

CMG 02313

WWII HISTORY

Tank Fight for the Hitler Line

African Americans' D-Day Fight

84TH INFANTRY DIVISION From Training Unit to Baptism by Fire

The Deadliest Sniper

+ THE REISING SUBMACHINE GUN,
BUCHENWALD: EVIL ON TRIAL,
OPERATION PAPERCLIP, AND MORE!

FALL 2024



RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL NOV. 11

WARFARE**HISTORY**NETWORK.com

WWII HISTORY - FALL 2024 Volume 23, No. 3

www.SARCINC.com

Ph# 610.250.3960

60th Anniversary

#WW2 FALL 24

Pray for Ukraine

**U.S. NAVY
N-1 DECK
JACKET**

A FAVORITE OF VETS LIKE LEE MARVIN & PAUL NEWMAN WHO SERVED IN WW2



KHAKI COLOR W/ DARK SHERLING TYPE LINING

SIZES: LARGE XL, 2XL, 3XL

\$85. #JKT-04

NEW

POPULAR WITH BIKERS & REBEL TEEN HEART THROBS OF THE DAY LIKE JAMES DEAN. FUNCTIONAL, WARM & UTILITY MINDED!



Japanese WW2 'Knee Mortar' Round
New made in Steel, Copper & Brass, weighing @28 ozs., this is the best reproduction of the infamous 'Knee Mortar' Round that was the 'bane' of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marines in the Pacific during the war. (First time offered & Very Limited) **\$65. #AM240**



Japanese WW2 Dog Tag With Cord. Repro. of the standard Japanese soldier dog tag. **\$9. #MISC1029**

British Denison Smocks

WW2 Paratrooper Camouflage Smocks
NEW



Full Zip 1944 #SMOCK-01

Pull Over 1942 #SMOCK-02

VERY LIMITED



Japanese Type 97 Hand Grenade
All metal full size replica in steel & brass. First time offered. **\$34.95 #AM243**

Japanese WW2 Helmet with liner, chinstrap, and helmet net. Large size, new. **\$62.95 #HLM107**



British WW2 Steel Helmet with liner, and 1st model chinstrap assembly. Large size in dark green color. **\$39.95 #HLM022**



U.S. M1 Helmet New made w/ Liner and both chin straps in adult large size. Steel pot w/ synthetic liner with full canvas suspension. **\$44.95 #HLM087**



German Falschirmjager Helmet with suspension & lining. Large size. **\$54.95 #HLM018**



Famed Paratrooper Smock of the gallant few who liked to jump out of airplanes and land near a 'Bridge to Far', on a 'Longest Day', or skipping out on the Rhine River crossing by appearing out of the fog & clouds to take possession of German Terra Firma! In all seriousness, the British soldiers of the 1st Paratroop Division were a tough bunch, distributed throughout frontline fighting units. The SMOCK is a signature of their service, effective camouflage, and highly prized in collector circles, and was a favorite of Mercenaries thru the 1970s. Today, they are all, but gone. We have new manufactured copies in 2 styles: Full Zipper and Standard 1942 pull over with a half zipper. Sizes Large, X-Large, 2 XL. Very Limited Production. Very rugged and hard wearing. Full Zipper Smock \$110. #SMOCK-01 Specify Size when Ordering. Pull Over Smock \$110. #SMOCK-02

Browning 1919A4 Parts Sets - Still have a small number in stock: See Web Site for details.

These parts sets can no longer be imported, so get one here while you can! (All parts except Right Side Plate) Tripod sold separately

.30-06 Cal. Parts Set **\$2,395. #A4047**



M2 Tripods in stock!

M2 Tripod with Pintle **\$280. #MNT149**
M2 Tripod with Pintle & T&E assy. **\$350. #MNT112**



WW2 Japanese Barrage Mortar

Anti Aircraft Mortar Used Against U.S. & Allied Aircraft in the Aleutians and in the Southern Pacific Island Campaigns

-Steel Wood Base
-w/Sling
-Non-Firing

New Non-Firing

\$179.95 #MORT01

USMC WW2 PUP TENT

Reversible 'Frog Skin' Camouflage / Herringbone Canvas Weave



w/ stakes, poles, rope

See Web Site for details: In Stock Now **\$158. TENT-04**

INSPIRED BY JUNGLE WARFARE IN THE PACIFIC

A timeless and well tested camouflage pattern from Marines in the Pacific WW2 & Korean theaters..... to French Legionnaires in Indochina



P41 Style Utilities in 'FROGSKIN' Camouflage

Sizes: Medium Large X-Large 2XL

\$94.95 #MISC987-

Limited Quantities

Inert Polish WW2 WZ33 Defensive Hand Grenade
A superbly designed Polish 'Defensive' Grenade most famous for its use by 'Underground' Partisans in their fight against both Stalin's early war hordes, and the German juggernaut. Continued in use by some of the 200,000 underground partisans against the Soviets in post war occupation. This was one of their best tools and also adopted by a few other countries for its performance **\$29.95 #AM239**



Green Frog Camo Beach Tan/Brown Camo.



WW2 Frog Camouflage SHORTS in 'Green & Brown' Camouflage

Thick cotton shorts with 7 pockets and 5.5" inseam. These wash & wear providing soft comfort, and fade nicely over time. Available in WW2 USMC 'Frog' Green Camo, and in Beach Tan/Brown camouflage. Sizes Med., Large, XL, 2XL. Shorts, Green Frog Camo. **\$34.95 #MISC898-Green**

Shorts, Tan Frog Camo. **\$34.95 #MISC898-KH-Camo**

U.S. M23 Rifle Grenade Yellow Smoke
 Strapper for signal and smoke screens as used with the M1 Garand, M-1 Carbine, & Springfield rifles. Comes with safety clip and is INERT. Full size, New.
\$34.95 #AM242



Non-Firing Display Guns

Standard PO-8 Luger display gun . \$149.95 #REPO6

P38 Pistol display gun \$79.95 #REPO5

U.S. Model 1911A1 Pistol display gun \$124.95 #REP12

K98 Mauser display gun. \$224.95 #REP19

Russian Makarov Pistol display gun. \$94.95 #REP32

Thompson 1928 w/ 50 rd. Drum & Vertical Grip \$245.95 #REP01

MG34 LMG w/ sling, starter tab gunner bag \$380. #REP45

Sten Mk2 SMG \$155.95 #REP22

REPLICA GUNS - We have a wonderful selection of these Non-Firing, full sized display guns made from metal & wood w/ some working features adding to realism like cocking mechanisms, trigger pulls etc. See all of them on our WEB SITE.

Enfield #1 Mk3 Rifle, display gun \$249.95 #REP41

M1 Garand Rifle, display gun \$229.95 #REP08

1928 Thompson w/ stick mag & horizontal grip \$229.95 #REP13

M1A1 Carbine (folding stock type) \$244.95 #REP11

M1 Carbine (full stock type) \$204.95 #REP07

German MP40 Sub Machine Gun
 w/ folding stock. Display gun. \$199.95 #REPO2

PPK Pistol \$110. #REP21

New
 German Luftschutz helmet w/ liner Best known for use at the homefront & occupied territory anti aircraft units. Large size. \$65. #HLM024

Czech M30 Helmet of WW2, but mostly used in the Spanish Civil War where it appeared on both sides of war.
 Steel w/ lthr. liner Large. \$59.95 #HLM069

German M35 Steel Helmet w/ Liner size - Large-Green #HLM037 \$44.95 Each

German M35 Steel Helmet w/ Liner Size- Large- Afrika Korps Tan (Gelbbraun) #HLM058

French Model 1915 Adrian Helmet w/ Badge- Steel with leather liner & chinstrap. Large size. We also have other badges-see Web Site. \$64.95 #HLM079

M51 French Helmet
 Postwar French M51 helmet replaced the U.S. M1 helmet and served the French thru Dien Bien Phu and Algerian theaters. These have modified aluminum band and leather liners and canvas chin straps. Most of the steel pots are unissued! Large size up to U.S. size 7.5" \$44.95 #HLM080

U.S. Pineapple Grenade - INERT
 All metal & quite hefty! \$18.95 #AM026

U.S. AVG China service 'blood chit' as worn on flyer's jackets. Leather 10"x8" \$18.95 #MISC659

'Over the Hump' China, Burma, India U.S. Flyers leather emblem patch commonly worn on Flight Jackets. \$24.95 #MISC908

U.S. M11A3 Rifle Grenade - M11s were used toward the end of WW2 and thru the Korean War. Launched by M-1 Carbines, M-1 Garands, M-14 & Springfield. \$34.95 #AM125

M31 Rifle Grenade INERT. Post WW2 use, but fits the same grenade launchers at Garand, Carbine, 1903 Spgld. and M14 rifles. \$53.95 #MISC875

USMC Jungle Packs are coming momentarily. Check Web Site or Call for Availability. (1943 USMC Jungle Pack)

U.S. 1942 Jungle Pack
 Capacious heavy duty back pack used by the US Army in the Pacific. An excellent bag for camping, bug out bag, storing in an RV or truck. On Sale \$50. #MISC1015

USMC P41 Herringbone Utility Jacket
 Olive Drab long sleeve jacket, although it is more of a rugged shirt with two large hip pockets and a left breast pocket with USMC emblem. Softens nicely with multiple washes and works great on its own or with a T-shirt. 4 sizes: Med, Lg, XL, 2XL \$55. #SHIRT-03

WW2 & Korea

Old Radio Sets with bases from Tanks, Half Tracks, & Jeeps. Getting Very hard to find, but we still have 3 types in stock. Sold as is as we do not have a way to check them, but they look like they are in generally good shape. To inquire, call for Dave.

SCR508
SCR528
SCR506

U.S. M65 Field Jacket with removable Liner
 If you served in the military, you know how 'hard wearing' these jackets are and how nicely the Olive color fades like a well worn pair of jeans. We have newly manufactured jackets with the removable cold weather liner, so it is a great jacket for all seasons. Available in sizes Medium, Large, XL, & 2XL \$69.95 #JKT-03

Far East Expedition Shirt - post war shirts made from USMC fabric found their way thru the ranks of French Foreign Legionnaires and onto French colonial farms & plantations. Our shirt was reproduced from a shirt used by security guards on a rubber long \$62.95 #SHIRT-01

Beretta 38/49 SMG Parts Set
 WW2 weapon that continued in Italian Police service with slight modification. Saw service throughout North Africa, Eastern Front, and on thru post war Europe. All parts come with the set except for receiver and mag. & barrel Great for spare parts or building a dummy gun. Cut per BATF regulations. \$225. #B38020 We also have Beretta 38/44 sets.

U.S. M1 Helmet with Liner, suspension and both chin straps along with the Vietnam era Mitchell camouflage cover. \$59.95 #HLM026

German WW2 Camouflage Fabric by the Meter! Very Limited!
 A. German Tan/Water Camo. 1 sided, \$27. per meter length #MISC1032
 B. German Splinter Camo. 2 sided, \$20. per meter length #MISC396
 Also in stock, WW2 USMC Frog Skin' Camouflage material as used in the Pacific campaigns. \$29.95 per meter length. 2 sided (green/beach tan camo. Herringbone pattern. #MISC885 (width is 60")

Japanese WW2 Rifle/MG Shield
 sometimes a lifesaver if the angle was steep enough. Mostly used by Type 96/99 machine gunners. Has carry handle. Very Limited \$80. #MISC443

U.S. M1A1 Pistol display gun \$124.95 #REP12

U.S. M1A1 Carbine (folding stock type) \$244.95 #REP11

U.S. M1 Carbine (full stock type) \$204.95 #REP07

U.S. M1A1 Carbine (folding stock type) \$244.95 #REP11



Page 42

Departments

6 Editorial

De Gaulle opposed Nazis, asserted political control in France.

8 Profile

Finnish sniper Simo Häyhä was one of the world's deadliest.

14 Top Secret

Securing German rocket technology in Operation Paperclip.

22 Weapons

Reising submachine gun: innovative and hated by Marines.

30 Insight

Mysterious death of Japanese Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo.

90 Books

Intelligence failures at the pivotal Battle of Midway.

96 Simulation Gaming

Commandos: Origins and Men of War II.

WWII History (ISSN 1539-5456) is published four times yearly (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite C-100, McLean, VA 22101. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History*, Volume 23, Number 3 © 2024 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. Subscription services, back issues, and information: (800) 219-1187 or write to *WWII History* Circulation, *WWII History*, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703. Single copies: \$12.99, plus \$5 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: \$29.95; Canada and Overseas: \$43.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Email Michael Haskew, Editor, at mhaskew3734@comcast.net. Articles, proposals, and synopses should be sent as Word attachments; please include a brief description of your submission within the body of your email. Authors' guidelines are available upon request. *WWII History* assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *WWII History*, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.

Features

36 From Bavaria to the Philippines

Private First Class Bob Wolf ended the war in Europe fighting with the 86th Infantry Division before heading to the Pacific.

KEVIN M. HYMEL

42 84th Infantry: From Training to Trial

As World War II progressed, the 84th Infantry Division entered active combat after serving as a training unit for months.

JAMES G. BILDER

54 Bouncing the Hitler Line

A costly Canadian armored attack was a setback for the arduous Allied campaign in Italy.

PATRICK J. CHAISSON

64 African American Heroes on D-Day

The soldiers of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion landed at Omaha and Utah Beaches under fire on June 6, 1944.

DR. FOREST ISSAC JONES

72 The 'Grand Old Lady' Packed a Wallop

The Royal Navy's battleship HMS *Warspite* took part in many historic events—including Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

GLENN BARNETT

84 Evil on Trial

The extremes of Nazi cruelty were brought to light during the now-forgotten Buchenwald war-crimes trial.

FLINT WHITLOCK



Cover: A young German Fallschirmjäger shoulders a machine gun and a bandolier of rounds.

See story page 54.

Credit: Bundesarchiv Bild 1101-578-1939-20; Photo: Gremmelsbacher



AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pa. PATRICIA RICH



THIS IS HALLOWED GROUND.

When you visit battlefields of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, you are standing where history happened.

With the help of our supporters and partners, the American Battlefield Trust has saved more than 58,000 acres at 155 sites in 25 states, creating outdoor classrooms where the past can come alive.

Keep in touch!



Get preservation news, history and more right to your email!
www.battlefields.org/email-signup

Join us and protect America's past by saving these endangered battlefields. www.battlefields.org

Charles de Gaulle seized the opportunity to oppose the Nazis and assert political control in France.

When Charles de Gaulle flew to London in 1940, his country was on its knees and days later Nazi jackboots were tromping down the Champs Élysées in Paris.

Named Undersecretary of State for National Defense and War in Prime Minister Paul Reynaud's teetering administration only two weeks earlier, June 5, de Gaulle was tasked with cooperating with the British while the Nazis engulfed France. He had no real authority to act independently, to conduct affairs of state—and yet he did just that.

While the collaborationists had made a deal with the Nazis and his former mentor, Marshal Philippe Pétain, became Hitler's Vichy puppet, it was de Gaulle who rallied the French people abroad, issuing his famous Appeal of June 18 on the BBC. "The destiny of the world is here," he intoned. "I, General de Gaulle, currently in London, invite the officers and the French soldiers who are located in British territory or who would come there, with their weapons or without their weapons, I invite the engineers and the special workers of armament industries who are located in British territory or who would come there, to put themselves in contact with me. Whatever happens, the flame of the French resistance must not be extinguished and will not be extinguished."

Four years later, the French had indeed rallied to de Gaulle, the once obscure brigadier general who had filled a power vacuum, courted, cajoled, demanded, and asserted his own will and maintained the place of the French nation at the table with other Allied leaders despite the fact that his country had fallen to the Nazis. He earned the trust and the mistrust of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the disdain and disapproval of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and ultimately outmaneuvered his political opponent, General Henri Giraud, to become the leader of France, not just militarily but diplomatically and politically as well. Personally and through his deputies, de Gaulle managed to deal with the varied factions that vied for control of liberated France in 1944 as the Nazis retreated before the onslaught of the Western Allied armies.

When the spearheads of the U.S. and British forces broke out of the Normandy beachhead in the summer, de Gaulle was adamant that the French capital, Paris, the City of

Light, symbol of the nation, should be liberated. Although Paris itself held no real military value, de Gaulle knew that the moment of the city's liberation would renew the spirit of his people and offer an opportunity to solidify his own hold on the government of the post-war nation. De Gaulle demanded the commitment of troops to Paris and threatened to order those French soldiers under Allied command to divert to the capital if General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, did not authorize the movement rather than bypass the capital.

On August 25, 1944, General Philippe Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division entered Paris, and the German garrison surrendered. De Gaulle arrived in the city that afternoon and declared at l'Hotel de Ville, "Paris outraged! Paris broken! Paris martyred! But Paris liberated!"

A day later, a million people gathered in the streets, and de Gaulle strode down the Champs Élysées in a tumultuous victory parade. Later, he emerged from the car at Notre Dame and strode erect in the midst of sniper fire, undeterred, unflinching, and triumphant as he made his way inside. It was an unforgettable moment, 80 years ago, which ushered in the era of Charles de Gaulle, the towering figure of the defiant and often intransigent French nation that emerged from the degradation of surrender.

WWII Quarterly Volume 23 • Number 3

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director,
Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

KEVIN SEABROOKE
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Jack Adamson, Ronald Anderson,
Glenn Barnett, James G. Bilder,
Patrick J. Chaisson, Kevin M. Hymel,
Dr. Forest Issac Jones, Joseph Luster,
Christopher Miskimon, Don Smith,
Flint Whitlock

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ, Publisher
(703) 507-4976
mhintz@sovmedia.com

LINDA GALLIHER, Ad Coordinator
570-322-7848, ext. 160
lgallier@sovmedia.com

BUSINESS OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ
Vice President & Publisher

HEATHER DODD
Subscription Customer Services
heather.dodd@darwin.cx

PUBLISHERS SERVICE ASSOCIATES
Circulation Fulfillment

COMAG MARKETING GROUP
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
6731 Whittier Ave., Suite C-100
McLean, VA 22101-4554

www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

**SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER
SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:**

2406 Reach Road
Williamsport, PA 17701

(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE USA.

★ WAR ★ THUNDER



New?
GET YOUR
FREE
BONUS

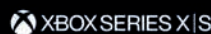
Over 700 of historically accurate aircraft and ground vehicles

PLAY NOW FOR FREE

[WARTHUNDER.COM/FLY](http://warthunder.com/fly)



Windows



www.pegi.info



In the Winter War with the Soviet Union, Finnish sniper Simo Häyhä became one of the world's most deadly snipers.

The 1939 war between Finland and Soviet Russia has been a minor inclusion in most histories of World War II. In terms of human resolution and fortitude, though, few battles in military history can compete with the dogged determination of a tiny country of 4 million going head-to-head with a giant neighbor with 150 million citizens.

If the orders of battle for both countries in the Winter War of 1939-1940 were analyzed prior to the onset of hostilities, the analysts would have most likely told Finland, “You don’t stand a chance!” Everyone would have judged such a contest to be a lost cause that should be avoided through capitulation. Everyone but the Finns, that is.

In the end, the desire to remain a free and independent nation drove Finland to mount a successful resistance against a vastly superior foe. The Russo-Finnish War, or “Winter War,” provides stories of savage battles fought with great heroism, stories of Finnish ski troops, acts of bravery in unfathomable weather conditions, and the never-say-die attitude that will inspire generations to come, the world over.

Finland had only gained her independence from Russia in 1917-1920 resulting from devel-

TOP: Finnish sniper Simo Häyhä, known as the “White Death” to the Red Army, is shown in winter camouflage as he tracks a target over the open sights of his Moisin-Nagant rifle. **RIGHT:** Simo Häyhä, pictured early in the Winter War, with his rifle at his side. One of the deadliest snipers in military history, Häyhä was credited with killing 505 Soviet soldiers in 100 days.



Both: SA-Kuva



Because History Matters



25238.....\$96
Displacing
U.S. 101st Airborne M1919 Machine Gun Crew



25092.....\$375
U.S. M3A1 Half-track 9th Armored 27th Infantry, A Company



25283.....\$96
Walking Beats Gliders
101st Airborne Glider Infantry, 1944-45



25208.....\$375
U.S. M4A3(75) Sherman 9th Armored Division, 14th Tank Battalion, Co. A, Germany, 1945



25203.....\$288
Kaiserbaracke Crossroads
Type 166 Schwimmwagen, 1st SS, Ardennes



10107.....\$48
Luftwaffe Fighter Pilot, 1939-45



25266.....\$56
German Waffen SS Grenadier
Standing with Helmet Off, 1941-45

Each one of our 1:30 scale metal figures is painstakingly researched for historical accuracy and detail. The originals are hand sculpted by our talented artists before being cast in metal and hand painted – making each figure a gem of hand-crafted history. Please visit wbritain.com to see all these figures and more from many other historic eras.

matte finish
Hand-Painted
Pewter
Figures

10118
U.S. General
George S.
Patton*
Winter,
1944-
45
\$48.00

56/58 mm - 1/30 Scale

*General George S. Patton is fully licensed from CMG Worldwide

Call W.Britain and mention this ad for a

FREE CATALOG

Also receive a

MINI BACKDROP

with your first purchase!

See these and more W.Britain 1/30 scale historical metal figures at:

Tel: U.S. 740-702-1803 • wbritain.com • Tel: U.K. (0)800 086 9123



ABOVE: Simo Häyhä was grievously wounded by a Soviet soldier's explosive bullet that struck him in the lower left jaw on March 6, 1940. Miraculously, he reached the age of 96 before his death in 2002. **RIGHT:** Colonel Antero Svensson stands at left with Häyhä after presenting the prolific sniper with a new rifle purchased by a Swedish businessman. Häyhä is holding a certificate that was presented along with the new sniper rifle.

opments in World War I. She lived a shaky existence as a free nation until 1939 when the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was signed by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia—a non-aggression pact. As a part of that agreement, Russia was “assigned” the Baltic States and Finland as part of its territory. Then in October 1939, Russia demanded the right to establish military bases in the Baltic States and in Finland, with additional demands for Finland to revise her borders giving Russia a buffer zone to protect Leningrad from Finnish invasion. Long-term leases on Finnish land were also demanded. The Baltic States had little choice but to agree to Stalin's demands. Finland refused.

Russia's eventual decision to take what the Soviet government wanted became a sobering experience for the Red Army. Russian military commanders expected a quick and decisive victory over the Finns but soon found themselves caught in a frozen slaughterhouse. The international press reported



that no other battles in its history had ever degraded the Russian Army so badly in the eyes of the world.

In every armed human conflict there are countless acts of selfless bravery and dedication to a cause. The Winter War is no exception. Among many compelling accounts that have emerged from that war the story of one individual stands out.

The diminutive Häyhä (5'3") became a near mythological figure, the absolute embodiment of the Finnish will to fight and survive as a free nation. He fought a “lone war,” not as a participant in mass attacks or defensive actions, but rather as an unsurpassed specialist in his chosen field. He was a sniper that became known to the Soviet Red Army as *Belaya Smert*, the “White Death.” It has been suggested that, according to information from Russian prisoners at the time, that the severe frost was the real “White Death.” Häyhä was the subject of much Finnish propaganda during a conflict characterized as “David vs. Goliath.”

Few are as feared and hated as much as the members of any fighting force who, through their superior marksman's skills, have been trained and designated to be a battlefield sniper. A single sniper has been known to keep large numbers of enemy combatants pinned down for long periods of time, everyone being afraid to move into an open position and run the risk of becoming a target for

the enemy sharpshooter. Considered “despicable,” captured snipers throughout history have often been summarily executed.

Sniping is a very personal way to wage war. Whereas many soldiers employ a spray-and-pray fire discipline in battle, the sniper actually looks every victim in the face—an intimacy that may cause haunting memories for life.

There have been many noted snipers—Chris Kyle, a U.S. Navy SEAL, had 160 confirmed kills during four tours in the Iraq War; Carlos Hathcock, a U.S. Marine Corps sniper in Vietnam had 93 confirmed kills; Soviet sniper Vasily Zaitsev was credited with 265 kills in World War II (225 during the Battle of Stalingrad). The most successful woman sniper in history was the Red Army's Lyudmyla Pavlychenko, who had a total of 309 confirmed kills during the sieges of Odessa and Sevastopol. It's worth noting that the total could have been much higher, as a third-party witness was needed for confirmation.

But the sniper credited with the largest number of enemy kills is not nearly as well known in the U.S. He was a Finnish farm boy fighting in the 1939 Winter War between Finland and Russia whose official kill total could be as high as 542. That's the number provided by Finnish Army major and sniper instructor Tapio Saarelainen in his book, *The White Sniper: Simo Häyhä*. Saarelainen interviewed Simo dozens of times between 1997 and 2002. Häyhä never discussed it, but in a

ALPVENTURES

WORLD WAR II TOURS

Travel with America's most knowledgeable Tour Guide to the World War II Battlefields of Europe—and enjoy exceptional service, first-class hotels, and much more...

SMALL GROUPS - MAXIMUM 25 GUESTS PER TOUR

Owner-Operated
World War II Tours
Since 1997



Comfortable, Luxury Coaches



Wonderful 3-Course Dinners



Overnight in First-Class Hotels

Toll-Free: (888) 991-6718 worldwar2tours.com

Finnish ski troops took a heavy toll on the Soviet infantry units sent to fight in Finland. Employing speed and remarkable marksmanship, they were feared and respected. In this image a group of Finnish ski troops takes aim during the Winter War.



SA-Kuva

memoir found in 2017 put his “sin list” at about 500. Häyhä’s division commander reported the total as 219. A military chaplain recorded the number 259 in his diary. Other sources have used the number 505.

Häyhä was born in 1905 in southern Finland near the Russian border. He was the seventh of eight children born into a Finnish farm family. After his daily work was done, he gravitated toward hunting, shooting, skiing, and pesäpallo, a Finnish form of baseball. He also spent many fond hours trekking through the dense forests that are abundant in his Nordic country. He led the basic no-frills life that was so characteristic of many of his countrymen in that era.

At 17, Häyhä joined the *Suojeluskunta* (local civil guard) where he was quickly recognized for his prowess with a rifle. He won many shooting competitions, filling a room with trophies. Shooting a bolt-action rifle, he was able to hit a small target 6 times in a row from 150 meters within a minute.

In 1925, at the age of 19, Häyhä began his 15-month mandatory military service as part of a bicycle battalion. Judged to be non-commissioned officer material, he was sent to the national NCO training academy. He made corporal and qualified for formal sniper training in 1927 at the military’s Utti training center. His training officers recorded that he exhibited an uncanny ability to judge the distances of remote objects with extreme accu-

racy, which served him well in the Winter War. When Häyhä joined the Finnish forces in the 1939 war, he mustered in demanding that he be allowed to keep and use his old training school rifle. Fortunately, that demand was accepted.

The shoulder arm that Häyhä carried into battle was a SAKO M/28-30, serial number 35281. This was a Finnish-made version of the Russian Mosin-Nagant in 7.62x53R caliber, a much better version than the Russian standard. He preferred open iron sights, even for long distances. He would have to raise his head higher to use a scope and sun reflected off the lens could reveal his position. When Häyhä took part in group operations, he normally carried the rapid firing Suomi KP/-31 submachine gun chambered in 9mm.

Other variables to be considered in that war were weather and temperatures. Much of Finland is above the Arctic Circle and the middle of winter is often bone-crushingly cold—with frozen tree limbs exploding like gunfire echoing through the forests.

A soldier whose job it was to lie for hours in frozen snow drifts had to be well versed in knowing how to keep himself, and especially his trigger finger, from freezing. Finnish snipers dressed in layers of wool and carried sugar cubes in their pockets to help their bodies generate heat. Being used to such conditions in their country, they were much better able to cope than were the Russian troops.

Häyhä would routinely put snow in his mouth to keep his exhaled breath from being seen by the enemy.

Häyhä’s confirmed kills were achieved in just 100 days at the front—an average of more than five kills per day. In a land where daylight is at a premium during the winter months, Häyhä had to be efficient while there was light. Though he averages five kills per day, his highest total for a day was 25. Confirming the kills was done through a number of methods, such as taking the sniper’s own report, the statements of others, and counting the dead.

Kills made with a Suomi submachine gun were not counted in the official total. Finnish ski troops used a hit-and-run tactic that involved rapidly skiing through camps where Russian soldiers were relaxing or eating around fires, and spraying them with automatic 9mm SUOMI fire. The highly effective tactic caused hundreds of Russian casualties.

Finding suitable targets was less of a problem than it might have been, as Russian troops wore brown uniforms in a snow-covered landscape. Finnish troops were largely clothed in white camouflage capes. On occasion, Russian troops would be ordered to mount frontal attacks across frozen lakes. These attacks were met with withering, heavy machine-gun fire from the opposite bank. Numerous Finnish machine gunners developed severe mental or emotional prob-

lems as a result of cutting down hundreds of young Russians, who were ordered to make such senseless attacks. Questionably, the Russian leadership also sent armored vehicles across frozen lakes, some of which broke through the ice.

Häyhä's successes were heavily reported by the media in an attempt to further encourage and strengthen the embattled citizens of Finland. As news of his achievements reached the public, they also reached the Russians. The Russian military was having problems with Finnish snipers in general, but bounties had reportedly been set on Häyhä's head—which only made him more dedicated and more careful. It was also reported that artillery barrages were dropped on specific spots in the hope of killing Häyhä. While this might have been true, it may have been exaggerated by Finnish propaganda.

Häyhä's deadly career ended abruptly on a fateful day in March 1940, when he was spotted by a Russian soldier who fired an explosive round at him, hitting his jaw on the lower left side. After the skirmish, Finnish soldiers piled up the bodies of their fallen comrades, Häyhä included, for transport to

the rear. Fortunately, a soldier saw Häyhä's leg moving and quickly got him into the hands of the medics.

His left cheek, along with much of his upper jaw, and most of his lower jaw, had been blown away. Combined with the blood loss, it seemed unlikely Häyhä could survive this level of injury and trauma.

But he did survive and his recovery took over 14 painful months during which he endured more than 25 surgeries on his face and head. His wounds left him disfigured for life as can be seen in photos taken of him for years thereafter. He accepted all of this bravely and stoically, as was his nature.

Finland's Winter War ended in 1940, only to be followed by the Continuation War. Häyhä volunteered to serve again, but his military days were over.

After his full recovery from his wounds, the Finnish government gave Häyhä a small farm, and he returned to the rural life that he knew and loved. He became an avid moose hunter and started a dog-breeding enterprise. His celebrity status never diminished, and he attended many hunting trips as a guest of the president of Finland. But all

was not happiness for him. He received hate letters and even death threats from anonymous sources that could have been Finns or families of Russian soldiers killed in the war.

A grateful nation presented Häyhä numerous prestigious awards for his contributions. He was also commissioned a lieutenant by war's end. His highest award was that of becoming a Knight of the Mannerheim Cross, named for the great Finnish Field Marshal and statesman.

Häyhä is considered by most to be the deadliest military sniper in history. In an interview at his residence not long before he died (at age 96 in 2002), he was asked by journalists and reporters if he had any regrets about what he did in the war.

He replied, in essence, that he had no regrets; he was doing what he was told to do and was helping to defend and save his country's freedom. Simo Häyhä is a name that will long be remembered in Finland—and in Russia, but for decidedly different reasons. □

Author Ronald Anderson is a student and researcher of military history and a resident of Prescott, Arizona.

N 13 MANCHE N 13
ENTRER EN
NORMANDIE
John C. Reams *Charles Norman Gray*

Beard Freeman *Beit Winger*
BASTOGNE
+ MORE

Our SITES OF VALOR have arrived!
Weathered metal signs, hand-autographed
by the WWII heroes who were there.

FREE US SHIPPING
USE CODE: WWIIHISTORY
GOOD THROUGH 8/31/24

VALORTM
STUDIOS

SEE THEM ALL AT:
VALORSTUDIOS.COM



All photo National Archives

After the collapse of the Third Reich, the U.S. secured German rocket technology and scientists during Operation Paperclip.

At first, Major Robert Staver seemed to have plenty of time. An Army Ordnance officer with a mechanical engineering degree from Stanford, he had been sent to Germany as part of the Combined Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee. The CIOS was a British-American organization tasked to search for and exploit scientific and technical targets in defeated Germany. Staver's specialty was rocketry, and in May 1945 he hit paydirt. Operation Paperclip—the American effort to bring German scientists and technicians to the U.S.—began two months later in cooperation with the hunt for components of the V2 ballistic missile, one of Hitler's terror weapons.

Staver and other American investigators had reached Nordhausen, a town in the central German state of Thuringia. Nordhausen was home to the primary V2 rocket production facility; Staver was looking for the scientists and technicians who built the rockets. Most had scattered into the surrounding towns or other parts of Germany. But American troops had firm control of their occupation areas and the Nazi armies were long gone. It seemed only a matter of time before Staver and his fellow investigators from CIOS and other technical search teams would ferret out their targets and round them up—until politics intervened.

Negotiations between American, British, and Soviet leaders led the United States to decide to withdraw its troops from large sections of central Germany. As these areas contained many key Nazi scientific and technical facilities, Staver and his colleagues now had just a

few weeks to finish their work. This led to a frantic, sometimes haphazard rush to find and secure as many German technical assets as possible before the U.S. Army pulled back.

The American armies' push into central and eastern Germany had exceeded expectations. U.S. forces advanced far into Thuringia and the neighboring state of Saxony—both of which were part of the Soviet occupation zone. Army historian Earl Ziemke estimated that when the war ended American troops held over 16,000 square miles of territory that had officially been allocated to Russia. One-third of the area American troops had conquered would have to be relinquished.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had other ideas. After Germany had surren-

Members of a U.S. Congressional committee investigating German atrocities and war crimes inspect a rocket engine captured at an underground Nazi manufacturing facility at Nordhausen. A top American priority, Operation Paperclip was tasked with gathering German scientists and rocket technology for development in the U.S. after World War II.

Sail Aboard the Liberty Ship **JOHN W. BROWN**



CRUISES ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

★ **PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR CRUISE DATES** ★

On a cruise you can tour museum spaces, crew quarters, bridge & much more. Visit the engine room to view the 140-ton triple-expansion steam engine as it powers the ship through the water. For more information, check our website.



Project Liberty Ship is a Baltimore based, all volunteer, nonprofit organization. SS JOHN W BROWN is maintained in her WWII configuration, visitors must be able to climb steps to board.

