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Cover: Airborne infantrymen share a laugh before taking off from an unknown location on the Mediterranean island of Sicily. (Photo: National Archives)

WWII HISTORY

MARCH 2006

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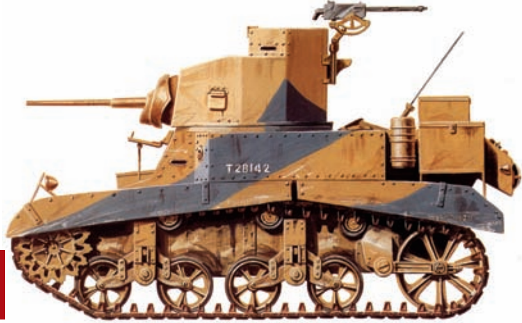

WWII History (ISSN 1539-5456) is published bimonthly by Sovereign Media, 453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at Herndon, VA, and additional mailing offices. WWII History, Volume 5, Number 2 © 2006 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to WWII History **Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $4.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $16.95; Canada and Overseas: $21.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to WWII History, 453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170. WWII History welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

A conscientious objector, Private Desmond Doss won his nation's highest award for bravery.

THE FIGHTING ON OKINAWA PROVED TO BE SOME OF THE MOST SAVAGE OF THE PACIFIC WAR. As American soldiers and Marines blasted the island's Japanese defenders from reinforced bunkers, caves, and even tombs, incidences of incredible bravery and self sacrifice were commonplace. However, the story of one soldier who earned the Medal of Honor on Okinawa stands out among the others.

The unlikeliest of heroes, Private Desmond T. Doss of Lynchburg, Virginia, served as a medic with the 307th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division. A devout Seventh Day Adventist, Doss had declined to touch a rifle, much less carry one or fire it in anger. His status as a conscientious objector left few options for service to his country as a member of the armed forces. He could find purpose, though, in alleviating the suffering of wounded comrades, saving lives, and, above all, praying that God would watch over them.

He had already seen action, but the ferocity of the Okinawa battle was unprecedented. After a month of hard fighting, U.S. forces were still absorbing heavy casualties as they dislodged the enemy from a seemingly endless series of cliffs, ridgelines, and hills in the southern end of the island. On several occasions, Doss distinguished himself under fire.

On May 2, 1945, the 307th Infantry was heavily engaged along the crest of the 400-foot Maeda escarpment. The terrain was so difficult to negotiate that the troops were required to use 50-foot cargo nets borrowed from the Navy to scale the cliffs. Once atop the precipice, the men of the 307th were resupplied with ammunition in buckets raised and lowered by rope. As wounded men fell along the crest of the escarpment, Doss exposed himself to enemy fire repeatedly, providing medical aid and carrying them individually to the edge to be lowered on litters supported by ropes to the relative safety below.

According to his Medal of Honor citation, he "exposed himself to heavy rifle and mortar fire in rescuing a wounded man 200 yards forward of the lines ... and two days later he treated four men who had been cut down while assaulting a strongly defended cave, advancing through a shower of grenades to within eight yards of enemy forces in the cave's mouth, where he dressed his comrades' wounds before making four separate trips under fire to evacuate them to safety."

Three days later, Doss saved an officer's life, administering blood plasma under fire. Later, he ran to a wounded man just 25 feet from a Japanese gun emplacement and carried the wounded soldier 100 yards to safety.

On May 21, at the risk of being mistaken for an enemy soldier, he cared for wounded soldiers lying between the two battle lines during a night attack. That same night, he was wounded in the legs by grenade fragments. Instead of calling for another medic to come to his aid, Doss bandaged his own wounds and waited five hours to be carried out of harm's way. As the injured medic and his two rescuers were retiring, they were caught in a Japanese counterattack.

The citation continues, "Doss, seeing a more critically wounded man nearby, crawled off the litter and directed the bearers to give their first attention to the other man." Once more exposed, Doss was hit by enemy fire and suffered a compound fracture of his left arm. Using a discarded rifle stock, he fashioned a splint for his shattered arm and then crawled 300 yards to an aid station.

Without ever firing a shot, Doss had saved the lives of numerous men—without regard for his own safety. On October 12, 1945, he received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman. "I don't think there is anyone who appreciates peace more than I do," he said in an interview some time ago. "I am sad for the true heroes who paid the supreme price for our freedoms."

Truly, because of the heroism of Desmond Doss, fewer men were required to pay that price. □

Michael E. Haskew

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 2

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

CHRISTOPHER R. D'AMORE
Managing Editor

MAE ARIOLA
Art Director

KEVIN HYMEL
Research Director

Contributors:
Eric T. Baker, Kelly Bell, John J. Domagalski, Michael D. Hull, Kevin M. Hymel, Captain Lee R. Mandel, James Marino, Sam McGowan, Christopher Miskimon, Maj. Gen. Michael Reynolds, Mason B. Webb, Charles Whiting

ADVERTISING OFFICE:

JEFF KIGHT
Advertising Director
(570) 322-7848, ext. 17

MARK HINTZ
Vice President & Publisher

TINA POUST
Comptroller

KATHY PAULHAMUS
MARY NOLAN
SANDRA HILLYARD
Subscription Customer Services

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

CURTIS CIRCULATION COMPANY
Worldwide Distribution

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:
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Katyn Forest Massacre

Dear Editors:

Thank you for your article by Richard Rule concerning the Katyn Forest massacre, its subsequent cover-up by the Soviets, and worse, the lack of further action by the Western Allies. I was already aware of this tragedy for some years before I read the account in *A Night Never Ending* by Eugenjusc Komorowski, in 1974. Komorowski was an officer in the Polish Army and a survivor of the massacre at Katyn. At a conference I attended on production of compilation documentary films at UCLA in 1979, a visiting professor stated that there was evidence that some of the officers of the Polish Army that avoided death at Katyn were transported to the Arctic Circle by the Communists. There, they were forced onto ice floes, where they either froze to death or drowned in the icy waters. Even though this was one of the worst tragedies of WWII—and mind you, there were many—it is important for the world to know about this travesty of justice, and that the perpetrators were never held accountable for their actions. Again, thank you for your article. I have a gut feeling that Hollywood will never make a movie about this.

Michael Hitchins
Garden Grove, California

Captain Forrest Biard

Dear Editors:

Regarding your January 2006 Insight piece, I found it strange that author Haufler did not ask Captain Biard about Robert Stinnett's contention that during the week leading up to the Pearl Harbor attack, Rochefort and Layton withheld the location of the approaching Japanese carriers from Admiral Kimmel. The head of Station Hypo, Homer Kisner is quoted as saying he would have given the carrier information directly to Kimmel. Obviously Biard's reaction to Kisner's statement would have been of immense interest. Captain Biard implies that during the run-up to the attack, Rochefort stayed continuously in "the dungeon." However, it is documented that Rochefort went off duty in the early afternoon of December 6—returning to his home approximately twenty miles away from Pearl Harbor. Could Rochefort have sent Biard to Station Hypo to listen for the "winds" message —keeping him out of harms way? Admiral Layton in *And I Was There* gives an excuse for Fletcher's badgering of Biard in front of the staff: Biard's misreporting of signals sent out by a Japanese submarine that was shadowing the U.S. carriers. A more likely explanation of Fletcher's animosity is that he was aware that Rochefort had sandbagged Kimmel and viewed any member of Rochefort's unit with contempt. Finally Captain Biard mentions going to Japan in 1939 for language training. Layton, on page 51 of his book, describing an intelligence matter in 1935, refers to Biard as "my Japanese language colleague and friend."

J.M. Hansen
High Bridge, New Jersey

Dear Editors:

By ignoring two facts, I feel that "Warsaw 1943: A War of Desperation," by Kelly Bell is misleading and could aid Nazi apologists. First, the ghetto activists trailed the relocation trains to Auschwitz and its gas chambers. This was reported back to the ghetto and later to London. Second, the Polish home army could not defend either the ghetto, or any other part of Warsaw. This was verified in 1944 when the Soviet Union stopped short of the capitol. The Polish home army instead recommended ghetto abandonment and countryside dispersal. The Jewish leadership feared this option—with its unknowns—more than surrender and a trip to Auschwitz.

William H. Mentzer, PE
Meadville, Pennsylvania

USS *Wake*

Dear Editors:

WWII History is an excellent magazine filled with well-researched articles. I gave it as gifts to several friends and they also enjoy it thoroughly. Keep up the good work. In the September 2005 issue, I read with great interest the article by Eric Niderost entitled "Eleventh Hour Peril." The crew of the USS *Wake* gunboat must have known that when hostilities broke out between the U.S. and Japan that they would become Japanese prisoners. I would like to know what the fate of USS *Wake*'s crew was? Did they survive the war?

Oakley B. Blair
Leesburg, Virginia

Dear Mr. Blair,

According to author Eric Niderost, "Smith was ashore when he got an early morning phone call on December 8 telling him of Pearl Harbor. He rushed down to the waterfront, but Japanese soldiers—who had invaded the International Settlement—refused to let him go aboard the USS Wake*. Oddly, they did not take him into custody. He went to his office in the American Consulate, where the staff was busy burning papers, destroying ciphers, and sending last messages. Later that morning Japanese soldiers came and made him a POW. Those aboard ship—and a few others who were on shore—were interned and spent the war as POWs. Smith escaped in October 1944, from Shanghai's Ward Road Prison: a regular penitentiary before the war that was considered a modern—and escape-proof—penal institution. He escaped with a British Royal Navy officer named Wooley, and a Marine named Storey. After many adventures, and with help from the Chinese people, the trio reached Free Chinese territory. It was a trek of some 700 miles, much of it on foot. Additionally, the USS* Wake *has the dubious distinction of being the only U.S. warship captured intact by the Japanese in WWII."*

Dear Editors:

In the January 2006 issue of *WWII History*, the article, "Wake Island Survivor" stated that the Wake garrison was the only force to defeat an amphibious assault during the entire war. My father, Creston Henry Rowland, was a defender of the Corregidor, and shared many stories with me. These stories included his role in the repulsion of Japanese landing craft on Corregidor. I have read many accounts of the events of May 5-6 which suggest the Japanese suffered heavy losses during the attack. I believe Corregidor was not defeated (the men were ready to fight to the end), but was surrendered under the orders of General Wainwright in order to save the lives of nurses and wounded in the tunnels. I feel this is a story worthy of further investigation. Thank you for your consideration, and an excellent magazine.

Archie L. Rowland
Fuquay Varnia, North Carolina

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Though obsolescent at the beginning of World War II, the M-3 Stuart light tank series would soldier on until war's end.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

Thirteen Panzerkampfwagen IV tanks advanced down the Chouigui-Mateur road in an attack against the newly arrived American First Armored Division. It was November 25, 1942, near the Tire River Valley in Tunisia.

Three American halftracks mounting 75mm pack howitzers engaged the German advance but withdrew upon realizing their fire was ineffective. Companies A and B of the 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment went into action. Support was provided by B Company, while A Company's 12 M-3 Stuart light tanks attacked the larger German panzers.

Company A quickly found itself in trouble. The thicker frontal armor of the panzers could not be penetrated by the M-3's small 37mm gun. One by one, the American tanks fell prey to the long-barreled 75mm cannon of the enemy. One German tank, keeping its frontal armor pointed at an M-3 it had targeted, closed to some 30 yards before firing a shot that destroyed the American tank as it tried to retreat, killing or wounding most of its crew. The American tankers fired 18 rounds at their foe during the Germans' approach, only to watch hits spark as they bounced away harmlessly. Still, the fight with A Company caused the Germans to turn their more vulnerable rear armor to B Company in its supporting positions. The B company gunners were able to knock out nine of the panzers.

The dual problems of weak firepower and light armor cursed the Stuart tank throughout its service life. Mechanically reliable, Stuarts were quickly relegated to secondary roles in the European theater, though the tank found more use in the Pacific. Nevertheless, the Stuart, in both its M-3 and M-5 models, was not withdrawn until after the war. It was widely used by several of America's allies, including France and Britain. The Stuart name, in fact, was a British contribution, as it was their practice to name U.S. tanks in their service after American Civil War generals, in this case it was Confederate cavalry General Jeb Stuart.

The Stuart's origin can be directly traced to American tank development of the 1930s. A number of M-3 ancestors were designed as either light tanks for the infantry or "combat cars" for the cavalry. At the time, only the infantry branch was allowed to possess tanks, so vehicles for the cavalry were called combat cars to avoid violating the regulation. Both vehicles were very similar in design, however.

These vehicles went through a number of design stages, particularly as the lessons of tank use in the Spanish Civil War were digested. The fighting there showed the need for increased armor protection against anti-tank weapons

National Archives

Practicing combat maneuvers, M-3 Stuart light tanks and supporting infantry advance on mock enemy positions.

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With the outbreak of WWII came an urgent need for overseas bases from which our armed services could fight. Building these bases would require an enormous force of dedicated, talented, and capable constructionmen trained to defend themselves in the midst of a war zone.

In early 1942, RADM Ben Moreell was given approval for such a force which became known as the Seabees. This legendary force over 300,000 strong and comprised of skilled construction workers in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s worked around the globe. They turned jungles, desert sands, arctic tundra, and mosquito infested swamps into the airfields, ports, wharves, hospitals, supply facilities, and other structures which made it possible to win the war.

The Seabees continued to provide that support during the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and today are in the Mid-East supporting our troops.

To ensure this story is never forgotten, the CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation is in the midst of an ambitious $12 million fundraising project to construct a new Museum at Port Hueneme. The state-of-the-art facility will allow visitors to experience the action from World War II to present. The past will truly meet the future at the new Museum, where Seabee relics and history are both presented and preserved through a unique blend of today's technology and dynamic displays. Guests will experience every aspect of service, from recruitment and boot camp, to serving on the front line.

Learn more about the new Museum by visiting the Foundation's website at www.seabeehf.org.

Individuals, groups, and organizations wishing to help make the new Museum a reality are encouraged to contact the CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation, Post Office Box 657, Gulfport,MS, 39502-0657, or call (228) 865-0480.

National Archives

A Stuart participates in a demonstration at Camp Chorrera in the Republic of Panama. Stuarts were produced in large numbers during WWII but were limited in their ability to engage enemy armor.

like the German 37mm cannon as well as the need to mount a cannon of at least 37mm on U.S. tanks. At that time, American tanks mounted no heavier weapon than a .50 caliber machine gun.

The beginning of World War II further highlighted the importance of heavier armor and weapons. Unfortunately, American designers clung to the concept of light tank use while future opponents like Germany looked harder at medium and heavy tanks.

Work on an improved light tank began in July 1940. This tank was designated the M-3 and mounted a 37mm cannon as well as 38mm of armor in front. That thickness of armor was still not enough to stop even 37mm rounds, but the new design was not considered able to carry armor of greater thickness, even with improvements to the chassis suspension.

Besides the cannon, the M-3 mounted five .30-caliber machine guns—one on the turret roof, one coaxial beside the cannon, and three in the hull. The first M-3s had riveted turrets, which were quickly replaced with stronger welded turrets. This reduced the danger to the crew from rivet heads bouncing around the interior if the tank was hit. The new turret was used from April 1941 until the end of the war. Accepted into service, production of the M-3 had begun in earnest the month before.

The production version of the M-3 weighed in at 13.7 tons when loaded for combat. It was 14 feet, 10 inches long with a width of seven feet, four inches, and a height of eight feet, three inches. The crew comprised four men: a driver, co-driver, loader, and the commander who had to double as a gunner. M-3s could make 36 miles per hour on roads and 20 cross-country. The tank's maximum range was about 75 miles on solid ground.

Through Lend-Lease, the British Army began to acquire the M-3. While it was not the ideal, it was still a tank and the British needed all they could get for the fighting in North Africa. Still, the M-3 offered some advantages. It was mechanically reliable compared to British designs, and its 37mm gun could fire a high-explosive round against unarmored targets, something the two-pounder gun on the British tanks lacked. To customize the tanks for their use, the British added such features as extra external stowage, removal of two of the hull-mounted machine guns, and various internal details. The first eighty-four tanks were shipped to Egypt in July 1941, where British troops gave it the additional nickname "Honey" for its reliability.

The Stuart's baptism of fire came on November 19, 1941, during Operation Crusader. The 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars fought elements of the 21st Panzer Division near Gabr Saleh, losing 20 Stuarts to three panzers. By the end of the battle, many more Stuarts had been lost to German armor and antitank guns, though losses were due more to German tactical proficiency than any particular deficiency of the Stuart. In fact, the bulk of German armor, mostly Panzer Mark III and IV tanks, were not markedly superior to the M-3 in terms of armor or firepower. Indeed, the Germans used a number of captured Stuarts in North Africa. As M-3 light and M-4 medium tanks began to reach British hands in the spring and summer of 1942, the Stuarts were gradually shifted from frontline service to reconnaissance.

About the same time the Stuart was deployed in the desert, the U.S. Army was fielding it in the Pacific. Two battalions equipped with the M-3 were sent to the Philippines to reinforce the American garrison in September 1941. When the Japanese attacked in December, both units took part in the fighting. Japanese tanks of the day were by no means superior to the Stuart, so American crews fared better than their comrades in North Africa.

During this initial period of service, the M-3 underwent a number of changes, including several additional turret designs. A number of production models were fitted with diesel engines due to a shortage of the continental gasoline engine normally fitted. To simplify logistics, diesel tanks were generally kept in the United States, the exception being tanks issued to the Marine Corps, which could get diesel fuel from Navy sources. Subsequent models of the M-3 included the M-3A1, which had a gun gyrostabilizer, powered turret traverse, and a vehicle intercom, and the M-3A3, with a welded hull and changes in the interior layout. A total of 5,811 M-3s were produced, as well as 9,031 M-3A1s and 3,427 M-3A3s.

The final upgraded version of the Stuart was the M-5 model. In its M-5A1 configuration, it was basically an M-3 powered by twin Cadillac engines and a Hydramatic transmission, as well as the latest improvements of the M3A3. Range was increased to 100 miles, and combat weight went up to 16.5 tons. Ultimately, however, the Stuart, whether an M-3 or M-5, was still undergunned and underarmored for the role assigned it.

Frontline users recommended discontinuing the design. By the end of 1942, though, over 13,000 Stuarts had been produced, and the production lines were in full swing. Coupled with the fact that no suitable replacement was available, it was clear the design would have to soldier on. A total of 10,958 M-5 Stuarts rolled off the lines by the time production ceased in 1944.

Some changes would occur, however. A reorganization of armored units eliminated light tank battalions and resulted in combined regular tank battalions with three medium tank companies and one light company. The concept was to use the light tanks for reconnaissance and security missions. Some independent units such as cavalry squadrons also used Stuarts, and they were in widespread use during and

after the Normandy landings. Against the Germans in Europe, the Stuart was vulnerable to the myriad of antitank weapons they used, from the handheld panzerfaust to the dreaded 88mm gun. Despite the cautious employment of the Stuarts by many commanders, 1,200 were lost in Europe and Italy.

Comparatively, the Stuart provided yeoman service in the Pacific theater, where enemy weapons did not outmatch its weaknesses. There was relatively little tank-to-tank fighting in the Pacific, but the tank found plenty of use in support of infantry. Though armored vehicles often had trouble traversing jungle terrain, the Stuart's light weight and small size actually mitigated this disadvantage.

M-3s went ashore at Guadalcanal in August 1942, and in September they were used by Australian troops in New Guinea. They rendered valuable service in defensive fighting, both from their machine guns and their cannon, which fired canister rounds (a cannon shell filled with small projectiles, akin to a giant shotgun shell). This firepower was also quite useful when the enemy attacked the tanks themselves. Japanese infantry had nothing like the bazooka or panzerfaust, and antitank guns were often difficult to employ well in Pacific terrain.

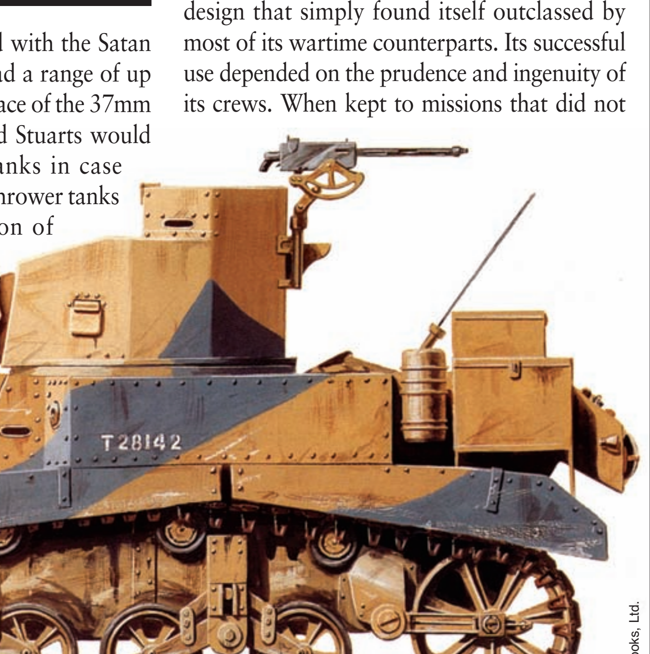
More personal tactics were required. Groups of infantry would charge a tank, attempting to swarm over it. Explosive charges would then be set to destroy the tank or be thrown inside if the attackers could get a hatch open. This tactic, while foolish in open terrain, could to work in close-in jungle terrain, though often at a high cost in lives. To counter this tactic, tankers would operate in groups. If enemy infantry attempted to swarm the tanks, they could literally hose each other down with machine gun fire to ward them off. On Guadalcanal, General Alexander Vandegrift stated that the tanks resembled "meat grinders" due to the covering of blood they were coated with.

The inadequacies of the Stuart did come to light even in the Pacific, though. When the 2nd Marine Tank Battalion went ashore at Tarawa, it confronted a network of well-built Japanese bunkers. The 37mm guns of its M-3s did little damage to them. Tank crews resorted to driving directly up to the bunkers and firing right into the embrasures. In fairness, it must be said that even larger tank guns were of limited effect against such structures.

One solution to the problem of destroying bunkers was the flamethrower tank. To this end, 20 Stuarts were equipped with the Satan flamethrower. This weapon had a range of up to 60 yards and was fitted in place of the 37mm gun. In practice, gun-equipped Stuarts would accompany flamethrower tanks in case enemy tanks appeared. Flamethrower tanks played a part in the invasion of Saipan during summer 1944.

National Archives

ABOVE: A Stuart tank of the 1st Armored Division traverses a rubble-strewn street in Italy while probing for enemy positions. **BELOW:** Limited armor and firepower prevented the M-3 Stuart light tank from engaging German armor on equal terms. The Stuart was, however, more successful in the Pacific against lightly-armored Japanese tanks.



Amber Books, Ltd.

Though its value as a frontline tank was quickly over, the Stuart chassis was used successfully for a number of variants. Perhaps the best known of these was the M-8 howitzer motor carriage. Mounting a 75mm M-1A1 pack howitzer in an open-topped turret, it was originally intended to provide support for light tank battalions. The diminutive but nevertheless effective pack howitzer could send high explosive or smoke rounds over 9,000 yards. Once light tank battalions were replaced, it was instead issued to cavalry reconnaissance units. The M-8 first saw action in Normandy and served for the rest of the war. A total of 1,778 were built, with some 174 being given to the French forces, which also used over 500 M-3s and M-5s.

Though never an official variant, British units adapted the Stuart by removing its turret and using it in a variety of roles. A personnel carrier known as the Stuart Kangaroo was created by fitting the turretless chassis with seating for infantry, and a similar reconnaissance version, fitted with a machine gun mounting, also appeared late in the war. Another notable variant was a command vehicle used by high-ranking officers. Again, the turret was removed, and a ring of steel plating was inserted to create a small superstructure around the turret ring.

The Stuart tank was a decent 1930s-era design that simply found itself outclassed by most of its wartime counterparts. Its successful use depended on the prudence and ingenuity of its crews. When kept to missions that did not unduly test their weaknesses, Stuarts could and did provide useful service. Even when used outside their limits, they plugged gaps in Allied tank forces until heavier medium tanks arrived. □

Author Christopher Miskimon served in the U.S. Army in both the infantry and artillery. He writes out of Denver, Colorado.

Lieutenant Commander Edward "Butch" O'Hare became a national hero for his exploits in aerial combat against the Japanese.

BY JOHN DOMAGALSKI

Jack Fellows, ASAA

Flying his Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter, Lieutenant Edward "Butch" O'Hare streaks past a Japanese bomber in this painting by Jack Fellows.

It was 7:25 am when Flight Captain William Motes brought his plane down for landing. The arrival of the American Airlines Convair on October 30, 1955, marked the beginning of the first day of regularly scheduled passenger service at Chicago's new O'Hare International Airport. Hailed as an aviation milestone, the airport would soon become the world's busiest.

The name O'Hare would eventually become instantly recognizable by millions of business and leisure travelers alike. Yet, few Americans know very much about the airport's namesake, Lt. Cmdr. Edward "Butch" O'Hare. A dedicated naval airman, O'Hare was a much-needed hero in the desperate early days of World War II in the Pacific. The O'Hare story is one of determination, heroism, gallantry, and sacrifice.

Edward Henry O'Hare was born on March 13, 1914, in St. Louis, Missouri, to parents of German and Irish descent. He was the son of wealthy attorney and businessman Edward J. O'Hare, who would later move to Chicago to become a horse racing promoter. Eddie, as the younger O'Hare soon became known, lived a comfortable childhood in the St. Louis area with younger sisters Patricia and Marilyn. As a youngster, he was fond of airplanes, swimming, and hunting. It was during summer visits to a friend's riverfront property that O'Hare learned marksmanship and became a good shot by using cans and bottles for target practice with his .22-caliber rifle. In 1926 at the age of 12, O'Hare entered Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois. Over the next four years, he played football and was the captain of the rifle team while earning honor roll grades and an excellent reputation.

Deciding on a career in the military, O'Hare entered the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, in 1932, appointed by Missouri Congressman John J. Cochran. While at the Academy, O'Hare played on the water polo team and picked up the nickname "Butch," which would stay with him for the rest of his life. The editors of the Academy yearbook, *The Lucky Bag*, wrote of O'Hare as being both friendly and personable. "The possessor of a winning personality, Ed has found no trouble in making lasting friendships; he is always ready with a pat on the back when you need it most."

Graduating in 1937 at the age of 23, Lieutenant O'Hare finished 255th in his Naval Academy class of 323. Although he desired to become an aviator, Navy policy of the time required all new officers to begin their careers on a surface ship. O'Hare was assigned to the battleship *New Mexico* for the required two-year tour of duty.

When his battleship duty was completed,

O'Hare was free to pursue his interest in aviation. He entered flight school on June 9, 1939, at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. During training he became both a skilled flier and expert marksman.

O'Hare graduated flight school as a naval aviator on May 27, 1940. He was assigned to Fighter Squadron Three (VF-3) aboard the aircraft carrier *Saratoga,* based in San Diego. The squadron was soon under the command of Lt. Cmdr. John Thach. A member of the Naval Academy class of 1927, Thach was an experienced pilot who had trained extensively in fighter tactics. The two formed an almost immediate bond. O'Hare's aviator skills would continue to develop under Thach's close instruction. He made his first carrier landing on July 24, 1940, landing a Grumman F3F-1 biplane fighter on the deck of the *Saratoga*. About a year later the squadron upgraded to the new Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter.

Flown by both Navy and Marine pilots, the Wildcat became the U.S. Navy's frontline fighter during the opening years of the Pacific War. Although not as maneuverable as its nemesis, the Japanese Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighter, the Wildcat was built to absorb a fair amount of battle damage and had a powerful armament of four wing-mounted .50-caliber machine guns.

While home on leave in St. Louis, O'Hare met Rita Wooster. A native of Keokuk, Iowa, the 24-year-old Wooster was training to become a nurse at DePaul Hospital in St. Louis. The couple married on September 5, 1941, in Phoenix, Arizona, and took a honeymoon trip to Hawaii. They later became the parents of a daughter named Kathleen.

On December 7, 1941, the *Saratoga* was returning to San Diego from a retrofit in Bremerton, Washington. The planes and pilots of VF-3 were already on land at the North Island Naval Air Station when the news came of the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Planes and supplies were hastily loaded aboard as crew members scrambled about trying to ready the ship for sea. At 9:30 AM on December 8, the *Saratoga* sailed into open water bound for Pearl Harbor. During the remainder of December, the carrier prowled the waters west of Hawaii and participated in a failed attempt to rush supplies to Wake Island.

January 11, 1942, found the *Saratoga* in the sights of the Japanese submarine *I-6*. Sailing about 500 miles south of Hawaii, the carrier was hit by one torpedo below the waterline on the port side, killing six of the crew and flooding several compartments. Severely damaged, the *Saratoga* was able to limp back to Pearl Harbor under its own power. The carrier was soon transferred back to Bremerton for permanent repairs resulting in its missing the upcoming Coral Sea and Midway battles. With the *Saratoga* out of commission for several months, VF-3 was transferred to its sister ship, the *Lexington*.

Both: National Archives

TOP: O'Hare (left) discusses fighter tactics with a fellow pilot after returning from a mission. ABOVE: After sustaining damage from heavy fire, a Japanese flying boat—its wing trailing smoke and flames—plummets from the sky.

The beginning of 1942 brought little improvement to the American position in the Pacific. In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Japanese advance southward continued almost unchecked. The beleaguered American defense of the Philippines was crumbling. Good news was in short supply. American morale was low, and it was badly in need of a hero.

In the South Pacific, the Japanese bombed and attacked New Guinea and the nearby island of New Britain. Situated in the Bismarck Archipelago east of New Guinea and northwest of the Solomon Islands, New Britain occupied a strategic position. The island's capital city of Rabaul was seized on January 23. Rabaul had a good harbor, and American intelligence soon learned that the Japanese were turning it into a major air and naval base with troops and supplies arriving on a daily basis. Once established, the base could be used as a staging point for further advances south and east.

American Vice Admiral Wilson Brown decided on a daring attack designed to disrupt the progress of Japanese base building on Rabaul. A Naval Academy graduate of the class of 1902, Brown had commanded a destroyer in World War I and served in various postwar capacities before attaining the rank of vice admiral on February 1, 1941. In command of a task force built around the *Lexington*, Brown planned to elude Japanese patrols by traveling up the eastern side of the Solomon Islands to a position just east of the island of New Ireland.

From that launch point, the carrier's planes would then be able to fly 125 miles west to surprise the unsuspecting Japanese at Rabaul. It was a bold and risky strategy. The *Lexington* had to reach the launch point undetected. The Japanese carriers *Akagi, Kaga, Zuikaku,* and *Shokaku* were thought to be operating somewhere in the South Pacific. An assortment of battleships and cruisers were likely at the Japanese island fortress of Truk to the north. At the time of the attack, the *Lexington* would be perilously positioned between Rabaul and Truk. Strict radio silence would have to be maintained once the *Lexington* started her journey.

Accompanying the *Lexington* on the raid were the heavy cruisers *Minneapolis*, *Indianapolis*, *Pensacola,* and *San Francisco* along with 10 destroyers. On the morning of February 20, Admiral Brown's task force was well into enemy waters moving at high speed toward the designated launch point. In the *Lexington*'s ready room, Butch O'Hare and the other pilots of VF-3 listened intently as Thach used a chart to outline the mission. "We'll launch the strikes here about 125 miles from Rabaul. Our first job is to take care of any snoopers that may show up during the next 10 or 12 hours. We don't want them sending any fix back to Rabaul."

By midmorning the task force was about 350 miles east of Rabaul, not yet at the launch point. At about 10 AM, the *Lexington* spotted an unidentified plane approaching the task force. It likely was a long-range Japanese search plane intent on radioing the task force's exact position back to its base. Squadron leader Thach, his wingman Ensign Edward Sellstrom, and two other Wildcat fighters raced through the clouds to the scene.

"Suddenly the cloud opened right in the center," Thach said of the encounter. "There, right under me, was a Mavis, a four-engine patrol bomber bigger than the Pan-American Clipper. I don't know which one of us was most surprised."

Both planes soon disappeared back into the thick rain clouds. "At last I dimly saw a huge shape leaving the rain squall. I never lost him again. I overtook him with the other fighter protecting my tail and I gained position for attack," Thach recalled. Both Wildcats opened fire on the much larger Japanese flying boat. "We continued in and made our firing run and I saw that I had hit his fuel tanks, for gasoline was spraying astern of him."

Both fighters immediately turned and came in for a second pass. "Our bullets ignited him for he suddenly caught fire. Great white sheets of flame from the streaming fuel spread out behind him and he began spinning down into the sea."

Thach screamed into his microphone, "I got him!" It was the first plane to be shot down by airmen from the *Lexington*.

While Thach and his wingman took care of the first Japanese scout, other Wildcats had located and shot down a second flying boat. The victories were bittersweet as the scouts had successfully notified their base of the approaching American carrier. The American flyers returned to their carrier and over a quick lunch wondered about the future. Some type of Japanese attack was now all but certain.

As the task force continued at full speed toward Rabaul, the *Lexington* prepared for battle. Captain Fredrick Sherman called the crew to battle stations. Antiaircraft guns were manned and made ready for action. As a precaution, the carrier maintained a protective fighter cover of six Wildcats at all times.

National Archives

Lt. Cmdr. Edward O'Hare was awarded the Medal of Honor for single-handedly breaking up the Japanese attack on the carrier *Lexington*.

In early afternoon, the *Lexington*'s radar picked up enemy planes approaching the task force from 25 miles away and closing fast. The planes were twin-engine Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" type bombers, each carrying two bombs. The formation of nine land-based planes had come from Rabaul, the very base the *Lexington* was planning to attack.

Thach once again led his Wildcat fighters into battle. In addition to the normal patrol of six fighters, Thach recalled six additional Wildcats that had just been relieved and were preparing to land. He ordered O'Hare and wingman Lieutenant Marion Dufilho to stay over the Lexington in reserve while the rest off the fighters went off to meet the attackers.

The ensuing battle lasted almost 10 minutes. "When first seen they were 12 miles out at 12,000 feet flying in a slight dive toward the 10,000 foot level," recalled Thach. "They had guns in the turtle back, in the tail position, and in the nose—machine guns and 20mm cannon." The fighters dove in for the attack. "The first time two of our fighters pressed their triggers, two Jap bombers fell."

The American fighters soon shot down six of the bombers. Two additional attackers were damaged and shot down by the *Lexington*'s

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Navy personnel look on from the edge of a carrier deck as an F4F-3A prepares for takeoff.

antiaircraft guns. The remaining bomber was damaged as it sped away from the scene of the attack. No bombs fell close to the *Lexington,* but two Wildcats went down in the battle with one pilot, Ensign J. Woodrow Wilson, lost.

In the aftermath of the battle some of the Wildcats gave chase to the last remaining bomber. Others, extremely low on fuel, began to land on the carrier. O'Hare and Dufilho maintained their protective position over the *Lexington*. The situation at that moment was less than ideal for providing protective fighter cover should another attack occur.

Suddenly, the alarm sounded again. The *Lexington's* radar had picked up a second set of attackers closing in fast from the opposite side of the task force. This group of attackers consisted of nine bombers of the same Mitsubishi type flying in three V formations. At the time of contact these were much closer to the carrier than the first group and had a clear path to the *Lexington*.

O'Hare remembered later: "This time we weren't quite ready for them, since most of the fighters were being refueled and getting ammunition. Thach and another plane were off chasing what was left of the first Jap flight and I was alone with one other plane over the ship." As the two Wildcats turned to face the attackers, Dufilho's guns jammed.

Butch O'Hare was now on his own to face the nine approaching bombers. The crew of the *Lexington* watched the developing battle in horror, hoping that the attacking planes could be stopped.

Making his first pass, O'Hare fired at the last two bombers on the right side of the formation. "I had fired at the starboard engine in each ship and kept shooting each time till they jumped right out of their mountings," he said. "This caused both of these planes to veer round to the starboard and fall out of the formation."

O'Hare then circled his Wildcat around and came at the formation from the opposite side, aiming his guns at the nearest plane. "I fired into the port engine of that plane and saw it jump out," he continued. "I pulled away slightly while this third plane skidded violently and fell away, then went back in and fired into the trailer of the middle V, still shooting at the engines." The bomber quickly became engulfed in flames as it spiraled down toward the sea.

The remaining Japanese planes, continuing to close in on the *Lexington*, were now in range of the ship's antiaircraft guns, which began to fire. Ignoring the danger, O'Hare pressed in for a third pass and knocked a fifth bomber out of the sky. He was able to damage one more enemy bomber before running out of ammunition. "The last Jap I went after I could have downed except my gun stopped after 10 rounds when I ran out of ammunition," he said. The entire action lasted about four minutes.

Help now arrived on the scene in the form of Thach and several of his Wildcat pilots who witnessed the initial battle but were too far away to help. "How O'Hare survived the concentrated fire of this Japanese formation I don't know," noted Thach. "Each time he came in, the turtle-back guns of the whole group were turned on him. I could see the tracers curling all around him and it looked to us as if he would go at any second."

Thach's fighters chased away the remaining Japanese planes, but not before they pressed home their attack. One damaged Betty approached the *Lexington* from astern. Cruisers and destroyers opened fire with an assortment of antiaircraft guns, but the plane kept coming. The hail of gunfire finally brought the plane down in a plume of smoke about 200 yards from the stern of the carrier.

The Wildcats, along with the *Lexington*'s guns, sent three more bombers down in flames. Although several bombs fell within 50 yards of the *Lexington*, the carrier suffered no damage. All told, eight of the nine attacking bombers were shot down with O'Hare claiming five kills.

