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Photo: National Archives

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Editorial

The invasion of southern France took place 75 years ago.

WHILE THE EYES OF THE WORLD REMAINED ON NORMANDY DURING THE difficult days that followed the D-Day landings of June 6, 1944, a scant nine weeks later another amphibious invasion of France took place. The second, the often overlooked invasion of southern France, was crucial to the Allied victory in World War II as well.

Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France, was executed 75 years ago this month, on August 15, 1944. Originally intended to take place simultaneously with the Normandy operation, it was postponed due to an acute shortage of landing craft. One of the earlier codenames for the D-Day landings, known to history as Operation Overlord, was Sledgehammer, and in keeping with that moniker the invasion of southern France was initially called Operation Anvil, only to be renamed later.

The U.S. Seventh Army, commanded by General Alexander Patch, and French Army B, led by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, were designated for Operation Dragoon. The spearhead of the Seventh Army was the U.S. VI Corps, commanded by General Lucian Truscott. Airborne forces were scheduled to land by parachute and glider about 15 miles inland from the coastline to secure objectives beyond the invasion beaches, and French commandos were put ashore to secure the flanks of the 35-mile strip of the French Riviera between the cities of Cannes and Toulon. Supporting the landing effort, a powerful fleet of four aircraft carriers, six battleships, 21 cruisers, and dozens of destroyers would provide air cover and preinvasion shore bombardment, while 1,300 Allied bombers based in Italy and on the islands of Corsica and Sardinia struck enemy strongpoints and infrastructure.

The landings began just after 8 AM, as the U.S. 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions came ashore against relatively light resistance. Although the quality of the German forces immediately opposing the assault was questionable and only four divisions were available to contest the landings initially, some German troops fought stubbornly at a beach dubbed "Camel Red." Even after air and naval gunfire struck heavy gun emplacements and bunkers, the defenders were not subdued, and troops were diverted to quieter sectors. The airborne and commando phases of Operation Dragoon had begun before daylight, while the French Resistance was also active, disrupting German communications and spreading confusion in rear areas. Although the airborne operation ran into difficulties, the troopers were able to concentrate their numbers and complete missions. Within hours, soldiers advancing from the beachhead had linked up with the airborne units, and the cities of Le Muy and Saint-Tropez had been liberated.

Meanwhile, de Tassigny's French forces came ashore and turned toward the cities of Toulon and Marseilles. Attacking both simultaneously, they ran into stiff opposition at Toulon, suffering 2,700 killed and wounded before the city was secured on August 27. After enduring attacks from the resistance, an enraged civilian population, and the French armed forces, the German garrison of Marseilles surrendered on the 28th. The French lost more than 1,800 casualties, but 11,000 German prisoners were taken.

Operation Dragoon proved highly successful. After clearing the beachhead, the American 36th Division liberated the city of Grenoble in the French Alps, and Lyon was occupied more than six weeks ahead of schedule. De Lattre's troops rolled up the Rhone River Valley, liberating Dijon in mid-September and linking up with General George S. Patton's Third Army. In less than a month, Patch's Seventh Army had advanced 500 miles.

As German forces retreated, they were increasingly squeezed in the vise of both the Allied advance from Normandy and the thrust of the Seventh Army from the Riviera. Dragoon also hastened the end of World War II as the port facilities at Toulon and Marseilles offloaded huge quantities of much-needed supplies.

Although it occurred in the shadow of Overlord, Operation Dragoon played a pivotal role in the final Allied victory in Europe.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Nathan N. Prefer

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The Soldier's General

Lucian K. Truscott served in the U.S. Army for 30 years and became one of the outstanding combat commanders of World War II.

IN HIS *MAXIMS OF WAR*, NAPOLEON BONAPARTE WROTE, "IT IS EXCEPTIONAL and difficult to find in one man all the qualities necessary for a great general. What is most desirable, and which instantly sets a man apart, is that his intelligence or talent are balanced by his character or courage." In North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and France, Lucian King Truscott, Jr., proved himself just such a man.

The future general began simply enough when he arrived on January 9, 1895, in Chatfield, Texas. Although the family soon moved to Oklahoma, he would always claim to be a Texan at heart. The grandson of an immigrant from Cornwall, England, he nearly died at a young age when he was playing in his father's office. His father, Lucian King Truscott, Sr., was a physician in Chatfield and was busy in another room when his son decided to taste something that looked good in his father's office. His choice was a poor one, however, and he swallowed some carbolic acid. His father heard his screams and saved his life, but that day he earned one of his trademarks, a raspy, gruff voice that one observer called "a rock-crusher."

The Truscott family moved to Oklahoma when the land boom began in 1901. Here, young Truscott came into contact with the U.S. Cavalry, an attachment that would last a lifetime.

To help his parents support him and his three sisters, he decided that he and his mother would both attend the Summer Normal School at Norman, Oklahoma. The goal was to acquire a teaching certificate. By age 16, having lied about his age, he was teaching school at Stella, Oklahoma. Later, after another family move, he taught in Onapa, Oklahoma.

Despite his success in achieving a trade, he was restless. This was no doubt what caused him to enlist in the Army Reserves program in which, after two years as a lieutenant, he would become a Regular Army officer.

Lieutenant Truscott's first assignment was to the 17th Cavalry on the U.S.-Mexican border near Douglas, Arizona. Here he gained on-the-job experience with the vagaries of morning reports, sick reports, duty rosters, and troop administrative requirements. By the time World War I ended, Lieutenant Truscott was an experienced, if combat-deficient, Army officer. Concerned that he would soon have to return to civilian life, he was relieved to learn that his regiment was being shipped to Hawaii for garrison duties. But before he shipped overseas, Lieutenant Truscott acquired something far more important to his life and career.

Sarah Nicholas Randolph was the fourth-

ABOVE: General Lucian Truscott proved a capable combat commander in the Mediterranean Theater and rose to command the Allied Fifth Army during World War II. TOP: Under the command of General Lucian Truscott, soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division make a practice landing on the beach at Mondragone, Italy. Truscott led the division during the Italian Campaign, and these troops are from the 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment.

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generation granddaughter of President Thomas Jefferson and, as such, she had a comfortable life and lofty social standing. Lieutenant Truscott was soon in love, and under the pressure of a move to Hawaii, the two were married on April 5, 1919, in Cochise County, Arizona. With the wedding came a promotion to first lieutenant. In Hawaii he took up polo and became a highly regarded horseman, something he would later have in common with another rising star, George S. Patton.

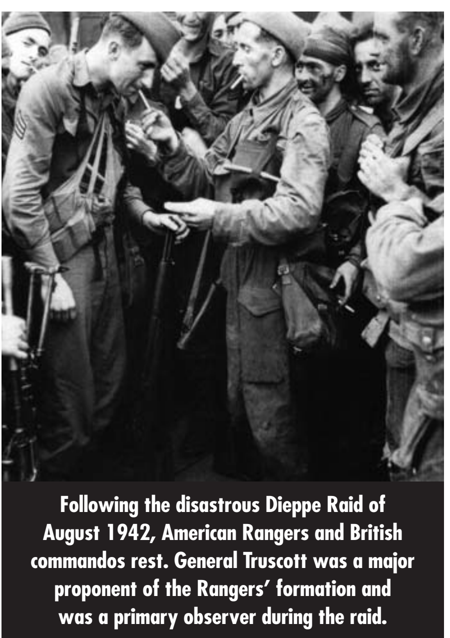
In a shrinking postwar army, Lieutenant Truscott nevertheless earned a promotion to captain. The interwar years were typical for the Truscotts. After Hawaii came California, then back to Douglas, Arizona. Texas was next, the fourth move in three years. In 1925, Captain Truscott was ordered to attend the Troop Officers' Course at the Cavalry School in Fort Riley, Kansas where he later served as an instructor.

In 1934, after serving as a troop commander of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment at Fort Myer, Virginia, where he met Majors Dwight D. Eisenhower and George S. Patton and participated in dispersing the "Bonus March" on Washington, he was selected to attend the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, another prestigious stepping stone to high command. His performance earned him promotion to major, along with an instructorship that lasted until 1940.

In September 1940, the newly promoted Lt. Col. Truscott transferred to the developing armored force. Soon after, Colonel Truscott was off to Fort Lewis, Washington, where he renewed his friendship with Colonel Eisenhower. Together, the two men participated in maneuvers in California. Both would also later participate in the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers.

After these large-scale maneuvers, Truscott found himself back in Texas, assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. When word came of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Truscott was promoted to full colonel. While training with his troops Colonel Truscott received an urgent call from General Mark Clark of the War Department who ordered him to report to Washington immediately.

Upon arrival in Washington, Truscott was surprised when General Clark asked if he wanted to become a British commando. These light raiding forces had been developed by the British while they bided their time to rebuild their military strength. General Clark went on to explain that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had agreed to invade Europe in 1943 and, in the meantime, U.S. forces would establish within their organization a group of U.S. commandos.



Following the disastrous Dieppe Raid of August 1942, American Rangers and British commandos rest. General Truscott was a major proponent of the Rangers' formation and was a primary observer during the raid.

Truscott wa sent to General Eisenhower for details. Eisenhower explained that Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall believed that the U.S. Army lacked combat experience throughout its ranks. To achieve this goal, a group of American officers were being sent to England to observe and learn from the experienced British. Colonel Truscott would lead the group that would observe the British Combined Operations Headquarters, the top headquarters for the commandos.

After studying every document he could lay his hands on regarding the British situation and listening in on War Department meetings about American plans for the European invasion, Truscott set off for London. As he flew via Canada to England, he received promotion to brigadier general in May 1942. His group began to absorb the organization of the British commando structure from Admiral Lord Louis Montbatten, and he was invited to sit in on planning conferences for the cross-Channel invasion. He observed commando training and exercises.

The lack of American infantrymen in England at the time and the continuing movement of American units to training bases caused General Truscott to create a unit that could then instruct others rather than pulling men out of existing units. As a result, the 1st Ranger Battalion was created.

In June, General Truscott was advised of a plan to land a large raiding force at the English Channel port of Dieppe in German-occupied France. Since several commando units would be involved in this operation, Truscott had 50 of his newly trained rangers added to the invasion forces. It would result in the first American combat losses in the European Theater. He observed the bitterly opposed landing from offshore.

General Marshall arrived in London in July, and Truscott was summoned to give a detailed report on every aspect of his stay in London to date. Later, he would attend a meeting with Generals Marshall, Eisenhower, and Clark to go over the same information. Using this data, General Marshall had a tentative plan drawn up for the Allied invasion of Europe. Disagreements between the Allies were resolved, albeit temporarily, by a decision to invade French North Africa in 1942. Truscott and his staff became involved in the planning of the new operation and worked with Eisenhower and Patton on the details.

General Patton was pleased to see his old friend. After asking Truscott what he had been doing in London, Patton said, "Dammit, Lucian, you don't want to stay on any staff job in London with a war going on. Why don't you come with me? I will give you a command." Truscott replied that he was eager to get in on the fighting, but he would need Eisenhower to release him. Patton quickly obtained Truscott's release and placed him on his staff where he became deeply involved in the planning of Operation Torch, the North African invasion.

With the planning completed, Truscott returned to the United States for his new duties. These involved his command of Sub-Task Force Goalpost, a heavily reinforced regiment from the 9th Infantry Division scheduled to land at Port Lyautey in French Morocco. Organizing an efficient task force took all of Truscott's time, although he did manage to see Sarah and Lucian III, who was now a West Point cadet.

With a force of 9,079 officers and men, Truscott's Sub-Task Force Goalpost landed against minimal opposition on November 8, 1942, and seized Port Lyautey and its vital airfields. There were problems, of course. During the approach, the task force lost its direction. H-hour had to be delayed while the assault waves reorganized. Heavy seas slowed matters as well. Some boats missed their assigned beaches. At daybreak, French planes strafed the beaches. Overall, though, the invasion succeeded, and the objectives were soon secured. The French surrendered on November 10. This success earned Truscott promotion to major general.

With the invasion complete, Sub-Task Force Goalpost was disbanded. This left Truscott without a command, so he went to Eisenhower in search of a new one. He was told to "wait around for a few days." Concerned with the slow progress of American forces toward Tunis, Eisenhower made Truscott his deputy chief of staff to control operations with the British First Army. This was a difficult job, requiring the

cooperation of the American, British, and French forces involved. This posting would prove an essential part of the eventual Allied victory in North Africa.

Once again, Truscott's outstanding performance earned him a new job, this time commanding the 3rd Infantry Division. The division had an outstanding World War I record and had been stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, in the interwar years, where both Eisenhower and Truscott had served with it. The division had participated in the North African invasion under Maj. Gen. Jonathan W. Anderson. When the latter was promoted to command of X Corps, Eisenhower gave the division to Truscott in April 1943.

Truscott's first steps were to improve the training and physical endurance of his new command. As he remembered, "I had long felt that our standards for marching and fighting

ABOVE: After executing a landing behind German lines at Brolo, Sicily, a soldier of the 3rd Infantry Division digs a foxhole while preparing a machine-gun position. LEFT: Lieutenant Colonel Lyle Bernard, who led the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment during the amphibious assault at Brolo, confers with General George S. Patton, Jr., commander of the U.S. Seventh Army.

in the infantry were too low, not up to those of the Roman legions nor countless examples from our own frontier history, not even to those of Stonewall Jackson's 'Foot Cavalry' of Civil War fame," he wrote. Adopting a tactic of the rangers and commandos, he ordered his men to march at the rate of four miles per hour. Despite initial skepticism, the new rate, soon dubbed "The Truscott Trot," was achieved by all units of the 3rd Infantry Division and helped make it one of the best combat units of the war.

Alerted for Operation Husky, the coming invasion of Sicily, the division began a new training cycle. The 3rd Infantry Division assaulted Sicily as part of the newly created Seventh Army under Patton. The landings were lightly opposed, and the division quickly moved inland. On the third day of Operation Husky, Truscott was already up front with his leading units, pressing them forward. As he observed one battalion attack an enemy position, his driver advised him that standing in the middle of the road with binoculars was inviting incoming fire. The group retired to a nearby ditch.

Soon Patton came calling. He was frustrated that his army was under orders to pace the advance of the adjoining British Eighth Army under General Bernard L. Montgomery. The two men talked the situation over and felt that the Seventh Army could easily conquer the western half of Sicily with the prize of its largest city, Palermo, if given permission. Together, the two men decided upon a "reconnaissance-in-force" to the west to, as General Truscott wrote, "clear up the situation." Thus began the "Race for Palermo."

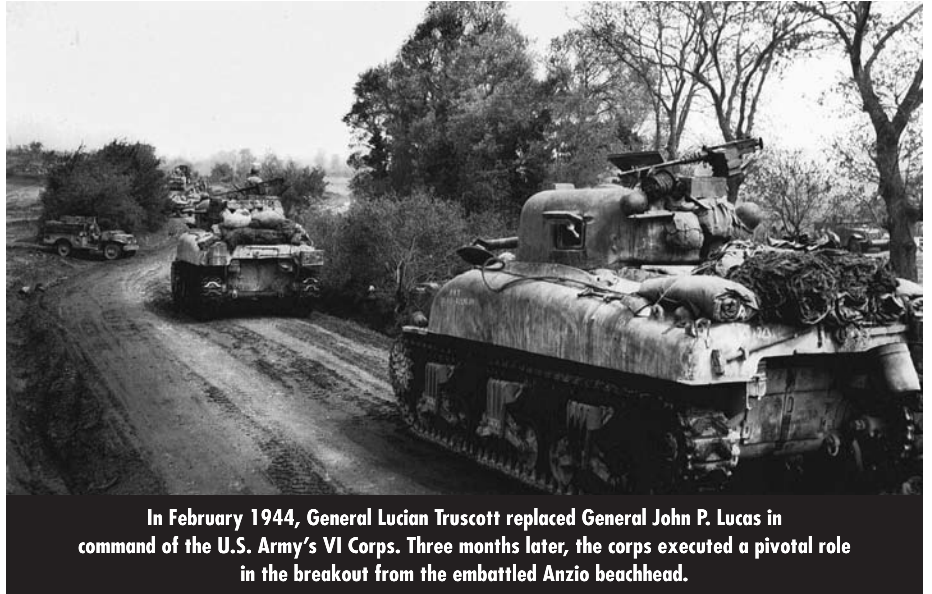
A few days after the capture of Palermo, the 3rd Infantry Division was back fighting the Germans in mountainous eastern Sicily. Progress was slow and costly. This time Patton sent his deputy, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, to order Truscott to have one of his battalions conduct an amphibious landing behind the German lines. Truscott agreed with the idea, but insisted that it be within supporting distance of the main division force. This soon became a point of disagreement and resulted in a rather famous episode in Truscott's career.

The first date for the landing was postponed when German aircraft destroyed one of the landing craft. When the next scheduled date was postponed by Truscott because he felt that the bulk of the division was still too far away to support the isolated battalion, Keyes appeared and demanded the landing proceed. He reported to Patton that Truscott did not want to carry out the landing. An hour later, Patton came screaming into the 3rd Infantry Division command post.

Truscott recalled the scene. "He was screamingly angry as only he could be. 'Goddammit, Lucian, what's the matter with you? Are you afraid to fight?' I bristled right back: 'General, you know that's ridiculous and insulting. You have ordered the operation, and it is now loading. If you don't think I can carry out orders, you can give the division to anyone else you please. But I will tell you one thing, you will not find anyone who can carry out orders which they do not approve as well as I can.'" Truscott's reply calmed Patton immediately, and the two men settled down to discuss how best to relieve the amphibious force.

Lieutenant Colonel Lyle W. Bernard's 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, itself at two-thirds strength, was reinforced with three batteries from the 58th Field Artillery Battalion, a platoon of the 10th Combat Engineer Battalion, and a platoon of Company C, 753rd Tank Battalion. As Truscott feared, the battalion took severe punishment in its isolated beachhead, and the division, despite its best efforts, took longer than expected. Seven of the eight artillery pieces were lost as were several tanks and other vehicles. But the battalion survived. By August 16, the division was on the hills overlooking Messina. The battle for Sicily was over.

Initially relieved that his division would not be in the assault phase of the invasion of southern Italy, Truscott was soon ordered by his new



In February 1944, General Lucian Truscott replaced General John P. Lucas in command of the U.S. Army's VI Corps. Three months later, the corps executed a pivotal role in the breakout from the embattled Anzio beachhead.

commander, Maj. Gen. Mark Clark of the Fifth U.S. Army, to be prepared to land farther north once the Allied advance made progress in that direction. But the strong German defense of the Salerno beachhead soon changed such plans. In less than a week, Truscott was ordered to prepare his division to land at Salerno and join the battle there. While his men sailed to Italy, Truscott went to the beachhead to see things for himself and confer with General Clark. Traveling by PT-boat, he visited the beachhead, saw the strong defenses, and received orders to assign his division to the Fifth Army's VI Corps once ashore.

During the battles along the German Winter Line at Cassino, Truscott learned of an old plan, Operation Shingle, that had been discarded and now suddenly revived. The VI Corps, along with the 3rd Infantry Division and the British 1st Infantry Division, was to land at the town of Anzio, on the coast behind the Winter Line.

The initial landings in January 1944 went surprisingly well and caught the Germans by surprise. But as always, they recovered quickly and soon had the beachhead surrounded. During the early days of the battle, Truscott was wounded in the leg when an enemy shell exploded nearby. Saved from serious injury by his favorite cavalry breeches and boots, he remained on duty after medical treatment.

The attack to break out of the beachhead failed when unexpected German reinforcements stopped the advance. During this attack, General Truscott suffered a personal blow when three ranger battalions assigned to his division for the attack were overwhelmed by the enemy. The Allies went on the defensive. For several weeks, the VI Corps would struggle to save its beachhead from increasingly heavy enemy assaults.

Truscott was asleep in his headquarters on the evening of February 16, 1944, when he was awakened by Colonel Carleton. He had a message from General Clark that relieved Truscott of command of the 3rd Infantry Division and appointed him deputy commander of the VI Corps.

Truscott arrived at the VI Corps headquarters to find Lucas and his staff concerned over the latest German counterattack, which threatened to push the Allies into the sea. He observed that there seemed to be "a feeling of desperation, of hopelessness" prevalent in the headquarters. "My optimistic assurance that nothing ever looked as bad on the ground as it did on a map at headquarters did little to dispel the pall-like gloom." Truscott contacted the division commanders, learned the situation, and was satisfied that each had done all he could, and that in fact, the situation was not as bad as first feared.

A few days later, Clark visited the beachhead and invited Truscott to accompany him on a tour of the frontline units. During the ride, Clark intimated to Truscott that in a few days Lucas would be relieved of command of VI Corps, and that Truscott would replace him. Truscott recalled, "I replied that I had no desire whatever to relieve Lucas, who was a personal friend, and I had not wanted to leave the 3rd Infantry Division for this assignment. I had done so without protest because I realized that some of the command, especially on the British side, had lost confidence in Lucas."

Continuing as deputy corps commander, Truscott had some ideas to improve the Allied position. He called in the corps artillery officer, Brig. Gen. Carl A. Baehr, and asked how the artillery was employing its guns. Disturbed by what he heard, he called for the 3rd Infantry Division's artillery operations officer, Major Walter T. ("Dutch") Kerwin. After Kerwin explained how the division massed its guns against enemy attacks, Truscott ordered him, accompanied by Baehr for authority, to make similar arrangements for all corps and other divisional artillery units.

On February 22, 1944, Clark returned to the beachhead and met with Truscott, ordering him to assume command of VI Corps the next day. Truscott repeated his earlier arguments against relieving Lucas, but was informed that the decision had been made. Later, after Lucas had been informed of his relief by General Clark, Truscott expressed his regrets as to how things turned out. Lucas expressed no hard feeling against Truscott, and the two men remained friends until Lucas's death.

As corps commander, Truscott had to deal with problems relating to both the American and the British troops under his command. Further, Clark had established an advanced Fifth Army headquarters at the beachhead, and this brought its own problems in assigning space, priorities, and rights of way.

By May, the VI Corps was heavily reinforced and ready to break out of the Anzio beachhead. The original plan had VI Corps striking east to cut the line of retreat of the German Tenth Army. The opening attacks went well, and General Truscott was ecstatic. After viewing the progress of the attacks, he returned to his command post where Clark's chief of staff, Brig. Gen. Donald W. Brann, was waiting. The new orders required Truscott to turn the bulk of VI Corps north to capture Rome. Only a token force was to be left to try to cut the German escape route.

Truscott "was dumbfounded. I protested that the conditions were not right. This was no time to drive to the northwest where the enemy was still strong; we should pour our maximum power into the Valmontone Gap to ensure the destruction of the retreating German army." But the orders remained, and Truscott obeyed, participating in one of the war's most controversial episodes.

With the capture of Rome, the VI Corps stood down for a brief rest. The months of July and August were spent training and planning a new operation, the invasion of southern France. This time Truscott and his VI Corps were under a revived Seventh Army commanded by Lt. Gen. Alexander ("Sandy") Patch, a veteran of the Pacific War. Allowed to pick his own combat units for the operation, Truscott chose his

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While an Italian woman does her laundry, South African M-10s fire on enemy targets in the city of Bologna. This action took place late in the Italian Campaign as the war in Europe was winding down. Around this time, General Lucian Truscott had returned to Italy to assume command of the Allied Fifth Army.

favorite 3rd Infantry Division and the equally battleworthy 45th Infantry Division, which had fought under his command at Anzio. The third division was the 36th ("Texas") Infantry Division, which had led the breakout at Anzio.

Truscott planned and executed Operation Anvil-Dragoon, the invasion of southern France, with little difficulty. The landings were lightly opposed, and the drive inland began quickly. The push toward the Belfort Gap went as planned, and the Germans were too busy withdrawing to make much of a defensive stand. Things continued to go well as the VI Corps entered the Vosges Mountains near the German border. As winter slowed operations, Truscott was visited by Eisenhower, who told him, "Lucian, I am going to assign you to organize the Fifteenth Army. You won't like it, because this Army is not going to be operational. It will be an administrative and training command, and you won't get into the fighting."

General Edward H. ("Ted") Brooks would take over VI Corps while Truscott returned to the United States for a well-earned rest before returning to command the new army. After two years of fighting in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and southern France, General Truscott was finally going home.

He thoroughly enjoyed his visit. Besides spending time with his wife, he visited West Point to see his son, Lucian III. As he was preparing to return to Europe, he was suddenly called to Washington. While at the War Department, he learned that the unexpected death of a British senior commander had resulted in a series of promotions and moves that would now affect him. One of the unexpected moves was the promotion of General Clark to command the Fifteenth Army Group in Italy. That left a vacancy in command at Fifth Army. General Marshall asked Truscott, "How do you feel about going back to Italy?" Surprised, Truscott replied, "Sir, I will do the best I can wherever you wish to send me."

Taking his faithful staff, Truscott assumed command of the Fifth Army in Italy. With 300,000 soldiers under its command, including at various times Britons, South Africans, Polish, New Zealanders, Brazilians, and soldiers of other nationalities, Truscott's Fifth Army pushed against the new German Winter Line, captured Bologna, broke the back of German resistance at the Gothic Line, and pushed into the Po River Valley, dispersing the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies. It was a part of the force that accepted the first surrender of a German army group in World War II when Army Group C surrendered to Allied forces in Italy.

With the defeat of Germany, Truscott returned to Texas and then volunteered for the war in the Pacific. He was assigned to a group of high-ranking officers who were directed to visit China and prepare to serve there until the defeat of Japan. But even as the group was conducting inspections, Japan surrendered. The war was over. His assignment to command a group of Chinese armies against Japan was moot.

Returning to Italy, Truscott learned that Fifth Army headquarters was to become inoperative. He said goodbye to his faithful staff and decided to visit his friend Patton, then on occupation duty in Germany. Expecting to be sent home to an unknown assignment, Truscott was suddenly caught up in another of Patton's indiscretions. As he was making the rounds of farewells, Eisenhower's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, caught up with him. Eisenhower wanted to see him immediately. Truscott reported to Eisenhower and learned that he was to replace Patton as commander of the Third Army. For the final time, Truscott protested, but agreed that for the good of the service Patton had to go.

The exchange between two longtime friends went without rancor. When introducing Truscott to the Third Army, Patton said, "A man of General Truscott's achievements needs no introduction. His deeds speak for themselves." And so they did.

As the commander of the Third Army on occupation duty, Truscott was faced with new challenges. Tens of thousands of displaced persons needed caring for. He became involved in Cold War politics when, for reasons of their own, some Americans claimed that the Army was abusing or neglecting these unfortunate people. Alerted to the coming storm, Truscott invited newspaper reporters to visit the camps and report accurately on the conditions. Additionally, he was responsible for the trials of Nazi war criminals. He also was responsible for opening a university program for refugees under the auspices of the United Nations. Many who knew him were surprised at his rapid adjustment from combat leader to government administrator.

In early 1946, General Truscott received word that Sarah was seriously ill at Walter Reed Army Hospital. He remained home for 10 days, until he was convinced Sarah was getting well. On the return flight to Germany, he became ill. An electrocardiogram indicated a heart attack, and the doctor ordered several weeks of bed rest. Told that his condition was not improving, Truscott retired on September 30, 1947, after 30 years in the United States Army. He later briefly served as a deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Promoted to the rank of four-star general on the retired list, Lucian King Truscott, Jr., died at the age of 70 on September 12, 1965.

Nathan N. Prefer is the author of several books and articles on World War II. His latest book is titled Leyte 1944, The Soldier's Battle. *He received his Ph.D. in Military History from the City University of New York and is a former Marine Corps Reservist. Dr. Prefer is now retired and resides in Fort Myers, Florida.*

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The concept of these "jeep" flattops and ocean-going "Model Ts" dated back to the mid-1930s, a time when America, Great Britain, and Japan were investigating the possibility of converting merchant ships into small aircraft carriers, itself a continuation of practices first initiated during World War I. As early as 1935, the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Construction and Repair studied the possibility of converting 10 passenger liners for military use, and they drew up plans for taking "quick action" in the event that a war emergency created the need for such vessels. By then, though, the Navy was already building a powerful fleet of big flattops, so the proposals for auxiliary carriers were soon put aside. As Navy Secretary Frank Knox told the U.S. Maritime Commission in the autumn of 1940, "The characteristics of aircraft have changed, placing more exacting demands upon the carrier. These demands are such that a converted merchant vessel can no longer make as satisfactory an aircraft carrier as was the case when the plans for those vessels were being drawn."

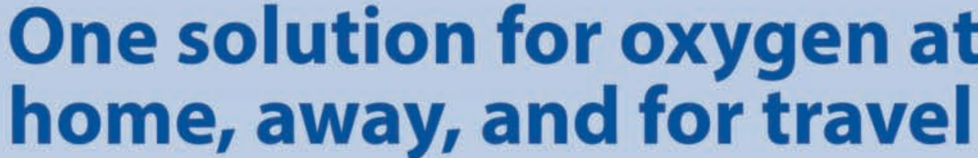
President Franklin D. Roosevelt nonetheless remained supportive of the concept, thanks to the influence of shipbuilder Henry J. Kaiser, whose shipyards were ready to gear up for wartime production, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who saw the auxiliary flattops' potential for quickly replenishing the Royal Navy's crippling combat carrier force losses.

FDR sent a memorandum to Admiral Harold R. "Betty" Stark, chief of naval operations, proposing the experimental acquisition and conversion of a merchant ship of 6,000-8,000 tons displacement. It would be fitted with a flying deck and equipped with about 10 helicopters or 10 planes with low landing speed.

Stark and his aides went to work through January 1941 on Roosevelt's proposal, one requirement of which was that the merchantman selected for conversion should have a sister ship that could be similarly converted for use by the British, who had been at war for a year and a half. On January 7, the Maritime Commission advised the Navy Department that the two C-3 diesel-powered cargo ships *Mormacmail* and *Mormacland*—492 feet long and 9,000 tons—would be made available for conversion to carriers. Stark estimated that the conversion project would take 18 months, but FDR imposed a deadline of three months.