For more information about the cruises we are planning, check our website:

www.ssjohnwbrown.org



Or call the reservation service:

410-558-0164





In April 1945, U.S. soldiers of the 35th Division guard a trainload of Nazi V-2 rockets discovered near Demker, Germany, on a rail line just outside the town of Tangermünde on the Elbe River.

dered in two separate ceremonies—to the U.S. and U.K. on May 7 and to Russia on May 8—Churchill had become convinced that the Soviets would be untrustworthy postwar partners. At the Yalta Conference in February, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin had said the Soviets would allow Eastern European countries to elect new governments through fair and democratic elections.

By early May, it was clear that democrats in Poland and other Soviet zone countries were under pressure from Soviet-sponsored Communists. Churchill felt the Americans and British needed leverage against Stalin. The Soviet zone territory then in British and American hands could provide that leverage.

“Churchill felt strongly that the Americans should display no undue haste in withdrawing from the heart of Germany,” wrote James McGovern in *Crossbow and Overcast*, his 1964 account of the American search for Nazi scientists and technology. Instead, the Americans “should delay their departure at least until the Potsdam Conference in July, when some troublesome problems that had arisen with the Soviet Union could be settled.”

General Dwight Eisenhower, supreme commander of Allied troops in Europe and President Harry Truman disagreed. Robert Murphy, a U.S. State Department official, served as Eisenhower’s political advisor. In September 1944, President Franklin D. Roo-

sevelt had told Murphy that he “regarded Germany as the testing ground for Soviet-American cooperation.” Ike “was determined to do nothing which might increase Russian distrust” of the West, which was intense. In the summer of 1945, Eisenhower and Truman not only wanted Russian cooperation—they needed it.

U.S. leaders expected a long, costly fight to defeat Japan. At Yalta, FDR told Churchill and Stalin that Japan might not be conquered until 1947. The Americans desperately wanted the USSR to wholeheartedly and forcefully join that fight. They also hoped the fledgling United Nations could develop into a potent force that could prevent future world wars. If the Soviets declined to use their military and diplomatic power to support the UN, it would fail. Eisenhower, said Murphy, “chose to politely disregard Churchill.” The Soviets refused to let American and British occupation forces enter Berlin until they first committed to leave Soviet zone territories. Truman consented and agreed that American and British forces would retire to their own zones by July 1, 1945.

The decision wasn’t a total surprise to the American investigators in Germany. McGovern’s *Crossbow and Overcast* notes that Colonel Holger Toftoy, chief of the U.S. Army Ordnance Branch Technical Intelligence Division in Europe, had known by late April that the V2 plant at Nordhausen and

many other prized Nazi technical sites in Americans hands were actually inside the Soviet Occupation Zone.

“Given the fact of American control” of those facilities and their surrounding areas, though, Toftoy initially felt his teams would have enough time to analyze and exploit the Nordhausen site “in orderly fashion.” In May, though, Toftoy and CIOS and all the other American technical investigators were warned that the Russians wanted to fully occupy their zone by June 1, later extended to July 1.

In May, much of the real work to find and analyze Nazi technologies was just beginning. One of Colonel Toftoy’s subordinates, Major James Hamill, led V2 exploitation operations at Nordhausen. A graduate of Fordham University with a degree in physics, Hamill’s task was to ship 100 V2s (or as many as possible) to the U.S. Unfortunately for him, wrote McGovern, the Nazis had not left “completely assembled rockets...conveniently available for shipment.” Instead, V2 pieces were scattered throughout the Nordhausen facility. When the Germans retreated, newly-freed concentration camp prisoners who had worked as slave laborers in the rocket factories “destroyed many priceless rocket components and machine tools.”

POWs and locals looted the site before the Americans arrived. The Americans had no list of V2 parts. On May 8, 1945, the day of Nazi Germany’s final surrender, the “V2



OXYGEN THERAPY THAT MOVES WITH YOU

Inogen® Portable Oxygen Concentrators

Experience the confidence of leaving the house without the worries of oxygen tanks.

Call us toll-free at

800-579-9415

or visit [Inogen.com](https://www.inogen.com).



U.S. Based Oxygen Specialists

*30-day risk-free trial- Return within 30 days of purchase for a full refund of purchase price.

PM240054 EN_EX_USA | Rx Only. © 2024 | Inogen, Inc. 859 Ward Drive, Suite 200, Goleta, CA 93111
Inogen® is a trademark of Inogen, Inc. The usage of any Inogen, Inc. trademark is strictly forbidden without the prior consent of Inogen, Inc. All other trademarks are trademarks of their respective owners or holders.



USES: The Inogen Portable Oxygen Concentrator provides a high concentration of supplemental oxygen to patients requiring respiratory therapy on a prescriptive basis. It may be used in home, institution, vehicle, and various mobile environments. DO NOT USE IF: This device is not intended to be used in any way other than described in the indications for use. Do not use in parallel or series with other oxygen concentrators or oxygen therapy devices. This device is to be used as an oxygen supplement and is not intended to be life sustaining or life supporting. ONLY use this product if the patient is capable of spontaneous breath, able to inhale and exhale without the use of a machine. The conserving, or pulse dose, oxygen delivery technique used by this device is contraindicated in persons whose breathing during normal resting would be unable to trigger the device. Proper device triggering, setup and operation must be confirmed by an experienced clinician or other respiratory professional. Not for pediatric use. Not for use by tracheotomized patients. WARNINGS: The device produces enriched oxygen gas, which accelerates combustion. Do not allow smoking or open flames within 2m (6.56ft) of this device while in use. If you feel ill or uncomfomtable, or if the concentrator does not signal an oxygen pulse and you are unable to hear and/or feel the oxygen pulse, consult your equipment provider and/or your physician immediately. If you are unable to communicate discomfort, you may require additional monitoring and or a distributed alarm system to convey the information about the discomfort and or the medical urgency to your responsible caregiver to avoid harm. Use only spare parts recommended by the manufacturer to ensure proper function and to avoid the risk of fire and burns. To avoid danger of choking or strangulation hazard, keep cords away from children and pets. TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER: The oxygen flow setting must be determined and recorded for each patient individually by the prescriber, including the configuration of the device, its parts, and the accessories. It is the responsibility of the patient to periodically reassess the setting(s) of the therapy for effectiveness. The proper placement and positioning of the prongs of the nasal cannula in the nose is critical for oxygen to be delivered.

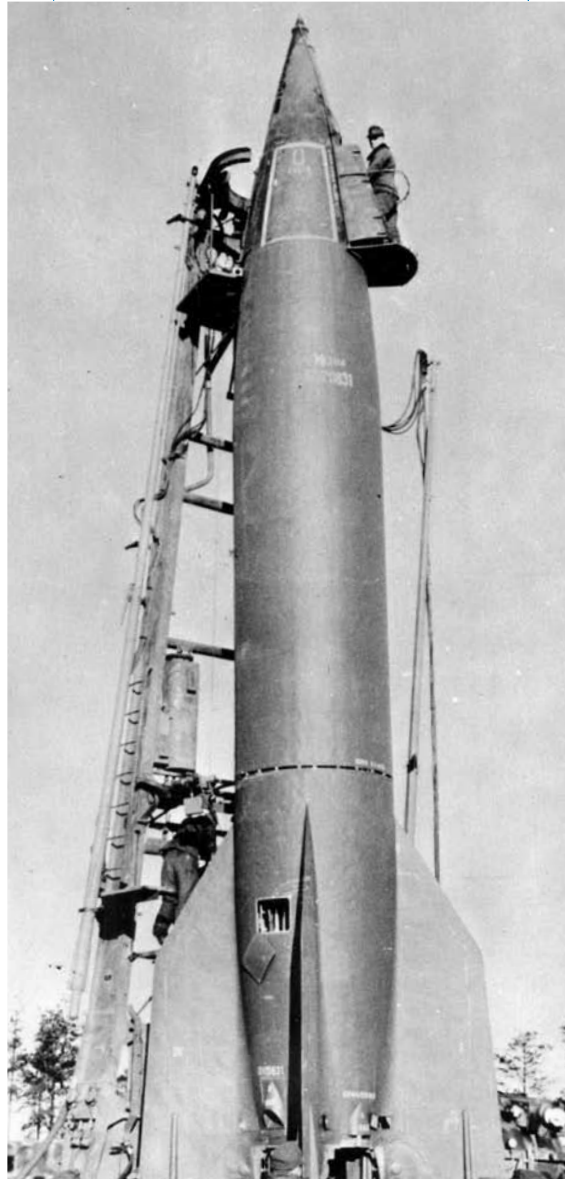
technical documents had not been discovered, and not one leading German rocket specialist, who could have been used as a guide to the selection of parts required for [reassembling] an engineering device of awesome complexity had been found in the Nordhausen area.”

The looming July 1 deadline was complicated by another directive, signed in Berlin on June 5 by all the Allied powers. It ordered that “all [Nazi] factories, plants, shops, research institutions, laboratories,” equipment and documents were to be preserved and left for the Allied power who owned the zone where the items were found. This order, if followed, meant that Toftoy and his colleagues would have to leave their newly-found treasures to the Russians.

American technicians across Germany disregarded the order. The treasures were simply too good to give up. CIOS and other technical investigation teams had confirmed what many American military and scientific leaders suspected: the Germans were years, even decades ahead of most countries in many technical fields. “The Germans were ahead of us, in some instances from two to fifteen years” said U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF) Chief of Staff Henry “Hap” Arnold, “in the fields of rockets and guided missiles, jet engines, jet-propelled aircraft, synthetic fuels and supersonics.”

As American troops entered Germany, “Wind tunnels of incredibly large dimensions were discovered with simulation characteristics American scientists could only dream of,” wrote retired U.S. Air Force colonel Wolfgang Samuel in *American Raiders*, an account of the USAAF’s hunt for Luftwaffe technologies and their inventors.

In 1945, American airframe designers were pursuing jet aircraft designs that used traditional straight wings. But the Messerschmitt Me-262 and other German jets had swept wings. When American investigators captured German aeronautical research specialists, they learned that the Germans had discovered that swept wings reduced air turbulence for planes flying at faster speeds.



This image of a V-2 rocket being prepared for launch was found in the pocket of a German prisoner. The U.S. military undertook Operation Paperclip to bring Nazi rocket technology to the United States after World War II.

Other German scientists had deduced how to photograph the airstreams around wing edges and surfaces, making it easier to study and measure airflows. The Germans had learned how to weld plastics, developed ribbon parachutes to use as landing brakes for aircraft, built a prototype helicopter that powered its main rotor with jets on the rotor tips (which eliminated the need for a tail stabilizing rotor). The list of Nazi technological breakthroughs went on and on.

In a June 9 memo “Disposition of Secret Weapon Installations and Armament Factories in Ultimate Russian Zone of Occupa-

tion,” the American-British Combined Chiefs of Staff determined it was “undesirable that any equipment of vital importance...should be left behind in the Russian zone.” This was counter to the terms of the June 5 declaration, which said that Nazi technical facilities and their contents were to be left undisturbed. But the U.S. wasn’t about to let other countries just have all those treasures. They also feared that, if the Soviet Union turned out to be a future foe instead of a friend, the Russians would use these technologies against Western militaries.

American technicians started to gather up, crate, and cart away whatever they could. Army Major Hamill told McGovern that Colonel Toftoy instructed him “that officially nothing was supposed to be removed from the Russian Zone. ‘But unofficially,’ Toftoy told Hamill, ‘I’m telling you to make sure that those V2s [are sent from Nordhausen into the American Zone]. Remove all the material you can, without making it too obvious that we’ve looted the place.’”

The Nordhausen V2 factory was housed in two huge tunnels bored into a mountainside. They were filled with V2 components and subassemblies, which Hamill’s team now had to extract, inspect, label for reassembly, and ship. Hamill hired former slave laborers who had worked on the rockets to assist teams of U.S. soldiers.

“The enlisted men,” wrote McGovern, “quickly learned how to recognize parts and sections of the unfamiliar V2.” The “small and intricate control devices which had guided V2s” had been manufactured in villages around Nordhausen. When the Americans arrived, German technicians hid the devices “in nearby barns, schools and beer halls. The Americans had to organize scouting parties which searched the area around Nordhausen for a radius of thirty miles before the control systems, without which the V2 would be almost useless, were located.”

Hamill’s team assembled enough rocket subassemblies and support components for 100 V2s, which he planned to ship to the

1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

We carefully climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch, a genuinely unique timepiece that marries timeless style with modern technology.

With its remarkable retrograde hour and minute indicators, sunburst guilloche face and precision movement, this design is truly one of a kind. What does retrograde mean? Instead of displaying the hands rotating on an axis like most watches, the hands sweep in a semicircle, then return to their starting point and begin all over again.

Retrograde watches by the big brands can set you back thousands; one recent offering from a big French fashion house is selling for more than \$150,000! But because we've designed the 1920s Retrograde Watch in-house, we can offer it to you for just \$99!

This watch is so wildly popular with our customers that we're actually concerned about running out; we only have 937 729 left for this ad!

Stauer
Impossible Price
ONLY
\$99



JOIN MORE THAN 1 MILLION SMART
PEOPLE WHO LOVE STAUER WATCHES

Watch Specifications:

- Precision movement
- Stainless steel case, caseback and crown
- Retrograde hour and minute indicators
- Water-resistant to 5 ATM
- Brown genuine leather band
- Fits wrists up to 8"

1920s Retrograde Watch

~~\$399~~ \$99* + S&P **Save \$300**

**Special price only for customers using the offer code.*

1-800-333-2045

Your Insider Offer Code: RGW258-01

"An elegant and exciting timepiece that every collector will love."

— George Thomas, internationally renowned watch expert

"[A] unique and beautiful timepiece."

— Carlos C., Los Banos, CA

Stauer, 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. RGW258-01, Burnsville, MN 55337 | www.stauer.com

Stauer | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY®

port at Antwerp on captured German railcars. Then he heard Army Transportation Corps teams were en route to Nordhausen to divert the cars to other uses. Hamill had no written orders authorizing him to use the railcars, because, officially, he wasn't supposed to be removing any equipment!

Fortunately for Hamill, one night someone sabotaged the railroad near Nordhausen with dynamite. McGovern speculates that one of Hamill's subordinates knew of his dilemma, put two and two together, and chose to exercise some initiative. This froze the railcars in place and gave Hamill time to convince the Transportation Corps to relent. He also convinced Army engineers to build extra rail spurs connecting the V2 works to the local railhead. On May 22, the first train left Nordhausen for Antwerp. Hamill sent nine trains in total, with an average of 40 cars per train. The last train left Nordhausen at 9:30 p.m. on May 31, just hours before the expected arrival of Russian troops. Eventually more than 400 tons of sensitive rocket technology reached Antwerp en route to New Mexico's White Sands Missile Range and other facilities in the U.S.



Major James P. Hamill, left, an ordnance expert ordered to work with German scientists after World War II, is shown with Dr. Wehrner von Braun, the foremost of the German rocket scientists who came to the U.S. This photo was taken in 1946, during discussions and research being conducted at the White Sands Proving Ground in New Mexico.

The USAAF investigators who found the large wind tunnels and the Germans who'd pioneered swept-wing technology had zonal border problems of their own, but not with the Russians. After the war ended, American and British officials agreed to several adjustments in the borders between their zones for a variety of reasons. Also, some American

forces had advanced into portions of the British Occupation Zone and stayed there after Germany surrendered. Now the time had come for all Allied Powers to retire to their official zones.

The Hermann Göring Research Institute at Völkenrode, west of Braunschweig, was one of the American-held facilities in the British zone. It was a "scientific gold mine," wrote Samuel. He quotes Dr. Theodore von Karman, General Arnold's scientific advisor, who visited Völkenrode and assessed its value. Karman reported that "probably 75 to 90 percent of the technical aeronautical information in Germany was available at this establishment...the information on jet engine developments available at this establishment would expedite the United States development by approximately six to nine months."

USAAF Colonel Donald Putt directed American exploitation efforts at Volkenrode; he decided to spirit as much equipment out of the facility as he could before the British took over. He acquired the services of one B-24 bomber and one B-17 bomber and started a nighttime mini-airlift. "The trick was to get whatever test equipment and documentation

U.S. Army WWII Visors

Look no further for beautiful reproductions of World War II Army & Army Air Corps visor caps! Made from the finest materials available, they feature O.D. (olive drab) or Khaki wool twill tops, wool mohair cap bands, genuine leather visors, sweat bands and chinstraps, silk-type lining with plastic sweat shield & correct, gilt metal insignia & buttons. Sizes 7 through 7-3/4.

Reddick Militaria



\$79.00 Ea



These stunning timepieces are excellent quality reproductions of the U.S. A-11, Vietnam and Kriegsmarine Service Watch, exactly like those issued during the wars. These are must-haves for enthusiasts, reenactors and collectors!

NEW Watches

\$69.95 Ea



0109-100-660

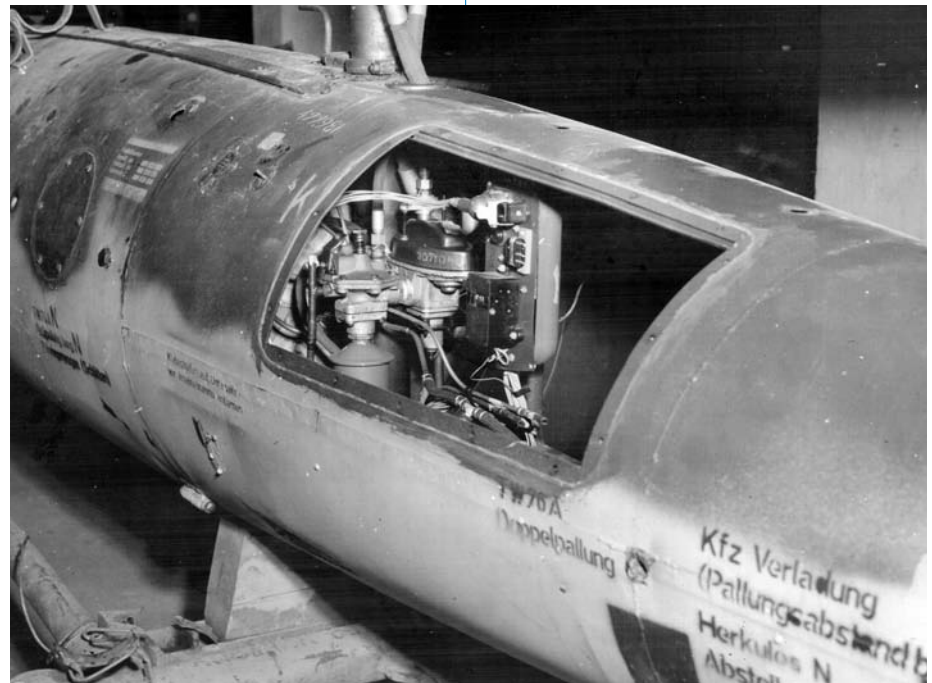
0109-100-661

Send \$5 Today for our Full-Color Catalog #9! Dealer Inquiries Welcome Please add \$9.95 for shipping for orders under \$150

P.O. Box 847 D-40 Pottsboro, TX 75076 **1-800-786-6210** Orders@reddickmilitaria.com

[we could] out of the place without the British noticing,” Putt recalled in an interview for Samuel’s book. British technicians had visited Völkenrode, and the British knew the site was valuable. “As soon as everyone was in bed and the lights were out, we would spring into action. There was an airfield just across town, and with trucks we’d haul this stuff over there, and quickly load it on my B-17 or B-24. By the time people woke up the next morning, they were in Lakenheath or Ireland...This went on for some time until the British caught on. At the Potsdam Conference [in mid-July] the British threw this up to General Arnold. I’m sure he must have pleaded ignorance.”

Another American officer, Major Robert Staver, also had the British on his heels. Staver was still in the Nordhausen area in early May looking for key V2 technicians. On April 3, one week before the U.S. Ninth Army arrived, the Nazis had moved V2 program lead Werner von Braun and hundreds of his key personnel to Bavaria for safekeeping. Von Braun realized the Third Reich was finished, and he wanted to continue his rocketry research postwar, presumably with



A captured V-1 Buzz Bomb is shown at the assembly plant at Nordhausen. The complex was sprawling, encompassing some three square miles with 85 buildings and camouflaged roads. U.S. personnel were in a race against time to bring Nazi rocket technology to the United States during Operation Paperclip.

American or British support. He tasked two of his engineers to collect the most important V2 technical documents and hide them. The

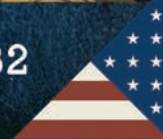
engineers found an abandoned mine, filled some of its chambers with crates containing, *Continued on page 97*

TIME TRAVEL. MADE POSSIBLE.

SEE DECADES OF HISTORY.



568 MAIN ST • HUDSON, MA • 978-562-9182
AmericanHeritageMuseum.org



**American
 Heritage
 Museum**



U.S. Coast Guard

An innovative submachine gun, 'The Wretched Reising,' failed the test of combat with the U.S. Marine Corps.

On paper, the Reising submachine gun appeared to be an ideal close-combat weapon. Accurate, lightweight, and inexpensive to manufacture, it was selected by the U.S. Marine Corps in 1941 to arm its fighting men whose duties prevented them from carrying a rifle.

Once it went into battle, however, several design flaws became glaringly apparent. A poorly-designed ammunition magazine jammed frequently, while the firearm itself was prone to rust. The Reising's sensitive internal mechanism proved impossible to keep clean in jungle environments; even a small amount of sand caught in its workings caused the gun to malfunction.

On Guadalcanal, disgusted Leathernecks traded this unreliable weapon for something more trustworthy at the earliest opportunity. According to legend, Lt. Col. Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson even suggested his Marine Raiders toss the weapons into the Lunga River. Once so full of promise, the Reising instead distinguished itself as one of the worst small arms ever fielded by American forces.

Eugene G. Reising was a prolific and talented American ordnance engineer who could claim credit for 60 firearms related patents. In 1938, he began work on a select-fire weapon intended for sale to foreign military forces along with law enforcement agencies and private security firms at home. Reising's design incorporated a number of innovations that resulted in an uncom-

monly accurate short-range shoulder arm.

Most submachine guns of the day employed an open-bolt action, a feature that helped prevent overheating but made aiming a challenge. The Reising's delayed-blowback operating system used a closed bolt; when the trigger was pressed and a cartridge set off, the force of recoil cammed this heavy steel bolt down and rearward inside the receiver while compressing a stiff spring. The bolt then moved forward under spring pressure to chamber another round before locking back up into position.

Reising's ingenious design enabled his firearm to deliver both precise aimed fire and an impressive cyclical rate of 550 rounds per minute. By sliding a switch on its receiver, the operator could select between full and semi-automatic modes or place his weapon on safe.

To keep it cool during rapid fire, the Reis-

A U.S. Coast Guardsman carries a Model 50 Reising submachine gun while on patrol with his dog. The Reising proved to be quite unpopular with line troops fighting during World War II, particularly Marine units in tropical climates.

THE VIEW FROM MY FOXHOLE

A MARINE PRIVATE'S FIRSTHAND
WORLD WAR II COMBAT EXPERIENCE
FROM GUADALCANAL TO IWO JIMA



WILLIAM SWANSON

"The conflicting fear that it would all end tomorrow, or that it would never end." Bill Swanson loved and fought for us all, one of the greatest, of his great generation.

- Martha MacCallum, Fox News Anchor, *The Story* & Co-anchor, *Fox News Election Coverage*, Author: *Unknown Valor, A Story of Family, Courage and Sacrifice from Pearl Harbor to Iwo Jima*

Raw, authentic, and honest. Swanson's story ranks with Robert Leckie's *Helmet for My Pillow* and E.B. Sledge's *With the Old Breed*. An instant classic.

- John J. Waters, author of *River City One*.
Real Clear Defense

It's his story but certainly reflects and honors the many Marines whose stories will never be told. Truly an unforgettable memoir.

- Gail Chatfield, author of *By Dammit! We're Marines!*

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON, BARNES & NOBLE, TARGET BOOKS



PERMUTATED
PRESS

ing had a series of radial fins machined into its 11-inch barrel. Early (First Design) barrels had 28 or 29 of these ridges, while later production models (Second Design) came with 14 cooling fins.

Many Reising barrels were fitted with a cylindrical metal compensator attached to the muzzle. This device deflected powder gasses upward through a series of slots, theoretically minimizing muzzle climb. Other controls included an aperture-style rear sight that could be adjusted from 50 to 300 yards and an action bar (cocking lever) concealed within the handguard.

The gun was chambered in U.S. standard .45-caliber, fed from a 20-round box magazine. It was 35.75 inches long and weighed 6.75 pounds empty. A carrying strap and loaded magazine increased that to 8.2 pounds. This new sub-gun also featured a full walnut buttstock—unusual for the time, as most similar European weapons tended toward all-metal construction.

In 1939, Eugene Reising met with officials from the Harrington & Richardson Arms Co. of Worcester, Massachusetts, to propose they build his “H&R Reising Submachine Gun M50” in return for a \$2 royalty on each unit produced. The executives agreed and production commenced in 1940.

National Archives



ABOVE: During fighting on the island of Bougainville in the Pacific in 1943, a Navajo code talker holds a Reising submachine gun at left. The Reising performed poorly during World War II and was generally loathed by those who were issued the weapon. **BELOW:** The Model 50 Reising submachine gun was expected to bring considerable firepower to the squad level for U.S. Marines, but its performance was disappointing due to several flaws. The U.S. Army never adopted the Reising.



The leadership at Harrington & Richardson envisioned Reising’s innovative firearm competing for lucrative wartime contracts against the older M1928A1 Thompson. Compared with the Tommy Gun, their product promised lighter weight (8.2 lbs. versus 10.75 lbs.), increased accuracy due to its closed-bolt system, and less cost to manufacture. One Reising could be made for \$50 (\$977.90 in 2022) as opposed to \$225.00 (over \$4,400 today) for a military-issue M1928A1.

In July 1941, several Model 50 submachine guns were sent to Maryland’s Aberdeen Proving Grounds where they

entered a series of U.S. Army field trials. The weapons failed to meet the Army’s expectations for performance in sand, mud, and dust, prompting H&R to make several hasty modifications. An improved version performed better in evaluations later that year, which led to an experimental order for some 1,000 M50s.

As the U.S. Army was committed to the development of an all-steel submachine gun that later became the M3 “Grease Gun,” it

never formally adopted Reising’s firearm. Some historians believe the Army’s M50s were transferred to a quasi-military organization known as the Office of Strategic Services for use by guerrillas and resistance groups overseas.

In November 1941, the U.S. Marine Corps also examined the Model 50 at their Quantico, Virginia, headquarters. Following a series of hurried tests, the Marines found it “acceptable when maintained to standards”—an observation that would come to haunt many Reising-armed Leathernecks in the Solomons less than a year later.

The Marines had fielded a small number

See the Forest Through the Trees

Mighty Conifer Knife at an Impossible Price!

Stauer
Impossible Price
\$99

What Stauer Clients Are
Saying About Our Knives



"Outstanding knife of high quality
and a great price. I now have a
number of your great cutlery in
my growing collection!"

— Robert F., Richardson, TX

We know you. You're not interested in everyday, run-of-the-mill, common cutlery. You want something with a story, a unique feature that you can brag about. We've got just the thing for you. Our *Mighty Conifer Knife* is a unique tool with a Damascus steel blade and a handle crafted from an enhanced and stabilized natural pinecone. While our competitors are charging hundreds for similar knives, we're offering the Mighty Conifer for **JUST \$99!** That's what we call our Stauer Impossible Price.

**JOIN MORE THAN 389,000 SHARP
PEOPLE WHO COLLECT STAUER KNIVES**

Each pinecone — and therefore, each knife — has its own unique characteristics. And the back of the handle features hand tooling, a further demonstration of each piece's individual nature.

The blade is nothing to scoff at either. Constructed of Damascus steel, a modern reworking of the legendary steel forged by ancient swordsmiths, this nearly 5-inch blade features 256 layers of steel that have been folded on top of each other to increase its durability. Our competitors are charging hundreds for boring, run-of-the-mill knives with no features worth bragging about. We're asking **JUST \$99** for a knife unlike any you've seen before!

With its full-tang construction and high-quality genuine leather sheath, the Mighty Conifer Knife is the perfect blade for the

person who wants to stand out. **CALL NOW!** If you're one of the first ~~700~~ 587 callers for this ad, we'll throw in a pair of *Stauer 8x21 Compact Binoculars* — a \$99 value — **ABSOLUTELY FREE!** Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back!

Knife Specifications:

- 9 1/2" overall length. Full-tang construction
- Damascus steel blade and natural pinecone handle
- Genuine leather sheath

Mighty Conifer Knife

~~-\$299~~ \$99* + S&P **Save \$200**

*You must use Insider Offer Code:
MCK188-01 to get this price.

California residents please call regarding Proposition 65 regulations before purchasing this product.

1-800-333-2045

Your Insider Offer Code: MCK188-01

**EXCLUSIVE
FREE**

Stauer 8x21
Compact Binoculars
a \$99 value
with your purchase
of the Mighty
Conifer Knife



Stauer, 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. MCK188-01, Burnsville, MN 55337 | www.stauer.com

Stauer® | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY®

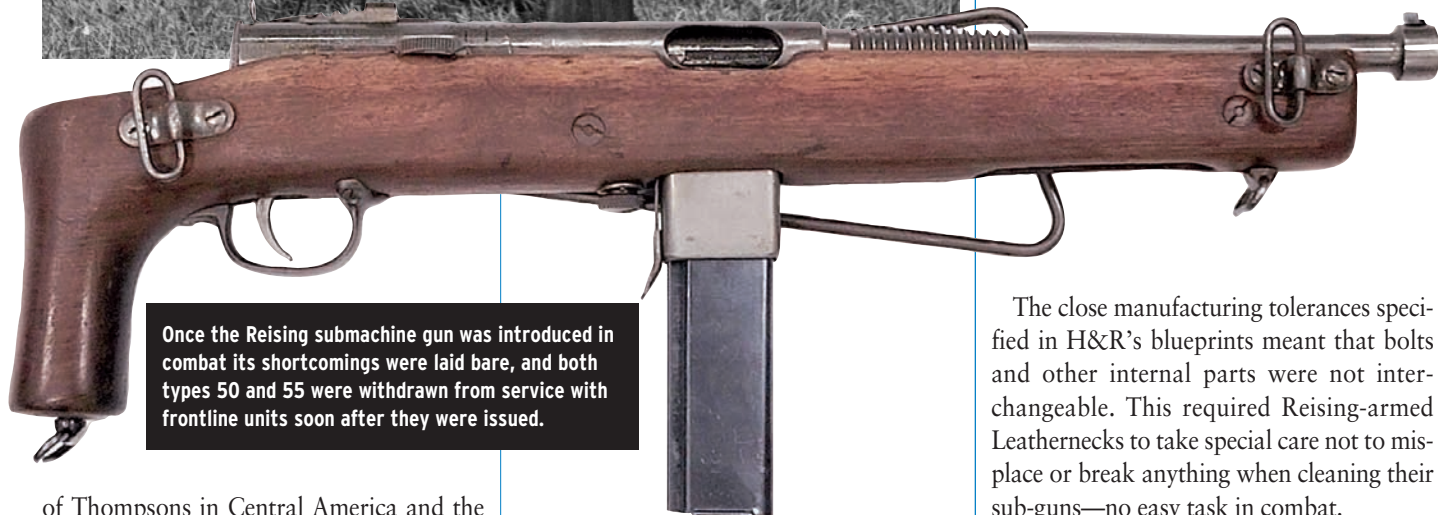


U.S. Marine Master Gunnery Sergeant V.J. Kavits poses with the Model 55 Reising submachine gun (left), with its pistol grip, folding wire stock, and shortened barrel, and the standard Model 50 Reising. Neither fulfilled the expectations of the U.S. Marine Corps.

the two variants were identical.

Designating the Reising a “limited standard weapon” in early 1942, the Marine Corps quickly let four production contracts with Harrington & Richardson Arms Co., who produced 55,000 wood-stocked M50s and folding-stock M55s for the USMC.

The first Reisings delivered to Marine combat units, so-called “commercial guns” assembled prior to Pearl Harbor, sported a high-gloss blued finish. Steel surfaces on later weapons were treated with an anti-corrosive phosphate coating known as “Parkerizing.” All Model 50s and Model 55s required extensive hand-fitting at the factory before they would function properly, a process that both slowed production and led to problems in the field.



Once the Reising submachine gun was introduced in combat its shortcomings were laid bare, and both types 50 and 55 were withdrawn from service with frontline units soon after they were issued.

of Thompsons in Central America and the Caribbean during the interwar years and appreciated its knockdown power at short range. Marine Corps senior leaders, anticipating a need for submachine guns in the approaching global conflict, declared that 100,000 of them would likely meet their wartime requirements.

These officials also knew that every M1928A1 Thompson then in production was earmarked either for the U.S. Army or a British contract. Whatever close combat weapon the USMC chose to provide for the thousands of tankers, junior officers, and sig-

nalmen now entering its ranks, it was not likely to be a Tommy Gun.

Another group of Leathernecks requiring a compact, but powerful, submachine gun were those men assigned to the 1st and 2nd Marine Parachute Battalions. When asked to adapt his M50 for these Paramarines, Reising produced a shortened M55 version.

The Model 55 had a pistol grip and folding wire stock. Its barrel was also half an inch shorter and lacked the M50's muzzle compensator. The M55 measured 22.25 inches overall and weighed 6.2 pounds unloaded. Otherwise,

The close manufacturing tolerances specified in H&R's blueprints meant that bolts and other internal parts were not interchangeable. This required Reising-armed Leathernecks to take special care not to misplace or break anything when cleaning their sub-guns—no easy task in combat.

Marines training for war on bases across the U.S. soon discovered another unpleasant fact about this new gun: even a small amount of dirt in the receiver often stopped it from firing. It was another unintended result of the tight internal clearances called for in Eugene Reising's design.

Yet the U.S. Marine Corps took pride in its troops' proficiency with their individual weapons and resolved to make do with what was issued. When the 1st Marine Division (Reinforced) conducted a seaborne assault of Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942, some 4,200

of its men were armed with Reising's.

Additionally, senior sergeants and platoon commanders in Lt. Col. Merritt Edson's 1st Marine Raider Battalion carried M50 sub-machine guns when they invaded the neighboring island of Tulagi that morning. One Raider, Marine Gunner Angus R. Goss, earned a Navy Cross and a mention in Richard Tregaskis's classic book, *Guadalcanal Diary*, when on August 8 he single-handedly "hosed down" the occupants of a fortified cave with his Reising.