The crew of the *Lexington* cheered wildly at the demise of the Japanese bombers. Admiral Brown noted, "I even had to remind some of my staff that this was not a football game." In the aftermath of the air battle, the admiral cancelled the mission to attack Rabaul. Sixteen Japanese planes in all, including the flying boats, were shot down by the *Lexington* and its airmen. The hero of the day was Butch O'Hare. O'Hare's Wildcat touched down to a hero's welcome on the flight deck of the *Lexington*. The modest O'Hare only desired to reload and head back up into the sky. "I'm okay," he said as he climbed out of the cockpit. "Just load those ammo belts and I'll get back up. But first I want a drink of water." While he did not go back up into the air that day, O'Hare did go up to the bridge to receive formal congratulations from Admiral Brown.

Upon returning to Pearl Harbor, O'Hare was soon ordered back to Washington. Facing a fury of reporters, he explained of the air battle, "There wasn't much to do but to shoot 'em."

Thach submitted a recommendation that O'Hare be given the Medal of Honor.

At a White House ceremony, O'Hare along with his wife Rita, stood proudly as he received the award. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called the action, "One of the most daring, if not the most daring, single action in the history of combat aviation."

The official citation read in part, "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in aerial combat, at grave risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty .... Having lost the assistance of his teammates, Lt. O'Hare interposed his plane between his ship and an advancing enemy formation of nine attacking twin-engine heavy bombers .... Despite this concentrated opposition, Lt. O'Hare, by his gallant and courageous action, his extremely skillful marksmanship in making the most of every shot of his limited amount of ammunition, shot down five enemy bombers and severely damaged a sixth before they reached the bomb release point."

Butch O'Hare spent the subsequent months touring the country and receiving a hero's welcome at every destination. In the course of his travels, he visited the Grumman Aircraft Company in New York, where a new American fighter plane, the F6F Hellcat, was under development. He advised the designers on what American airmen needed most, "A plane that will go upstairs faster." What O'Hare longed for most was a return to action in the Pacific.

In June 1942, the hero O'Hare returned to the Pacific as commander of Fighter Squadron Three. Now based at Puunene Naval Air Station on Maui, the squadron had suffered serious losses in the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway and was lacking experienced pilots. In February 1943, the squadron departed for North Island Naval Air Station near San Diego, where O'Hare was assigned the task of training new pilots to get the unit up to battle speed.

He was remembered by the pilots he trained as both an effective leader and a good teacher. One such pilot, Lieutenant George Rodgers, remembers O'Hare as a just one of the guys. "He worked the squadron hard, but he ran it with a sense of humor that helped him and us to take it."

After being promoted to lieutenant commander, O'Hare and his rebuilt fighter squadron returned to Pearl Harbor in the summer of 1943. Soon afterward, Fighter Squadron Three was redesignated as Fighter Squadron Six (VF-6). On August 5, 1943, VF-6 was assigned to the aircraft carrier *Independence*.

Like most fighter squadrons, VF-6 was now flying the new Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter. As the successor of the Wildcat, the Hellcat was designed to incorporate the lessons of combat. Improvements in speed and climb, along with six wing-mounted .50-caliber machine guns, meant the Hellcat was more than a match for the Zero in combat.

In September, O'Hare and VF-6 returned to combat. The U.S. Navy now had a new weapon in the Pacific War, the *Essex*-class aircraft carrier. Larger and faster than their predecessors, these fleet carriers were organized with battleships and cruisers into fast-moving task forces capable of striking deep into enemy-held territory. The new carriers were put into action in a series of air attacks on Japanese-held islands.

The first to be attacked was Marcus Island, located about halfway between Midway and Okinawa. The *Independence* joined the new carriers *Yorktown* and *Essex* in a task force under the command of Rear Admiral Charles Pownall. On September 1, the carriers launched six strikes against the island. It was O'Hare's first combat since his days aboard the *Lexington*. The Japanese were taken by complete surprise, and much of their shore installations were destroyed in the attack. O'Hare was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his efforts.

The next attack involved the largest American carrier task force assembled to date. The carriers *Essex, Yorktown, Lexington, Cowpens, Belleau Wood*, and *Independence* sortied

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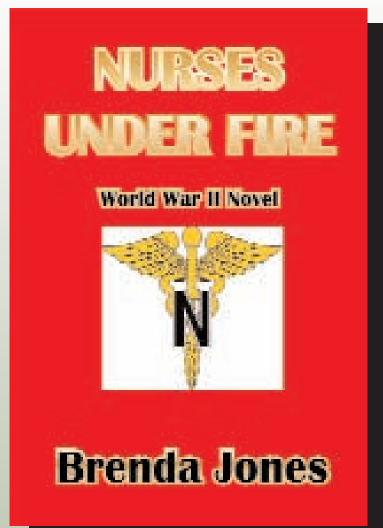

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from Pearl Harbor under the command of Rear Admiral Alfred Montgomery. On October 5 and 6, the task force launched six air strikes against Wake Island. About 375 pilots, including O'Hare, participated in the attack. The initial strike group was intercepted by an assortment of 30 Japanese planes. In the air battle that followed, O'Hare shot down one Zero and assisted in the downing of a Betty bomber.

By late 1943, the tide of war had turned against the Japanese in the Pacific. The American strategy called for a two-pronged advance across the Pacific toward Japan. The first drive would originate from the south moving northwest from the Solomon Islands through New Guinea and ultimately arriving in the Philippines. The second offensive would be launched west from Pearl Harbor and target Japanese strongholds in the Gilbert, Marshall, and Marianas Island groups. The two prongs would ultimately converge for a final assault on Japan.

National Archives

A pair of Grumman F4F-3A "Wildcat" fighters piloted by Lt. Cmdr. John Thach (F-1) and Lieutenant Edward O'Hare (F-13) wing their way over open sea near Kaneohe, Hawaii.

The Gilberts were first targeted by the American forces in the Central Pacific. Located approximately 2,100 miles southwest of Hawaii and 1,000 miles northeast of Guadalcanal, the islands represented a key Japanese base that could not be bypassed. The main target of the attack was the island of Tarawa, the location of a major Japanese air base. Makin, a smaller island to the north, would also be assaulted.

In support of the operation was the largest American naval armada assembled to date. Converging on the Gilberts was an invasion fleet of 200 ships, 35,000 troops, 6,000 vehicles, and almost 120,000 tons of supplies. Leading the attack was Task Force 50 of the Navy's Fifth Fleet. It comprised six fleet carriers, five light carriers, and almost 700 planes roughly divided into four task groups.

The northern carrier group (Task Group 50.2) consisted of the veteran carrier *Enterprise*, light carriers *Belleau Wood* and *Monterey*, three battleships, and six destroyers. Under the command of Rear Admiral Arthur Radford, the task group's principle role was to patrol the area north of Tarawa to protect the invasion forces from a potential counterattack. A secondary mission was to provide supporting airstrikes for ground forces as needed.

Air Group Six, under the command of O'Hare, was aboard the *Enterprise*. The air group consisted of Bombing Squadron Six (VB-6), Torpedo Squadron Six (VT-6), and Fighter Squadron Two (VF-2). O'Hare had a total of 90 planes under his command.

Operation Galvanic, the invasion of Tarawa, began on November 20, 1943, after the island had taken a heavy pounding from naval gunfire and air strikes. After three days of brutal fighting, organized Japanese resistance on Tarawa ended. Although the land battle was almost over, the attacks on American ships in the area continued.

Using airbases several hundred miles north in the Marshalls, the now familiar Japanese Betty bombers, armed with torpedoes, traveled south to attack American carriers. After sustaining heavy losses to Hellcat fighters and antiaircraft guns during daytime attacks, the Japanese turned to night torpedo attacks.

Aboard the *Enterprise*, O'Hare lectured his pilots on the new Japanese tactics. "They know it takes torpedoes hitting below the waterline to sink our ships permanently. And the only time to sock their fish home is at night when they can avoid our fighters. Once the Japs get set on this night business, it's going to be curtains for us."

The Japanese strategy called for using scout planes to locate American carriers by marking their approximate positions with flares. The light would allow other Japanese pilots to see the large ships by silhouette and press home their attacks. Although American ships could see the attacking planes on radar, antiaircraft fire was generally avoided as it could easily give away a ship's position. On the night of November 25, one Betty came to within a few hundred feet of the *Enterprise*. Torpedo wakes were being sighted on a nightly basis, and it was only a matter of time before a torpedo hit its target.

Butch O'Hare was getting impatient and wanted action. "Last night they launched at least five fish. They'll be back to do the job right. I don't intend to sit here doing nothing. We're going to find a way to bust up this night attack business if it's the last thing we do."

O'Hare proposed to break up the night attacks using carrier-launched night fighters. His plan called for a TBF Avenger torpedo bomber to be launched at dusk equipped with an extra fuel tank and small radar set. Once the long-range radar on the *Enterprise* detected enemy bombers, two Hellcat fighters would be launched to join the Avenger. To avoid becoming disoriented, the three planes would stay together, flying in close formation.

The fighter direction officer aboard the *Enterprise* would direct the trio to the general area of the attackers. Using its smaller radar set, the Avenger would then take over directing the Hellcats to their targets. Once close enough, the targets could be visually identified by engine exhaust streaks, and the Hellcats could attack from behind. The fighters should have enough fuel to return to the carrier for a landing at first light.

Having tested close formation night flying during training, O'Hare was convinced that his plan would work. However, the risks were great and potentially catastrophic. Planes could easily collide while flying in close formation at night. A pilot could become disoriented in the darkness and crash into the sea. Carrier landings were dangerous enough during daylight hours. Could it safely be done at night if needed?

O'Hare's plan would be put into action on the night of November 26. Just finishing dinner when the alarm sounded, he motioned off a dish of ice cream as he headed toward the ready

room. "No thanks," he told the mess attendant. "Keep it cold until I get back tonight." The long-range radar had picked up a large number of Japanese planes heading for the task group.

O'Hare's plane captain wished him luck as he climbed into the cockpit of the Hellcat. O'Hare replied, "Hell, we don't need luck with these cookies." The first night fighter operation was about to begin.

Lieutenant Commander John Phillips, leader of VT-2, piloted the radar-equipped Avenger that night. His crew consisted of Lieutenant Hazen Rand as radar operator and Aviation Ordnanceman Alvin Kernan manning the tail gun. Butch O'Hare piloted one Hellcat, while Ensign Warren Skon served as his wingman. At 6 PM, the three planes were catapulted off the flight deck of *Enterprise* and disappeared into the twilight.

The first-ever night air battle was filled with confusion. The Hellcats became separated from the Avenger almost immediately as the fighter direction officer vectored the planes toward the approaching Japanese formation. Phillips recalled the difficulty of trying to keep the planes together. "We had difficulty sticking together when it got dark. But we were lucky and were joining up when we ran into the Japs rendezvousing."

Closing range to make visual contact, the Avenger came across a formation of Bettys and opened fire. Phillips set his sights on one bomber and fired with his two wing-mounted .50-caliber machine guns. Kernan sprayed the same plane with machine-gun fire as the Avenger passed it by. The bomber caught fire, leaving a red streak in its wake as it veered out of formation and began its descent into the black sea below.

Phillips shouted into the radio, "I got me a Jap!" The Avenger soon made visual contact with a second bomber and opened fire. The second Betty caught fire and streaked down toward the ocean. Taken by surprise, the Japanese gunners began to fire at random in hopes of hitting an American plane. One Japanese bullet hit the Avenger, wounding Rand in the foot. The torpedo attack appeared to be disrupted.

O'Hare's voice came across the radio as the trio of American planes struggled to get together to coordinate an attack. "Phil, you'd better turn on your cockpit light. It looks like we're in a thousand Japs and I want to make sure I'm drilling the right guy." Attempting to pull together, all three American planes had their lights on for a brief time.

O'Hare radioed to Skon, "You take the side you want." The planes finally came together into one formation, the Avenger in the center with O'Hare flying on the starboard side and Skon on the port.

Suddenly, a fourth plane approached behind O'Hare's Hellcat as if to join in the formation. Phillips shouted into his microphone, "Butch there's a Jap joining up on you, coming in high! I'm instructing Kernan to shoot." Kernan saw the long black plane coming up from behind and opened fire, his machine gun lighting up the night sky with tracer bullets. At the same instance the Betty began to fire at O'Hare. For a brief moment, both planes were firing.

The Betty appeared to be hit as it turned away, disappearing into the darkness. A few moments later, an explosion occurred just over the horizon. Kernan thought he saw O'Hare's plane turn down, reappear for a brief moment, and then disappear for good. Phillips called out to O'Hare, "Butch this is Phil. We got him! Butch this is Phil over!" There was no answer.

Skon reported seeing gunfire from the Betty before observing O'Hare's plane drop down out of sight. "I saw tracers around his plane. I saw it sheer off and drop below us." Skon pulled his Hellcat out of the formation in a failed attempt to locate O'Hare.

Seeing the action from a different angle, Phillips later recalled, "While I was watching the Jap burn I saw something drop straight off and into the water, making a big splash. Then I thought my God that may be Butch."

After the battle, Rand recalled his observations: "I saw a fourth plane's guns blinking red, and he was shooting at Butch while our gunner, Kernan, was shooting at the Jap. Then Butch's light went off. I looked again and he was gone." Unable to locate their leader, the remaining two planes headed for home.

Both Phillips and Skon made tense but safe night landings on the *Enterprise*. The Japanese attack had been thwarted, although a few bombers managed to launch their torpedoes near the *Belleau Wood*. For the men on the *Enterprise*, the grim news slowly set in that Butch O'Hare was missing.

The search for O'Hare commenced at dawn on November 27. A large search grid was established, allowing for a 25-mile drift from the approximate point of O'Hare's downing. Equipped with dye markers and emergency supply kits, planes from Tarawa joined carrier planes from Task Force 50 in searching almost 2,000 square miles.

No trace of O'Hare or his plane was ever found. Edward "Butch" O'Hare, fighter ace, war hero, son, husband, and father, was missing in action and presumed dead. Recommending O'Hare for a second Medal of Honor, Admiral

Continued on page 82

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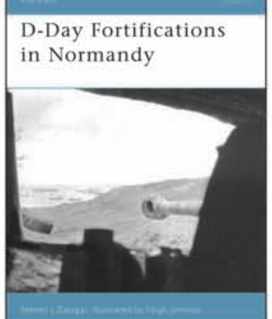

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Some sixty years later, Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler's death remains shrouded in mystery.

BY CHARLES WHITING

On Monday, May 21, 1945, men of the British 51st Highland Division were busy screening Germans and foreign nationals, mainly displaced persons attempting to go west over a small bridge near newly conquered Bremervoerde, Germany. They were on the lookout for war criminals and members of Himmler's SS, who were categorized as "automatic arrests" if located.

Screening was a boring job, but was better than being in combat—something that had been their lot right up to two weeks before. So, bored or not, they did their job conscientiously.

Some time that day the soldiers on the little bridge spotted three men in civilian clothes who seemed to be hesitant about crossing. They stood out immediately, not only because of their hesitancy but because some of them were obviously soldiers in civilian clothes. The British troops speculated that they might be SS. It was, however, the third man of the trio who caused the Jocks to eventually stop them. He was small and skinny, and nothing about him caught the attention of the British. He did not even appear especially soldierly, save for the black eye patch he wore over his right eye. It made him look like a performer from some third rate amateur drama group.

The trio's papers were examined and they seemed okay. Still, something did not seem quite right about the man with the black eye-patch, named, so he said, Hinziger. They asked more questions. It was then that the biggest of the trio made his mistake. He started to shout and threaten. That was enough for the men of the Black Watch, who had been fighting the Germans since the Battle of El Alamein in 1942. They arrested all three of them.

The trio was sent to a British Army holding camp for suspects at Barnstedt, 10 miles from the British 2nd Army headquarters at Luneburg. Here they were stripped and searched for anything incriminating, including what the guards there called "SS cough drops," or suicide pills. Nothing was found. Thereafter, they were questioned under the leadership of the camp commandant, a captain codenamed Sylvester, of the Reconnaissance Corps.

In the end Hinziger's nerve broke. He proudly told a British sergeant, "I am Reich Minister Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, and I want to talk to Eisenhower." He added that he had a letter for Field Marshal Montgomery, head of the British Army in Germany.

"And I'm Winston Churchill!" the British noncom quipped in cynical disbelief. All the same, Sylvester took Hinziger's claim seriously. At that time, except for Himmler and Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary, all the top Nazis had been accounted for in the West. The two were assumed to be still on the run. Sylvester called Colonel Murphy, 2nd Army's Chief Intelligence Officer, and was told to bring Hinziger in.

The final day in the life of the man who had once terrorized Europe had commenced.

Himmler, for he really was the Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, was taken to a suburban house in the small town of Luneburg from whence the first of the current English royal family had originated 1,000 years before. There, he was stripped and given a blanket to wear because he would not put on a British uniform before being medically examined by a British doctor. Once more the medic was looking for SS cough drops. Again, the British doctor found no sign of the so-called lethal pill. While Murphy listened, Himmler ranted how he was too important to deal with "underlings." He wanted to talk to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe. From that, he went on to the need for the Western Allies and the defeated Germans to band together to fight against the Soviet Union before it was too late.

Watching all this, the British doctor started to have second thoughts. Himmler was too confident, too smug. It was as if he still had

National Archives

The body of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, who's brutal SS men once terrorized Europe, awaits transport to a heavily wooded area of Luneburg Heath for burial.

some last ace up his sleeve. He stopped the interrogation and asked Himmler to come over to the window where there was more light. He wanted to look into the German's mouth. It was then that Himmler must have realized the game was up.

As the medical officer put his finger into Himmler's mouth and spotted the cyanide capsule, Himmler bit down hard. The doctor yelled and pulled out his bitten finger in the same instant that Himmler swallowed the contents of the hidden capsule.

Immediately, there was chaos. Some British officers grabbed Himmler, turned the naked Reichsführer upside down, and immersed his head in cold water. Later, it was reported that the doctor threaded a needle through Himmler's tongue to stretch it out so that he could reach down to his gullet and pull out what was left of the poison there. It was to no avail. Himmler died in agony. That was that. They threw a grey Army blanket over the corpse, posted guards outside, locked the door and went to report the sensational news to the higher authorities.

For 24 hours the British placed a security blanket over the whole affair. The body was photographed, examined in every way, and there was even a death mask taken. Then the time came to get rid of the scourge of German-occupied Europe. There was not going to be any post-war Himmler cult.

Under the command of a major, a Sergeant Major named Austen and four men were picked to bury the body in the woods of the so-called Luneburg Heath, where three weeks before the German Army had surrendered to Montgomery. It was a well-wooded, swampy area, once the favorite spot of pre-war weekenders on holiday from the big cities of northern Germany. Now empty, there were places enough for the burial party to inter the body far from prying eyes.

National Archives

Heinrich Himmler (right) converses with a fellow SS officer during *Reichsparteitag Großdeutschland* (National Party Day) in August 1938.

MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES SHROUD THE DEATH OF REICHSFÜHRER HEINRICH HIMMLER.

One of this author's contacts, a British Army nurse, managed to cut a lock of hair from the dead Reichsfuhrer's head, which she sent together with photos of local horses she had ridden to her mother for safekeeping. Her mother thought the hair clip came from one of the horses and threw it away. A vital clue in any investigation into Himmler's death may have been lost.

Two years after Himmler died, flowers were found near the spot where he had been buried. A team of investigators was sent by the British Army to check on the grave. The body, if they did in fact find the right location in that great wood, had vanished! **Charles Whiting**

The man who had been responsible for the deaths of millions was buried in an unmarked spot like one might bury a stray dog. It seemed very fitting that Sergeant Major Austen had once worked for his local council in sanitation before the war. He was an expert in removing trash.

Thus ends the official account of how Himmler died—suicide by poison. For nearly 60 years only historians of the Third Reich had concerned themselves (if at all) with the manner of Heinrich Himmler's death. All of them had been content to accept the British Army's account that he had died in captivity by his own hand. That was until May 2005 when a minor book by an obscure historian appeared in London. It was *Himmler's Secret War*, written by Martin Allen, an Englishman.

In the last few pages of his book, Allen, from southwest England, maintained that he had discovered documents in the British national archive at Kew, near London, that indicated Himmler had not committed suicide. Instead, he had been murdered on orders from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The latter had discussed the assassination of captured enemy leaders (such as Mussolini) who "knew too much" with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt before his death in April 1945.

The book aroused little interest and no British national daily would touch the story, although it would have made excellent copy and raised the sales figures tremendously. That was until the major British daily, *The Daily Telegraph*, broke the news on July 2, 2005, with a three-page story of its own investigation into the alleged assassination.

The *Telegraph*, which had daily sales running into millions, investigated Allen's claims that he or his researcher had stumbled across documents which had been previously overlooked by other historians. And what sensational finds they were. In fact, they purported that with Churchill's connivance and agreement, three key members of his entourage, including a minister in his cabinet and an Earl, had ordered Himmler murdered. Why? The supposed answer was because Churchill knew about the peace negotiations being carried out during wartime with Himmler, the master of terror and the scourge of European Jewry.

But the *Telegraph* had doubts. The newspaper commissioned an expert in forensic science, Mrs. Audrey Giles. She testified that although the paper on which these top secret documents were typed was genuine 1945 material—as was the typewriter used—the letterheads of these same documents had been created by a high resolution laser printer developed only in the 1990s. Moreover, the old typewriter of 1945 vintage had been used on the documents typed in two separate government departments—separated physically by thousands of yards. Hardly likely, naturally. In addition, the signature of one of the key figures had been traced in, first in pencil before the ink version had been used over the pencilled tracing.

Allen was called to account by the *Telegraph*. He said he was shocked. "I think I've been set up," he told the reporter. "But I do not even know by whom. I was devastated."

Immediately, the British National Archives at Kew went on the alert. How had these documents, if they were forgeries, been planted in the archives? Anyone who has used the facility knows that security there is tight. Then again, who would be interested at this time in attempting to blacken Churchill's character (and indirectly that of Roosevelt) by planting these very incriminating docu-

news.telegraph.co.uk

News

How Himmler's death was turned into a British murder plot

REPORTS BY
...N FENTON

All: Author's Collection

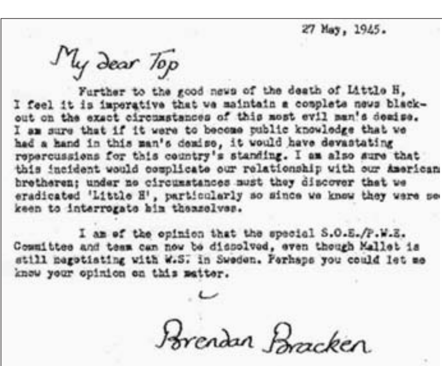
ments in the archive for the innocent historian to find?

We may never know! Perhaps it is simply a continuation—for whatever reason—of that secret war that commenced so long ago. At that time, many famous and infamous international military and political figures were threatened and killed.

So, what does a death on paper—one that never took place—matter? One thing is certain—terrorism at the top, which started so long ago, is now here to stay.

Two days after the *Telegraph's* sensational report, its main rival, the American-owned *Sunday Times* felt it had answered the last question at least. Allen, it maintained, had already been involved in one such forged document case.

In his book, *Hidden Agenda*, published five years before, Allen had alleged that King Edward VIII, who had given up the British throne to marry American divorcee Mrs. Wallis Simpson, the future Duchess of Windsor, had betrayed military secrets to Hitler in May 1940. At the time, the king's handwritten letter to Hitler in Germany, giving the military information, was examined by two forensic experts. They concluded it was a forgery. When Allen was confronted by the evidence of a forgery, he said he was "shocked." The letter had been given to him, he stated, by his father, also a historian, who had received it from Albert Speer, Hitler's minister of armaments. And that was that.


27 May, 1945.

My dear Top

Further to the good news of the death of Little H, I feel it is imperative that we maintain a complete news black-out on the exact circumstances of this most evil man's demise. I am sure that if it were to become public knowledge that we had a hand in this man's demise, it would have devastating repercussions for this country's standing. I am also sure that this incident would complicate our relationship with our American bretheren; under no circumstances must they discover that we eradicated 'Little H', particularly so since we know they were so keen to interrogate him themselves.

I am of the opinion that the special S.O.E./P.W.E. Committee and team can now be dissolved, even though Mallet is still negotiating with W.S. in Sweden. Perhaps you could let me know your opinion on this matter.

Brendan Bracken

The Rt.Hon. the Earl of Selborne,
Ministry of Economic Warfare,
Berkeley Square House,
Berkeley Square,
W.1.

Historian in Himmler dispute was in earlier forgery furore

David Leppard

Doubts have hit Allen's books on Edward VIII and Himmler

LEFT: The July 2, 2005, *Daily Telegraph* headline announcing its three-page story on the Himmler assassination plot. MIDDLE: One of the alleged fake documents used as evidence of the Himmler plot. RIGHT: The *Sunday Times* story of July 4 alleging that author Allen may have been the source of the documents in question.

The jury is still out. No doubt, we are going to hear more about this forgery, which is likely to rival the most notorious set of forgeries of the post-war years, the "Hitler Diaries." □

Charles Whiting has written numerous books on topics related to World War II. He resides in England.

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The death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt stunned the nation and the world in April 1945.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

It was a sunny spring day atop Pine Mountain in Warm Springs, GA. In his little white pine cottage, where he was resting from the strenuous Big Three conference at Yalta in the Crimea on February 4-11, 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sat at a card table in front of the stone fireplace and signed some bills. As was his custom, the genial Roosevelt smiled broadly and joked to his secretary and friend, William D. Hassett, "Here's where I make a law."

Shortly before 1 PM that Thursday, April 12, 1945, Hassett left the room. As Roosevelt sat reading a number of documents, Elizabeth Shoumatoff, a Russian-American society artist, sketched him for a portrait. The president had donned a double-breasted gray suit and his Harvard crimson tie. Soft rays from the bright sun slanted through the glass paneled wall of the room. Seated on a sofa were Roosevelt's cousins, Margaret Suckley and Laura Delano, who had accompanied him to Warm Springs two weeks before. Indicating the papers spread around the room, FDR laughed, "My laundry."

National Archives

On April 14, 1945, Roosevelt's funeral procession makes its way down Constitution Avenue past crowds of onlookers.

During his stay at the health resort in Meriwether County in western Georgia, the president had enjoyed ideal weather. He had taken long drives in the broad pine clothed valley around the "Little White House" to which he had first come 20 years before to be treated for infantile paralysis (polio). After having looked haggard and exhausted at Yalta, where his appearance shocked his friend and wartime associate, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Roosevelt was now tanned, appeared to be in good health, and was in fine spirits.

On that afternoon of April 12, Roosevelt planned to go to an old-time Georgia barbecue at the nearby cottage of Warm Springs Mayor Fred Allcorn, and in the evening he was to attend a minstrel show staged by the patients of the Warm Springs Foundation. The following day, Roosevelt was to make a brief radio address to traditional Jefferson Day diners. He planned to return to the White House in Washington on April 20, visit his beloved Hyde Park, N.Y., estate and then head for San Francisco to greet the opening of the United Nations Conference on April 25.

Meanwhile, in the Warm Springs cottage, a mess boy started setting a table for lunch, and FDR said to Shoumatoff, "Now, we have just about 15 minutes more to work." Then he fainted and slumped in his chair. Two valets carried the President into his unpretentious bedroom and laid him on his plain maple bed. One of his doctors, Navy Commander Howard Bruenn, hurried in. He had FDR's clothing changed to pajamas, and put him to bed.

Bruenn telephoned Vice Admiral Ross T. McIntire, Roosevelt's personal physician in Washington, who in turn called Dr. James Paullin of Atlanta and asked him to hasten to Warm Springs. Half an hour later, Bruenn informed McIntire that the president's condi-

tion was "a very serious thing" and that he was certain his patient had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. At 3:35 PM, Roosevelt said, "I have a terrific headache," he then died. He was 63 years old. He was elegant, cheerful, and brave to the end.

The three correspondents of the United Press, The Associated Press, and the International News Service who had been accompanying the President were waiting for him at the barbecue when they were summoned suddenly at mid-afternoon by Hassett. He told them, "It is my sad duty to announce that the President died at 3:35 PM of cerebral hemorrhage." The three newsmen dashed for telephones, and bulletins soon flashed the stunning news on teletypes across the nation.

For 12 years and 40 days, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had been the nation's leader in peace and war. Radiating imperishable self-confidence, energy, and idealism though anchored by steel leg braces, the architect of the New Deal had pulled his people out of the Great Depression, inspired them after the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, and led them to victory in World War II.

The handsome, dashing scion of Dutchess County, New York, wealth and privilege, who had served as assistant secretary of the Navy, governor of N.Y., and been inaugurated as the 32nd President at the age of 51, aroused both a loyalty and opposition unprecedented in American history. He had become almost a family member to all Americans; he was their national father figure and champion. They knew his broad smile, the determined uplift of his square jaw, the cigarette holder jauntily clenched, and his voice. They huddled around their radio sets to listen to his periodic "fireside chats" in which he explained his programs and purposes with measured, elegant simplicity.

The news of his death stilled the nation—a blow to every solar plexus. In bustling New York City, a taxi driver got out of his cab, sat on the curb, and wept. In Pittsburgh, a storekeeper closed up and hung a sign in the window that read, "He died." In Detroit, a woman said in disbelief, "It doesn't seem possible. It seems to me that he will be back on the radio tomorrow, reassuring us that it was just a mistake." In Washington, a young soldier spoke for all when he said, "I felt as if I knew him. I felt as if he knew me—and I felt as if he liked me."

Yank, the Army weekly magazine, wrote on May 11, 1945, "Under President Roosevelt's leadership, we have struggled through 12 years of troubled peace and war, 12 of the toughest and most important years in our country's history. It got so that all over the world, his name

National Archives

Flanked by Jim Bynes (left) and Henry Wallace (right), President Harry S. Truman waits at Union Station in Washington, D.C.

meant everything that America stood for. It meant hope in London and Moscow, and in occupied Paris and Athens….We made cracks about it and told Roosevelt jokes, and sometimes we bitterly criticized his way of doing things. But he was still Roosevelt, the man we had grown up under and the man whom we had entrusted with the staggering responsibility of running our war…. And the loss of Roosevelt hit us the same way as the loss of a good company commander. It left us a little panic-stricken, a little afraid of the future…. Franklin D. Roosevelt's death brings grief, but should not bring despair. He leaves us great hope."

The news of FDR's death resounded on front pages and from radios across the world. Many nations paid tribute in one form or another. In Moscow, the Soviet government met and stood in silence, and even the Japanese premier expressed "profound sympathy" to the American people.

The chief executive's wife and fifth cousin, Anna Eleanor, an energetic social reformer and beloved national figure in her own right, was in Washington on April 12, conducting her regular press conference and delivering a brief speech at the Sulgrave Club. Laura Delano telephoned from Warm Springs to say that the President had fainted and been carried to his bed. Later, White House Press Secretary Steve Early called and asked the first lady to come home at once. In her car, Eleanor sat with clenched hands all the way to the White House. "In my heart of hearts," she said later, "I knew what had happened, but one does not actually formulate these terrible thoughts until they are spoken."

In her sitting room, McIntire told her that FDR had died. Eleanor was silent for a moment, and then said, "I am more sorry for the people of this country than I am for us." Vice President Harry S Truman was having a glass of bourbon with some Democratic Party cronies in House Speaker Sam Rayburn's office when he was asked to return a call to Steve Early, who asked him to come at once to the White House. The plainspoken Missourian exclaimed, "Jesus Christ and General Jackson!" He grabbed his broad-brimmed white hat and was driven at speed from the Capitol to the White House. The first lady placed her hand gently on Truman's shoulder and said, "Harry, the President is dead."

After taking a few moments to absorb the news and its implications, Truman asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?" He never forgot her "deeply understanding" reply: "Is there anything we can do for you? For you are the one in trouble now."

Abruptly, Truman was thrust into the role of America's leader in World War II, which would rage on for almost another five months until the Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945. He had been left in the dark by FDR about international affairs, and had to be hastily briefed about the development of the atomic bomb. On April 13, Truman would tell reporters, "When they told me yesterday what had happened (Roosevelt's death), I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."

His cabinet members rushed to the White House on April 12. Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., was already there. The first lady notified her four sons of their father's death, ending her message: "He did his job to the end, as he would want you to do. Bless you all, and all our love." Elliott was with the Army Air Forces in England, James with the Marine Corps, and Franklin, Jr., and John with the Navy. After Truman was sworn in as the 33rd president, Mrs. Roosevelt asked him if she could use a government plane to go to Warm Springs; he agreed. As she walked, tall and erect, to the White House limousine, some newspaperwomen were standing beneath the portico. "A trooper to the last," whispered one.

On the morning of Friday, April 13, a hearse carrying FDR's flag-draped bronze coffin drove from the Little White House to the Warm Springs railroad station. Patients in wheelchairs and on crutches watched, and the streets were lined with soldiers from nearby Fort Benning, home of the 82nd Airborne Division. The hearse was followed by the Fort Benning band

and a 100-man color guard carrying carbines and company flags with black streamers. At the station siding, surrounded by thousands of silent Georgians, eight soldiers loaded the coffin aboard a modified presidential train. A raised catafalque had been placed in the last parlor car so that the coffin could be seen by onlookers as it proceeded northward. It was illuminated at night and could be seen from a great distance.

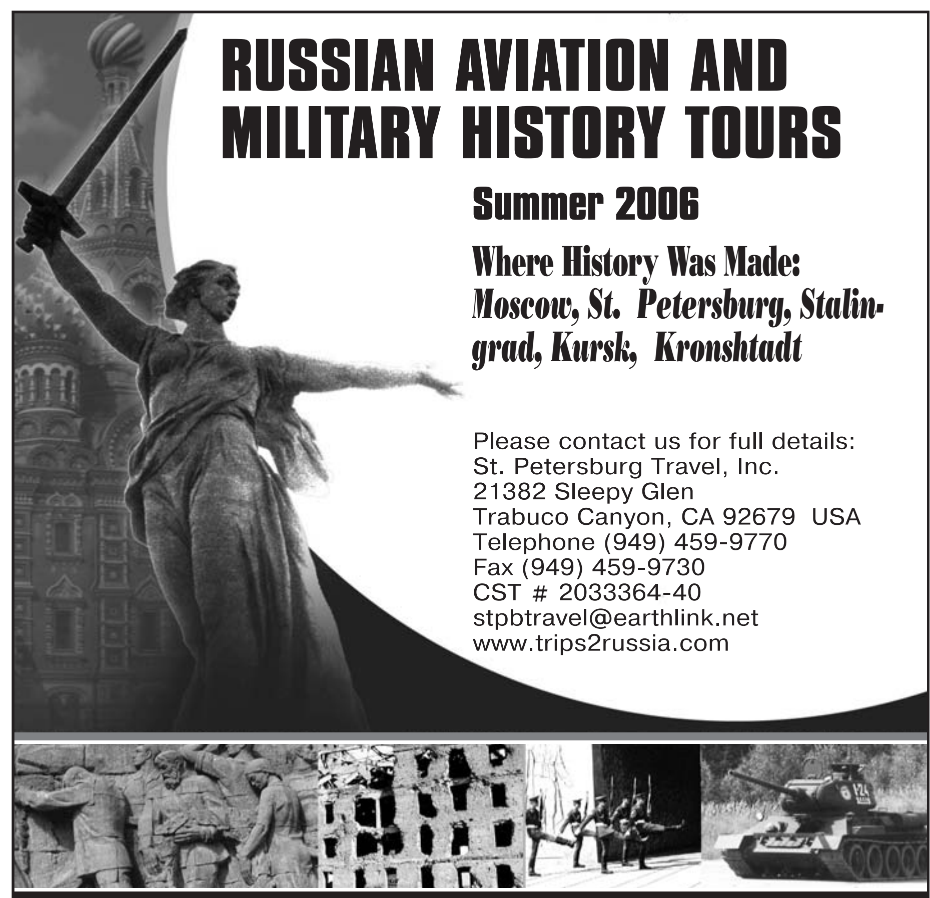
The train moved out slowly. During its sedate 800-mile journey, an estimated two million people gathered to bid farewell to their longest-serving leader. All day and the following night, they stood on rural station platforms, at road junctions, in fields, and in hamlets—farmers, sharecroppers, storekeepers, housewives, and children. In Georgia, four black women knelt at the edge of a cotton field with their hands clasped in prayer. The train rumbled on through the tobacco farms of the Carolinas. At a country depot in South Carolina, Boy Scouts sang the Anglican hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and when the train halted briefly to take on water or stores, local church choirs sang "Rock of Ages" and "Abide With Me."

That day, the veteran United Press correspondent Merriman Smith sat in his drawing room, too drained to dictate and thinking of the prayer Roosevelt had composed for the long-awaited Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944: "Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom."

As the presidential train wound northward during the night of April 13-14, Eleanor Roosevelt lay in her berth, unable to sleep. She raised the window shade and looked in amazement at the solemn faces of ordinary people standing vigil in the darkness. The first lady remembered the lines of "The Lonesome Train," a poem written on the death of President Abraham Lincoln 80 years before: "A lonesome train on a lonesome track / Seven coaches painted black / A slow train, a quiet train / Carrying Lincoln home again..."

Early on the morning of Saturday, April 14, the train clattered across the Potomac River and backed into Washington's Union Station. It was met by President Truman, cabinet members, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, congressmen, and representatives of the judiciary.