The two vessels were acquired for conversion on March 6. *Mormacmail*'s conversion was finished in less than three months, and on June 2, the Navy recommissioned the ship—the war's first escort carrier—as USS *Long Island* (CVE-1). *Long Island* was not used in combat, but she ferried aircraft to Pearl Harbor shortly after the Battle of Midway and carried 19 Grumman F-4F Wildcat fighters and a dozen Douglas Dauntless SBD dive-bombers to Espiritu Santo for use on Guadalcanal in late August 1942. For the rest of the war, the Navy used her to train carrier pilots and ferry troops. The converted *Morma-*

A Curtiss P-40 fighter launches from the deck of the escort carrier USS *Chenango* during Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa. The Jeep carriers provided valuable air cover for the assault troops.



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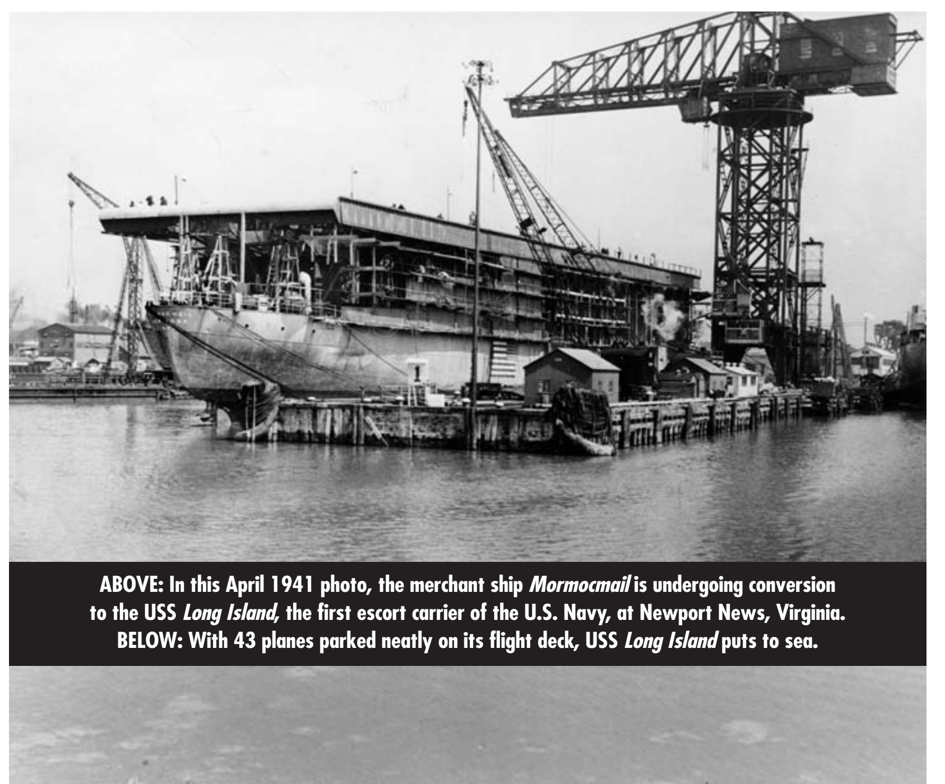

ABOVE: In this April 1941 photo, the merchant ship *Mormocmail* is undergoing conversion to the USS *Long Island,* the first escort carrier of the U.S. Navy, at Newport News, Virginia. BELOW: With 43 planes parked neatly on its flight deck, USS *Long Island* puts to sea.

cland was turned over to the Royal Navy as HMS *Archer* on November 17, 1941—the first of 39 American-built escort carriers provided under the Lend-Lease program—and it subsequently served in the Battle of the Atlantic.

During the latter half of 1941, four more merchant hulls were rebuilt into escort carriers for the British—*Avenger, Biter, Dasher,* and *Charger*—and made ready for service in the spring and summer of 1942. The U.S. Navy rescinded the Lend-Lease transfer order for the *Charger,* which was commissioned on March 3, 1942, as its second escort carrier.

Ironically, the first Allied escort carrier to see combat was of enemy origin. The 5,527-ton, 15-knot German merchant ship *Hannover* was captured in the West Indies in March 1940 by a British light cruiser and a Canadian destroyer. Recommissioned in June 1941 and renamed HMS *Audacity* in July, the ship had its superstructure removed and replaced with a stem-to-stern, 475-foot flight deck.

Once in service, *Audacity* and its half-dozen Wildcat fighters (called Martlets in the Royal Navy) proved to be so effective at protecting Mediterranean convoys that Nazi U-boat chief Admiral Karl Dönitz felt compelled to pay rueful tribute to the "continuous air umbrella" the ship maintained. Shortly after ferrying survivors of the sunken fleet carrier HMS *Ark Royal, Audacity* was torpedoed by a U-boat on the night of December 19. Seventy-five officers and men perished, including her skipper, Commander D.W. McKendrick.

By the spring of 1942, the American escort carriers *Long Island* and *Charger* had become operational, while another 13 were undergoing conversion. These included *Sangamon* (CVE-26), *Suwannee* (CVE-27), *Chenango* (CVE-28), and *Santee* (CVE-29), which had been converted from new 7,192-ton, 19-knot tankers.

The Navy ordered 74 additional escort carriers during the summer of 1942, the first 24 of which were of the C-3 turbine type, led by USS *Prince William* (CVE-31). She was retained, and the other vessels were transferred to the Royal Navy when completed in 1943 and 1944. The other 50 escort carriers of the Casablanca class were built at the Kaiser Company yards.

Burly, bald "Hurry Up Henry" Kaiser, a self-made industrial tycoon who constructed the great Boulder, Bonneville, and Grand Coulee Dams before becoming America's leading shipbuilder, had the ear of President Roosevelt. He convinced FDR that escort carriers were the answer to the U-boat menace and sold him on a design for mass-produced 498-foot, 6,730-ton flattops drawn up by the architectural firm of Gibbs & Cox. The Navy Department was dissatisfied with the design, but FDR authorized the construction program for "baby flattops," which was to be managed by the U.S. Maritime Commission.

Kaiser, whose yards were also helping to turn out large numbers of Liberty cargo ships, used women welders, prefabricated parts, and Henry Ford's assembly-line techniques. The CVEs were ordered on June 18, 1942, and the first was to be delivered the following February, but the lead vessel, USS *Casablanca* (CVE-55), was not commissioned until July 8, 1943, and Kaiser's yards fell behind schedule. The 50th "Kaiser carrier" was completed on July 8, 1944, a year after the first, yet it still constituted an amazing feat of shipbuilding.

As with the C-3 conversions, the Kaiser-built flattops each featured two elevators and one catapult and could accommodate 30 operational aircraft, or up to 90 when used to replenish the big fleet carriers. Bigger, better armed, and more stable than *Long Island,* and fitted with small starboard islands, the later escort carriers of the Bogue and Sangamon classes were to prove invaluable in the Atlantic and Pacific campaigns.

From the Mediterranean to the Arctic, meanwhile, Allied jeep carriers were soon in action. HMS *Avenger* was the first carrier to escort merchantmen carrying vital supplies to Russia. While plying through fog, snow, and ice with Convoy PQ-18 in September 1942, her 12 Hawker Hurricane fighters and three Swordfish torpedo-bombers foiled U-boats and destroyed a number of planes. Seventeen out of the 39 merchant ships were sunk, but the German naval and air high commands blamed the Avenger for preventing more losses.

Seven British and American escort carriers joined forces when Operation Torch, the great three-pronged Allied invasion of North Africa, was mounted on Sunday, November 8, 1942. As 70,000 American and British troops were landing in Algeria and Morocco, an Anglo-American carrier group—*Formidable, Victorious, Furious,* and *Argus* of the Royal Navy,

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plus the USS *Ranger* (CV-4)— supported by a force of CVEs stood at their backs. Wildcats and Grumman TBF Avengers from *Suwannee* flew combat air and antisubmarine patrols; *Sangamon* provided air support north of Casablanca; *Chenango* ferried 78 U.S. Army Air Forces P-40 Warhawk fighters to captured airfields and later took aboard 500 survivors of a sunken British destroyer tender, while Wildcats, Avengers, and Dauntlesses from the *Santee* neutralized the airfield at Marrakech. Sea Hurricanes and Swordfish from the British CVEs *Biter, Dasher,* and *Avenger* flew close support for the assault troops, and a fourth, HMS *Archer,* ferried 35 USAAF P-40s to Port Lyautey.

It was during the grim, prolonged Battle of the Atlantic that British and American escort carriers, sailing in new hunter-killer groups with fast destroyers, made their most important contribution of the war. The CVEs were deployed in the spring of 1943 and soon succeeded—along with the aid of new tactics, land-based, long-range bombers, improved radar, and homing torpedoes—in closing the mid-ocean "black pit" where German submarines had savaged Allied convoys at will.

Forty-one U-boats were sunk that May, making a total of 114 lost in the first five months of the year, and this turned the tide of the struggle. Admiral Dönitz admitted privately that he had lost the Battle of the Atlantic and began deploying his boats to safer waters. In the next several months, 62 Allied convoys crossed the Atlantic without losing a single ship. The British, American, and Canadian navies, meanwhile, used the subsequent convoys to lure and destroy more U-boats.

For several months in the Pacific War, after the *Long Island* had delivered the two Marine Corps squadrons to Guadalcanal, almost all of the escort carriers assigned there were relegated to tedious replenishment duties and had to wait for action. Their bored crews groused while transporting personnel and equipment for the fast carrier groups. Only *Nassau* had briefly engaged in combat (in the Aleutians). But the CVEs' time was coming, and they would prove indispensable as the U.S. Navy's powerful task forces pushed across the Central Pacific in a great island-hopping offensive toward Japan.

Eight Kaiser-built carriers were in action with Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance's U.S. Fifth Fleet when Maj. Gen. Julian C. Smith's 2nd Marine Division and Maj. Gen. Ralph C. Smith's 27th Infantry Division invaded Makin, Betio, and Tarawa Atolls in the Gilbert Islands on November 20-23, 1943. *Coral Sea* (CVE-57), *Corregidor* (CVE-58), and *Liscome Bay* (CVE-56) were with the Makin assault group, and *Sangamon, Suwannee, Chenango, Nassau,* and *Barnes* (CVE-20) were with the Tarawa group. With their Avengers, Wildcats, Dauntlesses, and Grumman F-6F Hellcats strafing and bombing in support of the landing troops, the CVEs added almost 200 aircraft to the 700 planes put up by the invasion force's 11 fast carriers. After bitter fighting and heavy losses for the Marines, the three atolls were secured on November 23.

The three jeep carriers of Rear Admiral Henry M. Mullinix's Task Group 52.3—*Liscome Bay, Corregidor,* and *Coral Sea*—had fought gallantly in their first action, and their weary crews were justifiably proud after the three hectic days and nights of the complex and massive operation. The Japanese had been soundly defeated ashore, but their naval units were closer than the Americans realized, and tragedy came early on November 24.

A newly arrived Japanese submarine, *I-175,* was stalking the CVEs, and flares dropped during the night of November 23-24 by a Mitsubishi G4M Betty bomber gave her a clear view of Captain Irving D. Wiltsie's USS *Liscome Bay* as she cruised near Butaritari Island. At 5:10 AM on November 24, Lt. Cmdr. Sunao

Tabata's submarine slipped through a gap left by two escorting destroyers and loosed a spread of torpedoes. One of them struck *Liscome Bay* in the worst possible spot—the ordnance storage area between her forward and aft engine rooms.

Crewmen aboard the other CVEs watched in silent horror as two violent explosions rocked the carrier and a column of bright orange flame rose 1,000 feet. Fragments of the ship and airplanes were hurled into the air, and debris rained on vessels as far as 5,000 yards away. The aft section of *Liscome Bay* was ablaze, and half of her virtually disintegrated. More blasts shook her, and she sank stern first 23 minutes after being hit. She was the first of six U.S. escort carriers to be sunk in the war.

Among the 644 officers and men who went down with *Liscome Bay* were Captain Wiltsie, Admiral Mullinix, who had been flying his flag on her, and Dorie Miller, the black messman who had won the Navy Cross for heroism aboard the battleship USS *West Virginia* (BB-48) at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a stunning loss for the Navy.

A damaged German submarine, part of a wolfpack that had been attacking Allied merchant shipping, comes to the surface under fire from aircraft launched by an escort carrier. The escort carriers led hunter-killer groups and helped turn the tide of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Eight escort carriers were in the thick of action from January 31 to February 5, 1944, during Operation Flintlock, the invasion of Kwajalein and Roi-Namur Atolls in the Marshall Islands by Marine and Army units of Maj. Gen. Holland M. Smith's 5th Amphibious Corps. They were the veteran *Chenango, Coral Sea, Corregidor, Nassau, Sangamon,* and *Suwannee* and the brand new *Manila Bay* (CVE-61) and *Natoma Bay* (CVE-62). Two hundred fighters and torpedo planes from the CVEs lent air cover to the landing ships and

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close support to the assault troops, who took Kwajalein after six days of bitter fighting.

The fleet and escort carrier groups kept up their forward momentum with the invasions in late February of Eniwetok, 360 miles northwest of Kwajalein, and Truk Atoll, the Japanese "Gibraltar of the Pacific." The American offensive rolled on relentlessly, and the jeep carriers gave valuable support in numerous assaults on Japanese-held islands: the Admiralties, Hollandia, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, New Guinea, and the Bonins.

Bigger and improved escort carriers began joining the task forces in the Pacific through 1944 and into 1945 as the Japanese were pushed back toward their home islands, proving indispensable in the naval actions at Samar, Surigao Strait, Cape Engano, the South China Sea, and Leyte Gulf, as well as the invasions of the Palaus, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Despite their excellent service, though, several were sunk by bombs, gunfire, or submarine torpedoes. The losses increased dramatically when the desperate Japanese launched kamikaze assaults during the fierce Leyte Gulf and Samar actions in late October 1944.

Off Samar on October 25, *Gambier Bay* (CVE-73) was fighting as part of Rear Admiral Clifton A.F. Sprague's Seventh Fleet task group when she was struck by gunfire. She took more hits than her damage control parties could handle, lost power, and listed before capsizing and sinking with about 850 of her crew. Two other flattops, *Kitkun Bay* (CVE-71) and *Kalinin Bay* (CVE-68), were damaged but kept afloat. More of Sprague's carriers, including *Fanshaw Bay* (CVE-70), *Santee,* and *Suwannee,* suffered damage and crew losses while struggling to dodge kamikaze attacks.

The Japanese assaults intensified on October 26 when a suicide Zero slammed into *St.-Lo* (CVE-63) in Leyte Gulf, detonating bombs and torpedoes on her hangar deck. A series of blasts almost blew her apart, and she sank with about 100 of her crew. *St.-Lo* was the first U.S. vessel sunk by a kamikaze.

The Americans shattered the Japanese fleets in the great Battle of Leyte Gulf, but the kamikazes continued to take a heavy toll during the campaign to liberate the Philippines. In November 1944 alone, they crashed into seven fleet carriers and damaged two battleships, two cruisers, two transports, and seven destroyers. When Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf and Admiral Kinkaid led task forces into Lingayen Gulf during the invasion of Luzon early in January 1945, escort carriers were again targeted. *Kitkun Bay* and *Kadashan Bay* (CVE-71) took hits and were disabled, and *Ommaney Bay* (CVE-79) was fatally damaged and had to be finished off with a torpedo from a destroyer. The flattop's casualties totaled 93 dead and missing and 65 wounded.

The aircraft carrier USS *St. Lo* burns furiously after being hit by a Japanese kamikaze plane off the Philippine island of Samar. The action occurred during the Battle of Leyte Gulf on October 25, 1944.

Wildcats, Hellcats, Avengers, and Dauntlesses from a dozen escort carriers commanded by Admiral Durgin flew close support when the U.S. 4th and 5th Marine Divisions invaded the eight-square-mile volcanic island of Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. Kamikaze attacks on the CVEs started just a couple of days later. On the night of February 21-22, a Japanese twin-engine Betty bomber headed toward *Lunga Point* (CVE-94). Her sister ship, *Bismarck Sea* (CVE-95), opened fire and shot down the plane. A few seconds later another plane streaked in low toward *Bismarck Sea* and crashed abeam of her aft elevator.

As fires broke out, a second bomber dived vertically onto the hapless flattop. The hangar deck, filled with planes, was soon an inferno. When the fires neared her torpedoes and bombs, the order was given to abandon ship. *Bismarck Sea,* one of the last of the Casablanca-class carriers from the Kaiser yards to see action in World War II, burned and exploded until she rolled over and sank with 218 of her 943-man crew. *Lunga Point,* meanwhile, was damaged by four more planes, but it survived.

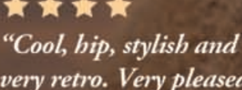
Then came Operation Iceberg, the climactic invasion of Okinawa in the Ryukyu Islands that was intended to tighten the blockade of Japan, intensify raids on its cities, and provide a staging base for an amphibious assault on Kyushu, Japan's southernmost home island. After bombardments by Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo's 52-vessel Task Force 54 in late March, a massive armada of Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet moved in for the last major action of the Pacific War. It comprised Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's Task Force 58 and Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's Task Force 51, with Vice Admiral Sir H. Bernard Rawlings's Task Force 57 of the newly formed British Pacific Fleet providing air cover support between Okinawa and Formosa. Twenty-nine CVEs led by Admiral Durgin took part.

Early on the morning of Sunday, April 1, 1945, assault troops of Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner's U.S. Tenth Army and the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Marine Divisions landed on Okinawa's western coast. Initial resistance was sporadic, but the stubborn defenders had dug themselves into hills, caves, and pillboxes, forcing American troops to fight for virtually every yard. During the campaign, which dragged on until June 21, the Allied support ships suffered repeated onslaughts by Japanese torpedo bombers and kamikazes. In the costliest naval operation in history, 34 U.S. vessels were sunk and 368 damaged, and more than 4,900 sailors perished.

The air groups from Durgin's versatile CVEs flew about 18,133 sorties at Okinawa, expending 2,000 tons of bombs and 30,000 rockets that destroyed numerous ground targets and 280 enemy planes.

Although their potential was questioned, the escort carriers proved versatile in both the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II, validating their existence with bold deeds.

Author Michael D. Hull, who passed away on March 21, 2019, was a frequent contributor to WWII History on a variety of topics. He resided in Enfield, Connecticut.



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By Peter McQuarrie

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Makin and the Japanese

Japanese sources shed light on the Makin Raid conducted by Carlson's Marine Raiders in 1942.

IN AUGUST 1942, THE 2ND MARINE RAIDER BATTALION CONDUCTED a raid on Makin Atoll in the Central Pacific. The purpose of the raid was to destroy Japanese installations on the island, gather intelligence, and to test the raiding tactics of the U.S. Marines. If successful, the raid would also boost home front morale. The plan was for 211 men from the 2nd Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Evans F. Carlson, to land at night from two submarines, USS *Argonaut* and USS *Nautilus*. They would neutralize the small Japanese garrison and destroy equipment before leaving the island and returning aboard the submarines.

Unfortunately, nine raiders were left behind on the island after the raid, and the submarine crews did not realize it until it was too late to return to rescue them.

As told from Japanese sources, this story relates the capture of the nine men on Makin, their interrogation, transfer to Kwajalein Atoll, and the reason why they were executed there. The Japanese record of Carlson's raid begins after most of the raiders were on their way home to Hawaii, believing they had lost 30 men in battle and that all of them had died on Makin.

Since 1940, Lieutenant Taniura Hideo had been a squad leader of the Japanese 6th Defense Force stationed on Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. Immediately after Carlson's raid, he was deployed to Makin with reinforcements for the decimated Makin Defense Force. Taniura and his platoon of reinforcements traveled by patrol boat from Truk in the Marianas Islands, arriving at Makin on August 23, six days after the raid. They set about identifying and cremating the Japanese bodies, the ashes of which were then buried in a mass grave. Then they buried the bodies of the 21 dead U.S. Marines and erected a marker labeled "grave of unknown American soldiers." The nine living U.S. Marines were brought to the burial site so that they could pay respect to their fallen comrades. Taniura's next task was to interrogate these nine abandoned Marines.

In his memoir, Taniura recorded the accounts given to him by two of the Marines. According to Taniura's record, four of the raiders had thought surrender would be their best option, and they had done so by making their way to the lagoon shore and waving to a Japanese seaplane that was anchored in the lagoon. The remaining five raiders had opted to try to escape. Under cover of darkness, they took the small trading yacht *Kariamakingo*, owned by the local branch of the NBK (Nanyo Boyeki Kabushiki Kaisha, or South Seas Trading Company), which was the only Japanese trading company operating in the Gilbert Islands in prewar times. The boat was tied alongside Kings Wharf with nobody aboard.

They left the wharf in the yacht. Even in the darkness, they believed they could see a passage out of the lagoon on the western side of the atoll, and they steered toward it. There are several gaps through which a small boat may pass to gain access to the ocean, all of them on the western side of the atoll. But there are also many places where the reef is close to the surface with insufficient depth of water for a boat to clear it. They ran aground on such a patch of reef and abandoned ship, swimming and wading until they made it to shore. The next morning, Japanese soldiers arrived, and they were captured.

TOP: War artist Kerr Eby created this stark image of a U.S. Marine marksman. Carlson's Raiders were highly trained in jungle warfare. ABOVE: Colonel Evans Carlson aboard the submarine USS *Nautilus*.

About this time, Taniura arranged for medical care for the people of Keuea Village who had come under attack from Japanese bombers. He had been alerted to this need by Kanzaki Chojiro, the NBK manager, who had reported that a village on the eastern side of the island had received a random bombing

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ABOVE: Makin Island, photographed in 1943, was defended by a Japanese garrison that took several Marines prisoner after Carlson's raid. Their fate has remained something of a mystery. RIGHT: A pair of Carlson's Marine Raiders pose aboard one of the two submarines that carried the unit to Makin Island.

attack by Japanese aircraft, killing and injuring a considerable number of villagers. Taniura dispatched two military doctors who provided medical service to the village for two days.

The attack had come on the morning of August 18, after the Americans had escaped on the yacht from the area around Butaritari Village, the main settlement on Makin. Japanese planes had bombed and strafed Keuea Village, 10 miles to the northeast. It is unclear why Keuea was selected as a target, but it seems that the Japanese mistakenly believed that the Marines were sheltering there. It was a disaster for the small village. .

Taniura arranged for the nine prisoners to be transported to Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands to the north. There, they were imprisoned at the 6th Naval Base Headquarters for approximately six weeks until executed on October 16. The Japanese explanation as to why and how these prisoners were put to death is as follows.

In September, an inspection mission was sent out by Tokyo, the Southern Defense Inspection Mission, which visited several Japanese bases in Micronesia. They completed inspections at various islands, including Wake Island, Truk, and Tarawa, before reaching Kwajalein on October 14, two days before the execution of the nine prisoners. The mission was headed by Lt. Cmdr. Okada Sadatomo, who was accompanied by Ida Hideo, from the 4th Fleet.

According to an account related by Hayashi Koichi, who was Admiral Koso Abe's chief of staff at Kwajalein, there was anticipation of a large-scale attack against Kwajalein. Commander Abe therefore wanted an early decision on what was to be done with the nine American prisoners and, seeking advice, had made the following suggestions to Japanese Naval General Headquarters: send the prisoners to a relatively safe location within the control of the 4th Fleet, send them to mainland Japan, or execute them locally by an appropriate method.

No reply was received, and so Abe sent another request seeking an urgent decision.

The matter was discussed when the visiting mission arrived on October 14, and Abe was informed by Okada that with regard to the three suggested options for dealing with the prisoners, General Headquarters had responded that transport was extremely difficult at the time and, furthermore, it was impossible to estimate the area of large-scale advancement of U.S. forces; under the circumstances, transfer to Japan from a distant location such as Kwajalein was impossible; therefore, there was no option other than to dispose of the prisoners locally.

Commander Abe, therefore, believed he had only one option. Two days later, at 9 AM on October 16, 1942, an open area near the western shore of Kwajalein Atoll was selected for the executions. The nine prisoners were brought by truck, hands tied behind their backs and blindfolded. Master swordsmen from among the Marshall Islands Area Defense Unit were selected as the executioners. These men were all veterans of the Shanghai Special Naval Landing Force. The executions were performed according to Japanese tradition, and the bodies were buried in a pit with local wild flowers offered to the spirits of the deceased.

After the war ended, this matter of the disposal of prisoners became an issue for war crimes investigators. At a U.S. Navy tribunal held on Guam on May 15, 1946, Commander Abe was sentenced to death. Navy Commander Ohara, who was in command at the execution site, received a sentence of 10 years imprisonment, and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Uchiki, who had transported the prisoners to the execution site, got five years imprisonment.

This story clearly shows the different attitudes of the Japanese and Americans toward the rights of prisoners of war, their treatment, and the "right" of the captors to execute them. The following is an example of how incorporating Japanese and local peoples' information into the otherwise American narrative can shed new light on the story.

The events of the U.S. Marine Raiders' attack against the Japanese Navy garrison on Makin has been well covered in books and magazines. The attack, which occurred on August 17-18, 1942, was designed to draw attention away from another U.S. Marine attack on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

Not so well known is that on the afternoon of the first day of the attack on Makin, Carlson's Raiders gave up all hope of being able to get away from the island and attempted to surrender. There is still some uncertainty over how the surrender overture was delivered to Japanese military forces and how they responded.

By using Japanese and Gilbert Islands sources of information in addition to American sources, it is now possible to clarify the matter.

The raid had been moderately successful. Although the raiders had lost 30 men, they had killed approximately 46 Japanese. They had also gained experience in atoll warfare and submarine troop transport. But when the time came to withdraw and return to the waiting submarines, there was a problem. They could not get over the reef to the deeper water where the submarines were. The high tide and surf worked against their rubber boats, washing them back onto the beach.

The Raiders became desperate and believed

they could not escape. Carlson thought that there were many Japanese left alive on the island, but he overestimated the strength of his enemy. Japanese sources tell us that, at that time, there were only 27 Japanese survivors and that they were in hiding, widely scattered along the atoll to the east. One of Carlson's officers (and it is unclear which one) suggested surrender, and after some discussion, Carlson endorsed the proposal, unaware that there really was no one to surrender to.

Captain Ralph H. Coyte was given the responsibility of making the surrender plea. He wrote a surrender note and then set out with his runner, Private William McCall, to contact the Japanese and deliver the message. What happened next is unclear, as American and Japanese versions differ.

In his book *Forgotten Raiders of '42,* Tripp Wiles writes: "Surprisingly, Coyte and McCall were able to find a living Japanese soldier and pass on the message without getting killed. The soldier was shot soon afterwards, and the message was most likely recovered several days later." Wiles wrote this based on his own research, considering what others had previously written on the subject. It has become the accepted version of the events.

Japanese Lieutenant Taniura Hideo describes the delivery of the note in his memoir. He states that Coyte entrusted the note to an islander who took it to the Japanese headquarters, which was located in the Chinese On Chong Trading Company building. When he found the building deserted, he took the note to Emily Hugill, who had a trading store in Ukiangang Village. Emily was originally from the island of Abaiang, 100 miles south of Makin. She was part European and could read English.

A few days later, when calm had returned to the island, Emily passed the surrender note to Kanzaki Chojiro, the manager of the NBK (South Sea Trading Company). Kanzaki had lived on the island for years, was also married to a part-European woman, and no doubt was a Japanese person who Emily knew well and trusted. When Lieutenant Taniura came to Makin bringing reinforcements for the decimated Makin Defense Force, Kanzaki delivered the note to him.

This incident occurred on August 23, the day that Taniura arrived on the island. And so, five days after the raiders had left Makin, their surrender note was finally delivered to a Japanese officer.

Author Peter McQuarrie is a first-time contributor to WWII History. He resides in New Zealand.

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The Bold Bull of Scapa Flow

Striking at the heart of the Royal Navy, German U-boat commander Günther Prien was audacious, but did he have help?

LATE ON THE NIGHT OF FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1939, KAPITÄNLEUTNANT Günther Prien surfaced his 218-foot-long submarine, *U-47,* and guided it through the protected, shallow, narrow channel at Kirk Sound. As the sub edged forward with electric motors turning in the treacherous currents, it moved ever closer toward where Prien believed the jewels of the Royal Navy lay in the broad anchorage.

Prien's strike against the British Royal Navy at its home in Scapa Flow off the north coast of Scotland, was nothing if not audacious, "the boldest of bold moves." Nonetheless, before the sun rose on Saturday, October 14, *U-47* had sunk the mighty battleship HMS *Royal Oak* and quickly escaped, leaving the ship abandoned upside down in 100 feet of water, with 833 crew members dead or missing.

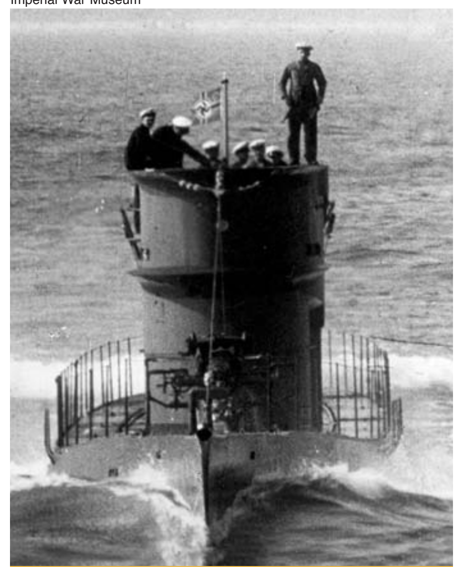
Throughout its time of service, *U-47* sank 30 other ships totaling some 162,769 gross registered tons and damaged eight more in its 10 war patrols before the sub itself disappeared in the North Atlantic in March 1941. Prien's attack on the *Royal Oak,* though, was by far the most spectacular, and it stunned the British military and the public. They were just recovering from the shock of a German submarine attack a month earlier that had sunk the HMS *Courageous,* a converted aircraft carrier, off southwest England with a loss of 519 men and 48 badly needed Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes.

Serious questions were immediately raised by the sinking of the 30,450-ton *Royal Oak* in the protected harbor. How did *U-47* manage to penetrate the Royal Navy's supposedly well-defended home anchorage that spanned some 125 square miles? Did Prien and his cohorts have assistance from onshore? What about the car headlights that were seen near the shore, and what about the mysterious Swiss watchmaker of Kirkwall who reportedly disappeared after the sinking? Four of the sub's torpedoes hit home, but what happened to the three others that either missed the target or failed to explode?