It was on Gavutu, a small but heavily-defended islet near Tulagi, that the Reising gun received its real baptism by fire. After coming ashore by landing barge at noon on August 7, the 1st Marine Parachute Battalion spent two bloody days trying to defeat 400 well-entrenched Japanese sailors belonging to the elite 3rd Kure Special Naval Landing Force. Before it was over, nearly 80 Paramarines would be dead or seriously wounded.

Curiously, Marine Corps authorization documents required every Leatherneck in the 1st Parachute Battalion to be armed with an M55 Reising. Supply shortages, however, meant that plenty of Paramarines toted M1903 Springfield rifles on Gavutu. Nevertheless, the fighting there occurred mostly at short range and in heavily-jungled terrain—ideal conditions for a force primarily armed with submachine guns.

Yet the men of the 1st Parachute Battalion struggled to capture Gavutu. These novice Paramarines made their share of tactical errors, true, but also claimed their Model 55 sub-guns could not be depended upon to provide the firepower necessary to overwhelm a determined and dug-in foe. Reising-armed Marines on Tulagi and Guadalcanal also reported problems with their weapons' reliability, an outcry that grew louder as the Solomons Islands campaign wore on.

The ever-present sand and grim of the battlefield continued to foul the Reising's internal action and prevent its bolt from fully closing despite all efforts made to keep them clean. Its brittle firing pin broke easily and the poor-quality steel used to manufacture the receiver, barrel, and magazine rusted quickly in Guadalcanal's humid climate.

The M55's folding wire stock was especially despised. It often collapsed unintentionally and was too lightly constructed for

2024

GREATEST GENERATION

COMMEMORATIVE COIN PROGRAM

SILVER DOLLAR GOLD FIVE-DOLLAR HALF DOLLAR

AVAILABLE 2024 ONLY

Coins shown are not actual size.

Marking the 20th anniversary of the dedication of the National World War II Memorial, this commemorative series is exclusive to 2024. Available in gold \$5, silver \$1, and half-dollar denominations, the coins showcase unique designs honoring our World War II heroes.

Place your order at [usmint.gov](https://www.usmint.gov) or **1-800-USA-MINT.**

EXPLORE THE DECKS OF THE LAST
DESTROYER ESCORT AFLOAT IN AMERICA.

518-431-1943 USSSLATER.ORG

USS SLATER
ALBANY - NEW YORK
DESTROYER ESCORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM



WW2 GERMAN NSDAP
PAPER BUNTING FLAG -
ORIGINAL

MILITARY

tour.com

HISTORICAL MILITARY PRODUCTS



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



THOMPSON SMG ORIGINAL
WW1 US FIVE CELL 20
ROUND MAG POUCH



WW2 GERMAN
PARATROOPER M38 JUMP
SMOCK EARLY WAR



HITLER YOUTH
BACKPACK



WW2 GERMAN EARLY WAR
POLICE GENDARMERIE
SHAKO IN BLACK



GERMAN WWII
OFFICER ALCOSEO
WEHRMACHT DAGGER



GERMAN WW2 WAR MERIT
CROSS 1ST CLASS 1939
WITH SWORDS



US M1 HELMET NET
WW2 - ORIGINAL



GERMAN WW1 1914 IRON
CROSS 1ST CLASS RARE
VAULTED VERSION

Over 2,500 items on-line supplying the WWI re-enactor and collector



www.militarytour.com

Email: dj@militarytour.com

Tel: 1-800-785-8644

We
welcome new
suppliers

BEFORE THE PHOTO OF THE FLAG WAS TAKEN, THE MARINES FIRST HAD TO TAKE THE BEACHES

Iwo Jima - the costliest battle in the history of the United States Marine Corps

The landing on *Iwo Jima* occurred on February 19, 1945, the battle would last for over a month. The results were staggering and historic. Now, you can honor these warriors and own a piece of history. This laser engraved map of the Iwo Jima Landing Plan is the ONLY collectible with "sand" from all six USMC invasion beaches and the peak of Mt. Suribachi. This will be a treasured part of your WWII collection, and a definite heirloom for your family when you order yours today.

\$119.99 + \$10.00 shipping
Includes a Certificate of Authenticity



DAY OF DAYS PRODUCTIONS

803-663-7854

ORDER ONLINE at

www.dayofdaysproductions.com

Or mail a money order for your plaque(s) + \$10.00 shipping to:

Day of Days Productions®

PO Box 645 • Warrenville, SC 29851-0645

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE:

◀ **US Army Landings and
Operations in World War II ETO**
Final Overlord D-Day Invasion Plan

With sand from all invasion beaches ▶



service on jungle battlefields. Other operators complained about the Reising's heavy eight-pound trigger pull and a defective safety mechanism that could cause a "slam-fire" if it was accidentally dropped.

Infuriated Marines reserved their worst criticisms for the double-stack, single-feed magazines. Called "the worst possible configuration for reliability" by one Leatherneck, this design malfunctioned after nearly every shot. Any amount of grit that collected inside the magazine, they learned, would almost certainly cause a stoppage.

An anonymous veteran of Guadalcanal said this about his Reising: "My last recollection of that weapon was that I flung it into the mouth of the Lunga River and to this day it's probably still there." Indeed, a perhaps-apocryphal story of the Solomons campaign credits Lt. Col. Edson with ordering his Raiders to dump their Reising into the Lunga so they could obtain small arms that functioned properly.

Photographs taken on Guadalcanal in late 1942 show only a few Marines still using Reising guns. As M1 Carbines and simplified M1 Thompsons reached the combat zone, surviving M50s and M55s were rapidly taken out of service. By early 1943, the USMC had canceled all production contracts for these troublesome sub-guns and restricted their issue to stateside commands.

While the Marine Corps had a poor experience with the Reising, this did not mean it was wholly unsuited for military service. During World War II, thousands of U.S. Coast Guardsmen patrolled lonely shorelines along the nation's Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts. To arm the Coast Guard's Beach Patrol, Harrington & Richardson initiated an additional run of 20,500 Model 50 sub-machine guns in July 1942.

Engineers at H&R also invented a single-stack magazine that solved the old design's tendency to jam. Holding just 12 rounds, this device was inadequate for Pacific battlefields but helped give many a Beach Patrol member added confidence as he walked alone at night along a deserted stretch of sand.

Foreign governments also used Reising guns. The Soviet Union received 6,000 pieces as part of Lend Lease, with 2,000 reaching British and Commonwealth forces. The French purchased 4,000 M50 submachine

guns in 1941 for shipment to Indochina; it remains unknown what happened to those firearms after Japanese troops occupied the region later that year.

To arm watchmen protecting America's defense resources, Harrington & Richardson produced a weapon it marketed as the Reising Model 60 Semi-Automatic Rifle. This firearm differed from the Model 50 submachine gun in that it had an uncompensated 18.5-inch barrel and an action that fired one round for each press of the trigger. Beginning in 1942, the U.S. Defense Security Corporation procured several thousand M60s for use by agencies in charge of guarding factories, bridges, and other critical infrastructure. The Marine Corps obtained some Model 60 semi-auto rifles as well, reserving them for local protection details and interior guard missions.

After the war, H&R continued to manufacture small quantities of semi-automatic Reising for civilian law enforcement organizations and private security firms. Many former USMC and USCG Model 50s also found their way into the gun lockers of police departments and correctional facilities. Others were given to a number of Central and South American governments as part of various foreign military assistance programs.

The last 2,000 Reising to be manufactured, most of which were M60 rifles destined for Latin America, left Harrington & Richardson's factory floor in 1960. Total production of all variants exceeded 120,000 units.

The Reising sun was an accurate, lightweight and—when kept clean—reliable shoulder weapon. These virtues did not excuse its dismal combat record. Overly complicated and difficult to maintain, this firearm should never have been accepted for front-line duty with the U.S. Marine Corps. The Reising's intolerance for dirt, humidity, and rough treatment, together with a poorly designed and manufactured ammunition magazine, forever relegated it to the ranks of World War II's least successful small arms. □

Frequent contributor Patrick J. Chaisson writes from his home in Scotia, New York. The author wishes to thank Mr. Jonathan Bernstein, Arms & Armament Curator with the National Museum of the United States Marine Corps, for his assistance in the preparation of this article.

Christmas on the Homefront

Featuring the Taxi from "It's a Wonderful Life!"

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2024



PLUS:

- Tanks, Jeeps & Transports
- Battle Exhibits including Authentic Helmets and Uniforms
- Stories and Artifacts of the Region
- and more!



845 Crooked Creek Rd., Gettysburg, PA 17325
717-253-3414 • museum@visitww2.org

visitww2.org

Jessen's Relics military memorabilia

Specializing in Original Military from WWII

U.S. • German • Japanese

Badges • Medals • Flags
Cloth / Metal Insignia
Buckles • Edged Weapons
Documents • Uniforms
Head / Field Gear Etc.

Jessen's Relics Inc.
Anthony H. Jessen
P.O. Box 1180
Harrison, TN 37341
Ph: 205-919-1069
Fx: 423-326-0970
email: ahjessen@mindspring.com

www.jessensrelics.com

REAL WAR PHOTOS

50,000+ ships, battles & military photos
Request a FREE catalog.
50% Veterans Discount!
P.O. Box 414, Somerset Ctr, MI 49282
734-327-9696 www.realwarphotos.com



Painting © Robert Taylor / Military Gallery; www.militarygallery.com

The mysterious death of Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, Imperial Japanese commander at Pearl Harbor and Midway.

When interviewed in the late 1960s by John Toland for his book, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire*, Takeshi Hirakushi told a fantastic tale. Hirakushi was a former major of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the senior surviving Japanese officer of the Battle of Saipan. His eyewitness account of the Japanese defense of Saipan through the lens of the top brass and culminated in his witnessing the deaths of the island's three most senior Japanese officers: Lt. Gen. Yoshitsugu Saitō, Maj. Gen. Keiji Igeta, and Vice Adm. Chuichi Nagumo. Nagumo, in particular, was described as quiet and withdrawn during the battle, and it is implied that he was unjustifiably unassertive of his authority over Saitō and Igeta. *The Rising Sun* was a masterpiece of its time, and Hirakushi's account in it has been referred to as gospel by many historians ever since.

Problematically, however, much of Hirakushi's story does not align well with other eyewitness accounts. Another red flag is raised by the fact that Hirakushi entered captivity under the alias "Major Yoshida" and at that time told his interrogators a completely different story. Further analysis disproves much of Hirakushi's post-war recollections of Saipan's top Japanese officers and restores some of Nagumo's military reputation.

If Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto was the architect of the Pacific War, Nagumo was his chief contractor, carrying out the most important of Yamamoto's plans. Nagumo led the force that attacked Pearl Harbor and then wreaked havoc across the Pacific and Indian oceans. At



Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo committed suicide on the island of Saipan in the Marianas in 1944 after a long career in the Imperial Japanese Navy. **TOP:** Artist Robert Taylor's painting of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor depicts an Aichi D3A dive bomber attacking the battleship Nevada, which is beached at Hospital Point. Admiral Nagumo commanded the Japanese aircraft carrier strike force that conducted the surprise attack. He committed suicide on the island of Saipan in 1944.

the Battle of Midway, however, Japan's fortunes irreversibly changed with a resounding defeat. Nagumo was eventually relieved of duty in November 1942. He reemerged in

150 Years of
Iconic U.S. Silver
Dollars

FIVE OF THE MOST
SOUGHT-AFTER U.S. SILVER
DOLLARS, IN ONE SET!



Dates
will vary

Peace

Silver Eagle
Type 1

Morgan

Eisenhower

Silver Eagle
Type 2

Actual sizes:
38.1-40.6 mm

YOUR ULTIMATE SILVER DOLLAR SET

150 Years of Iconic U.S. Silver Dollars from the Morgan to the Silver Eagle in One Master Collection!

The heritage of American Silver Dollars is rich and diverse, marked by stunningly beautiful designs, leading to an enduring desirability in the hearts of collectors around the world. In this iconic U.S. Silver Dollar set, spanning nearly 150 years, you're getting FIVE American Silver Dollars issued over the last 15 decades that each reflect the history, culture and economic aspects of the United States.

We've Done the Work for You with this Extraordinary 5-Pc. U.S. Silver Dollar Set

Each of these U.S. Silver Dollars is sought-after by collectors individually, but this set includes every design of U.S. Silver Dollar in American history, issued from 1878 to 2024!

Morgan Silver Dollar: First struck 146 years ago in 1878, the Morgan has a historic legacy as the coin that helped build the American West. Minted until 1904, then again in 1921, this 90% silver coin with its iconic Lady Liberty design is the most collected vintage Silver Dollar in the world. Extremely Fine (XF) condition coin included in set.

Peace Silver Dollar: With a beautiful design memorializing peace following the end of World War I, the 90% silver Peace Dollar was intended as a one-year only release struck in 1921—but it proved so popular with the American people, it was struck until 1928, then again in 1934-35. Extremely Fine (XF) condition coin included in set.

Eisenhower Dollar: The last circulating U.S. dollar coin, the Eisenhower Dollar, aka the "Ike Dollar," was prized by Americans, with its design featuring war hero President Dwight D. Eisenhower, backed by an image symbolizing the Apollo II moon landing. First struck with silver 1971-1976, the Eisenhower Dollar in this set was struck in 40% silver for collectors, and you will receive a coin in Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition.

Silver Eagle Type 1: The first-ever U.S. Silver Dollar minted in 99.9% silver, these coins were first minted in 1986 following President Ronald Reagan's signing of the Liberty Coin Act into law on July 9, 1985, which authorized the U.S. Mint to strike America's new silver bullion coin. This gorgeous Silver Dollar features the original, revered Type 1 "Heraldic Eagle" reverse design by John Mercanti, 12th Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.

Silver Eagle Type 2: In honor of the popular 99.9% silver coin's 35th anniversary in 2021, the Silver Eagle received a new, esteemed Type 2 "Eagle Landing" reverse design. This is the current issued coin by the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.

SAVE with this Ultimate U.S. Silver Dollar Set!

You'll save both time and money on this 150 Year U.S. Silver Dollar Set, with FREE SHIPPING and a BONUS presentation case, plus a new and informative 150 Years U.S. Silver Dollars booklet! Call right now to get yours before they're gone!

Ultimate U.S. Silver Dollars Set — Regular Price \$249 - \$199
Save \$50.00 (over 20%) + FREE SHIPPING

For fastest service call today toll-free
1-800-517-6468

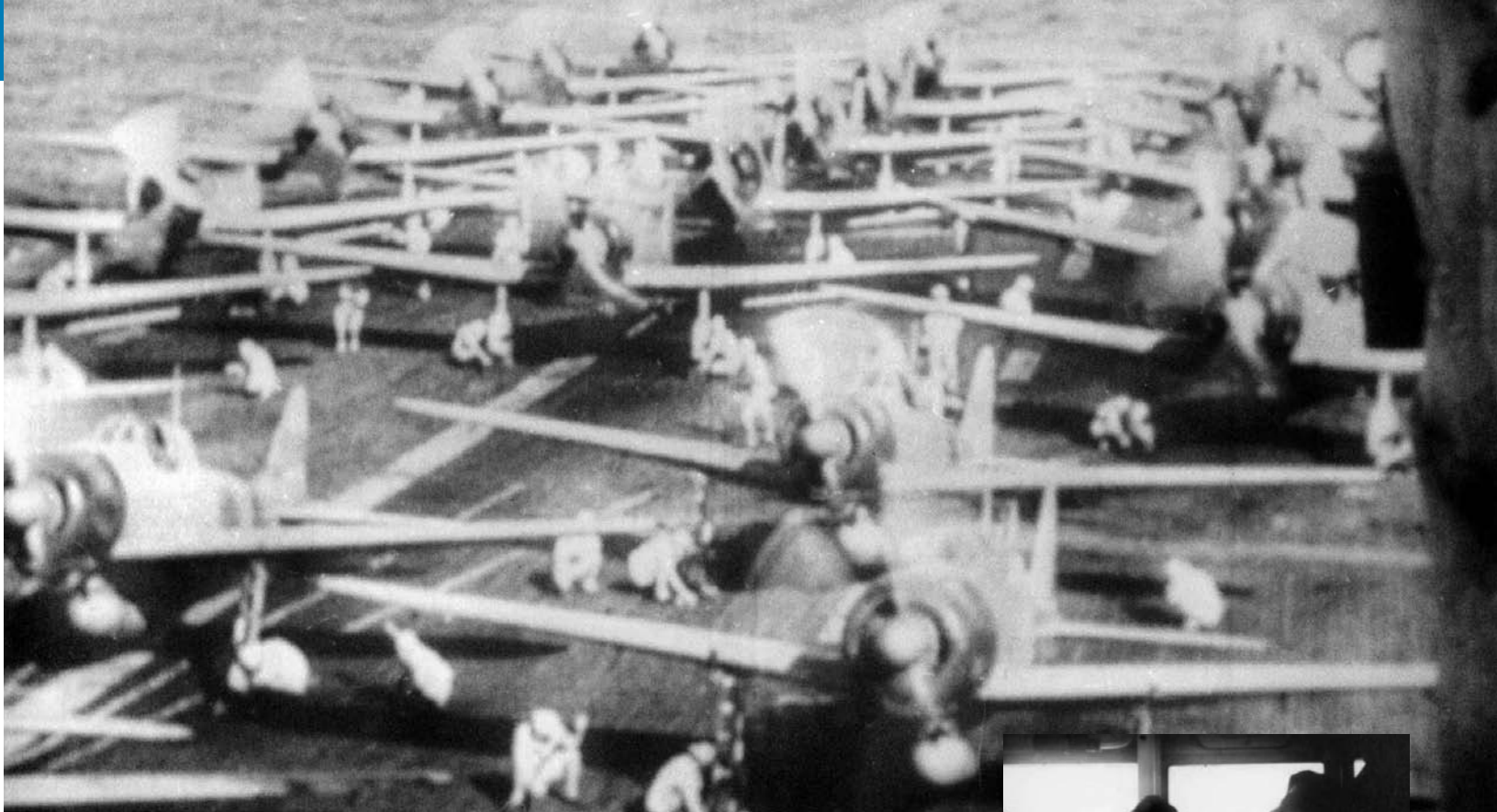
Offer Code YSL205-01
Please mention this code when you call.

SPECIAL CALL-IN ONLY OFFER

FREE SHIPPING: Standard domestic shipping. Not valid on previous purchases.

GovMint • 1300 Corporate Center Curve, Dept. YSL205-01, Eagan, MN 55121

Asset Marketing Services, LLC d/b/a GovMint is a retail distributor of coin and currency issues and is not affiliated with the U.S. government. The collectible coin market is unregulated, highly speculative and involves risk. Prices, facts, figures and populations deemed accurate as of the date of publication but may change significantly over time. All purchases are expressly conditioned upon your acceptance of AMS's Terms and Conditions (www.amsi-corp.com/terms-conditions); to decline, return your purchase pursuant to our Return Policy (www.amsi-corp.com/product-return-policy). Keeping your purchase means you agree to the Terms and Conditions. © 2024 GovMint. All rights reserved.



Naval History and Heritage Command

March 1944, designated Commander-in-Chief of the Central Pacific Fleet encompassing the majority of naval forces in the Central Pacific except the Fleet Air Arm and combat fleet. Nagumo's chief of staff was Rear Adm. Hideo Yano. Nagumo was deeply troubled, but hid his dismay from subordinates.

The 31st Army under Lt. Gen. Hideyoshi Obata and his chief of staff, Igeta, also formed at this time. Both the 31st Army and the Central Pacific Fleet's headquarters were in Saipan's largest metropolis, Garapan.

The two tactical commands on Saipan were the army's 43rd Infantry Division under Saitō and his chief of staff, Col. Takuji Suzuki and the navy's 5th Base Force under Rear Adm. Takehisa Tsujimura and his chief of staff, Commander Jiro Saitō (no relation to Lieutenant General Saitō). Maj. Hira-kushi was attached to the 43rd Division staff as a public relations officer. Vice Adm. Takeo Takagi, Commander-in-Chief of the Sixth Fleet under which all the submarines of the Imperial Navy operated, also chose Saipan as his headquarters.

The U.S. invasion of Saipan in mid-June 1944 surprised the Japanese. Obata on an inspection tour of the Palau Islands, so the eight most senior officers on the island were Nagumo, Yano, Igeta, Saitō, Suzuki, Tsu-

jimura, Cdr. Saitō, and Takagi. The U.S. attacked on June 11, 1944. Shortly thereafter, the Central Pacific Fleet staff withdrew to the mountainous central spine of Saipan. The 31st Army and the 43rd Division staffs withdrew to their own bunkers with Igeta's somewhere near Nagumo's and Saitō's in the south.

Nagumo and his staff retreated to their cave as naval guns pummeled the island. Nagumo and Yano calmly smoked cigarettes.

Lieutenant General Saitō had set up his new headquarters in an inland cave a day before U.S. troops landed on June 15.

The Battle of Philippine Sea was quickly lost and Saipan's defenders were perpetually pushed back, finally into a Combined Battle Headquarters in a cave in the north of the island, an area nicknamed "Paradise Valley."

At about 5 p.m. on July 4, while pushing north through the ruins of the Japanese naval facilities, the U.S. captured their highest ranking Japanese naval officer to date—Cdr. Jiro Saitō, Admiral Tsujimura's chief of staff. Commander Saitō had been in charge of the naval base defense when a near-miss shell knocked him out. U.S. intelligence officers found Saitō to be "intelligent and talking easily, but seems to be withholding information and evasive."

That afternoon, the headquarters area came under direct automatic weapons fire.



ABOVE: Vice Admiral Nagumo is shown on the bridge of his flagship, the aircraft carrier *Akagi*, just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. TOP: Japanese aircraft prepare for takeoff from the aircraft carrier *Akagi* during operations in the Indian Ocean early in the Pacific War. In the foreground are Mitsubishi A6M "Zero" fighters, with Aichi D3A "Val" dive bombers further aft.

Hirakushi was then sent to inspect the Japanese defensive lines and found them to be virtually non-existent. Saitō and Igeta then went into a private conference to decide on the course of action. The decision was *gyokusai*, a "banzai charge." Nagumo and his staff were likely not directly consulted. Nagumo had little place to insert his authority. Not only were navy personnel greatly outnumbered by their army counterparts, but he was a surface fleet officer and an administrator

with no experience in land warfare.

The next day (July 5), plans were finalized and orders for the gyokusai were drawn up that included military personnel and civilians. An inspirational message signed by Saitō and Nagumo was distributed.

Imperial Staff wanted the Saipan defenders to fight on, an impossibility. Circulating the message to unit commanders was the last task of the combined headquarters. Over the years, varying scenarios detailing the demise of Saipan's top Japanese officers emerged with Toland's version most widely accepted. The only indisputable facts are that Generals Saitō and Igeta and Admirals Nagumo, Yano, Tsujimura, and Takagi died along with an estimated 5,000 Japanese who participated in the suicidal attack on the night of July 6, 1944.

Several wounded Japanese were captured, including a 43rd Division intelligence officer named Maj. Koyoshi Yoshida, Chief Petty Officer Noda, and Seaman Hikada, the latter two attached to Nagumo's staff. All claimed to have witnessed the deaths of their respective commanding officers, and their accounts somewhat aligned. After the war, however, Major Yoshida came clean that he was not, in fact, the 43rd Division's intelligence officer, but that his true identity was Maj. Takashi Hirakushi, the 43rd Division's public relations officer. Major Yoshida was either fictitious or killed during the battle.

Major Hirakushi's recollections to Toland in 1967 with regard to the deaths of the senior officers was very different from what he told his interrogators in 1944. In *The Rising Sun*, Toland wrote:

At dawn on July 6th...Saitō, who had been quietly conferring with Nagumo and Igeta, beckoned to Hirakushi. He said that the three had decided to die at ten o'clock.

—“Excuse us for going first.”

—“Do you plan to do it here?”

—“Yes, here.”

Hirakushi said it would be better to commit suicide privately in a smaller cave nearby. The Major left to prepare the new cave while Saitō read aloud a farewell message.

Hirakushi led the three commanders to the new cave. “What means are you going to use?” he asked.

“We will go through the first step of Seppuku,” said Saitō, “but Seppuku will take

Russian Medals & Militaria

www.CollectRussia.com

- ★ Imperial Russian and Soviet Decorations and Medals
- ★ Documented Award Groups
- ★ Uniforms and Field Gear
- ★ Historical Documents and Autographs
- ★ Reference Books
- ★ Military Badges and Insignia
- ★ World War II Reenactment Uniforms and Gear
- ★ Posters and Newsprint
- ★ Edged Weapons

Large assortment and the best prices.
All major credit cards accepted.



Atlantic Crossroads, Inc.

P.O. Box 144, Dept. WWII
Tenafly, NJ 07670
Phone: (201) 567-8717
Fax: (201) 567-6855

PLEASE VISIT
OUR WEBSITE:
CollectRussia.com

E-mail:
Sales@CollectRussia.com

SATISFACTION
GUARANTEED

NAZI GERMAN COINS & STAMPS

“HITLER'S CHURCH” ON SILVER 5 REICHSMARK

The Potsdam Military Church, where Hitler officially ushered in Nazi control of Germany, is featured on this silver German 5 Reichsmark. The reverse features the Germanic eagle and two swastikas. The half-dollar sized is struck in .900 fine silver and was minted only two years: 1934 & 1935.

Silver Church 5 Reichsmark ONLY \$25 • Or get 5 for ONLY \$119



NAZI GERMAN 8 COIN SET

The Eagle and Swastika are featured on all 8 of these Nazi German coins. Included are the pre-war 1, 2, 5 & 10 Reichspfennig and the wartime 1, 5, 10 & 50 Reichspfennig.

Nazi 8 Coin Set ONLY \$23 • Or get 3 Sets for ONLY \$59

NAZI GERMAN 1944 HEROES DAY STAMPS

Each of these 11 Nazi German semi-postal stamps features a different aspect of the German military at war, including land, air and sea. Stamps are unused and not hinged.

Set of 11 German Heroes Day stamps \$10 • Or get 3 Sets for ONLY \$29



“Worlds most interesting coin & banknote catalog” free on request. ALL ITEMS GUARANTEED GENUINE.

Please add \$6 Shipping, Calif. residents add 8.75% sales tax. 3 week return privileges.
Checks, money orders, Visa, Mastercard, Discover, AMEX & Paypal accepted.

JOEL ANDERSON www.JoelsCoins.com

Interesting World Coins. Since 1970

Phone: 805-489-8045 • e-mail: Orders@JoelsCoins.com
P.O. Box 365-WWH, Grover Beach, CA 93483-0365

3 FREE
NAZI STAMPS
with offer code:
WWH



The bodies of Japanese soldiers and their discarded weapons lie in heaps following a failed *Banzai* charge on the island of Saipan in this painting by artist Robert Benney. Casualties were heavy on both sides, and American wounded were heard calling for help after their perimeter positions had been overrun.

Naval History and Heritage Command

too long, so have an officer stand behind each of us and shoot us in the back of the head.”

Saitō selected Hirakushi, Nagumo requested a Naval officer, Igeta didn’t express a preference. Hirakushi returned to the main cave and asked for someone from the Navy to “assist Admiral Nagumo with his suicide.” No one answered. Finally, a young Army aide said, “Let me do the job.” Another Army aide volunteered to shoot Igeta, and the three started back to the suicide cave.

The commanders...were sitting cross-legged near the mouth of the cave with the diminutive Nagumo in the middle. Hirakushi turned to find some water to wash their faces...Hirakushi started back around the boulder. The three commanders were lying sprawled on the ground. Behind the bodies stood the two young aides, smoking pistols in hand. The commanders, impatient, had gone ahead without him.

Yoshida’s version was very different. U.S. interrogators found him very forthcoming, answering any questions asked to the best of his knowledge. None of the information he gave contradicted what they already knew.

The record of Yoshida’s interrogation notes that: “Upon being questioned concern-

ing the fate of Lt. General Saitō, Major Yoshida told the following story. About 0600 on 6 July Saitō issued his orders for the counterattack of that day...At 1000, thinking that since he was too old to participate in a strenuous attack he considered himself of no further use. He then went up to a higher shelf in the cave accompanied by his Adjutant. He drew his own blood first and then was shot in the right temple with his own pistol by his trusted Adjutant as is the customary method in military circles. After that the Adjutant committed suicide followed by two other Shamboes (Japanese staff officers). All four bodies were cremated.”

Yoshida was also questioned on whereabouts of Admiral Nagumo to which he “stated that he was not sure but he thought he might have been in the same area mentioned before and probably committed suicide.”

Chief Petty Officer Noda told his interrogators in 1944, that he personally witnessed the suicide of Vice Admiral Nagumo and Rear Admiral Yano at 10:30, July 7, at the temporary headquarters inland from Matansa. Toland interviewed Noda in 1967 for *The Rising Sun* at which time he expounded upon but did not alter his account. Seaman Hikada’s account was published in the Japan-

ese-American newspaper *Rafu Shimpo* in 1953. A complete picture of Nagumo’s death emerges when his and Noda’s versions are merged. Noda and Hikada were not captured together and never give an indication of being acquainted with one another, and yet their accounts of Nagumo’s death are not only mutually supporting but somewhat align with the Yoshida version of events directly contradicting Hirakushi’s post-war recollections.

Nagumo announced that he had decided to commit suicide at 10 o’clock on the 6th. He thanked his staff and said he’d rather they they didn’t see his end. Nagumo and Yano went behind some large rocks, and most of those he had addressed walked some distance away, but Noda remained with the two admirals. Nagumo wore a green field uniform, noted by Noda as being torn and muddy from night moves and caves, while Yano wore a khaki field uniform. Nagumo placed his service revolver to his head, glanced at Yano while saying, “Shall we go?” and pulled the trigger. Yano followed.

Hikada and his group heard two shots and after a short time went to investigate. “We found Vice Admiral Nagumo and the C/S laid on the ground face down, bullets hit right at their temples. Ten of us dug two 4-5-foot-

deep holes and buried them after wrapping them in blankets. We didn't want to give our commander's dead body to the enemy."

What strengthens the veracity of these accounts is the fact they both state Nagumo and Yano committed suicide by self-inflicted gunshots to the head rather than by *seppuku*, the traditional samurai method of ritualistic suicide by self-disembowelment and simultaneous beheading performed by another individual. A pistol shot to the back of the head in lieu of beheading was also common by the time of World War II. It was considered an extremely honorable death and a means of regaining one's reputation after a failure. Nagumo and Yano possibly felt disgrace for their failure and did not consider themselves suited to the honor of *Seppuku*. Noda and Hikada held Nagumo in high regard. Therefore, the admirals' suicides would most likely have been recounted with the flair, honor, and inspiration of *seppuku* if the two sailors' accounts were falsified.

On July 11, Major Yoshida acted as guide for 4th Marine Division intelligence officers and Army liaisons on what was essentially a battlefield tour of the island, giving details from the Japanese perspective of the battle. Each of Saitō's headquarters locations was visited in succession until the detachment stopped at the 6th and final headquarters cave in Paradise Valley. Apparently the attempt to cremate the four individuals had been somewhat unsuccessful. Yoshida identified Saitō's remains on an upper ledge of the cave.

The biggest issues with the Hirkakushi account are the number of bodies, method of suicide, and disposal of the remains. Hirkakushi claims that Saitō, Nagumo, and Igeta knelt on the ground together and were shot by two aides while they were in the process of *seppuku* and that their bodies were subsequently cremated. Saitō's chief of staff, Suzuki, would have been the proper person to shoot him, not Hirkakushi as he claims, but Suzuki may have been occupied with the final preparations for the *gyokusai*, so it is possible. Hirkakushi specifically states only those three officers died together, with no mention of anyone else. Nagumo's chief of staff, Yano, would have killed himself with his commanding officer, but there is no mention of him. When the intelligence officers and liaisons went with Yoshida to the

command cave on July 11, there were four charred bodies inside, which could account for the remains of Saitō, Igeta, Nagumo, and Yano—with Hirkakushi simply having forgotten Yano was present. However, Hirkakushi specifically said that he had no idea of the whereabouts of Nagumo during his interrogation. Why would the major so willingly identify Saitō, but withhold the identities of the other three? He may have had some loyalty to Igeta as a fellow Army officer and one that he respected, but Hirkakushi had no such loyalty to the two Navy officers.

Hirkakushi's account also contradicts those of Noda and Hikada, with the former actually witnessing Nagumo and Yano kill themselves via self-inflicted gunshots and the latter claiming to have personally buried the two admirals. Neither mention the deaths of Saitō or Igeta. The Central Pacific Fleet had only been with Saitō for a week at that point; they had not fought the battle together. Saitō and Nagumo had no bonded loyalty to one another, especially considering the deep rift between the Japanese Army and Navy in addition to the fact that (according to Noda) Nagumo was opposed to the *gyokusai* and wanted to keep fighting. Nagumo and Yano more than likely would have wanted to die with their own people in a separate location, as Noda and Hikada recalled.

All of this is not to say that the Hirkakushi account is a total fabrication, however. It's true that certain details do not align, but there is one other high-ranking naval officer who is unaccounted for: Rear Admiral Tsujimura. One theory is that Tsujimura worked closely with Saitō in at least the latter stages of the battle, directing the defenses of the naval sector and coordinating the deployment of the naval ground forces in line with the general's orders. Tsujimura had been on the island longer than any of the officers in the 43rd Division, the 31st Army, or the Central Pacific Fleet, all of whom had only been on the island between one and three months while Tsujimura had been on Saipan since October 1943.

Tsujimura's knowledge of the island would have been invaluable in the defense, so it is logical that Lieutenant General Saitō and his staff would have leaned heavily on him. It is known that Tsujimura was at

Continued on page 97

24,000 Military Items



**WE BUY ANY OLD
MILITARY MATERIAL
US AND FOREIGN**

US, Vietnamese, German,
Japanese, Russian, French,
British and all other
Foreign Countries

WW1, WW2, Korean War,
Vietnam War, Cold War

Insignia, Patches, Medals,
Badges, Wings, Hats,
Uniforms, Flags, Gideons,
and more!

NCHSINC.COM
eBay store: NCHS

George Petersen
US Army 1964-67
Vietnam 1966

Direct Email:
gpete2000@aol.com

From Bavaria to the **PHILIPPINES**

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Private First Class Bob Wolf rode in a jeep along an exposed hill in Germany's Ruhr Valley when he heard an enemy artillery round screeching toward him. He was out with his battalion operations officer, looking for a place to set up a forward command post. Wolf hit the ground as the shell exploded and fragments tore through the air. A chunk landed next to him and, without thinking, he reached for it before the heat from the smoking hot shard caused him to pull his hand away.