The funeral cortege passed through the streets of the nation's capital on the morning of Saturday, April 14. Thousands of men, women, and children packed the sidewalks along Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues, yet the city was eerily quiet. The sky was crystal clear, and the sun grew warmer. Sweat ran



down the faces of the steel helmeted soldiers lining the streets. Small boys perched in spring-green trees along the avenues, and heads clustered in the windows of federal buildings. Mothers led small children through the crowds. Everyone spoke in low voices. They listened and waited, and many sobbed.

Then, faintly at first, came the thump-thump-thump of muffled drums and the slow wail of a funeral march. With silver horns flashing in the sunlight, the U.S. Marine Corps Band marched by, followed by a battalion from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. The cadet officers carried drawn swords, and the midshipmen shouldered rifles. Next came a field artillery battalion, the soldiers sitting stiffly in their gun carriers and followed by trucks towing howitzers. Marching behind them were black artillerymen, a Navy band and battalion of sailors, and a battalion of Marines, sailors, and members of the Women's Army Corps.

At last came six big gray horses in brightly polished harnesses pulling an artillery caisson carrying the president's flag-draped coffin. It was followed by a bridled, riderless Army horse with reversed stirrups, traditional symbol of a fallen warrior. Then came an all-services color guard carrying the President's flags, and cars containing cabinet members and other government officials. Movie cameramen perched atop trucks wove along the line of march. The crowds were hushed. A short time later at the White House, Roosevelt's coffin lay in the East Room between the tall portraits of George and Martha Washington. There, at the close of another bloody war, almost 80 years to the day, the body of President Lincoln had also lain.

The 4 PM White House funeral was brief and simple. It opened with the old Anglican hymn "Faith of our Fathers" and included a short reading from President Roosevelt's first inaugural address. Mrs. Roosevelt remained calm, but the frail Harry Hopkins, FDR's trusted transatlantic emissary, wept uncontrollably. The rite was attended by all of official Washington, military and civilian. The senior representatives of American allies were the vigorous Canadian prime minister William L. Mackenzie King; the dour Soviet ambassador to the United States, Andrei Gromyko; and the dashing British foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, representing Prime Minister Churchill. The stalwart British leader who had worked closely with the American President since before the Pearl Harbor attack had received the shattering news early on the morning of April 13. "I felt as if I had been struck a physical blow," said Churchill. "My relations with this shining personality had played so large a part in the long, terrible years we had worked together. Now they had come to an end, and I was overpowered by a sense of deep and irreparable loss."

National Archives

U.S. servicemen lower Roosevelt's casket into the ground at Hyde Park, N.Y.

He went to the House of Commons at 11 that morning and paid tribute to "our great friend." Churchill spoke of the 1,700 messages that had passed between them during the war, of their nine meetings, and of the 120 days of close personal contact with FDR and his family. "There never was a moment's doubt, as the quarrel opened, upon which side his sympathies lay," said Churchill.

It was in this speech that the prime minister described FDR's Lend-Lease program as "the most unselfish and unsordid financial act of any country in all history." The British leader concluded, "For us, it remains only to say that in Franklin Roosevelt there died the greatest American friend we have ever known, and the greatest champion of freedom who has ever brought help and comfort from the New World to the Old." After the eight-minute session, the prime minister proposed that Parliament adjourn out of respect for FDR. It was an unprecedented parliamentary gesture on the occasion of the death of a foreign head of state.

That day, Churchill sent messages to Mrs. Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins, and the new U.S. president, Truman. The prime minister told Eleanor, "As for myself, I have lost a dear and cherished friendship which was forged in the fire of war. I trust you may find consolation in the magnitude of his work and the glory of his name."

Churchill's first impulse had been to attend Roosevelt's funeral, and he ordered a plane to stand by. But, he reported later, "much pressure was however put on me not to leave the country at this critical and difficult moment, and I yielded to the wishes of my friends." Several key ministers were out of the country, critical debates and a tribute to FDR were scheduled for the following week in Parliament, and the prime minister was expected to accompany King George VI at a memorial service for the American President at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

The impressive service was attended by the royal family and government leaders, and Churchill wept copiously. When the prime minister eulogized Roosevelt in the House of Commons on the afternoon of April 17, the historic building was packed to the steps and doors.

On the night of April 14, in a steady downpour, the 17-car presidential train rumbled out of Washington's Union Station and rolled through Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and into New York state to the Hudson Valley. Again, thousands of mourners stood silently on station platforms and at rural crossings to watch the lighted funeral car pass by. The President had said nine months before, with the Allied armies on the road to victory, "All that is within me cries to go back to my home on the Hudson River." Now he was going home.

On the morning of Sunday, April 15, the spring sun brightened the fieldstone ancestral Roosevelt manor house in the little town of Hyde Park on the eastern bank of the Hudson, 10 miles north of Poughkeepsie. In the rose garden near the handsome, weathered old house where the President had been born on January 30, 1882, and played as a child, a grave had been dug in the lawn.

Around the lawn, with their backs to the surrounding 15-foot-tall cedar hedge, beribboned Army, Navy, and Marine Corps veterans of the European and Pacific theaters stood at attention that morning. A little group of Roosevelt's neighbors stood behind the flower-laden bier. Gazing at the open grave and a flowering lilac bush beyond the hedge, FDR's secretary, William Hassett, was reminded of the opening line of Walt Whitman's tribute to Lincoln, "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed," and lines from his "Drum-Taps," "Hush'd be the camps today / And soldiers let us drape our war-torn weapons, / And each with musing soul retire to celebrate / Our dear commander's death."

Heralded by the throb of muffled drums, the funeral cortege began its march toward the gravesite at 10 AM The column was led by the band of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, followed by a battalion of cadets in their distinctive War of 1812 uniforms of gray tunics, white trousers, and crossbelts. The cadet officers carried drawn sabers. They marched in

threes through lanes of Army troops, sailors, and Marines in measured cadence to the strains of Chopin's Funeral March.

Drawn by seven brown horses, the caisson bearing the flag-draped coffin followed. Then came the riderless steed led by a black soldier. The President's family followed in two sedans. The West Point band struck up "Nearer My God to Thee," the "Star-Spangled Banner," and "Hail to the Chief." FDR's little black Scottish terrier, Fala, rolled in the grass at the feet of Margaret Suckley.

In front of the grave, black-veiled Eleanor Roosevelt stood between her daughter, Mrs. Anna Roosevelt Boettiger, and second oldest son, Brig. Gen. Elliott Roosevelt, who had flown home from England for the funeral. A few paces to the rear, the first lady's four daughters-in-law struggled to emulate her stoic composure. Near the Roosevelt family stood Truman, his wife, Bess, and daughter, Margaret. Truman's eyes blinked behind his thick horn-rimmed glasses, and his jaw was clenched as the assembly recited in unison the Lord's Prayer. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson stood next to Canada's Mackenzie King.

The coffin was borne into the rose garden through an archway in the cedar hedge by eight soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. As FDR's body was gently lowered into the grave, the 78-year-old Reverend W. George Anthony, white-haired rector of St. James's Episcopal Church in Hyde Park, where the President and his father had served as vestrymen, read the committal words from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. With his surplice fluttering in the breeze, he intoned, "Now the laborer's task is o'er; now the battle day is past.... Father, in Thy gracious keeping, leave us now our brother sleeping." Three volleys from a West Point rifle squad cracked over the grave, and Fala barked sharply.

Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace, FDR's former vice president, watched Eleanor Roosevelt cross herself as she turned away from the grave and said, "God rest his soul." Looking at the lilacs and listening to the birds singing, Tom Conley, an old friend of the late President, said, "He would have liked this. He always loved clear, crisp spring days. He loved anything that had life." After the mourners had filed away, local workmen began to fill in the grave. A lone figure returned to watch. It was Eleanor Roosevelt. She would join her husband there 17 years later .□

Author Michael D. Hull resides in Enfield, Connecticut. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History.

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AN INTREPID PT BOAT COMMANDER RESCUED BOTH A FAMED GENERAL AND A PRESIDENT FROM THE EMBATTLED PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. CAPTAIN LEE R. MANDEL, MEDICAL CORPS, U.S. NAVY

MISSION FOR MAC

ABOVE: During the daring mission to evacuate General Douglas MacArthur from the Philippines, a PT boat slices through the Pacific Ocean at high speed. OPPOSITE: Intrepid PT boat commander John D. Bulkeley poses for the camera with an automatic weapon in hand. Bulkeley's exploits in the Philippines would become the stuff of legend.

ARTHUR

IN MODERN NAVAL HISTORY, THERE IS PERHAPS NO MORE COLORFUL figure than the late Vice Admiral John Duncan Bulkeley. Throughout a career that spanned nearly six decades, Bulkeley's name was synonymous with courage, decisiveness, and initiative. He first came into the public eye shortly after the onset of World War II. The daring raids on Japanese warships conducted by the PT boats of Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) Squadron 3 under his command provided some of the first instances of hope at a time in the war when the Japanese military machine seemed unstoppable.

Bulkeley will always be remembered for one of his most famous deeds, the rescue of General Douglas MacArthur, taking him, his family, and staff from Corregidor through 500 miles of Japanese-controlled waters to safety on the Philippine island of Mindanao. On August 4, 1942, Bulkeley received the Medal of Honor from President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

It is commonly thought that Bulkeley received the Medal of Honor for rescuing MacArthur, but in fact he received it for his heroism during the entire period from December 7, 1941, to April 10, 1942. The citation notes "the remarkable achievement of Lieutenant Bulkeley's Command in dam-

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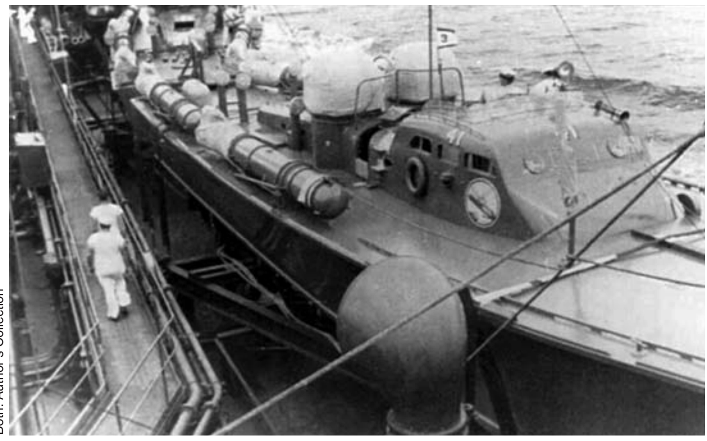
aging or destroying a notable number of Japanese enemy planes, surface combatant and land based enemy forces during the four months and eight days of operation without benefit of repairs, overhaul or maintenance facilities for his Squadron, is believed to be without precedent in this type of warfare." The citation further reads, "His dynamic forcefulness and daring in offensive action, his brilliantly planned and skillfully executed attacks, supplemented by an [sic] unique resourcefulness and ingenuity, characterize him as an outstanding leader of men and a gallant and intrepid seaman."

The story of MacArthur's escape from Corregidor aboard Bulkeley's PT boat was first told in the 1942 bestseller *They Were Expendable* by W.L White, which MGM made into a 1945 movie. What is not as readily appreciated is that on the night the boats reached the safety of Mindanao, MacArthur sent for Lieutenant Bulkeley. He had another mission for him: Bulkeley was to find the president of the Philippines, Manuel Quezon, and bring him by any means necessary back to Mindanao so he could be flown to safety in Australia.



Both: Author's Collection

To appreciate the importance and significance of the assignment, it is necessary to examine the relationship between MacArthur and Quezon on the one hand and the importance to the United States of a strong alliance with the Philippine government on the other. The relationship of the two men served as a metaphor for the relationship between the two nations. When the Japanese invaded the Philippines in December 1941, both relationships were put to the ultimate test.

The relationship between Douglas MacArthur and Manuel Quezon was a long and largely cordial one. They met for the first time when MacArthur dined with Quezon and Sergio Osmena (also a future president of the Philippines) at the Army-Navy Club in Manila in 1904. When MacArthur was reassigned to the Philippines in 1922, Quezon was by then the speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives.

MacArthur served as Army chief of staff beginning in 1930, and in 1934 his term was extended for one more year by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. That year, Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act granting the Philippines commonwealth status as a prelude to the complete independence that would come in 1946. At that time, Quezon was the head of the Nacionalista Party and the clear frontrunner for the presidency. With Japan expanding its military influence in the Pacific, Quezon traveled to Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1934 to discuss the formulation of a U.S. military mission to protect the Philippines. He requested that General MacArthur be assigned to head the mission, and Roosevelt agreed.

In the spring of 1935, the new Philippine constitution was drafted. It provided for the creation of a new senior American government position, that of high commissioner, to replace the current ranking American position of governor general. The incumbent governor general was Frank Murphy, but by then Quezon was a loyal MacArthur supporter.

In May, Quezon wrote MacArthur a letter in which he shared privileged information. He confided to MacArthur that the U.S. government was going to offer the position to him. Quezon suggested that it might possibly serve all better if MacArthur took the military adviser job that he was slated for initially and then come to a decision about the high commissioner job after a while. He clearly favored the general but didn't want to raise the idea himself. "Of course I did not discourage the idea fearing that my attitude might be misconstrued as opposition to your appointment. On the contrary, I stated that you are the best choice they could make and your appointment will be well received by the Filipino people."

Although Roosevelt supported him for the high commissioner post and had promised it to him, under law MacArthur could not be nominated until he resigned from the U.S. Army. Soon, political intrigue surfaced between MacArthur and Murphy, further complicating the situation. Due to these circumstances, Roosevelt decided to appoint Frank Murphy as high commissioner and MacArthur as military advisor. In the fall of 1935, MacArthur sailed for the Philippines.

On December 31, 1935, Quezon wrote to MacArthur, contracting him to the position of military adviser to the president of the Philippines. His compensation was to be 36,000 pesos annually. The appointment was effective as of November 16, 1935. The following June, Quezon appointed MacArthur field marshal of the Philippine Army. This appointment caused much controversy in the United States, and his chief aide, Lt. Col. Dwight Eisenhower, tried to persuade him to refuse the title, stating, "It was pompous and ridiculous to be the field marshal of a virtually nonexisting army."

MacArthur retired from the U.S. Army on December 31, 1937. About this time, Quezon was beginning to show signs of dissatisfaction with U.S. policy toward the Philippines, and by extension toward MacArthur. He began further agitating for accelerated Philippine independence, and when rebuffed, he considered seeking a policy of neutrality with Tokyo. He began cutting the Philippine defense budget, leading to a great loss of morale in the army. He began treating MacArthur with less respect as now he was no longer a U.S. Army general, but merely another Filipino civil servant.

Quezon clearly felt that MacArthur was no longer able to influence U.S. policy toward the Philippines. From this point on, the defense of the Philippines became the joint responsibility of native troops under Field Marshal MacArthur

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LEFT: General MacArthur and Filipino President Manuel Quezon greet each other cordially. OPPOSITE LEFT: Riding alongside a navy tanker, PT-41 is seen making its way toward the Philippines with five other PT boats of MTB Squadron 3. OPPOSITE RIGHT: PT commander John D. Bulkeley poses with General MacArthur upon MacArthur's arrival in Australia in April 1942.

and the Philippine Department (American soldiers and Philippine scouts) under the command of an active duty U.S. Army general.

By mid-1941, the situation in the Pacific had greatly deteriorated. MacArthur was recalled to active duty as a major general (he was to attain five-star rank before the end of the war) on July 26, 1941, and was appointed commanding general of the U.S. Army forces in the Far East. In this capacity, he was charged with the defense of the Philippines. President Quezon quickly put aside his previous defeatism and once again warmly embraced the general, claiming, "All that we have, all that we are, is yours." He then broadcast to the United States an unequivocal message: "The stand of the Philippine Nation is clear and unmistakable. We owe loyalty to America and we are bound to her by bonds of everlasting gratitude. Should the United States enter the war, the Philippines would follow her and fight side by side."

The following day, he wrote to MacArthur to congratulate him on his appointment. He signed the letter with the salutation "Very affectionately yours," a marked difference from his prior correspondence to the general which he always ended with "respectfully" above his name.

On December 8, the Japanese invaded the Philippines. Quezon steadfastly expressed his loyalty to the United States and to MacArthur, in one letter referring to himself as "the best friend you have ever had." He urged the general not to take any unnecessary risks, stating that if something were to happen to him "the effect upon the armed forces and the civilian population of the Philippines would be, to say the least, most demoralizing."

Almost daily as December passed, both MacArthur and Quezon grew increasingly frustrated as the Japanese swept across the Philippines and advanced on Manila. Promises of military aid continued to emanate from Washington, but the reality was that there would be none forthcoming. On December 24, MacArthur and his staff and Quezon and his staff were evacuated from Manila to the island fortress of Corregidor in Manila Bay. By then, Quezon was openly expressing harsh criticism of the failure of America to come to the Philippines' assistance and its "Europe first" sentiments.

While on Corregidor, Quezon's bitterness toward his perceived abandonment by the United States grew. Upon hearing a broadcast of a fireside chat on January 22, 1942, during which Roosevelt unequivocally outlined a strategy of defeating Berlin and Rome before turning attention to the Pacific War, Quezon exclaimed, "How typical of America to writhe in anguish at the fate of a distant cousin, Europe, while a daughter, the Philippines is being raped in the back room!" His mounting anger was evident in the letter he wrote to MacArthur on January 28, 1942.

In this letter Quezon first refuted the claim of a Japanese radio broadcast that a new Philippine government had been formed by prominent Filipinos sympathetic to Japan. He reiterated his loyalty to the United States. His tone then shifted to bitterness toward the Roosevelt administration for its apparent abandonment of his country. "How long are we going to be left alone? … It seems that Washington does not fully realize our situation nor our feelings which the apparent neglect of our safety and welfare have engendered in the hearts of people here." He castigated Roosevelt for not even responding to his messages asking for assistance and ended by once again haranguing MacArthur, "I am confident that you will understand my anxiety about the long-awaited reinforcements and trust you will again urge Washington to insure their early arrival."

As the situation on Corregidor deteriorated, Quezon agreed to be evacuated with his family to one of the unoccupied Philippine islands with the expressed purpose of keeping up his people's morale and support of the United States. He told Mac-Arthur that he was leaving with a heavy heart, "for you and I have not only been friends and comrades; we have been more than brothers."

Shortly after this, MacArthur was ordered by Roosevelt to break out of Corregidor and escape to Australia. Knowing that the Japanese were determined to prevent his escape, he sent for the young naval officer who had already distinguished himself in combat, Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley. Bulkeley would plan and execute the daring escape through largely uncharted Japanese-controlled waters to Mindanao; the general would be flown from the Del Monte airstrip to Australia.

The four PT boats of the expedition left Corregidor on the night of March 11 and arrived in Mindanao on the morning of March 13. Upon docking, MacArthur said, "Bulkeley, I'm giving every officer and man here the Silver Star for gallantry. You've taken me out of the jaws of death, and I won't forget it." Bulkeley was then given operating orders to work under Brig. Gen. William F. Sharp, commander of the U.S. Army forces on Mindanao. He was directed to "conduct offensive operations against the Empire of Japan in all waters north of Mindanao." To the 30-year-old Bulkeley, with his fleet of four PT boats, that made him "commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet," and he would conduct himself accordingly.

On the afternoon of his arrival, MacArthur received extremely unsettling intelligence reports. In Washington, the increasingly vocal discontent of Manuel Quezon was being closely monitored and his loyalty had come under

General Douglas MacArthur Foundation

ABOVE: PT commander John D. Bulkeley eventually reached flag rank in the U.S. Navy. The Medal of Honor was awarded to him for bravery during clandestine operations in the Philippines. OPPOSITE: General Douglas MacArthur and Maj. Gen. Richard Sutherland confer at MacArthur's headquarters on the embattled island of Corregidor.

question. Japanese destroyers were headed to the island of Negros were Quezon was hiding, and it was felt that it was highly likely that they would attempt to capture him and set up a puppet government. It was deemed imperative to U.S. interests that Quezon be brought out of the Philippines and taken to Australia where he could begin to set up a government in exile. That night, MacArthur again sent for Bulkeley, whom he called "Johnny Bulkeley, that bold buckaroo with the cold green eyes."

MacArthur then began to describe the mission to Bulkeley. He was to go to the port of Dumaguete on the island of Negros, approximately 100 miles away. He would find President Quezon and his family, Vice President Osmena, and several cabinet members. He would then bring them back to Mindanao so they would be flown to Australia. The task could be very risky. In addition to the fact that the waters around Negros were largely uncharted, there were seven Japanese destroyers in the vicinity also looking to capture Quezon.

In *They Were Expendable*, Bulkeley describes being informed of the assignment in one bland sentence in which he simply states he was called in and given the task by the Army. In later years, he would elaborate on the context of the tasking. When Bulkeley met with MacArthur, where he found the general extremely agitated and angered by the situation. After giving Bulkeley his assignment, he stated, "I don't care how you get him here, just do it!" In his usual no-nonsense style, Bulkeley would recall thinking, "If General MacArthur wanted Quezon back there, then I intended to bring the son of a bitch back—one way or the other."

MacArthur then introduced Lieutenant Bulkeley to Don Andres Soriano, an aide to President Quezon, who would serve as interpreter and guide to help find the president. Bulkeley instinctively took a disliking to Soriano as he was uncertain of the guide's loyalty to the United States—a suspicion that would prove to be unfounded. As he shook hands with both men, MacArthur said, "Don't forget Johnny, bring him back—by whatever means is necessary!"

At 7 PM that night, Bulkeley got underway in PT 41, accompanied by his only other usable boat, PT 35. Shortly after leaving, the Americans spotted a Japanese destroyer, and the two boats hid behind a small island until the destroyer had passed beyond them. Three hours later, they arrived at Dumaguete. Without any charts, they found the water to be dangerously shallow. Rather than risk their boats, they anchored out, and Bulkeley, Soriano, and two other crew members waded ashore. All were armed, Bulkeley himself carrying a machine gun. Before leaving the boat, Bulkeley had taken aside the other two crew members and told them to shoot Soriano if it appeared that he had led them into an ambush.

President Quezon was not waiting there as expected. Instead, they came upon a local constable who told them that the president had left earlier in the day. He then refused to disclose his location to Bulkeley. Using persuasion in the form of a machine gun muzzle to the constable's head, Bulkeley got the man to reveal that Quezon had gone to the village of Bais, about 25 miles up the coast. The men returned to their boats and proceeded to Bais. Bulkeley ordered PT 35 to patrol the area while PT 41 tied up at the small pier, and he and Soriano went ashore.

After learning that Quezon was staying in a hut several miles from the pier, Bulkeley commandeered two cars, and he and Soriano sped off to the designated location. There, Soriano called out twice in Spanish to the president before a light came on inside the house. Quezon then appeared in the doorway alone.

The image of John Bulkeley must have terrified the president. Bulkeley was not in uniform, had an unkempt beard, wore a bandana over his long hair, had a trench knife and a pair of pistols in his belt, and was brandishing a machine gun. He also carried no identification, either military or civilian. In his own words, Bulkeley would recall that he "probably looked disreputable to Quezon."

Bulkeley lost no time in telling Quezon that his mission was to bring him and his family, Vice President Osmena, and their staff back to Mindanao so that they could be flown to Australia. He proposed leaving immediately so that they would still have several hours of darkness to travel across the open seas. To Bulkeley's fury, Quezon refused to leave. He cited a telegram he had received earlier in the day from General Jonathan Wainwright, MacArthur's successor in the Philippines, stating that such a trip would be too risky given the Japanese destroyers in the area.

Bulkeley did not let on that he was aware of Quezon's vacillating loyalty to the United States. In the initial description of this encounter written in 1942, Quezon listened to Bulkeley and quickly decided to go with him. This very superficial account was written during the critical early days of the war. The nation needed heroes, and the war effort needed harmony among allies. Quezon most likely would not have been portrayed as anything less than a fiercely loyal American ally. The reality of the encounter was quite different.

In a letter to the director of the MacArthur Memorial, Bulkeley stated that he pointed out to Quezon the repeated treachery of the Japanese and described the Japanese idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as "hogwash." He told Quezon that he would merely be a puppet ruler and that Philippine indepen-

dence was the furthest thing from the minds of the Japanese government. In saltier language in another interview, he stated, "I stared hard at the bastard and minced no words, reminding him of repeated Japanese treachery in the Far East." Another subtle convincer was pointing his machine gun at the president's head. Shaken, Quezon then agreed to go.

Bulkeley quickly rousted up Quezon's family, Vice President Osmena, a general, and two cabinet officials, piled them into the "borrowed" cars, and drove them back to the pier at Bias. There they learned that PT 35 had struck a submerged object and had to be beached. The crew from PT 35 would have to go back on Bulkeley's PT 41. On the dock, more members of Quezon's cabinet appeared, along with a huge amount of luggage. Included in this were seven mail sacks containing about $15 million in American currency.

The Filipinos began arguing over who would sit where in the boat and what luggage would be taken. Losing patience, Bulkeley shouted above the chaos, "All right, everybody get aboard—and leave those goddamn suitcases on the dock!" The situation then worsened when President Quezon announced that he had changed his mind and was not going. There are no surviving accounts of exactly what Bulkeley next said to him, but after a shouting match Quezon reluctantly agreed to go.

Less than an hour after PT 41 was underway, the sea turned violently rough. Soon, all of the passengers were seasick and vomiting. Shortly afterward, a huge wave slapped against the side of the boat, knocking two torpedoes loose in their tubes where they instantly started a hot run—a terrific hissing of compressed air, with the propellers grinding. Bulkeley and two of his torpedomen began working feverishly to dislodge the torpedoes from the tubes before they detonated. While a puzzled Quezon looked on, the men were successful in getting the activated torpedoes launched.

After this episode, Bulkeley and Quezon were soon at loggerheads again. The operational orders were to arrive at Mindanao at Cagayan on the western side of Misamis Bay. Quezon announced that he wanted to go to the port of Oraquito on the eastern side of the bay. Bulkeley emphatically spelled out what his orders were, but Quezon kept insisting on Oraquito and was preemptive about it. Bulkeley, with Quezon's eyes fixed on the ship's compass, finally sent a radio message to General Sharp reporting that they would instead be arriving at Oraquito at dawn. At first light, PT 41 tied up at the pier at Oraquito. Waiting to greet them were General Sharp and an Army honor guard, who escorted President Quezon to the Del Monte airfield where he and his staff (and his mail sacks of cash) were flown to Australia. John Bulkeley's mission for MacArthur was completed.

Bulkeley and Quezon were to meet again soon after, this time under very different circumstances. On April 13, General Sharp conveyed orders from MacArthur that Bulkeley was to leave the Philippines that night, flying in a Boeing B-17 bomber from the Del Monte airstrip to Australia. He arrived wearing a jacket, pants, and sneakers without any other possessions and no money. An Australian family took him home as their guest, and Bulkeley proceeded to sleep for 36 hours.

Shortly afterward, Bulkeley was invited by MacArthur to a luncheon honoring Quezon,

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who would be leaving shortly for the United States where he would be heading up the Philippine government in exile. It was a dramatically different John Bulkeley who attended—he was clean shaven with regulation haircut and wore the uniform of a United States Navy lieutenant.

Quezon was jubilant at the reception. He proceeded to address the meeting, describing in detail how he had been rescued by "an old American sea wolf." As Bulkeley listened, somewhat confused by this reference, Quezon finished his detailed narrative by turning to him and saying, "I want to express my sincere appreciation to your father, the sea wolf, and commend him on his great courage and seamanship."

The entire audience, led by General MacArthur, erupted into laughter. When he realized his mistake, Quezon joined in on the laughter. He was to use the story of his mistake to his public relations advantage the following month when he gave his first press conference as the Philippine president in exile. On May 19, 1942, he held forth over the Washington press corps and revealed the story of his rescue to the American public. He was a master showman and was in excellent form that day.

"I am ready to leave Negros when here comes a message from General Wainwright for me to cancel my trip and remain right there. The sea around you is filled with Japanese destroyers it says. It was stormy night. Suddenly my aide, Colonel Soriano, appears out of darkness and introduces me to a man who looks like a fierce Spanish pirate, a sea wolf, with a formidable black beard and a cloth tied around the head like a turban."

Pausing for effect, he leaned forward and revealed the pirate's name: Lieutenant John Bulkeley. After pausing again, Quezon continued. "'I most certainly urge you, sir, to take my boat to Mindanao' the pirate told to myself. 'By gosh' I said to myself, 'this is the right man!' So I ignored General Wainwright's order and got into the PT boat. A month later, a young naval officer was presented to me in Australia. It was Lieutenant Bulkeley. Only this time he had no beard. He was no pirate. In fact he looked like a young boy. 'Goddamn', I told him, 'if I had seen your face I would have not gone with you!'"

During his mission for MacArthur, one that could be described as either a rescue or a kidnapping, John D. Bulkeley displayed many of the qualities for which he would become famous. His bravery, resourcefulness, and superb seamanship were showcased along with his dogged determination to complete his mission. His willingness to ruffle feathers and his salty demeanor were readily apparent even at this early stage of his career. He would be recalled to active duty the moment he reached statutory retirement age and go on to complete a distinguished career that spanned nearly 59 years before retiring on August 25, 1988. Shortly before his death, in a taped interview, he was asked to sum up his life in one sentence or phrase. Without hesitation, he succinctly replied, "Interesting, fascinating, and useful; to the United States and myself." □

Captain Lee R. Mandel served as personal physician to Vice Admiral John D. Bulkeley. He is currently the Force Medical Officer for the Commander Naval Air Forces, U.S. Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk, Virginia.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1944, THE Third United States Army under Lt. Gen. George S. Patton made a spectacular advance across France, a daring dash that ranks high on the list of great military endeavors. To a large extent, the gains made by Third Army were made possible only because of the cooperation between the ground units and air units of the XIX Tactical Air Command (TAC). Yet, with a couple of exceptions, most histories of the Third Army only pay lip service to XIX TAC.

Such, however, was not the case with Patton himself or the men who fought in the armored and infantry divisions under his command. More so perhaps than anyone else, Patton knew how important the young fighter bomber pilots and their Republic P-47 Thunderbolts and North American P-51 Mustangs were to the success of the operations he planned for his army. Few, except perhaps the young men in the tanks and those fighting alongside them on the ground, realized just how detrimental bad weather that kept the fighter bombers on the ground could be. But the Germans knew and they planned their movements to avoid the deadly "Jabos," as they called the Allied fighter bombers.

Third Army and air power were not strangers. Years before the famous breakout from the Allied beachhead at Avranches, Third Army had learned how air and fast-moving armor could complement each other and allow a particularly audacious army to quickly overwhelm and defeat superior forces. During the Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941, Third Army demonstrated just how effective the combination could be as armored forces supported by air moved so fast and occupied so much territory that umpires were called to question the legitimacy of the tactics.

PARTNERS F

Third Army's success enhanced the reputation of its commander, a German immigrant named Walter Krueger. Krueger's "sledgehammer" in the campaign that drove his Second Army adversaries all the way to Arkansas was the 2nd Armored Division, which would later earn fame as the "Hell on Wheels" division. The division's success in the maneuvers was largely due to the leader-

OR VICTORY

The XIX Tactical Air Command supported Patton's Third Army during its campaign in Western Europe. By Sam McGowan

North American P-51D Mustangs roar over the shattered remains of a retreating German armored division caught on the road to Bad Durkheim, Germany. While braving intense ground fire, they developed the close coordination with advancing ground units that hastened the war's inevitable outcome. Painting by Randy Green.

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BELOW: U.S. forces move down a French road littered with German vehicles. The Third Army would advance some 97 miles in the first 10 days of the breakout from St. Lo. OPPOSITE: Pilots of the Ninth Air Force fighter group relax outside of the officer's club at a captured airfield in France.

National Archives

ship of its commander, a man whose basic philosophy was to always be audacious, Maj. Gen. George Smith Patton. Three years later Patton became Third Army's commander when it arrived in England. He brought with him his tremendous respect for air support and plans to use it to enhance the power of his new army.

Patton had come a long way since the 1941 maneuvers. He had gone ashore at Casablanca, then had been given command of the demoralized Seventh Army after the defeat at Kasserine Pass and had led it through the remainder of the North African Campaign and during the invasion of Sicily. Although he had gained fame as an audacious and highly effective combat commander, Patton had also attracted the attention of muckraking elements of the American press. When he lost his temper upon finding a shell-shocked soldier among the wounded at a field hospital in Sicily and slapped the man, editorialists had a field day. The unwanted attention reportedly led to his relief, although it may have served as an excuse to move him to England. For General George C. Marshall, the U.S. Army chief of staff, had plans for Patton.

Marshall and other senior Army officers were well aware that, in spite of his faults, the flamboyant and often outspoken officer was the most effective ground commander in Europe, and probably in the entire U.S. Army. Once Allied troops had secured a beachhead in Normandy and managed to make their way off of the beaches, there would be a need for a hard-driving army led by a particularly dynamic commander who knew how to exploit the military advantage and defeat the enemy.

Third Army had remained in the United States during the early years of the war as many of its commanders and key staff officers went overseas with other units. Walter Krueger went to the Pacific, by personal request of General Douglas MacArthur. Krueger's replacement proved far less effective, perhaps due to his policy of delegating too much authority to his chief of staff, leading Marshall to decide that he was not the man to lead Third Army in combat. When Third Army arrived in England, the troops were unexpectedly greeted by Patton, their new commander. Patton immediately initiated a shakeup in the command structure and began emphasizing his thoughts on tactics, including his belief in the importance of air support. The air unit responsible for support of Third Army was to be the XIX Tactical Air Command.

The XIX Tactical Air Command was one of two special commands that were planned for the Ninth Air Force, an air unit that was organizing in England in early 1944 to provide support to the ground forces during and after the Normandy landings. In addition to the typical fighter, bomber, and troop carrier commands, Ninth Air Force was to include two tactical commands, the IX and XIX, each of which was to be dedicated to an army. The IX TAC was assigned to support First Army, while XIX TAC was dedicated to the support of Third Army. Both commands were equipped with several combat groups flying single-engine fighter bombers and reconnaissance aircraft. The mission of the fighter bombers was to maintain air superiority over their respective ground force and to provide close air support for the armored and infantry divisions.

The close air support mission was not new in 1944, but the Ninth Air Force and the Royal Air Force II Tactical Air Force would refine it to a high state of the art. Luftwaffe dive-bombers and light bombers had played a major role in the German blitzkrieg strategy in the early years of the war, and Allied commanders had taken note of their employment.

U.S. Army pilots became proficient in ground attack in New Guinea in the summer of 1942 and Army and Marine fighter pilots adopted the tactic in the struggle for Guadalcanal. The British Western Desert Air Force made ground cooperation a major RAF mission in North Africa, then taught the tactics to the American fighter pilots who joined them. Patton himself had become familiar with the possibilities afforded by air power in support of ground units in North Africa and Sicily. Perhaps no other commander was better acquainted and more appreciative of air power than Patton.

Planning for the Normandy landings called for the creation of two tactical air forces to support the invasion and to provide air support for the ground forces once they were ashore. The RAF established the II Tactical Air Force from its Ground Cooperation Command and the U.S. Army Air Forces established the Ninth Air Force in England as a tactical unit. The Ninth had formerly served in North Africa primarily as a heavy bomber force, operating long-range Consolidated B-24 Liberators on missions against targets in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Under the Overlord plan, the II Tactical Air Force would provide support for Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's Twenty-First Army Group, while the U.S. Ninth Air Force would be responsible for supporting Lt. Gen.l Omar Bradley's First Army Group.

Overlord called for First Army to hit the beaches at Normandy along with the British II Army, with both armies under Montgomery's overall command. Third Army would initially remain in England, then would begin moving to Normandy between D+15 and D+30. Third Army, code-named Lucky, began moving to the Normandy beaches on D+29, July 6, 1944. Patton set up his command post near the Norman town of Nehou, about 15 miles south of Cherbourg and just inland from Utah Beach. Brig. Gen. Otto P. "Opie" Weyland, commander of XIX TAC, set up his command post adjacent to the Lucky command post. The Third Army staff also included its own air intelligence and planning sections.

Lucky's initial mission was to break out of the Normandy beachhead and capture Brittany, the French region south of Normandy, and to open its seaports to Allied shipping. Once Brittany had been liberated, Third Army was to either drive east toward Metz and the Saar or make a sweep south of the Loire River. Third Army was set to become operational on August 1, as was XIX TAC. Even though Third Army headquarters was in Normandy, all of its assigned units were not. Some units were being held in England awaiting equipment while others were making the move to France. The XIX TAC's combat groups were also still in England, although IX TAC had moved most of its fighter bombers to Normandy.

Initially, XIX TAC included three fighter bomber groups, two equipped with Republic P-47 Thunderbolts and one with North American P-51 Mustangs, but the number of assigned groups varied due to the dictates of the military situation. Immediately after the Third Army breakout from Avranches, the number of groups assigned to the XIX TAC increased to nine, mostly with P-47s. Although the P-51 is often touted as the best Allied fighter of World War II, in reality the P-47 was the best-suited for the fighter bomber role. The P-51 was equipped with an in-line liquid-cooled engine that could be put out of action by a single round, but the P-47s air-cooled radial engine could absorb a lot of punishment and keep running long enough to bring the pilot back home.

The Thunderbolt was also the better armed of the two, featuring four .50-caliber machine guns in each wing compared to the Mustang's three. Eight streams of .50-caliber bullets threw a lot more weight than six, which made the P-47 the more effective strafer. Consequently, P-51s were often used to provide an air umbrella over the battlefield to keep German fighters at bay as the P-47s went in low to attack German armored columns with rockets and bombs.