And why did *U-47*'s crew so quickly slink from the anchorage if they knew additional tempting targets remained untouched and so close at hand? Prien had, after all, believed he had spotted the prized battlecruiser HMS *Repulse* anchored just behind the *Royal Oak*. Equally important, why did Prien's war diary differ so significantly from the reports that emanated from Berlin?

While the plan itself was hatched in Dönitz's headquarters, the concept dated back to World War I. During that war, the Imperial German Navy attempted—with limited success—to penetrate the defenses blocking entrance to the deep, natural anchorage at Scapa Flow. In one incident, the submarine *U-18* followed a

Imperial War Museum



TOP: The British battleship *Royal Oak* erupts after being struck by a torpedo from the German submarine *U-47* in this fanciful German illustration published during the war. ABOVE: The intrepid Gunther Prien stands atop the conning tower of *U-47.*

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ABOVE: This view of the primary anchorage of the British Home Fleet at Scapa Flow was taken in 1939. A battleship, possibly *Royal Oak,* rides at anchor in the foreground. BELOW: Crewmen stand on the deck of *U-47* as the submarine returns from a successful war patrol in 1939. Every member of the crew was decorated for the sinking of *Royal Oak.*

Imperial War Museum

steamer into the protected anchorage on November 23, 1914. Discovering it to be empty, the sub tried to escape, but was forced to surrender after suffering damage by being rammed twice by a trawler. The British further strengthened the anchorage's defenses, and on October 28, 1918, *UB-116* was lost with all aboard when an underwater magnetic detector alerted the defenders, who manually detonated the minefield that had been put in place.

Dönitz, who had served as a submariner in World War I, viewed the developing World War II plan as more than a way to weaken an exceptionally strong seagoing opponent. He and his superiors also undoubtedly saw it as a way to "even the score" for the loss just two decades earlier when 66 ships of the German Imperial Navy were scuttled at that very anchorage some seven months after the armistice had been signed. Scapa Flow remained a nagging reminder of the detested Versailles Treaty that had inflicted hefty reparations and the humiliation of defeat upon Germany after World War I.

This time around, the Germans held several advantages. Submarines were now faster and more maneuverable than their predecessors and could run deeper and stay submerged longer. German aircraft had progressed to the point where overflights of the anchorage were possible. Now German military leaders could obtain near real-time assessments of the size, numbers, and locations of the ships positioned there.

All in all, thorough research, preparation, and the selection of a bold and experienced submariner made a critical difference in *U-47*'s ability to evade and overcome the defenses at Scapa Flow.

Ironically, though, some contend it was the meticulous German preparations themselves that may have robbed Prien of even greater success. Two purported 11th-hour overflights by German reconnaissance planes—including one reportedly on Thursday afternoon—may have prompted much of the British Home Fleet to evacuate Scapa Flow by the morning of Friday, October 13. That "left the anchorage as empty as a ballroom after the band had gone home," as one observer put it.

But the records are not clear on what precisely caused a large number of British ships to leave the anchorage just a day or two prior to the attacks, and the role of a German overflight on October 12 that supposedly showed a gaggle of more than 60 ships anchored there.

By far, the greatest cause for the departures, and one the Germans were hesitant to publicly admit, was a rather substantial German naval maneuver nearly a week earlier off the southern coast of Norway. It was designed to lure British capital ships to within reach of 139 Luftwaffe bombers and four Type IIB U-boats that lay in wait. The plan was also designed to draw attention away from the *Graf Spee* and the *Deutschland,* two German pocket battleships then operating in the Atlantic.

The exercise, planned by German Admiral Alfred Saalwachter, did successfully lure many British Home Fleet ships to the waters off Norway, including the carrier *Furious*, the battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney,* the battlecruisers *Hood* and *Repulse,* three light cruisers, and 13 destroyers. The German effort proved fruitless, and the U-boats returned to port, while most of the British Home Fleet was ordered to disperse rather than return to Scapa Flow.

The point remains that Prien believed he had entered a target-rich environment that included a tempting concentration of more than 60 ships, including such prizes as the battlecruiser *Repulse* and destroyers *Fame* and *Foresight,* all of which had departed along with scores of additional vessels well before *U-47* neared the objective.

The earlier reconnaissance photos had revealed a 200-foot-wide northern passageway through Kirk Sound, between the sunken block ships *Seriano* and *Numidian*. It would be a dangerous but opportune entry point through which U-47, a Type VIIB U-boat with a draft of 15.5 feet, could travel on the surface through a 24-foot deep channel at high water that was laced with treacherous and constantly changing currents.

At that early stage of World War II, Kirk Sound also lacked boom defense nets, ASDIC (an underwater sound system to detect U-boats), minefields, patrol vessels, or even look-

outs. Consequently, that channel to the anchorage was largely unguarded save for the existing four block vessels, their anchor chains, and the tricky currents.

The planners had employed *U-14,* a smaller Type IIB U-boat, to further scout the anchorage from September 13-29 to obtain additional details on tides, lights, and patrol boats. Based on those findings and additional research, Dönitz believed a U-boat could almost be swept through Kirk Sound without applying any power whatsoever because of the strong tidal currents prevalent at certain hours. Upon reflection, he felt it would be best to enter surfaced at slack tide using a submarine's quieter electric motors rather than its diesel engines to power around the block ships. The dangers still would be substantial because the U-boat would not be able to submerge if spotted, and the jagged rusting block ships could easily rupture the submarine's external dive tanks or even the hull itself.

Prien did manage to penetrate the anchorage, but not without incident. He planned to pass some 50 feet south of a block ship, but an unexpected current moved the Germans toward another block vessel. When the drift occurred, they spotted a cable from the second vessel extending northward into their planned path. A scraping sound was heard as the submarine's port stern scraped against the cable. Prien ordered the port motor stopped, the starboard motor to slow ahead, and the rudders hard to port just as the submarine's bottom clipped the floor of Kirk Sound. *U-47* continued to move forward with a bit of a lurch as it managed to come free of the cable.

With a couple of additional quick turns to avoid becoming grounded in the shallow sound, Prien continued on the surface past the hamlet of St. Mary's, located only some 850 yards away, where the Germans could see a dance in full swing in the village.

At that point, a vehicle's headlights appeared to the crew of *U-47* and later gave rise to questions of whether the Germans had been seen or even had inadvertent directional assistance on shore that night in the form of car headlights. Because of British wartime regulations, vehicles were allowed only one headlight with a slotted cover that permitted only a small amount of light to be cast ahead of the vehicle. Subsequent inquiries over the years determined that the vehicle was operated by taxi driver Bobby Tullock, who drove two couples from Kirkwall to the dance at St. Mary's. After dropping them off, he did stop briefly along the waterway to tend to his headlight.

Confusing the issue is Prien's occasionally

Continued on page 78

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Paratrooper Private Bradford Freeman from the famed "Band of Brothers" recalls fighting in Normandy and in the Netherlands.

The green light lit up the inside of the Douglas C-47 Skytrain's fuselage, and 20 paratroopers from Easy Company's Stick 70, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division charged out the door. Twenty-year-old Private Bradford "Brad" Clark Freeman, the fifth man in line, exited and his parachute quickly popped open. In the intermittent light of the full moon, he could see a pasture rushing up at him. He counted five cows below before he hit the ground.

"It was a nice jump," Freeman recalled. He noticed one of the cows had a white face and red body, reminding him of the cows on his family farm in Artesia, Mississippi. For a brief second, he thought he was home before remembering he was now in enemy territory with a war to fight.

As Freeman freed himself from his jump harness, he looked skyward and saw paratroopers jumping out of another C-47. Their parachutes blossomed, and the men drifted to the ground. One man landed by a nearby road. Freeman rushed over and discovered it was his friend Private Lewis Lampos from Georgia, who slept across from him at their Aldbourne, England, barracks. Lampos had broken his leg. Freeman gathered up Lampos's parachute and hid it in the woods then dragged him into some bushes. He briefly treated Lampos's leg and told him if any vehicle passed by to shoot the driver. Then he took off to find more paratroopers as Lampos cursed after him. "They told us if you couldn't help a wounded paratrooper," explained Freeman, "you had to move on."

Freeman eventually joined a mixed group of paratroopers led by Lieutenant Richard "Dick" Winters. When Freeman mentioned that he thought he had landed on his farm, the other soldiers ribbed him. Sergeant William Guarnere repeatedly asked him, "What makes your big head so hard?"

They made their way through fields and high hedgerows, where Freeman eventually picked up an M1 Garand rifle, which he preferred to his folding-stock carbine. "It wouldn't shoot far enough," he said of his carbine, "but it was a good street fighter." As the sun rose, they passed a field filled with captured Germans. Sergeant Don Malarkey, who was part of the group, started talking to one of the prisoners. "Malarkey and him had known each other from Oregon," said Freeman.

Winters assigned Freeman and a few other paratroopers to guard a crossroads near the Brecourt Manor farm, where Winters and elements of 2nd Battalion would later take out four German artillery pieces. Freeman spent the rest of D-Day at the crossroad. Considering the action around him, his day was relatively quiet. The Germans never assaulted his checkpoint, nor did he see any 4th Infantry Division soldiers coming up from Utah Beach. "Every once in a while, someone would get a prisoner," he recalled, "but we were moving around and really didn't see many." He did hear Navy shells soaring over his position as they screeched toward targets farther inland. "Those two or three shells made a big racket," he recalled.

Freeman was the only member of the company from Mississippi. Raised just west of Columbus by Methodist parents, he was the youngest of four boys: Earl, Herb, Glover, and Carry. As a child, he sometimes played with a girl

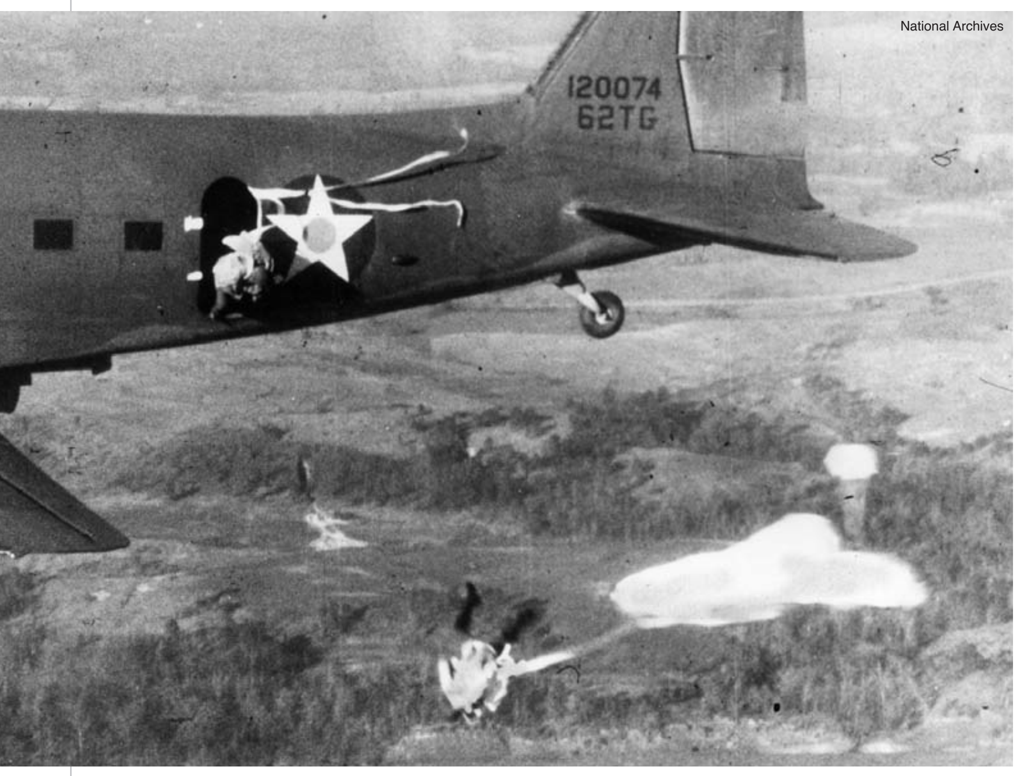
Troopers of the 101st Airborne Division board a transport aircraft for their jump into Normandy. The heavily laden troopers had to assist one another in boarding as seen in this photo.

EASY COMPANY MORTARMAN

PART I

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

named Willie Gurley, but as he got a little older, his parents put him to work. "When I was 11, I got my Social Security number and I worked with [Earl] measuring cotton," he explained. By high school, he and his brother Carry enjoyed reading about world events, especially Russian and German paratroopers. "We thought we'd like to be paratroopers."



During a training exercise at Fort Benning paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division hit the silk as they exit a C-47 transport aircraft.

The two put their interest into practice one day when they grabbed a visiting neighbor's umbrella and ran to the barn. Climbing up to the loft, they opened the umbrella and jumped. The umbrella immediately collapsed, and the two crashed to the ground. "We ran into the woods until our mother called us back to milk the cows," said Freeman. "Nothing was said about it."

Freeman was swinging on a neighbor's swing with their young daughter one day when the girl's mother came out to say that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and that he should go home. It was December 7, 1941, and Freeman was only 17. "I didn't know what was going on," he recalled.

As the country went to war, Freeman attended Mississippi State College in Starkville, signing up for the draft when he turned 18 in September. "I figured if I joined the Army," he said, "I could finish that year of school." When the semester ended, he was sworn into the U.S. Army on December 12, 1942, and four months later he reported to Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, for induction.

While Freeman joined up, his four brothers took on various wartime careers. Earl had spent four years in the Army before the war and had gone to work with the Civilian Conservation Corps at Camp Shelby. Herb caught a thorn in his eye while cutting bodark hedges and was ineligible for service. Glover, who had played football for Southern Mississippi State, joined the infantry and served in Greenland and Iceland before transferring to England, where he took classes at Oxford University. Carry, who had jumped out of the barn with Freeman under the umbrella, earned an officer's commission in the 11th Airborne Division. He jumped into New Guinea and fought in the Philippines in the Pacific Theater.

After Freeman's induction, he traveled to Fort McClellan, Alabama, for basic training. The Army issued him a uniform but had no size six boots, so he began training in his Sunday shoes. Once he graduated, a contingent of paratroopers came through the camp looking for volunteers. Freeman, considering himself a veteran paratrooper since he had jumped under an umbrella, eagerly joined and headed off to Fort Benning, Georgia, to become part of the airborne.

He joined Colonel Ducat M. McEntee's 541st Parachute Infantry Regiment, training at Fort Benning. All candidates had to make five jumps, including one at night, to earn their jump wings. Despite the tension and anxiety of jumping out of a plane (or perhaps because of it), Freeman often jumped with a plug of Bloodhound brand chewing tobacco in his cheek. On one jump, he leaped out of the aircraft, but one of the candidates refused to jump. "They took him away," recalled Freeman. "That was the last time I seen him."

On his third jump, Freeman's parachute deployed but his leg got caught in his harness. As he floated to Earth, an instructor shouted up to him how to disentangle his leg. He wrestled himself free before hitting the ground and landed safely except for one thing: "I swallowed my chewing tobacco."

For the night jump, on October 30, 1943, three C-47s packed with paratroopers took off, but one aircraft crashed, killing 14 men. "I didn't know them, but they gave me 14 days to go home," said Freeman. He wanted to be home for Thanksgiving, November 25, but his 14-day leave expired on Thanksgiving Day, forcing him to return to duty before the holiday arrived. Upon his return, he received his coveted wings.

The training continued with Freeman making it through the daily grind of hikes and calisthenics. Despite the regiment's excellent performance and high marks, it was part of the Army's strategic reserve, not slated for overseas duty. Freeman wanted to fight. Fortunately, the 11th, 82nd, and 101st Airborne Divisions needed paratroopers for combat. Freeman was picked for Maj. Gen. Maxwell Taylor's 101st, which had already departed for England in September, three months earlier.

In February1944, Freeman, promoted to corporal, boarded a converted cruise ship to cross the Atlantic Ocean for England. He enjoyed standing on deck and watching flying fish jump alongside the ship. The trip was not all smooth. When the ship hit a storm with heavy seas, the crew sealed all the hatches. "We felt like we were being smothered to death," Freeman recalled. When the ship finally arrived in England, he and about 11 other paratroopers disembarked onto a ferry boat.

A lieutenant from Easy Company in Colonel Robert Sink's 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment arrived in a jeep to bring the men to camp. Freeman did not like the looks of Lieutenant Dick Winters, the leader of Easy Company's 1st Platoon. The two sat across from each other and, as Freeman remembered it, "We looked at each other like two bulldogs who wanted to fight." Winters stood up, and Freeman, thinking they were about to grapple, started to get up. "Just sit back down," Winters told him. "As you were." Freeman sat down, and the two talked. He had a new respect for Winters.

Winters brought Freeman and the other new paratroopers to their new barracks in Aldbourne, headquarters for the 506th. They arrived at night, when the entire camp was blacked out, with no street lights and windows draped by heavy black curtains.

The next morning, Sergeant Guarnere marched the new paratroopers to the company commander, Lieutenant Thomas Meehan, who had taken command from Captain Herbert Sobel three months earlier after a handful of sergeants threatened to turn in their stripes instead of serving under Sobel. After a few words, Meehan dismissed all the men except Freeman, telling him the company had no room for a corporal and that Freeman would be reduced to a private first class. Freeman did not complain. "I liked being a private," he reflected. Meehan assigned him to Sergeant Don Malarkey's 4th Squad in Lieutenant Winters' 1st Platoon. Freeman came to like Malarkey. "He was a good fellow all the way," he said.

For the next four months, Freeman trained with his new unit. He participated in parachute jumps and field maneuvers. He fired mortars and his folding stock M-1 carbine on the rifle range. As the company's only paratrooper from Mississippi, the men enjoyed his accent. "They liked my Southern brogue," he said. Fellow Easy Company paratrooper Corporal Walter Gordon had lived in Mississippi and Louisiana but claimed Louisiana as his home.

During one rifle inspection, Winters, as Freeman remembered it, "tried a little something on me." He took Freeman's rifle before Freeman had a chance to open its bolt. Winters noticed the closed bolt and tried to hand it back to Freeman, but Freeman refused. He knew never to accept a rifle during inspection that might be loaded. "I stood there until he opened the bolt and shut it," recalled Freeman. "He done it right." But Winters was not finished. "He asked me if they gave me a razor and to get the peach fuzz off my face."

That was the moment Freeman and Winters developed a friendship. "We got to be buddies," he recalled. "We was raised alike and had to work when we was children." Winters eventually offered to send Freeman to Officers Candidate School, but he declined. He had found his niche as a private and was proud of it.

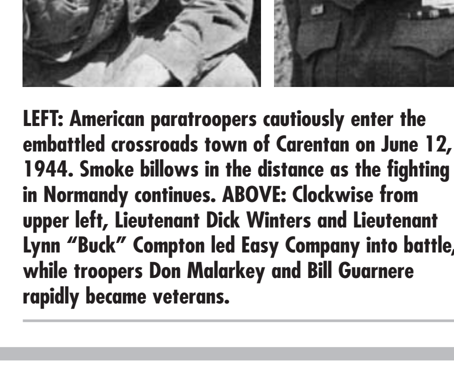
One cold night, Freeman broke the rules by starting a fire for his fellow paratroopers. Guarnere caught them and demanded to know who started the fire. Freeman spoke up. "I was cold." Guarnere did not respond, but the next day Freeman found himself on guard duty, standing in the cold he so hated.

On the last day of May, the 506th transferred to an airfield near the village of Upottery in southwestern England. The men moved into tents and spent the next several days learning about their D-Day objectives. Easy Company was to drop near the town of St. Marie du Mont and both eliminate a German garrison and seize Causeway No. 2 on Utah Beach, clearing the way for the amphibious forces of the 4th Infantry Division. When a storm swept through the English Channel, the men's jump date, set for June 4, was delayed 24 hours. "The delay didn't bother me," said Freeman. "It was delayed before we put on our jump suits."

The next day, Freeman and his comrades suited up for their combat jump. As part of the company's mortar unit, Freeman strapped an 18-pound mortar baseplate to his chest. "Malarkey had six rounds for the mortar and others had six rounds too," said Freeman. Unlike the depiction on HBO's *Band of Brothers* miniseries, Freeman never received a British leg bag nor streaked his face with black cork. He did keep a small Army-issued Bible. "That was the year that [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt gave us a little Bible."

Freeman was fastening some Bangalore torpedoes, used to blow up enemy obstacles, onto Guarnere when a fellow paratrooper came by, selling watches. Guarnere, who had just found out that his brother had died fighting at Monte Cassino in Italy, became furious and chased the man off. Guarnere would later earn the nickname "Wild Bill" for his fighting intensity, brought on by his brother's death.

The men gathered around Lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton, the commander of 2nd Platoon, who wore the number "70" on a piece of cardboard around his neck, designating their C-



LEFT: American paratroopers cautiously enter the embattled crossroads town of Carentan on June 12, 1944. Smoke billows in the distance as the fighting in Normandy continues. ABOVE: Clockwise from upper left, Lieutenant Dick Winters and Lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton led Easy Company into battle, while troopers Don Malarkey and Bill Guarnere rapidly became veterans.

National Archives

Brad Freeman was among the paratroopers who plummeted into the Netherlands during the opening hours of Operation Market Garden. In this image, billowing parachutes crowd the sky.

47. They then climbed into their aircraft. Freeman, so weighed down with equipment, needed British soldiers to help him up through the door. Twenty paratroopers packed onboard.

The C-47 took off in the dying light of June 5, 1944, and joined the fleet of 87 aircraft bearing the division for its flight across the English Channel. "It was silent," said Freeman about the trip. "No one was saying nothing." As the aircraft passed over the Channel Islands and French coast, enemy fire broke the silence. German antiaircraft streaked into the night sky. "You could hear it." Then the red jump light lit up. The men stood up and waited for it to turn green. The plane screamed above Normandy at 200 miles per hour, 100 miles per hour faster than their normal jump speed.

In the confusion, the men failed to check each other's equipment. Still, when the green light lit, Freeman jumped out and landed safely in a pasture. He spent D-Day protecting the intersection near Brecourt Manor.

Six days after D-Day, on June 12, Easy Company helped spearhead an attack into the vital city of Carentan, whose capture would unite the troops fighting on Omaha and Utah Beaches. Freeman and his fellow mortarmen set up their weapons southeast of the town before dawn and commenced firing. "That was the most firing we had ever done," he recalled. As the men dropped mortars down tubes and adjusted their fire, Colonel Sink came by and told them to hold their fire. A Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter aircraft had targeted Carentan's railway station. "The plane flew right over us and went across and came back and blew up the railroad with a 500-pound bomb," said Freeman.

Once the P-47 departed, the men returned to firing their mortars. When ammunition ran low, Sink personally resupplied them using his own Jeep. Once the infantry successfully captured Carentan, the mortarmen followed. "We weren't shot at," Freeman recalled, "although some shells did come through." He thought the town looked pretty intact, except for one building that lost a wall, making the rooms visible. "It was like Mississippi State's old dormitory," he said.

On June 28, the 83rd Infantry Division relieved the 101st, and the men of Easy Company made their way to Utah Beach for the trip back to England. As they prepared to board a Landing Ship, Tank (LST), Malarkey asked Freeman to help Private Alton Moore get an Army motorcycle into the ship. Moore rode the motorcycle up the LST's ramp, and Freeman pulled it onboard to safety. The men would spend their free time riding the motorcycle over the English countryside.

Back in Aldbourne, the men trained for their next jump. During one training jump, Freeman banged his knee, causing it to swell with fluid. One of the company medics, Private Eugene Rowe, drained it every few days. Freeman was taken off jump status and waited tables at the officers' mess while his knee healed. During his recovery duties, Freeman ran into Private Lampos, the paratrooper who broke his leg on D-Day. Lampos was still angry and, as Freeman remembered it, "he gave me a good talking to." Once he finished venting, Lampos forgave Freeman. "We was good friends again after that."

Easy Company's next mission came on September 17, when the men loaded into C-47s bound for the Netherlands: Operation Market Garden. British Field Marshall Bernard Law Montgomery planned to drop three airborne divisions into the country to protect a series of bridges along a single road that his army group would use to flank the German army on its right. The 101st Airborne was assigned to capture the Dutch cities of Eindhoven, Son, Veghel, and Grave. "We got all the ammunition we could carry," said Freeman about preparing for the drop.

The planes took off that morning and flew across the Channel. Freeman and his comrades spent the journey watching the other C-47s flying alongside. For protection, P-47 Thunderbolts flew below the troop carriers, Lockheed P-38 Lightnings flew above, while North American P-51 Mustangs flew alongside. As they reached the Netherlands, German flak towers opened fire on the airborne armada. Freeman saw a P-38 dive on one tower. "He came straight down and turned up," said Freeman. The Lightning poured machine-gun fire into the tower. "He stopped that gun from shooting ack ack."

When Freeman's aircraft reached its drop zone, he lined up and jumped out with the rest of his stick. "We landed, gathered up, and went to our areas," he said. As he headed off, he witnessed two gliders crash into each other some 50 feet above him. "They were up above us," he remembered, "high enough to turn bottoms-up and backwards, flipping over."

As the paratroopers reached Son, their first objective, grateful locals swarmed them. "They would give you anything," said Freeman. He watched as a small boy ran up to Private Joseph D. Liebgott and asked to see the bazooka strapped to his back. Before Liebgott could react, the boy pulled the bazooka's trigger, firing a round straight down into the middle of the street. Fortunately, the round didn't explode.

The town's liberation unleashed strong feelings. Some expressed joy at being delivered from four years of Nazi occupation; others chose to vent their anger on their fellow citizens who had collaborated with the Germans. Some of the women offered apples to their liberators, while others were punished for fraternizing with the Germans. "We could see down the street people cutting the hair off the women," said Freeman.

Easy Company raced for the bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal, but the Germans managed to blow it up before the paratroopers arrived. The men continued to Eindhoven, encountering some German fire as they neared the northern approaches. The next day, the British Army

arrived. As infantry, tanks, and vehicles passed the paratroopers, Freeman could hear a conversation on a radio from one of the command vehicles. "There was talk about battle," he said. Suddenly, the British stopped advancing and huddled into groups. Freeman asked an English soldier what was going on. The man explained, "A spot of tea, old bloke."

That night, word passed down that a German tank was on its way to their area. "We went to meet it," said Freeman. As the men advanced, a Luftwaffe aircraft flew over and dropped flares, illuminating the area. "We froze like a fence post." They could not see any tanks, so once the flare faded the men returned to camp.

With Son and Eindhoven captured, the 101st's mission changed from capturing bridges to defending the single road leading to the city of Arnhem, where British 1st Airborne Division paratroopers desperately fought to capture

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ABOVE: Smoke pours from the detonation of a practice round as paratroopers prepare to fire a 60mm mortar during a training exercise. By the time they entered combat the men of Easy Company were ready. RIGHT: Dashing through a shower of earth, rock, and shrapnel, American paratroopers seek cover as shells from deadly German 88mm guns burst around them.

the vital bridge over the Lower Rhine River (the river runs south to north). The Germans repeatedly cut the road, attempting to disrupt Allied progress, earning it the title Hell's Highway. "We'd open up a road," explained Freeman, "then the Germans would attack and we would have to go back."

One day, the Germans attacked the highway from the east while Winters led some Easy paratroopers from the west. The two sides engaged at a section of double highway divided by a concrete drainage ditch and covered by a bridge. "I was not very far from it," said Freeman. "They looked up and saw each other on each side." From his vantage point, he could see the Germans trying to use the ditch and bridge walls to their advantage. "They was trying to shoot through it and make it ricochet," he said, adding, "They had a tank battle right behind us."

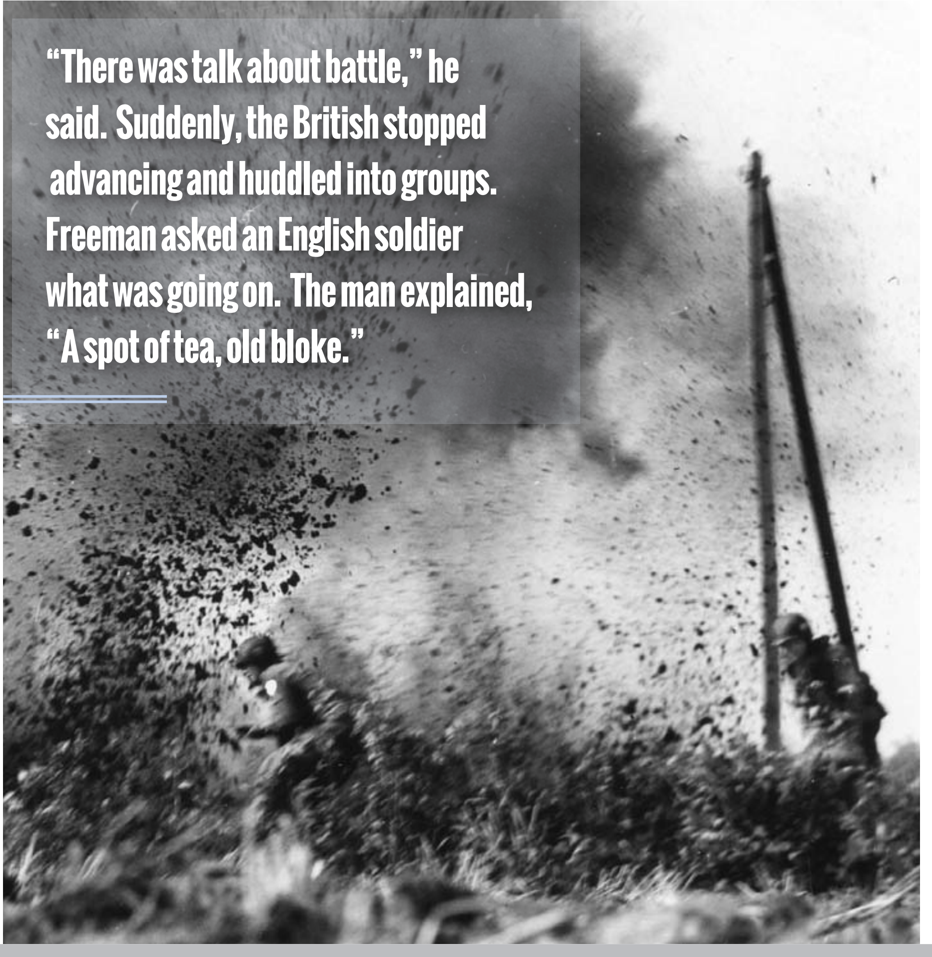
On September 20, Freeman and a platoon from Easy joined three British tanks and about 100 men from regimental headquarters for the drive to Nuenen, about four miles northeast of Eindhoven. The men made it through the town, but as they reached the outskirts German tanks and infantry attacked. "They had a tank sitting back in one of the places," said Freeman, "and one of our boys tried to get one of the [British] tankers to shoot." This would have been Sergeant John Martin, who climbed onto a British tank and warned the tank commander about the enemy threat, but he was ignored. The enemy tank emerged from its hiding place and blasted the British tank. "I wasn't too far behind."