Wolf, an intelligence staffer with the 86th Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 343rd Infantry Regiment, wore dog tags around his neck with the letter "H" for "Hebrew." Dangling with his dog tags was a mezuzah, a small tube with a piece of parchment inscribed with Hebrew verses from the Torah, which further identified his Jewish faith. "In retrospect," he later reflected, "one wonders how stupid anybody could have been to advertise to the Germans who the Jewish soldiers were."

By April 1945, the war in Europe was winding down. The great battles of Normandy, the Falaise Pocket, the Netherlands, and the Bulge had all happened the year before. The Rhine River had been crossed in late March. Now the Western Allies were aiming to knock out the German industrial area in the Ruhr, while the Soviets battled for Berlin.

Yet the war was still deadly—German soldiers, looking to draw blood as the Third Reich crumbled, still fought. And the American Army still needed soldiers to fight them. Wolf's division had been slated for amphibious operations in the Pacific, but there were so many American casualties at the Battle of the Bulge that the Army rerouted them to Europe instead. "We would have been ready for Okinawa," Wolf said, "but we got turned around."

When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, igniting the war in Europe, Wolf was only 14 and living in New Rochelle, New York. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, he was 16 and living in Miami, Florida, working on an 11th grade physics project. But the draft age was 21. "It never occurred to me that I would be in the war," he said.

In early 1942, however, the U.S. military lowered the draft age to 20 but to Wolf, the war still seemed a distant possibility. In the fall of 1942, it was lowered to 18. "By then I was 17," he recalled, "and at that point it was getting dangerous." In the summer of 1943, he headed off to Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

"I was going to be drafted in early September," he remembered, "but the Army made me an offer that was difficult to refuse." On August 24, 1943, the day before his 18th birthday, he joined the Army's Enlisted Reserve, which would allow him to complete his first semester

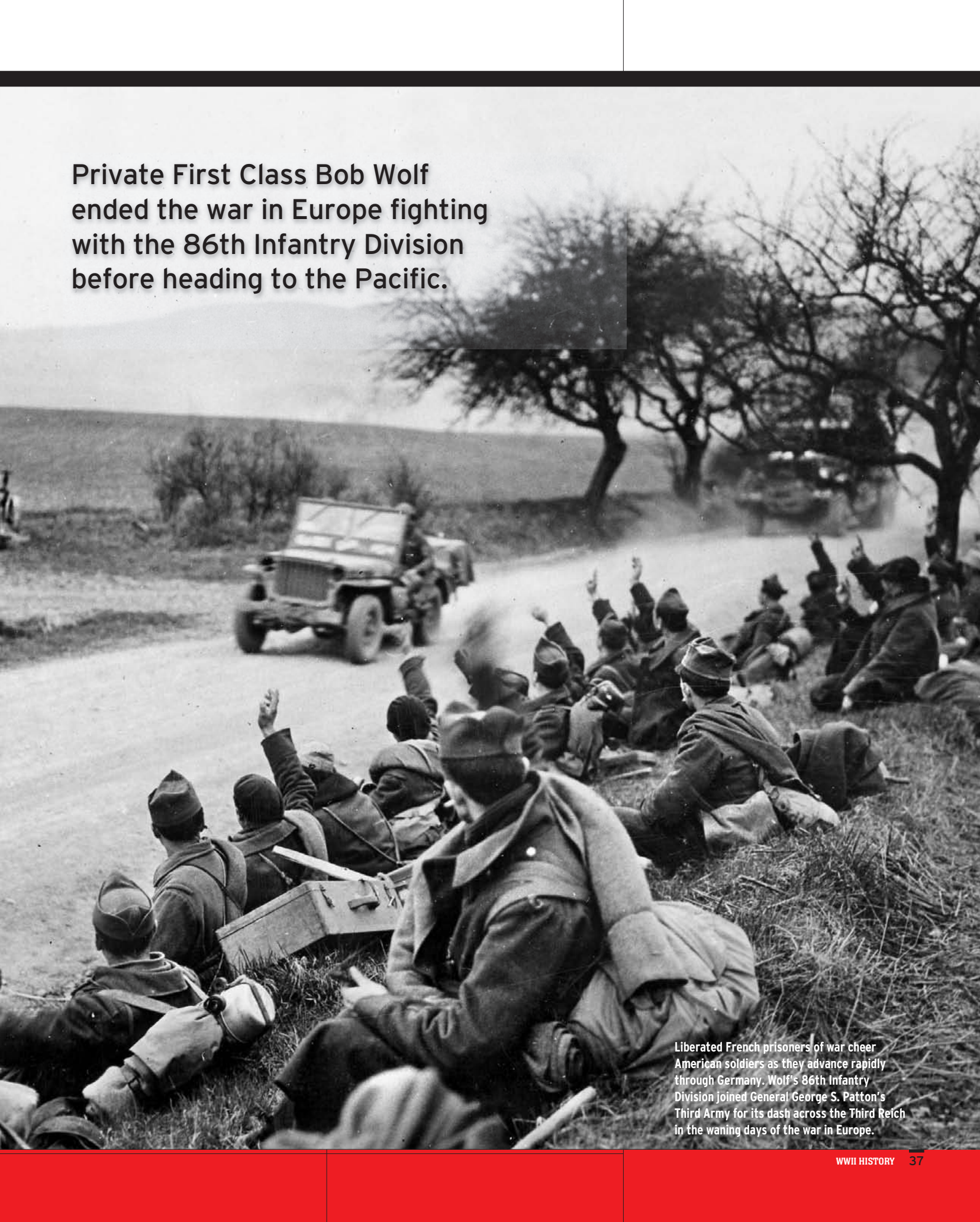
Photo courtesy Bob Wolf



PFC Bob Wolf served with one of the battalion intelligence teams for the 86th Infantry Division.



Private First Class Bob Wolf ended the war in Europe fighting with the 86th Infantry Division before heading to the Pacific.



Liberated French prisoners of war cheer American soldiers as they advance rapidly through Germany. Wolf's 86th Infantry Division joined General George S. Patton's Third Army for its dash across the Third Reich in the waning days of the war in Europe.



Both: National Archives

at Yale and ensure his entry into the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which sent promising enlistees to universities to learn skills such as engineering, medicine, and foreign languages.

Wolf reported for duty at Fort Devens, northwest of Boston, Massachusetts, on November 5, 1943—the same day the War Department decided to dissolve ASTP. The war required soldiers, not scholars. Unaware of his changed prospects, he reported for 17 weeks of basic training at Fort Benning (Fort Moore as of 2023) in Georgia. While on field exercises in January, 1944, he came down with pneumonia and then German Measles. When he was finally released from the hospital, he had to join a different training company to complete his training.

After basic, Wolf and his new buddies were sent to Camp Livingston, in Alexandria, Louisiana, to join the 86th Infantry Division, under the command of Maj. Gen. Harris M. Melasky. The division had been gutted of its riflemen, who were needed overseas, and was now filled with former ASTPers, former Army Air Forces cadets, and coastal artillerymen. “They were well-motivated people with very good morale,” said Wolf wryly.

While Allied forces under General Dwight

D. Eisenhower assaulted the beaches of northern France on June 6, 1944—D-Day, Wolf, assigned to Company C, of the division’s 343rd Infantry Regiment, trained in central Louisiana’s Piney Woods. With Wolf’s ability to speak German, he was eventually transferred to the 1st Battalion’s S-2 Intelligence Section. “That made my mother feel really good,” he said. “She didn’t know it meant scouts.”

The Intelligence Section consisted of five other privates and a sergeant. Wolf remembered them as an oddball bunch. One soldier named Robbie hailed from Bangor, Maine, where his parents ran a coal and ice business. Another, Tony Tappen, was the son of an English diamond merchant who brought his family to the United States at the start of the war. Then there was John DeLorean, who often wore aviator glasses (and would later go on to form his own car company). “He was really a bad boy,” Wolf recalled. DeLorean also had his own way of doing things. “That was the first time I ever heard of marijuana.”

Wolf’s best friend, however, was Jerry Shpall, a soldier from Denver in E Company. “He was the extravert and I was the introvert,” said Wolf. “He led me astray.” The two enjoyed Sunday dinners with local families, or drinks at local bars. Sometimes they rented a room at Alexandria’s Hotel Bentley. “We could pack 10 people in a room.” The experience taught Wolf his limits. “I learned my capacity for beer, whisky, and wine,” he said. “Beer on the base was 3.2-percent alcohol beer and you had to drink more than you could stomach to get drunk.” For Passover, Wolf and Shpall got passes and attended a community Seder at the local temple. “Jerry’s family was orthodox and my family was not,” he recalled, “so the second night we went to the Orthodox synagogue.”

After training at Camp Livingston, the entire division shipped out for Camp San Luis Obispo, California, for amphibious training. They practiced climbing down cargo nets into Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVP) boats, while the Intelligence Section trained in rubber boats. It was during this training in December of 1944 that the Germans launched their winter offensive in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg. Instead of the Pacific, the division sailed from Boston for Le Havre, France, on a converted passenger liner. During the voyage, soldiers took turns Topside duty searching for German U-boats was “cold,” Wolf recalled.

The division reached France in early March and assembled at Camp Old Gold, one of the

nine camps named after cigarette brands in Normandy. After about two weeks the men headed out in 40-and-8 trains, so named because each car could hold 40 men or 8 horses, which took them to the outskirts of the German city of Cologne. “The city center was bombed out,” Wolf said, “but there were some mansions a mile back on a leafy street.” Wolf helped set up the battalion headquarters in a mansion, where he kept the battalion journal and worked as a “gofer.”

One night, Wolf spied a strange group of Americans wearing all sorts of uniforms walking into battalion headquarters. Looking back on the incident today, he realized they might have been the Ritchie Boys, German and Austrian immigrants, many of them Jewish, who were trained at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, and served as U.S. Army intelligence soldiers. “Whoever they were, they were obviously a very peculiar bunch.”

Soon after, Wolf went into Cologne and discovered its underground wine caves. “There was still wine there!” he recalled. Since no one had brought a corkscrew, Wolf and his comrades innovated. “I remember breaking off the neck of a bottle on the wine racks,” he said. He got sick from the wine.

After their stint in Cologne, on April 5, the 86th Division packed up, crossed the Rhine River, and joined General Courtney Hodges’ First Army, which at that time was squeezing the Ruhr Pocket from the south. Both the American First and Ninth armies had surrounded Germany’s Army Group B in the Ruhr industrial valley and were in the process of reducing it.

While most of the division joined the battle of the Pocket, Wolf’s battalion was detached to the 95th Infantry Division. Wolf spent most of the campaign in a jeep. It was then that he saw his first dead body, a young German lying on the side of the road. “I remember that his hair looked dead,” he recalled.

The battalion staff soon set up a headquarters in a house. The intelligence section was at work when enemy artillery came roaring in. “It was a pretty good bombardment,” Wolf recalled. As the men charged downstairs to the cellar, Wolf almost bumped the battalion executive officer off the steps. After that scare, the battalion was soon underway again. It was during this time that Wolf found himself next to his jeep as the German artillery round exploded near him.



ABOVE: A dead German soldier sprawled on the street of an unidentified German city. Describing the first dead body he ever saw, a young German lying by the side of the road, Private First Class Bob Wolf recalled that even “his hair looked dead.” **OPPOSITE:** American troops easily breached the “dragon’s teeth” antitank barriers of the Siegfried Line, Germany’s last man-made line of defense. Wolf passed through the line on his way to the Germany city of Cologne.

Wolf spent his time clearing houses for headquarters and billets, evacuating German civilians, and taking the surrender of increasing numbers of German troops. “They were most concerned that we might turn them over to the Russians,” he explained. Wolf found the Germans quite willing to rid themselves of their weapons. “I scored a P-38 pistol,” he said. The Germans were mostly docile, but the liberated Eastern European slave laborers Wolf came across were not. “They were terrorizing the civilian population.”

A few days into the campaign, Wolf was checking houses when he discovered a dead woman laid out on a bed with flowers strewn around her. “It frightened me,” he recalled. “I worried that there might be someone under the bed.” That night, he went to sleep on a wooden bench in a village pub when news came in that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. It was April 12. “It was an eerie day,” he said.

On April 19, the 86th joined General George S. Patton’s Third Army, as it raced through the Bavarian region of Germany. The entire division picked up speed as it plowed south. “It was mostly a romp,” said Wolf. The division used the Autobahn to advance quickly towards the city of Munich, but at the last minute, it diverted east to Freising to capture an enemy airbase. “We went through it so fast.”

Wolf now enjoyed his jeep rides. “It was a beautiful spring,” he recalled. “Lovely weather, with green grass and flowers growing everywhere.” He was riding with the battalion executive officer when they stopped at a farm and Wolf found a chicken nest filled with eggs. He pocketed as many eggs as he could. Later, he put his hand in his pocket only to realize the eggs had all broken. “That’s when I learned what a marble nest egg was,” he said. “It busted up all the other eggs.”

One day, Wolf spotted some German soldiers on a hillside. He drew his M-1 rifle, along with the soldiers around him and opened fire. “We were peppering them,” he said. “Of course, we didn’t hit anything.” Decades later, he came away impressed from the movie *Saving Private Ryan* and the accuracy of the American soldiers shooting Germans in the fictional town of Remel. “Every



Both: National Archives



time they took a bead on a German, they hit him," he said. "That was not our outfit."

On May 1, Wolf's battalion was in reserve when word reached them that General Patton would be visiting. "We polished everything but he never showed up." Adolf Hitler's death had more of an effect. "We learned about Hitler's death on May 2," he recalled. "We were all overjoyed, but by then the jig was up."

ABOVE: Tanks and infantrymen of the 86th Infantry Division advance through the bombed-out German town of Ingolstadt on April 27, 1945. Private First Class Wolf spent most his time clearing houses and accepting the surrender of German troops. **LEFT:** Soldiers of the 86th Infantry Division leave the troop transport that brought them home from Europe before being shuttled to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on June 19, 1945. Wolf visited his mother and new stepfather in New York before reporting to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. **OPPOSITE:** Veterans of the 86th clean and oil their rifles at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, after they completed retraining on their weapons. They would soon ship out to the Pacific Theater, even though the war had ended.

Wolf and his battalion had penetrated about five miles into Austria, north of Salsburg, when, on May 8, 1945, the war in Europe ended. To celebrate VE-Day, Wolf and several comrades drove a jeep to Berchtesgaden, Adolf Hitler's mountain retreat. They found Hitler's house bombed out despite what seemed like two-foot thick walls. Books were scattered around the entrance. Upon entering, Wolf immediately recognized the huge picture window that looked out on the surrounding mountains. He had seen it before in photographs of Neville Chamberlain's visit in 1938. "It had a spectacular view," said Wolf. He found a book on the Russian winter campaign of 1941 and 42, filled with elaborate maps and overlays. "I took that but somehow it ended up with one of the officers."

Wolf thought he could relax, having survived the war, but a company commander soon called out the formation and put everyone through the manual of arms. The men drilled with their rifles until the final order of pulling their triggers. Someone's rifle fired. "Everybody but the guy who did it was laughing," Wolf recalled. "Nobody was hurt."

The division then transferred to Manheim, where Wolf and his team were billeted across the street from some German families. Wolf made friends with one of the families. "I never met a Nazi and never met anyone who hated a Jew," he said. "They were all honest citizens who worked six days a week and went for a Sunday walk, not a Nazi in the bunch."

After a week or two, the division was transferred back to Camp Old Gold. With the war still raging in the Pacific, the 86th Division would head to the United States, then across the Pacific to fight the Japanese. "We had amphibious training, so the Army wanted us there," said Wolf.

The men boarded the SS *Panama* for the trip across the Atlantic. Wolf spent most of his time playing bridge. "That was a happy time," he said. The ship arrived in New York, where



Wolf visited his mother and new stepfather. She had remarried the previous October, so Wolf gained two step brothers.

All the Black Hawk soldiers were given 30-day leaves before reporting to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. Wolf had begun training at Gruber when the atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima. "There was much gladness," he said. "The war is over, we're going to be discharged." But it was not to be. "Next thing we knew, the orders had been cut, and we're going to the Pacific."

As they headed to California, many of the men talked about going AWOL, but it slowly dawned on everyone that it was not an option. One man did manage to stay while the others shipped out: John DeLoren. "If there was a way of getting out of things, he did it," Wolf said.

The men boarded a troop ship that took them to Taal, Batangas Province in southern Luzon, the Philippines. After a few days, the men were transferred to a camp near Marikina, on the outskirts of Manila. There, Wolf and his comrades guarded Japanese prisoners. "They were fat and happy," said Wolf. "They were doing much better on American food."

Wolf attended the war crimes trials for the Japanese generals Masaharu Homma and Tomoyuki Yamashita. He came away from the Yamashita trial thinking it was a sham. "There was so much perjury, he recalled. "Young girls would testify to all kinds of mistreatment that didn't make sense."

Yamashita was on trial for the atrocities committed by Japanese naval infantry in Manila in February of 1945, even though he was neither in the city, nor actually in command of the naval infantry who committed the atrocities. He had retreated to the mountains and declared Manila abandoned. The navy had disobeyed his orders. "He was tried for having failed to prevent atrocities," Wolf said.

Both Homma and Yamashita were found guilty of war crimes and hanged. During an additional trial for a Japanese major of the Naval Infantry, Wolf departed the courtroom with his battalion commander who said, "If they are trying him for having failed to control his troops, they should have me in the next courtroom for what some of the men in my battalion did in Germany."

As the months passed, Wolf's rank increased until he became the battalion sergeant major. The point system to go home required 85 points (from rank, time overseas, and awards). Wolf

had about 30 points at the end of war in Europe, but the point number started coming down until it reached 35. By then Wolf qualified. At the end of March, 1946, he boarded a ship headed home. "The mood on the ship was pretty happy," he said. When he returned to the United States, he was discharged from the Army on April 24. He would later say, "I served for two years, five months, and twenty days, and when I got out I still wasn't old enough to buy a drink."

Returning to Yale, Wolf graduated in 1949 and went to work for an importer in New York. Later, he took a job at his uncle's liquidating business in Miami, Florida. Still not satisfied, he drove to New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1951, and found a job with J. Aron & Co., coffee importers and sugar refiners.

While at J. Aron & Co., Wolf went on a blind date with Marie Kohlmeyer, fell in love, and married her in 1956. They had three boys: David, John, and James. Not long after their wedding, Wolf's father-in-law asked him why he worked for a family business that he would never truly be a part of, when he could work for a family business of his own. He went to work for Kohlmeyer Company for the next 17 years.

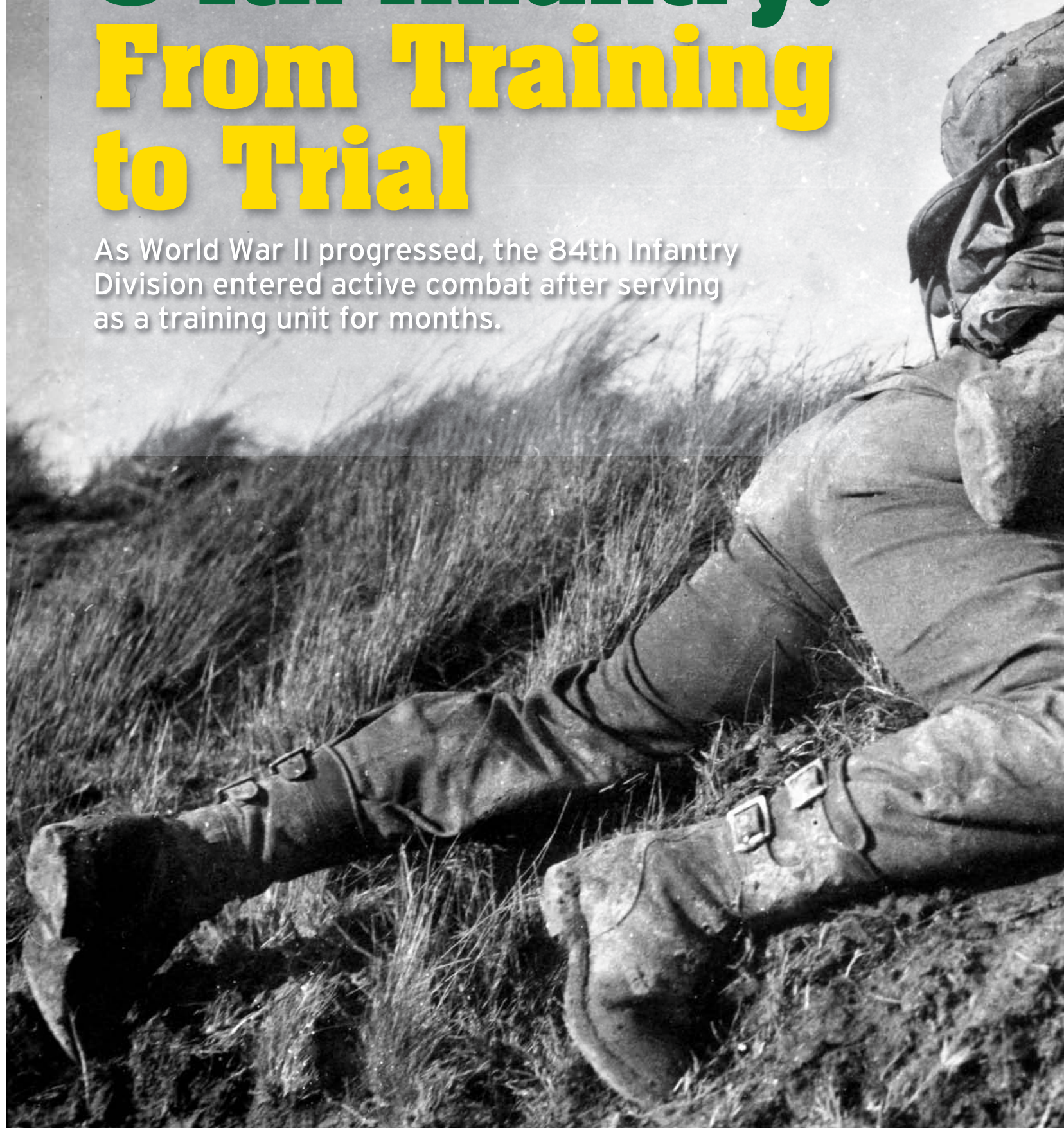
He would later work for the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C., and became the vice president for finance of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. He returned to New Orleans in 1983, and worked as a broker until he retired in 2000. He has been a volunteer at the National World War II Museum for the last 22 years, where he shares his war stories with interested patrons.

Looking back on the war, he admits that it taught him a lot. "I learned a lot about myself," he said. "I learned that I could manage and I could get through it." □

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel works as a historian for the U.S. Army. He is the author of Patton's War, Volumes 1 and 2 and leads tours of General George S. Patton's battlefields for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours. His article "Fighting a Two Front War" for this magazine is being made into the major motion picture Six Triple Eight by Tyler Perry for Netflix.

84th Infantry: From Training to Trial

As World War II progressed, the 84th Infantry Division entered active combat after serving as a training unit for months.





As casualties mounted in the fall of 1944, the U.S. Army began experiencing a problematic manpower shortage in the ranks of its infantry. Fresh troops from the numerous Replacement Depots (“repple deppels”) couldn’t keep up with demand, resulting in some American “training units” being redesignated for combat in order to fill the void. The 84th Infantry Division “Railsplitters” answered that call and would prove they were up to the task in some of the heaviest fighting in Northwestern Europe.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II, few American units would have been less likely to see combat than the 84th Infantry—its entire function was to train GIs for combat and then, after the completion of that training, to see them off as they were reassigned to combat-designated units.

The 84th Division had been a training unit since its activation in September 1917 at

BY JAMES G. BILDER

Camp Taylor, Kentucky. Conscripts, primarily from Kentucky and Indiana, were sent there to be trained as “Doughboys” in the ranks of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). The 84th deployed to France in October 1918, to hone the training of replacement infantrymen before sending them to frontline units, but the assignment was short-lived as the war ended on November 11.

In 1921, the 84th ID was again designated as a reserve unit and headquartered in Indiana. Ten months after Pearl Harbor, it was again activated as a training unit at Camp Howze, Texas. As combat spread across the Mediterranean, Northwest Europe, throughout Asia and the Pacific, there was a huge demand for manpower. By war’s end, the Army had 91 active infantry divi-

A soldier of Company G, 335th Infantry Regiment, fires on German positions near the town of Beeck, Germany, November 29, 1944. The 335th Regiment was part of the 84th Infantry Division—a training unit deployed to Europe as the U.S. Army experienced a shortage of combat troops.

National Archives



Accompanying M4 Sherman medium tanks into an open field, soldiers of the 333rd Infantry Regiment advance toward a German pillbox near the town of Prummern, Germany. The 84th Division trained American soldiers for combat and then also deployed to Europe.

National Archives

sions of about 15,000 men each—nearly 70 percent of U.S. military personnel. More than 11 million of the approximately 16 million men who served in the war were in the U.S. Army, two-thirds of whom were conscripts.

The Normandy invasion in June 1944 and the hedgerow fighting that followed were successful but terribly costly, and everyone knew the fighting ahead would be ferocious as the war came closer to German soil.

The Pacific was much the same, with Army divisions retaking the Aleutian Islands and relieving Marines in the Solomons, as well as assisting Marines in the Marianas and at Peleliu. With most of New Guinea retaken, General Douglas MacArthur required even more army infantry as he prepared for an invasion to liberate the Philippines.

Finally, with the capture of Rome two days before the Normandy landings, General Mark Clark's Fifth U.S. Army had clawed its way north up the mountainous Italian Peninsula paying dearly for every inch of ground taken.

The Army needed every able-bodied male between 18 and 35 on the battlefield as soon as possible. The 84th was reassigned to an

active duty combat division and embarked for England on September 20, 1944. After landing at Omaha Beach in November, it was shipped to Gulpen, The Netherlands, courtesy of the Red Ball Express.

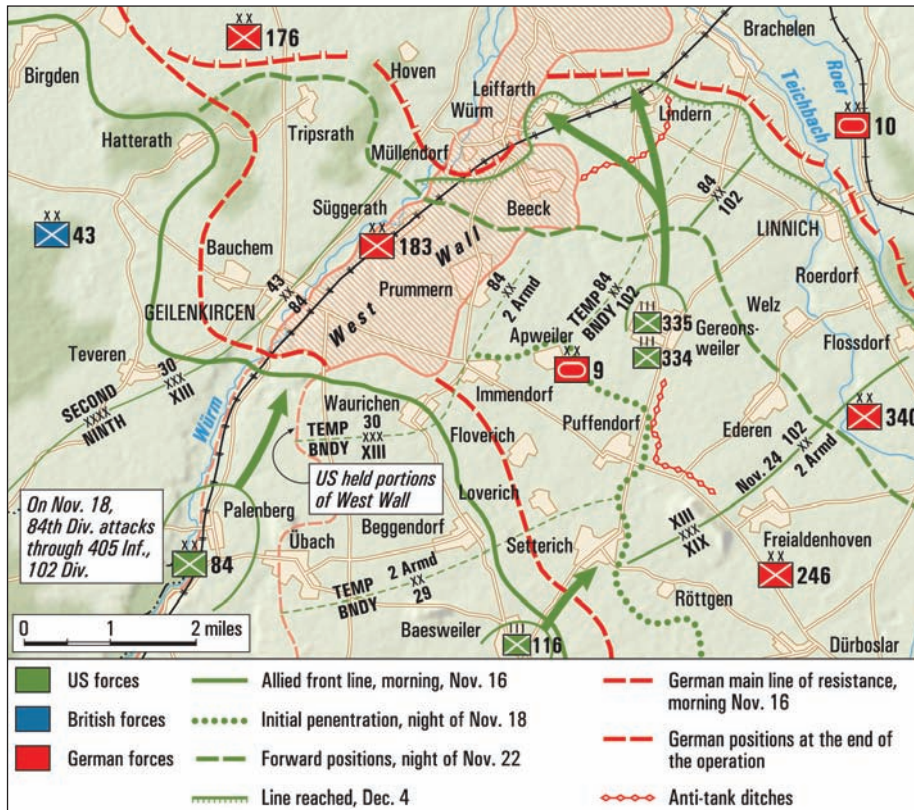
Allied offensives in Northwest Europe in the fall of 1944 had inflicted horrific casualties on the Germans, as well as their own ranks. British and American forces had been routed in September during Field Marshal Montgomery's ill-fated Operation Market-Garden.

At roughly the same time, General Courtney Hodges's First U.S. Army advanced through the Hurtgen Forest, where it was mauled before winning a largely symbolic victory along the German border when Aachen finally capitulated on October 21, 1944. The first significant German city captured by the U.S., Aachen was strategically important as the jump point for an all-out assault on the Siegfried Line. Unfortunately, manpower and gasoline shortages halted the U.S. plan to drive into the heart of the Reich.

At the time, General George S. Patton, Jr., was faring no better. Locked in a stalemate for more than two months in Lorraine around Metz and its fortresses, Third Army casualties increased dramatically. When the city fell on November 18, Third Army—like Hodges's First—lacked the men and fuel to push through the Siegfried Line into Germany. Despite the high human costs, there was a sense of impending Allied victory in the air as newer and more grand offensives were planned. One of those was Operation Queen, a plan for the northern section of the Western Front with its primary objectives to seize the Roer River as a jump off point against the Rhine and to gain control of the Hurtgen Forest. Within Operation Queen was a plan to eliminate the German salient at Geilenkirchen, codenamed Operation Clipper.

Under temporary British command in XXX Corp, the men of the 84th ID would spearhead the drive against the town of Geilenkirchen. As part of the Siegfried Line, or West Wall, it was expected to be heavily defended.

Fortunately for the Allies, the West Wall had been largely forgotten by the Germans. After the war, Gen. Siegfried Westphal would note that, "the defensive value of these constructions



ABOVE: During the heavy fighting against German forces around the town of Geilenkirchen, Germany, troops of the 84th Infantry Division participated in Operation Clipper, an offensive effort to eliminate an enemy salient. Operation Clipper was part of a larger offensive code named Operation Queen, and fighting in and around Geilenkirchen lasted for days. RIGHT: General Guenther Blumentritt commanded the German XII SS Corps during heavy fighting at the Siegfried Line and the Ruhr Pocket in the waning months of the war in Europe.

was so minimal that the soldiers preferred to live in the trenches under the open sky rather than have the concrete ceilings collapse over their heads.”

The commander of the 84th ID was Major General Alexander R. Bolling, a “mustang” officer who had begun his career as a private. Admitted to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1915, he quit the next year to enlist in the army. He was part of America’s Punitive Expedition in Mexico (1916-17) and during World War I was awarded a battlefield commission as a 2nd lieutenant and decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism.

Bolling’s chief of staff was Colonel Louis Truman, a West Point graduate and cousin of Harry Truman, who had been elected vice president as the 84th was en route to Holland.

Both Bolling and Truman had served under Patton—Bolling in Mexico during the hunt for Pancho Villa, and Truman in 1940 at Fort Benning as a staff and logistics officer for the 2nd Armored Division. Though it was the 84th Infantry’s first time in combat, they had every confidence in their outfit. As reassurance to the men, Bolling made sure word got out that the “old man” was sleeping in the blue silk pajamas his wife had packed.

The 84th would jump off against Geilenkirchen on November 18, and though untested in combat, the odds were still in the Americans’ favor. The 183rd Volksgrenadier Division defending the town was cobbled from Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe non-combatants, civilians, and the battle scarred remnants of the original 183rd Infantry Division.

To the north and west of Geilenkirchen were the German 176th “kranken” (sick) Division, full of the chronically ill and elderly, as well as seriously wounded combat veterans. Both the 176th and 183rd Divisions were part of the XII SS Corps under Gen. Guenther Blumentritt.

Though his infantry was weak, Blumentritt’s 301st Tank Battalion contained a whop-

ping 31 Tiger I tanks—roughly one-third of all the Tigers on the Western Front—and 21 mobile assault guns from his 559th Assault Gun Battalion.

A Catholic Bavarian, Blumentritt was never a member of the SS and had little in common with the Protestant military clique that was Prussia. A career military man, primarily a staff officer, he was considered a gifted strategist and tactician. While historians contend that he was a likely collaborator in the July 20 plot to kill Hitler, the Führer, amazingly, believed otherwise. Blumentritt was even awarded the Knight’s Cross with Oak Leaves, one of Nazi Germany’s highest military honors. During the 1950s and 60s, he assisted in the post war rearmament of West Germany as directed by the leaders of the NATO alliance.

In the assault on Geilenkirchen, the 84th ID would have British infantry and armor on its left for support. The 43rd Wessex Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. Ivor Thomas were battle hardened and eager for payback after

National Archives



participating in Operation Market Garden.

The British armor was M4 Shermans from the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards (cavalry) as well as specialized tanks from the 79th Armored Division—unusual configurations such as minesweepers and ramp carriers known as “Hobart’s Funnies.” On their right, the 84th ID would have the American 2nd Armored “Hell on Wheels” Division, in combat since North Africa. The 102nd “Ozark”



National Archives

ABOVE: Infantrymen of the 84th Division join with machine gunners aboard Sherman tanks to concentrate fire on a German sniper holed up in Geilenkirchen. The fight for the German village lasted for more than three days. **OPPOSITE:** Along with the U.S. 84th Infantry Division, the heavy armor of the British 34th Tank Brigade, 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards, and the 79th Armored Division wrested control of Geilenkirchen from the Germans.

Division, also new to combat, would provide infantry support.

P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bombers from the U.S. XXIX Tactical Air Command along with Supermarine Spitfire IXs from the RAF Second Tactical Air Force would provide close air support. Little resistance was expected from the Luftwaffe.

The fight for Geilenkirchen began at 6:55 a.m. on November 18, 1944, with artillery shelling outside the town to clear a path for the American advance. Col. John Roosma, commanding the 334th Infantry Regiment had his battle-naïve men step off and move through the lines of the 102nd ID as they advanced about three miles along Geilenkirchen's eastern edge toward Prummern and Suggesth.

Mine-clearing tanks were ineffective in

muddy conditions, so combat engineers using mine detectors had to manually clear German minefields.

The GI at the most forward point of 334th's advance was Private John Shaw. Recalling the incident years later, Shaw said, "All of a sudden, a German in a window, about three blocks away, opened up on our column in this trench with a machine gun and, of course, we all just hit the dirt. We just waited there for somebody to do something. Finally, a British tank lumbered up the street off to our side and fired two shells right into that window so that was the end of that!"