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In mid-July, Patton's intelligence staff reported that German opposition in Brittany was far less than expected, while the armored strength opposing the invading forces was almost 900 less than previously estimated. Furthermore, most of the German armor was concentrated in the Bocage-Caen sector opposing Montgomery's Twenty-First Army Group. Patton proposed to Bradley that he be allowed to mount an attack with two armored divisions and two of infantry even while his army was still assembling in France. Bradley began working on a plan of his own to initiate a breakout from the beachhead.

On July 22, Patton was called to confer with Bradley at the headquarters of the newly formed Twelfth Army Group, which had replaced the former First Army Group as part of a deception plan to keep the German 15th Army in the Pas de Calais. Bradley gave Patton the outline of his plan to break out from the beaches. British and Canadian forces under Montgomery would attack to the east and south around Caen, while First Army would launch Cobra, an attack to the south around St. Lo.

The VIII Corps, which was actually part of Patton's command, was to drive south down the coast to open a window for Third Army to launch an attack into Brittany. In advance of the attack, a massive aerial and artillery bombardment would pound German positions around St. Lo. Some 3,000 heavy bombers, medium bombers, and fighter bombers were involved in the attack, which was successful in that it paved the way for First Army's breakout. Unfortunately, the bomb line was compromised by "creep back" as the impact points for the falling bombs moved northward into the American lines. Hundreds of GIs were killed by bombs dropped by friendly planes, including Lt. Gen. Leslie McNair, commander of the U.S. Army Combat Command and the senior U.S. Army officer in France.

On July 28, Bradley made Patton personally operational by declaring that he was now deputy commander of Twelfth Army Group. Patton was instructed to take command of VIII Group's sector and to set his breakthrough plan into action. The verbal appointment was a political move designed to protect Bradley since VIII Corps was still under First Army and Third Army was not to become officially operational until August 1. The position allowed Patton to put his plan in motion so that Third Army would be on the move the instant it received operational status.

On July 31, the day before Third Army was to become operational, Patton met with his staff and key commanders just before their departure for a new command post close to the lines. At the conclusion of the daily briefing, the Third Army commander admonished his officers regarding two of his dearest principles: that the way to reduce casualties was to constantly push the enemy and that worrying about protecting flanks was a waste of time. This was a refrain Patton had maintained with his staff since taking command of Third Army. He frequently reinforced his lecturing on the futility of worrying about protection of flanks by pointing out that the XIX TAC would protect them. It was a belief he took to heart.

That evening VIII Corps broke through at Avranches. When the commanding general notified Patton that his men were on the banks of the Selune River, Patton ordered him to establish a bridgehead immediately. He then launched a two-pronged Third Army attack into Brittany—one aimed at the provincial capital of Rennes and the other at the coastal city of Brest. He set up Task Force A to mop up along the north coast of the peninsula.

The XIX TAC role in the Third Army breakout was limited during the first hours because of bad weather in England that kept the fighter bombers on the ground until noon. Although the IX TAC's fighter bomber groups had made the move to France, no airfields had yet become available for Weyland's command. Once the fog lifted and the fighter bombers were able to take to the air and arrive over the battlefield, they were in sunny skies and able to make a difference by bombing and strafing German positions and columns. The fighter bombers also provided air cover and often tangled with German planes in the air.

Third Army itself was not immune to air attack. During the first few days of operations, the Luftwaffe was very active in the Third Army area. One German attack was aimed at a bridge near Avranches and a nearby dam, but antiaircraft fire managed to prevent a successful attack. Many of the attacks came at night, which prompted the assignment of a squadron of Northrup P-61 Black Widow night fighters to XIX TAC for night patrols. The P-61s were also adapted to use their radar for the night interdiction role. Third Army captured most of Brittany within three days, and Patton turned his eyes toward the rest of France. The XIX TAC P-47s and P-51s struck at pockets of German resistance.

Patton benefited from a bit of timely intelligence provided by a XIX TAC pilot, who was shot down near Angers, a village on the Loire River some 55 miles south of Laval, which at the time marked the limit of the Third Army advance. He was picked up by French guerrillas and transported over back roads to Third Army lines. During his debriefing, the pilot reported seeing few Germans, and those were signal troops pulling down communication lines, then moving to the east. This was solid intelligence that the Germans were retreating. He also reported an intact bridge over the Loire River just south of Angers.

Patton immediately dispatched a 5th Infantry combat team to capture Angers and secure the bridge. The team surprised the German garrison at Angers and captured them before they could organize a defense, but the bridge had been mined and was blown before it could be seized. Nevertheless, the seizure of Angers was a great opportunity. Patton immediately ordered XX Corps, which had been standing by awaiting commitment, to move to Angers, then advance eastward along the north bank of the Loire to secure Third Army's south flank. This move set the stage for the operation that doomed German hopes in Normandy.

On August 7, the Germans counterattacked. Luftwaffe bombers hit Patton's command post on the night of the 6th, but failed to do significant damage. A more serious attack struck an ammunition dump a few miles away; the fires burned for two days. The counterattack was aimed at the 2nd Armored Division at Mortain, on the demarcation line between the First and Third Armies. It was a powerful attack, involving 23 divisions, five panzer and 17 panzergrenadier. Some of the German divisions had been shifted south from in front of the British and Canadians, who had only managed to advance a few miles due to strong opposition.

The German attack ran smack into the fighter bombers of the IX and XIX Tactical Air

BELOW: Charred and burned German vehicles and bodies surround a farmhouse in Normandy. **OPPOSITE LEFT:** A group of fighter pilots are briefed on German infantry positions before embarking on a mission in France. **OPPOSITE RIGHT:** Brig. Gen. Otto P. Weyland commanded XIX TAC.

National Archives

Commands. The dreaded "Jabos" ranged far and wide over the battlefield, literally attacking anything that moved—motorized vehicles, tanks, locomotives, horse-drawn carts, individual soldiers on bicycles and on foot. By the time the Germans began their withdrawal, all but two of the bridges over the Seine north of Paris had been knocked down and rail and road traffic was practically at a standstill.

On August 8, the XIX TAC launched 717 sorties. The fighter bomber pilots put in claims for three bridges, 29 locomotives, 137 freight cars, 505 motor vehicles, 93 horse-drawn vehicles, and 29 tanks. The P-47s and P-51s also cut 11 railroads and flew three strafing raids on German airfields around Paris. Hundreds of sorties were flown in support of attacks by Third Army armored columns. The carnage on August 9 was even greater as the XIX TAC flew 780 sorties that were as destructive as those the day before. This time the fighter pilots included 16 claims for aircraft destroyed in addition to scores of German vehicles and locomotives. The XIX TAC losses amounted to 13 pilots, four on the first day and nine on the second.

Just how effective the fighter bomber attacks were is evidenced by the reports in the German war diaries. One panzer commander told how his division advanced more than 10 miles with only three losses, then all of a sudden the Jabos dropped out of the sky firing deadly rockets and strafing, spreading terror throughout the ranks. The panzers were helpless under the onslaught. Tanks and trucks were quickly turned into smoldering wrecks, and the previously rapid advance turned into debacle as the roads became blocked by burning vehicles.

The German Seventh Army diary recorded how the counterattack came to a standstill under the deadly attacks. The Germans were further frustrated by the absence of the Luftwaffe, which was prevented from providing air support to the panzers by the umbrella of XIX TAC P-51s that covered the battlefield. By August 11, the German attack had been broken and the outcome of the war in Europe had been decided. At least, it would have been decided had it not been for a lack of aggressiveness and an emphasis on military politics on the part of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force).

The capture of Angers put Third Army into position to attack northward at the back of the German 7th Army and completely envelope the entire German force in Normandy. On August 11, elements of Third Army captured Alençon, cutting the highway leading north to Argentan. With Alençon in Allied hands, the Germans realized they were in danger of being completely cut off and began milling around. A XIX TAC P-47 squadron spotted 800 to 1,000 motor vehicles driving aimlessly around just west of Argentan and went in for the attack with bombs and guns, firing until exhausting all of their ammunition. The XIX TAC pilots claimed an estimated 400 to 500 vehicles burned out or blown up during the action. After dropping all of his bombs and exhausting all of his ammunition, one fighter pilot dropped down low and jettisoned his gasoline-filled belly tank on a line of 12 trucks. He saw them go up in flames in the exploding gasoline.

Elements of Third Army had advanced to within a few miles of the town of Falaise, which lay some 18 miles northwest of Argentan. The Germans had been routed, and XV Corps had the tanks and troops to seal off their escape route. At this point military politics reared its ugly head. SHAEF—meaning Eisenhower—ordered Patton to halt his forces at Argentan. Field Marshal Montgomery's British and Canadian forces would advance and take Falaise. Patton was told to set down the American 90th Division and 2nd French Armored Division in the vicinity of Argentan and to send the bulk of XV Corps some 50 miles eastward toward Paris to capture the town of Dreux and the nearby airfield.

Eisenhower's explanation for the halt was that the British had sewn the area around Falaise with time bombs. This, however, was a ruse. The real reason for the halt was that Montgomery had insisted on capturing Falaise himself and put pressure on Ike to halt Patton's forces at Argentan. Montgomery took his time moving forward, and it was not until August 19 that the Falaise Gap was finally closed. Meanwhile, what was left of the German 7th Army escaped.

The Germans suffered horribly during their retreat through the Falaise Gap, but they managed to move the bulk of their panzer divisions out of harm's way intact. They took advantage of darkness to avoid the Jabos and moved the panzers through the gap, while replacing them with lesser troops brought in from the east. Most of the German losses fell to the fighter bombers, as XIX TAC squadrons shot up everything that moved by day. They were joined by the IX TAC, as well as British Typhoons and Spitfires from II Tactical Air Force.

So many fighter bombers were thrown into the fray that they had to queue up and wait their turn. One flight of P-47s from the 405th Fighter Bomber Group captured some 400 German POWs. They attacked the column so relentlessly that the survivors began waving their handkerchiefs in surrender. The fighter pilots herded the Germans toward some nearby tanks, whose crews took possession of the POWs.

Both: National Archives

Although Third Army was halted at Argentan, its direction of attack merely changed. Patton's line of advance was already some 60 miles west of the Falaise Pocket, stretching along a 60-mile line running south from Druex to Orleans. Paris lay barely 30 miles to the east. The close proximity of Third Army forces to Paris put XIX TAC fighter bombers into frequent contact with the Luftwaffe, which maintained several airfields in the vicinity of the French capital. Fighter bomber missions by the tactical commands were officially classified as armed reconnaissance or armored column cover, but they frequently were aimed at German airfields. During a two-week period commencing in early August, XIX TAC fighter bombers engaged in aerial combat every single day but one, in spite of bad weather on five of the affected days. The fighter bomber pilots were just as aggressive—perhaps more so—as their peers flying P-51s in the escort squadrons of the VIII Fighter Command.

On one occasion, when a squadron of P-47s from the 405th Fighter Bomber Group encountered a formation of Germans, they tore into them using the rockets mounted on pylons beneath their wings for ground attack. The Germans were caught by surprise by the unorthodox tactic and broke up their formation. When four 405th Group P-47s were jumped by 16 Germans, all four P-47s were shot down, but they accounted for three of the enemy. An eight-plane flight of P-51s from the 354th Group attacked a huge formation of 70 Focke Wulf FW-190 fighter bombers on their

way to attack Third Army columns. The P-51s only accounted for two German fighters, but they broke up the formation and kept them from carrying out their mission.

Another flight of P-51s engaged in a similar encounter when they spotted a flight of 20 Germans. The P-51s climbed above the German formation, but they were coming down to attack, some 60 German fighters bounced them. Over the next 15 minutes, the battle ranged from 11,000 feet down to the deck. Eleven Germans went down while the XIX TAC lost two.

One of the most amazing encounters saw the loss of two German fighters to a flight of P-47s that had already run out of ammunition! The unarmed P-47s went down on the deck and began maneuvering, causing two Germans to fly into the ground. On August 20, eight P-47s from the 362nd Fighter Bomber Group took on four times their number and came out of the scrap with a score of 6-2, in the Americans' favor. Four of the six kills were credited to one U.S. pilot.

While the glamour of air-to-air combat captures the imagination, the destruction of enemy aircraft on the ground is also effective. This was a lesson American airmen learned in the Southwest Pacific in mid-1942, and it was taken to heart by the Ninth Air Force fighter bomber groups. Despite the oft-repeated assertion that the air war had been won before D-day, the Luftwaffe was still a major threat to the ground forces in the summer of 1944, and the fighter bomber pilots fought to keep the Germans off of the infantry's back.

As Third Army dashed across France, XIX TAC fighter bombers endeavored to keep their way clear of the threat of air attack. Most of the German fighter bombers were based on airfields around Paris, and these airfields became targets for XIX TAC rocket and strafing attacks. On August 25, the two tactical air commands, IX and XIX, teamed up for a coordinated attack on German airfields at Beauvais and Reims.

Fighter bombers from the two TAC were credited with the destruction of 127 German aircraft, 77 in the air and 50 on the ground, along with 11 probables and 33 damaged. Some of the day's battles saw the Germans with superior odds, but the more experienced and aggressive American pilots usually gained the upper hand. One dogfight saw 12 P-51s battling some 45 FW-190s and Me-109s; 13 Germans went down while one U.S. fighter bomber was lost. Total losses for the IX and XIX TAC on August 25 were 27 fighter bombers and 19 pilots. The Allied successes led the Luftwaffe to withdraw from France entirely.

The destruction of the Luftwaffe in France coincided with a new and frustrating threat to Third Army. Patton's armored columns had moved so far and so rapidly that they had outrun their lines of supply. Fortunately, captured German airfields afforded landing strips for Allied transports loaded with gasoline for the ground forces. Initial supply flights were made by C-47s from IX Troop Carrier Command (TCC), but in early August General Carl Spaatz took the TCC away from Ninth Air Force and put it directly under his own headquarters.

Spaatz justified the decision by pointing to the August 1 creation of the First Allied Airborne Army and the need for the Troop Carrier Command transports to be available to support any airborne operation that might suddenly arise. To compensate for the withdrawal of the some 1,400 TCC C-47s from support of the rapidly advancing ground forces, Spaatz set up the 302nd Air Transport Wing under the control of the Air Services Command of the U.S. Strategic Air Forces, Europe. Still, without the TCC transports, there was not enough air transportation to go around and the assignment of the transports became a political issue at SHAEF.

One of the steps initially taken to keep Third Army moving was the temporary transfer of a number of VIII Bomber Command B-24 Liberators to IX Troop Carrier Command for "trucking" duty flying gasoline to France. The four-engine Liberators operated into recently captured German airfields as close to Third Army's forward positions as possible. When the TCC C-47s were withdrawn from support of the ground forces, a contingent of 100 Air Transport Command C-47s was transferred from the United States to Europe for assign-

CLOSE AIR SUPPORT CONTINUED TO EVOLVE DURING WORLD WAR II.

The concept of close air support was not entirely new in World War II, but as the mission developed it completely revolutionized warfare. Prior to the war, all of the major combatants had formed some kind of ground combat support units, although the degree of employment varied.

The British Royal Air Force had a Ground Cooperation Command while the United States Army had formed combat groups equipped with light bombers whose mission would be to support ground units. But it fell to the Germans to demonstrate to the world how effective the combination of ground and air power could be, as Luftwaffe dive-bombers operated in close support of advancing armor and infantry during their blitzkrieg attacks in France, Poland, and the Soviet Union.

Initial American close air support action came as modified Douglas A-20 gunships attacked Japanese positions on the Kokoda Track in New Guinea in September 1942. Army Bell P-39 Airacobra fighters were adapted for ground attack on Guadalcanal a few weeks later. When U.S. troops landed in North Africa, they were joined by light bombardment groups flying A-20s and the dive-bomber version of the famed North American P-51 Mustang, the A-36. U.S. fighter groups equipped with Curtiss P-40 Tomahawks joined British fighters in providing air support for the Eighth Army in the Western Desert even before the first American ground troops arrived in the theater. Soviet forces also came to depend on air support as they halted German progress eastward and then began driving the Wehrmacht back toward Berlin.

Lessons learned in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy led to major changes in U.S. air units assigned to the European Theater, as the Ninth and Twelfth Air Forces were divorced from strategic bombing and reorganized specifically to provide air support for ground armies. There were also changes in the fighter mission, as the escorting of heavy bombers became secondary to that of ground attack. All of the existing Allied fighters were modified for the attack role by the addition of "hard points" under the belly and wings where bombs and rockets could be attached.

Young fighter pilots received training in operations at treetop altitudes, and tactics were developed for low-altitude attacks on airfields, railroads, and other ground targets. To coordinate ground attacks, fighter pilots were assigned to Allied ground units as forward air controllers with the mission of maintaining communications between the ground units and the fighter bombers and instructing the pilots where to drop their loads. The results can be seen in the records of units such as the XIX Tactical Air Command. □

A P-47 roars over a column of U.S. armor.

National Archives

ment to the 302nd Air Transport Wing. Still, there was not enough airlift to keep the motorized columns moving, and Spaatz's headquarters shifted the transports around.

After the liberation of Paris, transports that had been supporting Third Army were shifted to flying supplies into Paris, leaving Patton's armored forces literally out of fuel. Third Army would remain in a defensive position for more than six weeks.

Third Army's rapid advance led the American chiefs in Washington to conclude that the war in Europe could be over by November, but the failure of Field Marshal Montgomery's ambitious Operation Market Garden in Holland and Eisenhower's subsequent decision to halt the Allied advance west of the Rhine prolonged the war, nearly leading to disaster. During the six-week halt, Patton was given authority to carry out limited offensive operations to exploit the Third Army bridgehead across the Moselle River. The XIX TAC fighter bombers were particularly busy along the Third Army front since Patton's role at the time was to draw as many enemy forces as possible to his front.

In the month of October, the XIX TAC flew 4,790 sorties in support of Third Army units, attacking German troop concentrations, gun positions, armor, command posts, and airfields. On October 20, P-47s from the 362nd Fighter Group breached the Etang-de-Lindre dam at Dieuze with 1,000-pound bombs in preparation for an upcoming Third Army advance.

Interdiction of German lines of communication was a major mission of the Ninth Air Force fighter bombers. While the Allied armies remained in check at the Rhine, the XIX TAC was assigned to keep watch on eight railroad lines leading to Coblenz, which lay in Third Army's front. Prior to October, railroad bridges were left intact, but as it became apparent that the Allied advance was coming to a halt, the restriction was lifted. Rail-cutting missions consisted of attempting to interrupt rail traffic by knocking rails out of the track. Such attacks were temporary interruptions, but they halted rail traffic until the damage was repaired. The XIX TAC missions attacked 33 bridges during the month of October, and pilots put in claims for 17 destroyed.

In early November, Patton's Third Army began a new offensive by striking against the German flanks around Metz. In preparation for the assault, some 1,000 fighter bomber sorties struck supply dumps and ordnance. Other strikes were aimed at airfields and railroad bridges. November signaled the approach of late fall and winter weather over Western Europe, and as Third Army continued its advance the ground troops were often deprived of fighter bomber support. For 12 days between November 10 and December 15 air operations were totally restricted.

When weather permitted, XIX TAC fighter bombers wreaked havoc among the Germans. During three days in mid-November, more than 1,000 sorties were flown, all against enemy transportation. Claims for the period amounted to 842 motor transport vehicles, 60 armored vehicles, 162 locomotives, 1,096 railroad cars, and 113 guns. Attacks against German positions at Merzig on November 19 led to a commendation from General Patton. In spite of frequent bad weather, the XIX TAC flew 5,195 fighter bomber sorties between November 1 and December 15, while their night fighters accounted for 99 sorties and reconnaissance aircraft went out 563 times.

On December 16, German troops launched a massive attack along a lightly defended First Army sector in the Ardennes and commenced an offensive that shook the Allied command to its roots. Although the troops in the sector and the high Allied commanders were taken by surprise, there had been numerous indications in preceding weeks that the Germans were building up their forces in the west. Not the least of these intelligence warnings came from tactical reconnaissance aircraft, including the 10th Tactical Reconnaissance Group from the XIX TAC.

Additional information came from fighter bomber pilots operating in front of the Allied lines. Why Eisenhower and his headquarters failed to prepare for an offensive will be debated for years to come, but the simple fact is that they did not believe that Germany had the ability to mount a counteroffensive in the west.

The German commanders took advantage of

Continued on page 70

STEMMING THE UNDEFEATED TIDE

AT MILNE BAY, A FORCE OF AUSTRALIAN AND AMERICAN TROOPS DEALT THE JAPANESE LAND CAMPAIGN ON NEW GUINEA ITS FIRST MAJOR SETBACK AND SHATTERED THE MYTH OF IMPERIAL INVINCIBILITY.

Australian War Memorial

Australian War Memorial

The third banzai charge that night struck the inexperienced, worn out infantry with the force of a blowtorch. Possession of the airstrip on this malaria-infested, tropical island in the South Pacific in August 1942 would determine the fate of Australia and Allied fortunes in the Pacific.

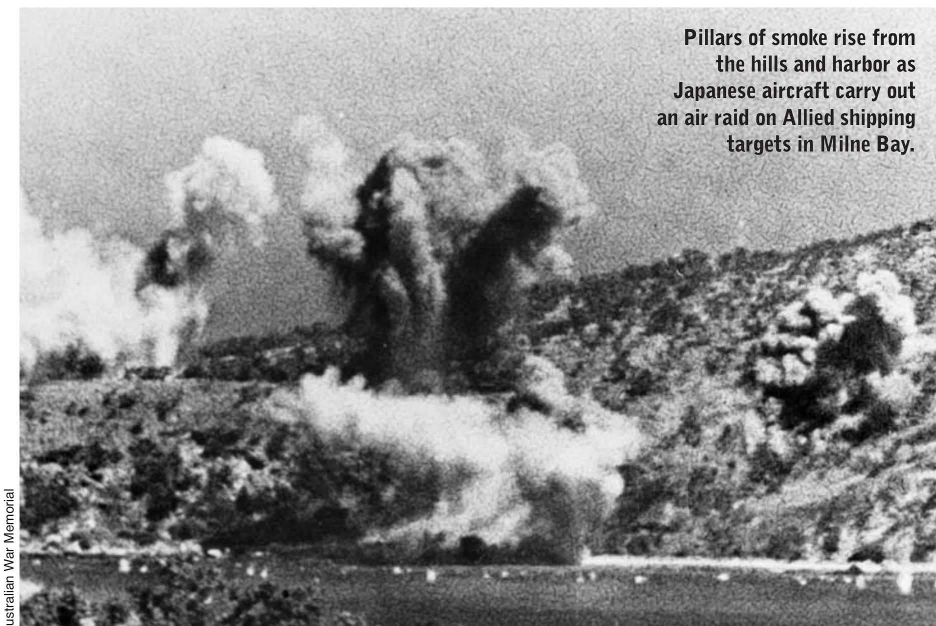
LEFT: In this painting by artist William Dargie, pilots of the RAAF Kittyhawk Squadron rummage through supplies at Milne Bay. **ABOVE:** Australian troops, just coming off an unsuccessful engagement with Japanese infantry, slog their way through the mud in early October 1942.

BY JAMES MARINO

Japanese soldiers had yet to fail, let alone retreat, since Pearl Harbor. The veterans of Malaya, the Philippines, and the East Indies stormed forward, confident of victory. Machine guns hammered at the Japanese as the young soldiers clung to their defensive positions near the airstrip. The world, as well as General Douglas MacArthur, wondered if these Australians could stem the Japanese tide. The Diggers held. Raw Australian militia and seasoned regulars defeated the Japanese at Milne Bay and changed the course of the war in New Guinea and the South Pacific. General Viscount William Slim of the British 14th Army in Burma wrote, "Some of us may forget that of all the Allies it was the Australian soldiers who first broke the spell of the invincibility of the Japanese Army."

The Japanese had captured Rabaul on the island of New Britain in January 1942. They had been on New Guinea since March 1942. Their prime objective was the capture of Port Moresby for use as a staging area for further operations against Australia. The Imperial Japanese Navy attempted to seize the harbor, but the effort was turned back in the Coral Sea. Subsequently, the Japanese Seventeenth Army set out to capture Port Moresby from the north, across the Owen Stanley Range and down the Kokoda Track.

The Japanese Navy wanted to be in on the kill. Australian historian Dr. Peter Londey explained in a lecture at the Australian War Memorial, "The Navy wanted to save face by making its own contribution to the capture of Port Moresby, and thought that Milne Bay would make a good jumping-off point for an attack along the south coast." The Allies, especially General MacArthur, had eyes on Milne Bay as well. After Coral Sea, MacArthur decided to establish an Allied base on the southeastern peninsula of New Guinea. On June 8, a 12-man party, three Americans and nine Australians, under the command of Lt. Col. Lev-



Pillars of smoke rise from the hills and harbor as Japanese aircraft carry out an air raid on Allied shipping targets in Milne Bay.

Australian War Memorial

erett G. Yoder, took off in a Catalina flying boat to reconnoiter Milne Bay. The patrol reported that Milne Bay possessed all the key features required for base development: a deep harbor, tracts of flat land, fresh water, construction materials, and supportive villagers.

MacArthur wanted to construct airstrips on the southern tip of New Guinea to guard Port Moresby's flank, to strike Rabaul and other Japanese bases in the Solomons, and to develop a base for future operations along the northern coast. Milne Bay, 370 kilometers from Port Moresby, provided the best natural harbor on New Guinea. Its terrain and climate, however, were inhospitable for airstrips.

Milne Bay is 20 miles long and 10 miles wide with mountains near the shore that quickly rise to 4,000 feet in elevation. Slightly inland, the mountains reach 13,000 feet and give the impression of flying into a long, narrow funnel. A narrow coastal strip of land is choked with thick jungle. Hot, humid, and subject to torrential rains that turn tracks into quagmires, the Milne Bay area averaged 106 inches of annual rainfall according to an Australian wartime meteorology report.

A meteorologist stationed at Milne Bay wrote in his diary, "On an occasional day in the dry season, Milne Bay presents a magnificent panorama of translucent blue and green water, spectacular mountains and flamboyant vegetation. Exotic birds and reptiles abound. Myriads of insects, mostly mosquitoes, flit, buzz and sting. Malaria is rife; scrub typhus is common. On a clear night, fireflies flash like miniature neon lights. But, in minutes, the situation can change into an incredible darkness as clouds descend to the very surface of the earth, and torrential downpours obliterate everything." The battle would be fought during the rainy season.

The narrow strip of land between the mountains and the sea ranged in width from a few hundred meters to three kilometers at the widest point, perpetually soggy with sago and mangrove swamps. Before the war, Lever Brother had planted a large coconut plantation and built a company headquarters and a service building at Gili Gili. The dock consisted of two large barges with a ramp to a jetty. The very few roads consisted of crushed rock covering logs, which by 1942 were in terrible condition. The only coast road, a simple flat dirt path, ran along the north shore through the villages of Kilabo, Rabi, Kristian Bruder Mission station, Waga Waga, Wandala, and Ahioma. The plantation managers implemented malaria control measures including drainage, but the drains had fallen into disrepair. According to John Moremon, a contributor to the Australian War Memorial, "It was one of the worst places ever discovered for malaria—the disease classified as hyperendemic with up to 90 per cent of the villagers infected." The Australian planters had abandoned the location by the time the Japanese took Rabaul.

Allied headquarters in Brisbane issued orders on June 12, 1942, to Company E, U.S. 46th Engineer Regiment and a company of Australian militia to proceed to Milne Bay. The engineers and two detached companies and a machine gun platoon from 55th Battalion, 14th Brigade, arrived on June 18. The commanding officer, American Colonel Frank Burns, reported difficulties immediately. There was little material in the area to aid them, no wharves, no ships, but the main problem was supply. Historian Harry Gailey described the logistical problem in his book *MacArthur Strikes Back*: "There were few ships available to bring in the necessary food, ammunition, and construction materials. From the beginning the workers were on a two-thirds ration of bully beef and biscuits." It was not until July that a continuous shuttle of Dutch, American, and Australian supply ships was established.

A U.S. Army antiaircraft battery arrived on June 29 to provide air defense. On July 1, the engineers began work. The engineers and work details of Australians completed strip No. 1 in 22 days. They cleared 426 acres and felled 23,850 coconut trees. Private Peter Wright of the 55th Battalion, who guarded the construction and conducted patrols, recalled the Japanese air raids: "They often strafed the airstrip but the air raid warning system gave the troops enough notice to scramble into the foxholes."

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Maj. Gen. C.A. Clowes (left). Brig. Gen. George Wootten (right). **OPPOSITE:** The Japanese offensive at Milne Bay began with an amphibious landing, followed by a march along the coast of New Guinea. Australian diggers and American troops combined to halt the operation, dealing the Japanese their first major setback in the campaign for control of the island.

MacArthur strengthened the base defense, committing a militia brigade and support units called Milne Force. The main strength was the Australian 7th Militia Infantry Brigade, which consisted of the 9th, 25th, and 61st battalions, all from Queensland and commanded by Brigadier John Field. According to Australian military historian Peter Firkins, Field had been commissioned 18 years earlier, served as a mechanical engineer and university instructor, led the 2/12th battalion in Libya, and was promoted to command 7th Brigade a few weeks after returning from the Middle East. He was selected to lead Milne Force and helped to build the logistic foundation at Milne Bay, including the airfields, roads, bridges, wharf, and the defenses.

This was the first time these militiamen had served outside the mainland, but they were the perfect match for the situation. "The fighting in

Map © 2005 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Papua well suited the individual qualities of the 7th," noted historian John Costello. "It was largely a series of savage hand-to-hand conflicts, and there was less skill in maneuver. Milne Force also included light and heavy antiaircraft units and a battery of 25-pounders from the Australian 2/25th Field Regiment, along with the American 709th Airborne AAA battery armed with .50 caliber machine guns."

Brigadier Field and 25th Battalion arrived on July 11. The detached company of 55th Battalion returned to Port Moresby. With additional manpower, the engineers and Diggers, according to the battalion's war diary, laid 100 yards of landing strip each night, 1,500 yards by the time the Royal Australia Air Force arrived. The weather conspired to make the work back breaking. Private Francis Beitz was a stretcher-bearer attached to 8 Platoon, A Company, 61st Battalion, part of the battalion's advance party. "The men were immediately put to work constructing and repairing roads for the trucks bringing supplies from the wharf," he recalled of the daily grind. "Road construction was a never-ending task due to the constant, heavy rain, which continually washed out roads." Eventually, 8th Platoon was sent to Taupota, a village on the northern coast, to prevent the Japanese from landing there and striking overland to Milne Bay.

The engineers finished Airstrip No. 1, on July 21. Without delay they began work on airstrip No. 2, two miles farther west at Waigani. Allied Headquarters immediately moved two RAAF squadrons, the 75th and 76th, and a composite squadron of RAAF Lockheed Hudson bombers from the 6th and 32nd Squadrons, which arrived on July 25. The air contingent consisted of 40 Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawks and five bombers. On the rolls of the 76th Fighter Squadron were two of Australia's most famous pilots, Peter Turnbull and Keith Truscott.

Peter "Hawkeye" Turnbull commanded 76 RAAF. At the age of 25, Turnbull flew combat in the Middle East, where he earned a Distinguished Flying Cross with 3 RAAF Squadron. He had also helped defend Port Moresby with 75 RAAF before commanding 76 RAAF at Milne Bay. Of Scottish stock, his former commanding officer, Ian McLachlan, considered him "the best of the early teams. He was quick to learn fighter tactics, was quick to the kill, and was able and courageous in leadership." Turnbull fought German, Italian, and Vichy French pilots and bettered them all. He soon would encounter Japanese veterans.

RAAF historian J.C. Waters described what Turnbull faced upon arrival at Airstrip No. 1. "It was one of the worst air-combat areas and among the wettest. Six inches of rain fell in one day when the squadrons erected their tents. Machines bogged as soon as they left the runway. Rain squalls came down with the speed of diving aircraft. Ground crews worked and ate in the rain; mildew impregnated clothing, infested hairbrushes, and clung to blankets. Fever and dysentery attacked the pilots."

"Bluey" Truscott, a well-known all-star Australian Rules footballer from Melbourne, arrived at Milne Bay in a roundabout manner. At the start of the war, he was posted to Canada, then to England where he joined the RAAF's first fighter squadron, 452. Over England, Truscott achieved 16 victories and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. "Bluey" participated in the famous Channel Dash and fought in North Africa. He was posted back to Australia to help train 76 RAAF, which was forming at Townsville. When the squadron arrived at Milne Bay, Truscott commanded the second flight of 12 P-40s.

The Aussie pilots named Airstrip No. 1 Gurney Airfield, after Squadron Leader Charles Raymond Gurney, who had been killed in action two months earlier. Two miles from the sea, Gurney, according to one pilot, "was virtually a swamp laid with matting of interlocked perforated steel plates." Nonetheless, the RAAF began patrols throughout the area.

Milne Force arrived piecemeal during the month of July. Field's force expanded as the main body of the 61st Battalion, nicknamed the Camerons, along with the 2/6 Heavy AA Battery, 11th Field Ambulance Battalion, and elements of the 9th Battalion, arrived on August 3. The first air raid on operational Gurney occurred the next day as Japanese Zero fighters and dive-bombers pounced, destroying a p-40. The Diggers knocked down a fighter and dive-bomber. Allied plans to expand and expedite the base construction shifted into high gear when D and F Companies of the American 43rd Engineer Regiment arrived on August 8, the day after the landing at Guadalcanal. The new engineer companies began a third strip at Kitabo, about three miles west of Gurney. By the time of the battle, the 43rd Engineers bulldozed a 2,000-foot strip, only 200 yards from the bay. The unfinished Airstrip No. 3 would be a critical factor at the climax of the battle. Field now commanded a total of 6,212 Australians and Americans.

Events elsewhere in the South Pacific had repercussions for Milne Force. The Japanese seized Buna, on New Guinea's northern coast, on July 22. From there, the northern pincer of General Haruyoshi Hyakutake's Seventeenth Army was to assault Port Moresby. The second pincer, designated Operation RE, required the Navy to seize Milne Bay and attack Port Moresby along the southern coast. Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, commander of the Eighth Fleet, planned to use the Aoba Detachment, presently in the Philippines, and the 124th Regiment to occupy Milne Bay. Soon, however, the 124th Regiment was diverted to Guadalcanal.

With the Army already in action and poor intelligence indicating a small Australian force at Milne Bay, he decided not to wait for the Aoba Detachment and cobbled together a force made up of available naval troops.

The RE forces consisted of 612 Marines from the 5th Kure Special Naval Landing Force (SNLF), 197 Marines from the 5th Sasebo Special Naval Landing Force (SNLF), and 362 engineers from the 362nd Naval Pioneer Unit. These were to land at Rabi in Milne Bay. An additional 350 Marines from the 5th Kure SNLF would land at Taupota and march south overland to Gili Gili. Commander Shojiro Hayashi led the expedition. Mikawa gave Hayashi the command to proceed on August 22 with the following orders: "At the dead of the night quickly complete landing and strike the white soldiers without reserve, unitedly smash to pieces the enemy lines and take the aerodrome by storm."

Melbourne codebreakers, however, had provided the Allied contingent at Milne Bay with valuable intelligence. Operating as part of the Fleet Radio Unit network code-named Hypo, the Melbourne codebreakers monitored radio traffic from Rabaul. In early August, Hypo informed MacArthur of the Japanese intention to attack Milne Bay. MacArthur believed the codebreakers and ordered the 18th Brigade of the 7th Australian Division, recently returned from North Africa, to Milne Bay. The brigade received its orders on August 3, sailed on the 7th, and completed its move to Milne Bay by August 22. In *American Caesar*, author William Manchester remarked, "Anticipating the end-around toward Moresby, he [MacArthur] had set a trap at Milne Bay and armed it with Mideast veterans of the 7th Australian Division."

These were the Desert Rats, who exactly a year earlier had stopped Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and the German Afrika Korps cold at Tobruk. The 18th Brigade consisted of the 2/9th Battalion from Queensland, 2/10th Battalion from South Australia, and the 2/12th Battalion from Queensland and Tasmania. Commanded by Brigadier George Wootten, it also included two antiaircraft batteries, a field battery from 2/5 Field Regiment, and an antitank battery. Wootten had commanded the unit at Tobruk and was a tough, respected leader.

The Desert Rats slowly confronted the jungle. Captain Angus Suthers recalled, "It was a bastard of a place. It rained solidly for weeks, and the mud was waist deep in parts and if you fell, you drowned."

One Digger wrote, "Even without the war Milne Bay would have been a hell hole—it was

Flying Officer Peter A. Masters poses in front of his RAAF 75 Squadron Kittyhawk fighter dubbed "Poison P."

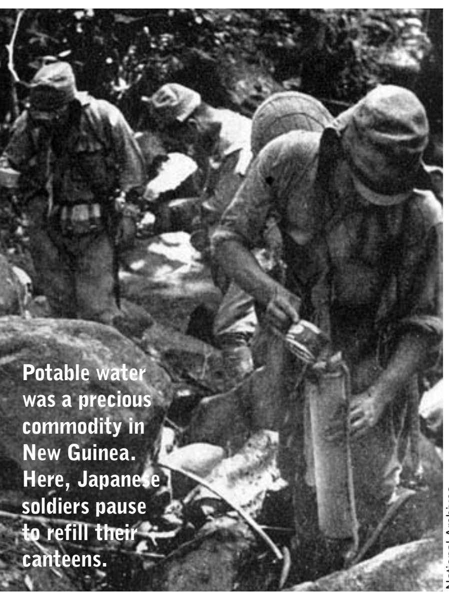
Australian War Memorial

a terrible place. The sun hardly ever shined and it rained all the time. It was stinking hot and bog holes everywhere and it was very marshy, boggy country. It was a disease-ridden place."