A tank battle broke out with the British getting the worst of it. The paratroopers pulled back. Freeman ran past a knocked-out British tank. "It was still smoking and popping and burning," he recalled. "That was very unpleasant and bad smelling." The fighting outside Nuenen was some of the worst Freeman experienced during the war. "It was a pretty rough time."

Easy Company and the rest of the 101st Airborne continued to fight for Hell's Highway until Arnhem fell to the Germans on September 25, trapping hundreds of British paratroopers on the north bank of the Lower Rhine. A week later, on October 2, Freeman and his comrades were trucked north and took up positions on the southern bank of the Lower Rhine, west of Arnhem and about equidistant between the ancient towns of Opheusden and Driel, an area known as "the Island" since it was cut by the Maas River to the south.

Farms separated by dikes and wooded areas comprised the Island. The men dug foxholes into the dikes for protection, just like they had done in France's hedgerows. Here, for almost two months, the 506th clashed with German patrols on the Island or with groups that crossed the river at night. Some of the fighting was so close the two sides tossed hand grenades across the dikes at each other.

On October 5, Freeman joined a patrol led by Sergeant Malarkey through a wooded area,



"There was talk about battle," he said. Suddenly, the British stopped advancing and huddled into groups. Freeman asked an English soldier what was going on. The man explained, "A spot of tea, old bloke."

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where they set up a camouflaged observation post. Freeman spotted seven Germans with two German Shepherd dogs depart a house and head out on their own patrol. "They had been down at that house goofing off," he explained. "We were scattered out in the woods." When the Germans unknowingly reached the paratroopers, Freeman shouted out "Achtung!" They stopped, and the paratroopers quickly surrounded them. While the other paratroopers kept their rifles trained on the Germans, Freeman focused on a different threat. "I never pointed [my rifle] at the Germans, I pointed it at the dogs." The Germans went off with their captors, but the dogs did not join them. Speaking of one of the animals, Freeman remembered, "He didn't follow us either," said Freeman. "He was a big dog."

The Americans led their prisoners to the edge of the woods, which opened up to flat fields and swamps near the river. They worried the enemy would fire on them while they crossed the open area. "What are we going to do now?"

ABOVE: A young Dutch boy is oblivious to the danger as American paratroopers seek temporary cover alongside a road moments after descending into the Netherlands during the early phase of Operation Market Garden. BELOW: In this photo taken moments after the men of Easy Company destroyed two companies of German infantry, the scene remains somewhat confused. OPPOSITE: Proud of his service to his country, Easy Company veteran Brad Freeman poses during a recent event.

National Archives

Malarkey asked. "We'll get in the middle of them," Freeman answered. "If they kill us, they'll kill their men too." The men arranged the Germans around them and continued on their journey. It worked. "We weren't shot at."

While Freeman helped bring in the German prisoners, Winters led a clash with an entire company of Germans dug in at a crossroad of two intersecting dikes. "He just took so many and left the rest of us to secure the dike," recalled Freeman. When Freeman finished with the prisoners, he manned a position near a jelly factory. "We had a quarter mile each [to cover], and I remember looking across the water." Winters led his attack on the Germans while Freeman defended his post. "We were on the left," Freeman remembered. "We had to move up and back and got fired on, but not much." When it was over, the other paratroopers told Freeman about Winters' final charge to eliminate the enemy. "I heard that he ordered 'fixed bayonets.'" The successful attack earned Winters a transfer to battalion staff.

After the crossroads fight, the Germans brought in a railway gun. Freeman recalled seeing it roll into his area. "The Germans would take this big gun on the railroad, roll it in and roll it back," he said. "It took two little cars to take the gun, so they'd have Germans riding on the side." The gun never fired on Easy Company, so the men never fired on it. "We didn't bother them."

Two weeks after the crossroads battle, Freeman and 17 other paratroopers were picked for a possible suicide mission. On the north bank of the Lower Rhine, some 125 British paratroopers, several members of the Dutch Resistance, and a handful of American pilots remained surrounded by German forces west of Arnhem. To rescue them, British Lt. Col. David Dobie devised Operation Pegasus, a river crossing in the dead of night on October 22. Colonel Sink agreed to the operation and picked Lieutenant Fred "Moose" Heyliger, Easy Company's new commander, to lead it.

The men trained with boats and took swimming lessons. Freeman took a few lessons but told Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Hester he simply could not swim. "Hester got into it with me," recalled Freeman. "He told me no boy from Mississippi couldn't swim." Freeman told him that back home the only watering hole on his farm was where the cows drank and relieved themselves. "It wasn't a good place to swim," said Freeman. He finally told Hester, "If somebody throws me in water over my head I won't drown, I could dog paddle." Hester told Freeman he should teach the other men the same.

On the night of October 22, the men pushed off and paddled across the river. As they crossed, the Germans on the high ground opened fire with heavy weapons and hit Colonel Sink's quarters on the southern bank. The boats touched down on the northern bank, and Freeman jumped out, then grabbed the boat so the current wouldn't pull it away, and also so "I wouldn't get caught." The British and their allies climbed into the boats and pushed off. Most of the troops that approached Freeman were Polish paratroopers. As many men as possible loaded onto the boats and headed south, leaving Freeman and his comrades alone on the north shore.

When the boats returned, Freeman, his fellow Easy Company men, and the last Allied fighters climbed onboard. As they made their way back, the rescued paratroopers, wanting to help, started paddling with their rifle butts but the splashing became too loud. "We told them they couldn't do it," Freeman explained. When asked if he was ever worried about being stuck on the north bank, he said, "We got to where we were used to it."

After almost two months in the Netherlands, Freeman and his fellow paratroopers boarded trucks and headed to an old French camp in Mourmelon-le-Grand, France, for rest and refitting. Freeman was glad to be out of the mud and clean for a change. He received a five-day pass to Paris, but the City of Light did not appeal to the Mississippi farm boy. The urinals in the public bathrooms consisted of a trough that ran out to a street gutter. They reminded him too much of the troughs for the cows (for the same purpose) back home. "I didn't see anything I liked about Paris," he recalled. "I didn't like Paris at all." He returned to camp and spent his time either watching his friends play cards and shoot dice or cleaning his rifle and mortar.

The relaxed atmosphere did not last long. Two weeks after arriving in Mourmelon, on December 17, Freeman and his comrades were put on 24-hour alert. The Germans had broken through the American lines in Belgium and Luxembourg. The 101st Airborne was needed for its toughest campaign yet, fighting surrounded in snow and ice against a resurgent German army. Freeman had more war to fight.

"Easy Company Mortarman Part 2: Bastogne and Beyond" will appear in the October 2019 issue.

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Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, famed German commander in North Africa and Western Europe, was also an avid photographer.

BY ZITA BALLINGER FLETCHER

The name Field Marshal Erwin Rommel—associated with tank warfare in Europe and North Africa during World War II—might conjure up mental images of the famous German general riding in a panzer, reviewing maps, or commanding battles. What one might not imagine is that in the midst of commanding frontline troops, Rommel toted a camera and wielded a lens with artistic imagination and precision amid gunshots and shell bursts. In fact, he created thousands of striking wartime photographs prior to his death in 1944.

Rommel's photography shows that the field marshal had an eye for irony, great attention to detail, an attraction to flowers, and a daring streak—he often tempted mortal danger to snap dramatic action pictures during battles. He was also keenly interested in his fellow soldiers. An overwhelming majority of Rommel's photographs document simple and poignant moments in the everyday lives of his men—as well as their final resting places. Rommel went out of his way to photograph the makeshift battlefield graves of soldiers who fought alongside him and under his command. Rommel's photography included images he wished to publish as documentation of his campaigns as well as many private mementos. He labeled many of his pictures with handwritten captions.

Rommel took the majority of his wartime pictures during his campaigns between 1940 and 1942, although he took some during his command of Army Group B and the fortifying of the Normandy coastline in 1944. His life was brought to an abrupt end several months after the successful Allied invasion of Europe on D-Day. It is interesting to note that the photographs taken during the early stages of the war number in the thousands. However, as the

Italian soldiers smile for Rommel's camera in North Africa, circa 1941. BELOW: Erwin Rommel in 1934.

Through the Lens of the DESERT FOX

tide turned against the Germans, Rommel became disillusioned and focused solely on his command duties as well as on his own growing discontent with Nazi leadership. As a result, the photographs he took during the last year of his life were strictly for military purposes—lacking the élan and spontaneity that characterizes his earlier work.

Rommel used a Leica camera for much of his photography. Some of his early wartime photographs, particularly from his 1940 campaign in Belgium and France, were taken using a different camera.

Since photography was a passion for Rommel for many years preceding the war, he owned many lenses, camera attachments, and other photography equipment. According to his son Manfred, Rommel's camera equipment was stolen by American GIs, who looted their rural home in 1945. In addition, Rommel's wartime photography collection was carted off by two American counterintelligence officers, who discovered it in a trunk during a search of the house. They provided the Rommel family with a receipt for the confiscated material. However, the family later was unable to locate the officers or discover the whereabouts of the pictures.

I discovered the obscure photograph collection in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, D.C., while I was a teenager in high school doing research for a book. Afterward, I spent several years doing research on Rommel and his photos and embarked on a mission to digitally restore the pictures, which were badly damaged. My project continued throughout my college years. During that time, I wrote a letter to Manfred Rommel to inform him about the location of his father's photo collection at NARA, in case he was unaware. I sent Manfred copies of some of his father's photographs along with my letter. Manfred wrote back to me, confirming that it indeed was his father's photography. He also provided me with information about a museum in Germany where I could donate the photos to be kept with the rest of his father's estate. At the time of his letter, Manfred was suffering from a long illness and passed away in 2013.

My senior honor's thesis at the University of South Florida focused on my restoration work with the Rommel photos. The work evolved into a book series called *Erwin Rommel: Photographer,* the first volume of which was published in 2015.

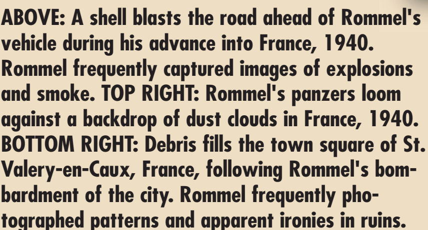
tos I had brought matched reels of negatives that had been inside Rommel's home, and were then in their possession. However, their reels were few and incomplete. The photos I had provided the missing pieces.

The archivists were completely astonished to behold the images. Rommel's photographs had not been seen in Germany since before the end of the war, when a pair of American Army officers hauled away a large trunk across the gravel driveway of his home in Herrlingen in 1945. It had been 72 years since the pictures had vanished without a trace. There was an atmosphere of shock and anticipation in the museum when these images resurfaced.

The archivists were particularly fascinated by the photos Rommel took of North Africa. They informed me that photos from behind German lines in North Africa are extremely rare in Germany. They were also excited to see Rommel's color pictures. They did not even know that Rommel's color photography existed.

I donated electronic copies of Rommel's photography that I had digitally restored to the Haus der Geschichte Museum photo archive in 2017, in addition to my research notes in the hope that the photos would be of educational use to any Germans who wished to view them. The images were reunited with those that had been left behind at Rommel's home and were to be kept at the museum with his other remaining personal belongings.

Studying Rommel's photography, I identified patterns in his work and several key themes in



ABOVE: A shell blasts the road ahead of Rommel's vehicle during his advance into France, 1940. Rommel frequently captured images of explosions and smoke. TOP RIGHT: Rommel's panzers loom against a backdrop of dust clouds in France, 1940. BOTTOM RIGHT: Debris fills the town square of St. Valery-en-Caux, France, following Rommel's bombardment of the city. Rommel frequently photographed patterns and apparent ironies in ruins.

I moved to Germany in December 2016 after taking a job there as a foreign correspondent for a wire service. The following spring, I contacted the museum Manfred had written to me about, the Haus der Geschichte in Baden Württemberg, and arranged to meet with the museum's staff to show them the photographs I had digitally restored. The archivists recognized immediately that the photos were taken by Rommel. They informed me that the pho-

TOP LEFT: German motorcycle troopers, covered in dust from their advance, pause for a photo in France, 1940. BOTTOM LEFT: A German soldier fires artillery during the invasion of France, 1940. Rommel sometimes captured action shots from a low angle. ABOVE: Rommel's soldiers charge up a hill in France, 1940. Rommel led from the front lines and enjoyed photographing his infantry in action.

which he showed special visual interest. Some of these reflect his interests as a professional soldier and a general, such as those depicting troop maneuvers, fortifications, and action shots during battles. Other images reveal Rommel's personal quirks. No matter what the subject matter, all of the images contain distinct idiosyncrasies that appear like fingerprints in all of Rommel's images.

As a photographer, the field marshal was quite meticulous. Although he snapped most of his photographs spontaneously while leading his lightning-fast military advances, he somehow managed to create quick images with measured, mathematical precision. For example, Rommel's focal objects always tend to be perfectly centered within the frame. Lines also always appear measured and balanced in shots in geometrically even compositions. For many photographers, such precision is difficult to achieve without

ALTHOUGH HE SNAPPED MOST OF HIS PHOTOGRAPHS SPONTANEOUSLY WHILE LEADING HIS LIGHTNING FAST MILITARY ADVANCES, HE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO CREATE QUICK IMAGES WITH MEASURED, MATHEMATICAL PRECISION.

practice and tends to be difficult to pull off when taking snaps on the run. Rommel, however, was both fast and exacting. Precision was a reflex for him when he composed his shots.

Rommel had an eye for drama and was drawn to overpowering shadows, stark light, and dominating lines. He often took larger-than-life images of machines, tanks, and vehicles. He also captured dramatic images of nature, knife-like sand dunes, steep craggy cliffs, and massive sandstorms. He liked to photograph people in the midst of activity; rarely are his human subjects idle or completely at leisure.

One of the most interesting aspects of Rommel's photography was his attention to contrast and irony. When exploring areas around him, particularly in the aftermath of a battle, Rommel noticed things in his environment that created ironic contrasts or that were amiss. He would snap a single picture of these haunting or bewildering scenes as if making a note. Here is a French soldier retreating sullenly before a charging statue of Napoleon in Cherbourg. A German soldier in North Africa sits alertly with binoculars on a broken-down vehicle. A classical statue poses prettily at the end of a street beside a row of parked military vehicles. Understated ironies such as these frequently appeared in Rommel's lens.

Perhaps Rommel's most haunting composition style—one that seems to have been his favorite—was to capture lone human figures against vast or overpowering backdrops. In another kind of contrast, Rommel liked to capture images of small human figures, either isolated or diminutive in the frame, against overwhelming backgrounds: for example, lone German soldiers walking across wide, open spaces being totally dwarfed by nature or advancing tanks. These pictures portray the individual as a tiny speck in a world filled with motion, peril, or emptiness. The images often create a sense of loneliness and void. They give the viewer some kind of insight into Rommel's psyche. Why, out of the many diverse approaches to photo composition available to him, did this methodical photographer choose to cast human figures in such a desolate, remote light? The answer to that question is something for observers of Rommel's photos to theorize.

With regard to the human subjects of his photos, the field marshal tended to focus mostly on soldiers. He showed no discrimination with regard to soldiers that he chose to photograph—they could be German or Italian, English or Indian, Axis or Allied. He clearly enjoyed mingling with enlisted men because he took many pictures of them on and off the battlefield as they were engaging in a wide variety of activities. He also occasionally photographed POWs—among them a turban-wearing Sikh and a kilt-wearing Scot—out of apparent curiosity. The soldiers are usually working, pausing a moment for rest, or in the midst of traveling. There are no photographs of men lounging, playing card games, or engaging in soldierly pranks; it appears Rommel had little interest in leisurely pastimes. There are a few exceptions to this rule. He did snap a few pictures of a soldier playing guitar, and he also took some unassuming shots at social gatherings he attended. It is evident from his photography, however, that when it came to personal interactions, the general was predominantly concerned with his work.

Rommel was emotionally attached to his soldiers, which is evidenced not only by his writings, but also by his numerous private photographs of soldiers' graves that he took in France and North Africa. Most of these are unmarked and were clearly intended as personal mementos. Rommel kept other burial photos as memorials or tributes. He wrote captions on some images, describing the bravery of particular soldiers or memorializing their sacrifices. Rommel captured images of lone gravesites and secluded makeshift ceme-

teries in the fields of France and the North African wilderness. Rommel's photographs show burial services, graves covered with flowers, or German soldiers decorating their comrades' resting places. Sometimes these German soldiers were buried in open meadows, behind buildings, or in desolate spaces not far from where they fell in France. In North Africa, the graves of the dead were a grim sight, covered by heaps of sand and rocks. Rommel's pictures show that wooden crosses placed on these graves were frequently blown down by dust and gusting winds. The images also depict German soldiers in North Africa using desert brush to decorate graves in lieu of floral arrangements.

death dates of many soldiers. Even after the passage of more than 70 years, many Germans are still waiting to learn the fate and whereabouts of their relatives who were killed or went missing in action. To assist surviving family members in locating deceased relatives, I donated digitally restored copies of Rommel's war grave photographs to the German War Graves Commission in 2018.

Officials from the German War Graves Commission were eager to see the photographs that I offered to send to them and welcomed the donation. The work of the commission is to bury the dead and reconnect families with missing soldiers. This work is fraught with many difficulties that

including nature, airplanes, machinery, military maneuvers, battle action, and war devastation.

Rommel's affinity for nature found its way into his pictures. He was an intrepid outdoorsman. Like many Germans, he loved hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing, swimming, and exploring nature. His interest in the outdoors was lifelong and can be attributed to the fact that he grew up in a rural and mountainous region of Germany known as the Swabian Alps. As a young man, he often went on hiking trips, and he continued to involve himself in outdoor pursuits with other soldiers throughout his life and military career. While navigating rough and rugged terrain during his military campaigns,

LEFT: Soldiers of the Afrika Korps pose on top of a tank, circa 1941. Rommel photographed many scenes from soldiers' everyday lives on the front lines. Unlike staged photos taken by Nazi propagandists, Rommel's photographs of his men were candid and unpolished. BELOW: Vehicle tracks crisscross the landscape in North Africa, circa 1941-42. Rommel tended to photograph geometric patterns due to his apparent visual interest in them.

One of the grave photographs with a personal story related by Rommel in his writings is that of Lieutenant Most, killed at Rommel's side in France in 1940. Most was Rommel's aide; the two men had crossed the Meuse River together under sniper fire and survived many battles together. Most was gunned down unexpectedly as he stood near Rommel during a lull in fighting. Rommel was shocked by this and witnessed Most's immediate death despite efforts to resuscitate him. He described Most's death in his writings, referring to him as a "magnificent soldier." Most's grave numbers among those photographed by Rommel; located behind a brick wall in rural France, it is decorated with tulips and a wooden cross.

Due to the high quality of Rommel's Leica images, many details of the graves were preserved in time, including the names, ranks, and

arise from wartime conditions and postwar scars. In many cases, German soldiers were buried in remote unmarked graves, or their cemeteries were demolished. People from former Allied and occupied countries are often unwilling or reluctant to return materials to the German families that may assist them in burying their dead. This causes suffering among the soldiers' surviving relatives, many of whom are now elderly and wait with faint hope for news from the War Graves Commission or the Red Cross even after so many years. Due to confidentiality, it is unlikely that the world will ever learn whether Rommel's graveside photos reunited any of his soldiers' remains with their surviving relatives, however, I did receive a message from the German War Graves Commission conveying their thanks.

Aside from soldiers, Rommel the photographer had several other chief areas of interest,

particularly in North Africa, Rommel managed to amass a heap of landscape photography. He photographed sunsets over tanks, rocky ravines, windswept dunes, and blossoming meadows. From the images, it is clear that he always went to great pains to neatly frame every shot. Apparently, the general also had a soft spot for flowers. He strained to take macro close-ups in color of delicate white flower petals and bright golden blooms in North Africa. Rommel's interest in nature also extended to fauna. Camels, horses, and donkeys number among a variety of animals that Rommel captured in peaceful scenes across war-torn lands. Some camel herds were captured by his lens when he shot images as an aerial photographer.

Rommel frequently made use of a Fieseler Storch aircraft to reconnoiter North African battlefields and surrounding terrain. Most of the time, he piloted the aircraft himself. Rommel had entertained a keen interest in flying since his teens and had made efforts to study the science of flight. As a grown man, he seized opportunities to fly planes. Evidently, he was good at it, since he never crashed despite the many perilous conditions he encountered in North African skies. As usual, Rommel toted his camera along with him in the cockpit and somehow managed to snap a bevy of aerial shots even while maneuvering his plane over battlefields and rugged, windy tundra. He liked to photograph other planes from the air—sometimes as they stood motionless in airfields far below him, and many times as they glided aloft outside his window. At times, he also photographed planes flying over him as he stood on the ground.

Machinery captivated Rommel; he was a gifted engineer who showed great interest in battlefield equipment and in designing fortifications. It would be inaccurate to say that Rommel was fascinated only with tanks. Generally speaking, he photographed anything with wheels, engines, gears, or metal parts—whether intact or in ruins. He took many photos of damaged and derelict vehicles in addition to working ones. Sometimes, he photographed pieces of vehicles blown apart during battle. He had an attraction to tank treads and metal bolts, taking many moody and imposing images focusing on the undercarriages of larger-than-life tanks and their outer steel armor. He also frequently took abstract photographs of trucks and battleships.

Rommel enjoyed capturing vivid scenes of his troops advancing. He frequently accomplished this through aerial photography or by wielding his camera from a moving armored vehicle. He intended to use photos of his maneuvers to document military events that transpired under his command. He photographed scores of motorcycles and tanks speeding across France and North Africa from many striking angles and viewpoints. However, not all of the photos were taken with a military view in mind—Rommel could not resist a good shot. He snapped many oddities that crossed his lens, including goats and dogs interrupting a military march, geometric patterns left by tire tracks, and a sandstorm crossing a desert battlefield.

Battlefield chaos provided the scenes for many of Rommel's most striking pictures. The German commander dedicated himself not only to successfully devising strategies and leading

ROMMEL TOOK NO "WAR TROPHY" PHOTOGRAPHY. IT WAS TYPICAL FOR MANY GERMAN SOLDIERS, PARTICULARLY NAZI PARTY ENTHUSIASTS, TO TAKE GLOATING PICTURES OF DESTROYED CULTURAL LANDMARKS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES OR TO PHOTOGRAPH THEMSELVES STRIKING VICTORY POSES IN CONQUERED TERRITORIES. THIS WAS NOT THE CASE FOR ROMMEL.

troops under fire, but to photographing the action as it unfolded. Amid bomb bursts, ear-shattering shell explosions, and gunfire, Rommel risked his life to take compelling photos of hot war zones. Photos frequently show other soldiers around Rommel ducking for cover. Other pictures show men charging forward in assaults or firing mortars and plugging their ears amid sonic blasts and curtains of rising dust. Instead of covering his own ears, Rommel was using his hands to snap Leica pictures. As shells fell, Rommel was quick to capture the explosions and fountains of dark smoke that ensued. Rather than shield himself from enemy fire, Rommel accompanied his men on the front lines and took snapshots of some of their most daring exploits in the thick of fighting.

A sizable portion of Rommel's photography focuses on the devastation of war. These pictures form some of the strangest and eeriest in his collection. These pictures depict only emptiness and ruin—with isolated human figures making occasional ghostly appearances. Destroyed buildings, collapsed walls, shattered inanimate objects, and bomb-tossed furniture all merited single snapshots from Rommel as he passed by them. The result is a hodgepodge of destruction. Most of these spooky photographs show intellectual contradictions. For example, his photos portray order amid disorder, broken or ruined machines, or neatly intact objects among ruins. One photograph shows a shadowy staircase on fire inside a building. Another depicts a line of torched cars parked in perfect formation along a street. An orderly row of trees in North Africa stands in the sunshine beside a shattered wall. What makes these pictures unsettling is the complete absence of human presence in most of them. It seems obvious that Rommel deliberately excluded people from these scenes, likely out of respect. Doubtless, Rommel as a soldier witnessed much destruction during his career, more so than appears in his collection. Why he chose to capture these particular scenes is a mystery.

Much can be gleaned about Rommel's personality from the types of photos he did not take during the war. During his lifetime, Erwin Rommel was a man whose personal opinions and point of view were often understated and seemingly repressed. Absence, at times, speaks louder than presence. This is quite true in the case of Rommel's photo collection. The photographs seized were exactly as they had been in his unaltered personal collection under the care of his family.

Rommel took no photographs of dead people. This is unusual since many war photographers visually document death. Also, many American military officers in World War II took photos of dead enemy combatants. Yet not a single dead German, Italian, or Allied soldier of any type appears among Rommel's photos.

Similarly, gore has no place in Rommel's photos. Pooling blood, guts, and gruesome injuries—most certainly a real part of battle—are nonexistent in the field marshal's collection. The lone exception is the depiction of a wounded German soldier with what appears to be minor bleeding injuries being carried from the battlefield by his comrades. The wounds were a rare sight.

There is a marked absence of sadism. There are no pictures of human beings in demeaning or helpless situations. Photographs of POWs show them being treated respectfully by German soldiers; there are no images of brutality or dehumanization. Inhumane images such as I have described were frequently taken by Nazi devotees or marauding German soldiers. Rommel, however, did not take any such pictures.

There are no photos of debauchery. German soldiers acquired a notorious reputation for taking risqué and bawdy pictures of each other partying in France following their occupation of that

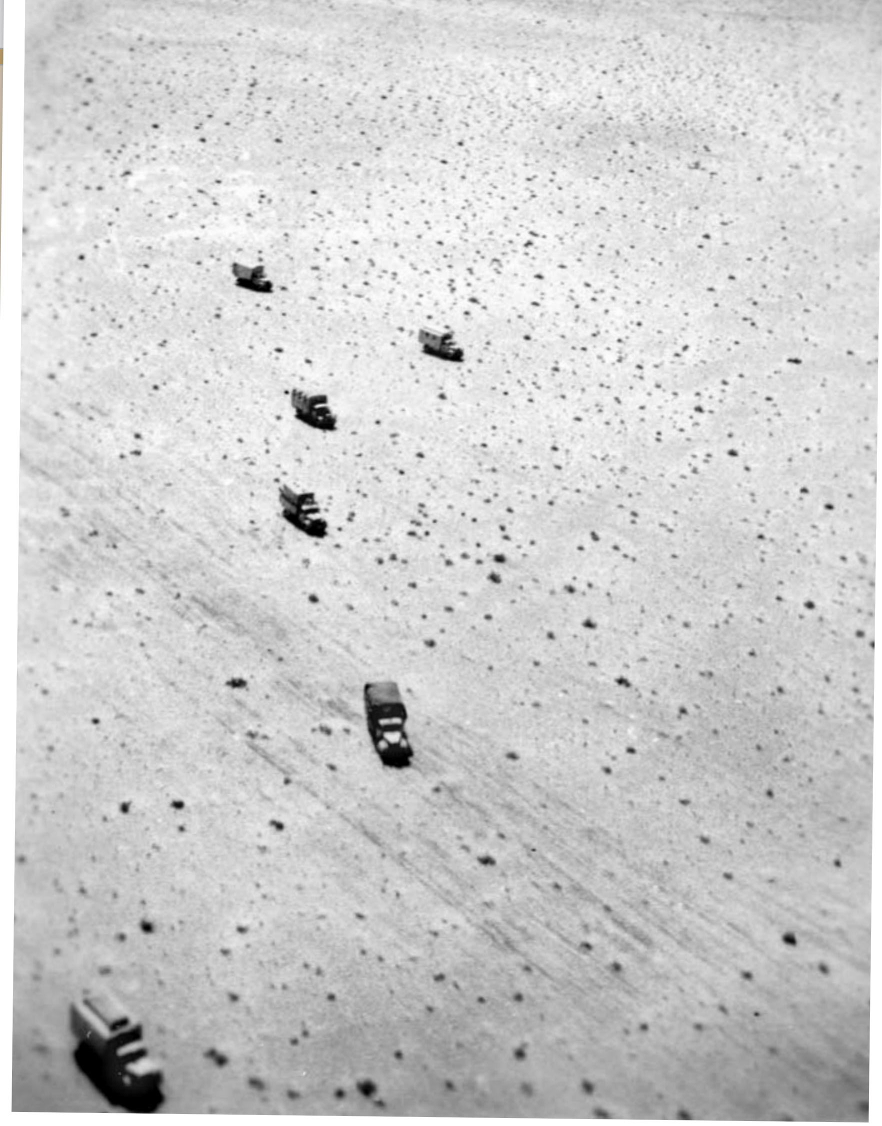
country in 1940; many photographed themselves with trophy foreign girlfriends or in the company of prostitutes. German soldiers were known to have behaved similarly in Italy, Greece, and certain areas of North Africa, and many images of this type exist as proof of their behavior to this day. Rommel was present in France, Greece, Italy, and North Africa where many of these events were occurring and must have been aware of them. However, he was clearly preoccupied with his job and made no effort to create or collect photos of revelry in conquered lands.

Rommel also took no propaganda photographs. Although he frequently allowed himself to be exploited by the German government for propaganda purposes, Rommel's viewpoint expressed through his pictures reveals an absence of Nazi Party aggrandizement. For example, Nazi Party visual propaganda emphasized racial superiority at others' expense and centered on the cult of Hitler's personality, in addition to swastika images and slogans. Rommel did none of these things. He took no photographs of his soldiers performing the Nazi salute. He took no photos to stage images of "racial superiority." Nazi Party heroes and slogans, neo-pagan symbols, and other iconography associated with the Nazi regime are missing from Rommel's pictures. Rommel's photography contains limited photos of the swastika; when present, the swastika appears on soldiers' uniforms, military vehicles, and the German national flag.