As the GIs of Roosma's 334th advanced, they ran into some of the many German pillboxes around Geilenkirchen. Armor from the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Regiment helped to flush out the defending Germans, who were getting some fire support from their own mortar teams, but generally chose surrender rather than going toe-to-toe with the battle-eager Americans.

Small teams of GIs neutralized many pillboxes at night in hit and run attacks. The Brits were also moving on their objectives to the south and west of Geilenkirchen. After securing Bauchem and Tripsrath, they would link up with the Americans on the high ground north of Geilenkirchen—encircling the town and closing off any possible escape routes. GIs from the 333rd Infantry Regiment would then enter Geilenkirchen and mop any remaining enemy resistance.

Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, commander of XXX Corps, was encouraged by the initial success of Operation Clipper and decided to press his advantage. He wanted to close the circle early by having the Americans move on Suggesth and Prummern a day ahead of schedule. Three companies of GIs secured Prummern relatively quickly against fairly light resistance.

The seemingly one-sided part of the battle was about to end as British reconnaissance reported enemy reinforcements on the way. The 15th Panzergrenadier Division, with about 4,500 infantry, was moving south presumably to reinforce Geilenkirchen. Prummern lay in their path, so Lt. Col. Lloyd Gomes prepared his 1st Battalion for a desperate fight to come

the following day.

The Germans attacked the following evening with six tanks and two companies of infantry, many of whom were veterans of the Eastern Front. The front line was fluid, and the intense fighting lasted into the following morning.

Daylight revealed the U.S. defenses had held and British Churchill “Crocodile” flamethrower tanks eliminated any remaining German opposition. The Americans had only 10 dead, but the number of wounded was significant at 180.

A gap had developed between 84th ID and the American 2nd Armored Division, exposing the Allied right flank. Bolling reported to the Ninth Army, “Our flank is sort of out in the breeze now.”

The 9th Panzer Division seized the opportunity to engage the American 2nd Armored Division. But the 9th Panzer was a remnant of its former self, and its assault against the Americans fell far short. Still, it forced the 2nd Armored to hold in place. Ninth Army command then used the untested 405th Regiment from the 102nd ID to plug the gap.

The British also had to deal with counterattacks as the 104th Panzergrenadier Regiment, part of the very capable 15th Panzergrenadier Division, hit them using two Tiger II tanks and two self-propelled guns. The British had five Sherman tanks ready to counter the Tigers, but German panzerfausts and artillery quickly knocked out four of the Shermans.

With quick thinking and great courage, the British soldiers used PIATs (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) to slow the enemy armor, allowing flanking fire from British artillery at Tripsrath to inflict significant losses on the attacking Germans, who were forced to retreat.

The American 333rd Infantry Regiment, with British armored support, moved into Geilenkirchen proper and forced the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division to retreat into pillboxes on the outskirts of the city.

Sergeant Donald Phelps of K Company in the 333rd Regiment remembered that the plan was to flush them out that night. “We found that we could sneak up easily to pillboxes at night—hit and run,” Phelps said. “The biggest problem in this type of action was that the

rigor emplacements of the German army in the pillboxes had everything so zeroed in that all major road intersections were under constant interdicting fire.”

The Americans taking the pillboxes developed tactics very like the “blowtorch and corkscrew” method used by U.S. infantry in the Pacific—flamethrowers forced the enemy to hunker down inside their spider holes, pillboxes, or caves, as advancing American troops moved forward and dropped grenades or a satchel charge near any openings to eliminate or entomb their foes inside. The explosives served as a kind of reverse corkscrew.

The men of the 84th ID, still relatively fresh to combat, were about to get a lesson in “tree bursts”—exploding artillery shells shattered trees, turning their wooden splinters into deadly shards of flying shrapnel.

“We got through Geilenkirchen and we started on the road that we thought was taking us right to Berlin,” Private John Shaw said. “We felt great and we were pretty excited about being in the war. And after we had gone about 500 yards up the road, the 88s started coming in. Like fools, we ran into a little woods and all of us tried our best to dig into

National Archives





National Archives

the ground. We used our hands to just try to claw the dirt, trying to dig in. Meantime, these shells were coming into the trees and bursting all around us and our friends were being hit and were screaming for medics. This lasted, it seemed, for about half an hour, (but) I suppose it lasted about five minutes.”

By November 21, Geilenkirchen and the majority of its surrounding objectives had been seized. Heavy rains prevented any further advance, but Operation Clipper was a success as most of the salient had been eliminated.

Among the newly minted combat veterans of the 84th ID was an unlikely member—Private Fritz G.A. Kraemer. Born in Essen, Germany, to Jewish parents, he earned a law degree from the University of Frankfurt in 1931 and a doctorate in political science from the University of Rome three years later. As Hitler solidified his hold over Germany in the 1930s, Kraemer served independently as a senior legal advisor to the League of Nations. He stayed on in that role even after Hitler pulled Germany out of the League in 1933.

Kraemer, a Lutheran and strong opponent

of Nazism, fled to America with his wife and son in 1939. He was inducted into the U.S. Army in April 1943 as a private at the age of 34. He would go on to serve as a member of the White House national security staff for numerous presidents and become a protege of future Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as well as General Alexander Haig.

“I do remember very clearly now the feelings we had, like all men who go into battle for the very first time,” Kraemer said. “We were uncertain. We were very unsure of ourselves. We knew very well that combat was very different from training. We had met the enemy and, while we certainly had not performed any great heroics, we felt our self-confidence greatly increase.”

On November 26, the 84th Division became whole again as they were reunited with their 335th Regiment near Immendorf, Germany. After arriving in France, the 335th had been temporarily attached to the 30th “Old Hickory” Infantry Division and had been fighting in Wurselen during the battle for Geilenkirchen proper. The baptism of fire that the men of the 335th Regiment had received at Wurselen was under the tutorage of some of the most capable combat vets in the U.S. Army at the time.

A regiment of the 30th ID, had held Hill 314 at Mortain the previous August, the only GIs holding meaningful high ground and thus capable of calling down artillery fire to stop the Germans’ armored juggernaut that was roaring toward Normandy. Outnumbered four-to-one—running out of food, water, and ammunition—they held this vital position for six days before being relieved. Their tenacity and courage was instrumental in stopping the German counterattack cold in its tracks.

More than 75 years later their heroic actions were recognized with a Presidential Unit Citation by President Donald Trump in March 2020. The 30th ID’s tough reputation was so widely known during the war that the Germans referred to them as “Roosevelt’s SS.”

The next objective for the 84th ID was Lindern, Germany. With Prummern and Sùggerath



ABOVE: Trudging along a muddy road, American soldiers of the 333rd Infantry Regiment (84th Div.) advance near Suggarath during the fight for control of the German city of Würm. This photograph was taken in the early stages of the battle in late November 1944. **BELOW:** An infantryman of the 84th points his M3 submachine gun, popularly known as a “grease gun,” at a German soldier who has just thrown up his hands in surrender during the fight for Beeck, Germany. **OPPOSITE:** British Cromwell and American Sherman tanks gathered in a staging area before the assault on Lindern in Lower Saxony. Along with elements of the 84th Infantry Division, Allied forces captured the German town, at first with only light forces, and then held it against German counterattacks that ended in early December 1944.



Both: National Archives

in the 84th ID’s possession, Wurm and Beeck were logical targets but would require another frontal assault. Instead, it was decided to attack from the right flank (south-east) and move on Lindern. A success there would leave the Germans in Wurm and Beeck trapped in a vise with no choice other than to surrender or face annihilation.

The Germans occupied the high ground to the north and could observe the flat half-mile between Lindern and the potential American jump-off point at Gereonsweiler. German batteries east of the Roer River could be quickly called upon for support and a concentrated barrage could turn any American assault over such flat, open terrain into a disaster.

The answer to the dilemma was a feint from the American left coupled with a surprise attack from the right.

U.S. infantry had been probing Beeck for more than a week. The Germans were expecting an attack from the southwest. A heavy artillery barrage from the 333rd Regiment on Beeck would appear to be a preparatory move for an infantry assault.

But that assault would come not from the American left but rather from the right flank. As the Germans turned their attention and observers to the southwest, the 335th Regiment would move quickly from the southeast over the half mile of open ground to take Lindern.

On November 29, the GIs of the 335th Regiment moved up in the dark and jumped off at 6:30 in the morning with only small arms, ammunition, and chocolate bars. The Germans quickly caught onto the ruse and rained down fire on the Americans who were now running so fast that they were passing enemy pickets without bothering to engage. The rear units, Item Company and King Company, lost most of their platoons halfway to Lindern.

The three American platoons that reached Lindern found it lightly occupied as they continued on into the area just outside its boundaries. They dug in as ordered and waited to be reinforced. The few Germans in Lindern did not even know that the town had been “taken.”

Meanwhile, the dug-in units were unable to contact command to send in the armor



Ullstein

German soldiers move forward to oppose Allied forces in the vicinity of Geilenkirchen and Lindern. The first two soldiers in the center are armed with the Sturmgewehr 44, considered the world's first operational assault rifle. The Germans clung stubbornly to these towns and others within the borders of the Third Reich, but the 84th Infantry Division and other Allied units fought to push them out of the strong positions.

until a soldier had the idea of hooking the radio antenna to a fence post. American tanks were immediately dispatched, but by this time it was 1 p.m. and the enemy had dug in along the road and their artillery was alerted.

The Americans managed to get six Sherman tanks into Lindern. Had the Germans known the size of the force holding the town they could have easily taken it, but their response was limited and weak. By the time they were ready to attack in force, the American 335th was holding Lindern with infantry at battalion strength and some two dozen tanks

The German 9th Panzer continued to hit Lindern from November 29 through December 1. Losses of men and tanks were equal in each attack, but the Americans held. The Germans broke off their assaults on Lindern by December 2. Company K, 335th Regiment would later be awarded a Presidential Unit

Citation for its stand at Lindern.

Technician Sergeant Emanuel Planas, 3rd Platoon, Baker Company, 335th Regiment seemed to speak for the whole regiment, if not the entire 84th ID, when he said, "We felt we had gained more confidence in ourselves and our ability to fight. Now we knew the 9th Panzers were no better than we."

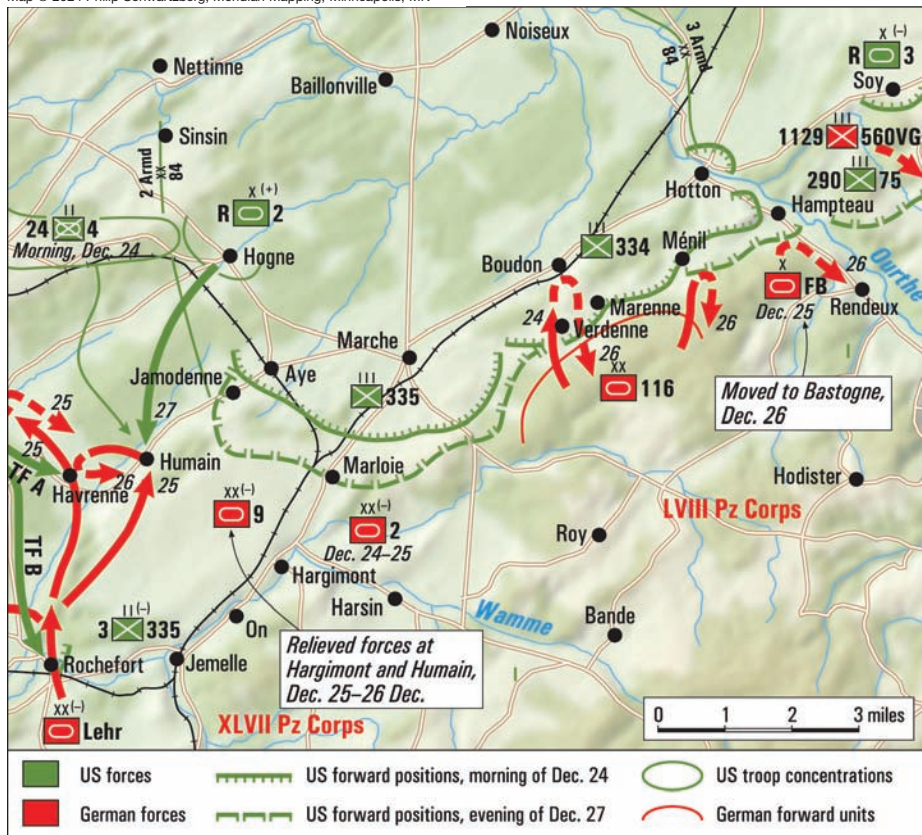
"To sum up the actions of the 84th Division in the Geilenkirchen area of the Siegfried Line," Col. Louis Truman said years later, "it had reduced or captured eight strongpoints or villages, it had captured or destroyed over 112 bunkers, it had captured 28 officers and over 1,500 enlisted men, it had engaged 15 different kinds of German units, including SS troops and panzer units, and, we might say, as an overall sum up, every mission had been accomplished."

The men of the 84th ID—called the "Hatchet Men" by the Germans after their ax-splitting-a-rail insignia—were now truly combat vets and moving forward as they expected to cross the Wurm and Roer Rivers on their way to the Rhine.

But the Germans had other ideas. It was early December, and Hitler was about to launch his Ardennes Offensive, a battle that would fully test the mettle of the 84th.

As the Allies trained and prepared to cross rivers into the Fatherland, the Germans had been training and preparing for their own beforeoffensive. They would move under the cover of fog, through the dense Ardennes Forest, and burst out unexpectedly north of Luxembourg. From there, they would drive northwest to the vital port of Antwerp, Belgium, capturing Allied fuel and supply dumps along the way to sustain their gas hungry tanks as they drove a wedge between the British and Americans on the Western Front.

The German attack began in dense fog at 4:30 a.m. on December 16 with a 90-minute artillery barrage from more than 1,600 guns. The main thrust would be led by the Sixth Panzer Army, consisting of four armored and five infantry divisions. At the tip of this spear was Joachim Peiper, an SS man and devoted Nazi as well as a highly experienced combat commander with almost 5,000 men and 600 vehicles under his command. Peiper would not tolerate delay and could not be bothered with guarding prisoners, making him ultimately responsible for the massacre of more than 80 American POWs by his men at Malmedy.



ABOVE: The 84th Infantry Division assumed a defensive role around the towns of Marche and Hooton as Allied forces sought to stem the German tide during the Battle of the Bulge. The Nazi Ardennes Offensive ended in failure after about a month of fighting. BELOW: Private Henry Higgan of the 84th Infantry Division cleans a German Sturmgewehr 44 assault rifle captured during the fighting at Suggarath. The Sturmgewehr brought tremendous firepower to the squad level in the hands of a single German soldier and was considered a formidable weapon in the last days of World War II.



Peiper and the German high command were frustrated because their drive was being delayed by resistance from the battle proven men of the American 2nd Infantry “Indian-head” Division as well as the untested men of the American 99th Infantry “Battle Babies” Division. Peiper captured 50,000 gallons of gas in the first two days of the offensive, but as U.S. forces fell back under the onslaught, they destroyed their own supply dumps and bridges.

While not in the direct path of the assault, the 84th ID was close enough for the Germans to try to brush them back. As the battle began, a battalion from the German 694th Volksgrenadiers hit a battalion of the 335th Regiment in the open area between the German towns of Lindern and Leiffarth. Simultaneously, the area around Wurm held by the U.S. 334th Regiment, was attacked by the 343rd Volksgrenadiers.

In both cases the Germans were pushed back but not before they infiltrated behind the 84th’s lines in the darkness. In their hasty retreat, a company-size unit of Germans was forced to stop at the edge of a minefield that had been set up in defense of their own lines—a fatal delay as U.S. artillery cut them to pieces.

The situation along the “Bulge” was generously described by Allied command as “fluid” when Bolling arrived for a briefing and instructions at First Army Headquarters in Verviers, Belgium, on December 20. The German objectives were not clear, nor was the strength or extent of the drive.

There was a real danger, however, that with the crossroads of Bastogne surrounded and under siege the enemy might be able to siphon enough men and vehicles away to cross the Meuse River and drive on toward Antwerp. Unlike 1940, the Allies would meet this Ardennes Offensive from the east side of the Meuse River.

Bolling was ordered to secure the bridge and roadway northwest of Bastogne between the towns of Marche and Hooton. He personally led the advance and arrived in Marche around 7 p.m. to it “held” by nothing more than two American MPs and about 10 engineers—the only obstacle preventing a German crossing of the Meuse until the arrival



Both: National Archives

of the 84th. The nearby German armor never realized that Marche had been essentially a ghost town. They had shelled the town and were waiting until the next day to attack.

By then 84th had been deployed and were ready to hold the line. Elements of the 334th Regiment had arrived late in the evening on December 20 and secured the town. The 333rd and 335th, would arrive to reinforce them the following day.

The 84th's other two regiments were badly needed as the area along the Marche-Hotton Bridge was thinly defended by troops in fox-holes 100 to 150 yards apart.

Probing for a weak spot in the American lines, the Germans seemed to have found one at the small Belgian village of Verdenne—if they could push through it on to the town of Bourdon, about a mile behind the center of the 84th's defensive line, they could cross the Meuse.

The Germans came at Verdenne at 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve with five Panther tanks, two halftracks, a single armored car, and 100-200 supporting infantry.

"[They] overran our position," 1st Lt.

Richard Hawkins of Able Company (334th Regiment) said, "This was one of the few times in which it became necessary for me to call in artillery on our own position."

Hawkins' call was answered by 81mm mortars that didn't drive the Germans out of Verdenne, but slowed their advance. Some of the 84th's men at Marche would now be used in a counterattack at Verdenne. The men of King Company, 333rd Regiment, set out at midnight to link up with some Sherman tanks before making their assault.

As King Company moved out of Marche, they mistakenly turned left instead of right, coming up on some tanks in the heavy darkness which they assumed were the Shermans. Banging on the nearest tank, Sergeant Donald Phelps shouted, "Hey you guys, open up!" The turret hatch opened and a figure stood up asking, "hallo, was ist los?" in a German accent.

Phelps shot him without hesitation, and bedlam followed with lead flying everywhere. King Company had stumbled onto tanks from the 1st Panther Battalion of the 16th Panzer Regiment under Maj. Gerhard Tebbe, a veteran of both the Eastern and Western Fronts.

King Company's mistake revealed that the Germans had been inching toward Bourdon in the dark. U.S. heavy artillery and mortars then opened up on Verdenne and the Germans moving toward Bourdon. By 1 a.m., the German armor was pulling back and the American infantry was entering Verdenne.

The Chateau Verdenne became the focal point of infantry combat, changing hands five times over three days. The fighting was often hand to hand as the chateau owner Baron Charles de Radzitsky d'Ostrowick and his daughter Elizabeth, along with a few residents from the town, hid in the cellar and winced at the gruesome sounds of soldiers killing each other with small arms, trench knives, and even bare hands.

As the Americans gained control several pockets of resistance in the 84th ID's sector were stubbornly holding out. Finally, Major Tebbe made a break for safety on December 26, moving his armor down the extremely narrow main street in Marenne.

Amazingly, he found the American vehicles along the street to be deserted, and encountered

no opposition along the way. But it was a ruse and like many Germans fleeing back to their original lines after the Bulge, they were picked off by American planes and artillery. Once Tebbe and his columns were on open ground, his forces were halted by several daisy chains—explosive clusters of mines triggered to explode simultaneously.

As his men and vehicles tried to scatter, the enormous shells from American 155mm and 105mm howitzers released a storm of destruction. From 6-7 p.m. on December 26, Tebbe lost six tanks and 19 vehicles, with some 240 German infantry killed or wounded. The Germans took one last shot at the 84th just south of Marche on January 2, 1945, but no longer had the material or attitude necessary for victory. The following day, the 84th ID, along with the 2nd Armored Division, would begin a drive that pushed the Germans in their sector back to their starting points.

Snow, rain, and sleet fell freely from the sky on January 3 and by afternoon the ground had frozen. The 335th Regiment and 2nd Armored Division kicked off the offensive moving south-east of Ny, Belgium. Before the advancing Americans were the 2nd SS Panzer, along with the 12th and 560th Volksgrenadier Divisions.

The infantry advanced without their armor—the tanks skidding and sliding on the frozen ground—moving up roughly 2,000 yards. The Germans held high ground near Beffe with 88s and antitank guns that were protected by machine-gun nests. Capt. James Burt took some men to probe the enemy strongpoint. Among them was Staff Sergeant Emanuel Planas who, in civilian life, had been a sheep herder in Utah. Burt thought the ground approaching their



ABOVE: Soldiers of the 334th Infantry Regiment try to repair a German armored vehicle, Sd.Kfz. 250 of 146 Artillery Regiment, 116th Armored Division of the Wehrmacht, captured by the Allies in Belgium, January 1945. German losses in tanks and troops as a result of the Battle of the Bulge were irreplaceable, and Hitler's desperate offensive actually contributed to shortening the war in Europe. **OPPOSITE:** In this wintry photograph, soldiers of Company I, 333rd Infantry Regiment, 84th Division, advance along a road covered in snow and ice near Forge à la Plez, Belgium. The 84th Division helped to slow the German assault during the Battle of the Bulge and then reduce the salient that had developed.

objective was too steep to cross.

Planas disagreed, telling his captain that “it takes a sheep man or a hunter to go through. We’ll zig zag down to the bottom.” The two platoons moved rapidly down and around the German artillery, whose crews surrendered after exchanging only a few shots with the daring Americans. A Belgian liaison officer had accompanied the GIs, and Planas would later be awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre with Palm for his heroics that day. He was hit in the thigh by machine-gun fire from a German tank near Consy Ridge two days later. He received the Purple Heart and remained in the army, but his fighting days were now behind him.

Many in the 84th were now wearing long underwear over their uniforms, thus creating their own winter camouflage. These outfits were called “spookies” by the GIs. The ruse worked, and many Germans were captured by a soldier from the 84th who seemingly appeared suddenly out of nowhere.

On January 16, 1945, the men of the 84th made contact with elements of the American 11th Armored “Thunderbolt” Division near the Ourthe River in Belgium. This was the official linking of the First and Third Armies and essentially the end of Germany’s last great offensive of World War II.

The 84th ID went on to cross the Roer River on February 23 and then the Rhine. They pushed through northern Germany before eventually linking up with Soviet troops at the Elbe River just south of Hamburg. They welcomed, and when possible, even assisted, thousands of German troops who were fleeing the Soviets so they could surrender to the Americans.

The “Railsplitters” of the 84th Infantry Division truly lived their motto of “Strike Hard” as they fulfilled each and every mission assigned to them. They exemplified how everyday men, trained as simple soldiers, could muster the courage, determination, and ingenuity necessary to achieve victory over the supposed “supermen” of Hitler’s Third Reich. □

Author James G. Bilder resides in Illinois and has written numerous books and articles on World War II historical topics.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Bouncing the Hitler Line

A costly Canadian armored attack was a setback for the arduous Allied campaign in Italy.

A Polish flag, followed minutes later by a Union Jack, appeared above the ruins of the abbey on the summit of Italy's 17,000-foot Monte Cassino.

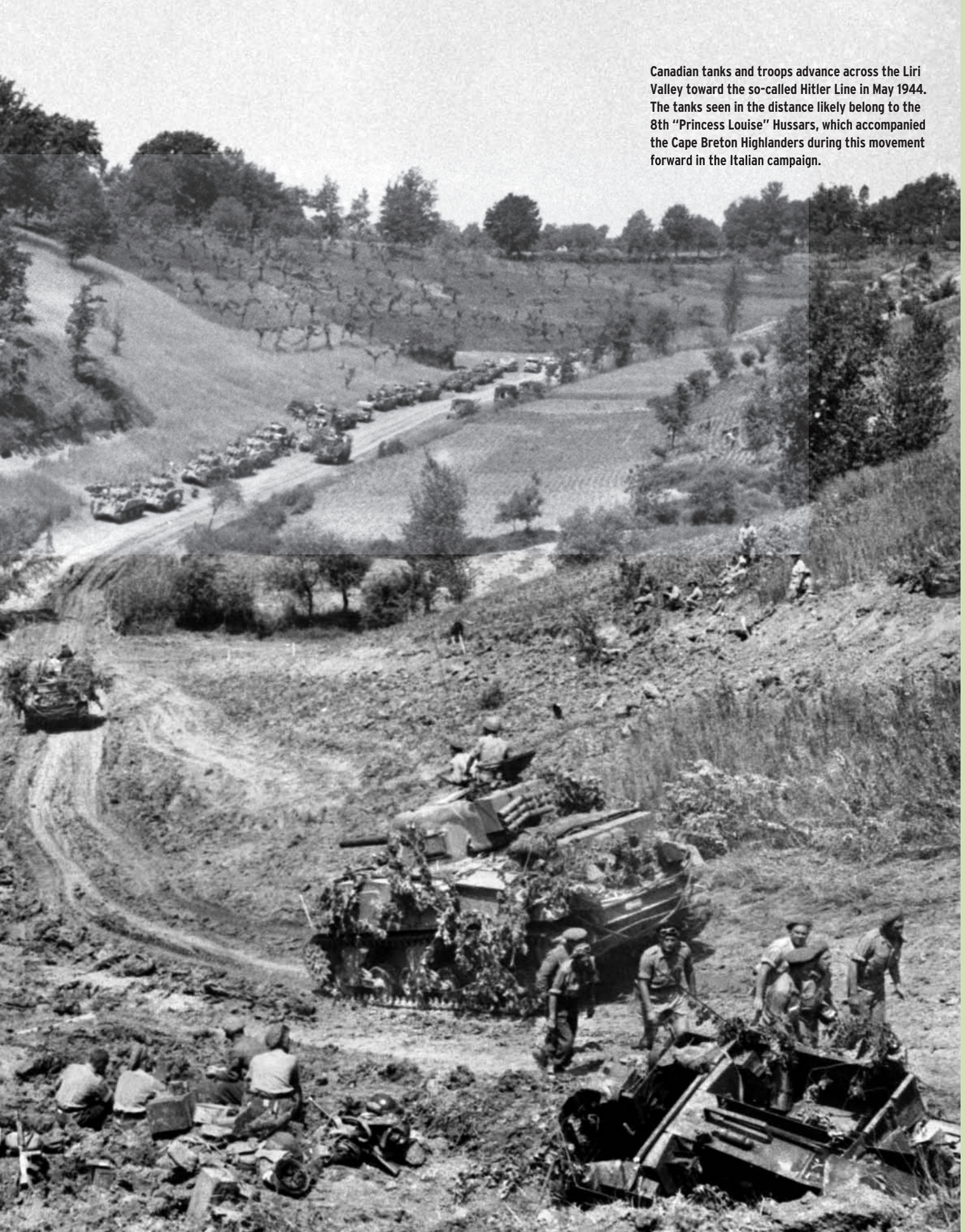
It was 9:45 a.m. on Thursday, May 18, 1944, and Allied troops all along the valley floor cheered in celebration. They had good cause to celebrate—the Poles' victory on "Monastery Hill" signified an end to the bloody Battle of Cassino.

Throughout that awful winter and spring fighting men from the United Kingdom, Poland, New Zealand, Canada, India, South Africa, France, and the United States grappled with tenacious German defenders for possession of key terrain surrounding the town of Cassino in southern Italy. An estimated 55,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded during this five-month campaign, which concluded only when a patrol from the 12th Podolski Lancers Regiment, Polish II Corps, entered the ruined Abbey of Monte Cassino and found it abandoned.

Few of the Poles now occupying Monte Cassino knew or cared why their opponents had withdrawn so abruptly the night before.



Canadian tanks and troops advance across the Liri Valley toward the so-called Hitler Line in May 1944. The tanks seen in the distance likely belong to the 8th "Princess Louise" Hussars, which accompanied the Cape Breton Highlanders during this movement forward in the Italian campaign.





Both: Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: Lieutenant General Oliver Leese commanded the British Eighth Army during the latter months of the campaign in Italy. Leese assumed command of Eighth Army after General Bernard Montgomery was called to England in preparation for D-Day. **TOP:** An M4 Sherman medium tank of the Ontario Regiment rumbles through the streets of Trececastagni during Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily, in August 1943. Canadian forces were later heavily engaged in the campaign on the Italian mainland.

In truth, the Nazi Fallschirmjäger (paratroops) dug in there were in grave danger of being surrounded by a phalanx of fast-moving French colonial troops. This column, pushing rapidly through the rugged and mostly undefended Aurunci Mountains south of Cassino, threatened to outflank the Gustav Line—Nazi Germany’s main defensive belt in the region.

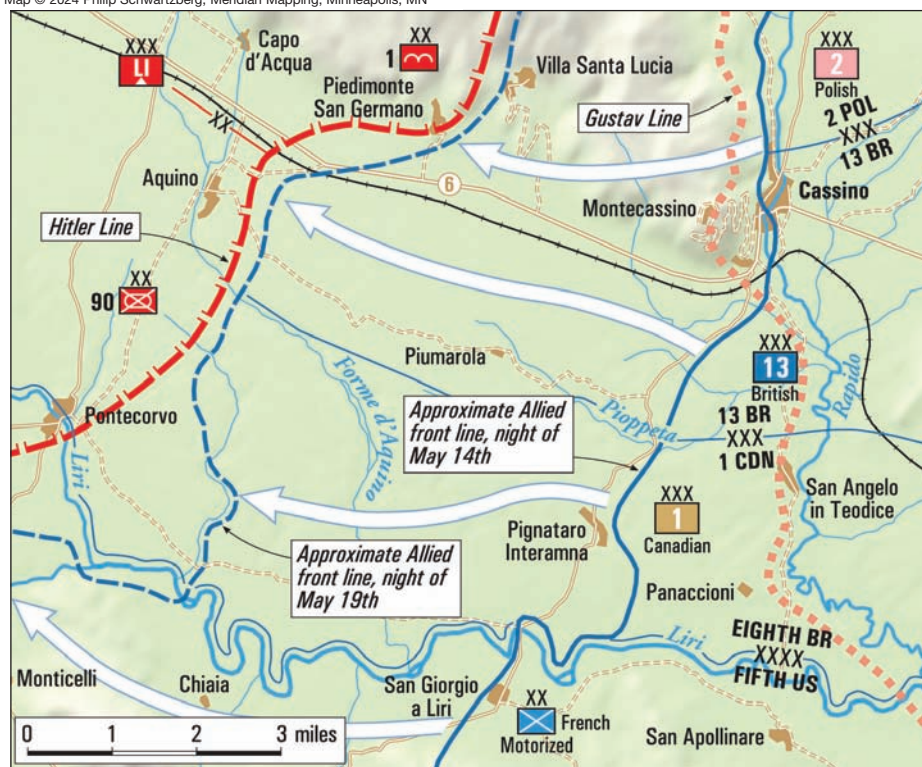
Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commanding all Axis forces in Italy, acted decisively to prevent a total catastrophe. First, he personally ordered those paratroopers occupying the high ground at Cassino to retreat before they were cut off and destroyed. Kesselring also began moving reinforcements up to defend a vitally important region known as the Liri Valley.

This wide, flat avenue of advance extended for 90 miles directly toward Rome. Allied mechanized forces traveling along its good roads and mostly dry, level ground could reach Italy’s capital in a few days—that is, unless German defenders managed to establish a fallback line and stop them.

During the third week of May, 1944, the two adversaries began a desperate footrace toward the Liri Valley’s approaches. Could Kesselring’s men reach their contingency positions in time to mount an effective defense, or would fast-moving Commonwealth infantry and armor “bounce” them out before they got into place?

The top Allied officer in Italy, British Army General Harold Alexander, believed his soldiers could rapidly smash their way into the Liri Valley. He had been considering how to do this for some time but needed to build combat power before attempting a major offensive. Finally, after additional troops, tanks, and guns became available, the decisive operation could begin.

On May 11, Alexander launched Operation Diadem using elements of the Fifth and Eighth Armies. His objectives were to crack the Gustav Line, defeat the German Tenth Army, relieve Anzio, and open the Liri Valley to Allied armor. He timed Diadem to coincide roughly with Operation Overlord—by pinning down Wehrmacht forces in Italy, those soldiers could not be redeployed to France.



General Harold Alexander formulated Operation Diadem to finally breach the German defenses of the Gustav Line and link up with Allied forces breaking out of the Anzio beachhead southeast of Rome. His intent was to cut off the retreat of the German Tenth Army in southern Italy.

The opening phases of Diadem went almost exactly to Alexander's plan. As tough colonial troops from the Corps Expéditionnaire Français advanced across a mountain range to work their way behind the Gustav Line, determined Commonwealth soldiers made a frontal attack on German strongpoints in and around Cassino. Under a massive weight of shellfire provided by 1,600 artillery pieces, these troops charged across the Gari and Rapido Rivers to scale the heights of Monte Cassino against near-fanatical resistance offered by small groups of Fallschirmjäger.

By May 16, Allied efforts were showing signs of success. In a cable to Field Marshal Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, that evening, Alexander boasted: "We can now claim that we have definitely broken the Gustav Line." Yet he knew the Liri Valley must not be allowed to remain under Axis control. Alexander assigned its capture to the storied Eighth Army—famous for hard-fought victories in North Africa and Sicily.

Eighth Army's General Officer Commanding (GOC) was battle-tested combat leader Lt. Gen. Oliver Leese. As the fight for Cassino reached its bloody crescendo, Leese and his staff began positioning forces for the next phase of Operation Diadem. Orders quickly went out to push west seven miles toward the villages of Pontecorvo and Aquino—gateways to the Liri Valley.

Leese made Pontecorvo the responsibility of the I Canadian Corps, which on May 18 was just moving into its assigned area of operations. He gave the job of seizing Aquino, three miles northward, to British XIII Corps. This formation, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sidney Kirkman, was expected to go on and grab Pontecorvo if its lead elements encountered no opposition at Aquino.

Kirkman's corps stood in an excellent position to conduct the attack. While two of his divisions (8th Indian and 4th British) had been badly mauled during the fight for Cassino, Maj. Gen. Charles Keightley's 78th Infantry Division remained relatively fresh after a time spent in reserve. The Battle-Ax Division (a moniker inspired by the shoulder patch its

members wore) would be reinforced for this operation by elements of the 6th British Armoured Division and 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade.

The job of taking Aquino fell to Brigadier John J. James's 36th Infantry Brigade. His command consisted of three rifle battalions: the 5th Battalion, Royal East Kent Regiment ("Buffs"); the 6th Battalion, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment ("Royal West Kents"); and the 8th Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders ("Argylls").