Neil Barrie, a stretcher-bearer of the 2/5th Field Ambulance attached to the 18th Brigade, recalled the local help: "Due to the constant tropical storms, most of the local roads were virtually impassable so the unit relied on the help of the local 'fuzzy wuzzy angels' who were familiar with the jungle tracks to move between the forward lines and medical aid posts. They helped save many lives."

On August 22, command of the entire Milne Force passed to Maj. Gen. Cyril Clowes, a Duntroon graduate. Clowes was a Regular Army officer who had served with ANZAC forces during the campaign in Greece. For the first time in the Pacific, Australian Army and Air Force units came under one commander. This would maximize swift and efficient coordination between the ground and air support.

Clowes, like Wellington at Waterloo, set his defense by interlacing his veterans and the militia. The 2/9 Battalion guarded Gurney Airfield from a possible parachute drop. The 2/10 defended the Gili Gili beachfront from direct landings. The 2/12 was between airstrips No. 1 and No. 2 along Route 4. Clowes assigned the 9th Battalion, between 2/10 and 2/12, on the beachhead west of the wharf at Gaba Gabuna Bay along Route 9. The 25th Battalion protected the American engineers working at Airstrip No. 3, while one of its companies was northwest at Goodenough Bay. The 61st Battalion was scattered along the coast road with D Company at Ahioma, B Company at Kristian BruderMission, and A Company at Motieau while Headquarters and the remain-


Potable water was a precious commodity in New Guinea. Here, Japanese soldiers pause to refill their canteens.

National Archives

der of the battalion screened east of Airstrip No. 3.

Milne Force was at its maximum: 7,429 Australians, of whom 6,394 were combat troops and 1,035 were service troops. American strength, mainly engineers and antiaircraft personnel, numbered 1,365 men. The strength of the RAAF was 664 personnel. Clowes' total strength was 9,458 men. He knew he would not receive any further reinforcements, and he also knew the Japanese were coming. The enemy had no idea they faced such a large force.

The first echelon of Japanese from Kavieng, bearing mostly 5th Kure troops, left Rabaul for Rabi on the morning of August 24, while the 5th Sasebo left Buna at the same time in seven large motor-driven barges. By now, only 12 of 76 RAAF's fighters were serviceable. To soften

up Milne Bay, 12 Japanese aircraft strafed the airstrips the same day. The Australian coast-watcher at Porlock Harbor on Cape Nelson caught sight of the Japanese forces and passed along the information to Allied headquarters. He reported three cruisers and three destroyers escorting two troop ships, 8,000 tons each; two tankers, 6,000 tons each; and two minesweepers. A second report indicated another force of seven motorized barges.

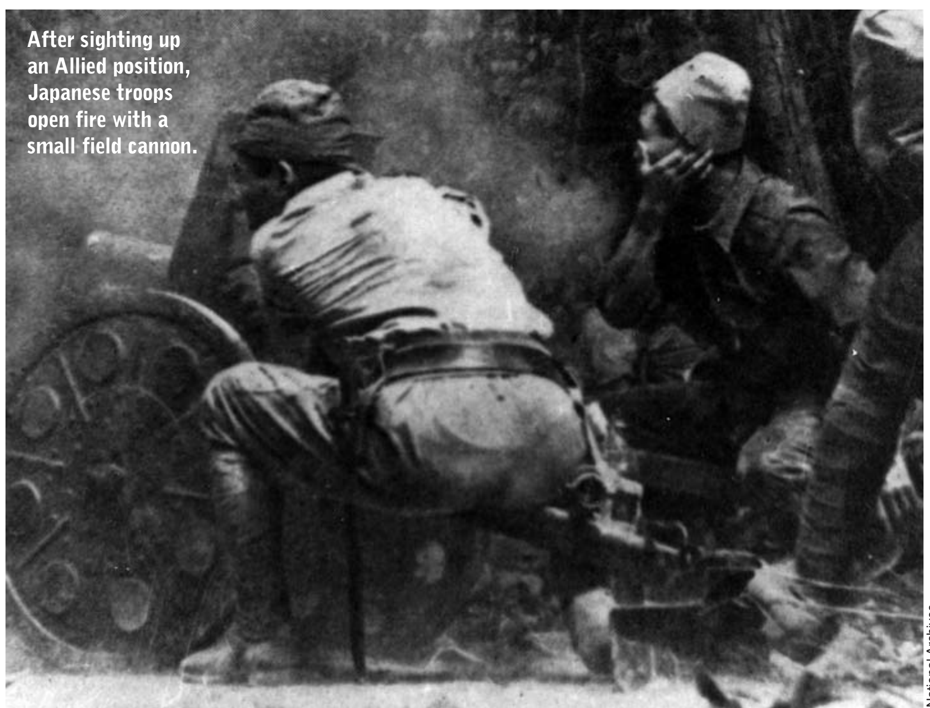
The RAAF went to work. A Hudson from 32 Squadron sighted the barges near Goodenough Island about 100 kilometers north of Milne Bay. The troops were ashore to rest and eat. Kittyhawks scrambled to hit them.

Twelve P-40s found the Japanese shortly before noon. "They made run after strafing run on the stationary targets," wrote historian Harry Gailey. "When it was over, all the landing craft had been destroyed along with most of the stores and ammunition. Japanese troops were left stranded on the beach. This part of the plan had been foiled. There would be no attack on Taupota. The success of the Japanese offensive rested totally on the detachment from Kavieng." The RAAF failed to locate the main Japanese fleet.

The next day, American Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses from Cape York airfields and Martin B-26 Marauders from Townsville found the enemy fleet. Heavy cloud covering prevented the planes from scoring any hits. The weather broke in the afternoon, permitting the RAAF to attack. Carrying bombs fixed to their undercarriages, the Kittyhawks struck the RE invasion force, sinking a minesweeper and damaging a transport. However, the Japanese did not turn back. At about 10 PM, August 25, despite rain and fog, the Japanese landed nearly a thousand Marines and quickly established headquarters and a series of supply dumps at Waga Waga and in the Wanadala area. The beachhead cut off the Australian units at Ahioma and Taupota.

Historian Dudley MacArthy explained Clowes' dilemma: "Thinking he might be dealing with a landing force of up to 5,000 men and expecting further landings on either of the peninsulas north and south of his position, which would put large bodies of enemy troops in the flank or rear of his main position at the western end of the bay, Clowes had been obliged to play a cautious hand and initially kept the bulk of his units in reserve."

Clowes did, however, attempt to recall the company at Ahioma. The Japanese began to push out patrols in both directions along the coast. The first shots of the battle rang out just before midnight near Ahioma. One of the boats filled with Australian troops ran into a Japanese patrol operating on a barge and was forced back to shore. The Australian company melted into the jungle and attempted to make its way back to the Gili Gili area. The 8th Platoon of A Company at Taupota remained in place. Anticipating an attack that never came, stretcher-bearer Beitz recalled, "The men at Taupota missed out on the main battle, although we did encounter some Japanese escaping from the battle area afterwards."


After sighting up an Allied position, Japanese troops open fire with a small field cannon.

National Archives

Just after 1 AM on the 26th, Australian and Japanese patrols bumped into each other east of the KristianBruder Mission. A screening platoon of B Company, 61st Battalion opened up with Bren gun and rifle fire. The Australians killed the four lead scouts but then withdrew to report a large force of Japanese soldiers accompanied by two tanks. An expected attack failed to materialize. The Japanese pattern of resting by day and fighting by night was not yet understood. In the morning, Commander Hayashi discovered something, too. The Japanese Navy disembarked his troops five miles east of Rabi, the intended site. They landed at the villages of Waga Waga and Wanadala, a full 10 miles from their objectives. He called up motorized barges to move the troops along the coast.

The pilots of both RAAF squadrons, as John Vader revealed in his book *Pacific Hawk,* had "vowed never to shave one side of their faces until the Japs were driven into the sea." The Kittyhawk pilots took off at dawn on the 26th. Searching for the enemy in rain, fog, and clouds would not be easy. The Aussie pilots were aided by a single Japanese Marine who foolishly opened fire with an antiaircraft machine gun. Kittyhawks and Hudsons shuttled back and forth all day long. The P-40s destroyed most of the supplies that the Japanese brought with them. They also hit a disguised fuel dump. Most important, the RAAF squadrons sank every landing craft the Japanese had, forcing them to rely on the muddy coastal road.

First Hayashi had to take Kristian Bruder Mission, and B Company was ready for the attack. At 10 PM, the 5th Special Naval Force launched a highly coordinated attack with tactics that had been successful in Malaya. They hit the middle while other Japanese waded into the sea on one side and into the swamp on the other to outflank the Australians. Before being cut off, orders came down for the Diggers to withdraw. Lacking antitank guns and mindful of Japanese armor, the battalion commander withdrew a mile down the coast behind the Gona River, a natural tank obstacle. In spite of their success, the Japanese failed to occupy the mission. Instead, Hayashi waited for additional troops, which landed during the night.

Clowes moved the 2/10 Battalion forward to reoccupy K.B. Mission. The battalion passed through the exhausted militia company that had seen action earlier and lost 15 killed, 14 wounded, and several missing during the night combat. The 2/10 entered K.B. Mission in mid-afternoon on August 27 and formed a defensive perimeter. The 500 veterans of the desert campaign had traded heat, sand, and Germans for rain, mud, and Japanese. Australia's best

troops, men who had stymied Rommel, now faced the Japanese Marines. The Desert Rats were confident that they could halt the assault on Australia. But as historian Peter Firkins wrote, "The Japanese proved to be an even tougher foe than the Afrika Korps."

The Japanese launched the attack at 8 PM in blinding rain. Supported by tanks, the infantry pierced the perimeter. Fighting became hand-to-hand. Without antitank guns or mines, the Australians depended on grenades and sticky bombs, but the rain and humidity rendered them useless. The Japanese attack split the battalion. Headquarters and two companies retreated into the jungle and did not get back to the plantation until August 30. By midnight the Japanese held K.B. Mission. The remainder of 2/10 withdrew to the Gona River along with B Company, 61st Battalion and dug in.

In the steady rain, the Japanese pressed forward with tanks and infantry. Just like in Malaya, the Japanese did not allow the Australians to set up a defense. By 2 AM, the Japanese had overrun the river position. The Australians retreated to Airstrip No. 3, which was defended by the remainder of the 61st and 25th Battalions. The 61st Battalion lost 14 killed, 30 wounded, and 14 missing. The 2/10 Battalion, hit harder, lost 43 killed and 26 wounded.

Once again, the Japanese had driven back a numerically superior enemy. Historian Peter Firkins, in his book *Australians in Nine Wars,* explained why: "A comparatively small force of resolute and expertly trained Japanese troops, who synchronized perfectly with their supporting tanks, had made the attack work." By the morning of August 28, the Japanese were on the verge of victory. The 5th Special Naval Force advanced over seven miles in three days of hand-to-hand fighting. Their troops outnumbered 10 to 1, the Japanese tanks tipped the scales. Now, the environment tipped the scales back to the Australians. The tanks did not cross the river with the infantry, instead sinking into the soup-like muck. Trapped, they became easy targets for the Kittyhawks. As the Japanese edged toward Airstrip No. 3, the Australians dug in.

Brigadier Field, in charge of the eastern defenses, prepared his position well. The partially graded strip offered a clear 2,000-yard field of fire. "The 25th and what was left of the 61st defended the partially completed airstrip," wrote historian Harry Gailey. "He [Field] had his troops positioned on the south side of the strip. The end of the runway was only a few yards from the sea; thus the Japanese were forced to attack frontally. He placed the American antiaircraft battery, with its .50-caliber machine guns, at the eastern end of his defenses. The two companies of the 43rd Engineers, with their .50-caliber machine guns and 37mm antitank weapons, were sited in the center of the line and were covered by Australian troops on either side. This was the critical position, because the trail from Rabi crossed the strip at this point."

The Kittyhawks strafed the Japanese throughout the 28th as they closed in on No. 3's perimeter. The mud did not deter the sorties. One pilot recalled, "Mud caked inches deep on the wings and brakes. Water lay inches deep on the runway. There were water-filled hollows 50 yards long in the mesh. Planes took off and landed enveloped in slush, slithered dangerously this way and that. Mud-caked guns ran hot. Some had only two out of six that would operate."

Flying at treetop height, the P-40s came in from the west over the heads of the Diggers, down the strip, firing at the enemy. Airstrip No. 1 was so close that barely were the wheels retracted before the guns blazed. The two squadrons slammed 85,000 rounds into the Japanese lines that day. An infantry liaison officer working in the RAAF Ops Tent provided the necessary coordinates, which resulted in precision fire.

Unexpectedly, Allied high command handed the momentum back to the Japanese. Afraid the airstrips would be lost, headquarters ordered 75 and 76 Squadrons back to Port Moresby on August 28. "Having close support from the RAAF in New Guinea was novel, and a great boost to morale, and indeed at times the only thing that allowed the Australians to prevail. Morale dropped markedly when the machines left," commented aviation writer Felix Noble.

The Japanese and Australians fought artillery duels and conducted patrols over the next two days. Hayashi took the calculated gamble to wait for reinforcements rather than to push forward. The Japanese probed the Australian lines by speaking in English and giving false commands or verbal taunts. One commander reported after the battle, "To draw fire, the Japs made free use of English phrases—often in very good English. Some invited vigorous Australian replies: 'Australian man, you go. Japan man, we come.' To which was given the answer, 'Come on, you bastard!'"

Shortly after midafternoon on August 29, the Diggers heard the hum of approaching planes. Thinking they were Japanese, they were relieved to spot the blue and white roundels as the Kittyhawks of 75 and 76 Squadrons returned to Milne Bay. The P-40s swung back into action strafing the Japanese positions. Both sides tried to soften the other up in preparation for the assault on the airstrip.

On the evening of the 29th, a Japanese convoy of one cruiser and nine destroyers landed 768 Marines, 200 of the 5th Yokosuka SNLF and 568 of the 3rd Kure SNLF. Commander Minoru Yano, who arrived that evening, was the senior officer present and took command of the Japanese forces. He used August 30 to bring the reinforcements into line next to Airstrip No. 3.

Brigadier Field also adjusted his defenses. He did not change the infantry's position but moved the American antiaircraft guns to both ends of the airstrip, which set up a crossfire on the center of the line. Field also increased his indirect fire support by taking a calculated gamble. He moved the two mortar platoons attached to the Australian battalions guarding Airstrip No. 1 over to Airstrip No. 3. He also placed a 25-pound howitzer battery half a mile to the rear of the defense line as additional firepower.

The RAAF continued to fly constant close support missions throughout the days. This was

THE MUD DID NOT DETER THE SORTIES. ONE PILOT RECALLED, "MUD CAKED INCHES DEEP ON WINGS AND BRAKES. WATER LAY INCHES DEEP ON THE RUNWAY. THERE WERE WATER-FILLED HOLLOWS 50 YARDS LONG IN THE MESH. PLANES TOOK OFF AND LANDED ENVELOPED IN SLUSH, SLITHERED DANGEROUSLY THIS WAY AND THAT. MUD-CAKED GUNS RAN HOT. SOME HAD ONLY TWO OUT OF SIX THAT WOULD OPERATE."

beginning to take a toll on the Australian pilots. Biographer J.C. Waters described the condition of 76 Squadron's fliers: "They were weary and mud-caked; they had dysentery; they had malaria; they had high temperatures, but not one of them would say so." Their condition eventually cost the life of 76 Squadron's commander, Peter Turnbull. His Number 2 Flight Officer described the action: "A Japanese tank was threatening our positions. Peter flew low to strafe it. He shot it up. His plane continued to go straight on and in. He didn't pull out. Incessant fighting and lack of sleep had taken toll of his seemingly tireless energy."

There was no sleep that night either, as the Japanese cruiser and destroyers returned to shell Gurney Field.

Air Force Command again got cold feet. On the 30th, the two fighter squadrons were ordered back to Port Moresby. Keith Truscott took matters into his own hands. He understood the impact the withdrawal would have on the battle and on the soldiers. Truscott made a popular decision to stick it out with the ground troops until the battle was won or his pilots had no planes left airworthy. The next 24 hours proved Truscott right.

The climactic battle began insignificantly enough. Just after midnight, an Australian in a forward listening post thought he heard a metallic sound. To check it out, the sentry fired a rocket, which illuminated several hundred Japanese massed for attack. It was the start of three separate attacks launched by the Japanese with the support of artillery and machine guns. They struck the seaward end of the strip first.

The Japanese directed mortar fire at the Australian positions and then followed the barrage with an infantry attack. The Australian militia, supported by American engineers manning .50-caliber machine guns and 37mm antitank guns, was ready for them. Gailey wrote, "Troops of the 7th Brigade, bolstered by U.S. firepower, met the onslaught with automatic weapons in what an official army report described as a 'wall of fire.' In the manner of earlier Japanese attacks, the ordinary soldier, despite their physical condition and sustaining heavy casualties, repeated their attacks throughout the night. There was no hesitation for small units to attack larger Australian forces. Not one Japanese soldier was able to cross the airstrip alive."

The Japanese moved to the northern end of the airstrip and tried a fourth time. They came up against another brilliant militia defensive position sited on high ground and backed by the artillery and mortars of the regulars. Over 2,000 mortar rounds were called in during the night.

With dense jungle foliage, stifling heat, and the constant threat of the enemy, conditions in New Guinea were brutal for even the most hardened of soldiers.

Australian War Memorial

"As a close support weapon the 3-inch mortar was very effective, devastating in results and demoralizing in its effect," said one Australian officer.

A Japanese Marine on the receiving end of a mortar barrage wrote in his diary about the night attacks: "We were like rats in a bag and men were falling all around. I thought we were going to be wiped out and then we were told to withdraw."

Despite heavy fog and rain, the RAAF P-40s flew low and strafed the Japanese positions throughout the fight. Just before dawn a Japanese bugle sounded withdrawal. The Australians counted 160 Japanese dead littered in the killing zone of Airstrip No. 3. The Australians lost three killed and 12 wounded.

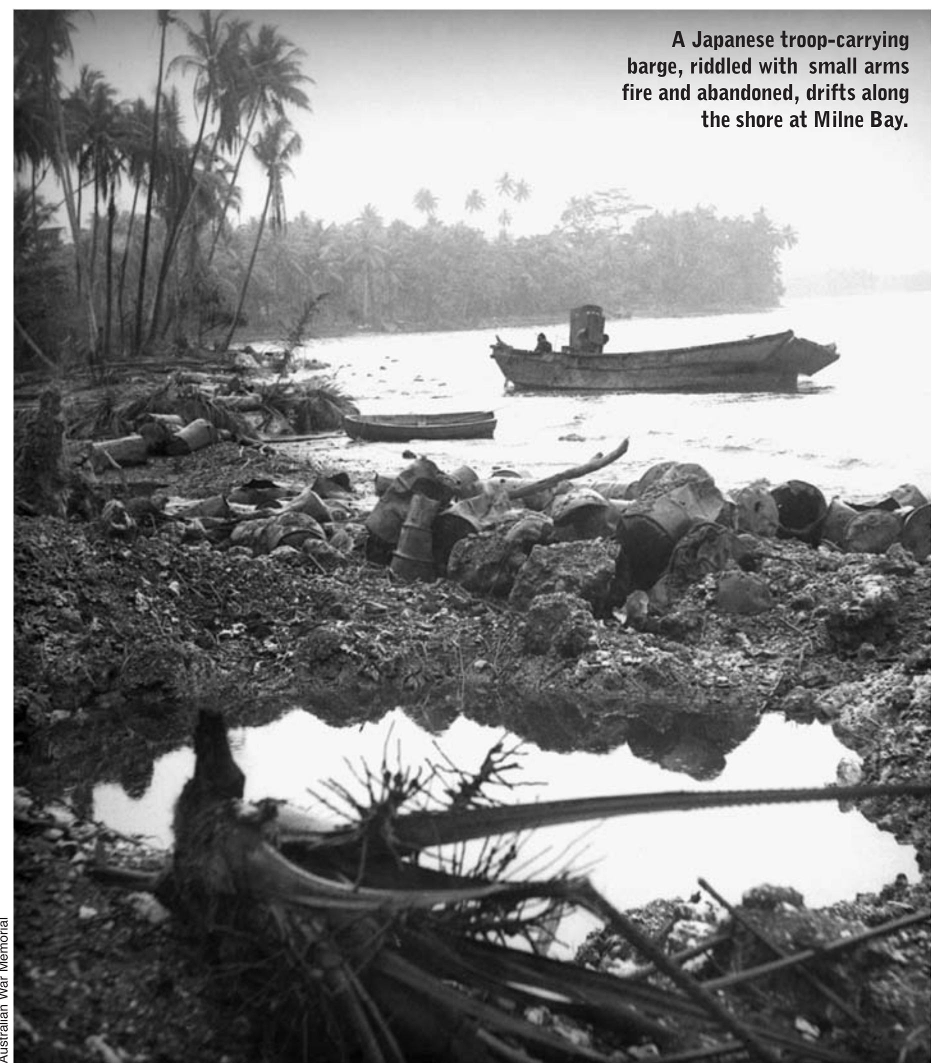
Brigadier Field transmitted a communiqué to his defending forces: "Brigadier Field wishes to convey to all ranks of Australian and U.S. forces under his command, his appreciation of the splendid effort and success achieved under difficult conditions. The spirit which has been shown is worthy of our highest military traditions and has taught the enemy to respect your quality. These are proud days for our countries and for your comrades."

Brigadier Clowes did not miss his opportunity to finish off the enemy. Clowes ordered the 2/12th and B and C Companies from the 2/9th to counterattack. Close air support would continue in the attack after a number of selected infantry and artillery officers briefed the pilots on enemy targets and friendly dispositions.

At 6:30 AM in pouring rain, 2/12's A, B, and D Companies moved out as the battalion war diary said, "knee deep in mud." The companies passed through 61st Battalion across the open strip. Lieutenant Neil Russell of 2/12, from Coorparoo, Queensland, had been a platoon sergeant at Tobruk and led the battalion's first platoon across the line of departure that morning.

Corporal Geoffrey Holmes, in his first battle, recalled his initial impression of combat and the Japanese: "I was met with the vision of dead Japanese strewn across the ground and concentrated around a mountain gun. I was struck by the features of the dead Japanese. I did not expect the Japanese to be so tall. I noticed anchor tattoos that marked their arms and assumed they were marines. Most of all I was amazed by the prevalence of stainless steel teeth among the Japanese, which also seemed to create a sense of eeriness amongst the dead."

The momentum of the assault carried the companies through snipers, rear guards, and isolated Japanese Marines all the way to K.B. Mission. The coordinated fire again proved decisive. One infantryman commented on the close air sorties: "Palm fronds, bullets, and dead Japanese snipers were pouring down with the rain." D Company assaulted K.B. Mission with a bayonet charge at midafternoon. The Diggers stormed into the Japanese position, and a nasty hand-to-hand fight ensued. The Australians killed 60, and the Japanese immediately launched a savage counterattack from the jungle. The pitched battle lasted 40 minutes, and


A Japanese troop-carrying barge, riddled with small arms fire and abandoned, drifts along the shore at Milne Bay.

Australian War Memorial

the Japanese Marines broke off the fight when A Company arrived.

It was at K.B. Station that the Australians found their first evidence of Japanese atrocities. Captain Angus Suthers was with the squad that made the grisly discovery. "K.B. Mission's where we found the Aussie prisoners, trussed to a tree and stabbed full of holes. The Japs had used them for bayonet practice. It was brutal, cruel and inhuman. They behaved like bastards."

Feelings of disgust even reached the commanders, as Brigadier Field wrote in his personal diary: "The yellow devils show no mercy and have since had none from us. After that, there were no prisoners taken." Corporal Holmes, the green infantryman, also saw the massacre. The experience had a profound effect on Holmes even decades later. He explained at the 60th anniversary ceremony: "There is still a strong hatred of the Japanese as individuals, not their doctrine or anything else, hatred against the troops I was up against … you had to kill them to beat them."

Historian Dr. Peter Londey recounted extensive Japanese atrocities during the battle: "In their few days at Milne Bay, the Japanese displayed remarkable brutality. The Webb Commission into Japanese atrocities listed 59 cases of local people murdered by the Japanese, often being bayoneted while held prisoner, and in many cases being tortured and mutilated. Not one of the 36 Australians captured by the Japanese in the course of the battle survived. All were killed, and some were badly mutilated."

That night two companies of 2/12 were at K.B. Mission and two at Rabi on the Gona River, while one company of 9 Battalion was between the Mission and Rabi and another company in reserve at Rabi. During the night, 2/12 was struck by elements of the Japanese force. The largest attack was at Rabi when 300 Japanese slammed into the river position out of the jungle from the north. Company B took the brunt of three separate attacks. "Charging out of the jungle with maniacal screams, they struck just at dusk," wrote Peter Firkins. "For the next two hours there was a confused savage struggle in slashing rain with the opponents fighting in mud which in places was knee-deep. After a severe mauling the Japanese fell back." The company killed over 90. Companies A and D at K.B. Mission defeated an assault, inflicting over 20 dead.

Clowes planned to push on to Ahioma the next day, but the torrential rain wiped out the roads. This plus a false invasion report from MacArthur's headquarters forced Clowes to keep his units in place. It took two days to shuttle the rest of 2/9 Battalion across the bay to position itself as the lead unit in the advance. During the reshuffle, the Japanese continued to harass the Australian positions.

The medical facilities provided outstanding service despite the terrain and climate. The general hospital, with two field ambulances, was located between airstrips No. 1 and No. 2. Medical battalions were sprinkled from the general hospital to Airstrip No. 3. During the first seven days of fighting, the surgeons performed 96 operations, and the wounded overflowed the ward as cots were set up in native huts. By September 2, there were 365 sick and 164 battle casualties held in the facilities. The hospital ship *Manunda* was ordered to Milne Bay to assist.

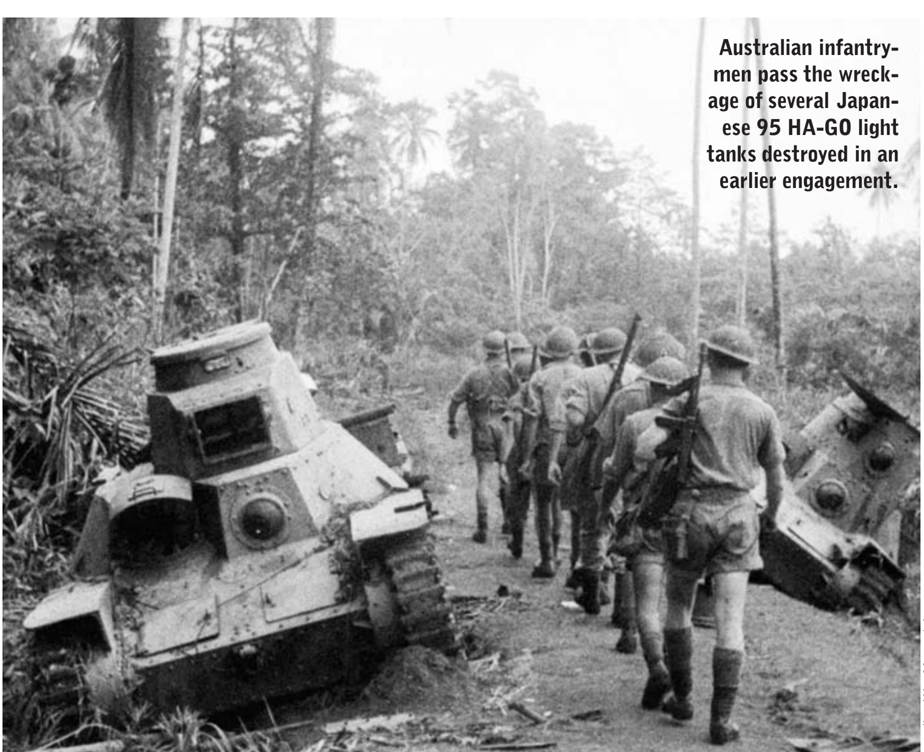
Clowes was ready to resume the attack on September 3, but the respite permitted the Japanese to dig strong fixed positions that the Australians would have to take out one by one. When the lead battalion kicked off the offensive, it faced two days of very stiff resistance. The 2/9 advanced a mile east of the Mission on the first day.

The Japanese were desperate. Commander Yano, himself wounded, led the rear-guard action, hoping to buy time for reinforcements. Determined to accomplish this, he radioed Rabaul, "Everyone resolved to fight bravely to the last." By nightfall, the Diggers of 2/9 reached the village of Goroni, two miles east of K.B. Mission. The battalion lost eight killed and 22 wounded. Here the Australians faced even stiffer Japanese resistance.

The battalion moved forward in the morning. Machine-gun nests, coconut log rifle pits, and fanatical Japanese stalled the Australians all morning. Inch by inch the Diggers moved forward only to be stopped dead in their tracks by the Japanese. The Australians regrouped. The battalion launched another attack around 3 PM, supported by mortars and artillery. The Japanese seemed on the verge of repulsing this attack when Corporal John French, a veteran of the North African campaign, turned the course of the battle.

His posthumous Victoria Cross citation reads: "A company of Australian infantry encountered terrific rifle and machine-gun fire. The advance section of which Corporal French was in command was held up by fire from three enemy machine-gun posts, whereupon, Corporal French, ordering his section to take cover, advanced and silenced one of the posts with grenades. He returned to his section for more grenades and again advanced and silenced the second post. Armed with a Thompson submachine-gun, he then attacked the third post firing from his hip as he went forward. He was seen to be badly hit by fire from the post, but he continued to advance. The enemy gun ceased to fire and his section pushed on to find that all members of the third gun crew had been killed and that Corporal French had died in front of the third gun pit."

The 2/9 broke the defensive line by the end of the day. It cost another 18 killed and 34 wounded. The same day, the body of Squadron Leader Turnbull was discovered among the remains of his Kittyhawk in the bush near K.B. Mission.



Australian infantrymen pass the wreckage of several Japanese 95 HA-GO light tanks destroyed in an earlier engagement.

Australian War Memorial

The battalion continued to advance during the next several days. Corporal Stanley Powell, from Maryborough, Queensland, described D Company's contribution to 2/9's advance: "D Company was held in reserve early in the battle, then moved forward to engage the Japanese. The 2/9th pushed the enemy force back to their evacuation points. We went into action around K.B. Mission, Elevala Creek, Goroni and Waga Waga. On the last day of the battle, I was wounded in the leg and evacuated by the hospital ship, *Manunda*, to Australia." From September 1-5, the Australians lost 45 killed and 147 wounded. The Japanese barely held on.

The Aoba Detachment finally arrived at Rabaul on September 5. Preparations were made to land on September 12. Admiral Mikawa designated Captain Yoshitatsu Yasuda as new overall commander of the Milne Bay expedition. But Yano informed Mikawa that his soldiers were near a state of exhaustion and could not hold out for another week. Mikawa cancelled the move and tried to save as many of the trapped Marines as possible. During the night of September 6, Japanese ships slipped quietly into the bay and evacuated 1,318 men. The Australians advanced the next day and found the base deserted.

The last Japanese naval bombardment hit the coastal positions on September 7. The Japanese got in one last air strike when the skies cleared on the 8th. Clowes shifted 2/9 back to Gili Gili the same day. It had suffered 30 killed and 90 wounded during the offensive. The 12-day battle cost Milne Force 373 casualties, of which 167 were killed or missing. The Americans suffered 14 deaths, all from the 43rd Engineer Regiment. The Japanese suffered 311 killed and 700 missing.

The Australian pilots, as Harry Gailey said, "had done yeoman's work." The RAAF destroyed 23 Japanese aircraft during the course of the battle. By the end of the fight, only 17 of the original 40 Kittyhawks were serviceable. According to Noble, "The two squadrons fired approximately 200,000 rounds of ammunition and wore out three hundred gun barrels. Nine Kittyhawks were destroyed and seven pilots killed."

Major General Clowes recorded his appreciation of the pilots' work soon after the engagement: "When the story is complete it will be found that their incessant attacks over three successive days proved the decisive factor in the enemy's decision to re-embark what was left of his force." American Air Force General George Kenney added his endorsement and "earnest appreciation of their tenacity, determination, and fearlessness."

Unfortunately, MacArthur and Australian Supreme Field Commander General Thomas Blamey assessed the Australians differently. Both commanders were very critical of Clowes. At Allied headquarters in Brisbane, Blamey commented, "It seems to us here by not acting with great speed Clowes had missed the opportunity of dealing completely with the enemy." MacArthur, who only remembered Australian defeats in Malaya, wondered about the Aussie. He could not understand why 4,500 ground troops had not speedily repelled 1,900 Japanese. Following an investigation, it became clear that the Australian soldier had fought magnificently under incredible conditions against a confident and previously undefeated enemy.

Besides destroying the myth and hurling back the Japanese, did the Aussies achieve anything else of significance for their losses? As the Allies developed Milne Bay as a forward logistical base, it was featured in the master plan for the recapture of Japanese occupied territories throughout the South Pacific.

Sixty years later, 20 veterans, including Beitz, Wright, Powell, Russell, and Barrie, flew to Milne Bay to dedicate war memorials for Turnbull, French, and the 161 others buried in the war cemetery there. Only the men who faced the Japanese in the nose-to-nose death struggle survive today. The generals are long gone.

Today, the survivors' assessments of why, how, and what their victory meant are simple and straightforward. Milne Bay veteran Peter Wright, of central New South Wales, sums it up best: "We were the 18-year-old kids who went up there to do a man's job under adverse conditions. We did the job we were given to do." □

James I. Marino is a teacher in Hackettstown, New Jersey. He is also a football coach and World War II reenactor.

EVERY AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO JUMPED INTO NORTH AFRICA, Europe, the Philippines and other combat zones around the globe during WWII had to first learn his trade at Fort Benning, Georgia. For one month, soldiers went through tough physical training as well as classes and demonstrations on how to hurl themselves out of perfectly good airplanes.

They started off learning to fold and pack parachutes. Then, it was a week of jumping into piles of sawdust from mock doors four feet off the ground. Halfway through the training, the troopers jumped out of 30- and 250-foot towers. Attached to parachute harnesses to cushion their falls, they learned the stomach churning experience of falling helplessly until the wires slowed their speed. They also learned how to collapse their chutes while fighting against a wind machine.

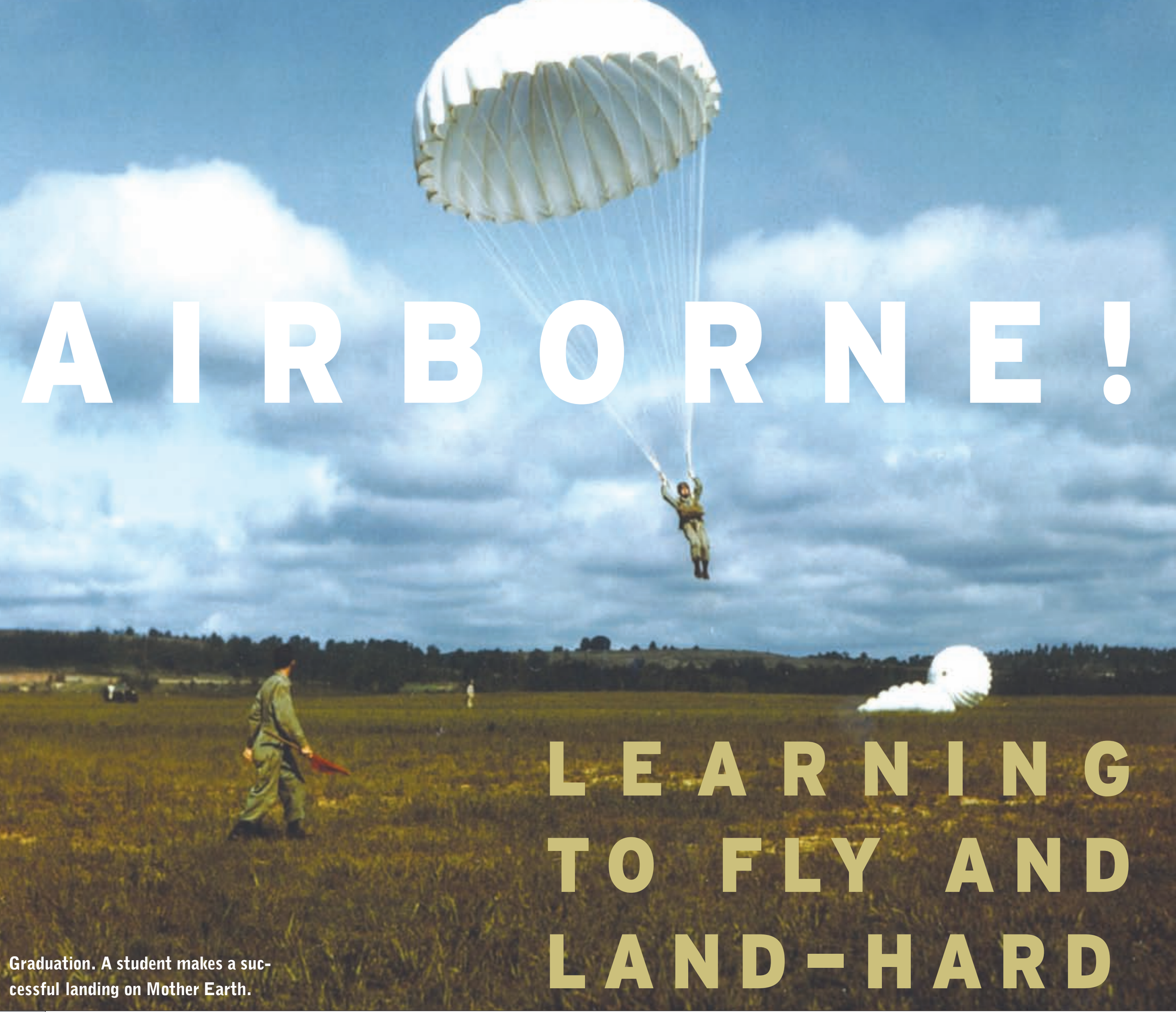
To earn their jump wings, the paratroopers had to make five jumps out of a Douglas C-47 cargo plane. They climbed aboard, 25 men to a plane, and waited anxiously to get airborne. The jumpmaster ordered, "Stand up and hook up!" For each man's parachute there was a line attached to a metal clip that the men would attach to another line strung up within the length of the cabin. Once the men jumped out of the plane, their line would pull against the cabin's line and release their parachutes.