In a similar vein, Rommel took no "war trophy" photography. It was typical for many German soldiers, particularly Nazi Party enthusiasts, to take gloating pictures of destroyed cultural landmarks in foreign countries or to photograph themselves striking victory poses in conquered territories. This was not the case for Rommel. His photo collection contains no pictures of himself or others performing acts of personal or propaganda-related cruelty.

In its entirety, Rommel's photography collection provides a gripping visual history of World War II from the viewpoint of one of the most famous commanders in modern history. The photographs are valuable not only in view of the strategic military mind that created them, but are also silent witnesses to the war as Rommel, a lone figure against a background of vast chaos, experienced it.

It has been said that an image is worth a thousand words. Scenes captured in Rommel's photography tell us more about him perhaps than any biographical conjecture written about him. A camera is like an open mind—what moments it chooses to dwell on reveal facts about the personality and will behind the shutter-release button. The pictures that Rommel created show us that he was a high-spirited person who tested danger, a keen observer of human irony, and a leader who enjoyed mixing with his troops, but who was drawn to scenes of personal isolation.



ABOVE: Trucks form a strange asymmetrical pattern as they cross the desert in North Africa, circa 1941-42. This was one of many reconnaissance photos Rommel took from his Fieseler Storch aircraft; while flying, he created many striking photographic compositions. OPPOSITE: Rommel knelt to capture this photo of German graves in the desert framed beneath a looming artillery gun, circa 1941. He took many photographs of his men's graves throughout his campaigns, evidently to save them as mementos.

During the last year of his life, Rommel unfortunately destroyed many of the papers and writings that might have revealed more of his thoughts and personal convictions. His pictures, however, endure as visual documents of spontaneous and vivid moments that he never got the chance to revise, edit, or refine. His photography is significant and insightful because it gives modern historians a clear and candid view of a military leader who, throughout most of his life, tended to be minimalistic in expressing his mind.

Since the photos have been returned to Germany, it is now up to present and future generations of Germans to examine their nation's past as captured by Rommel's camera and develop their own analyses on a part of history that was previously lost.

At the same time, the photos open new doors for historical discoveries, providing numerous opportunities for historians, military enthusiasts, and curious onlookers in America and elsewhere to reinterpret their existing knowledge of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and his military campaigns. By viewing Rommel's photographs, onlookers gain a rare opportunity to look through the lens to experience and share the same sights as he did during the war.

Zita Ballinger Fletcher is a first-time contributor to WWII History. *She is an expert on photo research and restoration and resides in Washington, D.C.*

THE Black Devils OF WORLD WAR II

THE 1ST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE GAINED ITS PLACE IN HISTORY WITH DARING EXPLOITS IN COMBAT IN FRANCE AND ITALY.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

When General George C. Marshall visited London in April 1942, the new chief of the British Combined Operations Command, Lord Louis Mountbatten, introduced him to a "very odd-looking individual … [who] talks well and may have an important contribution to make."

The man in question was Geoffrey N. Pyke, a bearded, unkempt maverick and former journalist, philosopher, and inventor who had joined Mountbatten's coterie of civilian strategists. Just weeks before Marshall's visit, Pyke had conceived a plan called Project Plough, which envisioned specially trained troops on motorized, armed sleds attacking vital hydroelectric plants in Nazi-occupied Norway, traversing mountain passes from Italy into Germany, and sabotaging enemy targets in Romania. Mountbatten viewed it as "probably the most bold and imaginative scheme of this war."

The antisocial genius's project eventually fell by the wayside. Nonetheless, the truly unique commando assault force created to carry it out—the 1st Special Service Force (SSF)—later made quite a name for itself with its successful combat record and its colorful approach to fighting, earning it a raft of nicknames during its year and a half in service: "The Thugs," "Freddy's Freighters," and "The North Americans." The Germans invented a particularly endearing nickname after encountering the 1st SSF in battle: the "Devil's Brigade."

Later that same year, the Allied high command decided to go ahead with Project Plough, which called for covertly training and inserting a 1,600-man sabotage force into Norway to wreak havoc on German occupation forces. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill insisted that Canadian troops be included to enhance the value of the unit and suggested that it be called the "North American Force." The official unit name finally chosen was crafted to mask its identity by echoing the name of the U.S. Army's entertainment branch (Special Services).

By early that summer, the new unit's housing was undergoing hasty renovations at remote Fort William Henry Harrison outside Helena, Montana, and trains and trucks began to roll in bringing volunteers. The volunteers came from many walks of life, but most were hardy outdoorsmen who had been told only that they were joining an elite unit. Forming about a third of the force's overall strength, the Canadians were drawn from proud regiments such as the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, while the Americans comprised a motley assortment of lumberjacks, miners, trappers, game wardens, and misfits from Army stockades. There were also teachers, farmers, Sunday school teachers, choristers, political bosses, and former bodyguards for Hollywood stars.

The commander of the force was 35-year-old, San Francisco-born Lt. Col. Robert Tryon Frederick, who had served in the Coast Artillery Corps after graduating from West Point in 1928. At the time that Dwight D. Eisenhower—then chief of the War Department's planning division—and Lord Mountbatten selected him for the new assignment, he was desk-bound and working for the War Department general staff. Tall, slender, and mustached, Frederick was soft-spoken, dynamic, and incisively intelligent. He was to prove fearless in combat, and by the end of the war he would become the youngest major general in the Army Ground Forces. His Canadian regimental commander was 34-year-old Lt. Col. Jack F.R. Akehurst, an Anglican clergyman's son and former miner from Southern Ontario.

Frederick and his 172 officers organized the men of the SSF into a brigade-size unit comprised of three regiments of two battalions each. Its insignia was a red spearhead bearing the words "USA Canada." Once the ranks of the SSF had arrived at Fort

All photos: National Archives

Brigadier General Robert Frederick, commander of the 1st Special Service Force, stands at left with Lt. Col. Robert Moore while discussing the tactical situation during a raid carried out on August 15, 1944.

ABOVE: During their arduous training program in Montana, members of the Devil's Brigade clean their weapons inside a barracks. The Canadian and American soldiers engaged in intense rivalry but became an effective fighting force. BELOW: General Robert Frederick, commander of the 1st Special Service Force, leads his men through the streets of Helena, Montana, after the completion of training in the vicinity. Soon after this review took place, the Devil's Brigade relocated to Norfolk, Virginia, for amphibious warfare training.

Harrison, the men underwent several months of intensive training in hand-to-hand combat and killing silently without weapons, skiing, mountaineering, parachute jumping, and demolitions.

Organization and training proved to be the easy part of forming the SSF into an effective fighting force, though. Building team spirit proved much more difficult, and there were initially many barracks and barroom brawls among the 2,194 men of the U.S.-Canadian force. Over time, though, they grew to respect each other and idolize their commander.

Project Plough, the operation in Norway for which Frederick's brigade had trained, was called off in the autumn of 1942, and he was ordered by the general staff in November to prepare to take his men—fighting fit and eager for action—to New Guinea. The next day, this too was canceled. Frederick was now told that the brigade would take part in a planned invasion of the Aleutian Islands in the Northern Pacific the following spring.

On Army Day, April 6, 1943, after marching in dress parade through Helena attended by the governor of Montana, Frederick and his men headed for Camp Bradford at Norfolk, Virginia, for training in amphibious tactics. After intensive instruction in boat landings and night loadings, the force moved on May 23 to Fort Ethan Allen near Burlington, Vermont, its final staging ground in America.

After a few weeks, the men headed for San Francisco, where they were to board transport ships that would take them to their first action in the Aleutians. A 12,000-man U.S. amphibious force had invaded the island of Attu on May 11 and waged a bitter offensive, with the loss of 561 killed and 1,136 wounded. Of the 2,500 Japanese defenders, only 29 survived.

The Forcemen embarked from San Francisco on July 10 and arrived in the chilly, fog-shrouded Aleutians on July 25. On August 15, Frederick's brigade was part of a 34,000-man U.S.-Canadian assault force—supported by three battleships—landing on Kiska. But the Japanese had evacuated the island, and the Forcemen were denied their baptism of fire. The task force commander, Maj. Gen. Charles H. Corlett, nevertheless cited Frederick for his "splendid leadership" and his men for their "fine spirit and unselfishness."

Finally, after tireless pleadings by the frustrated Colonel Frederick, the Forcemen won their chance to fight. Frederick's superiors tapped the SSF to join the Italian campaign, where General Bernard L. Montgomery's British Eighth Army and Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark's Anglo-American Fifth Army were slogging northward and struggling to dislodge Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's well-entrenched German armies.

After returning to Fort Ethan Allen and then staging at Camp Patrick Henry in Virginia, the SSF boarded a British troopship, the *Empress of Scotland,* on October 27, 1943, at Hampton Roads, Virginia, and sailed to Casablanca. Frederick and his men landed at Naples on November 19 and went into the line at Santa Maria with Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker's 36th Infantry ("Texas") Division. The North Americans faced a tough assignment in their first action: to capture several enemy mountaintop outposts that were part of Kesselring's Bernhardt (Winter) Line in the rugged Mignano Gap, south of strategic Monte Cassino.

The key to breaching the line was represented by two formidable peaks named Monte la Difensa and Monte la Remetanea. The area was held by the crack 15th Panzergrenadier Division, with the Hermann Göring Division in reserve. Previous assaults by British, American, and Canadian troops had failed at great cost.

The first objective for Frederick's force was the 3,120-foot Monte la Difensa, christened the

"Million-Dollar Hill" after it had been pounded with 206,929 shells from British and American artillery. At 1:30 AM on December 3, the North Americans started climbing, burdened with 60-pound rucksacks, weapons, and extra ammunition. Little by little, they inched their way upward along steep mountain trails through the 1,000-foot tree line. Worse still were the bare, almost perpendicular crags and rock faces that had to be surmounted. It was a nightmarish, hour-by-hour ordeal in fog and swirling snow that left the soldiers sweating and shivering.

Somehow, though, after resting on narrow ledges, 600 of them neared the cloud-enveloped summit where hundreds of unsuspecting German troops were dug in underground and in foxholes in a saucer-shaped area the size of a football field. The North Americans were ordered to hold their fire until 6 AM, but others—with their faces blackened and wielding trench knives and bayonets—slipped forward in the darkness and quietly slit the throats of enemy sentries.

As Frederick's lead battalion neared the objective, a rock slide suddenly alerted the Germans. They fired green and red flares silhouetting the Forcemen, and a furious two-hour battle started. "All hell broke loose," remembered Canadian Lieutenant Percy M. Crichlow. Tossing grenades and firing machine guns, the North Americans fought desperately to overcome the stubborn enemy force. In the forefront of the action was Colonel Frederick, armed with a pistol and grenade, wounded, and as "dirty, wet, and miserable as anyone."

More Forcemen arrived, and casualties soared on both sides in the process of flushing out the Germans. One group of Germans rousted out of their emplacement surrendered, carrying a white flag, but when one of the prisoners shot the squad captain in the face and killed him, his enraged men mowed down the rest. From then on, the Forcemen took no prisoners unless ordered to do so.

Frederick's gallant troops had secured the summit by the time the fog began to burn off at dawn, while to the south, the British 56th Infantry Division had captured Monte Camino. The SSF now took shelter in deserted pillboxes to wait for supplies to come up.

Meanwhile, the retreating Germans swarmed down the slope and across a connecting ridge to the second objective, Monte la Remetanea, while German artillery and mortars zeroed in and pounded the Forcemen on Monte la Difensa. But they held on, repelling probing counterattacks as rations, ammunition, and blankets were laboriously hauled up by the men and mules of their service battalion. Colonel Frederick was proud of his GIs and Canadians. In their first action, they had prevailed against a superior force and achieved one of the war's epic feats of arms.

Heavy casualties forced Colonel Frederick to delay his assault on Monte la Remetanea for three days. Patrols were sent out to kill what German snipers they could find, and then, on the afternoon of December 6, Forcemen armed with knives, guns, and grenades moved silently through cold rain and shifting fog to kill more Germans. After a lengthy and brutal clash in which no quarter was given by either side, the enemy defenders began pulling back, and Monte la Remetanea was secured by noon on December 9.

Frederick lost 532 of his men killed or wounded, but the seizure of Monte la Difensa and Monte la Remetanea opened strategic Highway 6 for the Allies to advance forward. "This feat captured the imagination of the entire Fifth Army," reported Clark Lee of the International News Service. "And overnight Frederick and his soldiers became almost legendary figures in a battle area where heroism was commonplace." When Prime Minister Churchill received word from General Eisenhower of the La Difensa success, he declared, "If we had a dozen men like him [Frederick], we would have smashed Hitler in 1942. He's the greatest fighting general of all time." By its boldness and courage, the U.S.-Canadian brigade had quickly joined the ranks of the Allies' fabled assault units, such as the British commandos, Special Air Service, Gurkhas, and Chindits, and the U.S. Rangers, Marine Raiders, and Merrill's Marauders.

After a brief respite at their Santa Maria bivouac area, the Forcemen went on to seize German-held heights barring the Allied push toward Cassino. Defying bitter cold, snow, ice, and gale-force winds, they beat well-entrenched enemy units twice their size and took 4,000-foot Monte Sammucro (Hill 720) on December 25, 1943; Monte Vischiataro on January 8, 1944; and the Monte Majo Range to the north, the maneuver pivot needed for an attack on Cassino. Despite grave losses, the North Americans moved forward stealthily by darkness to surprise the enemy. On one hill, they captured 100 unsuspecting Germans dug in among mortars and machine guns. Colonel Frederick received three more wounds during the Monte Majo assault.

After their ordeal in the mountains around Cassino, only a few trucks were needed to carry the exhausted Forcemen back to Santa Maria on the afternoon of January 17. Of 1,800 combat personnel, 1,400 were either dead or lying in field hospitals. Fifty percent of the unit's ser-

Prior to their first airborne jump during 1943 training exercises, members of the 1st Special Service Force adjust parachute lines for one another. The Devil's Brigade was a versatile, hard-fighting unit that left a stirring legacy.

vice battalion packers and litter men were laid low by wounds and fatigue.

While the Allied attacks on Cassino were floundering, General Sir Harold Alexander, Eisenhower's deputy Mediterranean field commander, ordered Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas's U.S. VI Corps to undertake Operation Shingle, an amphibious invasion at the historic port of Anzio, 30 miles south of Rome and 70 miles behind the German Gustav Line. The ultimate objective was to push on and liberate the Italian capital.

The British 1st Infantry and U.S. 3rd Infantry Divisions landed west and east of Anzio, respectively, on January 22, while five American battalions attacked the port itself. The theory was that Field Marshal Kesselring would panic and pull back his Fourteenth Army, led by General Eberhard von Mackensen, as far as Rome. The Allied invaders met little opposition, and the cautious Lucas, fearing a repetition of the almost disastrous Salerno landings the previous September 9, dug in around a 15-by-7-mile perimeter and massed his forces, instead of pressing inland.

His hesitation gave the able Kesselring time to deploy the Fourteenth Army and seal off the crowded Allied beachhead, kicking off a series of fierce battles. A major Allied attempt to break out on January 31 was blunted by six German divisions, dooming Operation Shingle to harden into a bitter, four-month stalemate. To Adolf Hitler, the Anzio beachhead was an "abscess" that had to be excised.

In anticipation of a German counterattack, the Anzio bridgehead was reinforced by elements of the U.S. 1st Armored Division and three other infantry divisions, two British and one American. They were soon joined by the North Americans led by newly promoted Brig. Gen. Frederick. By then, more than 35 percent understrength, they landed at Anzio on February 2 and dug in for eight miles along the Mussolini Canal on the right flank of the beachhead. The Forcemen were given twice as much front to hold as Maj. Gen. John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel's veteran U.S. 3rd Infantry Division.

Trained as an assault force, Frederick's men balked at assuming a defensive posture. "Defend, hell!" protested one soldier. "Let the goddamned Krauts do the defending!" So the Forcemen went on the offensive in their own inimitable fashion by raiding and killing as many of the enemy as they could. They snuck across the canal to German positions and looted horses, cattle, pigs, chickens, and anything else they could find. One patrol returned with a wheelbarrow full of sweet potatoes, four bushels of peanuts, 22 eggs, a rabbit, and a wounded enemy soldier.

The North Americans' favorite activity, though, was the death raids. Heading out almost every night with charcoal-blackened faces, knit caps instead of helmets, and loose gear taped to prevent rattling, the raiders would silently slash the throats of sleeping Germans and sentries, then steal back to their own lines with prisoners just before dawn.

One Forceman returned from a patrol with a diary taken from a German lieutenant who had been strangled with piano wire. A recent entry lamented, "The 'Black Devils' are all around us at night. They are upon us before we even hear them coming." Word spread swiftly through the enemy ranks that their attackers were former convicts—mostly murderers—who showed no mercy and took no prisoners.

General Frederick added a gimmick to fuel the enemy's fears. He ordered "courtesy calling cards" printed that displayed the North Americans' insignia and the words, "*Das dicke Ende kommt noch*!" (The worst is yet to come!). Forcemen pasted the stickers on the faces or helmets of Germans they had dispatched, and brigade intelligence reported that the psychological impact of these tactics was devastating.

Force intelligence officers later found a Wehrmacht headquarters message on one of the prisoners they interrogated that read, "You are fighting an elite Canadian-American force. They are treacherous, unmerciful, and clever. You cannot afford to relax. The first soldier or group of soldiers capturing one of these black-hearted men will be given a 10-day furlough."

A number of the Forcemen became colorful legends during the four months that German artillery, bombs, and two 280mm railroad guns pinned down the dispirited Anglo-American troops in Anzio. One was tall, red-mustached Lieutenant George Krasevac, who ventured out on solo patrols, captured a herd of cattle, and was wounded three times. On other occasions, he carried an umbrella and rode a bicycle along one of the streets to draw enemy fire. Another was Lieutenant Taylor Radcliffe, who was captured, beaten when he refused to reveal Allied dispositions, and escaped several times in one night.

And there was the indefatigable Frederick himself, described as "a crazy bastard" by some Allied generals. Wearing a knit cap and with his face blackened, he went on many patrols into German territory. One night, he and his men wandered into a minefield and were raked by automatic-weapons fire. Several Forcemen were cut down, including a stretcher bearer. Left with a badly wounded man, the surviving bearer shouted to a dark figure, "Don't just stand there, you stupid bastard! Grab hold of

Pausing long enough to prepare rations, members of the 1st Special Service Force assess their situation while moving through the chilling cold of the Apennine Mountains near the town of Radicosa, Italy.

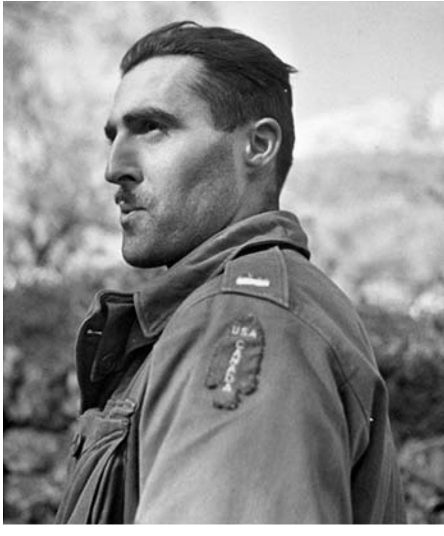
day on which Cassino was at last secured, the Allied troops broke out of Anzio before linking up with the Fifth Army's U.S. II Corps led by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes. The Anzio struggle had cost 9,200 British and 29,000 American casualties.

As Allied units pushed on toward Rome, meanwhile, General Clark lauded the performance of Frederick's "aggressive, fearless, and well-trained" North Americans in the Anzio cauldron. He cited their "devastating and terrifying raids" which "gave birth to the legend of the invincible 'Black Devils,'" and decided to reward them by allowing them to spearhead the entry into Rome. Defying General Alexander's instructions for the Fifth Army to make its main effort eastward through Valmontone behind German forces on the Gustav Line, which would have speeded Allied operations, the glory-hungry Clark was eager to steal the limelight from General Sir Oliver Leese's British Eighth Army and liberate the first Axis capital with the 45th and 36th Infantry Divisions.

After a 12-day break for regrouping and rest, General Frederick's brigade went back into action, trekking across the mule trails of Rocca Massina toward the Alban Hills and the gates of Rome. In Valmontone and the little town of Artena, a stop on Highway 6 heading into Rome, the Forcemen battled through fierce resistance from German armor, self-propelled 88mm guns, flak wagons, and sharp-shooting snipers. Losses were heavy, but the North Americans pushed on doggedly.

At 1:06 AM on Sunday, June 4, 1944, Frederick received a radio message from General Keyes tersely ordering him to enter Rome and capture six bridges over the River Tiber. The first elements of the brigade entered the city at 6:30 AM. Hitler had given Kesselring permission the previous day to abandon the city, but the Forcemen nevertheless came under fierce fire from enemy tanks, flak wagons, and snipers. Handsome Lt. Col. Alfred C. Marshall, commander of the 1st Regiment, was killed, and Frederick was wounded three more times in the arm and leg, but the resolute North Americans pressed forward.

Riding a half-track out front, Frederick led his men—some on foot and others mounted on tanks of Maj. Gen. Ernest N. Harmon's 1st Armored Division—through the city as snipers continued shooting and jubilant, cheering Romans dashed into the streets with fresh bread, wine, and flowers. With bazookas, grenades, and machine-gun fire, the Forcemen skillfully outflanked and cleared out pockets of German resistance, rolled on toward the six assigned bridges, and seized them by 11 PM. The 85th Infantry



ABOVE LEFT: Private First Class Edward Wall of Albany, New York, a member of the Devil's Brigade, looks toward enemy positions with an M4 Sherman tank in the background. This photo was taken during operations at Anzio, Italy. ABOVE RIGHT: Canadian Lieutenant J. Kostelec was typical of the gritty young soldiers and adventurers who populated the ranks of the 1st Special Service Force. TOP: Several weeks after the bitter battle at Monte la Difensa in early December 1943, soldiers of the Devil's Brigade take up positions in the mountains near the Italian town of Cassino, scene of heavy fighting during the Allied Fifth Army's push toward Rome.

the other end of the litter!" After the two Forcemen carried the wounded soldier out of the minefield under fire, the medic recognized the man at whom he had shouted. It was General Frederick.

Wounded nine times, the SSF commander was the most shot at general in American history. No other World War II general spent more time with his men in action than Frederick. He eventually received no less than eight Purple Hearts, and his many other decorations included two Distinguished Service Crosses, two Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, the British Distinguished Service Order, and two Legions of Merit.

Despite mounting casualties in the face of nonstop German attacks, during which Frederick's men were in action for 99 consecutive days, the Anzio defenders held on. The hapless Lucas was replaced by dashing Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., commander of the U.S. VI Corps. Eventually, on May 17, 1944, the

Division, meanwhile, captured the other eight spans to the south, and Rome was firmly in the hands of the Fifth Army.

With cameras focused and accompanied by his able chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, General Clark triumphantly rode a jeep through St. Peter's Square on the morning of June 5. He was the first general since Belisarius in AD 536 to capture the city from the south, and it had taken the Fifth Army 275 days and 125,000 casualties since the Salerno landings to get there. "This is a great day for the Fifth Army," he declared, without mentioning the sacrifices of his British, Canadian, Free French, and Polish allies. Clark's elation was dampened within a few hours by headlines proclaiming the massive Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6. The Italian campaign had become a sideshow.

The Forcemen, whose reputation as rowdy garrison troops was as legendary as their fighting record, missed the frenzied celebrations that engulfed the city. Instead, they were ordered to withdraw to the suburbs, where they slept before moving to Lake Albano near the Pope's summer residence. Frederick made sure that his men were catered to and told his officers to overlook any but the most flagrant breaches of discipline. Celebrating in their own way, the Forcemen gorged on beer and big Italian meals, caroused with prostitutes and willing girls, and pilfered papal furniture, bed sheets, and statues. After a series of spot inspections and threats, the missing items were returned to the Vatican authorities.

Recovering from his wounds and with a leg in a cast, Frederick summoned his men to an awards ceremony on June 23, 1944. It became one of the most traumatic moments in the brigade's brief history when the general announced that he was leaving for another command. The tough Forcemen "cried like babies when we said goodbye to General Frederick," reported Sergeant Raphael P. Montone. Frederick had been directed to raise and lead the 1st Provisional Airborne Division for the imminent Operation Anvil-Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France.

The 10,000-man force was composed of British and American paratroop and glider regiments, and Frederick shaped and led it as brilliantly as he had the Devil's Brigade. General Truscott noted later, "Frederick's feat in organizing and training this composite force, and perfecting the operation within a period of less than one month, is one of the most remarkable exploits of the war. It was one of the most successful airborne drops." Frederick, who went on to command the 45th, 4th, and 6th Infantry Divisions, was succeeded as commander of the North Americans by Colonel Edwin A. Walker, a mild-mannered, respected combat leader.

Just before the 1st Special Service Force left Lake Albano for Naples on July 1, General Clark again complimented the "elite" group. He told them that their exploits had forged "a bright new link in our military tradition." The unit bivouacked in a fishing village south of Salerno and trained for their next action—an assault role in Operation Dragoon.

Set for 8 AM on Tuesday, August 15, 1944, the massive invasion on a 37-mile stretch of the French Mediterranean coast between Toulon and Cannes was to be mounted by General Alexander M. Patch's U.S. Seventh Army, Truscott's VI Corps, General Jean-Marie Lattre de Tassigny's Free French II Corps, and General Frederick's airborne division. Colonel Walker's 2,000 Forcemen were to strike the first blow against the Nazis' South Wall.

The North Americans left from Corsica in a destroyer fleet and headed westward as the Allied armada stood a dozen miles off the Riviera coast. Ready to spearhead the landings by the night of August 14, they crammed themselves aboard transport ships alongside 700 French Commandos led by Lt. Col. Georges-Regis Bouvet. The Forcemen's objectives were the small enemy-held islands of Ile du Levant and Port-Cros in the Ile d'Hyeres group, five miles off Toulon on the western flank of the invasion. They were to seize the islands by dawn on the 15th and silence a German 6.5-inch gun battery on the Ile du Levant that posed a threat to the invasion fleet. The French Commandos were to storm the mainland at nearby Cap Negre.

At 1:30 AM on August 15, the Forcemen started scrambling down rope ladders from the transports. There were about 1,300 men of Lt. Col. Robert S. Moore's 2nd Regiment and Lt. Col. R.W. Beckett's 3rd Regiment. Their faces blackened with burned cork, the soldiers were armed with rifles, Tommy guns, bazookas, grenades, and daggers. They paddled inflatable rafts to the rocky, pine-clad islands and silently slipped ashore.

On the Ile du Levant, Moore's men scrambled up the outcroppings and made their way through thick brush toward the enemy battery. All was ominously quiet as scouts went forward. An attack was hastily organized, and the Black Devils charged the guns. But no Germans were there, and the three big guns turned out to be camouflaged drain pipes.

Seconds later, incoming fire struck the area, and the Forcemen hugged the ground. Holed up in a cave at the other end of the island were 200 Germans with mortars, machine guns, and plenty of ammunition. As the Black Devils deployed to assault the stronghold, shells from the Royal Navy destroyer HMS *Lookout* whis-

ABOVE: On May 25, 1944, a patrol consisting of soldiers of the Devil's Brigade makes its way along a railroad track near the Italian seaside town of Anzio. The 1st Special Service Force earned a reputation as a ferocious fighting force during the Italian Campaign. OPPOSITE: Devil's Brigade troops fire on a farmhouse believed to be occupied by enemy troops during the fighting in Italy. The men of the 1st Special Service Force were both respected and feared by the Germans.

tled in to blast the enemy out of the cave. But the shells were not getting inside, so the Forcemen dashed through mortar volleys and approached the cave from three sides to pepper the opening with bullets and bazooka rounds. Suddenly, a German waving a white flag emerged from the smoke-filled opening, and cries of "Cease firing!" rang out. The battle for Ile du Levant was won.

On the nearby island of Port-Cros, meanwhile, 700 men of Colonel Akehurst's 1st Regiment had slipped ashore and fanned out through the brush. There were no signs of an enemy presence as the Black Devils pushed on toward their objective, three formidable Napoleonic forts with 12-foot-thick stone walls and 20-foot earth and greenery ceilings. Entrenched inside were 58 Germans with machine guns and rifles.

As they crossed open ground to storm the forts, Akehurst's gallant men came under withering fire. They had no armament heavier than bazookas, so Colonel Walker put in an urgent call to General Patch for a naval bombardment. Minutes later, gunfire from the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta* bracketed the forts, but the Forcemen looked on in dismay as the eight-inch shells bounced harmlessly off the thick walls. The struggle for Port-Cros continued while Patch's main American and French forces splashed ashore, Frederick's paratroops dropped inland, and Prime Minister Churchill watched the invasion intently from the bridge of the destroyer HMS *Kimberley*.

The action on Port-Cros raged for two days and two nights as the tenacious Germans beat off repeated efforts by the Black Devils to root them out. Deadly Royal Air Force Hawker Typhoon fighters bombed and rocketed the citadels, but to no avail. Akehurst's men eventually fought their way into one of the structures, but the other two held out.

After Akehurst appealed for another naval bombardment, the 150-ton British battleship HMS *Ramillies* moved to a six-mile range and opened up with her eight 15-inch guns. Her first earthshaking salvo fell long, and the second short, but the third scored a direct hit on the forts. German white flags waved through the smoke, a drawbridge was lowered, and one of Akehurst's companies dashed into the citadels and disarmed the dazed defenders. The battle for Port-Cros was over. A few days later, Colonel Walker's Forcemen advanced rapidly eastward along the Riviera shore and took up positions behind the Franco-Italian border. They remained there until November 30.

On December 5, the North Americans paraded on the Loup River flats at Villeneuve-Loubet, near Nice, and tears rolled down many cheeks as the adjutant read their inactivation order. After chaplains had read prayers for the men who had fallen from Italy to the Riviera, the Canadians formed into a battalion, marched past their American comrades, and went on to serve under their own colors. Some of the GIs were later assigned to airborne units, while Walker, now a brigadier general, plus a nucleus of former SSF men joined the newly formed 474th Infantry Regiment (Separate) of the U.S. Third Army. Led by Walker, the regiment served briefly in Germany and then, ironically, was sent to Norway in August 1945 to help disarm and repatriate German Army units.