Providing armored support for 36th Brigade's attack was a Canadian Active Service Force organization known as the 11th Armoured Regiment (The Ontario Regiment), Canadian Armoured Corps. Commanded by Lt. Col. Robert L. "Bob" Purves, the Ontarios would play an integral role in Eighth Army's first attempt to bounce its foe from the Liri Valley.

Organized as an active militia battalion in 1866, this unit contributed many volunteers to fight in the Boer War and in World War I with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In 1936, the outfit converted to armor, as many of its militiamen then worked in the nearby Oshawa car assembly plant and were already familiar with motor vehicles. The Ontario Regiment (the title "regiment" was a traditional cavalry designation—in terms of size and organization, it served as a tank battalion) was activated for World War II on September 1, 1939, arriving in the United Kingdom exactly 22 months later.

First combat for the Ontarios took place during the invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky), in July, 1943. A few months later, the unit joined Eighth Army's long and costly fight up Italy's east coast. There the regiment developed a solid reputation for its effective use of armor-protected firepower and shock effect in the infantry support role.

In 1944, the Ontario Regiment's main weapons system was the M4A4 Sherman V medium tank. Each of its three maneuver squadrons (equivalent to a U.S. Army tank company) was authorized 19 of these vehicles organized into five line troops (platoons in American parlance) of three tanks each, plus a headquarters troop. The squadron commander was typically a major who



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, NAC (National Digital Archives of Poland)

fought from his own Sherman.

Headquarters Squadron contained the Ontarios' command group, intercommunication troop, ammunition section, administration troop, and normal service support elements. In April the outfit's reconnaissance troop received 10 M3A3 Stuart light tanks, each with the turret removed and a .50-caliber machine gun mounted in its place. Troopers named these nimble vehicles "Honeys" and used them for a wide variety of battlefield errands.

While the collapse of the Gustav Line might be viewed as a calamitous defeat for Field Marshal Kesselring, Wehrmacht forces had a superb fallback position that, if properly manned, would block all access to the Liri Valley. It was called the Hitler Line. For the past six months, workers had been turning this so-called "switch" position (as it branched off the Gustav Line) into a most formidable barrier. A New Zealand historian, Robin Kay, described the Hitler Line thusly:

"From the hill town of Piedimonte San Germano the Hitler Line ran southwards across

the Liri valley to the vicinity of [Aquino and] Pontecorvo and, after crossing the river, swung south-westwards over the mountains to Terracina on the coast. Although far from complete, its defenses were even more elaborate than those of the Gustav Line; they included armoured pillboxes, reinforced concrete gun emplacements and weapon pits, underground shelters, and minefields and wire to obstruct tanks and infantry."

The Hitler Line's man-made strongpoints proved themselves to be both extraordinarily lethal and hard to detect. Machine gunners, one Eighth Army intelligence analyst wrote, occupied "mobile steel cylinders...nicknamed crabs [that] could be inserted in pits above which their steel domes rose to a height of only 30 inches."

The Eighth Army intelligence officer went on to describe this defensive belt as containing "the turrets of new Panther tanks, eighteen in all, mounting 75mm guns with all-round traverse, which also made barely visible intrusions above their concrete emplacements." Called *Panzerturms*, these innovative armored bunkers had never before been encountered on the Italian front.

Behind the Hitler Line stood 150 pieces of tube artillery, mostly 105mm and 150mm howitzers. Several batteries of 150mm and 210mm Nebelwerfer rocket launchers augmented these field guns. For short-range indirect fire missions, the Germans employed large quantities of 80mm and 100mm mortars.

While the Hitler Line appeared truly impregnable, the Führer felt his name could not be associated with a system of fortifications that might in fact be defeated. In May 1944, he directed Kesselring to rename it; accordingly, this defensive network became known as the Senger Line after Fourteenth Army commander General Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin. Allied officers, however, continued to call it the Hitler Line.

The deteriorating situation in Italy required Kesselring's direct involvement. On May 15, recognizing the Gustav Line was about to fall, he issued orders to his principal subordinate



ABOVE: Two Stuart light tanks, nicknamed “Honeys” as their turrets have been removed and .50-caliber machine guns have been mounted, pause at a crossroads in Italy during the 1944 campaign. These modified armored vehicles were utilized primarily for reconnaissance. **BELOW:** A Canadian soldier pauses to inspect a panzerturm, the turret of a PzKpfw. V Panther with its 75mm cannon mounted in a fixed position, such as this concrete bunker. Such defenses were encountered during the assault against the Hitler Line. **OPPOSITE:** German Fallschirmjäger, elite paratroopers, are shown moving along a dusty road in Italy. After a stubborn defense of Monte Cassino, the Fallschirmjäger were finally compelled to retreat. The soldier at the rear is carrying a Mauser Kar98k rifle used for firing grenades.



commander in the region, Tenth Army’s Colonel General Heinrich von Vietinghoff. “I consider withdrawal to the Senger position as necessary,” Kesselring ordered as he put into motion a fighting retreat by thousands of hard-pressed German soldiers that took place over three days and nights in mid-May 1944.

Some of these troops were ordered to hold the Liri Valley as part of Gen. Valentin Feuerstein’s LI Mountain Corps. Feuerstein had many tasks to accomplish and few soldiers with which to do so. His primary mission required LI Corps to defeat an expected Allied attack against the gateway towns of Pontecorvo and Aquino, but Feuerstein could neither ignore the Poles to his north nor the French mountaineers threatening his southern flank. He also needed to keep Route 6, the chief supply artery leading to Rome, open for Wehrmacht traffic at all costs.

During the German retreat, quite a few fighting men became separated from their commands; upon arrival at the Senger fortifications, they were formed into provisional battle groups (*Kampfgruppe*) and placed wherever needed. Other reinforcements, such as those belonging to the 90th Panzer-grenadier Division, entered the Liri Valley one unit at a time.

Since February, General Richard Heidrich’s 1st Fallschirmjäger Division had stubbornly defended Monastery Hill while inflicting heavy losses on Allied attackers. Those “Green Devils” who fell back to Aquino joined an ad hoc task force under Col. Ludwig Heilmann, commanding officer of the 3rd Fallschirmjäger Regiment. Kampfgruppe Heilmann primarily consisted of paratroopers from that regiment’s 1st and 2nd Battalions, while gunners belonging to the 1st Fallschirmjäger Division’s anti-tank company crewed as many as 10 Panzertürms placed along this section of the line.

It is impossible to estimate the number of German soldiers holding Aquino—indeed, even their commanders did not know how many men were on hand. An Eighth Army intelligence summary suggested as many as 3,500 Wehrmacht troops stood on the Hitler Line between Aquino and Pontecorvo. Alternatively, Canadian post-battle evaluations stated that only 775 Fallschirmjäger were pre-

BELOW: German soldiers of the 1st Fallschirmjäger Division service a 37mm Pak 36 anti-tank gun on the front line in Italy. Although the Pak 36 was replaced by the 75mm Pak 40 in 1941, many examples of the weapon remained in service with paratrooper units because of their light weight. **RIGHT:** Canadian armored vehicles advance cautiously during the attack on the Hitler Line in the spring of 1944. This photograph was taken as the troops and tanks crossed open ground near Aquino.



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, NAC (National Digital Archives of Poland)



Imperial War Museum

sent for duty on May 19, 1944, although more may have filtered in over the next few days.

The ancient town of Aquino, founded in the 4th century B.C., was normally home to a few thousand residents, most of whom had been evacuated by mid-May. While the village itself held no tactical value, it did serve to help anchor the Hitler Line's flank. Allied mechanized units could not advance into the Liri Valley without first taking Aquino.

The hard-surfaced Route 6 and a parallel railway bed led west from Cassino past an abandoned airstrip to brush the village's northern edge. Orchards and olive groves concentrated on the north and south sides of town provided some measure of cover and concealment for attacking forces. The center, however, was more open. A large cemetery, sitting about halfway between the airfield and Aquino, dominated all approaches from the east.

Adding to the challenges of terrain was a steep ravine cutting through the village and past Pontecorvo to the south. This gully, the *Forme d'Aquino*, served as a natural anti-tank

ditch that channeled armored vehicles into kill zones where Green Devils and Panzerturms lay in wait. Tanks could only cross the *Forme d'Aquino* on heavy duty bridges such as the one spanning Route 6 north of town.

Throughout the day on May 18, weary Fallschirmjäger moved into position and readied themselves for battle. Meanwhile, several miles to the east, a number of British scout teams began probing the Hitler Line. In late afternoon, three light tanks from the 6th Armoured Division's reconnaissance regiment (temporarily attached to the 78th Infantry Division) entered Aquino for a brief period. Their accompanying infantry was held up, though, and the tanks had to withdraw after sunset.

When news of this action reached 78th Division's General Keightley, it convinced him that a hastily organized attack might succeed in pushing its way through the foe's defenses. Accordingly, Keightley's staff issued a series of oral orders designed to mass overwhelming combat power against what were believed to be small, disorganized pockets of resistance occupying this section of the Hitler Line.

The Battle-Ax Division's main effort would be made by motorized infantry and armor belonging to the attached 6th Armoured Division. A supporting effort conducted by 36th Brigade was to go in on their right at Aquino, while riflemen from I Canadian Corps' Royal 22e Régiment would seize Pontecorvo to the left. Allied artillery and mortars stood by to fire a preparatory "stonk" (bombardment) and provide chemical smoke to conceal the assault forces. The attack was set to commence at 0515 hours on May 19.

Purves, the Ontario Regiment's Officer Commanding (OC), first heard of this plan at 2130 hours on May 18 when Brigadier James directed him to move his unit to a lying-up point south of the Aquino airport. They arrived there by 0200 hours on the 19th. In the meantime, Purves joined an orders group in progress at the 5th Royal East Kent Regiment (5th Buffs) headquarters.



There the 5th Buffs' OC, Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Monk, outlined his scheme of maneuver. From their positions south of Aquino's airport, Monk's riflemen would attack northwest to seize a bridge crossing over the *Forme D'Aquino* just beyond the village. A secondary road leading into town acted as the axis of advance; one company of infantry was to stay south of this byway while another kept to its north.

As soon as Monk's orders group broke up, Purves briefed his squadron commanders by candlelight in the back room of an abandoned farmhouse. He directed B Squadron (Major Douglas H. McIndoe, commanding) to accompany the Buffs' attack into Aquino. Maj. Harry Millen's A Squadron was to guard their right flank while providing covering fire from positions north of the airport. C Squadron (led by Maj. Lyle A. Gerry) would remain in reserve.

The Ontarios' orders group concluded just before 0500 hours, leaving Purves' squadron commanders with little time to orient their men on the plan and move to a forming-up place where the 5th Buffs' infantrymen waited. At 0515 hours the attack began.

Early morning mists both protected the Allied assault force from observation and slowed its advance due to poor visibility. Lt. John Richardson, a troop commander in A Squadron, said the fog was so thick that he "couldn't see the tank ahead of me and I was practically touching it."

At 0700 hours, heavy automatic weapons fire pouring out of Aquino's cemetery brought the Allied advance to a halt. Shermans from B Squadron then deployed in an attempt to locate and silence these guns. This maneuver attracted some unwanted attention; at 0745 hours, McIndoe reported that one of his tanks had been destroyed by an unseen anti-tank (AT) cannon.

On the left side of the road, Lieutenant Keith D. McCord's troop advanced under cover of a vineyard until it emerged out into the open just 300 yards from Aquino. An enemy AT gun to the south opened up on the Canadian tanks; reacting quickly, they destroyed it with a volley

of 75mm rounds. Then a Panzerturm on their right brought the Ontarios under point-blank fire. All three of McCord's Shermans were hit at least twice, but his crewmen kept trading shells with the foe until it got too hot to remain inside. One man, Trooper John T. "Jack" Phillips, failed to escape from his burning vehicle; his body was never recovered.

In the meantime, A Squadron had reached the railroad line that marked its northern limit of advance. Millen sent a troop of Shermans along Route 6 toward Aquino with orders to loop around and cut off the foe. This effort was stymied by the lifting fog, which exposed Millen's tanks to Panzertrums emplaced on high ground north of town. Worse still, Allied artillerymen started running out of smoke shells that had been screening the Ontarios' right flank from observation. Cargo trucks were dispatched to get more from nearby ammunition dumps, but the task of resupplying friendly howitzers with additional smoke rounds would take hours.

As the morning wore on, Purves released his



Library and Archives Canada PA-169093

reserve, Gerry's "C" Squadron, to help secure the battlefield's northern edge. Already, though, the 36th Brigade's attack was bogging down. A mortar stonk killed Monk, the 5th Buffs' OC, and his entire signals section at about 0930 hours. After that it was no longer possible to communicate effectively with the infantry, which greatly increased the danger of a friendly fire incident.

Also at 0930 hours, B Squadron's McIndoe reported the loss of two more Shermans. His second-in-command (2IC), Capt. John I. Nicol, was wounded around this time as well. Despite the Ontarios' best efforts, their fight for Aquino's cemetery seemed to be going nowhere.

Conditions were also deteriorating on the regiment's right flank. Millen, the A Squadron OC, was knocked unconscious by a sniper's bullet that ricocheted off his helmet as he stood in the open hatch of his tank. Moments later he was injured again when his tank was hit by a German AT shell. With Millen badly wounded, command passed to his 2IC, Capt. Arthur W. "Bud" Hawkins. That officer's first act as squadron commander was to ward off a fierce counterattack coming in from the north.

By now, C Squadron had fully entered the fight for Aquino. Although their tanks were

picking off numerous pillboxes and towed AT guns, the Canadians were tormented by well-hidden Panzerturms. Lt. James Cameron lost his vehicle to enemy fire as it attempted to cross the rail line, while another C Squadron troop commander—Lt. Albert J. Symons—received severe burns when his Sherman "brewed up" after being hit by a high-velocity projectile.

Corp. Pete Andrew's tank was also destroyed near the airport. Yelling for the rest of his crew to clear out, Andrew pulled himself free of the burning vehicle only to notice his young co-driver had become frozen with fear inside its crew compartment. Andrew sprinted back to his wrecked Sherman and dragged the trooper out "by main force," as a unit historian later recorded.

Another crew commander, Corporal Cecil Jones, nearly led his men into German lines that day after they evacuated their smashed tank. Confused by the smoke and dust of battle, Jones crawled for some time in the wrong direction before he realized his mistake and turned around. The tankers made their way back to friendly positions by using a network of drainage ditches surrounding the airport.

Near the railway, A Squadron's Richardson found a depression in which his troops could hide from one particularly persistent Panzerturm. This gun periodically fired high-velocity 75mm shells that passed inches over the young officer's Sherman; their concussive effects left him with (as he recounted in 2014) "a bloody headache for three days afterwards." Only the coming of darkness—and a well-laid smoke screen—enabled Richardson's tanks to safely withdraw.

As mentioned previously, 36th Brigade's supply of artillery smoke ran out early in the day. Two Ontario Regiment soldiers, Sergeant Ken Braithwaite and Trooper Kelly Turcott of Headquarters Squadron, took their "Honey" light tank back to a supply depot and loaded it up with smoke canisters before returning to the front line. The regimental history recorded how Braithwaite and Turcott then ran "a wide circle in front of the tanks with their careening machine [while tossing] out the ignited canisters." It was a foolhardy move, perhaps, but one that likely saved several tanks from the deadly Panzerturms.

The 98th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, kept busy all day firing chemical smoke and high explosive rounds in support of Allied forces at Aquino. Their "Priest" self-propelled howitzers harassed troop concentrations and suppressed AT guns all along this section of the Hitler Line. A unit historian described how the 98th's 392nd Battery, long associated with the Ontario

Regiment, “toiled from dawn till dark to smoke that right flank or, when the smoke ran thin, shelled and shelled to keep the enemy from loosing a slaughter on our lads.”

Later in the day, word came down that 78th Division’s main attack on the Ontarios’ left never materialized. This meant the 36th Brigade was stuck holding an exposed salient in the lines into which German paratroopers were pouring fire from three sides. Purves received orders to hang onto what ground had been gained until nightfall then move all operable tanks to a “harbour area” south of the Forme D’Aquino for refitting.

The Ontario Regiment disengaged at dusk then moved back to take stock of its losses. A total of 13 Shermans were completely destroyed: 12 by AT fire and one blown up by a mine. Every single tank in A and B Squadrons suffered damage from mortar or artillery fragments. Personnel losses, however, numbered just one man (Trooper Phillips) missing in action and five soldiers wounded.

Balanced against this toll were the Wehrmacht outposts eliminated, AT guns silenced, and Panzerturms neutralized by Canadian crewmen. The Ontarios further claimed to have killed a German tank and one self-propelled gun during their attack on May 19. No record of casualties suffered by Kampfgruppe Heilmann at Aquino has survived.

While most of the regiment’s troopers tended to their Shermans or grabbed some sleep, one soldier worked tirelessly to care for his comrades. A 17-year-old jeep driver named Cecil “Westy” Westover spent three days and nights evacuating casualties back to the regimental aid station with nothing more than a single cup of tea taken to sustain himself. During this time, it was estimated that Westover brought nearly 180 wounded tankers and infantrymen off the battlefield.

Eighth Army’s hastily organized attempt to bounce the Hitler Line had ended in failure. To the south, I Canadian Corps’ assault on Pontecorvo bogged down quickly as the “Van Doos” of Royal 22e Régiment came under heavy fire from German panzergrenadiers. No one knows why the 78th Infantry Division’s armored thrust in the center never came off. A lack of bridging assets needed to cross the Forme D’Aquino may have contributed to this abortive attack.

Writing to his wife, Eighth Army GOC Leese admitted that he underestimated the will of those Germans holding the Hitler Line, as well as the strength of its fortifications. “We came

Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: Canadian soldiers of the 48th Highland Division knocked out this German self-propelled assault gun during heavy fighting at the Hitler Line. The armored vehicle belonging to the 90th Panzergrenadier Division was knocked out during the night of May 17-18, 1944. **OPPOSITE:** German trucks and armored vehicles destroyed during the assault on the “Hitler Line” lie in heaps of twisted steel after being pushed to the side of the road during the Canadian advance near the town of Pontecorvo.

up against strong defences with barbed wire, ditches, and with boxes and anti-tank guns,” Leese reported. “It will be a tough nut to break.”

Captain Ion Calvocoressi, Leese’s senior aide-de-camp, agreed. “A disappointing day,” he noted in his journal. “In the early morning we had hopes of breaking through the Hitler Line without a battle, but now it is evident that we shall have to fight for it.”

Over the next few days, Eighth Army made preparations for a more deliberate assault on those enemy strongpoints blocking access to the Liri Valley. While the Ontario Regiment’s troopers would not participate directly in it, their countrymen serving with I Canadian Corps unleashed a ferocious attack against Pontecorvo beginning at 0600 hours on May 23. Two full brigades of infantry, each supported by a regiment of British tanks, went forward under foggy conditions that morning.

When the Fallschirmjäger who were dug in at Aquino fired on this assault force, Allied artillery responded with a 668-gun barrage. “In a couple of minutes,” recalled Sergeant Victor J. Bulger of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, “some 74 tons of high explosive crashed down on the town and completely demolished it.” Two days later, a patrol from 78th Division entered the ruins of Aquino and found it entirely abandoned.

The Hitler Line had finally been smashed. Eighth Army’s tanks, self-propelled howitzers, and infantry carriers began pouring into the Liri Valley on their way to a rendezvous with Fifth Army forces then breaking out of the Anzio beachhead. But now a question arose: once the Allied armies in Italy reunited, would they continue their pursuit of Kesselring’s fleeing troops or allow themselves to be distracted by a politically desirable but militarily insignificant objective?

Thirty miles to the north, Rome—the glittering Eternal City—beckoned. □

Patrick J. Chaisson is a historian/writer based in Scotia, New York. The author wishes to thank Jeremy Blowers and Sam Richardson of the Ontario Regiment Museum, as well as Ontario Regiment Historian Rod Henderson, for their assistance with this article.

The soldiers of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion landed at Omaha and Utah Beaches under fire on June 6, 1944.

AFRICAN AMERICAN D-Day Heroes

BY DR. FOREST ISSAC JONES

The heroics of African American soldiers during the D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, have not been taught regularly in high school or college history classes.

The Hollywood blockbuster *Saving Private Ryan* did not depict any African American soldiers being present that day. The film did show some barrage balloons aloft on Omaha Beach, but did not mention who operated them. When soldiers who were being celebrated in France for the 65th anniversary of D-Day met actor Tom Hanks, he said he had no idea that African American soldiers and the 320th Battalion were there. The soldiers of the 320th had to overcome segregation, racism, and the notion among many military leaders that African Americans were not fit for frontline military service. In Normandy, the men of the 320th worked diligently to protect American troops and ships offshore.

William G. Dabney was one of those men in the 320th Battalion who created their legacy on the beaches of Normandy. Dabney sat for an interview in October 2018; he was 94 years old, and he had a lot to talk about when it came to the African American soldiers' role on D-Day, a role that had been ignored by books, movies, and most historians. Most historians thought that African American soldiers were only there to do menial jobs in the

broad context of the D-Day invasion.

Dabney was awarded the French Legion of Honor (Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur) for his actions during the D-Day invasion. At the time of the interview, he was one of the last known surviving soldiers from that battalion, which was the only all-black unit involved in the D-Day landings.

The author sat down with Dabney in his home in Roanoke, Virginia. He was a straight-shooter with a wicked sense of humor. Throughout the conversation, he shrugged off the casual racism that he had endured during his military days and focused, instead, on his contributions during the D-Day invasion. His account provided a wealth of knowledge. He was more confident in telling his story after years of people not believing that he was part of the invasion of Normandy.

"I didn't talk about it because nobody would believe me," he remembered. "I'd play pool with friends, and I'd talk about the army and D-Day invasion and my friends told me to cut it out, that I hadn't been anywhere. So, I just stopped talking."

The African American 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion began landing on the beaches of Utah and Omaha by 9 a.m. on June 6, 1944—just two hours behind the first wave. The only African-American combat unit to land

Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion guide one of their balloons through a partially cleared minefield to a location off Omaha Beach. The African-American unit rendered valuable service after coming ashore in Normandy on D-Day.







in France on D-Day, the well-trained battalion was tasked with operating the balloons to protect the U.S. soldiers from attacking Luftwaffe aircraft. Inflated in England and tethered to the landing craft, the balloons destined for Omaha were all destroyed before landing. At Utah, some 20 balloons made it ashore where they were ordered cut loose by commanders concerned that they were drawing enemy fire. By about 11 p.m., the 320th had one balloon up, with another 11 flying by dawn but German artillery knocked them out the next day. The unit was quickly resupplied and the balloons were back up.

Their balloon cables were intended to ensnare the wings and propellers of German aircraft. Some 140 balloons would be up over Omaha and Utah beaches by June 21.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, thrust the United States into World War II and changed American society in many ways. Record numbers of African Americans enlisted to serve their country. They saw it not only as a chance to show Americans that they could fight for their country, but they also saw it as a chance for racial respect in their own hometowns.

At the time, segregation and Jim Crow were still standards throughout the South,



ABOVE: While Allied infantrymen board transport craft that will take them to the invasion beaches on D-Day, a barrage balloon is prepared for tethering to a ship that will participate in the landings. The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, an African American unit, served with distinction on D-Day and during the Normandy campaign. **TOP:** Allied landing craft approach the coast of French Normandy on D-Day with barrage balloons aloft to protect from attacks by enemy aircraft. The balloons were under the control of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion before and after landing on Utah and Omaha Beaches on June 6, 1944.

and the military was no different. There were still questions concerning the capabilities of African Americans fighting in the military. Even though these beliefs still remained in society, African Americans had fought bravely in both the Civil War and World War I. However, African Americans were still not seen as equals to white soldiers.



ABOVE: Corporal A. Johnson, of Houston, Texas, works with another soldier of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion to move a balloon into position with a winch on Omaha Beach. The men of the 320th came ashore under fire on D-Day at Utah and Omaha Beaches. **BELOW:** Awaiting disposition amid the air defenses at Omaha Beach, a barrage balloon sits atop the former German defensive position WN (*Widerstandsnest*—“resistance nest”) 72. At lower right an American engineer makes notes regarding his surroundings.



During World War II, more than a million African American soldiers would serve their country. The soldiers of the 320th were among them, and many people such as Dabney would end up at Camp Tyson near Paris, Tennessee, to learn the trades of warfare. Dabney and many others trained at the army base in 1942 and 1943.

Camp Tyson was the first base in the U.S. created primarily to teach soldiers how to fly barrage balloons. There were approximately 30 barrage balloon battalions trained at Camp Tyson prior to D Day, with the 320th being the only all-black barrage balloon battalion. Each battalion consisted of approximately 42 officers and 1,100 enlisted men.

Lieutenant Colonel Leon J. Reed, a white officer from South Carolina, was placed in command of the 320th, and he earned the respect of the men. The African American soldiers did basic training first, and it was strict to make sure they were in fine condition. After that was completed, they started six weeks of training with the barrage balloons. The soldiers learned how to carefully fill the balloons with hydrogen gas and how to maintain and deploy them during wartime.

After the 320th finished its balloon training, the soldiers learned how to forecast the weather. They had to be careful controlling the 35-foot balloons, and the training taught them how to anticipate and deal with varied weather conditions.

When the training was finished, the 320th Battalion headed for ships that would take them to England. The unit arrived on November 24, 1943. Dabney and his colleagues were warmly welcomed by the locals. He mentioned plenty of dances, social occasions, and being treated as equal citizens in both the community pubs and in the streets.

As the men of the 320th enjoyed their time in England, they also prepared for the invasion of Europe that was on the horizon. They had taken smaller balloons with them from Camp Tyson, and these were called VLAs (Very low altitude). The British-designed VLAs could be safely tied to boats and vehicles, and they could reach altitudes of 4,000 feet or more, close to the ceiling of the larger balloons that the 320th had originally used.

There were about 600 men in the 320th



on English soil, and there were more than 130,000 African American soldiers in the United Kingdom. The men of the 320th were moved across England and Wales to train for the Normandy invasion. They were working to prepare the balloons to be available early on D-Day. The VLA was designed so that one soldier could carry the winch that would send the balloon up in the air.

The job of the 320th was simple on D-Day—to protect the ships and other craft offshore, as well as the combat troops on the beaches, from German planes that might strafe and bomb them. The men of the 320th moved the balloons into the most advantageous locations to dissuade the German pilots from making passes at the targets below. The balloons also augmented the firepower of Allied anti-aircraft guns aboard the ships off Omaha and Utah beaches, as well as those later brought ashore.

The balloons were inflated while the 320th was still in England and attached to the ships that took part in the voyage to Normandy. Separated into groups of four or five men, the 320th was to move the pre-inflated balloons from the ships to the beaches.

It was a dangerous job. The soldiers working with inflated balloons served as anchors

to maintain control in windy conditions. The 320th knew when to send the balloons up and when to take them down. Soldiers like Dabney were warned when enemy aircraft were airborne. When there were no enemy planes in the air, the battalion would send balloons up in an effort to deter the Nazis from taking to the sky.

The majority of the soldiers in the 320th were headed to Omaha Beach on D-Day, where planners believed enemy small-arms and artillery fire would be intense, along with the probability of attacks by the Luftwaffe even though Allied air forces had won air superiority in Europe during the preceding months.

Dabney was one of those first men ashore, in charge of three others with the balloons ready to protect the soldiers. They got their balloons in the air as quickly as possible, even as the Germans continued to resist. More balloons came across the Channel from England on June 6, already inflated and ready for deployment.

“My job on D-Day was to take the balloons...and to protect and keep the planes from coming in on the soldiers,” he said. “The purpose of flying the balloon was to stop any plane that might strafe the beach to kill the soldiers. The plane couldn’t see the cable because it was thin,” he continued. “Depending on where they were flying, the balloons helped the anti-aircraft people.”

The young men would grab the mooring lines hanging from the balloon, one on each side, and draw them in to be tied down. High winds could cause trouble with the lines, whipping them with such force that they became dangerous when out of control.

When the 320th hit the beaches, the heavy surf and high winds made coming ashore difficult. Some landing craft disgorged their human cargoes in water that was quite deep. One balloon was seen going down, but the men of the 320th were unsure whether it was German fire or friendly fire that caused that first casualty among their much-needed equipment.

“When we started the invasion, the commanding officer said some of us wouldn’t return, some of us would die,” Dabney recalled. “We climbed on the ship, stayed in the Channel, waited for air [cover], crawled down ladders, landing [craft] boys came, water was splashing, and we went across the English Channel. It was rough water. The tide was still coming, and the weather was rough for the ships. The English Channel could get rough and it was rough when we landed.

Imagine that, getting off the boat, wading to shore with the Germans shooting.”

The soldiers of the 320th exited their landing craft and waded to shore under enemy fire. There was no time to be afraid. Too much was happening around them. Hours went by before the American foothold at Omaha Beach and the advance from Utah Beach had caused enemy fire to slacken. The silver, oval-shaped balloons were a strong defense barrier for the soldiers fighting their way off the beaches. The protective line of balloons flew in an unorthodox pattern, forcing any German pilot to fly at higher altitudes, thus discouraging attacks on the forces below. Forcing enemy planes to fly higher also made them easier targets for American anti-aircraft guns. The balloons were especially effective against enemy planes at night when the cables were difficult to see.

Henry Parham, another member of the 320th, described what he saw when they first landed. “We landed in water up to our necks,” he told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. “Once we got there we were walking over dead Germans and Americans on the beach. Bullets were falling all around us.”

Men from the 320th remembered that the scene was a mess at Omaha Beach. The 320th faced a heavy dose of machine-gun fire from the Germans. A number of the balloons were shot up and destroyed before

RIGHT: Private First Class Warren Capers removes shrapnel from the face of a wounded soldier on D-Day+2, June 8, 1944. Capers, a member of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, was recommended for the Silver Star for his heroism in Normandy. Capers and his comrades set up an aid station on D-Day and treated an estimated 330 wounded soldiers on that day alone. **BELOW:** U.S. soldiers of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, an African American unit, are seen standing in the background of this photo of German prisoners inside a barbed wire enclosure at Utah Beach on the afternoon of D-Day. **OPPOSITE:** Barrage balloons float above landing craft and other vessels clustered at Omaha Beach shortly after the D-Day landings. The balloons, handled by the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, were intended to guard against attacks from low-flying enemy aircraft. At far right a barrage balloon rests on the deck of an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) prior to deployment.

they could be taken off the ships. Many of the soldiers were cut down by enemy fire and men of the 320th had to drop down and pretend they were dead to survive. Some crawled from one dead soldier to another to protect themselves until things had cooled down on the beach.

Most of the 320th landed at Omaha Beach, where Lieutenant Colonel Reed could barely find his soldiers amid all of the shooting. He saw that they had trouble getting some of their equipment off the boats successfully.





Dabney talked about how he and the rest of the 320th remained dedicated to their task, protecting the soldiers landing on the beach, despite the chaos that surrounded them. “My biggest job in the Army was to fly that balloon,” he said. “It was a live balloon, and you are the live anchor man.” The standard balloon crew was normally five men, but the 320th reduced crews to three and four, specifically for the D-Day invasion.

The 320th had to make sure that the barrage balloons were in the air before nightfall because they believed that a German air attack might materialize after the sun went down. Finally, the 320th Battalion got 12 balloons in the air by D-plus One. The Germans continued to go after the balloons but by the evening of June 7, there were as many as 30 of them over Omaha and Utah beaches. Over the next couple of months, the balloons helped protect ships and soldiers. In all, the African American soldiers protected the Allies on Normandy for close to 150 days.

Parham talked about the experience on the beaches during the invasion. “Staying in your trench was the hardest thing,” he said. “It was two months of ducking and dodging and hid-

ing. I was fortunate that I didn’t get hit. I managed to survive with God’s strength and help.”

Psychologically, the most difficult part of D-Day, Dabney said, was dealing with the terrible casualties. “When our soldiers had cleared all the Germans away that morning, there was nothing but dead bodies on the beach,” Dabney said. “The soldiers had two dog tags, one to the undertaker, and one stayed on the soldier at the morgue until he was identified. That’s what they were doing that morning. They were picking up the bodies and taking the dog tags. As the invasion continued, you couldn’t bury each soldier individually, you had to put the bodies in a ditch for the time being. There were too many of them.”

After the Allied victory at Normandy, it appeared that Dabney and the 320th Battalion would see action in the Pacific theater. “When we came back from France after the invasion, we came back home, stayed 30 days, and then shipped out to Washington state,” he said. “That meant you were going down under, to Australia or to the Philippines to fight. We crossed the Pacific, and something happened to the boat. It needed service. We got to Hawaii, and they announced the war was over. We didn’t have to fight. We stayed in Hawaii for six months, came back to California, and went home.” At the age of 22, Dabney joined other men of the 320th in finally returning home for good.

Dabney and the other African Americans in the 320th battalion were a great example of the courage, bravery, and determination that was needed on June 6, 1944. There were naysayers that did not believe African Americans had the courage to fight, but these men went on to prove those negative people wrong.

After the war, Dabney lived in Roanoke without much fanfare about his service and participation on D-Day. He lived quietly and worked as the owner of a carpet-laying business for years without commenting on his heroics during World War II. He met his wife, Beulah, in 1948 when he was a sophomore and she was a freshman at St. Paul’s College. “We met on the bus going to school after the Christmas holidays,” she said. “We dated the whole time while I was in college. He finished a year ahead of me and I graduated in 1951 and we got married that year.”



ABOVE LEFT: Corporal Waverly Bernard Woodson, Jr., a medic with the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, was wounded on D-Day when his landing craft struck a mine and was hit by German artillery. Disregarding his own wounds, Woodson established an aid station and treated other wounded men for 30 hours. Recommended for the Medal of Honor, he instead received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his actions on June 6, 1944. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Private First Class Warren Capers, along with Woodson and two other medics from the 320th, Corporal Eugene Worthy and Staff Sgt. Alfred F. Bell, manned the medical station on D-Day. *Stars and Stripes* wrote that he unit's medics, who saved the lives of hundreds of U.S. soldiers that day, had "covered themselves with glory." Capers was recommended for the Silver Star. **TOP:** Soldiers of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion work on the moorings of a barrage balloon on the coast of Normandy after D-Day. The balloons were made of two-ply cotton fabric impregnated with vulcanized or synthetic rubber, then coated with aluminum. Typically, the balloons were raised in the evening after Allied aircraft had returned to bases in England. **OPPOSITE:** On June 10, 1944, D-Day+4, African American soldiers of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion search for German snipers in the French village of St. Laurent-sur-Mer. Visible at center with the recognition stripe on his helmet is a white platoon officer accompanying the soldiers.