From that point on, it was all physics. The unfurling parachute would catch the plane's prop blast and inflate. The fall would be jolted to what felt like a standstill, and the men would begin swaying to and fro until they touched down.

Those lucky few who completed the training were presented with a certificate recognizing their status as a qualified parachutist and the coveted Airborne wings to wear on their chest. Now, they were ready to jump behind enemy lines anywhere around the world.

AIRBORNE!

LEARNING TO FLY AND LAND—HARD



Graduation. A student makes a successful landing on Mother Earth.

All photos: National Archives

THE U.S. ARMY'S ELITE INFANTRY HAD TO EARN THEIR WINGS BEFORE THEY COULD LEAP INTO BATTLE.

PHOTO ESSAY BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

1. New recruits wearing soft headgear board a C-47 for their first practice jump.

2. Boom! Airborne artillerymen fire off a round from their 105mm howitzer during a battle simulation.

3. An instructor demonstrates how to collapse a parachute to a class of Airborne hopefuls at Fort Benning.

4. A paratrooper prepares to jump from a mock tower while instructors look on. Students were taught to put their hands outside the plane door before jumping. If they kept their hands inside, the instructors would push them aside and let the other students jump.

BY THE END OF 1944, THE SOVIET RED ARMY HAD surrounded the Hungarian capital of Budapest and established strong defensive positions running from Esztergom on the Danube to Lake Balaton. On the last day of the year, the provisional government set up by the Soviets in those parts of Hungary occupied by the Red Army threw in its lot with the Allies and declared war on Germany.

The last of Hitler's partners in his European Axis had deserted him—but not the Hungarian Army. In order to protect the country from the Bolsheviks, whom they feared and hated, what was left of the Hungarian Army continued to fight alongside the Germans.

On New Year's Day 1945, the only sizable German reserves on the Eastern Front launched an offensive code-named Konrad to relieve Budapest and secure the southern Hungarian oil reserves. By January 6, General Herbert Otto Gille's IV SS Panzer Corps had come within 25 kilometers of the Hungarian capital but then, in the face of rapidly redeployed Soviet units, the attack stalled. On the same day the Russians launched an attack across the Gran River, north of the Danube, with the equivalent of two tank divisions and four infantry divisions. Designed to disrupt the German offensive, it was successful and by the 8th they had advanced some 50 kilometers.

German countermeasures succeeded in halting the attack, and by the 14th the Russians had lost half their gains and some 200 tanks; nevertheless, they still held a sizable bridgehead west of the Gran River.

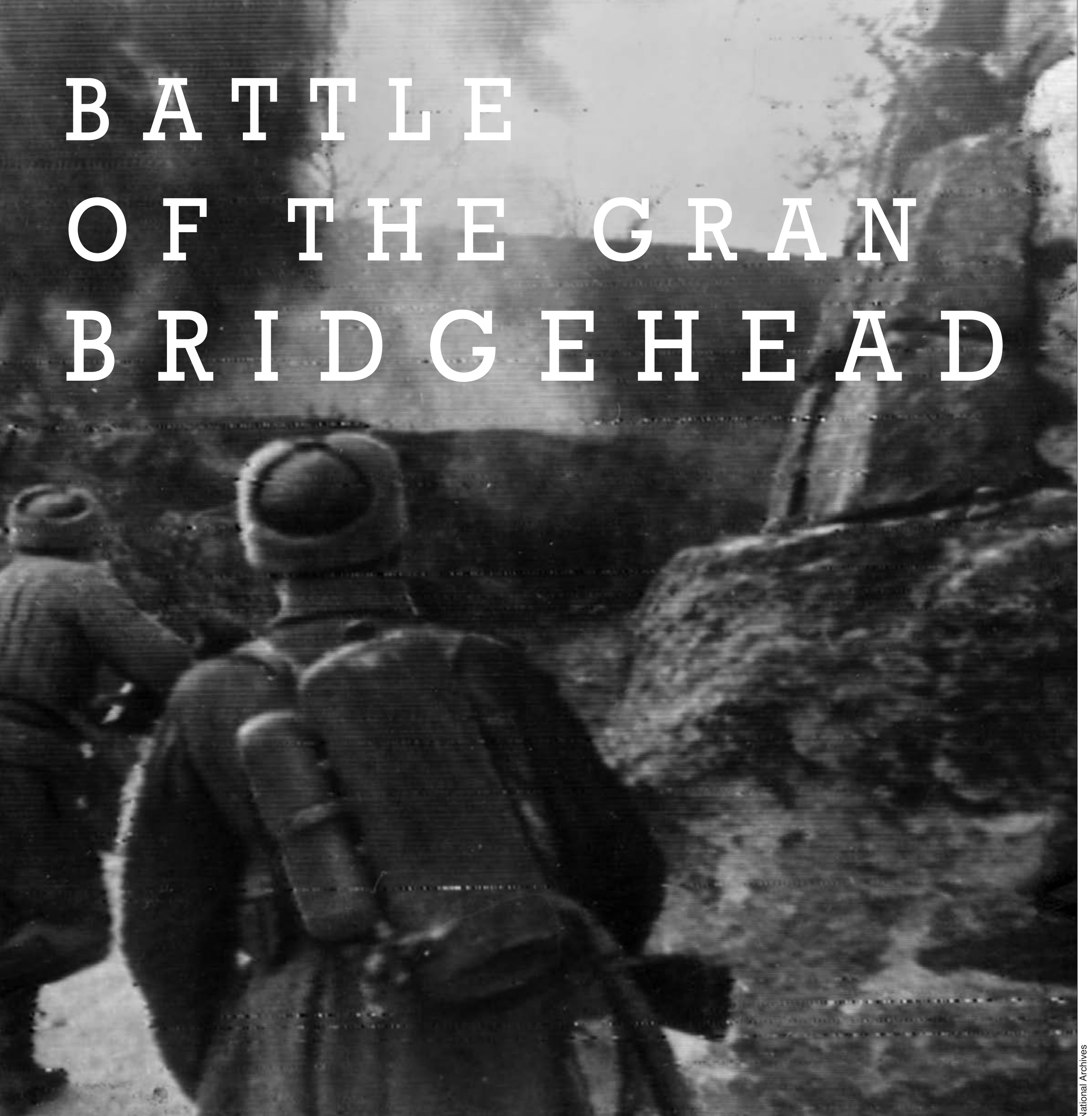
In the meantime, Gille's IV SS Panzer Corps had renewed its attack on January 10, and, after taking the Soviets completely by surprise, had advanced to within 21 kilometers of Budapest by the 13th. Then, despite Gille's assurance that he was on the point of a breakthrough, Headquarters Army Group South inexplicably called a halt.

National Archives

ABOVE: A plume of black smoke billows near a group of Soviet soldiers as they move through the war-ravaged outskirts of Budapest, Hungary. **LEFT:** During the winter of 1945, heavy rains on the Eastern Front turned dirt roads into seas of thick mud. Here, SS soldiers struggle to free a motorcycle.

BY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL REYNOLDS

BATTLE OF THE GRAN BRIDGEHEAD



National Archives

On the Hungarian front in February 1945, elite SS units of the German armed forces spearheaded an operation that recaptured a vast amount of territory and inflicted heavy losses on the Soviet Red Army.

SS Lieutenant Colonel Fritz Darges, commanding the 5th SS Panzer Division's Panzer Regiment said later, "The head of our assault unit could see the panorama of the city in their binoculars. We were disappointed and we could not believe the attack was stopped. Our morale was excellent and we knew we could free our comrades the next day."

Be that as it may, Hitler and the high command had other plans. On January 16, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander of German forces more than 1,000 kilometers away on the Western Front, received the following order: "CinC West is to withdraw the following formations from operations immediately and refit them: I SS Panzer Corps with 1st SS Panzer Division LAH [Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler] and 12th SS Panzer Division HJ [Hitler Youth]; II SS Panzer Corps with 2nd SS Panzer Division DR [Das Reich] and 9th SS Panzer Division. Last day of refitting is 30th January."

Also at this time Hitler sent his personal adjutant, SS Major Otto Günsche, to warn the Sixth Panzer Army Corps commander, SS General Sepp Dietrich, that within a month he would be required to move his army to the Eastern Front to launch a new offensive designed to secure the vital oil deposits in southern Hungary and perhaps even regain the oil of Rumania. Both Dietrich and General Heinz Guderian, the army group chief of staff, had wanted the Sixth Panzer Army deployed behind the Oder River to protect Berlin and northern Germany, but Hitler would have none of it. The only natural oil deposits in German-controlled territory were those around Nagykanizsa in southern Hungary, and, with Allied air attacks disrupting and often neutralizing the synthetic gasoline production sites for long periods, it was essential to protect them. Without this crude oil, the battle could not be continued. Dietrich and the trusted divisions of the Waffen SS were to be given responsibility for this new offensive, codenamed Spring Awakening.

In view of the time needed to refit and move the Sixth Panzer Army to the Eastern Front and secure the ground west of the Danube for the new offensive, Hitler ordered a third attack in Hungary on January 18, using much larger forces. This was designed primarily to cut off and destroy all Soviet troops north of a line drawn from Lake Balaton, through Székesfehérvar, to Budapest, and secondarily to liberate that city. The Pest garrison had in fact withdrawn across the Danube to the hills of Buda the night before.

Since the Russians had depleted their defenses in this area to meet the previous German attacks in the north, the new offensive was initially very successful. Within three days a large section of the west bank of the Danube had been secured 35 kilometers south of Budapest, and the Germans then turned north and northwest, threatening to link up with other forces attacking in the north and cut off an entire Soviet Front.

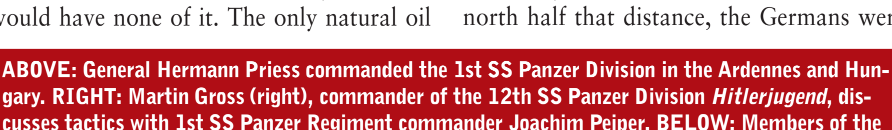
By the 26th, however, with their forces in the south only 20 kilometers from Buda and in the north half that distance, the Germans were exhausted, and this was the moment when Marshal Rodion Y. Malinovsky went over to the attack. Although the Germans continued to hold Székesfehérvar and the ground between it and Lake Balaton, by February 3 they were more or less back to their original positions. Buda fell finally on February 14. The siege had lasted 51 days and had cost the Axis over 70,000 men.

Meanwhile, Marshal Georgi Zhukov's and Marshal Ivan Konev's offensives in the north had advanced over 150 kilometers; Warsaw, Lodz, and Cracow had fallen, and a Soviet Army had entered East Prussia. The Red Army was now a mere 200 kilometers from Prague and, worst of all for the German people, it had crossed the Oder River and was only 70 kilometers from Berlin.

The Germans saw The Soviet bridgehead over the Gran River north of Esztergom as a potential assembly area for a major Red Army thrust toward Vienna, and as such it had to be eliminated before they could launch their own Operation Spring Awakening. Therefore, on February 13, Headquarters Army Group South ordered the commander of the German Eighth Army "to attack, concentrating all available infantry and armored forces, and accepting the consequent weakening of other front sectors, with the newly arrived I SS Panzer Corps.... After a short artillery preparation, to thrust from the north, to destroy the enemy in the Gran bridgehead."

The operation was given the code-name South Wind.

Although the bridgehead had existed for over a month, the Germans had no detailed intelligence of Soviet strength or dispositions within it. The Operation Order issued on February 13 merely stated that aerial photography and ground observation indicated that the Soviets were in a defensive posture. It also noted that a mechanized division was positioned in the center of the bridgehead, a guards mechanized corps and a guards tank corps "with the attached Sixth Guards Tank Army are probably located in the refitting area east of the Gran." These



ABOVE: General Hermann Priess commanded the 1st SS Panzer Division in the Ardennes and Hungary. RIGHT: Martin Gross (right), commander of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*, discusses tactics with 1st SS Panzer Regiment commander Joachim Peiper. BELOW: Members of the 12th SS Panzer Division hitch a ride on a tank as they move through a village on the Eastern Front.

All: Author's Collection

units could be expected to reinforce the bridgehead if necessary.

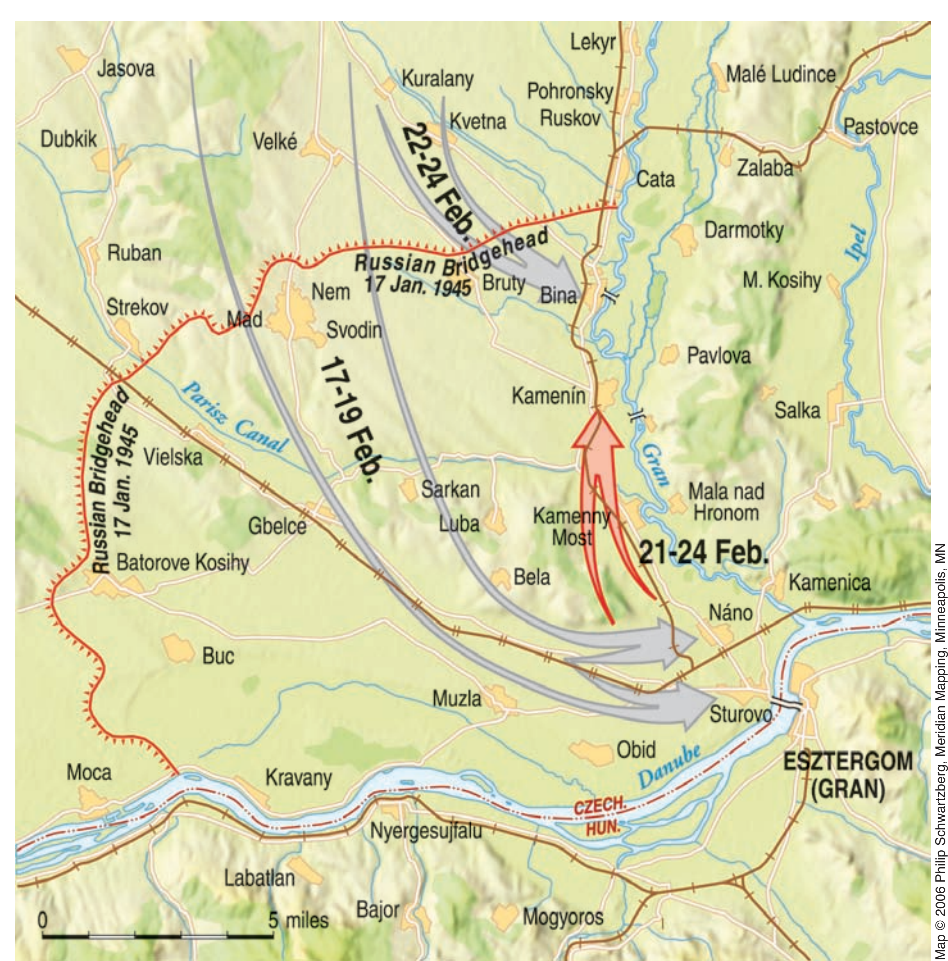
The order added that there were known to be antitank blocking positions, supported by mortars to the west of Bruty, a continuous “fighting trench” running from Obid in the south through Muzla and Gbelce to just south of Bruty. The Parizs canal formed a considerable obstacle due to flooding, and although the roads and tracks were beginning to thaw out, they were not yet soft. Single bridges across the Gran existed at Bina and Kamenin, and there were two more near Nana.

In fact, the Soviets were much stronger than the Germans realized. In addition to the guards mechanized corps already mentioned, which provided a centrally located mobile reserve, there were two guards rifle corps in the bridgehead with a total of seven rifle divisions. Five of the rifle divisions were in perimeter defense, while the other two provided second echelon defense in depth. Even if these divisions were below strength, this would still mean that the Germans were up against well over 60,000 men with 100 to 230 tanks and self-propelled tank destroyers, over 100 antitank guns, some 200 heavy mortars, and over 200 guns and howitzers.

Containing the Soviet bridgehead before the opening of the German offensive were three German infantry divisions with one Hungarian infantry division and parts of another, supported by elements of a German panzer division.

The Germans were correct in their appreciation that the Soviet forces were in a defensive posture. Although a new offensive was being planned, this would not take place until mid-March, and in the meantime the troops west of the Gran were clearly vulnerable. The bridgehead was only 20 kilometers deep and 20 kilometers wide and, with a 30 to 40-meter-wide river behind them, it was clearly going to be difficult to reinforce the Soviet troops in the bridgehead or, in the worse case, withdraw them.

From the German point of view, the forthcoming battle was not without its problems. Mounting the main attack from the south across the Danube was obviously out of the question, and an attack from the west would run against the grain of the country. The Germans therefore chose to attack from the north. Even this had its difficulties. The Parizs Canal was a major obstacle due to the early thawing of the winter snows, and in the final stages of the advance the assault force would be compressed into a narrow corridor, less than 10 kilometers wide, by a ridge to the south of Luba and the Danube River.



During the winter of 1945, SS units inflicted heavy losses on the Red Army and took back large amounts of territory near the vicinity of the Gran Bridgehead.

Operation South Wind was to be led by Panzer Corps Feldherrnhalle. This corps consisted of three infantry divisions and an armored group of some 25 tanks. Its initial task was to seize the high ground, particularly Point 190, to the south of Svodin, but the villages of Svodin and Bruty were to be taken from the rear and any fighting there was not to be allowed to interfere with the general advance south. SS General Hermann Priess’s I SS Panzer Corps was to follow closely behind the Feldherrnhalle and, after crossing the Parizs Canal, was to capture the ridge running east from Gbelce before pushing on toward the Danube at Sturovo. A reinforced regimental group from the Sixth Army south of the Danube, known as the Hupe Regimental Group, was to establish a bridgehead across the river near Obid in the early phases of the offensive and cooperate with Priess’s men attacking from the north.

The Luftwaffe was tasked with supporting South Wind by attacking known antitank defenses south of Svodin and Bruty and in the Muzla-Luba sector, as well as delaying and destroying any Soviet reinforcements attempting to cross the Gran River.

From February 12-15, I SS Panzer Corps moved to a staging area around Nové-Zamky. Tracked vehicles moved by rail and those with wheels by road. A platoon commander in the 9th SS Panzer Pioneer Company recalled, “Rations were excellent. We learned from the civilian population the various uses of paprika. The people were very friendly. They recounted to us the good old days—Germany, Austria, Hungary. During the evenings we drove to see films in Nové-Zamky.”

Then, on the night of the 16th, the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (LAH) and the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend (HJ) moved again into a final assembly area behind the Feldherrnhalle. The latter’s infantry divisions were located in and around the villages of Ruban, Dubnik, Velk, and Kvetna, and the armored group near Farna. This was an ideal place to assemble with rolling hills and plenty of cover.

In readiness for the attack, SS Maj. Gen. Otto Kumm, who had only assumed command of

AKG-London

DURING THE EARLY PART OF THE night, a small infantry bridgehead was established by KG Hansen, but no vehicles could cross. Nevertheless, it had been a good day for the LAH and its associated 46th Infantry Division. They had broken through the Soviet defenses and advanced nearly 10 kilometers.

On the left flank things did not go nearly so well, and the 211th Infantry Division of the Feldherrnhalle was stopped in front of Bruty by a guards rifle division in fortified positions supported by antitank guns, mortars and artillery.

LEFT: Men of the Waffen SS pick their way through the underbrush of a Hungarian hillside during their winter 1945 offensive. BELOW: Outfitted with American war matériel, Soviet troops advance toward the front on January 4, 1945. OPPOSITE: The German tracked howitzer "*Hummel*" opens fire on attacking Soviet forces near Budapest.

the LAH on February 15, divided the available parts of his division into a Panzergrenadier Group under the command of SS Lt. Col. Max Hansen, Kampfgruppe (KG) Hansen, and a Panzer KG under SS Lt. Col. Jochen Peiper—soon to become infamous for his part in the "Malmedy Massacre."

The former consisted of parts of the 1st and 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Regiments, a detachment from the 1st SS Reconnaissance Battalion, the 1st Company of the 1st SS Panzerjäger Battalion, and two 37mm flak batteries. Kampfgruppe Peiper was made up of 25 Panther and 21 Mk IV medium tanks in one panzer battalion under SS Major Werner Poetschke, 19 Tiger IIs of SS Lt. Col. Hein von Westernhagen's 501st SS Heavy Panzer Battalion, the 3rd SS Mechanized Panzergrenadier Battalion, and part of the 1st SS Panzer Artillery Battalion. According to the divisional chief of staff, Ralf Tiemann, the rest of the division was still in transit to the new battle area when the offensive began.

Hubert Meyer, the chief of staff of the HJ, has stated that the 12th SS Panzer Division was more or less complete for South Wind and fought in its conventional groupings. He claims 38 Mk IVs, 44 Panthers, and 13 Jagdpanzer IVs were operational just before the attack. The only combat unit not mentioned in his account of the Gran bridgehead fighting is the 560th Heavy Panzerjäger Battalion. If, therefore, we exclude this latter unit, we have a figure of 160 operational tanks and Jagdpanzers in I SS Panzer Corps at the beginning of Operation South Wind, only 66 percent of its authorized holdings.

Despite the widespread flooding and poor road conditions caused by the early thaw, Operation South Wind began at 0500 hours on February 17. Leaving high ground on their right flank and with the Gran River on their left, the Germans attacked across open, rolling, agricultural land with few villages and no serious obstacles.

The artillery of I SS Panzer Corps joined in an opening barrage by the guns of Panzer Corps Feldherrnhalle, and in the most critical area of the attack, the center, the Russians were taken by surprise. By 0900 hours the leading elements of the 46th Infantry Division were near Point 190, having penetrated the Soviet defenses between Svodin and Bruty, but there they ran into an antitank screen and a few individual T-34 tanks. After calling for support from the LAH, a successful attack was launched at 1140 hours, and by 1700 hours elements of both the LAH and 46th Infantry Divisions had reached the Parizs Canal in the area of Sarkan only to find the bridges there destroyed.

A loader in one of Peiper's tanks later remembered, "Peiper ordered five King Tigers to drive over the hill. What a sight! As on a silver platter, they appeared on the hill and immediately began taking fire from the Russian antitank guns. We saw the shells bounce off the front of the Tigers. That must have been a shock for the Russians, especially since the Tigers destroyed one antitank gun after another.… Peiper immediately gave the order: 'Panzers—march!' A hurricane of fire was released as the KG drove over the hill in formation.… The tanks and APCs drove at full speed, firing all barrels.… There was only one thing for the Russians to do —clear out.… KG Peiper suffered no losses."

National Archives

Similarly on the right flank, the 44th Infantry Division of the Feldherrnhalle ran into strong opposition from the 6th Guards Airborne Division between Strekov and Svodin, and it was only after tanks joined in the attack that further progress could be made. By 1700 hours, Svodin had been captured and the advance continued toward the canal and Vieska.

What of the Hitlerjugend Division? It had followed behind the LAH, and during the afternoon the 26th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment was committed on the right flank of its sister division to secure a crossing of the Parizs Canal. The 1st Battalion of the 26th Regiment managed to make a crossing just to the north of the large village of Gbelce by about 2100 hours, and the 2nd Battalion followed into the shallow

bridgehead. Soon after midnight, the 2nd Battalion had reached the road junction 1,500 meters northeast of Gbelce, and both battalions then went firm. A small canal crossing, capable of taking wheeled vehicles, was discovered in the same area. During the night the Russians counterattacked with a battalion of infantry and at least two T-34s, but were beaten off.

The commander of Army Group South, General Otto Wöhler, was anxious that the Soviets should not be allowed to recover their balance and build up a second defensive line to the south of the canal. To prevent this from happening, the Hupe Regimental Group from south of the Danube was ordered to cross the river that same night. This was achieved without opposition.

In the early hours of the 18th, KG Hansen expanded its small bridgehead, and Leibstandarte Pioneers (engineers) were able to bridge the Parizs Canal. Four T-34s were claimed by Hansen's 6th SS Panzergrenadier Company during this fighting. Mines caused some further delay, but soon after midday the first of Poetschke's Mk IVs and Panthers crossed the canal, and, despite an air attack by Soviet fighter bombers, by early evening KG Peiper had reached the Gbelce-Nana railway line, 3 kilometers north of Muzla.

Meanwhile, to the west of the LAH, the Feldherrnhalle's 44th Infantry Division had forced a passage over the Parizs Canal near Vieska, and in the early afternoon its tanks were able cross. Then, in conjunction with the 26th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, a joint attack was launched on Gbelce. The Feldherrnhalle Group was joined by SS Major Hermann Brand's 3rd SS Mechanized Panzergrenadier Battalion, and they took the western part of the town. The 1st Battalion captured the eastern sector, and the 2nd Battalion went on to secure the high ground 2 kilometers further east. By evening, infantry and armor of the Feldherrnhalle were in possession of Point 129, 3 kilometers south of Gbelce, and in contact with the Leibstandarte.

On the 19th, the weather improved, and at 0530 hours I SS Panzer Corps resumed its attack. KG Hansen of the Leibstandarte was given the task of clearing the enemy from the vine-covered ridge south of Point 250, while KG Peiper resumed its advance on the north side of the Gbelce-Nana railway. It was by no means an easy advance.

SS Lieutenant Rolf Reiser later described the action: "In the early morning our assembly was considerably delayed by a Russian fighter bomber attack; we suffered the loss of several tanks and wounded.... We set out astride the road with seven tanks of the 1st Company. I advanced ... between the road and railway line with the three Panthers of my Platoon.... Ivan attacked our open right flank at short range with tanks from behind the cover of the railway embankment. One of the Panthers... was hit and stalled.... SS Senior Sergeant Strelow, the 3rd Platoon leader, set up to the right of me. Then there was a detonation a short distance away and his tank was ablaze. I drove behind a shed and slowly probed the other side until I had the T-34 broad-side in front of me—no more than 50 meters away.... He burst into flames on the first shot, the turret flew off after the second! Then the Tigers and Panthers of the 2nd Company caught up and joined in the armored battle. Two more enemy tanks were destroyed."

Farther to the west, SS Captain Hans Siegel's 2nd SS Panzer Battalion of the Hitlerjugend, with Brand's 3rd Mechanized SS Panzergrenadier Battalion attached, had formed up during the night to the south of Gbelce protected by the 25th and 26th SS Panzergrenadier Regiments. It too advanced at 0530 hours with grenadiers leading the way on both sides of the Sturovo road in case of mines and the tanks on the road itself. Shortly before daybreak, KG Siegel came under artillery and antitank gunfire from Muzla, but a quick attack, led by SS Lieutenant Helmut Gaede's 1st SS Panzer Company, took the village, and the surrounding area was soon cleared by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 26th Regiment.

While the HJ was preparing to resume its advance on Sturovo on the south side of the Muzla-Sturovo road by way of Obid, the division suffered a serious loss. SS Lt. Col. Bernhard "Papa" Krause was killed in a surprise rocket attack. He had been a stalwart of the HJ since its foundation and was revered by all its members.

The advance began again soon after midday, with the HJ moving on Sturovo from the southwest and KG Peiper of the Leibstandarte from the northwest. At about 1300 hours, when they were some 3 kilometers short of Sturovo, the infantry element of KG Peiper, the 3rd SS Mechanized Panzergrenadier Battalion, swung northeast to attack Nana. Poetschke's Mk IVs and Panthers and von Westernhagen's Tiger IIs were joined by 20 Sturmgeschutze armored vehicles and infantry of the Hupe Regimental Group from the Obid area for the assault on Sturovo.

In his citation for the oakleaves to Poetschke's Knight's Cross, Peiper wrote, "Rushing headlong and firing wildly, his tanks overran the antitank nets in front of Muzla and Sturovo, and after making contact with the Southern Group [Hupe], which had been ferried over the Danube in assault boats.... pushed through to Esztergom."

At the same time, an assault group from an infantry division holding Esztergom crossed the Danube and joined in the attack. The Russians had no chance in this vulnerable corner of their bridgehead, and before last light the men of I SS Panzer Corps were gazing at Esztergom cathedral, standing like a sentinel above the far bank of the mighty Danube. They knew they had completed the hardest part of their task. Nana and Sturovo were in the hands of the Leibstandarte and Hitlerjugend.

In other relevant actions on February 19, Batorove Kosihy and Buc were occupied by a KG of Army Group South following their evacuation by the Russians, and the 44th Infantry Division of the Feldherrnhalle captured Kravany on the Danube and the forest to its east. In the eastern part of the bridgehead, the 46th Infantry Division, with

AKG-London

armored support, had cleared the wooded, hilly area just to the west of Kamenny Most, but, north of the Parizs Canal other elements of the division were repulsed by a Soviet counterattack 2 kilometers short of Kamenin. In the north, Bruty remained firmly in Russian hands.

From the outset of Operation South Wind, the Germans had been worried that the Soviets would attempt to reinforce their bridgehead. They had correctly identified parts of the IV Guards Mechanized Corp in the northern part of the bridgehead, but they were particularly worried about the whereabouts of the Sixth Guards Tank Army, and when aerial reconnaissance reported 3,000 vehicles moving north from the Budapest area, they became alarmed. Orders were issued for immediate night attacks on Kamenny Most and Kamenin. Leaving the bulk of the LAH armored group in Sturovo to replenish ammunition and supplies, the Mk IVs of KG Peiper, with part of the 46th Division, attacked from Nana along the Kamenny Most road. Another part of the 46th Division advanced north of the Parizs Canal on Kamenin. Both attacks failed, and Soviet air superiority and artillery fire from east of the Gran precluded any further attempts during daylight on the 20th.

A two-phase operation was then ordered. In the first phase, the LAH and 46th Infantry Division were to take Kamenny Most in the south of the remaining bridgehead, while the HJ, with support from the 211th Volksgrenadier Division (VGD), was to secure Bruty in the north. In a second and final phase, the twin divisions of I SS Panzer Corps would clear Kamenin and Bina, respectively.

Parts of KGs Peiper and Hansen, with support from the 46th Division, successfully entered Kamenny Most during the night of the 21st, but soon after dawn they were forced on to the defensive by Soviet artillery fire and continuous air attacks.

Rolf Reiser recalled, "Peiper had decided upon a night attack because we were covered by massive fire during the daytime from enemy artillery positions on the raised eastern bank of the Gran.... We rapidly crossed the softly rolling terrain directly under the chain of hills that ran west of the road and railway line.... We turned east... in order to penetrate frontally. Then massive Russian artillery fire was initiated. A curtain of iron and fire hung before us. Flares and tracers illuminated the night and showed us the way to the enemy positions.... We rattled across the railway—then there was a crack and flash of light. We were hit!... We caught fire immediately.... My gunner followed me as the last one out of the turret. We landed in a trench with Ivan, who was as surprised as we were. Armed only with pistols and bare fists, we defended ourselves.... We finished off the Soviets in the cover of the burning tank and the exploding ammunition."

The assault was resumed with the coming of darkness, and by 2100 hours the last Russians had withdrawn from Kamenny Most.

Meanwhile, during the 20th and 21st, the Hitlerjugend was relieved by the 44th Infantry Division and moved to a new assembly area southeast of Farna in readiness for its assault on Bruty. The I SS Panzer Corps was thus poised for its final battles west of the Gran River. With aerial reconnaissance and other intelligence sources confirming that the IV Guards Mechanized Corps had withdrawn across the Gran and other troop movements toward the river had apparently halted, Hermann Priess and his men had every reason to be confident of success.

Headquarters Army Group South concluded that the Soviets must be expecting a German assault across the Gran. Therefore, defensive positions on the east bank were being prepared with all available reinforcements. In fact, Hitler had forbidden any such assault and demanded that his Leibstandarte Corps be freed as soon as possible for his new offensive, Spring Awakening, in the Lake Balaton area.

In preparation for its attack on Bruty, the HJ had to rely mainly on aerial reconnaissance and on information provided by the 211th VGD, which had already failed to take the village. This revealed that the area was heavily fortified, with minefields backed by large numbers of machine guns, mortars, and antitank guns in considerable depth. Since the ground was completely open, the decision was made to undertake a night operation.

The preliminary phases of the attack were marred by a number of unfortunate incidents. The 25th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, on the right flank, failed to reach its starting line in time for the assault, and, in the darkness, some of Siegel's tanks failed to recognize the Panzergrenadiers who were leading the attack on the left and opened fire on them. Five men were killed, including a company commander, and another eight wounded. This second disaster alerted the Russians, who opened fire with machine guns and mortars.

Despite these problems, Siegel's tanks began their attack at about 0445 hours in the wake of a bombardment by artillery, mortars, and rocket launchers. Within minutes, however, the leading tanks ran into a minefield, and several, including Siegel's, were immobilized. These were repaired under fire, and the tanks then withdrew behind a reverse slope from where they supported the attack of the 9th Mechanized Panzergrenadier Company, led by SS Lieutenant Dieter Schmidt. This company was on the left flank of the attack and outside the minefield. Although some of its APCs floundered in the soft ground of a streambed, the rest managed to break through the defenders and reach the southern edge of the village.

In the meantime, the 25th Regiment had joined in the attack, and together with the other two battalions of Braun's 26th Regiment took the western and lower sectors of the village.

An SS Sergeant Burdack of the mechanized battalion later described the scene: "The village was choked with enemy vehicles.... Several T-34s and T-43s [light tanks], still inside the village, forced the APCs to take cover.... The

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ABOVE: German infantry and armored vehicles move through the countryside of Hungary as they attempt to stem the tide of the Russian advance toward their own borders. **OPPOSITE:** Soviet machine gunners leap from their tanks to support the attack at Budapest on December 31, 1944.

Russian tanks, without the protection of infantry, left … in the direction of Bina."

An SS officer remembered: "Fire from our heavy weapons had badly damaged most of the buildings. Roofs had been stripped off; walls had crumbled. During the pitched battle, civilians came out of the ruins of their houses … unconcerned with what was going on around them…. They were obviously happy beyond measure to be liberated again from their 'liberators.'"

Later that morning, Bruty was finally cleared by the 25th Regiment in conjunction with troops of the 211th VGD who had advanced on the right flank of the HJ and entered the village from the south. Eighty prisoners were taken and a large number of antitank guns and mortars, two undamaged T-34s, and six large caliber howitzers were found in the area. Bruty was in German hands, but the cost had been high—particularly in the 25th Regiment.

In the meantime, in preparation for the assault on Kamenin, elements of KG Peiper had secured the road junction immediately north of Kamenny Most.

The I SS Panzer Corps spent February 23 preparing for its final assaults on Kamenin and Bina. The Leibstandarte, with elements of the 46th Infantry Division, was to attack the former, and the Hitlerjugend, still with support from the 211th VGD, was to secure Bina and its bridge across the Gran. Intelligence sources indicated that there were elements of two motorized mechanized brigades still in the bridgehead. H-hour was set for 0200 hours on the 24th.