The Devil's Brigade, which inflicted an estimated 12,000 casualties on enemy forces and took 7,000 prisoners during the war, gave rise to the U.S. Special Forces.

The legendary unit's exploits were later dramatized in a 1968 film, *The Devil's Brigade*. Directed by Andrew V. McLaglen, it starred William Holden as Colonel Frederick and Cliff Robertson as his Canadian deputy, supported by Vince Edwards, Claude Akins, Dana Andrews, Richard Jaeckel, and Michael Rennie as General Clark. It was shot partly in the Wasatch Mountain Range in Idaho and Utah, with 300 men of the Utah National Guard as extras. *The Hollywood Reporter* and *The Citizen-News* praised the picture, but other reviews were mixed.

Author Michael D. Hull, who passed away March 21, 2019, was a frequent contributor to WWII History *on a variety of topics. He will be missed.*

The Strange Case of Rudolf Hess

BY BOB GORDON

IN October 1939, British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill famously described Russia as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." The same could be said of Rudolf Hess, the Nazi leader and Nuremberg war criminal who spent the last four decades of his life in Spandau Prison in Berlin. In the 15 years following World War I, he rose from being a shy and introverted but brilliant university student to the height of power in Nazi Germany as deputy Führer, second only to Adolf Hitler himself. He ended his life at age 93, a feeble, captive, old codger.

On May 10, 1941, only weeks before the planned German invasion of the Soviet Union, he flew from Augsburg to Scotland, apparently on a freelance diplomatic mission. He planned to make peace with Great Britain and avert the age-old German specter of a two-front war. Needless to say, he was singularly unsuccessful and imprisoned until transferred to Nuremberg for the war crimes trials held after the war. phrase, Hess stood out for his peculiarities.

Dr. Kelley S. Douglas, the official U.S. government psychiatrist who examined Hess during the war crimes trials, concluded pithily, "Diagrammatically, if one considers the street as sanity and the sidewalk as insanity, then Hess spent the greater part of his time on the curb." In all seriousness, Hess asserted to Lt. Col. Eugene K. Bird, U.S. commandant of the Spandau Allied Prison from 1964 to 1972, that if

a suicide. However, as is always the case with Hess, questions remain. Many, including his late son Wolf Rutiger Hess, believed it was a politically motivated assassination. Even in death, Rudolf Hess remains a mystery.

Hess was born in Egypt, his father operating an import/export business in Alexandria. He was raised in an affluent environment and educated at the Protestant School in Alexandria. At 14, he was sent to the Evangelical School in Bad Godesberg in northern Bavaria, close to the family's summer home in Reicholdsgrün. His father insisted that he prepare to join the family business, Hess & Co. Against his will and the recommendation of his teachers, his father compelled him in 1911 to study at the École Supérieure de Commerce in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, and then apprentice himself at a trading company in Hamburg.

Forced into a career path he resented, driven by a distant and domineering father, Hess greeted the declaration of war in 1914 with

Since that fateful Saturday, the first anniversary of the German invasion of France, myths and misinformation have shrouded this undeniably eccentric Nazi.

His curious diplomatic mission is only the tip of the inexplicable iceberg that is Hess. Prior to his flight, his companions regarded him as extremely odd, even mentally unbalanced. Herman Göring described him as "mad," and Hitler often mocked his reliance on astrology, ghosts, telepathy, and mesmerism. Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, a German-American businessman close to Hitler, recalled that Hess "would not go to bed without testing with a divining rod whether there were any subterranean water-courses which conflicted with the direction of his couch." Others remembered watching him hang magnets over his bed. Even in the Führer's circle of "bohemians and condottieri," to use Hitler biographer Ian Kershaw's colorful turn of

his mission had succeeded, he would have received the Nobel Peace Prize! In this century, psychiatrist Dr. Joel E. Dimsdale reassessed the accused at Nuremberg, concluding Hess exhibited "consistently abnormal behavior, which extended over years, spanning events before, during, and even after the trial."

Questions arise, thus, such as who was Rudolf Hess? What were his beliefs and intentions? What were the forces that animated his psyche? His personality? These questions must also be considered in an existential sense, because it has been posited that the prisoner in Spandau was not the man born Rudolf Walter Richard Hess in Alexandria, Egypt, on Thursday, April 26, 1894. Only recent research published earlier this year has resolved this fundamental issue.

Finally, and as is only fitting, there are significant questions surrounding his death on August 17, 1987, at the age of 93. It was ruled

relief. He immediately enlisted in the 7th Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment, and on November 9, 1914, transferred to the 1st Infantry Regiment. In January 1918, he transferred to the Deutsche Luftstreitkräfte (German Air Force) and completed training, earning promotion to Leutnant der Reserve, although the war ended before he flew any combat missions. He survived the war and was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class, having suffered multiple wounds.

Most importantly, Hess felt crushed, shamed, and angered by Germany's defeat in World War I and believed that his country had been humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles. According to his future wife, Ilse Pröhl, he "was a string taut to the point of snapping, on which the fateful song of Germany's distress was unendingly played." He joined the Aryan fantasists in the Thule Society, many of whom were future Nazis, and on May Day 1919, while fighting Spartakusbund (Communist) paramilitaries

Deputy Fuhrer Rudolf Hess stands beside Adolf Hitler during a review. Hess attempted an abortive peace mission to Britain in May 1941. OPPOSITE: Seated beside Hitler, Hess was devoted to the Führer but later lost favor among the inner circle.

THE FORMER DEPUTY FÜHRER OF THE THIRD REICH SPENT MOST OF HIS LIFE IN PRISON AFTER A SUPPOSED PEACE-SEEKING FLIGHT IN 1941 AND DIED UNDER MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

with Freikorps Epp in the streets of Munich, he was wounded again.

His impotent rage became transformed when the young veteran, now a student of geopolitician Karl Haushofer at the University of Munich, heard his fellow veteran Adolf Hitler speak for the first time. He raved about the man to his fiancée. Contemporaries report that his entire demeanor changed. Unrelievedly somber, they noted that he smiled again and voiced optimism for Germany's future. After a single dose of Hitler's oratory, Hess was enthralled, so on June 30, 1920, he joined the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP). His membership number was 16, immediately preceding Julius Streicher, the infamous Nazi Jew baiter and publisher of the racist newspaper *Der Stürmer*.

In terms of submission to the Führer, Hess quickly emerged as number one, and the Führer reciprocated. In September 1920, Hess wrote ecstatically to his parents, "I spend nearly every day with Hitler." The next spring, he told a cousin, "A splendid person!... He comes from a humble background, and has acquired a vast knowledge on his own, which I greatly admire." Universally, his Nazi contemporaries commented on his slavish submission to the Führer.

German historian Volker Ullrich describes Hess as one of the first "Hitler disciples." British historian Ian Kershaw asserts that Hess was "besotted" by Hitler. Still a student, he entered a University of Munich essay contest in the fall of 1922 in which he asked, "What qualities will the man have who leads Germany back to the top?" Hess's answer to this question won by his descriptions of Hitler's "deep knowledge in all areas of the life of the state and its history, the ability to learn lessons from them, belief in the purity of his own cause and in ultimate victory, and an untamable strength of will that give him the power of captivating oration that makes the masses celebrate him."

Even during his imprisonment in Landsberg after the failed Munich Putsch in 1923, he maintained an almost religious belief in his Führer, writing to his wife, "Hitler is the man of the future in Germany, the dictator whose flag will fly sooner or later over public buildings in Berlin. He himself has faith enough to move mountains." At Nuremberg a quarter century later, American psychologist Dr. G.M. Gilbert characterized his hyperbolic loyalty as "doglike devotion."

For a future dictator already fully dedicated to his own personality cult and who valued loyalty and obedience above all else, Hess was the perfect acolyte. Winnifred Wagner, the granddaughter of composer Richard Wagner, wrote, "Wolf [Hitler's nickname] is so attached to Hess—he's constantly singing his praises." Hitler would stand as best man at Hess's wedding and become godfather to his son, Wolf. Significantly, he allowed Hess to address him with the intimate "du" rather than the more formal German form of address "Sie," a familiarity Hitler extended to very few.

The 1923 Munich Putsch attempt and its aftermath illustrates their closeness. Hess played a leading role in the attempted coup. He was assigned to make the arrests in the Bürgerbräukeller, including Bavaria's ruling triumvirate of State Commissioner Gustav Ritter von Kahr, Generalmajor Otto von Lossow, and Munich police chief Hans Ritter von Seisser. He held them hostage while the putsch collapsed, briefly hid out at Karl Haushofer's apartment, and then fled to Austria. He only surrendered to German authorities after Hitler was sentenced to Landsberg Prison, where he happily joined him.

Particularly concerning to Goebbels was the fact that Hess had become a topic for humor: "The 1,000-year Reich is now the 100-year Reich because one zero is gone." Goebbels had a potential public relations disaster on his hands.

Despite the spurious but widely repeated myth, Hitler did not dictate Mein Kampf to Hess. This erroneous report by a guard is easily explained. Often on Saturday evenings, Hitler would read completed chapters to his fellow Nazi prisoners. He was not dictating to Hess. That said, Hess played an important role in the book's genesis.

The concept of Lebensraum (living space) was a theme of Haushofer's that Hess, his student and personal assistant, introduced to Hitler. Hitler may not have read Haushofer, but Hess would most certainly have shared Haushofer's theories and concepts of geopolitics. In this view, vital space is essential, and dynamic nations expand into it, aiming at autarky—economic self-sufficiency. Conflict is inevitable, and victory is indicative of a healthy, dynamic nation. In the case of Germany, Haushofer concluded that this vital space was the Ukrainian breadbasket and the oil fields surrounding the Caspian Sea. The closeness of the Haushofers and Hess cannot be overstated and, consequently, neither can Karl Haushofer's indirect influence on Hitler. His theories, delivered through Hess, gave Hitler's thinking on Germany's destiny to expand eastward an intellectual veneer.

Hess was Hitler's amanuensis also. He wrote, "Hitler regularly reads to me from his book. Whenever a chapter is done, he takes it to me. He explains it to me, and we discuss the odd point." Hess also assisted in other more mundane tasks. "My daily routine begins as follows: at 5 AM, I get up and make cups of tea for Hitler (who is writing his book) and myself." Finally, he copyedited the final draft of the manuscript. Evidence of Hess's obeisance to the Führer abounds within the devotional narrative of his imprisonment together with his beloved Hitler.

This close, symbiotic relationship persisted through the decade between the putsch and Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. Hess identified a unique type of "German democracy" defined by "absolute authority directed downwards, and absolute duty directed upwards." For Hess, this was more than a political theory: it was a deep-seated, psychological need and a sacred, personal commitment. Three months after assuming power in January 1933, Hitler rewarded him with the designation of deputy Führer. On the basis of this label, he was entitled to sit in on cabinet meetings, but he was given no official government role. His exclusive responsibility instead extended to Nazi Party matters.

Hess's introversion, his idiosyncrasies, and his dedication to Hitler, rather than his own career, sentenced him to the periphery of power. He was bested in internecine quarrels by Luftwaffe chief Göring (who was also in charge of the Four-Year economic plans) and Himmler, who established his own military-economic fiefdom with the Schutzstaffel (SS). After the invasion of Poland, military matters increasingly took precedence over party matters, further pushing Hess to the periphery of power.

Compounding Hess's difficulties, his assigned domain of authority, the Nazi Party, was an amorphous, diffuse entity not a disciplined, reliable power base as was the case with, for instance, Himmler's SS. Orders issued by Hess from the center could easily be subverted by regional gauleiters, who could appeal directly to the Führer based on decades of personal camaraderie. According to Kershaw, "Hess's

ability to survive had less to do with his own battling nature than with the persistence and tactical cleverness of [his chief of staff] Martin Bormann." Eventually, Bormann turned those skills on his boss in his successful drive to supplant him as an intimate of the Führer.

Albert Speer's recollection of Hitler's first words upon being informed of Hess's flight says it all: "Bormann, immediately! Where is Bormann?" By the spring of 1941, the Führer was increasingly turning to Bormann when crises arose. Two days after Hess's flight, the position of deputy Führer was abolished, and Bormann, already Hitler's personal secretary, was appointed director of the newly established party chancellery.

It was this gradual marginalization from the inner circle that explains Hess's quixotic flight to Scotland. It was a flight of fancy. He had persuaded himself that a personal intervention through the Duke of Hamilton would convince the British elite of Germany's regard for the British Empire and its sincere desire for an alliance against the Soviet Union. Operation Barbarossa loomed, time was of the essence, and desperate measures were called for.

Most important to Hess was the promise of a diplomatic breakthrough bringing him back into the circle of the elect in the eyes of his Führer. He hoped that his intuitive understanding of the Führer's goals, his commitment, and his daring would return him to the feet of the throne. Insightfully, Churchill later imagined Hess's inner dialogue as he contemplated his mission: "I, Rudolf, by a deed of superb devotion, will surpass them all and bring to my Führer a greater treasure and easement than all of them put together." As unlikely and even delusional as this belief was, it impelled him to act.

Remarkably, Hess had not kept his deliberations secret. His senior adjutant found out inadvertently, but kept silent. Hess had also discussed the issue with his mentor, Karl Haushofer, and Haushofer's son Albrecht, who was a close friend. Replying to a memorandum Albrecht sent him regarding future Anglo-German relations, Hess asked who specifically in the upper echelons of the British elite could be approached about an Anglo-German rapprochement. Albrecht responded with a long list of politicians, nobility, and diplomats, concluding with the Duke of Hamilton, "the closest of my English friends." Albrecht Haushofer and the duke had met at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The duke was the co-author of Pilots Over Everest, which told the story of his flight above the world's tallest peak. More specifically, he had presented a copy to the elder Haushofer, who had in turn loaned it to Hess.

ABOVE: Hess served as Hitler's personal secretary during the Führer's incarceration at Landsberg Prison. Here they pose with three other Nazis at Landsberg. BELOW: Rudolf Hess accompanies Hitler as the Führer greets children. By the spring of 1941 Hess had become less relevant to the progress of the Nazi Party.

No mystery surrounds Hess's choice of the Duke of Hamilton as an intermediary, although they had never been introduced. Unaware that the duke was on active service with the Royal Air Force, Hess chose Donvegal, Hamilton's Scottish estate, as his destination when he took off from Augsburg.

On Sunday, May 11, the Nazis with Hitler at his Alpine retreat in Obersalzburg had no idea how to spin the story. Hess had flown the coop, seemingly to negotiate peace in England, but there was no word of his fate. The next day, a brief statement was issued. Hitler had consulted only with Otto Dietrich, his press chief, who was at Obersalzburg, but not his public relations guru, Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment, who was not present. The communiqué mentioned "mental derangement," described Hess as the "victim of hallucinations," and concluded (hopefully) that he must have crashed. Goebbels dismissed the immediate response as amateurish. "It's rightly asked how such an idiot could be the second man after the Führer," he remarked while noting in his diary, "What a spectacle for the world: a mentally-deranged second man after the Führer."

On May 13, the BBC announced that Hess

was in British custody and, consequently, the German story had to change. By this point, Goebbels had gotten control of the German messaging, and explanations ceased following a final communiqué that evening. It asserted that Hess's "mental distraction" was a very recent phenomenon brought on by overwork and the stress of his party responsibilities. It also held open the possibility that "Hess was deliberately lured into a trap by a British party." Afterward, Goebbels repeatedly asserted in his diary that the affair was over.

Reports from party officials and public opinion research indicated otherwise. Particularly concerning to Goebbels was the fact that Hess had become a topic for humor: "The 1,000-year Reich is now the 100-year Reich because one zero is gone." Goebbels had a potential public relations disaster on his hands.

While the Germans were struggling to get their messaging straight, London was also trying to understand what was going on and what should be done. The delayed and muted British response after the initial, terse communiqué followed from two discrete issues. From the get-go, the British were unsure of Hess's competence. Churchill dismissed him as "a disordered mind" who behaved like "a mentally defective child who has been guilty of murder or arson." His British psychiatrist, Dr. J.R. Rees, opined, "Hess is a man of unstable mentality and has most certainly been like that since adolescence." If Hess was mentally ill, he might be unstable, unpredictable, and potentially damaging if attempts were made to use him for propaganda purposes.

This conundrum arose amid a bureaucratic free for all that virtually paralyzed the British reponse. It was an open question as to who controlled propaganda, psychological warfare, and the use of an asset like a captive deputy Führer. The Ministry of Information (MOI) claimed, not surprisingly, that Hess was a propaganda tool and hence in their purview. The Foreign Office (FO) insisted that this was a diplomatic issue and was clearly their responsibility. The Special Operations Executive (SOE), responsible for black ops and resistance in occupied Europe, also put in a claim. Finally, Lord Beaverbrook injected himself into the mix because he was a friend of Churchill's, owned much of Fleet Street, and had been heavily involved in British propaganda efforts in World War I.

The net result, clearly apparent to Goebbels as his diary reveals, was that England had missed a splendid opportunity to stick it to the Reich. On May 16, he wrote, "We are dealing with dumb amateurs over there. What we would do if the situation were reversed!" Three days later he continued, "London has missed a big chance.… Hess is already scrap iron so far as London is concerned." Goebbels realized that only British hesitancy had saved Germany from a public relations disaster.

Despite Hess's ongoing insistence that his peace proposals were real and relevant, he largely disappeared into the tight circle of his guards and doctors for the five years following his fantastic voyage. This did not stop him from composing long memoranda entitled "Peace Proposals," including one that he demanded to have forwarded to the duke in the fall of 1941. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Hess persisted in the belief that he was an important and influential diplomatic emissary. This unlikely assumption speaks volumes about his divorce from reality.

When Hess returned to the public eye as an accused war criminal at the Nuremberg trials, his bizarre behavior and even stranger continuing fervor for his dead Führer marked him apart from the other defendants. The court psychiatrists only questioned the sanity of two defendants: Hess and the sadistic, rabidly anti-Semitic Julius Streicher. Ultimately, both were deemed fit to stand trial.

The British official artist Dame Laura Knight thought otherwise. "Hess looks crazy now. The sickest man one ever saw. Born to burn at any stake for any cause that happens along.… The eyes of a fanatic, cavernous in that emaciated, grey-white face." His final address to the court only confirmed his continued commitment. He concluded, "I am happy to know that I have done my duty to my people, my duty as a Ger-

ABOVE: Preparing for a training flight, Rudolf Hess stands in the cockpit of a Messerschmitt Me-110 twin-engine fighter. Hess flew the same Me-110 on his failed peace mission in 1941. BELOW: British soldiers inspect the wreckage of Rudolf Hess's aircraft after he parachuted into Scotland and was taken prisoner. OPPOSITE: Rudolf Hess sits in the docket with arms folded during the Nuremberg Trials. He was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to life in prison.

man, as a National Socialist, as a loyal follower of my Führer. I do not regret anything." Unrepentant, he was a true believer to the bitter end.

Hess was found not guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Convicted only of crimes against peace and conspiracy, he was sentenced to life imprisonment and transferred with the other convicted war criminals spared execution to Spandau Prison in Berlin. On September 29, 1966, architect Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach, former Hitlerjugend leader and gauleiter, were released, leaving Hess the sole remaining prisoner, effectively condemned to solitary confinement. Despite repeated efforts by family, other interested parties, and Western governments, the Soviets vetoed any suggestions that Hess be released. Aged (he turned 80 in 1974), imprisoned alone, increasingly infirm, and only occasionally considered newsworthy on the anniversary of his flight, Hess faded from public consciousness during the 1970s.

In 1979, he burst back into the headlines with the publication of The Murder of Rudolf Hess. Former British Army doctor Hugh Thomas, who had examined Hess, asserted that the prisoner in Spandau could not be Hess. He assembled circumstantial evidence. The flight exceeded the range of the Messerschmitt Me-110 aircraft the pilot had flown, the prisoner refused to see his family for more than 35 years, and there was also additional "best evidence" of a medical sort. Hess was wounded in the chest during World War I, yet the prisoner had no scars, according to Thomas. It was seemingly irrefutable evidence that the prisoner in Spandau was not Rudolf Hess.

Regardless of the identity of the prisoner, he was found dead on Monday, August 17, 1987, in the summer house in the prison garden. Officially, it was ruled a suicide. Medical records, however, suggest that he was too infirm to have hanged himself, and his nurse that day concurred. The nurse also attested that unknown men in U.S. Army uniforms were present at the scene. His son, Wolf Rutiger, personally commissioned a second autopsy that concluded the cause of death was "the application of force to the neck by a cord form of instrument," or strangulation in laymen's terms. Rumors persist that the prisoner was murdered to prevent him from publicizing embarrassing details of wartime secrets or his real identity as a doppelganger, were he to be released on compassionate grounds before he died.

Hess was buried in the family plot in the Bavarian town of Wunsiedel. The grave attracted neo-Nazi demonstrations, causing the local Lutheran church council to refuse to extend the lease on the plot. As a result, the bones were exhumed at dawn on July 21, 2011, and cremated, the ashes scattered at sea. Many questions remained, but answers to the Rudolf Hess enigma seemed lost forever.

While the circumstances surrounding Hess's death remain in dispute, the doppelganger theory was categorically disproved in January 2018. Forensic DNA research established that "the conspiracy theory claiming that prisoner 'Spandau #7' [Hess] was an imposter is extremely unlikely, and therefore disproved." Fortuitously, a slide of a blood sample taken from Hess in December 1982 had been preserved and came to the awareness of Colonel (Dr.) Sherman McColl while he was doing a residency at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Realizing it might provide DNA evidence to resolve the doppelganger controversy, McColl contacted Jan Cemper-Kiesslich at the University of Salzburg's Interfaculty Department of Legal Medicine. He explained the complicated and sensitive questions surrounding selecting a lab, saying, "For the result to have most credibility it needed to come from an official forensic genetics lab. In case the result was controversial, it would best be performed outside Germany or the four powers. It was an advantage to have native German speakers, which left Austria. As for Salzburg, the chairman was one of the four pathologists on the second Hess autopsy and enjoyed the confidence of the family."

Cemper-Kiesslich explained by e-mail that he became interested in "the application of forensic DNA testing in the course of archaeological and historical research" as a student. His work has covered "Roman and medieval times, reliquaries and the remains of holy men, historical family and noblemen's graves."

With regard to Rudolph Hess, based on comparison with an anonymous but verified

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Company B's jeeps, armored cars, and self-propelled guns stood lined up on a narrow road, their crewmen anxious to move out. Up ahead, they had heard, another reconnaissance unit had met stubborn German resistance and needed help.

Blocking their way, however, was a Mk.V tank. None of the Americans' light weapons would be able to batter through its armored hide, so to get around the leviathan, the GIs would have to rely on speed and surprise.

One by one, Company B's vehicles took off down the road at full throttle. Zipping by the panzer at 50 miles per hour, truck after truck passed through its kill zone unscathed. Then one last machine, an M8 self-propelled assault gun, got caught in what witnesses later called "a shooting gallery." A high-velocity 75mm shell struck the M8, instantly killing three of its five crewmen: Sergeant Dallis A. Drake, Pfc. Charles S. Duncan, and Pfc. Hubert G. Roberts.

The panzer, however, had revealed its position. Within minutes, four American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers pounded it into a smoking wreck. Next, a low-flying observation plane buzzed the area to confirm that the way forward was clear once again.

At the cost of three lives, Company B of the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion had pierced the foe's thick defensive crust. This aggressive unit's foray deep behind enemy lines during the last days of July 1944 helped launch the Allied breakout in France.

Yet these veterans knew better than to underestimate the Germans, dangerous opponents even in retreat. Troopers of the 82nd Recon expected to encounter many combatants desperate to flee the trap being closed around them. Both sides would soon meet in a number of headlong clashes, all distinguished by their suddenness and savagery.

GET A MOVE ON!

For five weeks following the Normandy invasion of June 6, 1944, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley's First Army slogged its way through a thickly vegetated region of impenetrable hedgerows and sunken lanes known as the bocage. In this difficult terrain, Bradley's forces gained on average one mile per day while suffering heavy casualties inflicted by skilled, resolute defenders.

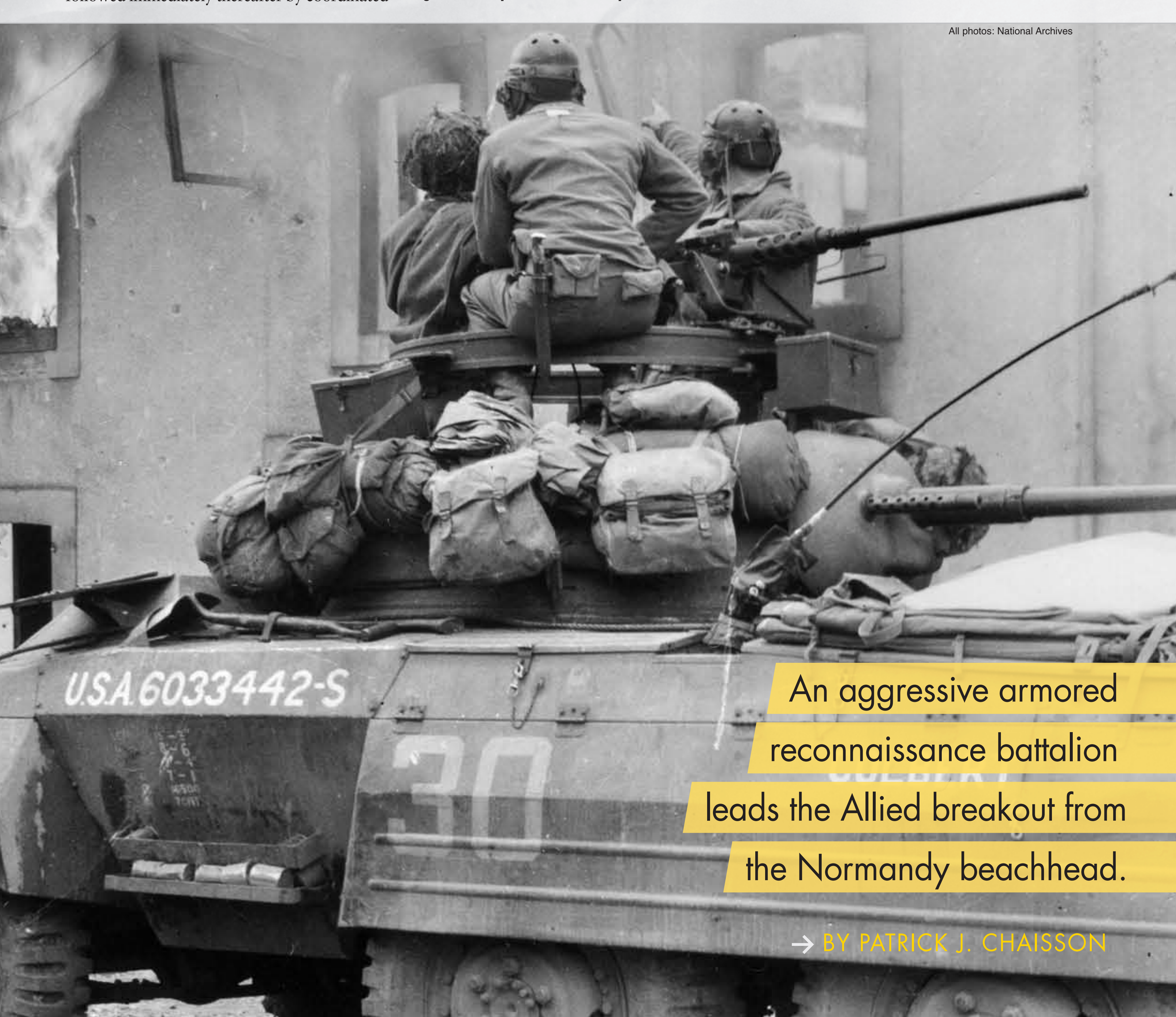
First Army needed to punch through the bocage and onto terrain better suited for its rapidly maneuverable motorized forces. Bradley's breakout plan called for concentrated aerial bombardment to blast a gap in the lines, followed immediately thereafter by coordinated infantry and armored attacks. He codenamed this scheme Operation Cobra and assigned it to his most aggressive commander, Maj. Gen. J. Lawton "Lightning Joe" Collins.

Collins had performed brilliantly as VII Corps chief during the Utah Beach landings. He had also orchestrated the speedy capture of Cherbourg, a heavily fortified port city on Normandy's northern coast. His corps now faced south, in the center of the U.S. line.

Throughout mid-July, Bradley and Collins worked to refine their plan. Operation Cobra was to kick off once other First Army units seized the crossroads town of St. Lo, thereby clearing the way for VII Corps' advance. After Allied aircraft saturation-bombed a narrow corridor west of town, Collins' infantrymen would take and hold open the penetration's shoulders. Then, strong mechanized columns would roll in behind the foe and cut off his retreat.

Riding atop an armored car, members of the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion rush past a building destroyed by American artillery in the French town of Casiny. The 82nd led the Normandy breakout during the opening hours of Operation Cobra, July 27, 1944.

All photos: National Archives



An aggressive armored reconnaissance battalion leads the Allied breakout from the Normandy beachhead.

→ BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Unfortunately, bad weather and worse luck plagued Cobra's initial stages. Twice, on July 24 and 25, several squadrons of U.S. Army Air Force bombers accidentally dropped their loads on friendly troops. Among those killed was Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, commander of the phantom First Army Group.

The VII Corps' riflemen encountered vicious return fire when they finally started their movement through the impact area on July 25. Somehow, numerous enemy emplacements had escaped untouched by the preparatory barrage, blocking the Americans from achieving Cobra's first-day objectives.

In VII Corps headquarters, though, there was cause for careful optimism. True, Maj. Gen. Collins noted, their infantry assault stalled early. But neither did the Germans launch an immediate counterthrust, something for which they were notorious. "Lightning Joe" believed Cobra's massive air strikes damaged his opponents far more than what initial reports had indicated.