Unfortunately, the 320th Balloon Battalion did not immediately receive the recognition that it deserved for its contribution to the success of the D-Day. There were no celebrations or stories about what they did on D-Day—their heroics simply disappeared. They came home to an America that continued to be segregated, despite efforts by African American veterans to fight for Civil Rights. Dabney and others in the 320th admittedly said they remained quiet for years about the barrage balloons because nobody would believe them. If it were not for historians that dug deep and talked to eyewitnesses, their stories would not have seen the light of day.

The actions of the 320th began to come into the public view after a man named Sam Wooten contacted Dabney and others in the battalion about their experiences at Normandy. Wooten, who had a French mother and African American father, grew up in France, but lived in San Francisco, California, at the time. He had noticed that white soldiers were routinely present when D-Day celebrations took place in Normandy, but African American soldiers had never been included.

Wooten and his mother decided that they would sponsor an African American soldier who was involved in the D-Day invasion to attend an observance in Normandy. Through a contact, Wooten was able to find Dabney and invited him to France at Wooten's expense, where they would film a documentary about the 320th Battalion.

"This is what got the word spread about my involvement," Dabney said about the visit to France. "When I was in France I stayed with private families for two weeks there, and the families treated me well. They treated me like one of the family, all during the documentary. They were very nice people and treated me kindly."

As a result of Dabney's newly found recognition, he was presented with the French Legion of Honor on the 65th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in 2009. While he was in France, Dabney also met President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, former President George W. Bush, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as well as other dignitaries. He remembered that the

Continued on page 98

HMS *Warspite* fought in two world wars and several major battles against a combination of enemies to become the most decorated ship ever to serve the Royal Navy.

A naval arms race between Great Britain and Germany preceded the First World War. To stay ahead of their rival, the British undertook to build five new “Super-Dreadnought” battleships in 1912—the *Queen Elisabeth*, *Malaya*, *Barham*, *Valiant*, and *Warspite*. They were known as the Queen Elisabeth class and featured two important improvements over

the boilers to help keep a ship’s weight balanced while freeing up manpower for the guns. Churchill won the argument.

Steaming at 24.5 knots under ideal conditions, the “Queens” were known as the first of the “fast” battleships. The most successful of the Queen Elizabeth class, by far, would be HMS *Warspite*—nicknamed the “Spite.”

Despite the cutting-edge innovations, the “Queens” would retain at least one anachronistic feature from the days of wooden sailing ships. They were fitted with an “Admirals Walk” attached to their stern. This shaded platform was mounted outside the ship’s hull and allowed a fleet admiral a place to take the air or hold private conversations during conferences while in port. (Photos in the November 20, 1939, edition of *Life* magazine featured *Warspite*’s outdated “stern walk.”)

Warspite was commissioned in March 1915. Following sea and gunnery trials, she joined the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow, the great Scottish anchorage, as war was raging across Europe.

The ‘Grand Old Lady’ PACKED A WALLOP

The Royal Navy’s battleship HMS *Warspite* took part in many historic events—including Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor.

BY GLENN BARNETT

previous capital ship designs. Both these changes were strongly pushed by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.

First, they would mount eight new, secretly developed and untried 15-inch guns in four turrets to replace the standard 13.5-inch guns of their predecessors of the Iron Duke class. The United States and Japan were each developing a 14-inch naval gun but a 15-incher had never been mounted on a ship.

Secondly, they would run on fuel oil rather than coal. At the time, using this “foreign” fuel was a hard sell, though some destroyers were already using oil successfully. Oil had to be imported from far away Persia, while coal was mined on British soil by British workers.

Coal was unwieldy, dirty, and labor intensive, while oil, taking up less room, could be pumped from tank to tank or directly into

After a German hit-and-run naval bombardment of the ports at Lowestoft and Yarmouth on the English coast, the British people were furious that the Navy had let the raiders get away. As a result of public anger, *Warspite* and her sisters were assigned to a rapid-response force commanded by Vice Adm. David Beatty. They were based at the Firth of Forth near Edinburgh, Scotland.

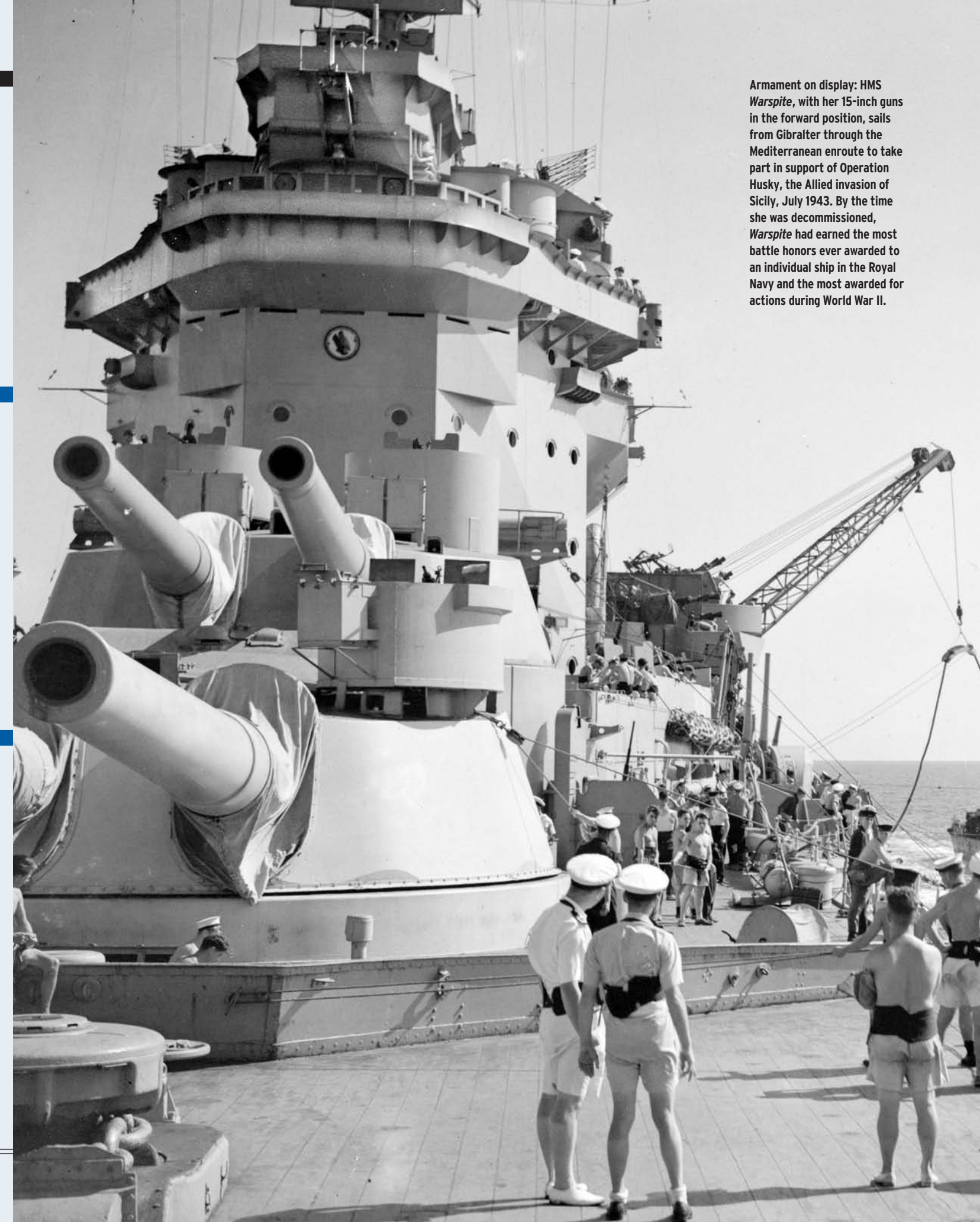
While there, Beatty learned that the German fleet had put to sea and was determined to engage it; he could not wait for the slower and older battleships at distant Scapa Flow to join him. In the grand tradition of Horatio Nelson, he headed directly for the enemy and engaged, firing the first salvos of the Battle of Jutland.

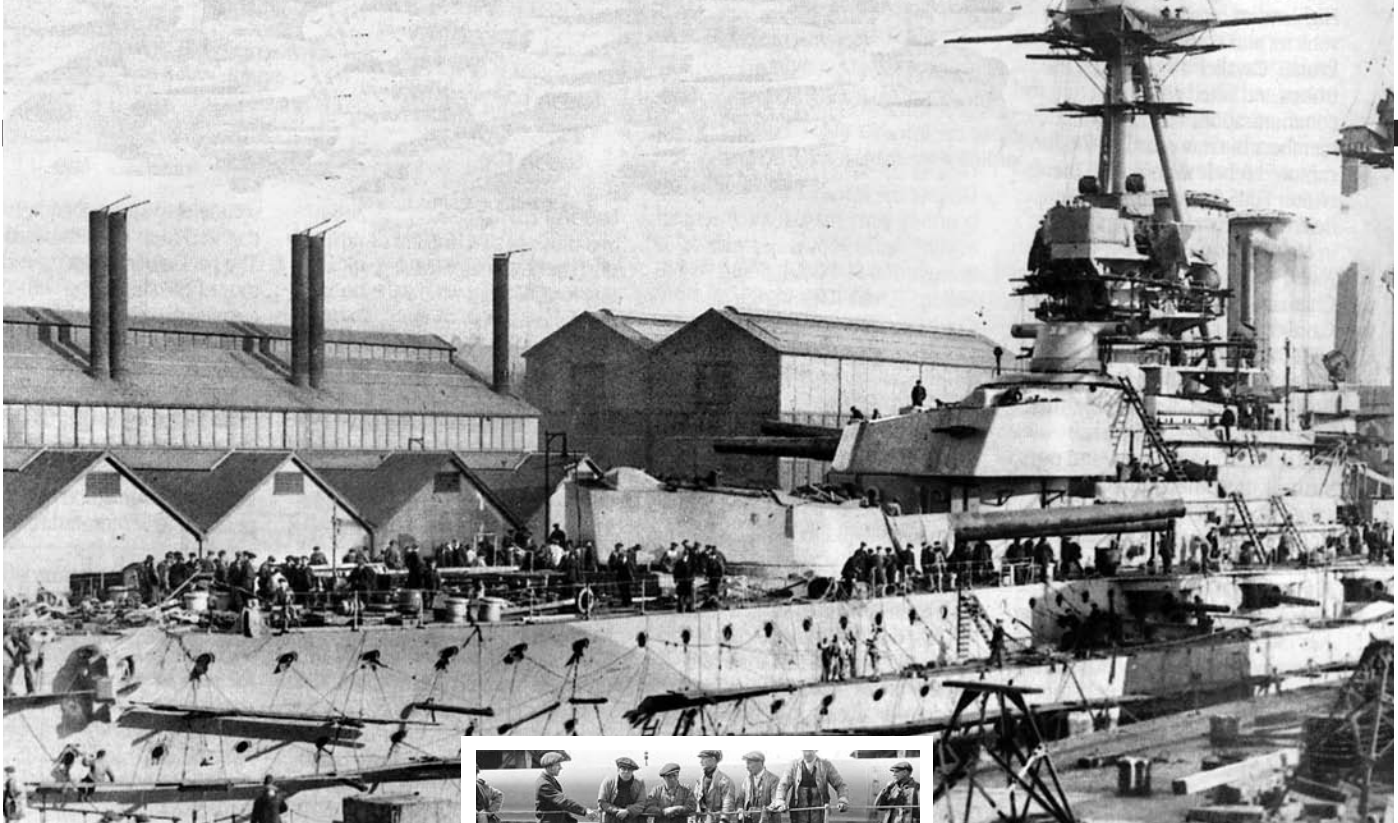
Warspite—along with *Malaya*, *Valiant*, and *Barham* and their 15-inch guns—outmatched the German battleships that mounted smaller 11- and 12-inch guns. But German fire control was more accurate. During the fight, *Warspite*’s steering jammed from damage caused by a German shell and she helplessly tracked twice in wide circles before righting herself.

While unable to steer, she became the target of the closest German battleships and was hit 15 times, killing men and wounding 32 more. The ship was a shambles of debris and wreckage.

The shells she took saved the crew of the badly damaged and burning armored cruiser *Warrior*, which had been the target of German guns until they switched their fire to *Warspite*. *Warrior* was able to limp away and 743 of her surviving crew were taken off and saved before she foundered.

Armament on display: HMS *Warspite*, with her 15-inch guns in the forward position, sails from Gibraltar through the Mediterranean enroute to take part in support of Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily, July 1943. By the time she was decommissioned, *Warspite* had earned the most battle honors ever awarded to an individual ship in the Royal Navy and the most awarded for actions during World War II.





All: Imperial War Museum

When *Warspite's* crew regained steering control, she came out of her turns but was headed straight for the German line. Worse, her engine room was flooding, which caused speed to drop from 25 to 16 knots and only her forward turrets could be brought to bear.

By this time, however, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe's main battle fleet, rushing from Scapa Flow, had come up and began pouring heavy fire on the German fleet, which turned to the south and fled. When the battle ended, *Warspite*, in danger of sinking, was escorted to the Royal Naval Dockyards at Rosyth in the Firth of Forth for repairs.

Returning to service, she would not fight again but would spend the rest of the war at Scapa Flow. At war's end, she steamed out to escort the surrendered German fleet to anchor there.

Her first war was rough on *Warspite*. She had run aground once, collided with other Royal Navy ships three times, and took severe damage and casualties at Jutland. But the "Great War" was only a prelude of things to come.

During the interwar period, *Warspite* served with the Atlantic Squadron and in the Mediterranean Sea. In 1924, and again in 1934, she underwent modernization. Her two funnels were removed and replaced by a single larger one. Her torpedo tubes were removed, making room for seaplanes, along



as Gibraltar before new orders sent her to Canada.

Arriving at Halifax, Nova Scotia, she was assigned to escort a convoy of 30 merchant ships to Britain. In December, after the battleship *Nelson* was damaged by a magnetic mine, *Warspite* took up her duties as flagship of the Home Fleet.

In April 1940, the Germans invaded Norway, and *Warspite* was dispatched immediately to the Norwegian city of Narvik, an important port for the export of Swedish iron ore. This valuable industrial resource was vital to both sides.

A force of 10 German destroyers landed 2,000 mountain troops at Narvik on April 9. The destroyers were to refuel and return to Germany, but the tanker assigned to the task was blown up by British destroyers. A tanker already in port was pressed into service, but its improvised pumping system was inadequate to the task. Only two destroyers had been refueled by the time five British destroyers arrived the next day.

The British destroyers steamed into Narvik harbor on April 10 and began firing on every German ship they could find. Two of the attacking British ships would be sunk, as well as two of the enemy's destroyers. By the time the British flotilla left Narvik, reinforcements, including *Warspite*, had arrived to box the Germans in.

The German situation at Narvik was desperate. The remaining eight destroyers were low on fuel and ammunition. They tried to hide deep within the Narvik fjord, but Vice Adm.

with their launcher, crane, and hanger. Torpedo bulges were installed along her hull.

New, lightweight engines increased endurance and decreased weight and fuel consumption. The weight savings was used to add additional armor and new anti-aircraft guns. When her second refit was complete in 1937, she was, for a short while at least, the most powerful ship afloat.

When World War II began, *Warspite* was at Alexandria, Egypt. Disaster called her back to home waters when a U-boat navigated through the defenses as Scapa Flow and sank the battleship *Royal Oak*. She made it as far



ABOVE: Led by Vice Admiral William Whitworth aboard the flagship HMS *Warspite*, (not pictured) a British force steams into Norway's Narvik fjord on April 13, 1940, to defeat the Kriegsmarine fleet anchored there. **OPPOSITE:** Workers swarm over the British Queen Elisabeth-class battleship HMS *Warspite* during her construction in Plymouth, October 1914. She fought at the Battle of Jutland on May 31, 1916, one of the largest naval battles of all time. **OPPOSITE INSET:** Portside battle damage is visible after Jutland, caused by a German 28cm shell that passed through the captain's quarters.

William "Jock" Whitworth aboard *Warspite* gathered a force of nine destroyers and proceeded to attack the Germans on the 13th.

Warspite's raid was to be supported by aircraft from the carrier HMS *Furious*, but foul weather negated their usefulness. Instead, *Warspite* relied on her own Fairey Swordfish float planes. As the battleship and her destroyers steamed toward Narvik, one of her planes spotted and sank *U-64*. It was the first time that an aircraft sank a submarine.

Charging into the fjord, *Warspite* and her escorts, guided by the float planes, sank or severely damaged the eight remaining German destroyers. Perhaps boasting about his insistence on mounting untested big guns on the ship in 1912, Churchill wrote, "The thunder of her [*Warspite's*] 15-inch guns reverberated among the surrounding mountains like the voice of doom."

Despite several torpedoes fired at *Warspite*, they all missed due to adroit steering and she escaped unscathed. *Warspite* vacated the harbor to gain maneuvering room against *U-51*, a U-boat known to be in the area, as well as any German bombers that might appear. She would remain in Norwegian waters providing shore bombardment until April 24 when she was recalled to Scapa Flow.

Back in port, *Warspite's* sailors found that the news of the (temporary) victory at Narvik had preceded them and the ship's name was on everyone's lips. It was a spot of good news in a war that was not going well.

The battleship was hurriedly refueled and resupplied before being ordered to the Mediterranean. Even as she steamed south through the Atlantic, news was received that France had been invaded. By the time she arrived in harbor at Alexandria in Egypt, the Battle of France was almost over.

In Alexandria, the British Naval Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, was piped aboard as he transferred his flag to his fastest ship, and *Warspite* became the flagship of the British Mediterranean fleet.

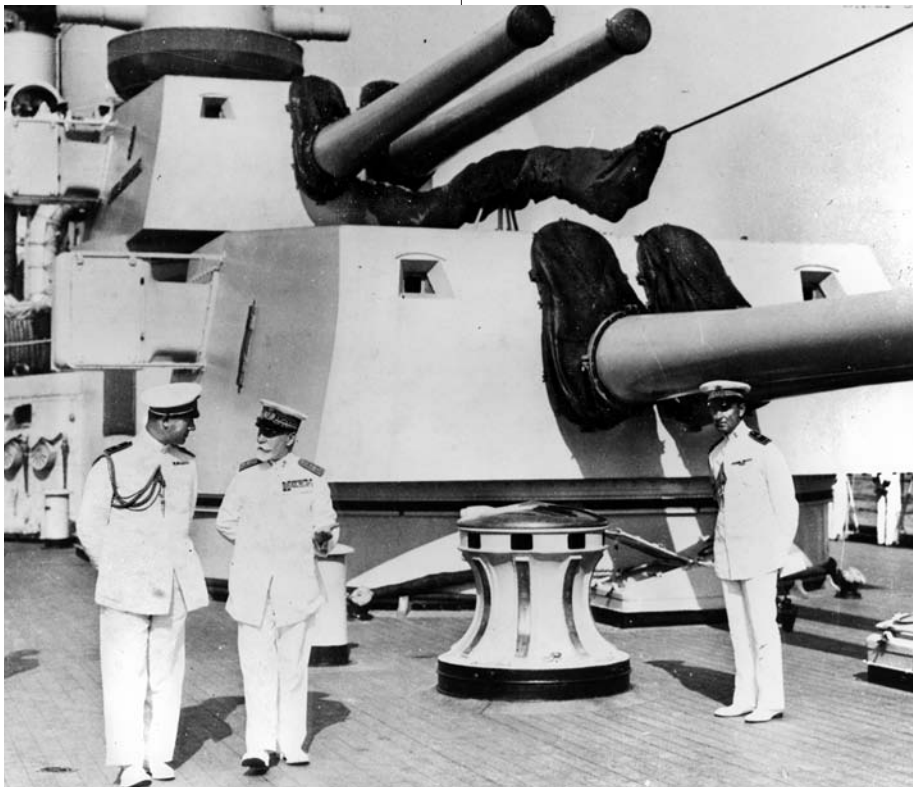
There were three major fleets in the Mediterranean Sea: French, British and Italian. The

allied French and British armadas intimidated the Italians into neutrality but, with Adolf Hitler's sensational Blitzkrieg through France, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini felt emboldened. Italy declared war on an almost helpless France and sided with Germany. With the French Navy paralyzed by defeat, the British stood alone against a formidable Italian fleet.

The British Admiralty had little to spare from their life-or-death struggle against U-boats and commerce raiders in the Atlantic but were compelled to take on the Italian Navy, the Regia Marina, as well. First however, the Vichy French fleet had to be prevented from joining the Nazis. A British squadron based at Gibraltar fired on French ships at the port of Mers-el-Kébir in Algeria, killing nearly 1,300 French sailors. Frenchmen of every stripe were enraged at "perfidious Albion," their former ally.

At Alexandria, Cunningham wanted to reach a solution that didn't involve firing on the French ships then in port, including the battleship *Lorraine* and four cruisers. He negotiated with the French Admiral René-Émile Godfrey. With skillful diplomacy—and the implied threat of *Warspite's* guns—a tenuous but amicable solution was reached.

No sooner was the French squadron at Alexandria secured than Cunningham, on *Warspite*, led his squadron to sea on July 7



Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: The Italian Royal Navy was one of the largest and most modern, but avoided combat. Here, Italian officers stroll the deck of the heavy cruiser *Pola*. The ship, along with several of her sister cruisers, was sunk by *Warspite* during a night attack at Cape Matapan, March 28, 1942. **RIGHT:** In a painting by Charles David Cobb, the British battleships *Warspite*, *Valiant*, and *Barham* blast the Italian cruisers *Fiume* and *Zara* during night action at the Battle of Cape Matapan near Crete on March 28, 1942. The Italian fleet suffered a humiliating defeat in the pivotal Mediterranean engagement.

to escort a convoy steaming to Alexandria from Malta. In all, he commanded one aircraft carrier (the aging *Eagle*), three battleships, five light cruisers, and 16 destroyers of various worth.

At the same time, the Italians were sending a convoy of supply ships south to Libya. They were guarded by a considerable escort including two battleships, six heavy cruisers, eight light cruisers and 16 destroyers, commanded by Vice Adm. Inigo Campioni.

Scout planes and submarines from both sides revealed the presence of the other. Cunningham steered his ships between the Italian fleet and their base at Taranto in the arch of the Italian boot. He hoped it would force them to fight.



Naval History and Heritage Command

For their part, the Italians hoped to lure the British into their home waters where submarines and shore-based bombers could reach them and aid in the battle. As it was, the three branches of the Italian military could not coordinate their actions. The British would not be lured to a spot where the submarines were waiting for them and 126 Italian bombers flying at 12,000 feet, scored only one hit—on the cruiser *Gloucester*—before the two fleets met.

On the morning of July 9, the screening cruisers made contact with each other. In this contest the British light cruisers, mounting 6-inch guns, were no match for more numerous Italian heavy cruisers firing 8-inch guns.

Admiral Cunningham ordered *Warspite* to the aid of his cruisers, causing the Italians to flee her 15-inch guns behind a hastily laid line of smoke. As the Italian cruisers withdrew, the two battleships *Giulio Cesare* (Julius Caesar) and *Conte di Cavour* advanced on *Warspite*.

The other two British battleships, the unmodernized *Malaya* and the disappointing *Royal Sovereign*, were too slow to engage in the brief battle (*Malaya* would get off one ineffectual salvo).

In effect, *Warspite* stood alone against the two onrushing Italian battleships. At about 4 p.m., both sides opened fire at extreme range. *Giulio Cesare* soon straddled *Warspite* with near misses. When *Warspite* fired a salvo at 26,000 yards, one shell hit the Italian battleship *Giulio Cesare*. The hit was perhaps the longest naval artillery shell fired at a moving target ever to find its mark.

The shell hit *Giulio Cesare* in her rear funnel and exploded, causing almost 100 casualties. Fires and smoke fumes raged through the boiler rooms, chasing out the coughing crew and putting half the boilers temporarily out of action. Speed was suddenly reduced from 27 to 18 knots. As a result of this one hit, Admiral Campioni ordered his ships to disengage. The Battle of Calabria was over.

In his dispatch to the Admiralty, Cunningham wrote, “*Warspite*’s hit on one of the enemy battleships at 26,000 yards range might perhaps be described as a lucky one. Its tactical effect was to induce the enemy to turn away and break off the action, which was unfortunate, but strategically it probably has had an important effect on the Italian mentality.”



For the next three months, *Warspite* engaged in convoy protection and shore bombardment in support of British ground forces while successfully fending off the occasional air attack. Her one lucky hit on *Giulio Cesare* had the effect of keeping the Italian fleet in port. In August she was ordered to dry dock in Alexandria where her peacetime gray paint was finally covered over with war-time camouflage.

On November 6, *Warspite* steamed in radio silence with the bulk of the Mediterranean fleet in convoy to Malta. There, on the evening of the 11th, the aircraft carrier *Illustrious* and her escorts, four cruisers, and a screen of destroyers, quietly detached from the convoy to carry out an air raid on the immobile Italian fleet at Taranto. The rest of the British squadron stood in readiness as distant cover. It was an anxious night for all involved.

Illustrious, whose Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers sank one Italian battleship while seriously damaging two others plus a heavy cruiser and two destroyers, rejoined the fleet at dawn the next day exultant with victory. The sinking of Italian capital ships in their home port would inspire the Japanese to do the same at Pearl Harbor.

In mid-January the Luftwaffe added its weight to the Italian air attacks on Malta. On January 10, 1941, Stuka dive bombers zeroed in on *Illustrious* as she was in convoy bound for Malta. *Warspite* stayed close to provide anti-aircraft support as the vulnerable aircraft carrier limped into the port of Valletta. During the melee, *Warspite* was only hit once with a glancing blow that ricocheted off an anchor.

Hitler, besieged by Mussolini's pleas for help, agreed to support the Italians, who were being manhandled by the enraged Greeks following a botched Italian invasion. The German plan was to knife through the Balkans in March in order to reach Greece, prop up his friend, and undermine the British position there.

As part of the deal, the Italian fleet was coerced into disrupting the troopships between Egypt and Crete that were strengthening the British positions. Alerted by a reconnaissance plane that had spotted Italian cruisers and destroyers heading toward Crete, Admiral Cunningham, aboard *Warspite*, ordered the Mediterranean Fleet to sea on the evening of March 27.

When the Italian fleet was sighted south of Crete by his screening cruisers, Cunningham

increased speed and changed course to intercept. It is likely that he wanted to challenge another Italian battleship to slug it out, but *Warspite* was having mechanical problems which restricted her speed to 20 knots.

The admiral ordered planes from the carrier *Formidable* to make a torpedo attack. Six Fairey Albacore biplanes responded, but scored no hits. Yet it was enough to make the skittish Italians, who had hoped to ambush some undefended troop or supply convoy, turn for home. They had not bargained on meeting up with *Warspite* and the British Mediterranean Fleet.

Now the two navies fought a running battle while rushing westward, the Italians in retreat. *Formidable* launched three more Albacore torpedo planes to target the Italian battleship *Vittorio Veneto*. At 4:30 in the afternoon, one of the Albacores scored a hit in the stern of *Vittorio Veneto*, damaging her portside propulsion shaft and slowing her speed to 15 knots. The plane and her crew gave their lives in the process.

At 7:30 p.m., another air attack left the Italian heavy cruiser *Pola* dead in the water, although the British were unaware of this. In the growing darkness, radar contact was made

with two ships some six miles ahead. Cunningham saw an opportunity for a night attack.

He ordered *Valiant*, *Formidable*, and *Barham* into line behind *Warspite* with a screen of destroyers on either side. Running with their lights out, they quietly approached the position of the radar sighting while training their guns by the radar's signal.

The Italian admiral, operating without radar, thought that the British fleet was 90 miles astern. He ordered the heavy cruisers *Zara* and *Fiume*, along with four destroyers, to assist the stalled *Pola*. Without radar they could not know of the enemy's approach. At 2,900 yards, searchlights were turned on which illuminated *Fiume*. The British fired at the unsuspecting Italians at point-blank range.

Five of *Warspite's* first six shells struck home. *Fiume* was shattered and burning when, 30 seconds later, a second salvo smashed into her again. *Fiume* limped into the darkness and sank within the hour. *Warspite* then turned her guns on *Zara*. *Valiant* and *Barham* added their fire to doom the second Italian cruiser.

In just 10 minutes, *Warspite* alone fired off 40 rounds from her 15-inch and 44 rounds from her 6-inch guns. British destroyers then finished off two of their counterparts and sank the crippled *Pola*. Cunningham sailed his fleet away without a scratch. In all, three heavy cruisers and two destroyers were sunk. The Battle of Cape Matapan, a resounding British victory, was over.

In April, *Warspite* conducted convoy-escort and shore-bombardment duties against Tripoli, Libya. In May, the Germans made their airborne landings on Crete. The Mediterranean fleet was called upon to support and then to evacuate the British troops on the island. All the while the fleet would be under intense German bombardment. Now it was the Royal Navy's time to suffer.

While on station 100 miles west of Crete on May 22, *Warspite*, sailing without Cunningham, her "lucky admiral," came under attack from waves of German planes. At 1:30 p.m., she was pounced upon by three ME 109 fighter/bombers, each carrying a 250kg (500 lb.) bomb. The mighty ship swerved to avoid them.

Two of the bombs missed but the third

All: Imperial War Museum



struck a 4-inch gun mount on the starboard aft and blew it overboard. The bomb penetrated the deck and exploded, killing 38 and injuring 31, while knocking out a 6-inch gun as well. Fires broke out and one boiler room was temporarily evacuated due to smoke. Speed dropped to 18 knots.

During the disastrous evacuation from Crete, the British lost three cruisers and six destroyers. *Warspite*, *Barham* and *Formidable* were damaged along with more cruisers and destroyers. To make matters worse, in the Atlantic, the HMS *Hood* was sunk with only three survivors that same week.

Temporary repairs were made to *Warspite* but more extensive work was required. She was ordered to steam to the U.S. Navy Dockyard at Bremerton in faraway Washington State for extensive repairs and the addition of advanced radar and fire control systems. Her worn-out 15-inch gun barrels would be replaced with new barrels sent from Great Britain.

The day before her departure from Alexandria, a German air raid sent a 1,000-pound bomb close enough to explode beneath her hull, causing warping in her plating. Her crew was happy to get out of the Mediterranean.

After her repairs, *Warspite* was at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when the Japanese attacked. As the first bombs fell, the ship went on full alert, her crew recalled from shore.

One British sailor remembered, "I heard a plane and looked over my shoulder and it seemed very close, close enough to touch. I watched as a torpedo dropped from its belly. He was coming straight in from over the submarine dock and heading straight for our port side. I knew the torpedo was going to hit and I thought it would throw me into the water or at least off the ladder.

"I wrapped my arms around, expecting a huge blast but only felt a jolt. I continued up the ladder to my station. My gun crew was already there when I arrived. We were frustrated that the gun was not operable, as the ammunition was locked and the breechblock was in the machine shop."

Warspite was one of the few ships in harbor that day capable of offering resistance to an enemy attack and the only ship's crew with combat experience. Ironically, all of her ammunition had been removed and stored ashore during her reconstruction. Trucks were rushed to retrieve her precious munitions.

The next day brought news of the sinking of HMS *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*. If the Taranto-style attack on Pearl Harbor were not bad enough, it was sobering for *Warspite's*



INSET, LEFT: Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, considered *Warspite's* "lucky" captain. **INSET, RIGHT:** Admiral of the Fleet, Sir James Somerville, used *Warspite* as his flagship, successfully eluding Japanese attack at Ceylon, and escaping to Bombay. **TOP:** A Grumman F4F Wildcat, known as a Martlet in service with Britain's Fleet Air Arm, flies past *Warspite* as it prepares to land on the British aircraft carrier *Formidable* during the Battle of Madagascar, March 1942. **OPPOSITE:** *Warspite's* 15-inch guns belch fire as she bombards German shore batteries at Catania, Sicily, in support of the British advance up the island's east coast in August 1943.

crew to realize just how vulnerable big-gunned capital ships had become.

Upon completion of her refit, rather than return to the Mediterranean, *Warspite* was ordered to the Indian Ocean via Australia to shore up the Royal Navy on a new front. She arrived in Trincomalee, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) on March 22, 1942. On the 27th she became the flagship of Admiral Sir James Somerville, who had once been her captain; he had only arrived in port the day before. *Warspite* was now the most important ship of the British Eastern Fleet.

On the very next day, March 28, the anniversary of the victory at Cape Matapan, Somerville received word from British Intelligence that the Japanese planned an air attack on Ceylon. He immediately ordered all ships out of the ports of Trincomalee and Colombo to prevent their being trapped and sunk there.

Next, he formed his meager number of ships into two columns; "Force A" consisted of the faster ships. Led by *Warspite*, they included the two modern aircraft carriers *Formidable* and *Indomitable* with a combined 40 fighters and 60 torpedo planes of mostly antiquated biplane designs. Not all were serviceable. There were also the heavy cruisers *Cornwall* and *Dorsetshire*, two light cruisers, and six destroyers.

"Force B" consisted of four battleships of the R class, newer than *Warspite*. But they had not been modernized and were slower and carried fewer anti-aircraft assets. In order not to hold back the faster ships, Force B cruised separately.

Somerville judged that the Japanese squadron would approach Ceylon from the southeast. That squadron was the world's first aircraft carrier strike group, the Kidō Butai. These same ships had successfully bombed Pearl Harbor and later the port of Darwin in Australia.

Somerville knew that he was no match for them. He adopted a strategy of steaming southwest of Ceylon, westward during the day and eastward at dusk. Each time he cruised on a different arc to prevent Japanese submarines from lying in wait. In this way he hoped to avoid detection by Japanese air reconnaissance by day and, hopefully use his radar-equipped torpedo planes to make a night attack on the enemy.

He steamed in this manner for three days and two nights but the enemy was never sighted. With his ships running low on fuel, fresh water, and supplies, Somerville assumed the intelligence reports were faulty. He took the fleet to the secret British naval base at Addu Atoll, 600 miles south of Ceylon, to replenish.

Cornwall and *Dorsetshire* were detached to Colombo, while the outdated aircraft carrier

Hermes, sailing with Force B, was sent to Trincomalee to prepare for a planned attack on Madagascar.

Detaching these ships was a horrendous mistake—all three would soon be sunk.

Force A arrived at Addu Atoll at noon on the fourth, and the ships immediately started to refuel and resupply. The slower Force B arrived at 3 p.m. At 4:30, Somerville received word that a Consolidated PBV Catalina had spotted a Japanese force approaching Ceylon from the southeast. At midnight, after all of the Force A ships had refueled, *Warspite* led them in the direction of the reported sighting; Force B would follow at 6 a.m.