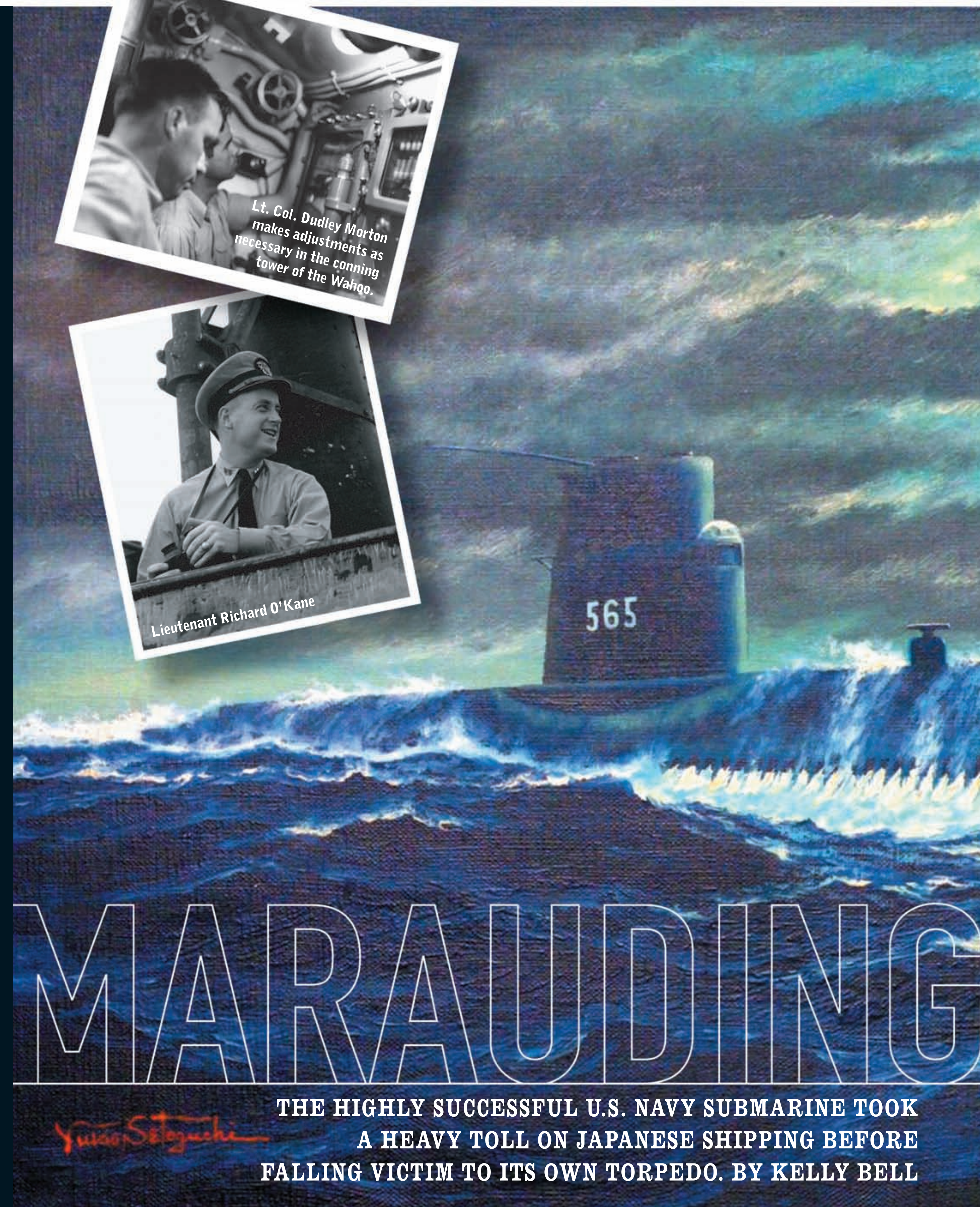
In the HJ sector the most bitter fighting occurred in the area of the railway line which runs north-south just to the west of Bina. This had been heavily fortified, as had some of the flood dikes, but by using the main Kvetna-Bina road as their axis and taking advantage of the gently sloping ground, which dropped some 30 meters down to the village, the tanks and SS Panzergrenadiers soon overcame all resistance. By 0830 hours the village had fallen. The last Russians blew the Gran bridge as they withdrew.

In the southern part of the bridgehead, elements of the 46th Infantry Division moved on Kamenin from the west, while the LAH attacked from due south. The Mk IVs, Panthers, and Tigers of KG Peiper used the main road as their axis and soon encountered a screen of 37 antitank guns sited on the dominating ground to the south of the village. Nevertheless, the attack was pressed home without regard to possible casualties, and the sheer power of the armored assault was too much for the Russians, who abandoned their guns and fled. Panzergrenadiers followed up, and after some bitter house-to-house fighting the defense was broken. By late afternoon, the Gran bridgehead had been eliminated.

The Germans claimed 71 tanks; 179 guns, howitzers, and antitank guns; 537 prisoners; and 2,069 Russian dead in the fighting up to February 22. Of these, Peiper credits Werner Poetschke's mixed SS Panzer Battalion with 23 T-34s destroyed; 30 Hungarian-, Italian-, British-, and German-built tanks captured, and 280 enemy killed. According to a return signed by Fritz Kraemer, the chief of staff of the Sixth Panzer Army, I SS Panzer Corps suffered 2,989 casualties, including 413 killed in the same period and, rather surprisingly, only three Mk IVs, six Panthers, and two Tigers lost or in need of long-term repair. Figures quoted in the histories of the LAH and HJ would indicate that this is a major understatement.

Operation South Wind was, without doubt, a brilliant success. In eight days, I SS Panzer

Continued on page 71



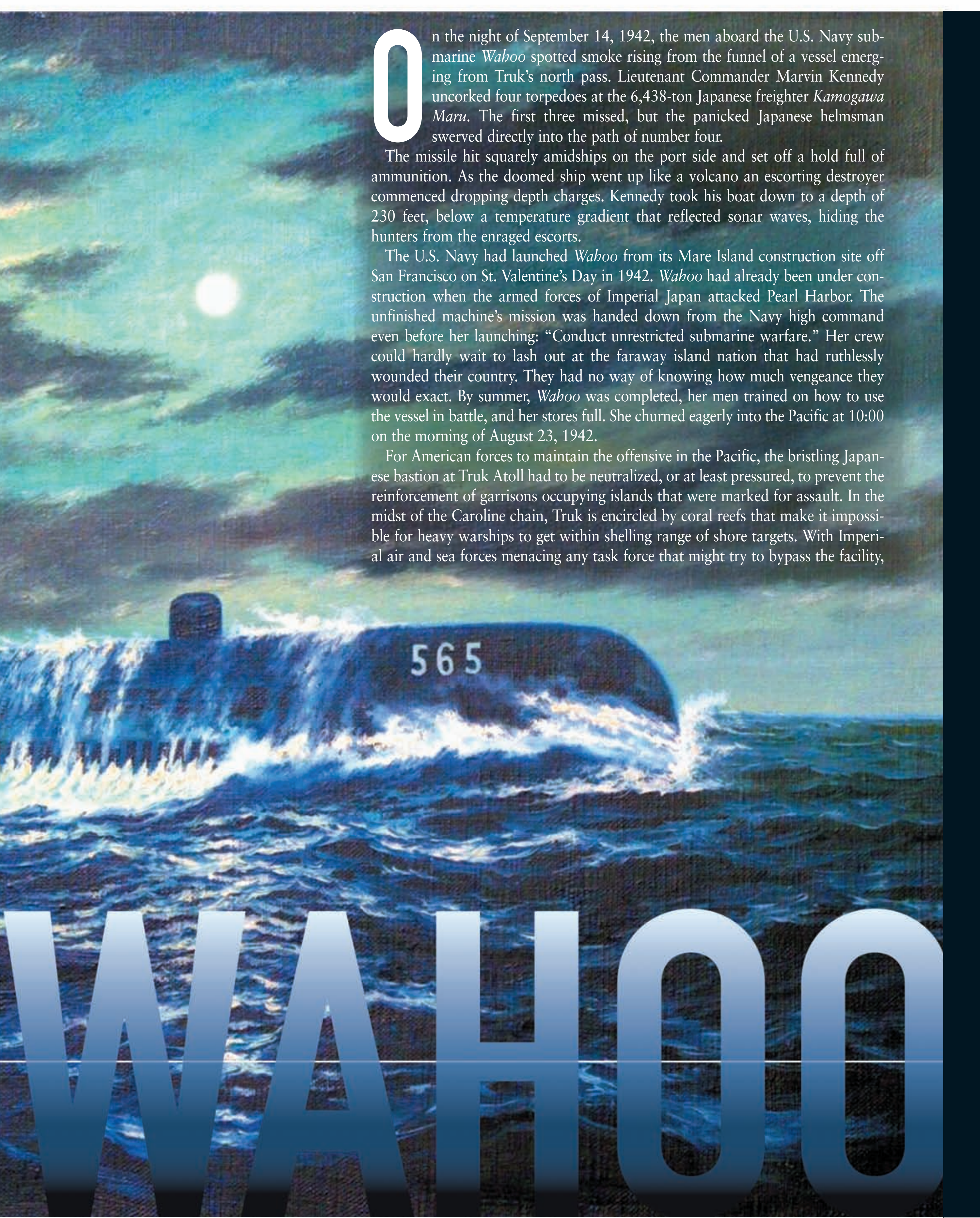
Lt. Col. Dudley Morton makes adjustments as necessary in the conning tower of the Wahoo.

Lieutenant Richard O'Kane

MARAUDING

THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL U.S. NAVY SUBMARINE TOOK A HEAVY TOLL ON JAPANESE SHIPPING BEFORE FALLING VICTIM TO ITS OWN TORPEDO. BY KELLY BELL

Painting: U.S. Navy; Photos: National Archives



On the night of September 14, 1942, the men aboard the U.S. Navy submarine *Wahoo* spotted smoke rising from the funnel of a vessel emerging from Truk's north pass. Lieutenant Commander Marvin Kennedy uncorked four torpedoes at the 6,438-ton Japanese freighter *Kamogawa Maru*. The first three missed, but the panicked Japanese helmsman swerved directly into the path of number four.

The missile hit squarely amidships on the port side and set off a hold full of ammunition. As the doomed ship went up like a volcano an escorting destroyer commenced dropping depth charges. Kennedy took his boat down to a depth of 230 feet, below a temperature gradient that reflected sonar waves, hiding the hunters from the enraged escorts.

The U.S. Navy had launched *Wahoo* from its Mare Island construction site off San Francisco on St. Valentine's Day in 1942. *Wahoo* had already been under construction when the armed forces of Imperial Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The unfinished machine's mission was handed down from the Navy high command even before her launching: "Conduct unrestricted submarine warfare." Her crew could hardly wait to lash out at the faraway island nation that had ruthlessly wounded their country. They had no way of knowing how much vengeance they would exact. By summer, *Wahoo* was completed, her men trained on how to use the vessel in battle, and her stores full. She churned eagerly into the Pacific at 10:00 on the morning of August 23, 1942.

For American forces to maintain the offensive in the Pacific, the bristling Japanese bastion at Truk Atoll had to be neutralized, or at least pressured, to prevent the reinforcement of garrisons occupying islands that were marked for assault. In the midst of the Caroline chain, Truk is encircled by coral reefs that make it impossible for heavy warships to get within shelling range of shore targets. With Imperial air and sea forces menacing any task force that might try to bypass the facility,

the installation was a hornets' nest awaiting victims. With no bomber bases in range of Truk at the time, submarines were the only weapons the Allies had to wield against this hot spot. *Wahoo* arrived on the morning of September 4.

Shortly after dawn on the 6th, Kennedy's lookouts summoned him to the periscope. He fired three torpedoes at six-second intervals, but all missed the freighter steaming southeast across his bow. For over a week, the ocean was then barren of targets as the impatient Americans searched for prey. On the evening of September 14, a torpedo in the number one forward bow tube spontaneously activated itself and crashed through the chamber's outer door.

Although the warhead did not explode, the missile remained protruding halfway out of the silo. This made the boat seriously susceptible to depth charges, but the crewmen had no thoughts of aborting their cruise. Instead, they ignored the faulty torpedo jutting from their bow and sank *Kamogawa Maru*.

Following this inaugural kill, the seas again became sterile, and after a full month of fruitless hunting a disillusioned Kennedy returned to Pearl with the defective missile still poking from its tube. For three weeks *Wahoo* was repaired and restocked while her men chafed to return to predatory pursuits.

On November 8, a grim Kennedy again headed west with a rested crew equally anxious to prove itself. The assigned patrol area was north of enemy-held Bougainville Island. Japanese supply and troop convoys bound for embattled Guadalcanal traversed this sector regularly. With the Imperial Navy in control of the seas surrounding the Solomon Islands, it was critical to block the shipping lanes if the American Marines who had landed on Guadalcanal in August were to have any hope of victory.

Hunting was poor until December 10. That evening *Wahoo* attacked a convoy between Buka Island and the Kilinailau Islands. The resolute Americans closed to just 700 yards from 8,748-ton *Syoei Maru* before blowing her into a towering bonfire. Diving away from depth-charging escorts, the submarine was shaken by the blasts, but managed to escape.

The Japanese apparently realized an especially dangerous raider was on the prowl and decided to fight her with her own kind. On the morning of December 14, a Japanese I-Class submarine blithely churned across *Wahoo*'s bow. Stumbling from the shower, Kennedy rushed dripping and stark naked to the periscope and directed his forward torpedomen as they fired three times from just 800 yards. One torpedo banged into the enemy's hull just ahead of her conning tower, sending her under in a twinkling.

Five days later, Kennedy and his crew reached the end of their patrol and headed for Australia. Kennedy was reassigned, and his first officer, Lt. Cmdr. Dudley Morton, took command for war cruise number three. On January 15, 1943, *Wahoo* set out for the coast of New Guinea.

On the afternoon of the 24th, Morton was lining up on a small Japanese naval anchorage on New Guinea's eastern shoreline when new First Officer Richard O'Kane, who was at the second periscope, shouted, "Destroyer underway! Angle ten port!" With insufficient time or depth to escape, Morton turned his boat nose to nose with her attacker and began pumping out torpedoes. The first four missed, but the fifth ripped the destroyer wide open. With their victim going down headfirst, the Americans fled to the open sea before enemy planes could arrive.

Wahoo sniffed out a Japanese troop convoy of three freighters on the morning of January 26. Using both torpedoes and deck guns she sank two of the enemy vessels and seriously damaged the third before it managed to escape. By 3 PM, however, the submarine had caught up with the wounded transport, now accompanied by a tanker. Morton quickly sank the 6,515-ton oiler *Manzyu Maru,* but as he turned to attack the damaged freighter a destroyer came boiling in from the submarine's port side.

Diving deep, the skipper correctly anticipated the transport's course and steered toward her and away from the warship. The raider surfaced as her victim was passing 3,000 yards to the stern. Taking careful aim, Morton directed the aft torpedo room crewmen as they primed their last two missiles. It took a full three minutes, but both charges squarely hit the 9,684-ton *Arizona Maru*, sending her cargo of infantry reinforcements to the bottom.

During a 14-hour rampage, *Wahoo* had sunk four vessels totaling 30,557 tons. Counting the destroyer she had bagged earlier, she had five kills before even reaching her patrol area. Out of torpedoes, Morton turned for Pearl. That evening, the jubilant crew received a wireless message directly from Admiral William Halsey, congratulating them on their success. They docked on February 7.

The legendary patrol took just 24 days—the briefest completed wartime voyage ever made by an American sub. After only eight days at Pearl Harbor, the *Wahoo* steamed past the charred hulk of the battleship *Arizona* and steered westward. After refueling at Midway on the 27th, the submariners churned for the East China and Yellow Seas. On March 10, they arrived off the Japanese Home Island of Kyushu. The next morning they were in the shipping lanes leading from the island's southwestern ports to the Empire's occupied territories.

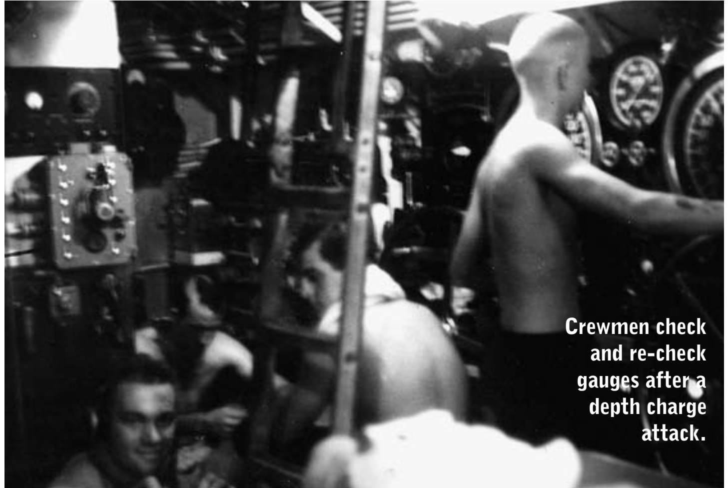
These waters proved barren, so on the 13th Morton turned his prow toward what he hoped would be a more crowded seascape off Korea. Just before daybreak on March 19, a silhouette appeared on the horizon. A colorful dawn was blushing behind a large transport. Every man on board was keen to try out their new armament. Back in Pearl, *Wahoo* had been stocked with torpedoes capped with a new explosive called torpex. Hoping this invention would cut down on the number of shots required to sink each target, the skipper yelled, "Fire just one torpedo!" The interior of the sub was so silent with anticipation that every man on board heard First Officer Richard O'Kane slap the firing plunger.

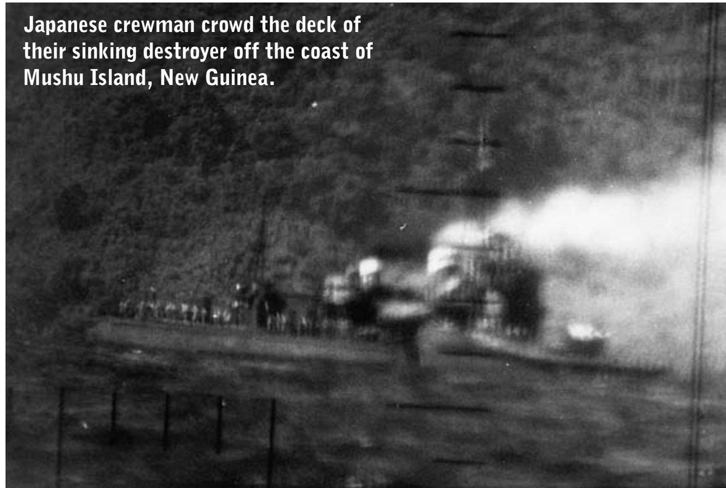
Forty-nine seconds later, the submariners were startled by a deafening report they had never dreamed could come from one torpedo. At the attack periscope, Chief Thomas McGill watched stunned as the freighter's aft section disintegrated. Less than three minutes later nothing remained on the surface except small bits of flotsam. The victim had been the 4,065-ton *Nanka Maru,* and even if her wireless had survived the blast there had not been time to broadcast warning of the fearsomely armed predator. Sure enough, just before 8 AM, the raiders sank the 5,725-ton transport *Tottori Maru* in the same area. As a storm began to whip up the ocean, *Wahoo* turned toward the Korean port of Chinnampo.

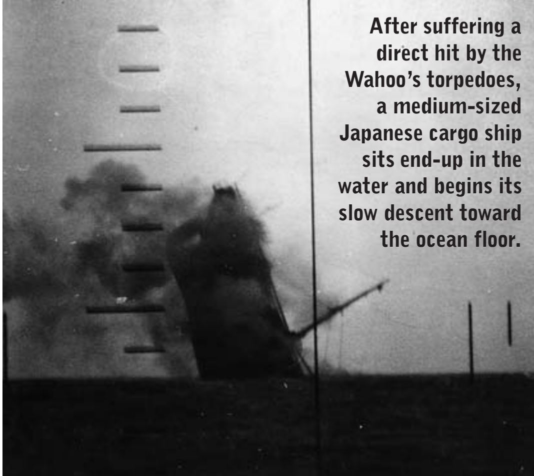
March 22 was a busy day. At dawn the Americans blew a never-identified freighter from the water. At 9:30 they closed to just 800 yards from the transport *Nita Maru* and drilled her with two torpedoes aft.

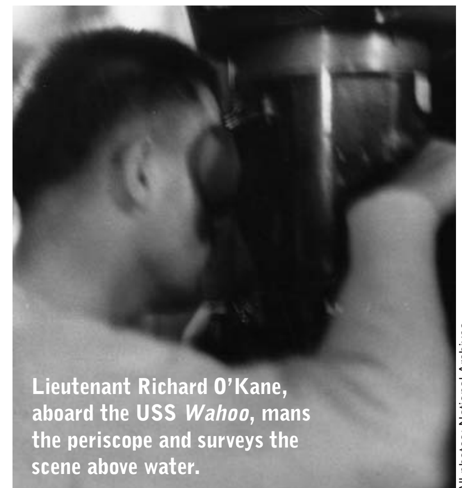
That evening, the hunters set course for the heavily traveled area around the Laotiehshan Promontory, which juts into the Gulf of Pohai. In the early morning hours of the 23rd, they sank the 2,427-ton coal carrier *Katyosan Maru,* but at 10 AM they heard the boom of depth charges back at the site of the sinking. Realizing destroyers were on their trail, they slipped out of the sector.

At sunset on March 24, Morton's lookouts spied a large tanker steaming on a course for Port Arthur. Lining up his after tubes, the skipper fired from a perfect right angle at 1,700 yards. The first two torpedoes malfunctioned and exploded just 18 seconds into their runs.


Crewmen check and re-check gauges after a depth charge attack.


Japanese crewman crowd the deck of their sinking destroyer off the coast of Mushu Island, New Guinea.


After suffering a direct hit by the Wahoo's torpedoes, a medium-sized Japanese cargo ship sits end-up in the water and begins its slow descent toward the ocean floor.


Lieutenant Richard O'Kane, aboard the USS *Wahoo*, mans the periscope and surveys the scene above water.

All photos: National Archives

The third missile shot into the huge, momentary crater its predecessors had blasted in the water and went tumbling out of control. The alerted enemy dodged a fourth round and opened up on *Wahoo* with deck guns using flashless powder.

Diving to safety, the submariners quickly resurfaced and set out for their target's presumed destination of Dairen Harbor. Looping in front of their quarry, they intercepted her just four miles outside the safe anchorage and in a position where she was silhouetted by the rising moon. At 9:22 PM, Morton pointed his forward tubes at the target 1,200 yards ahead and fired three torpedoes. The first two missed, but the third was a direct hit that ignited over three million gallons of oil and gasoline. The conflagration engulfed the 7,499-ton *Syoyo Maru* and lit Dairen Harbor midday bright. Although still not out of ammunition, *Wahoo* already had seven kills on this patrol.

At 3:00 the next morning the Americans had to pump a torpedo and countless rounds from their deck guns into a small merchantman that was very loath to sink. As the little boat finally bubbled under, an armed tanker charged *Wahoo*.

The Japanese opened up on the sub with 40mm antiaircraft guns as soon as they spotted her. Retreating on the surface, Morton answered with his four-inch deck cannon. His fifth round silenced the tanker's guns and crippled her engines. Swapping ends and moving in for the kill, the raiders shelled their foolish attackers into a roaring furnace. By 6:15 AM both of these latest victims had gone down.

The first of the morning's kills had been a *Sinsei*-class freighter, and the second was the 1,000-ton *Hadachi Maru*. In the growing daylight the Americans saw the mast of an approaching destroyer and began to notice the drone of warplanes. With just two torpedoes remaining, the raiders submerged and steamed quietly out of the area.

Early on the morning of March 29, *Wahoo* was prowling north of Formosa when her radarman detected a large vessel southbound out of Shanghai. Seconds after Morton fired his last two rounds from just 900 yards, things got very hectic aboard the sub.

Many of the submariners were unaware of the attack on the suddenly appearing ship, and both torpedoes were direct, almost simultaneous strikes. The deafening explosion reverberating through *Wahoo* panicked many of her crewmen, who mistook the blast for depth charges. As his terror-stricken men lunged for life preservers O'Kane had a sailor shout over the loudspeaker, "The sound you hear is the ship breaking up!" The man forgot to say it was an *enemy* ship that was sinking, and the bedlam increased. In the chaos O'Kane and Morton forgot to order the helmsman to turn aside, and the sub almost collided with the sinking 5,193-ton freighter *Kimisima Maru*. After shrieking "Full right rudder!" at the pilot, the executive officer hastily toured the boat and assured the crew all was well.

Counting a small radar trawler they had shot up with deck guns on March 27, the raiders had destroyed 10 Japanese vessels on this cruise. On April 6, they arrived back at Midway to another warm reception. Extensive repairs to *Wahoo*'s electrical system kept

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Partners for Victory

Continued from page 45

worsening weather conditions to launch their offensive, knowing that the Allied Jabos would be unable to operate under the low ceilings in the rain, snow, and fog that characterize European winter storms. When the attacks came, Patton's Third Army was making preparations to move against the Siegfried Line. The German offensive was well to the north of Patton's area, and he and the air commanders—Spaatz, Ninth Air Force commander Hoyt Vandenberg, and Weyland—hoped that his attack would be allowed to continue.

A worsening tactical situation in the Ardennes and a lack of First Army reserves led Eisenhower to order Patton to break off his attack and send forces northward more than 100 miles to relieve the embattled 101st Airborne Division at the town of Bastogne. To reinforce Weyland's XIX TAC, three fighter bomber groups were transferred from IX TAC; a few days later each of the tactical air commands received a P-51-equipped fighter group from the Eighth Air Force.

For the first three days of the offensive, weather conditions were marginal and the fighter bombers were able to operate, especially those of the XIX TAC, since weather conditions to the south were better. They met with intense enemy air opposition as the Luftwaffe came out in strength. Encounters with German aircraft often forced the fighter bombers to jettison their bombs so they could engage in air-to-air combat. Beginning on December 19, a severe winter storm enveloped the region, grounding the fighter bombers.

Legend has it that Patton called the Third Army chaplain to his headquarters to write a prayer asking for moderating weather as he began moving toward Bastogne. In reality, the prayer had been written several weeks before in preparation for attacks on the Siegfried Line. At the time the prayer was written, "immoderate rains" had been the problem, but as elements of the Third Army turned north to relieve Bastogne, winter snow and fog prevailed. Nevertheless, Patton ordered that the prayer be printed off and distributed to the troops on December 22. Whether Divine providence intervened can never be determined in this life, but the weather broke on December 23 and XIX TAC fighter bombers were able to take to the air.

One XIX TAC mission on December 23 was providing escort for IX Troop Carrier Command C-47s dropping supplies to the men of the 101st Airborne at Bastogne. Other missions escorted medium bombers while two groups supported Patton's advancing troops. Ninth Air Force fighter bombers encountered heavy enemy air opposition, claiming no less than 91 German aircraft destroyed against a loss of 19 of their own. Ground claims were for some 230 motorized and armored vehicles, along with enemy troop concentrations and gun positions.

Favorable weather continued for several days, allowing the fighter bombers to continue their devastating attacks on the German forces, which were beginning to run out of fuel and had failed to capture the Allied fuel dumps they were depending on to maintain their advance. Over the five-day period from December 23-28, XIX TAC aircraft claimed 3,200 vehicles, 293 tanks and armored vehicles, 57 guns, 42 locomotives, 1,800 railroad cars, 11 bridges, five ammunition dumps, 234 buildings, 52 German planes destroyed or damaged and, 106 rail lines cut.

The New Year dawned with a devastating attack on the fighter bomber airfields in Holland and Belgium by Luftwaffe planes. The Germans took advantage of expected New Years Eve celebrations by the Allied pilots, an expectation that was not entirely misplaced. A XIX TAC airfield near Metz suffered losses of 20 P-47s, with 17 others damaged. However, of the 25-plane attacking force, 16 were shot down by antiaircraft fire. Later in the day, XIX TAC pilots reportedly shot down 47 more.

An innovation in the war in Europe was the use of night fighters both to provide protection against air attack and to interdict German supply lines at night. The XIX TAC included the 425th Night Fighter Squadron, an organization equipped with P-61 Black Widow twin-engine fighters that had been armed and equipped for night combat. A few modified Douglas A-20s were also assigned to the night-fighter role. The radar-equipped night fighters patrolled the Third Army area looking for enemy aircraft and for signs of vehicles and movement on the ground.

Another innovation was the use of fighter bombers to drop supplies to ground troops in forward areas. The first for the XIX TAC was the delivery of rations to elements of the 80th Division spearheading the bridgehead at the Sauer River. The first drop mission was carried out in spite of heavy German ground fire, and the experiment was repeated at other Third Army points. Early in the European campaign, light liaison aircraft from Third Army's own aviation detachment dropped ammunition to a surrounded company.

Bad winter weather often kept the XIX TAC fighter bombers on the ground in the first weeks of 1945. Fortunately, the decline of the German Wermacht after the Battle of the Bulge allowed the armored and infantry forces to prevail without air support, although the ground troops certainly appreciated the contribution of the fighter bombers when the weather cleared. As Third Army made its way slowly forward through melting snow and mud in the Eifel, the XIX TAC struck at the railroads and roads the Germans were depending on to move their troops and supplies.

On March 14, Third Army crossed the Moselle River. The next day was a good one for the XIX TAC as the command flew 643 sorties. The following day Patton began the encirclement of German Army Group G. The devastating attacks by the Jabos not only destroyed hundreds of vehicles and unknown numbers of troops, but they also made German morale a casualty, preventing the enemy from taking advantage of the highly favorable defensive terrain. On March 24, Field Marshal Montgomery launched his epic crossing of the Rhine, which had already been crossed by American troops. Third Army had crossed at Oppenheim two days earlier.

After the Rhine crossing, the Allied armies rushed toward their objectives, which in the case of the American Twelfth Army Group was the river Elbe, where SHAEF had determined they would link up with advancing Soviet troops. Third Army was turned south, into Czechoslovakia and southern Germany. The XIX TAC continued to support the advancing Third Army, right up to May 7, 1945, when hostilities came to an end. The record of the partnership speaks for itself. During 281 days of combat and 74,447 sorties, XIX TAC pilots were credited with 2,340 German planes, 38,541 motor vehicles, 3,888 tanks and armored cars, 3,237 locomotives, 18,437 freight cars, 364 factories, 2,809 gun installations, 1,730 military installations, 285 bridges, and 220 supply dumps.

The XIX TAC losses were 582 aircraft to all causes. Third Army tank destroyers knocked out 648 tanks and 211 self-propelled guns, 349 antitank guns, 175 artillery pieces, 519 machine guns, and 1,556 vehicles.

Third Army antiaircraft fire claimed 1,084 destroyed and 564 probables out of 6,192 German planes that were engaged in Third Army zones. The partnership between the Third Army and the XIX TAC had proven to be one of the most effective in the history of warfare. □

Sam McGowan is the author of The Cave, *a novel of the Vietnam War. He has also written extensively on the subject of air power during World War II.*

Wahoo

Continued from page 69

her in port until the 25th. By then, Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz had awarded Morton a Navy Cross and O'Kane a Silver Star. Both officers dedicated their decorations to their crew and ship.

When *Wahoo* returned to her sprawling hunting ground, sister subs *Steelhead*, *Pickerel*, and *Scorpion* accompanied her. They conducted a futile search for a Japanese flotilla which counterintelligence sources had reported headed for the Aleutians. When the sharks found no trace of the fleet, they separated and headed for individual patrol sectors. Morton and his crew arrived in the freezing seas off the Kurile Island of Onnekotan on May 2.

On the 4th, the hunters wounded a warplane transport that managed to reverse direction and escape back into Etorofu Strait. On May 7, the Americans sank a 5,700-ton *Yuki Maru*-class cargo ship. The next day they attacked a freighter off Honshu's northeast coast, but the first torpedo exploded prematurely, knocking the second one off course. When the third shot hit the target but failed to explode, a destroyer got a fix on the predator and attacked her with depth charges. Rattled by the concussions, the submariners managed to escape and set course for Kone Saki. At 2:30 the next morning they sank the 9,527-ton tanker *Huzisan Maru* and the 9,467-ton freighter *Hawaii Maru*. After more weapons malfunctions, Morton ran out of ammunition on the 12th and turned for Pearl.

Docking on May 21, Morton received a Gold Star to his Navy Cross, and O'Kane was awarded a second Silver Star. It was O'Kane's last cruise aboard *Wahoo*. He was given command of the brand-new attack submarine *Tang*. It was literally a lifesaving promotion.

The acclaimed *Wahoo* sailed all the way to San Francisco for servicing and resupply. She was also a major draw for politicians, journalists, and sundry and assorted patriots. Her seventh patrol was scheduled to be a grand lark completely around the Japanese home islands and a cruise through the Sea of Japan. She embarked July 21, but after an unprecedented plague of weapons failures a disgusted Morton broke off the cruise early without having sunk any of the six ships he attacked. On August 29, 1943, America's most lethal lady docked at Pearl Harbor for the last time.

On September 12, *Wahoo* left for the shipping lanes between Japan and the Asian mainland. Postwar examination of the *Report of the Imperial Japanese Navy* reveals that on October 2, 1943, the sub sank a 2,968-ton *Taiko Maru*-class merchantman. On the fifth she bagged a 9,000-ton troop transport, and the next morning picked off 1,288-ton *Kanko Maru*.

On the storm-lashed morning of October 9, she fired three torpedoes at another *Kanko Maru*-class ship. The first two missiles mortally wounded the target, but the third fish went haywire in the heavy seas. It circled back and blasted a gaping wound in *Wahoo*'s forward torpedo room. Two days later, Japanese artillerymen spied the crippled submarine churning along the surface of Cape Soya Strait and radioed the alarm.

National Archives

With a careful hand, a Navy sailor guides a torpedo aboard a U.S. submarine.

Antisubmarine floatplanes and sub chasers quickly converged on and assaulted the hapless boat with a cascade of depth charges. By 1:30 PM the surface was coated with oil, wreckage, and dead fish. USS *Wahoo* was never heard from again.

Lieutenant Commander Dudley Morton received his second Navy Cross posthumously. Like 3,505 of his brother American submarine crewmen of World War II, he remains on eternal patrol. These men comprised just 2 percent of the Navy's total wartime complement, but they accounted for over half of the Japanese shipping destroyed by Allied forces. With no heavy bomber airfields in range of Japanese industrial targets until the autumn of 1944, it was America's submarines that choked off the Empire's attempts to maintain its far-flung forces.

Before this war, Japan had no concept of naval defeat. The U.S. Navy's submarines showed this ruthless enemy a lethal new type of warfare. *Wahoo* led the way and taught her sisters well. □

Kelly Bell is a longtime freelance writer based in Tyler, Texas.

Gran Bridgehead

Continued from page 65

Corps, admittedly with valuable assistance from Panzer Corps Feldherrnhalle, had recaptured over 400 square kilometers of territory, inflicted 8,800 casualties on the Red Army, and cleared seven infantry divisions and a guards mechanized corps from west of the Gran. It is remarkable that such an effective fighting machine could have been produced within a month of the Battle of the Bulge disaster, and it is even more so when one takes into account that many of men involved had received only minimal training.

As Otto Kumm described the Leibstandarte, "The Division was in miserable shape, only a shadow of its former self. After the heavy losses in Normandy and during the Ardennes offensive, it had only recently been refitted with personnel who were poorly trained former members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, labor service and police."

The performance of both the LAH and the HJ in South Wind can be explained only by superb leadership, high morale and fighting spirit, and a brilliant reinforcement and replacement system. That said, the question arises as to whether this elite SS panzer corps should have been used in this operation at all.

Despite all the measures taken to disguise the arrival of the Sixth Panzer Army on the Hungarian front, units of I SS Panzer Corps were soon detected in the Gran bridgehead operation. Its commitment there, rather than in the northern part of the Eastern Front, and the knowledge that a second SS Panzer Corps had arrived in Hungary, immediately alerted the Soviets to the possibility of a German offensive. It is also obvious that the premature use of the corps interrupted the proper refitting of the two SS panzer divisions and, indeed, actually ensured that their effectiveness in Operation Spring Awakening would be reduced.

Taken together, these facts indicate that the use of I SS Panzer Corps in Operation South Wind was a serious mistake. The chief operations officer of the Sixth Panzer Army, SS Lt. Col. Georg Maier, expressed similar thoughts in his book *Drama Between Budapest and Vienna*, published in 1975. □

Michael Reynolds is a retired major general in the British Army. He is a veteran of the Korean War and the former director of NATO's Military Plans and Policy Division. Since retiring from the Army, he has written several well-received books and contributed regularly to WWII History.

Recollections of a World War II veteran's adjustment to civilian life make riveting reading.

BY MASON B. WEBB

FOR ANYONE WHO HAS EVER WONDERED WHY THE MEN WHO CAME HOME FROM THE WAR refused to talk with their families about their experiences, this book may hold the clue.

The son of a 10th Mountain Division veteran, Tom Mathews, Jr., is a former journalist and editor with *Newsweek*. Now a novelist and military historian, he writes about his rocky relationship with his father with style, pain, and earnest poignancy in ***Our Fathers' War: Growing Up in the Shadow of the Greatest Generation*** (Broadway Books, New York, 2005, 293 pp., photographs, $24.95, hardcover). This insightful, beautifully crafted book details the author's earliest memories of his hard-drinking father's return to the family home in Utah and the barricades the veteran immediately erected between himself and his wife and toddler son.

Declaring his son a coward, the elder Mathews tried to instill courage and fortitude into his boy while on a family camping trip. Mathews notes that his mother's "drill instructor husband put me through my own survival course. Like a master sergeant confronting a dense recruit, he spelled out the four basic rules of manhood: Don't cry, don't bitch, don't bother me when I'm busy, and never pretend to be sick."

As the years went on, father and son became even further separated by a widening emotional gulf. The elder Mathews' marriage failed, and Tom Jr. stopped talking altogether with his emotionally abusive father. The silence—and the hurt—lasted for years.

Taking his friend Colonel David H. Hackworth's sage advice, Mathews finally proffered an olive branch and broke a two-year silence with his dad, inviting the 81-year-old veteran to retrace the route of the Mountain Division through Italy's northern Apennines. Surprisingly, the father accepted—an acceptance that caused the son a moment of panic. Says Mathews, "The two of us weren't carrying just baggage from the past; we were carrying steamer trunks. I needed to lighten the load. Growing up in the shadow of the Greatest Generation meant a son also had to grow out of it, and, at a ridiculously old age, I wasn't sure I knew how."

But, miraculously, the trip worked. The senior Mathews climbed the same peaks he had climbed in his youth and talked with his son about friends and comrades who had been killed beside him in Italy's ancient hills and valleys. Only then did the son finally break through the 60-year-thick carapace of silence and anger, of denial and rejection, of bullying and browbeating. The two men embraced, cried, and began restoring their lost years, using what little time they both had left to rebuild bridges to each other.

This moving book also contains nine other dramatic stories of estranged fathers and sons, separated by an impenetrable shield called World War II. Their stories, including those of a black pilot who served with the Tuskegee Airmen and a man whose life was saved by Audie Murphy, make this a powerful "must-read."