Collins was correct. These concentrated bombings had killed many soldiers and obliterated many vehicles and fortifications, burying them underneath a carpet of rubble. Those men who survived the attacks were mostly so dazed as to be combat ineffective. The bombing had also destroyed telephone and radio systems, crippling German commanders' ability to monitor and influence the battle.

The German Seventh Army's commander, SS Obergruppenführer (Lt. Gen.) Paul Hausser, was struggling to obtain a clear picture of the tactical situation. It seemed the Americans had punctured his lines west of St. Lo in the sector held by the Panzer Lehr Division right on the boundary between the II Parachute Corps and LXXXIV Army Corps. Messengers told him of U.S. tanks already operating well inside the Seventh Army rear area.

Leading this onslaught was the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. Known as "the commander's eyes and ears," the 82nd Recon ranged deep into enemy territory to locate defensive positions and troop concentrations, evaluate routes, and report all observed activity. While lightly armed in comparison to a tank battalion, the outfit could for a limited period hold key objectives such as bridges or road junctions.

The battalion was organized into a headquarters and service company, three reconnaissance companies, a light tank company, and a medical detachment. Each recon company fielded 15 M8 armored cars, 16 quarter-ton gun jeeps, three M8 75mm assault guns, and five half-tracks. Their arsenal also included 60mm mortars for indirect fire and illumination missions. The light tank company had on hand 17 M5A1 Stuart tanks, whose 37mm guns were employed mainly against soft-skinned vehicles, bunkers, and personnel.

Although similar in mission and equipment to a cavalry squadron, the unit retained traditional battalion and company designations because its parent unit, the 2nd Armored Division, was established under a prewar authorization document.

Commanded by Lt. Col. Wheeler G. Merriam, the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion had assigned 51 officers and 851 enlisted soldiers. One of those troopers was a no-nonsense career cavalryman named Victor S. Prawdzik, the outfit's senior NCO and sergeant major, whom, battalion lore said, the enlisted men feared more than the Germans.

The 82nd Recon came ashore at Omaha Beach on June 10, 1944, but stayed mostly in reserve for the next five weeks. Busting the bocage was an infantry fight, and the 2nd Armored required open ground on which to wage its style of mounted warfare. Meanwhile, the recon troopers kept busy training replacements and maintaining their equipment.

Lieutenant Colonel Merriam received the operations order for Cobra late on July 25. This plan directed his men to conduct a zone reconnaissance up to the deep-banked Seine River, where they were to demolish a set of bridges in order to block the German retreat. The battalion would also provide flank security, furnish connecting patrols, and maintain contact with adjacent outfits. H-hour had been set for 0430 hours on Thursday, July 27, 1944.

Following directly behind the 82nd Recon was Combat Command B (CCB) of the 2nd Armored Division, led by Brig. Gen. Isaac D. White. This powerful mechanized organization consisted of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 67th Armored Regiment (totaling 118 medium M4 Sherman and 34 light M5A1 Stuart tanks), the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment (1,400 riflemen and 122 halftracks), the 78th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (520 gunners and 18 M7 105mm self-propelled howitzers), plus the usual signal, service, and support elements. The 17th Armored Engineer Battalion, less one company attached to Lt. Col. Merriam's 82nd Recon, also joined this task force.

White's mission called for aggressiveness and maximum flexibility. Once inside enemy-held territory, his armored columns would move rapidly to the southwest and secure a line of objectives designed to prevent German reinforcements from moving northward into the American lodgment.

Several small communities marked their route of advance. After passing through VII Corps lines at Canisy, CCB was to roll through Quibou, Dangy, Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly, Saint-Denis-le-Gast, Lengronne, and lastly to the Seine River bridges near Cerences. At each crossroads, bridge, and hilltop, small detachments would drop off to establish blocking positions.

One macadam-surfaced road supported the attack. Numerous farmers' fields, sunken lanes, and thick hedgerows lined the route,

while several crisscrossing streams further hampered mobility. While the weather had recently turned sunny after a month of almost constant rain, many unimproved side roads remained wet and impassable.

Army intelligence possessed a limited understanding of the enemy situation. The VII Corps leadership believed that Panzer Lehr, or what was left of it, sat directly in CCB's path, while another five German divisions held positions to the north. Many of these units, however, were now significantly understrength after six weeks of near-constant fighting.

Well before dawn on July 27, a long column of olive drab vehicles began assembling along the road near St. Jean de Daye. Right on time, the 82nd Recon stepped off with Company A in the lead as advance guard, accompanied by a platoon of armored engineers. Company B, with another engineer platoon attached, was directed to scout the primary route of movement. Next in line was Company C, with orders to move north of the main line and keep in touch with friendly forces on CCB's flank. The light tanks of Company D headed up the rear, followed by battalion headquarters and a rear security element.

Watching over the reconnaissance scouts were a number of nimble but completely unarmed spotter aircraft flown by pilots assigned to the 2nd Armored Division Artillery. Flying out ahead of the armored column, these "Maytag Messerschmitts" (one nickname for the lightweight liaison planes) could both provide early warning to ground commanders and request immediate close air support in the form of P-47 Thunderbolts from U.S. IX Tactical Fighter Command. Air liaison officers riding with the 82nd Recon were also in contact with these flights of fighter-bombers, standing by to destroy the deadliest targets.

Traffic congestion, made worse by heavily cratered roadways, initially slowed the attack force's progress. Once past Canisy, though, the column picked up speed. The first objective: Quibou, one and a half miles distant.

Just outside that tiny hamlet, Company A encountered the Panzer Lehr Division. Here, 16-year-old radioman Private William A. "Chicken" Nawrocki's jeep took a wrong turn and blundered into a German tank. While two fellow GIs managed to run off amid the confusion, Nawrocki saw that he was cornered. Wisely, he raised his hands in a sign of surrender.

Not far away, Private Carl Wood's armored car came face to face with another panzer. Its crew, Wood recalled, "were as surprised as we were and they immediately started getting inside to position their 7.5 [cm cannon] and to fire on us at point blank range." Driver Francis O'Neill immediately shifted into reverse and "moved rapidly, faster than I ever dreamed that anyone could drive one of these armored cars backwards."

ABOVE: Dressed in camouflage uniforms, American troops of the 41st Armored Infantry Battalion study a map recently taken from a German prisoner in a village in Normandy. The soldiers were part of Combat Command B, 2nd Armored Division, and followed closely behind the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion during Operation Cobra. OPPOSITE: Mounting 75mm main weapons, a unit of PzkPfw. V Panther medium tanks assembles in a village in Normandy. German armor was late in responding to the initial Allied landings of Operation Overlord, but armored divisions were later deployed to Normandy and mounted dogged resistance. Note the muzzle of one of the German tank guns in the foreground of this photo.

Wood's vehicle escaped unharmed, but this Mk.V later destroyed Sergeant Drake's Company B assault gun while it was attempting to run through the line of fire. That incident caught the attention of four P-47s orbiting overhead; after a quick radio call, the warplanes swooped down to attack. "They came in with the bombs at about 1,000 feet," Wood wrote later. "It was to the back of us, and it seemed like we had to duck, they came in so low."

The Thunderbolts made short work of their prey, extracting a measure of revenge for those three Americans and their assault gun lost earlier.

Moving cross-country, Company B also ran into German armor north of Quibou. First Platoon, under 1st Lt. James J. O'Connor, spied the captive Nawrocki lying spread-eagled on the front deck of a panzer. While O'Connor's crews distracted the enemy tankmen with machine-gun and 37mm cannon fire, Nawrocki managed to slip away. The lucky ex-prisoner was later evacuated for medical treatment.

Bypassing pockets of resistance for CCB to mop up, the recon men had by 1100 hours moved forward another two and a quarter miles to the village of Dangy. In the lead armored car was 1st Lt. Danford Bubolz.

"There was some firing going on as we entered the village," Bubolz recollected. "One German fired at me from a doorway about 20 feet from my left side and put a hole through the neck of my jacket, but he missed because he did not allow for the movement of my vehicle. I ducked down into the turret and then came up again with my .45 pistol and slammed a couple rounds into the doorway, forcing him back in."

A sergeant from the next armored car in line killed the troublesome German soldier as they rolled by. Altogether that afternoon, troopers destroyed five half-tracks, a tank, several wheeled vehicles, some horse-drawn supply wagons, and one 1935 Buick repurposed as an ambulance. Unfortunately, Dan Bubolz received severe wounds to both legs when a truck loaded with land mines exploded as he was attempting to clear it off the road.

The 82nd Recon pronounced Dangy secure at 1500 hours. Colonel Merriam then received

“Normally I fired in only groups of two or three,” he remembered. “But, with many targets, I shifted to rapid fire and would start at the left, go through a magazine and insert a new one, and go back to the left again.”

a radio message from the 2nd Armored Division’s command post: “Speed up.”

CCB’s rapid gains had prompted a change in mission. “Lightning Joe” Collins now believed Brig. Gen. White’s combat command could cut the foe’s route of retreat and ordered him to drive for the coast. It was a big job, especially since the Germans had gotten a head start. Only a hell-for-leather advance would ensure the Americans won this race.

Company B’s jeeps, assault guns, and armored cars soon roared off for Pont Brocard, just two miles down the road. Along the way, they passed a nondescript farmhouse that happened to be the Panzer Lehr Division’s command post. From inside, its commander, Lt. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein, watched these reconnaissance vehicles speed by. How, Bayerlein asked his staff, did American soldiers get this far behind our lines so quickly?

The German officers did not have much time to ponder his question, though. Moving closely behind Company B was a phalanx of M4 tanks, CCB’s advance guard. While the recon scouts often held their fire on the move as a way of preserving stealth, CCB’s tankers felt no such reluctance to expend ammunition. Identifying the farmstead and its collection of command cars parked outside as a lucrative target, they sent shell after shell into it. Diving out a window to make his getaway, Bayerlein escaped alone into the gathering darkness.

Merriam’s battalion had by midnight made it to Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly, more than seven miles from its starting point. Once past Panzer Lehr’s few remaining strongpoints, his fast-moving troopers now faced mostly an assortment of astonished rear echelon personnel and the odd combat outfit caught attempting to retreat. The attached engineer company, for example, captured 32 soldiers and several horse-drawn artillery pieces that stumbled into its bivouac position after dark.

That evening, the recon men “coiled up” (i.e., established a night defensive perimeter) in the fields surrounding Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly. While tired soldiers stood watch or grabbed a few hours of sleep, headquarters personnel on both sides labored into the wee hours.

Staff officers at 2nd Armored’s command post hustled to send forward reinforcements. They eventually released the division reserve, plus a spare infantry battalion, to buttress CCB’s hastily established strongpoint defense. It was also decided that Merriam’s unit would resume its original mission of blowing up bridges along the River Seine.

German Seventh Army headquarters also hummed with activity. General Hausser saw his command was about to become torn in two, but extremely poor communications prevented him from doing much to prevent this disaster. Before the phone lines went out, Hausser directed all combat divisions west of St. Lo to commence a fighting withdrawal.

His planned line of retreat, however, brought those outfits straight up against the 2nd Armored Division’s strongest roadblocks. Hausser finally realized his mistake, but by then the damage had been done. Many German formations were already on the move and could no longer be contacted by telephone, radio, or messenger.

As all land lines were still down, Hausser felt he had to personally issue new, correct withdrawal orders to the Seventh Army commanders most threatened by this attack. At dawn on July 28, he set out by car to meet those officers, but he never made it.

Later that morning near Lengronne, a patrol from Company C, 82nd Recon, fired on Hausser’s staff car as it drove into view. Had the U.S. gunners known who was inside that vehicle they would surely have ensured its destruction; as things stood, getting to the Seine bridges had a higher priority than finishing off a fleeing automobile. Hausser got away, having learned for himself just how far the recon troopers had penetrated the Seventh Army’s rear area.

It was now Company C’s turn to lead the dash, with two borrowed M4 tanks out front. Third Platoon Leader 2nd Lt. Morton C. Eustis fought from the back deck of one Sherman, “mowing down Jerries with a .50 caliber machine gun,” as he later wrote his mother.

Another Company C lieutenant “raising merry hell” that day was Merle A. Hanson. His scout section fell upon a huge fuel dump near Cerences, scattering its defenders before destroying 20,000 gallons of precious gasoline with thermite grenades. “Our C Company had captured, killed and wounded 130 men,” Lieutenant Hanson claimed of the afternoon’s activity. “We had shot up at least 30 trucks and small vehicles, and made many French peasants very happy when we broke the German hold on their countryside.”

Hanson also remembered how those villagers’ joyous expressions disappeared once they observed Company C withdrawing from its river outposts later that afternoon. The American advance had halted, and now U.S. commanders were working to prepare their overextended units for likely collisions with large numbers of well-armed, organized enemy soldiers all bent on escape. At 1800 hours, Lt. Col. Merriam drove out to personally order his far-flung recon companies back to their bivouac positions near Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly.

While Merriam was out coordinating his defense, a band of retreating German foot soldiers struck the 82nd Recon's command post. Organized by Sergeant Prawdzik, the normally noncombatant drivers, radio operators, code clerks, and cooks all grabbed their individual weapons and hurried into position along a hedgerow. Walking behind the GIs, Prawdzik encouraged them by repeatedly hollering, "Get a move on, trooper, get a move on!"

By the time Lt. Col. Merriam returned, the attack had already been repelled with some help from Company D's light tanks. "It was reassuring to know that the men thought less of the enemy than the sergeant major's wrath," Merriam observed wryly before returning to the business of commanding his battalion. Already, the recon companies were reporting heavy fighting near a crossroads known as La Pinetiere.

This intersection a mile southwest of Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly became the scene of a fierce encounter between German and American forces that began before dawn on Saturday, July 29. After sunrise, 15 tanks and 250 Fallschirmjäger (paratroopers) smashed into the U.S. perimeter there. Among CCB's defenders at La Pinetiere were two batteries of field artillery, a pair of antiaircraft half-tracks, and one big recon trooper.

Private Robert Lohr of Company C, 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, stood 6 feet, 4 inches tall and weighed 240 pounds. The burly Californian easily carried his Browning Automatic Rifle and 27 magazines full of ammunition; that morning he would need all of them. Taking cover in a treeline, Lohr opened up on the shadowy figures of advancing paratroopers.

"Normally I fired in only groups of two or three," he remembered. "But, with many targets, I shifted to rapid fire and would start at the left, go through a magazine and insert a new one, and go back to the left again." Then Lohr took what he called "a massive blow to my chest." Although seriously injured, he survived to eventually receive a Silver Star and French Croix de Guerre for his role in defeating the assault.

After reinforcements arrived to regain control of La Pinetiere, unit leaders took stock of their losses. Killed in the battle's first moments were Company B's Lieutenant O'Connor and one enlisted soldier from Company A. An attached combat engineer was also killed in the action, while 10 troopers were wounded.

Desperate to evade the American trap, German commanders committed a number of colossal tactical errors on July 29. In the town of Roncey, an enormous traffic jam of 500 German vehicles developed. Unable to move forward, these machines sat "triple-banked" until a U.S. spotter plane discovered them. For six hours, Allied aircraft bombed, rocketed, and strafed the column in what one participant termed "a fighter pilot's paradise." More than 100 tanks and 250 other pieces of equipment were later found destroyed, with many more .abandoned intact.

Hausser's army was disintegrating. The "flotsam of six divisions," as historians later described it, wandered leaderless toward what many hoped was safety across the Seine. Hundreds of demoralized German soldiers ran into 82nd Recon patrols now making their way back to the all-important bridge crossings. Some stragglers surrendered straightaway while others tried to hide themselves. A few chose to fight back, though escape was uppermost on their minds, not combat.

The rising panic did not spread to every unit then withdrawing southward. Out past

BELOW: Moving through the ruins of the village of St. Sever Calvados, M8 Greyhound armored cars of the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion advance in the vanguard of Operation Cobra. OPPOSITE: Accompanied by an attached engineer company, the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion rolled into the French village of Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly on July 29, 1944. In this photo American soldiers examine the corpses of German troops lying on the steps of the local church.

Lengronne, a heavy counterattack forced Company B to abandon its demolition work on the Seine rail bridge and fall back. At least some of the foe, it seemed, would get away to fight another day.

At day's end, the 82nd Recon occupied an outpost line that ran 12 miles along the river, starting near Cerences and stretching in an arc southeast to the village of Hambye. As such, only a few troopers participated in "Death Night," a series of ferocious nocturnal melees taking place on July 29-30 that pitted SS tanks, panzergrenadiers, and paratroopers in close-quarter combat against isolated defensive outposts from the 2nd Armored Division. When it was all over, U.S. forces had killed an estimated 450 enemy troops, captured another 1,000, and knocked out about 90 vehicles. American losses numbered less than 100.

Surveying the scene afterward, Lt. Col. Merriam wrote, "There were sickening groans and feeble cries for "Wasser" from this horrible pile of burned and bloody flesh. The ditches on either side of the road were filled with dead and wounded German soldiers—some decapitated, others disemboweled. The air was filled with the sickening stench of death and cremation."

On the morning of July 30, Company B cleared a triangle of land near Saint-Denis-le-Gast where the most furious fighting had taken place. They flushed out several snipers, eliminated dozens of diehard SS men, and took 250 prisoners. "The situation is breaking up," Merriam advised, explaining that 100 troops from the 2nd SS Division "Das Reich" had "just walked in and given themselves up."

Meanwhile, Company C cautiously entered the small village of Trelly, a few miles northwest of Lengronne. Their lead scouts halted, spying another armored column also heading into town. These tanks turned out to be American M4s of the 4th Armored Division, which had for several days been pushing southward along the French coast. This linkup at Trelly was a positive indication that the Normandy breakout had at last concluded.

Operation Cobra was an overwhelming triumph for Omar Bradley, "Lightning Joe" Collins, and above all the GIs they commanded. After-action assessments showed that the 82nd Recon had advanced well over 20 miles into enemy-held territory during its five-day mission. In heavy fighting against elements of six German divisions, the battalion's troopers had killed or sent to the POW cages an estimated 600 enemy combatants. They also destroyed dozens of tanks, half-tracks, armored cars, artillery pieces, and other tactical vehicles.

During Cobra, the 82nd Recon lost three officers and 22 enlisted troopers killed, with another 72 men wounded in action. Additionally, the battalion's attached combat engineer company lost two soldiers killed and six wounded.

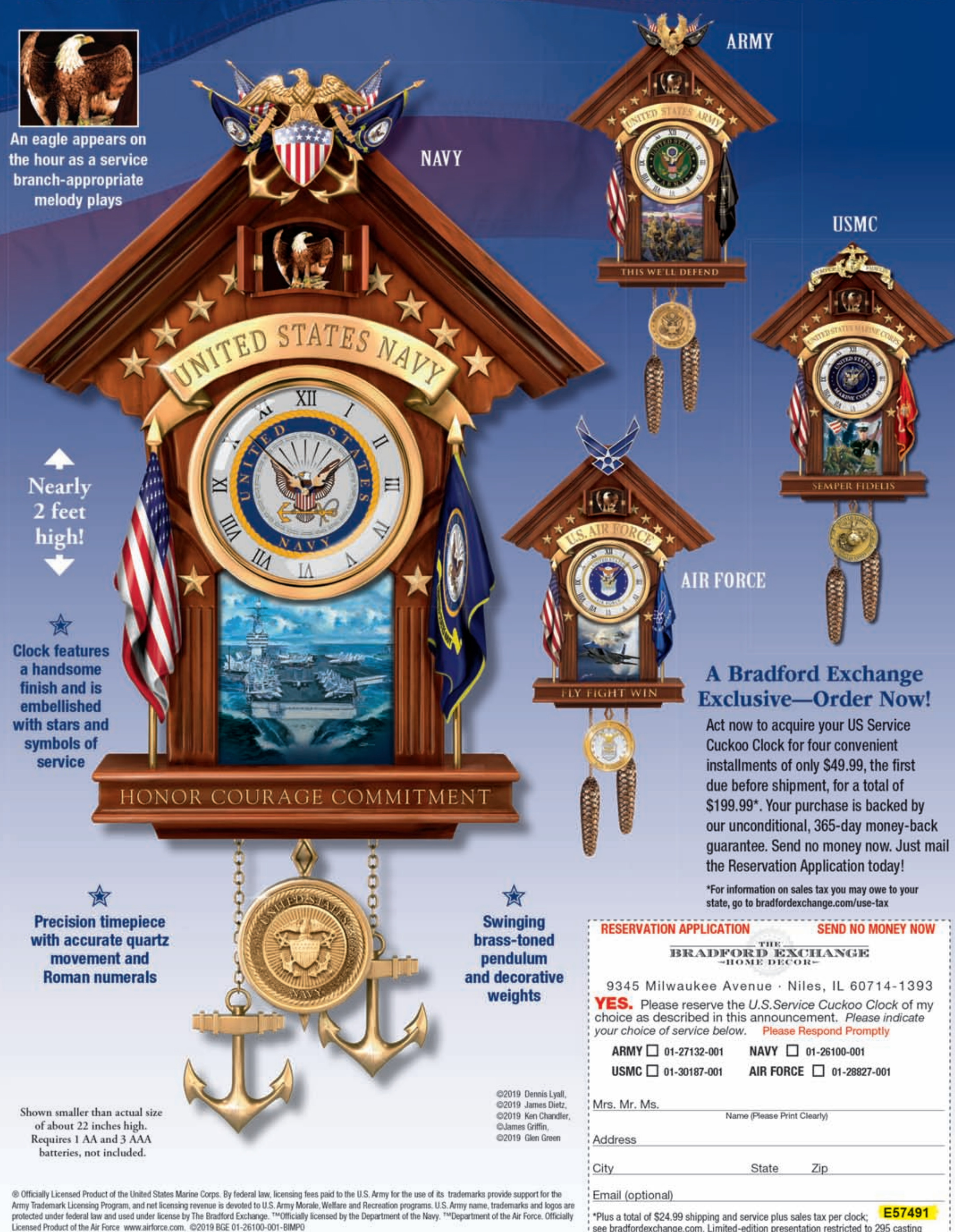
For those who remained, it was now time to rest, reorganize, and prepare for the next mission. With the bocage finally behind them, a new spirit of optimism surged through the ranks. They were now in tank country, open terrain well suited for the Americans' mechanized tactics and equipment.

On August 6, 1944, Merriam's recon men turned east, leading the 2nd Armored Division on an epic dash across France. They entered Belgium on September 2, the first U.S. Army unit to do so, and for the next seven months, they moved relentlessly through the heart of Nazi Germany. War's end found them astride the Elbe River at Magdeburg, Germany. For the troopers of the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, it had been a long, hard-fought journey from the hedgerows of Normandy to final victory in Europe.

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

ABOVE: Prior to linking up with the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion in the village of Trelly, American Stuart light tanks of the 4th Armored Division advance through the rubble-strewn streets of the town of Coutances in Normandy. BELOW: During the swift advance of Operation Cobra and the American breakout from the Normandy beachhead, an M4A1 Sherman medium tank passes the hulk of a destroyed German PzKpfw. IV medium tank of the 2nd SS Panzer Division "Das Reich." Near the town of Saint-Denisle-Gast, 100 men of "Das Reich" surrendered to the 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion after heavy combat had occurred.

Both: National Archives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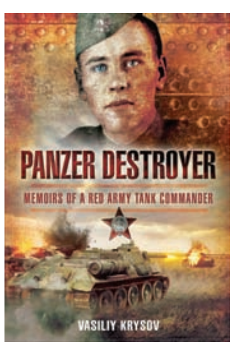
Memoir of a Red Army Tanker

Vasiliy Krysov survived combat with German tanks on the Eastern Front, including the vaunted Tiger.

JUST AFTER 6 AM ON JULY 5, 1943, VASILIY KRYSOV SPOTTED THE ENEMY. SIX tanks moved slowly toward him and the SU-122 self-propelled gun he commanded. The tanks had flat-sided hulls, squat turrets, and a long gun barrel with a muzzle brake … they were Tigers!



Vasiliy had to let them get close to ensure their destruction. His vehicle commanders reported ready to fire, but he told them to wait … 900 meters … 800 … 700…. Still he held their fire. The Tigers stayed slow, hoping a Soviet gunner would lose his composure and fire outside effective range, revealing his position. Then the German gunners could destroy their enemy from a safe distance.

The Tigers reached the Soviet infantry's outpost line; the footsoldiers opened up with machine guns and hurled grenades and Molotov cocktails. Soon the infantry had to pull back, and the Tigers followed. Suddenly two explosions rocked the battlefield. Two of the Tigers struck mines. They were immobilized but continued to fire. Vasiliy had encouraged his men to hold their fire, and they acted with restraint, but now the regimental commander came over the radio. "At the tanks," he ordered. "Fire!" Vasiliy passed the command to his gunner, Valeriy Korolev.

Three red flares rose into the sky, confirming the order to open fire. Before the first flare reached its maximum height, Korolev depressed the trigger. The 122mm cannon roared, sending its heavy projectile racing toward a Tiger. The muzzle blast threw a cloud of dust and smoke into the air in front of the self-propelled gun. Even through the haze Vasiliy made out the flash of a hit on one of the Tiger's turrets. Another was also hit, and both stopped. To the left, a third Tiger kept moving. Vasiliy ordered his crew to reload and fire at it.

The round crashed into the Tiger's turret, but it kept advancing, firing its cannon and machine guns at the Soviets. Vasiliy ordered a new aiming point. "At the tracks! Fire!" A second round thundered off, striking the Tiger's right track and breaking it. Immediately, the Tiger swerved from the remaining momentum of its left track, revealing the thinner armor of its flank. Another SU-122 fired right away, slamming a shell into the German tank's flank. The gunner was rewarded with a sheet of flame from the Tiger. With three tanks knocked out, the remaining German vehicles began to move around, looking for cover against the accurate fire of the Soviets. Soon, however, they resumed their attack, and in the distance Vasiliy made out the dark shapes of more German tanks. The enemy's second wave was moving in.

The life of an armored vehicle crewman was a difficult and risky one in the Soviet Red Army. Vasiliy Krysov knew that better than most, though he defied the odds and survived the war. As a new lieutenant in 1942, he was given command of a KV-1S heavy tank but was later reassigned to the SU-122 and then the SU-85 self-propelled guns. He fought at Stalingrad, Kursk, and the Dnieper. Wounded four times, at the war's end he commanded a company of T-34/85 tanks. His fascinating memoir appears in English in ***Panzer Destroyer: Memoirs of a Red Army Tank Commander*** (Vasiliy Krysov, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, 214 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $22.95, softcover).

Too often in accounts of the Eastern Front, Russian soldiers exist only as anonymous figures, cut down in droves by German troops and treated like simple peasants trying to make war. This memoir puts that notion to rest, highlighting the tactics and resourcefulness of Soviet soldiers along with their growing battle experience over the course of the war. The descriptions are vivid, revealing the thrill and terror of battle against a skilled opponent and the dogged determination that kept the Soviets in the war. The combat sequences are interspersed with vignettes of the daily life of the tank crews. A number of the author's photographs and hand-drawn maps accompany the clear and engaging text. The notes should be read as they flesh out some details of the war that the author probably would not have known at the time, adding a wider scope to the work.

Red Army infantrymen ride atop an SU-122 assault gun into battle. The Soviets produced large numbers of armored fighting vehicles, and many heroic tankers lost their lives fighting the Germans.

Panzers on the Vistula: Retreat and Rout in East Prussia (Hans

ADVERTISEMENT

Break Free from Neuropathy with a New Supportive Care Cream

A patented relief cream stands to help millions of Americans crippled from the side effects of neuropathy by increasing sensation and blood flow wherever it's applied

BOSTON, MA – A recent breakthrough stands to help millions of Americans plagued by burning, tingling and numb legs and feet.

But this time it comes in the form of a cream, not a pill. The effectiveness is remarkable.

The breakthrough, called *Diabasens*, is a new relief cream developed for managing the relentless discomfort caused by neuropathy.

When applied directly to the legs and feet, it causes arteries and blood vessels to expand, increasing the flow of warm, nutrient rich blood to damaged tissue.

However, what's most remarkable about the cream...and what makes it so brilliant...is that it contains one of the only natural substances known to activate a special sensory pathway right below the surface of the skin.

This pathway is called TRPA1 and it controls the sensitivity of nerves. In laymen terms, it determines whether you feel pins and needles or soothing relief.

Studies show that symptoms of neuropathy arise when the nerves in your legs deteriorate and blood flow is lost to the areas which surround them.

As the nerves begins to die, sensation is lost. This lack of sensation is what causes the feelings of burning, tingling and numbness.

This is why the makers of *Diabasens* say their cream has performed so well in a recent clinical use survey tria: it increases sensation and blood flow where ever its applied.

No Pills, No Prescriptions, No Agony

Until now, many sufferers have failed to consider a topical cream as an effective way to manage neuropathy. *Diabasens* is proving it may be the only way going forward.

"Most of today's treatment methods have focused on minimizing discomfort instead of attacking its underlining cause. That's why millions of adults are still in excruciating pain every single day, and are constantly dealing with side effects" explains Dr. Esber, the creator of *Diabasens*.

"*Diabasens* is different. Since the most commonly reported symptoms – burning, tingling and numb legs and feet – are caused by lack of sensation of the nerves, we've designed the formula increase their sensitivity.

And since these nerves are located right below the skin, we've chosen to formulate it as a cream. This allows for the ingredients to get to them faster and without any drug like side effects" he adds.

Study Finds Restoring Sensation the Key To Effective, Long Lasting Relief

With the conclusion of their latest human clinical use survey trial, Dr. Esber and his team are now offering *Diabasens* nationwide. And regardless of the market, its sales are exploding.

Men and women from all over the country are eager to get their hands on the new cream and, according to the results initial users reported, they should be.

In the trial above, as compared to baseline, participants taking *Diabasens* saw a staggering 51% increase sensitivity in just one week. This resulted in significant relief from burning, tingling and nubmness throughout their legs.

Many participants taking *Diabasens* described feeling much more balanced and comfortable throughout the day. They also noticed that after applying, there was a pleasant warming sensation that was remarkably soothing.

Diabasens is shown to provide relief from:

- Burning
- Swelling
- Tingling
- Heaviness
- Numbness
- Cold extremities

Diabasens Users Demand More

Many of *Diabasens* users say their legs have never felt better. For the first time in years, they are able to walk free from the symptoms which have made life hard.

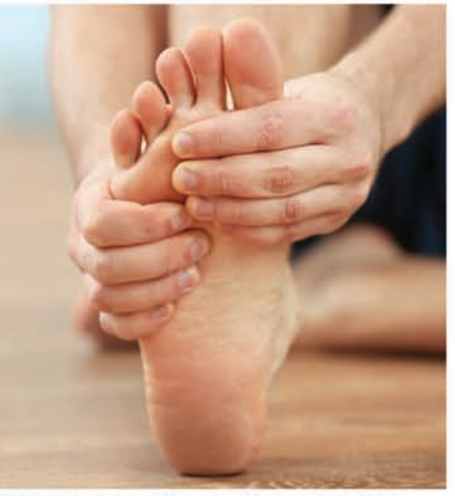
"I have been using the cream now for about ten days. It has given me such relief.

I've had very bad foot pain from injuries and overuse of my feet for years which have contributed to severe itching/tingling and pain for some time. (My father also suffered from this pain and itching. I wish I would have had this for him.)

The first time I used the cream, I felt an almost immediate relief from this.

I now use it at least twice a day: once in the morning before work and once at night before I sleep.

I am so delighted with this. It has helped my walking, also. It has helped generate feeling again in my feet," raves Marsha A. from Texas



Topical Cream Offers Sufferers a Safer, More Effective Avenue of Relief: Diabasens increases sensation and blood flow wherever its applied. It's now being used to relieve painful legs and feet.

Targets Nerve Damage Right Below the Skin's Surface

Diabasens is a topical cream that is to be applied to your legs and feet twice a day for the first two weeks then once a day after. It does not require a prescription.

Studies show that neuropathy is caused when the peripheral nerves breakdown and blood is unable to circulate into your legs and feet.

As these nerves deteriorate, sensation is lost. This is why you may not feel hot or cold and your legs and feet may burn, tingle and go numb.

Additionally, without proper blood flow, tissues and cells in these areas start to die, causing unbearable pain.

An ingredient called cinnamaldehyde in *Diabasens* is one of the only compounds in existence that can activate TRPA1, a special sensory pathway that runs through your entire body.

According to research, activating this pathway (which can only be done with a cream) increases the sensitivity of nerves, relieving feelings of tingling and numbness in your legs and feet.

Supporting ingredients boost blood flow, supplying the nerves with the nutrients they need for increased sensation.

How to Get *Diabasens*

In order to get the word out about *Diabasens*, the company is offering special introductory discounts to all who call. Discounts will automatically be applied to all callers, but don't wait. This offer may not last forever. **Call toll-free: 1-800-993-1002.**

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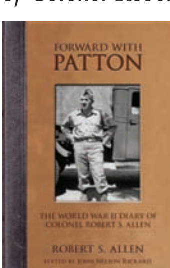
Schäufler and Tony Le Tissier, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2018, 160 pp., maps, photographs, $32.95, hardcover)

Hans Schäufler was the commander of a Jagdpanther tank destroyer in 1945. His unit was in the seaside resort town of Zoppot in the Bay of Danzig after evacuation from the Courland Pocket. His unit was forced to leave their vehicles and equipment behind. They were not there long when his regimental commander received a daunting radio message: "Soviet tanks penetrating the Gruppe Training Area. Heavy weapons, armoured personnel carriers and tanks available in limited numbers. Get the crews moving immediately!" The battle for East Prussia was grinding to its dreadful conclusion. It was a time of chaos and tragedy for the soldiers and civilians involved as the Third Reich reaped what it sowed.

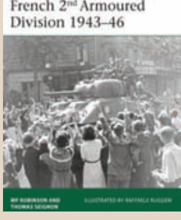
This memoir gives insight into that tragedy from the viewpoint of a German soldier who went through it all. It is an eyewitness account, describing what it was like to take part in the rearguard actions against the Red Army and the horrifying conditions in the city of Danzig while under attack. The book also provides a look at German tank and infantry tactics at the end of the war, when there were shortages of everything but the fighting still went on. The writing is clear, well translated from the original German, and quite engaging.

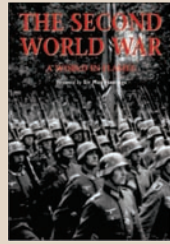
Forward with Patton: The World War II Diary of Colonel Robert S. Allen (Robert S. Allen, edited by John Nelson Rickard, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2018, 317 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $50.00, hardcover)



Robert S. Allen was a controversial figure. He was a World War I veteran, a journalist, and a Soviet Spy, a paid informant. Even after this treachery, he returned to the service during World War II on the staff of General George S. Patton. He thought very highly of Patton and frequently wrote of him in his diary. Allen also wrote of various things that came to his attention as an intelligence officer for Third Army. He loved Third Army to a fault, though he was not always liked by his fellow officers. While he was not always objective, his writings provide insight into the operations of Patton's army and

New and Noteworthy





P-39/P400 Airacobra vs A6M2/3 Zero-Sen: New Guinea 1942 (Michael John Claringbould, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $20.00, softcover) Osprey's Duel Series compares machines of war and the combatants who operated them. This volume compares two famous aircraft in the early part of the Pacific War.

Division Leclerc: The Leclerc Column and Free French 2nd Armored Division, 1940-1946 (M.P. Robinson and Thomas Seignon, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $19.00, softcover) Leclerc led the most famous division in the Free French forces. This book highlights their service and experience.

The Second World War (Forward by Sir Max Hastings, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $35.00, softcover) Nine leading historians collaborated to produce this summary of history's greatest and most terrible conflict. It is well illustrated with excellent maps.

Malta Strikes Back: The Role of Malta in the Mediterranean Theatre 1940-1942 (Ken Delve, Pen and Sword Books, 2018, $44.95, hardcover) Malta was an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" that helped keep Great Britain in the war. This book summarizes its importance in the war effort.

The Allies Strike Back 1941-1943: The War in the West, Volume Two (James Holland, Grove Press, 2018, $20.00, softcover) This second volume in the author's trilogy highlights the years in which the Third Reich met its first real setbacks at the hands of the Allied armies. It is well researched and detailed.

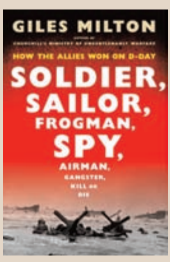
Hitler's Collaborators (Philip Morgan, Oxford University Press, 2018, $27.95, hardcover) This book is an in-depth look at how the European nations occupied by Nazi Germany worked with the Reich in the furtherance of its goals. The author sees them as trapped but also largely complicit.

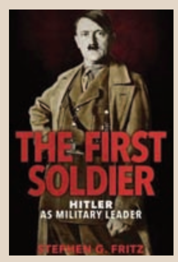
Soldier, Sailor, Frogman, Spy, Airman, Gangster, Kill or Die: How the Allies Won on D-Day (Giles Milton, Henry Holt and Co. 2018, $30.00, hardcover) This is the story of D-Day from the perspective of various soldiers and civilians who lived through it. It is a richly detailed narrative account.

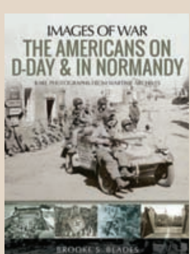
The First Soldier: Hitler as Military Leader (Stephen G. Fritz, Yale University Press, 2018, $30.00, hardcover) This reassessment of Hitler's military leadership challenges the accepted notions of his incompetence at directing the war. It argues his generals were actually often in agreement with his larger goals.

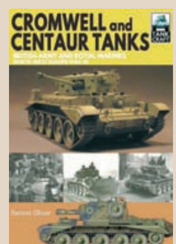
Images of War: The Americans on D-Day and in Normandy (Brooke S. Blades, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, $28.99, softcover) This book contains hundreds of photographs of Americans during the Normandy fighting. It highlights both soldiers and civilians.

Cromwell and Centaur Tanks (Dennis Oliver, Pen and Sword, 2018, $24.95, softcover) This historical analysis focuses on these two British tank types with emphasis on assisting modelers in creating accurate reproductions.









provides detail on the members of its staff.

Allen was a colorful character, and his writing reflects it. The book focuses on his diary during the time he was with Patton's Third Army. The editor does an excellent job annotating the diary and adding information, which completes the reader's understanding. The diary of a staff officer is rarely considered exciting, but the editor trumps that notion through the skillful application of his craft.

War in the Far East: Storm Clouds Over the Pacific 1931-1941 (Peter Harmsen, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2018, 234 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover)

Japanese Army Captain Shimizu Setsuro walked along the banks of the Yongding River near Beijing on the evening of July 7, 1937. His task was to inspect the area in preparation for his battalion's scheduled night maneuvers in a few hours, but something bothered him, leaving an uneasy feeling. The Chinese Army positions on the far bank showed signs of reinforcement. It led him to believe something might happen that night. There were 5,600 Japanese troops in the area versus an estimated 75,000 Chinese soldiers; the Chinese ranks were full of hatred for the Japanese. In a few hours the captain would lead his company into the area, just downriver from a famous landmark, the Marco Polo Bridge, so named thanks to the Italian explorer who described it centuries earlier. It would prove a fateful night in the history of China and the world.

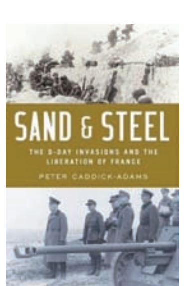
For Americans, World War II began with the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. For much of Asia the conflict was already 10 years old by then. The author studies the origins of World War II in the Pacific through the vast war fought between China and Japan. It is a balanced book providing the perspectives of both sides and explains the motives and goals of each. The narrative is clear and engaging, and the level of detail is impressive.

B-25 Mitchell Units of the CBI (Edward M. Young, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2018, 96 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $23.00, softcover)

The North American B-25 Mitchell is famous as the land-based bomber that took off from the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* to strike Japan during the Doolittle Raid, but it played a vital role in Southeast Asia in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater. Medium bomber groups were assigned to both the Tenth and Fourteenth Air Forces, and they ranged across South China and what was then Indochina. At first the B-25s saw employment at medium altitude bombing, but soon Japanese air power in the region declined, giving the Allies control of the air. This allowed the Mitchell to be used for low-level strafing and bombing against bridges, shipping, and railroad targets, as well as enemy ground forces. The B-25 and its crews proved versatile and effective at various attack missions and contributed greatly to the disruption of Japanese logistics networks in the combat area.

This is a thorough look at the B-25 and those who flew it in the CBI. The author is an acknowledged military aviation expert who uses extensive firsthand accounts by B-25 veterans to bring the reader a fascinating look at air operations in one of the war's lesser known theaters. The book is part of Osprey's Combat Aircraft Series; true to the quality of previous volumes, it is well illustrated and includes color plates of various B-25 models.

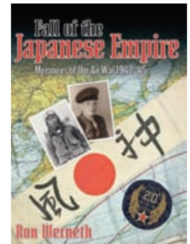
Sand and Steel: The D-Day Invasions and the Liberation of France (Peter Caddick-Adams, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2019, 928 pp., notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)



The invasion of Europe by the Western Allies proved a monumental task requiring massive preparations before the first soldier's boot could touch the sands of the Normandy beaches. Troops had to be equipped and trained. Reconnaissance planes flew over Europe to gather information. Shipping had to be assembled. Planners worked furiously to devise the methods to move what was ultimately millions of soldiers onto mainland Europe and keep them supplied with everything from ammunition and fuel to chocolate bars for quick energy. Once the development concluded and the invasion force left English soil, it was up to the men who went ashore in France. The senior Allied staffs were now helpless; everything depended on privates, sergeants, and the junior officers who led them to bring all that planning to fruition.

The 75th Anniversary of D-Day is in 2019, and this book commemorates that event with in-depth research and an engaging narrative. The author is recognized for *Snow and Steel,* his previous work on the Battle of the Bulge. This work is fully the equal of that volume in detail and prose. It combines personal testimonies of the participants with archival and battlefield research to give the reader a one-stop hardcover on World War II's greatest amphibious assault.

Fall of the Japanese Empire: Memories of the Air War 1942-45 (Ron Werneth, Elm Grove Publishing, San Antonio, TX, 2018, 282 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $59.99, hardcover)



The Americans attacked Chichi-Jima at dawn. The Japanese-held island felt the full fury of American airpower for several days in early July 1944. During an attack on July 4, Lieutenant Kunio Iwashita, stationed on nearby Iwo Jima, scrambled to his fighter and took off just as the sun rose. The young pilot only reached about 300 feet when American fighters opened fire on him. Kunio managed to dodge the bursts of machine-gun fire and ascend. Flying near Mount Suribachi, he looked for enemy planes to engage. He saw four aircraft that he thought were Japanese but soon realized were American Grumman F6F Hellcats. They either did not spot him or similarly misidentified his plane, so Kunio went closer and opened fire on one of them. The Hellcat burst into flames, and Kunio saw its pilot's face as the young American turned toward him. The Hellcat crashed into the ocean, and the other Americans pounced on Kunio, hitting his Zero numerous times. He was forced to make a landing at a nearby airfield. Several mechanics ran up to him and thanked him for shooting down the Hellcat, which had just strafed them. It was Kunio's first combat; he would always remember the face of the young pilot he killed that day.

This book collects the firsthand experiences of 19 Pacific War veterans, 11 of them Japanese. Each chapter is a fascinating look at the lives of the men who struggled across the world's largest ocean and the tiny islands that dot it. It is well illustrated and engaging. There are a number of color plates and several appendices with useful information.

Kangaroo Squadron: American Courage in the Darkest Days of World War II (Bruce Gamble, Da Capo Press, Boston, 2018, 416 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover)

Simulation Gaming BY JOSEPH LUSTER

AIR CONFLICTS COLLECTION BRINGS DOGFIGHTING TO SWITCH, AND *RAILWAY EMPIRE: GERMANY* PAVES THE WAY FOR LOCOMOTIVE DOMINATION.

AIR CONFLICTS COLLECTION

PUBLISHER KALYPSO MEDIA • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** SWITCH • **AVAILABLE** NOW

The *Air Conflicts* series of dogfighters has been buzzing around since 2006 and has inspired a number of sequels and spinoffs since its initial debut. Two of those are 2011's *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars* and 2012's *Air Conflicts: Pacific Carriers,* and both recently made their way to Nintendo Switch to fill in a much-needed gap in the system's genre coverage. While they can be purchased separately, fans of air combat who are familiar with what this series has to offer will want to look into the *Air Conflicts Collection,* which takes them both and gives them a new lease on life both physically and digitally. The fact that there isn't a groundbreaking upgrade to go with it is disappointing, but those looking for a way to play these aging games on Switch now have a convenient solution at their fingertips.

For the uninitiated, *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars* offers up relatively light arcade flight simulation set in both World War I and World War II. There are seven campaigns in total, packed with 49 missions with varying objectives and aircraft options, and there are also a handful of local and online multiplayer modes to choose from. No matter which mode you end up spending the most time with, you'll be able to go with either arcade-style or more simulation-like controls, and it's ultimately going to come down to how much work you like to put into your time spent in the skies. I never quite found simulation controls worth the extra effort, but your mileage will most certainly vary.

As the title suggests, *Air Conflicts: Pacific Carriers* is all about famous battles of the War in the Pacific. Players can choose between the U.S. Navy or the Imperial Japanese Navy, and the narrative is more tightly focused on the massive warships at the heart of the conflict and the captains behind them. Outside of the subject matter, the main difference between the two games in this collection is the structure of the missions themselves. The majority of the action in *Secret Wars* falls at your feet, so you'll need to survive through standard dogfighting, nighttime stealth missions, and other deadly scenarios without much in the way of assistance. This can occasionally lead to frustration, especially if you end up reloading checkpoints constantly, or if you just prefer a more free and open style of air combat mission.

You'll find much more of the latter in *Pacific Carriers,* which centers more on squad-based combat. The Pacific setting likely has a lot to do with this, but the brighter visuals alone make this the more appealing of the two games in the *Air Conflicts Collection.* The presentation of the story in both is fairly straightforward, even with the comic book-style narrative applied to *Secret Wars.* Brief cinematics offer up just enough motivation and context to keep you going through the missions that follow, and early tutorials do a decent job of introducing the UI and preparing you for some of the tougher challenges to come.

If anything, the main drawback of this collection is the lasting effect of putting these two games directly side by side. When compared to the superior *Pacific Carriers, Secret Wars* looks downright tattered at times. There's some good to be said about each entry in the series, though. Anyone starving for flight combat on Switch will find this to be a serviceable snack, but it's not something I would recommend to those just coming to the genre looking to be summarily wowed.

RAILWAY EMPIRE: GERMANY

PUBLISHER KALYPSO MEDIA • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC, PS4, XBOX ONE • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Railway Empire has made a name for itself as a rail management simulator on PC and consoles, and the game recently laid its tracks even farther with a trip into the heart of Deutschland in the *Railway Empire: Germany* DLC. The add-on is currently available for PC, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One, and the new scenario and expansion have plenty to offer those who have already spent a ton of time establishing their own dominance as a railway magnate.

To get into the right time frame for this one, we're going to have to go farther back than World War II. The story of *Railway Empire: Germany* finds the German petty state on the brink of economic collapse after the events of the March Revolution. Thanks to the introduction of the first private trains, however, the ability to connect borders and link larger cities for a more promising economic connection is finally within reach. Players hop on board as a German railway magnate in the hopes of bolstering these connections and acquiring valuable concessions that will ultimately raise the country back to greatness.

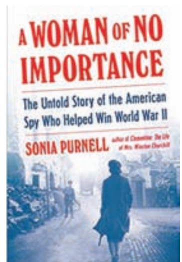
Those who go for the Germany expansion will get access to a new scenario in Patchwork (1850-1870), as well as the expanded Germany map one would expect in this type of package. There are also 10 historical engines, a bunch of new tradable goods that fit with the period and location, nearly 60 new cities, and setting-appropriate music and character updates. One of the most significant additions is the Concession feature, which divides the map into sections and allows players to purchase concessions so they can access new building grounds. This applies both to the new Germany map and the full North America map, so there's a decent amount of content to play around with in this surprisingly packed DLC.

Developer Gaming Minds Studio tapped into something interesting with *Railway Empire,* and the *Germany* DLC is a continuation that will no doubt please fans of this type of strategy and management simulation. You'll need to own the base game to enjoy this one, but if you fall into that category I have no doubt this is the add-on for you. □

In the bleak days after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, America's immediate prospects against the Japanese Empire seemed dim indeed. Nevertheless, the United States did not quit, despite the paucity of available forces. In early 1942 a dozen Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, barely a squadron, were designated as the Southern Bomber Command and sent to Australia to take the fight to the Japanese as best they could. The men of the unit did just that. On February 23, 1942, they carried out a raid against the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul. It was a small effort but signaled America was still in the fight. The unit carried out more bombing raids, reconnaissance missions, and even picked up General Douglas MacArthur and his staff as they fled the Philippines.

The author is an acknowledged authority on the Pacific War, and this is his seventh book on the subject. It is remarkable for its clear, crisp writing, attention to detail, and grasp of how his subject fits into the wider scope of the war.

A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II (Sonia Purnell, Viking Press, New York, 2019, 334 pp., map, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover)



"She is the most dangerous of all Allied spies. We must find and destroy her." This was the Gestapo's message to its agents in 1942. They referred to Virginia Hall, an American woman who joined the war first by driving ambulances for the French Army and later by joining the British Special Operations Executive. She parachuted into France with a mission to establish a spy network and succeeded beyond all expectations. The Nazis doggedly chased her, but she made a fast escape in a grueling march over the Pyrenees Mountains. Yet she later returned to do more work toward liberating France, and she did all of this with a prosthetic leg.

This unique tale of a woman at war is expertly assembled and told. The author pulls together details from a variety of sources, weaving it all into a coherent and sharp narrative. Virginia Hall is truly one of history's larger-than-life characters, and this new work does justice to her legacy. □

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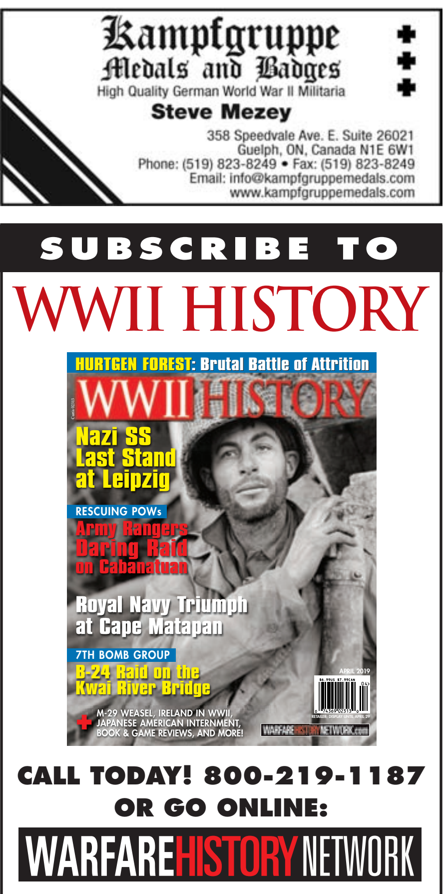

Top Secret

Continued from page 31

inconsistent wartime diary, which states that a vehicle was spotted after the attack on the *Royal Oak*. The car reportedly stopped opposite the surfaced *U-47* and then turned around and quickly sped off. A number of analysts, including this writer, believe that Prien may have inserted that comment as a way to help explain his decision to quickly depart the harbor rather than remaining a bit longer to prowl for additional enemy ships.

It is possible to conclude that Prien did not receive assistance from the driver of the vehicle, who may in fact have been cab driver Tullock. But then, what about the "Little Watchmaker of Kirkwall?" Articles in a 1942 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* and a December 1947 issue of *Der Kurier,* a Berlin newspaper, talked about the wartime activities of Alfred Wehring, a German national and alleged intelligence operative who had been sent to Switzerland to learn watchmaking. He obtained the necessary papers in 1927 and traveled to Kirkwall in the Orkneys, where he opened a watchmaking and jewelry repair shop under the name of Alfred Ortel, a name strikingly similar to the Albert Hotel in Kirkwall. He reportedly learned of the defensive weaknesses at Kirk Sound and sent a shortwave report to his superiors. In one rather far-fetched version of the story, he personally piloted *U-47* through the dangerous sound and even returned to Germany aboard the submarine.

While the tale of Alfred Ortel might form the foundation for a decent but somewhat imaginative spy novel, the story has no basis in fact, according to those who have thoroughly investigated the tale.

Another controversy revolved around the three torpedoes that either missed the *Royal Oak* or failed to explode on impact. The Germans were having difficulties early in the war with their torpedoes, caused, it was later discovered, by an overly complex impact pistol that did not work well at an impact angle of less than 20 degrees. The Germans also had difficulties with keeping the torpedoes at a proper depth and with properly heating and charging the torpedoes' batteries.

One of three missing torpedoes was found at Scapa Flow and raised to the surface in September 2002. The other two may have gone astray or possibly struck the *Royal Oak* and failed to explode. Those eventually may be located elsewhere on the floor of the anchorage, possibly even beneath the 620-foot-long sunken ship.

Subsequent British inquiries also looked at why the *Royal Oak*'s antitorpedo blisters, added to the sides of the vessel in the interwar years, failed to protect it. It was found that the blisters were designed in 1924 to withstand torpedoes with 450- to 500-pound warheads. The newer German G7e torpedoes carried 617 pounds of Hexanite, more than enough to breach the starboard blister and create enough damage to sink the *Royal Oak* within 15 minutes.

Prien had expended seven of the 12 torpedoes that his Type VIIB craft could store internally, and after his success, he decided to scamper from the confines of the harbor, slipping through the southern portion of Kirk Sound. He might have created further damage, but he knew he had accomplished his major goal of striking a significant blow at the very heart of the Royal Navy.

There are a number of inaccuracies and embellishments in Prien's war diary that distract somewhat from his accomplishments and his subsequent nickname, "The Bull of Scapa Flow." He described, for example, the harbor coming alive with activity after the explosions and the sounds of depth charges, while British reports run to the contrary. But there is no question that following the bold attack, he took a balanced and sound approach to preserving his vessel and men for future attacks against a powerful enemy.

The daring attack was praised in every corner of Hitler's Third Reich. Prien and the crew were enthusiastically received when they returned to port in Wilhelmshaven. Raeder personally awarded the entire crew the Iron Cross Second Class, while Prien and two others received the even more prestigious Iron Cross First Class. Then the entire crew was flown to Berlin, chauffeured through the streets of the Nazi capital lined by cheering fans, and Prien was personally presented the Knight's Cross by the Führer.

While he and his officers could have lingered longer at Scapa Flow to inflict further damage, and despite their misidentification of the *Repulse* being in the harbor adjacent to the *Royal Oak,* there is no doubt that the overall operation was a bold, spectacular success in military terms. *U-47* managed to slip into the harbor undetected, sink the only capital ship in the anchorage, and depart unscathed to fight another day.

It was, as none other than Winston Churchill ruefully admitted, a "remarkable exploit of professional skill and daring."

Phil Zimmer is a U.S. Army veteran and a former newspaper reporter. He has written on a number of World War II topics.

Rudolf Hess

Continued from page 63

male relative, the conclusion is unequivocal. "Prisoner 'Spandau #7' indeed was Rudolf Hess, the deputy Führer of the Third Reich. Hence, the conspiracy theory claiming that prisoner 'Spandau #7' was an imposter is extremely unlikely, and therefore disproved" [emphasis in the original].

The man that died in Spandau was Rudolf Hess, although the cause and circumstances of his death remain unclear. This has been conclusively proven, although a host of other questions about Hess's life remain. Fittingly, Hess spent his incarceration in England at Camp Z near Aldershot, only a few miles from Ockham, birthplace of philosopher and Franciscan friar William of Ockham, whose most important contribution to science and philosophy was his insistence that, barring evidence to the contrary, the simplest explanation is most likely to be correct.

Hess photographed some years after the war while serving his life sentence. He died in Spandau Prison under mysterious circumstances.

In this vein, the final word belongs to 2nd Lt. M. Loftus, a guard whom Hess grew to trust during his imprisonment at Aldershot. According to Loftus, Hess was "one of the simplest men you could meet," dedicated to one and only one purpose, a "single-tracked, blind, and fanatical devotion to an ideal and the man [Hitler] who is his leader."

Author Bob Gordon recently wrote for WWII History *on the M-29 Weasel. He resides in Brantford, Ontario, Canada.*

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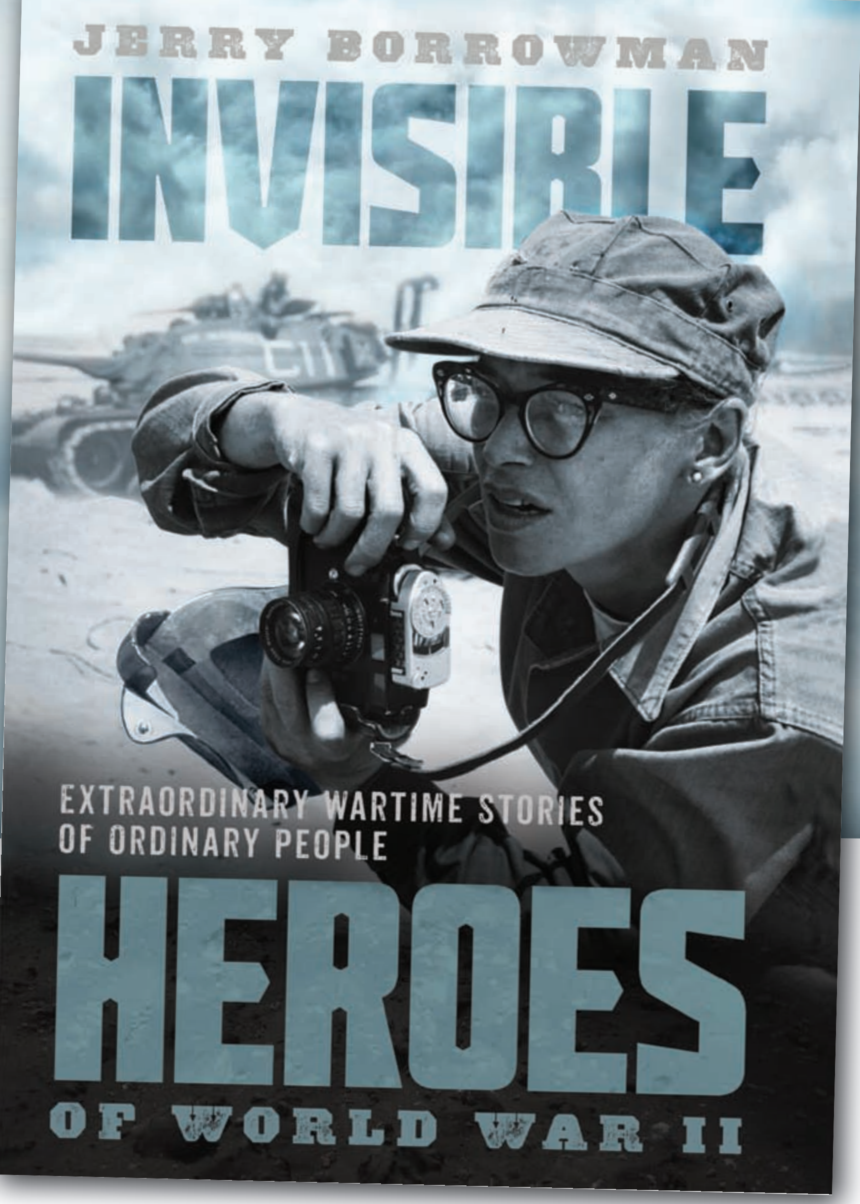

Invisible Heroes of World War II documents ten fascinating true stories of a diverse group of Allied soldiers and noncombatants from all over the world, including African Americans, women, and Native Americans who worked and fought to keep the world safe from tyranny and oppression. Some were frontline soldiers and spies, while others were engineers, industry workers, or war correspondents and photographers. Without much fanfare, these heroes made noteworthy contributions to the war effort. Some even gave their lives for freedom and liberty. All served with valor and distinction, and their names should never be forgotten.

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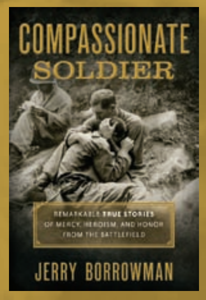

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