Our Father's War, like *The Greatest Generation* and *Flags of Our Fathers*, is more than a war story. It is a deeply personal, sometimes achingly painful portrait of a son trying to find his father buried beneath the scar tissue that months of combat had built up on his heart. This is not the book for readers who prefer the "blood and guts" variety of war book. Very little actual combat is reported within its pages. It is a personal, introspective look at the impact combat has on men and why so many returning veterans chose to keep their war stories bottled up inside rather than share them with their families.

Experiencing the horrors of war firsthand, many veterans would find it difficult to relate to friends and loved ones during the return to civilian life.

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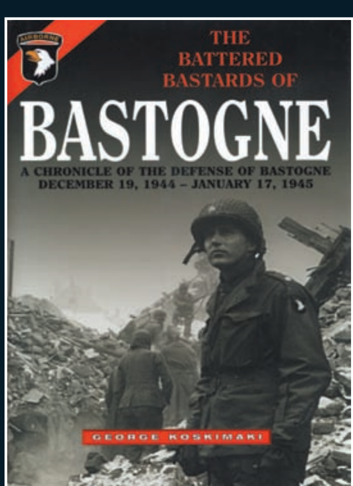
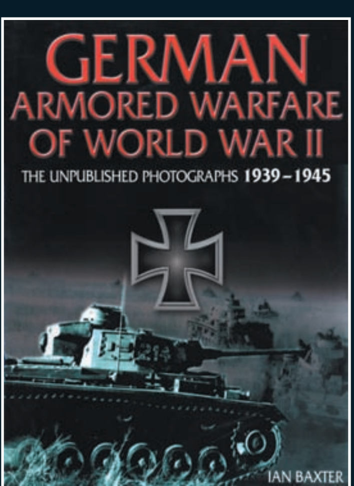
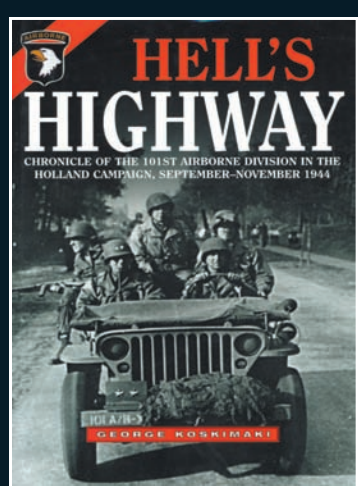
World War II Books For the Serious Collector







Battle of the Bulge 1944 Hitler's Last Hope • Superbly Illustrated with rare photographs and detailed maps • Written by Robin Cross • 176 Pages Copyright 2002 • 8.5" x 11.5" • $34.95. In December 1944, the German Army launched an attack through the Ardennes forest to seize the port of Antwerp and cut the Allied supply lines. They were hoping to force the Western Allies either to delay their advance on Berlin or agree to a peace settlement. The book's authoritative text is illustrated with rare photos and detailed maps that explain the troop movements during the battle.

The Battered Bastards of Bastogne • Written by George Koskimaki • Fully Illustrated with Photos and Maps • 484 Pages • Copyright 1994 • $32.95. Through the eyes of the US 101st Airborne Division, The Screaming Eagles, *The Battered Bastards of Bastogne* relives the land and air war around Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. Firsthand accounts bring the battle back to life, for a look at this battle as viewed by the soldier, not the historian. George Koskimaki weaves the memoirs of each of these men into a cohesive whole. The memories of one soldier fit with those of a nother unit or group in another nearby piece of terrain to present a gripping account of the battle.

German Armored Warfare of World War II-The Unpublished Photographs 1939-1945 • Written by Ian Baxter • Over 350 Previously unpublished photographs of German armor • 224 Pages • Copyright 2003 • 9.5" x 11.5" • $34.95. *German Armored Warfare of World War II* captures the full might of the Panzerwaffe, Hitler's Panzer arm, from its early triumphs to its final demise. Featuring unpublished photographs, many from albums of individuals who experienced the war first-hand, the book presents a unique and vivid record of German armor from 1939 to 1945.

Hell's Highway-Chronicle of the 101st Airborne in the Holland Campaign • Written by George Koskimaki • Fully Illustrated with Photos and Maps 453 Pages • Copyright 1989 • $32.95. Members of the US 101st Airborne Division, The Screaming Eagles, fought in Operation Market Garden to liberate the Netherlands. *Hell's Highway* is the personal account of the 612 members of this force who risked their lives for the freedom of the world. George Koskimaki expertly weaves together individual accounts of the battles and makes them into a cohesive whole. *Hell's Highway* helps us relive the battle by giving us a true picture of the war as seen through the eyes of the men who fought it.

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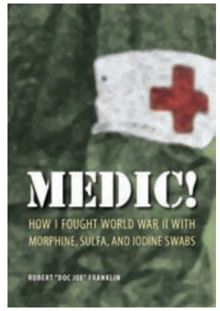
As Mathews writes, "The real question for a son was not 'What did you do in the war, Daddy?' It was 'What did the war do to you?'"

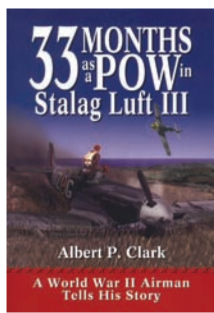
MEDIC! How I Fought World War II with Morphine, Sulfa, and Iodine Swabs, by Robert J. "Doc Joe" Franklin, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006, 160 pp., maps, photographs, index, $21.95, hardcover.

"Not a lot about war is believable," writes Robert J. "Doc Joe" Franklin in his searing memoir, *Medic!*, and certainly much of the two years of combat packed into this slim volume may seem far-fetched, but it is the real deal. For anyone who has ever wondered what combat was really like, this astonishing little book is about as close as one can come without getting the mud and blood all over them.

Written by a front-line medic who served for more than two years with the 45th Infantry Division through the tough fighting in Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany before being evacuated as a casualty himself, this book is a searing, devastating look at combat, heroism, and stupidity. It pulls no punches.

An out-of-work Broadway actor struggling to get by during the Depression, "Doc Joe" reveals the inadequate medical training he received prior to going into combat and the on-the-job skills he was forced to acquire once there; he pioneered several innovative life-saving techniques.





Franklin is unsparing in his descriptions of battlefield horrors and unstinting in his praise of buddies who risked their lives while attempting to save others. In one of many graphic incidents, he describes how, at Anzio, a platoon had jumped into a water-filled ditch to escape a German artillery barrage: "An eighty-eight round landed in the ditch just as the men did. I arrived only seconds later. [Medic Guy] Pearce was desperately trying to hold three wounded men on the slippery wall of the ditch, which was thigh deep in water. Pearce called to me, 'There are two men underwater!' I fished around under the muddy water and pulled them up, but they were dead."

Franklin is also unsparing in his criticism of leaders who sent men into battle foolishly, or did stupid things that cost them their lives and the lives of their men. He writes, "I ran to the sound of a loud explosion. Lieutenant Lehman, an 'explosives expert,' had found a butterfly bomb that hadn't exploded. He sat cross-legged on the ground with three men around him trying to figure out what was wrong with it, and he must have given the propeller a couple of turns. When I got there Lehman had no arms or legs, his head was as flat as a pancake, and his brains lay in a neat pile about a yard away—as if someone had scooped them out and laid them there. The men around him were dead."

Franklin is justifiably proud that he never shirked his responsibility on the battlefield when, even in the midst of a fierce firefight or heavy shelling, he heard the cry of "Medic!" For many mortally wounded men, he could do nothing, but just his presence by their side helped them spend their last moments alive in peace.

His mind and body worn out by the war, Franklin came home a physical and psychological wreck (he calls himself a psycho) but managed, through the help of a loving wife, to pull through and lead as much of a normal existence as possible for someone suffering from lifelong post traumatic stress disorder.

Medic!—a book that is likely to leave the reader shattered—is his loving tribute to his wife and to all his longlost friends. It will undoubtedly rank with the classics of military literature as one of the finest, most heart-breaking, most brutally honest books ever written about men in war.

While the contributions and heroism of battlefield medics is unquestioned, it is curious that few books have been written by and about medics. Franklin's book fills that gap. An absolute "must-read."

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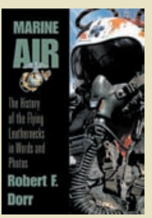
33 Months as a POW in Stalag Luft III: A World War II Airman Tells His Story, by Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Albert P. Clark, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, CO, 2004, 224 pp., photographs, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, $17.95, softcover.

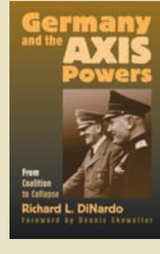
Despite its rather unwieldy title, this is a fascinating, well-written account of life in a German POW camp and the real "Great Escape" as experienced by one of the major participants, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Albert P. Clark, who ended his 38-year military career as superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy.

NEW AND NOTABLE

Marine Air, *by Robert F. Dorr, Berkley Caliber, $24.95.* The first fully-illustrated oral history of the United States Marine Corps Air Force—the "Flying Leathernecks." During World War II, it expanded to sixty-one squadrons—twenty with at least one flying ace—and over 10,000 pilots.



Germany and the Axis Powers: From Coalition to Collapse, *by Richard L. DiNardo, University of Kansas Press, 320 pp., $34.95.* This examination of Germany's dysfunctional relationship with Italy, Rumania, Hungary, and Finland shows an Axis of different goals and a lack of coordination which eventually spelled doom for Hitler's Reich.



Secret Weapons and World War II: Japan in the Shadow of Big Science, *by Walter E. Grunden, University of Kansas Press, 348 pp., $39.95.* Japan's failure to develop such technologies as rocket and jet propulsion, radar, and nuclear weapons ensured its defeat. Japan's weak infrastructure, a lack of raw materials and an inadequate industrial base all added to the nation's inability to keep up with its enemies, particularly the United States.

The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West, *by Karl-Heinz Frieser, U.S. Naval Institute, $47.50.* This history of the fall of the West has been translated from its original German. It explodes many myths and shows how the fog of war and proficiency in execution are more important factors than plans.

Zhukov's Greatest Defeat: The Red Army's Epic Disaster in Operation Mars, 1942, *by David M. Glantz, University of Kansas Press, 432 pp., $19.95.* When the Red Army tried to push the Nazis away from Moscow, they incurred 335,000 casualties and lost 1,600 tanks. Launched in conjunction with the relief of Stalingrad, it proved to be Marshall Georgie Zhukov's greatest defeat. Once covered up, the campaign is now discussed in detail. □

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What set the original *Call of Duty* game apart from other first-person shooting games set during World War II is the feeling it delivered that the player was just a small part of a much larger battle. Which, since players were taking the role of an enlisted rifleman in some of the war's biggest battles, they were. ***Call of Duty 2***, for the PC from Activison, captures this feeling even better, with more computer-controlled characters on the screen, both allies and enemies. At the same time, the computer AI doesn't let the player hang back. It responds to the player being inactive by becoming more aggressive. Particularly with grenades.

In addition to more people, *CoD2* also adds vehicles to the game, both the single player and the on-line multiplayer. These additions take place on larger battlefields. The single-player game has the same open-ended scenario selection as the first game. Players can start in Normandy, Russia, or the African desert. No matter where the fight takes place, it turns out that one of the most welcome additions is the ability to lay smoke, which not only keeps the character alive, but also adds to the "yikes" factor of the game when the character suddenly comes on the enemy in the midst of the billows.

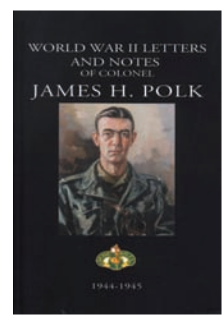
In contrast to the ground-pounding action of *CoD2*, ***Heroes of the Pacific***, for the PC, PS2, and Xbox and also from Activision, is a highflying game that puts players behind the joystick of a warplane battling above the Pacific. The game starts with the attack on Pearl Harbor and carries on through the major battles of the Pacific,

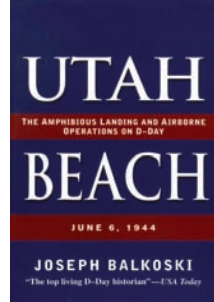
including Wake, Midway, and the Coral Sea. Overall, the game contains ten campaigns and 26 missions. The missions take in the full range of air combat in the era including patrol, attack and defense, ground support, and bombing, both dive and torpedo.

Players can ultimately choose from 35 different planes in *HotP*. The game can track over 100 planes in combat at a time, which in addition to the highly detailed ship models that appear in many missions, means that combat is very immersive. Players can choose if they want to fly and fight arcade or historic style, and they can choose the difficulty of the missions. The AI wingmen do a decent job during the single-player missions, but the experience of the multiplayer game with real humans "flying" is definitely superior.

A final game worth mentioning is Lost Battalion's naval-themed card game, ***Battlegroup: 1939-1945***. The game comes with an Allies and an Axis deck, plus an action deck and dice. The game is a historical simulation of WWII ship combat only in the broad sense that the ships and planes on the cards, and the statistics derived for them, are based on the historical units. The rules of the game reflect the realities of that combat, but because of the way the cards are drawn by the players, it is possible to have ships acting together and opposing each other who were never near one another during the war.

Historical limitations aside, *Battlegroup* is easy to learn, easy to teach, and fast to play. There are rules for two, three, and four players, and players who want to win have to know or learn the roles of their ships and planes, balancing their strengths and weaknesses just as the historical admirals did. Send the planes to attack or keep them to defend? Attack at night without air cover at all? In addition, the victory conditions change with the cards played so that simply sinking the most tonnage is not always the way to win. □





In July 1942, Clark, was a young lieutenant colonel and executive officer of the 31st Fighter Group flying out of Tangmere, England, when he was shot down while piloting a British Spitfire over the Pas de Calais.

Rich in detail and filled with dozens of never-before-published photos taken with a hidden camera inside the prison camp, *33 Months* tells the story of Clark's training, introduction to combat, and his subsequent capture and incarceration. That harrowing experience was soon supplanted by the trials and tribulations of life inside Stalag Luft III near Sagan, Poland. Although the camp had plenty of activities (such as a band, sports, theatrical productions complete with costumes, etc.) designed to keep prisoners' minds off thoughts of escape, it was plotting escape attempts that occupied most of the POWs' time.

Anyone familiar with the 1963 Steve McQueen-James Garner film *The Great Escape* will immediately recognize the theme here: Royal Air Force and American pilots incarcerated together in a remote POW camp use seemingly innocent recreational activities as a cover for dirty, dangerous tunnel-digging work that goes on secretly for months, culminating in a climactic mass breakout that ends in tragedy. Clark, as one of the senior ranking officers at Luft III, was in the thick of the planning and execution of escape attempts, and his account lends immediacy and authenticity to the tale.

Here, too, is the full, tragic story of the March 1944 breakout during which 76 POWs got away before the attempt was detected by the Germans and brutally crushed. Clark recalls the last conversation he had with Roger Bushells, the RAF officer in charge of escape activities in the north camp, on the day of the big breakout: "It was late afternoon on 24 March 1944 when I was called out to the north wire. Someone walking the circuit passed the word that Roger Bushell wanted to talk to me. I went out immediately and Roger was standing there waiting. He called me over to the wire. 'We go tonight,' he said, then added, 'Please don't do anything to screw it up.'

"I assured him that our escape group had nothing planned and wished him good luck. This breakout came to be known as the Great Escape. A number of good books have been written about it, but few, in my opinion, have given enough attention to the terrible risks and stresses that each individual who went down into that dank, dark tunnel had to face."

Over the next few days, all but three of the escapees—despite their disguises and expertly forged identification papers—were rounded up; 50 of them, including Bushell, were executed in cold blood.

The book *33 Months* is a riveting, revealing look at what went on behind the barbed wire and guard towers of one German stalag and the extent to which desperate prisoners of war will go to regain their freedom—even at the cost of their lives.

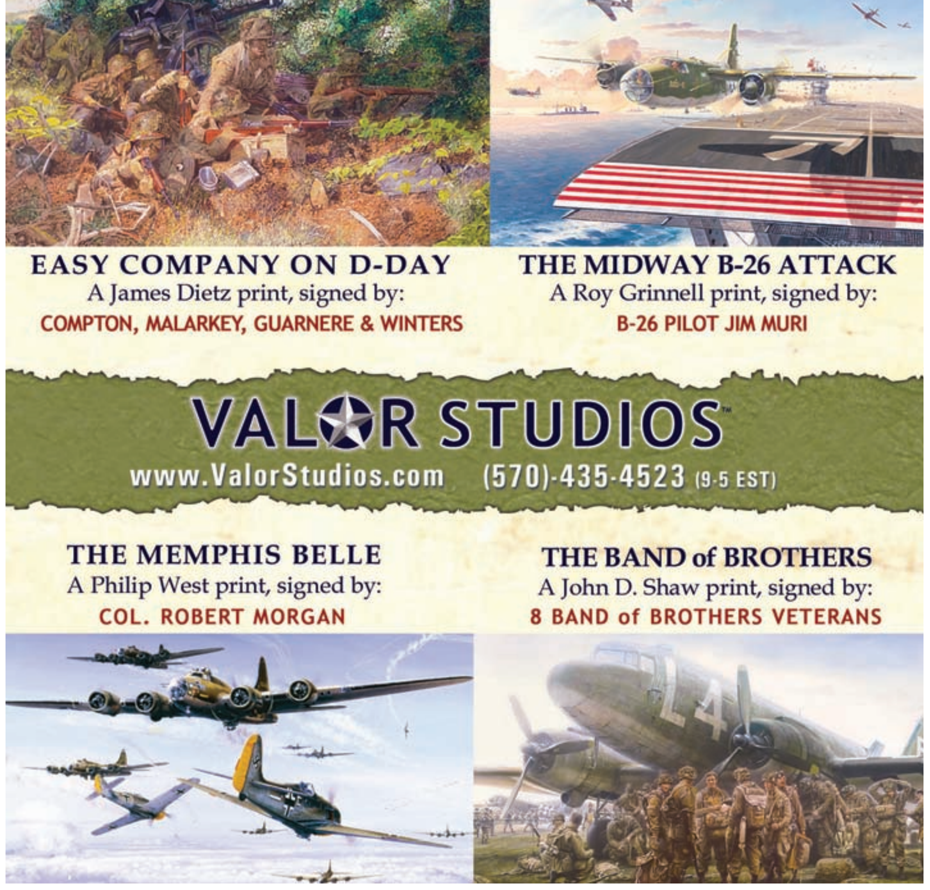
World War II Letters and Notes of Colonel James H. Polk, compiled and edited by James H. Polk III, Red Anvil Press, Oakland, OR, 2005, 307 pp., photographs, maps, index, $19.95 softcover.

A fine addition to the wealth of recent first-person accounts, this collection of wartime letters of the famed commanding officer of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Group (Mechanized) was compiled and edited by his son, James H. Polk III.

A young colonel (only 32) when he took over the reins of the "Brave Rifles" in 1944, Polk had a distinguished military career that spanned 37 years, eventually he rose to four-star rank and command of USAREUR, Seventh Army, and Central Army Command, NATO.

Serving under 3rd Army commander General George S. Patton, Jr., Polk gives us glimpses of Patton, George C. Marshall, James van Fleet, and others, and details of his life in combat ("We really punished those bastards last night—I can't help but feel good about it. I am not getting cruel or ugly, really I'm not; but when you see your friends die, it's a very personal thing."), and is not afraid to reveal to his wife, Josephine, his personal fears ("We have had two very exciting attacks with bombs dropping and guns popping... I say exciting, but it really scared the hell out of me. I have decided that there are all sorts of men braver than I am."), frustrations ("Tomorrow looks like a rough day... More of this business ordering good men out to die, and how I hate it."), and small triumphs ("I had a wonderful bath in a tub full of luscious hot water. You can't appreciate the luxury of it until you have been without one for three weeks.").

Polk's unit was in the thick of the action in Europe and spearheaded Patton's drive out of



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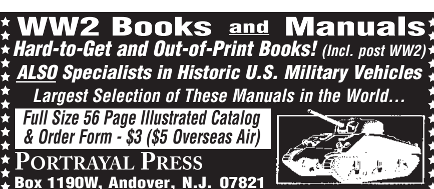


the Norman hedgerows, the dash across France, the penetration into Germany, and the final victory over the Nazis in Bavaria. Polk and his men then were in charge of providing humanitarian aid for thousands of displaced persons and Holocaust survivors.

The letters, all written to his wife Jo between February 1944 and October 1945, paint a remarkably intimate picture of a man trying to balance his tender love for his wife and young children with the often brutal business of leading men in combat. Although heavily self-censored (for example, when trying to slyly give his wife a clue as to where his unit was—Brest, France—he makes reference rather humorously to her "shapely chest"), the letters do much to illustrate the "loneliness of command" and how important it was for every man, whether a colonel or a private, to have a loving anchor at home.

The letters are remarkable not only for what they reveal but also for what they leave out. Although Polk often gives Jo detailed accounts of the actions in which his unit engages, he omits much of the gruesome details in order to spare his wife needless worry about his safety. Fortunately, in the late 1980s, he went back and added notes to most of the letters that give the reader a more complete "back story" of what was going on, combat-wise, at the time.

Profusely illustrated with personal photographs (which, unfortunately, are not reproduced well), this is, overall, a very fascinating and satisfying book.

Utah Beach: The Amphibious Landing and Airborne Operations on D-Day, June 6, 1944 by Joseph Balkoski, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2005, 380 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $26.95, hardcover.

Operation Overlord, the invasion of northern France on June 6, 1944, continues to generate more books, articles, films, etc., than any other single operation of World War II—and for good reason: It marked the beginning of the downfall of Nazi Germany in the West. While the Normandy invasion remains arguably the most important combat operation of World War II, at least from the American and British perspective, the struggle at Omaha Beach has garnered the lion's share of the public's seemingly insatiable interest in the invasion.

Forgetting for a moment the important British and Canadian contributions at Gold, Sword, and Juno Beaches, the American effort to land at the eastern base of the Cotentin Peninsula on a beach code-named "Utah" has for too long played second fiddle to Omaha. Joseph Balkoski's fine new history should do much to help correct the imbalance.

Utah Beach becomes the third leg in the author's Normandy trilogy (joining *Beyond the Beachhead* and *Omaha Beach*). Balkoski begins by taking the reader behind the scenes to the efforts, spearheaded primarily by British Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, to add this fifth beachhead to the overall invasion plan. The logistical nightmare Utah Beach represented in the all-important effort to take Normandy was only one aspect of this difficult phase of the overall operation. Whereas the Omaha Beach phase was primarily a straight amphibious landing, Utah Beach involved considerably more planning, coordination, and resources.

PEOPLE ARE READING...

BEST-SELLING WORLD WAR II BOOKS ON WWW.AMAZON.COM THIS MONTH:

Biggest Brother: The Life of Major Dick Winters, The Man Who Led the Band of Brothers, *by Larry Alexander, 320 pp., $24.95, hardcover.*

Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway, *by Peter Parshall and Anthony Tully, Potomac Books, 2005, 640 pp., $35.00.*

Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne From Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest, *by Stephen Ambrose, Simon & Schuster, 2001, 336 pp., $16.00.*

Night, *by Elie Wiesel, Bantam, 1982, 128 pp., $5.99.*

Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II, *by Robert Curson, Random House, 2004, 400 pp., $26.95.*

In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War, *by David Reynolds, Random House, 2005, 656 pp.*

The Long Walk Home: The True Story of a Trek to Freedom, *by Slavomir Rawicz, The Lyons Press, 1997, 256 pp., $14.95.*

Survival in Auschwitz, *by Primo Levi, Touchstone, 1995, 192 pp., $13.00*

Flags of Our Fathers, *by James Brady and Ron Powers, Bantam, 2001, 384 pp., $26.00.*

Armageddon: The Battle for Germany, 1944-1945 *by Max Hastings, Knopf, 2004, 640 pp., $30.00.*

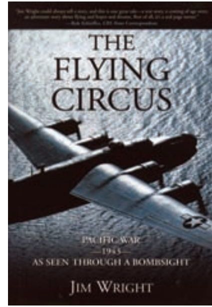
Besides the seaborne landing of Maj. Gen. Raymond Barton's well-trained but inexperienced 4th Infantry Division, vital roles were also played by two American airborne divisions—the 82nd and 101st—plus a host of glider-borne troops. These forces were necessary not only to prevent German reinforcements from attacking the beachhead, but also to prevent the German coastal defenders from fleeing from their own destruction.

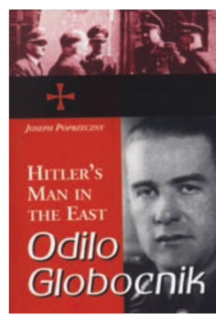
Those familiar with Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* and the television series of the same name will be familiar with the role played by the 101st Airborne Division, but Balkoski's work goes into far greater detail.

The story of the Utah Beach phase of Operation Overlord was previously covered in Cornelius Ryan's ground-breaking *The Longest Day* and Ambrose's monumental *D-Day, 6 June 1944*, but Balkoski's research has dug deep to uncover the myriad details that went into making Utah the success it was.

Strangely, there is precious little mention in Balkoski's book of the disastrous drop by the 82nd Airborne's F Company, 505th PIR, directly into the center of the key crossroads village, Ste. Mere-Eglise.

This omission aside, Utah Beach will provide the reader interested in the scope and detail of the entire Overlord operation a more complete picture of the deathless deeds of the men who carried out the operation.





The Flying Circus: Pacific War—1943—As Seen Through a Bombsight by Jim Wright, The Lyons Press, Guilford, CT, 2005, 214 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $22.95, hardcover.

Former Texas Congressman and Speaker of the House Jim Wright is one of a number of World War II veterans (Dwight D. Eisenhower, Bob Dole, Daniel Inouye, and George H.W. Bush are others who come immediately to mind) who parlayed their military service into long and successful political careers. While the title of Wright's memoir might conjure up images of World War I German ace Manfred von Richthofen's aerial combat group, it is actually a remarkable tale of war as seen through the eyes of a young B-24 bombardier assigned to the 380th Heavy Bomb Group, and his often humorous, sometimes harrowing experiences as a freshly minted Air Corps second lieutenant in the Pacific Theater.

The Flying Circus takes the reader through Wright's decision to drop out of the University of Texas and enter the service shortly after Pearl Harbor; his desire to become a bombardier instead of a pilot because the training was shorter (five months as compared to nine)and he wanted to get into combat before the war was over; and, ultimately, his assignment to a bomb group based in Australia. Through his straightforward, descriptive prose, Wright captures both the tedium and terror of long-distance bombing missions over the heavily defended Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the South Pacific.

He writes of one mission over Balikpapan: "At twenty minutes after midnight, Gus's Bus was first to reach the target area. A hole in the loose flotilla of overhead clouds gave us a perfect sight of the refinery complex with its rows of big oil and gasoline storage tanks. To my amazement, ground lights were illuminating the tanks and buildings. The crosshairs of my bombsight locked onto the dead center of the

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tank installations during a surprisingly steady bomb run. There was no flak, not yet, no interceptors in the air. They hadn't been expecting us. We banked to the right, following 'bombs away,' circling back on the seaward side to begin our homeward course. Below, two separate storage tanks were ablaze. Black smoke billowed. All the ground lights were now out, but our tank fires lighted the area. We'd hit our mark."

The air war in the Pacific has for too long been underdocumented. Wright's book helps to rectify that situation and will give the tens of thousands of Air Force personnel who served in that theater much overdue recognition.

Jim Wright can tell a war story with the best of them, and this one is all the better because it comes from the heart and from the gut—a real page turner.

Odilo Globocnik, Hitler's Man in the East,by Joseph Poprzeczny, McFarland, Jefferson, NC, 2004, 439 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $45.00, softcover.

Odilo Globocnik is a name that many in the West may not be familiar with, but this book should do much to change that situation. Along with Rudolf Höss, the kommandant of the Auschwitz death camp, Globocnik, an Austrian and SS Brigadeführer (brigadier general), ruled the Lublin district of Poland with an iron fist and deserves to go down in history as one of the worst mass murderers of all time.

Betraying his homeland by conspiring with the Nazis to destroy Austria's independence, Hitler rewarded Globocnik by appointing him the first Nazi Gauleiter of Vienna; he later played a crucial role in the ethnic cleansing of the conquered territories of Poland and the Ukraine. It is estimated that Globocnic was directly responsible for the deaths of at least 1.5 million people in three notorious Nazi camps in that occupied country: Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec.

The author of this detailed, chilling biography, a journalist in Perth, Australia, spent years exhaustively researching his subject, translating many documents unknown and unavailable in the West, and conducting extensive interviews with Globocnik's former fiancée, Irmgard Rickheim. Many of the numerous photos come from Rickheim's own collection and are published here for the first time. Nearly every aspect of Globocnik's life, from his ancestry to the seven varying accounts of his death by suicide after being captured by British troops in 1945, is carefully scrutinized.

The price is rather steep for a paperback, but the story within is important to students of the Holocaust and for those wishing to understand how ordinary Germans (or, in this case, Austrians) could make the steep descent into hell.

All-American Wonder: The Photographic History of the U.S. Military 1/4 Ton Truck (Third Edition) by Fred W. Crismon, Victory Publishing Ltd., Rogers, MN, 2005, 605 pp., illustrations, $59.95, softcover.

For all the Jeepophiles who simply can't get enough views and information about their favorite 4x4, this 600-plus page book should do the trick.

As a follow up to the first two books also titled *All-American Wonder*, by Ray Cowdery, Crismon's third volume, the result of years of exhaustive research, is a worthy successor.

In addition to being packed with literally hundreds of historic photos of the development, testing, manufacturing, and combat theater shots of one of the great military American inventions of all time, there are also dozens of excellent full-color photos of restored Jeeps at museums, car shows, and various living history events around the world.

Such rare Jeeps as the Bantam BRC-40; Willys WAC or Jeeplet; the MBL-2; the Parajeep; the MLW "Jungle Jeep" and "Sand Jeep;" armored Jeeps, and many more models are featured in high-quality detailed photos. *All-American Wonder* packs in a seemingly endless parade of Jeep variations, all the way up to the HUM-Vs of today. There's even a fun chapter showing scores of toy Jeeps.

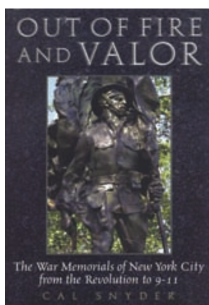
As an extra attraction, there are quite a few advertisements in the back of the book for parts retailers, which will come in handy for anyone seeking to restore one of these military workhorses. A thoroughly delightful, essential, and informative book that will keep Jeep enthusiasts excited for years to come, *All-American Wonder* is indeed a wonder.

"I'm Staying With My Boys …"—The Heroic Life of Sgt. John Basilone, USMC, by Jim Proser with Jerry Cutter, Lightbearer Communications, Hilton Head Island, SC, 2004, 330 pp., bibliography, photographs, $19.95, softcover.

This is the remarkable true story of one of the legends of the United States Marine Corps—Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant John Basilone—written in a remarkable style.

Jim Prosser, a documentary filmmaker, was so intrigued with Basilone's life and heroic deeds that he set out to write the definitive portrait of a hard-fighting Marine who sacrificed his life for his men on Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945.

As the author says, "It is my hope that I have created a more accurate portrait of [Basilone] than has existed before. I have attempted to



recreate his story in his own voice based on hundreds of hours of interviews with people who knew John well and spoke with him frequently. I also grew up near his hometown of Raritan, New Jersey. The speech of that area is second nature to me."

Because it is the author speaking in autobiographical first-person style, the effect is a little like reading a historical novel. Yet, the language and the imagery are so dead-on that one soon forgets that this book was not written by the subject. It is a remarkable achievement, especially when one learns that Prosser never even served in the military, let alone under fire in the Pacific.

John Basilone grew up poor, making money as a golf caddy, then dropped out of school and joined the Army in the mid-1930s. Always handy with his fists, he earned a reputation as a tough boxer in the Army and even picked up a boxer's moniker, Manila John, while serving in the Philippines. But he grew tired of the peacetime military and got out, hoping to find a new direction for his life. Then came Pearl Harbor, and he reenlisted, this time in the Marines.

Prosser has captured the sights, sounds, and smells of combat perfectly. With his unit dug into the greenish hell of Guadalcanal, Prosser/Basilone says, "Heavy rain filled our holes with a nasty soup of mud, piss, and floating trash. When we weren't standing in this muck we were out stringing a second and third apron of perimeter wire. Since we didn't have any trip flares to let us know when our Japanese guests might arrive, we hung tin cans full of pebbles and grenades with the pins half pulled on the wires.

"A week went by while we filled more sand bags with mud and the enemy marched closer each day. On October 23, a light tank and infantry attack across the mouth of the Matanikau ran right into the teeth of Vandegrift's defenses. It was chewed up in short order with over 600 Japs killed, many of them trapped in a jungle clearing where US tanks just drove over them instead of wasting ammunition. They ground the poor bastards up like sausage under the tank treads until the entire clearing was covered in gore and left to rot in the sun."

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Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

1. Publication Title- WWII History Magazine 2. Publication Number- 1539-5456. 3. Filing Date- 10/11/05. 4. Issue Frequency- Bimonthly 5. Number of Issues Published Annually 6. 6. Annual Subscription Price $16.95. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known office of Publication- 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Fairfax County. Contact Person: Mark Hintz. Telephone 703-964-0361.8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher- 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170. 9 Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor- Publisher-Mark Hintz, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Editor Michael Haskew, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Managing Editor- Carl Gnam, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170. 10. Owner- Sovereign Media Inc, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon Va 20170, Mark Hintz, 453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, Carl Gnam-453-B Carlisle Drive, Herndon VA 20170, 11. Known Bondholders, mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. None.12. Tax Status: Has not changed during preceding 12 months. 13. Publication Title- WWII History Magazine. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below- November 2005. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months. a. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run) 89,068. b. Paid and/or Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 35,503. 2. Paid In-County Subscriptions 0. 3.Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 19,305. 4. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS 0.
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Based partly on Basilone's sister's book, *The Basilone Story*, and partly on interviews with men who served alongside the sergeant, Prosser's retelling of one Marine's tale of courage and devotion to duty puts the reader on the battlefield as only the best books do. Most of all, *"I'm Staying With My Boys"* is undoubtedly a book that its subject would have wholeheartedly endorsed.

Out of Fire and Valor: The War Memorials of New York City from the Revolution to 9-11, by Cal Snyder, Bunker Hill Publishing, Piermont, NH, 2005, 240 pp., photographs, bibliography, maps, index, $25.00, hardcover.

How many people pay much attention to war memorials? To most city dwellers, statues, fountains, and plaques commemorating this hero, that regiment, or that battle are as invisible and ubiquitous as pigeons and park benches.

Ex-Vietnam Marine Cal Snyder, author and photographer of this handsome coffee table volume, suggests that we all take the time to study more carefully the monuments that abound in New York City—or wherever we happen to live.

"Our grand civic monuments," begins Snyder, "are meant to speak for the life of the city or nation, or to evoke as the doughboys and angels do the spirit of their time and place. Among them are a few tributes ... that salute the exploits of local military units, and other, lesser-known works, many of them in the outer boroughs, that honor a single man or a singular act of bravery... They ask us to think of the unspeakable—of the deeds of war that must be done, and the deaths and suffering exacted in their name."

Covering the whole panoply of military monuments found throughout Manhattan and nearby boroughs, Snyder takes us on an eye-opening tour of the city and the monuments, artists, and architects behind them.

He also explains how and why the shape and content of war memorials have changed over the course of decades—from the literal, if idealized, depiction of daring deeds to the more somber, reflective, and abstract notions of war and its deeper rumblings. His full-color photographs and elegant prose, captured in a series of short essays, provide a wonderful lesson in American and New York military history.

Also included is a descriptive catalog of the city's 159 memorials, including maps of walking tours to the sites.

Out of Fire and Valor shows that the legacy of our monuments and memorials is one of unstinting courage, pride, and heartbreak, and a search for honest remembrance by now forgotten generations. □

Profiles

Continued from page 21

Radford said, "Butch, with accompanying planes, saved my formation from certain torpedo hits." In the end, all the participants of the night action would be awarded the Navy Cross.

What exactly happened to O'Hare has been the subject of much speculation. Ensign Skon would later summarize his beliefs: "I'm certain in my own mind that he was hit directly. We had perfect radio communication. Butch would have talked to us as his plane fell if he had not been directly hit."

The most widely held belief seems to be that O'Hare was brought down by a short but lucky burst of machine-gun fire by the forward gunner in the Betty. Since no Japanese airman claimed to have shot down an American plane that night, the gunner probably did not even know what he had accomplished.

Other brave American pilots came forward to continue the night fighting work that O'Hare had started. During the remainder of the war, carrier planes flew 164 night missions and shot down 103 enemy planes. Six more American pilots would be lost in night combat.

O'Hare was officially declared dead almost one year after his disappearance. He was credited with shooting down 6 and a half Japanese planes in combat. His decorations included the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and the Purple Heart.

President John F. Kennedy stepped into bright sunshine and an unseasonably warm temperature as he walked out of the United Airlines terminal building at O'Hare International Airport. The first order of business during the brief presidential visit to Chicago on March 23, 1963, would be a formal airport dedication ceremony. The president laid a wreath at the base of a plaque honoring the airport's namesake before stepping up a platform overlooking the crowd of dignitaries and well wishers.

A World War II hero himself, Kennedy spoke of the White House ceremony in 1942 in which O'Hare was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Roosevelt. "The tragically short life of Lieutenant Commander Edward H. O'Hare came to an end only 18 months later," Kennedy remarked, "but his name lives on in the great international airport that we dedicate here today."

The airport remains a lasting tribute to an early American hero of World War II. □

First-time contributor John Domagalski is a marketing manager for a major corporation and resides in the Chicago area.

axisandallies.com

Conflicts of Interest

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