For the next four days, the British and Japanese fleets tried desperately to find and destroy each other, but neither side could locate the other. Occasionally, *Warspite's* radar would pick up Japanese aircraft on the edge of their screens but the Japanese were never able to find Force A.

After receiving reports of the sinking of *Hermes*, *Cornwall*, and *Dorsetshire*, the Admiralty and Admiral Somerville were nervous that the whole Eastern Fleet might suffer destruction at the hands of the Japanese aircraft carriers, and so, on the 9th, *Warspite* led Force A to the safety of distant Bombay, while Force B was sent to guard the sea lane between Africa and Madagascar. Though accused of cowardice, his decision to save his fleet from the overwhelming power of the Japanese was the right one.

By early May, Force A approached the northeastern end of Vichy-held Madagascar, where they provided distant cover for Force Z, which was assigned to occupy the capital of the island, Diego Suarez, to prevent its fine harbor from falling into Japanese hands. From there Force A steamed to Kenya to refuel and resupply.

By the middle of the month, Admiral Somerville was approached by the Admiralty and representatives of the U.S. Navy to ask if he could return to Ceylon as a diversion against anticipated Japanese attacks in the mid-Pacific. On June 5, *Warspite* led Force A back into Colombo harbor. Even as she docked, the Battle of Midway raged in the distant central Pacific.

Though the *Kidô Butai* suffered badly at Midway, the Japanese were still active in the Indian Ocean. Submarines and surface raiders roamed the huge oceanic expanse like sharks hunting prey.

There were also two Japanese merchant cruisers prowling in southern waters between Australia and South Africa. Originally built as passenger or cargo vessels, *Aikoku Maru* and *Hōkoku Maru* were fitted with eight 6-inch naval guns. They also served as submarine tenders for the subs operating around Madagascar.

On the same day that *Warspite* returned to Colombo, *Aikoku Maru* sank MV *Elysia*, which was ferrying troops between South

Africa and Australia. With the crushing American victory at Midway, Force A was free to pursue these threats. Number One on that list was locating the two Japanese commerce raiders.

On June 12, *Warspite* led Force A in search of the two Japanese merchant cruisers. Their search centered on the Chagos Archipelago—a group of atolls and reefs south of the Maldives (today the home of the American naval base at Diego Garcia). The search for the enemy ships proved fruitless, as they were operating to the southeast of Madagascar at the time.

British concern about the raiders was just as much to protect the secrecy of their refueling base at Addu Atoll as to protect the lightly traveled sea lane between Australia and South Africa. Failing to find the offending Japanese raiders, *Warspite* and her flotilla returned to Colombo on the 18th before sailing to Kilindini on Zanzibar Island.

As Force A cruised back and forth through the Indian Ocean, Admiral Somerville led the crew of *Warspite* and the other ships of the squadron in fleet exercises, maneuvers, gunnery practice, and mock air attacks. The busy crewmen, competing with each other, were rewarded for their diligence with the Royal Navy's tradition of a daily "tot" of rum. Winning gun crews might get an extra tot.

Unfortunately, *Warspite* was built for action in the cold climes of the North Sea. The crew suffered from the heat and humidity of the tropics, especially when buttoned up at their humid, airless action stations. Sickness thinned the ranks.

On July 21, once again in response to an American request to create a diversion, *Warspite* led Force A eastward across the Indian Ocean. This time they were to participate in Operation Stab, a simulated invasion of the Japanese occupied Andaman Islands off the western coast of Burma. The ruse was set to coincide with the U.S. Marine landing on Guadalcanal.

Steaming in convoy with dummy transports, Force A approached the Andamans on August 2. The mock invasion was covered by copious fake radio traffic of the kind that would later

All: Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: Captain Herbert Packer, right, on the bridge of *Warspite*, observes the bombardment of the Italian mainland, September 1943. Packer, who had also served aboard the ship during World War I, and another sailor are wearing anti-flash coveralls. **OPPOSITE:** After being refitted, *Warspite*, under Somerville, sails at full steam for the Indian Ocean as part of "Force A" to take on a Japanese force that was threatening British interests in the region.



convince the Germans of an Allied landing at Calais as the real target of D-Day. Japanese scout planes approaching the convoy were identified by radar and shot down before they could guess British intentions.

Leaving the enemy in confusion as to their whereabouts, Force A was ordered to return to East Africa to participate in the invasion of that part of Madagascar south of Diego Suarez still in Vichy hands. On the way, Force A rendezvoused with the slower ships of Force B.

The invasion of major Madagascan cities occurred in September 1942. *Warspite*, with the battleships and aircraft carriers of the combined Eastern Fleet, stood by to offer shore bombardment if needed, but there was little resistance from the disillusioned Vichy French garrison.

The dawn of 1943 would find *Warspite* at Durban, South Africa. There, a new captain was piped aboard. He was Herbert Packer. In 1915, Packer had joined the ship's company of the brand-new *Warspite* as a sub-Lieutenant tasked as an assistant gunnery officer. In the late 20's he was her gunnery officer. Now he was her captain.

In April *Warspite* was ordered back to Britain to the delight of her crew who had by now traveled over 150,000 miles since the beginning of the war. Admiral Somerville remained behind. Steaming from Durban around the west coast of Africa, she arrived at port near Glasgow for another refit.

In early June, *Warspite* was back in the Mediterranean in time to join in the invasion of Sicily on July 9. Force H, to which *Warspite* was now attached, provided distant cover for the invasion forces. Following the landings, Force H moved to the Ionian Sea to prevent a naval response from Italy against the Anglo-American beachheads.

After refueling at Malta, *Warspite* was redirected to support stalled British troops on Sicily with shore bombardment. Proceeding with haste to her appointed target near the city of Catania, her steering jammed again, turning her in a tight circle to port before being brought under control. It was a problem that had jinxed her since Jutland.

Once the steering was sorted, she arrived on station and fired off 57 rounds at a point-blank range of 7,000 yards. Her destroyer escorts added their own shells to the din onshore. During the bombardment, *Warspite* was buzzed by three FW 109s but no damage was done.

Returning at speed to Malta that evening *Warspite* was alerted to threats from the air but no attacks materialized. *Warspite*'s "lucky admiral," Andrew Cunningham was now the Commander-in-Chief of British naval operations in the Mediterranean. In a message to his former

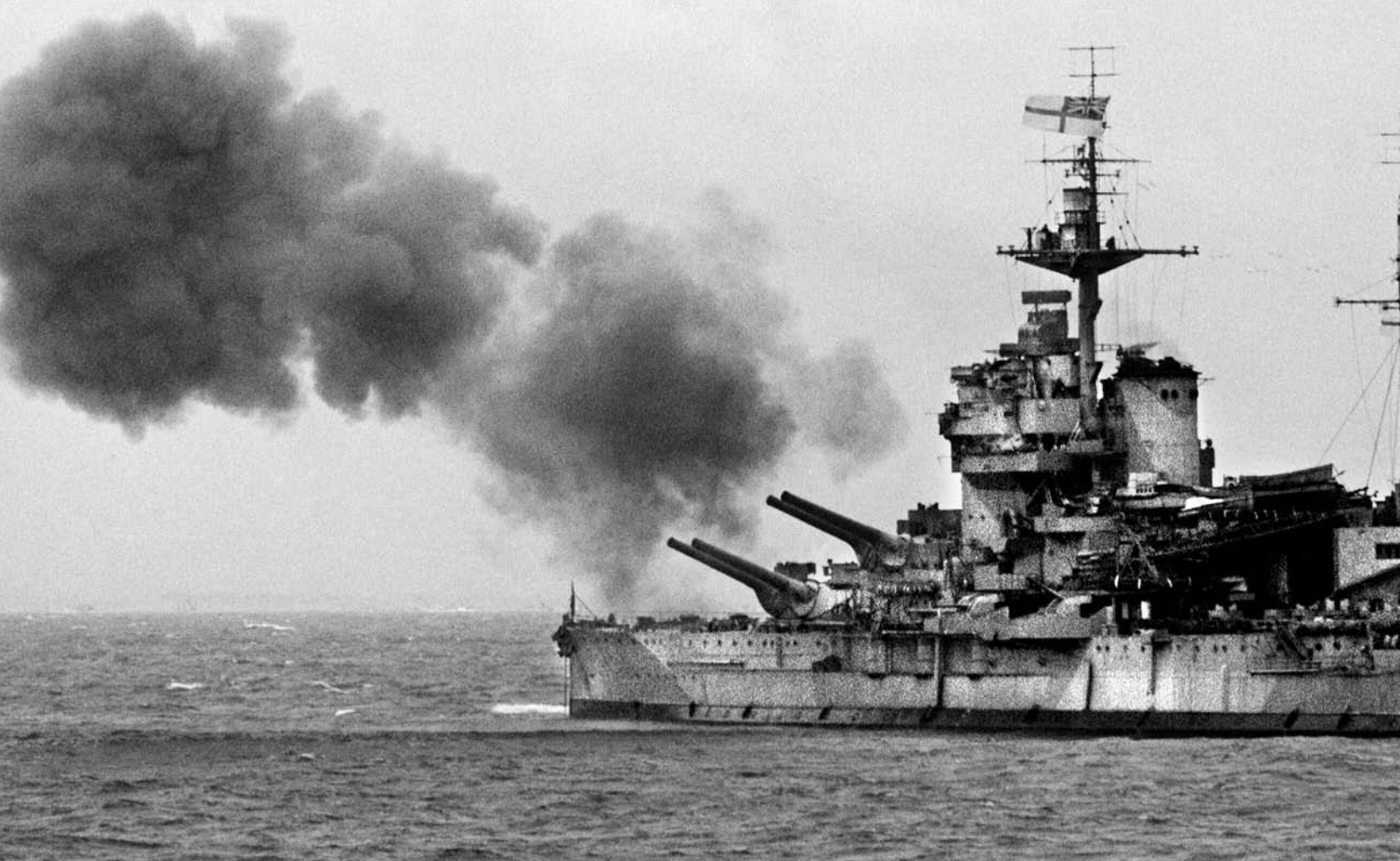
flagship, he referenced her dash back to Malta by noting that, "Operation well carried out. There is no question when the old lady lifts her skirts she can run." Everafter, *Warspite* would be known as "The Old Lady."

In August, diversion from war came in the form of an impromptu concert for the crew from popular entertainer Noel Coward. Then on September 1 a squadron including *Warspite* and *Valiant* slipped out of Malta to participate in Operation Sledge, which was the bombardment of the Italian mainland south of Reggio di Calabria in preparation for the allied landings. Specifically targeted were Italian gun sites. The landings took place on the 3rd and were unopposed, allowing *Warspite* and her squadron to return to Malta on the fourth.

By now the Italians had seen enough. Mussolini was ousted and secret negotiations were held to surrender to the Allies and become officially neutral. Allied negotiators insisted that all remaining Italian naval units steam to Malta so as not to fall into the hands of the Germans.

In the transfer of the Italian fleet, *Warspite* would escort two groups of Italian warships to Malta. The task reminded the ship's company that *Warspite* had once escorted surrendered German ships to Scapa Flow in 1918.

On the 14th, *Warspite*, in company with



Imperial War Museum

three other battleships and two aircraft carriers, began the journey back to Britain to prepare for the D-Day invasion. Before they could reach Gibraltar, *Warspite* and *Valiant* were suddenly recalled to Italy's coast at Salerno where the Germans had begun a vicious counterattack against an insecure Allied beachhead.

Warspite arrived on station around 11 a.m. Much time was spent assuring that the ship had the right targeting information as gunnery officers visited shore and other ships to verify that the big guns did not hit the threatened beachhead. By 6 p.m., the 15-inch guns opened up on German positions. When darkness fell, the bombarding ships ceased fire and withdrew.

The next morning at 8:30, firing began again; all the while the off-shore fleet was under German air attack. By 2 p.m., *Warspite* ceased firing and began to slowly weave her way seaward through the cluster of other ships that were supporting the landings. During this maneuvering she was attacked by a dozen low-level FW 190 fighters. The crew successfully warded off these attacks.

However, no sooner did the FW 190s clear the area than the contrails of a flight of D0 217 K-2 bombers were sighted at 20,000 feet. Each bomber was fitted to carry one FX-1400, commonly called the "Fritz X" glide bomb, that were designed to be guided to their targets using radio control by aimers in the mother craft. Three of the bombs were aimed at the slow-moving *Warspite*.

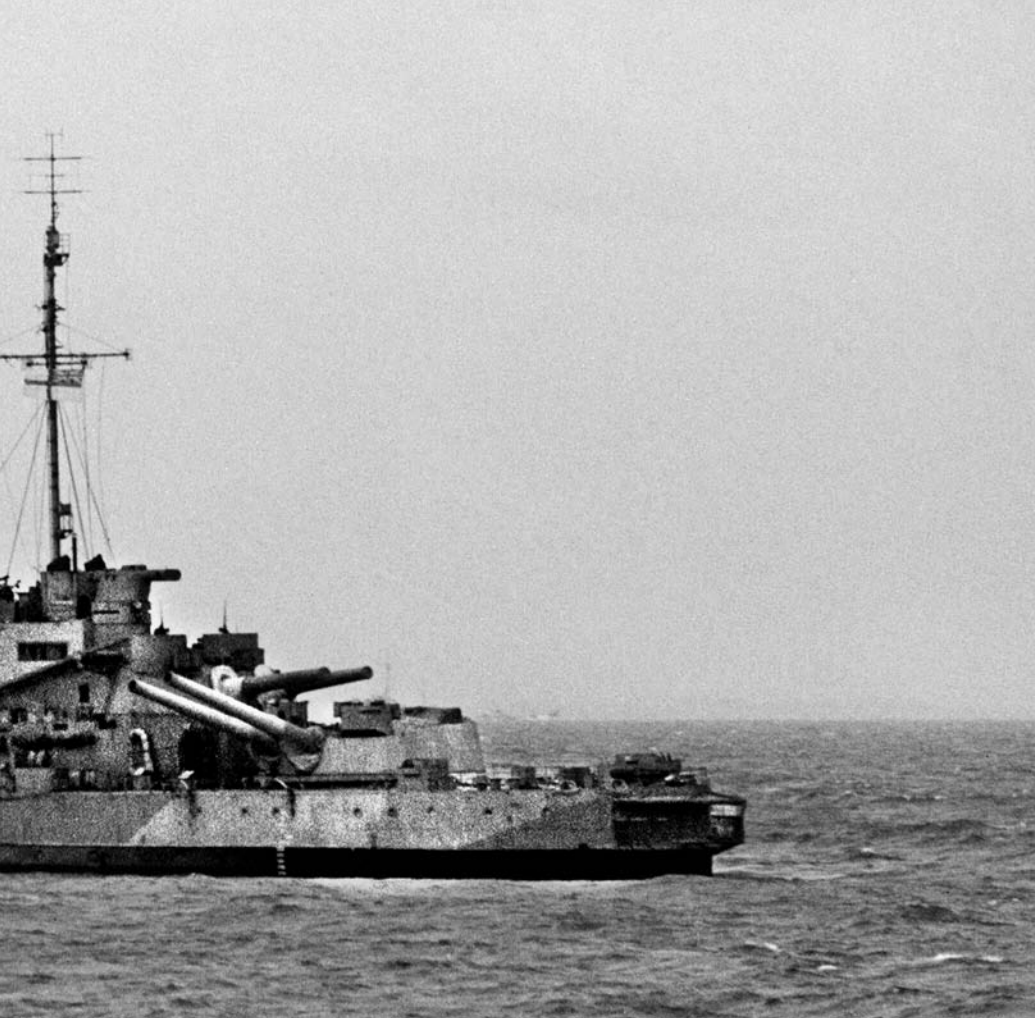
These glide bombs were not toys. One of them had already sunk the Italian battleship *Roma* as it was cruising to surrender at Malta. Now it was *Warspite's* turn to be targeted. The first bomb struck on the port side at the funnel and penetrated six decks before exploding against the double hull. The blast and hull breach flooded the boiler rooms, knocking out all power to the ship.

A second bomb narrowly missed amidships on the starboard side. It exploded and ruptured the torpedo bulge, which took on more water. The third bomb missed astern and did no damage. The blast of the first bomb killed six crewmen and injured several more, while the ship took on 5,000 tons of seawater that caused her to list five degrees to starboard.

As if on cue, the steering jammed and caused *Warspite* to track in impotent circles dangerously close to a German mine field until she glided to a stop. Her boilers were damaged beyond use so she could not communicate, use radar, steer, or aim her guns.

Using semaphore flags, Captain Packer ordered a tow. Soon, both U.S. and British fleet tugs arrived to rig hawsers for towing. Making no more than four knots, and with tow ropes repeatedly snapping, *Warspite* made slow progress away from Salerno. Meanwhile, the crew was able to get the ship's two diesel dynamos moving, powering the pumps and preventing further flooding.

As she approached the Straits of Messina, the swift southward current overpowered her tugs and all but one of her hawsers parted. *Warspite* went through the straits crab-like, sideways. Once out of the rushing current, the tugs reattached their lines and safely towed the helpless *Warspite* to Malta, arriving on the 19th. War-torn Malta's limited repair facilities



As part of Bombardment Force D, *Warspite's* 15-inch guns fire at German targets at the British beaches at Normandy, June 6, 1944. With the end of the battleship era, *Warspite* was decommissioned and broken up after the war.

man gunners. For the rest of the day *Warspite* and the other bombardment ships supported infantry ashore by firing at German batteries until they were silenced. In the evening she moved four miles off shore and anchored for the night.

The next day she was back in action firing her still-functioning guns at the enemy. In all, *Warspite* fired 334 of both high-explosive and armor-piercing shells. That evening she sailed to Portsmouth to replenish her magazines.

She would return to action on the 9th. This time she was assigned to a position opposite the American landing site at Utah Beach, relieving the USS *Nevada*, which had run low on ammunition. She fired blind at a reported German artillery position and drew praise for her marksmanship from American commanders on the ground.

On the 10th, the Old Lady was on standby most of the day before firing on an artillery battery. That evening *Nevada* returned to her station, so *Warspite* moved over to support British forces at Gold Beach. The next day, she would fire into some woodlands where a number of panzers were reported hidden. The ship was again commended for her shooting by officers on the ground.

Once more she returned to Portsmouth for more ammunition but for the second time in her long life her 15-inch gun barrels were worn out. To get new ones she would have to steam to Rosyth in Scotland. To do so, she traversed the Straits of Dover that a British capital ship had not done since the beginning of the war. At 4 a.m., German guns near Calais fired on her in the dark but missed.

Having successfully cleared the Channel, she steamed northward along the eastern coast of England. She was near Harwich when she struck a German influence mine on her port quarter. The ever-problematic steering jammed again and the port propeller shafts, bent from the impact, seized up entirely. Headway could only be made by using first one and then both starboard

Continued on page 98

did the best they could to patch up the “old lady.” On November 1 she was sent on to the drydock facilities at Gibraltar where she arrived, still under tow, on November 12.

Warspite underwent repair in Gibraltar until March, by which time most of her crew had been transferred to other ships and a newly conscripted crew assigned to her. She then sailed in convoy back to Britain and docked at the repair yard at Rosyth, where she had been repaired after the Battle of Jutland. The aging ship wasn’t so much repaired as “patched up.”

A heavy cement caisson was placed over the hole in her hull to staunch a persistent leak, but one of her boiler rooms was too far gone to repair and was left off line. Her 6-inch guns were removed to offset the weight of the heavy caisson. One of her aft 15-inch gun turrets could not be made to swivel, and the steering problem that had plagued her the entire length of her service was still a puzzle.

Nevertheless, she was still a powerful gun platform. In May 1944 she was assigned to Bombardment Force D that was to provide fire support for the troops landing at Normandy on D-Day. Ship and crew underwent gunnery exercises with the other battleships and cruisers assigned to this force.

At 5 a.m. on June 6, *Warspite* was given the honor of firing the first shot on D-Day. She opened up on a German artillery battery at Villerville, behind Sword Beach. A feeble German response came quickly. Three Motor Torpedo Boats (known as E boats) were ordered to attack what were reported to be landing craft at Normandy.

Leaving their base at Le Havre, the torpedo boats encountered an Allied smoke screen. When they cleared the smoke, the terrified Germans found themselves facing not landing boats but six battleships and heavy cruisers with their huge guns. They quickly fired off 18 torpedoes at long range and retreated back into the safety of the smoke. One of the torpedoes narrowly missed *Warspite* while another hit and sank the Norwegian destroyer *Svenner*.

Warspite also came under fire from a shore battery. Shells straddled the ship with near misses. The captain ordered her moved to another position to throw off the aim of the Ger-

Evil on Trial



The Nazi concentration camp at Dachau was liberated by American soldiers of the 45th Infantry Division, Seventh Army, on April 30, 1945. Prisoners who were able to stand and to comprehend that the hour of deliverance had come cheered the liberators just days before the final collapse of the Third Reich.

The extremes of Nazi cruelty were brought to light during the now-forgotten Buchenwald war-crimes trial.



BY FLINT WHITLOCK

In the spring of 1945, after more than five-and-a-half years of total, merciless war in Europe—and the deaths of millions of human beings on the battlefields, the bombed-out cities and in the concentration and extermination camps—the carnage and destruction in Europe had finally come to an end.

Dealing with the tremendous number of sick and traumatized liberated survivors of the concentration camps suddenly became a major priority for the U.S. Army. Many had lost everything and everyone. Of those who had lived in countries now under Soviet control, many did not want to return.

The refugees and survivors needed medical care, food, clothing and shelter. Remaining in the camps for the foreseeable future, no matter how marginal the conditions, was the only option for many. The enormous task of determining what to do with the survivors was turned over to the United Nations Displaced Persons Branch.

Defeat left Germany without a functioning government, economy, infrastructure, or a means to take care of millions of its own citizens. The victors would need to help the vanquished rebuild basic water, sanitation, and utility services; businesses, schools, hospitals, police, courts, and other institutions; civil government—and those guilty of Nazi Germany's crimes rounded up and put on trial.

A Culture of Terror

A few weeks after Germany had surrendered, 40-year-old Ilse Koch was walking with her two little children, son Artwin and daughter Gisele, through the rubble-strewn streets of Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart, when she was spotted by a former prisoner from the Buchenwald camp, or KLB. He went to the municipal authorities, who then arrested her and brought her in for questioning.

The red-headed Ilse Koch was the widow of SS-Colonel Karl Otto Koch, Buchenwald's first commandant (he had previously been in charge of the Sachsenhausen camp near Berlin). The couple had lived a life of privilege, unquestioned authority, and debauchery from 1937 until he was transferred by the SS to run the camp at Majdanek, Poland, in 1941. Karl was shot by an SS firing squad in April 1945 after an investigation and trial that found him guilty of skimming funds that

should have gone into SS coffers. He had even stolen gold fillings from the mouths of dead prisoners before cremation.

During the Kochs' tenure as overlords of KL (Konzentrationslager) Buchenwald, high on a hill overlooking Germany's cultural capital of Weimar, unspeakable horrors were committed against the helpless inmate population.

Like all the camps, living conditions were beyond primitive. Prisoners were fed a starvation diet of inedible, so-called "food." Sanitary conditions were abominable. Inmates were forced to sleep three or four to a bunk. Backbreaking work was non-stop, and many were beaten and tortured by their sadistic SS guards without mercy. Disease was rampant, as was fear and hopelessness.

Prisoners who broke camp rules were hanged on gallows while thousands of others were forced to watch. Those who weren't hanged were often beaten to death by an especially cruel SS man named Martin Sommer, the camp's chief jailer.

Another SS man to be avoided at all costs was Koch's adjutant Heinrich Hackmann, who was known to carry out extreme punishments for little or no reason. One of his favorite punishments was to tie a prisoner's arms behind his back and then hang him by the arms from a tree or post; the pain was excruciating.

When simply inflicting pain was not enough, Hackmann supervised the random killing of prisoners. On at least one occasion, it was said, he laughingly had two inmates bend back a small tree growing at the lip of the quarry, put another inmate in the tree, and then launch the inmate to his death as though he were a missile on a catapult.

A crematorium within the camp disposed of hundreds of bodies a day.

Although the mother of two children, Ilse was no saint; she carried on an affair with one of the camp's doctors, and orgies were a regular occurrence at the Kochs' hill-top home.

She had her passion for horseback riding and would ride around the all-male camp where, it was alleged, she often saw inmates laboring shirtless on work parties. After spotting a prisoner with especially interesting tattoos, the prisoner would disappear. Within a few days inmates would fashion the skin into macabre household objects such as



ABOVE: Dr. Kurt Sitte (right), a witness for the prosecution, identifies human skin taken from dead prisoners at Dachau during the trial of former camp personnel and prisoners from Buchenwald. At left is Prosecutor Sol Surowitz, and in the middle is Werner Klein, a radio reporter. This photo was taken during trial proceedings on April 16, 1947. **TOP:** Sadistic medical experiments were conducted at concentration camps, and the Nazis preserved human organs in a grisly display of their inhumane treatment of prisoners. In this photo a collection of such organs is shown, among them a kidney, liver, lung, stomach, and possibly a heart.

lampshades, knife sheaths, or pairs of gloves. So associated with these barbarities was Ilse that the inmates gave her a secret nickname: "The Bitch of Buchenwald" (*die Schlampe von Buchenwald*).

Atrocities sometimes involved animals, usually guard dogs that were sometimes sicced on inmates. According to one inmate, Colonel Koch sometimes threw prisoners into the bear den at the camp zoo, where they were "torn limb from limb."

Ilse Koch was incarcerated, but her turn at justice would have to wait. First, a war-crimes tribunal of the leading Nazis began in the fall of 1945 in Courtroom 600 at the bomb-scarred Palace of Justice in Nürnberg—the city that had hosted the massive, emotionally powerful Nazi Party rallies in the 1930s.

Although some have criticized the proceedings as "victors' justice," the "London Agreement" of August 8, 1945, signed by representatives from Great Britain, France, the Soviet



ABOVE: The charred remains of inmates who were executed or died from starvation or disease are shown inside a crematory oven at the Buchenwald concentration camp. The camp was liberated by the U.S. 80th Infantry Division. **LEFT:** Many with hollow stares and others suffering from malnutrition and disease, prisoners are photographed in the concentration camp at Buchenwald after their liberation by troops of the U.S. Army's 80th Infantry Division.

Union, and the United States, established the authority for the four powers to create international law and conduct tribunals for those accused of committing war crimes, or “crimes against humanity.”

Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Heinrich Himmler had escaped justice by committing suicide, but there were other high-ranking Nazis and military officers whose ultimate fate would be decided by an international court of law. Twenty-two of the Third Reich's most notorious figures became the focal point of the first, and most famous, of the war-crimes tribunals, which began in Nürnberg on Monday, November 19, 1945.

In the prisoners' dock, guarded by members of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division in white helmet liners and Class A uniforms, was a broad cross-section of the former Nazi hierarchy. Military leaders included Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, once the commander of the Luftwaffe and arguably the second-highest-ranking figure in the Third Reich; Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, former Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces; his Chief of the Operations Staff, General Alfred Jodl; and Grand Admirals Karl Dönitz and Erich Raeder.

Others, who had been a part of the Nazi government included Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess (deemed by many to be mentally ill); former Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop; Wilhelm Frick, ex-Minister of the Interior; and Walther Funk and Hjalmar Schacht, both of whom had served as Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank.

Those who were implicated in the program to exterminate the Jews were Gestapo chief Ernst Kaltenbrunner; Nazi Party ideologist Alfred Rosenberg; and Julius Streicher, editor of the viciously anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Sturmer*. They were joined in the dock assortment of former diplomats and politicians and Nazi goons.

The tribunal lasted 218 days, and the verdicts read on October 1, 1946. Eleven of the accused were condemned to death, seven were sentenced to long prison terms, and three acquitted.

Sentenced to death were Frank, Frick, Göring, Jodl, Kaltenbrunner, Keitel, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, Sauckel, Seyss-Inquart, and Streicher. (Göring cheated the hangman by swallowing smuggled poison in his cell.) Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary, tried in absentia, was

also sentenced to death. Seven men were given prison terms: Dönitz (10 years); Hess (life in prison); Funk (life); Neurath (15 years); Raeder (life); von Schirach (20 years); and Speer (20 years). Fritsche, von Papen, and Schacht were acquitted.

Even today, many Americans assume the trials of the top 22 Nazi figures wrote the final chapter to the 12-year nightmare that was the Third Reich. Such was not the case. A series of less-publicized American military tribunals also took place to prosecute Nazi doctors, judges, industrialists, and individuals.

Out of 3,887 accused war criminals, 1,672 of them later went on trial at the former concentration camp of Dachau. A tribunal for concentration-camp administrators and guards was conducted there from November 1945 through August 1948.

The trials, held in a former mess hall at Dachau, did not conform to customary civilian judicial procedures as practiced in the U.S. and Britain, and were, in fact, akin to military courts-martial, even though not all the accused, such as Ilse Koch, had been military personnel.

Further, those on trial were referred to as



ABOVE: The cruelty of Ilse Koch, wife of Buchenwald commandant Karl Koch, earned her the nickname *Die Hexe von Buchenwald*, “the witch of Buchenwald.” RIGHT: Rudolf Wolf, who testified that more than 600 prisoners at Dachau had been killed in a “death march,” points to Franz Trenkle, number four on the list of 40 accused Nazi torturers at Dachau being tried for their actions. This notorious Nazi concentration camp, which became the scene of the trials, is located near the Bavarian city of Munich, Germany, and the photo was taken on November 20, 1945.



the “accused” and not “defendants”—there was no presumption of innocence. It was up to the accused to prove their innocence, not the duty of the prosecution to prove their guilt. All that was required to prove that an accused was guilty was showing that he or she was part of a “common plan,” and that he or she had some connection with the place where crimes had been committed.

On April 11, 1947, exactly two years after KL Buchenwald had been liberated, the most sensational of the Dachau-venue trials began. General der Waffen-SS Josias Erbrprinz zu Waldeck und Pyrmont, the senior SS and police commander for the Fulda-Werra Main Territorial District (in whose jurisdiction KL Buchenwald lay), and 30 other defendants who had some association with Buchenwald, including the by-now-notorious Ilse Koch, were prosecuted.

Presiding over the court was 52-year-old U.S. Army Air Corps Brigadier General Emil C. Kiel, who had served as court president of the Dachau war-crimes tribunal. A panel of American military officers, led by Lt. Col. John S. Dwinnell, served as both judge and jury. The prosecutor was William Denson, a

former lieutenant colonel, who had graduated from West Point and Harvard Law School.

Only 34, Denson had already prosecuted three such tribunals, and had nearly been overwhelmed by the duty of prosecuting the atrocious crimes.

“The most difficult part of the trial was trying to present a case that the court would believe,” he said, “because the court certainly entertained the same incredulity when they heard my witnesses as I did when I first heard those witnesses. It was absolutely incredible. I didn’t believe it.”

Denson’s first trial took place in November 1945 with the case of 40 accused former KL Dachau personnel, followed by a trial of 61 from Mauthausen (known as the “Altfuldisch trial”), then 45 from Flossenbürg. Although he was on the verge of nervous exhaustion, Denson agreed to prosecute the Buchenwald accused.

Representing the Buchenwald accused as defense counsel were Major Carl Whitney and Captain Emanuel Lewis. Like all the tribunal defense attorneys appointed to defend their clients, they had the impossible task of proving that their clients, accused of participating in some of the most heinous acts imaginable, were innocent or, at the very least, should be shown leniency by the court.

The Trial of Ilse Koch

The trial of the Buchenwald accused included gruesome evidence—a shrunken head, pieces of tattooed human skin, etc. There was a parade of former inmates on the witness stand who delivered damning testimony about the abuses they saw, heard about, and experienced first-hand that connected the accused to crimes. Lewis and Whitney did their best to poke holes in the testimony, but theirs was a losing battle.

The part of the tribunal that packed the courtroom with reporters and observers was, not surprisingly, Ilse Koch’s testimony, for everyone wanted to see and hear the woman whose name had been associated with such horrific crimes.

Several months pregnant after a sexual liaison with a fellow prisoner at Dachau, she coolly

deflected every attempt by Denson to place her at the center of the prisoner abuses. She adamantly claimed to know nothing about what her husband and the other SS personnel at the camp might have done to the inmates, had never instructed anyone to hurt or humiliate any prisoner, and had never requested that any prisoners with tattoos be killed.

She was, as she tried to convince the court, nothing more than an innocent wife and mother whose sole duty in life was to look after her little children 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She was innocent of all charges.

In the end, however, the testimony of former inmates was just too overwhelming and she, along with the other 30 accused, were found guilty in August 1947. Many were sentenced to death, and a few even executed, but Ilse was given a life sentence.

On October 29, 1947, Ilse Koch gave birth in prison to a son she named Uwe, who was turned over to a German child-welfare agency and raised in an orphanage.

In the late 1940s, relations between the Western powers and the Soviet Union worsened. The West was eager to enlist West Germany in the bulwark against the growing influence of communism. Lt. Gen. Lucius Clay, military governor of Allied-occupied West Germany and commander of all U.S. forces in Europe, was tasked with trying to contain the advances of the Soviets short of going to all-out nuclear war.

Clay was also the reviewing authority of all the German war-crimes trials and he was presented with a petition for clemency that said that there was insufficient proof that Ilse Koch had played any role in the operation of Buchenwald or in the alleged selection and execution of tattooed prisoners. The petition called for the reduction of her life sentence to four years, including time served.

In September 1948, General Clay announced the reduction of Ilse Koch's sentence and 11 months later she was released from American custody. Almost immediately, she was re-arrested by West German authorities and jailed in Augsburg. She was tried again, this time for crimes against German citizens while she was living at Buchenwald. On January 15, 1951, she was once more pronounced guilty and sentenced to life at the women's prison in Aichach, Germany. A later appeal failed to overturn the Augsburg verdict.

In 1966, 19-year-old Uwe Köhler (Ilse's maiden name) began showing up at the prison for weekly visits but on September 2, 1967, he was told that she had hung herself in her

cell that morning.

Twenty-eight years later, on April 23, 1995, Andrew Rosner, a survivor of the Buchenwald subcamp at Ohrdruf, said to the assembled veterans of the 89th Infantry Division in a ceremony in Wichita, Kansas: "There are those who would tell you World War II veterans of the 89th Division that what you saw at Ohrdruf and at other camps never happened the way you said it did. But—we were there. I, the victim. You, the liberators. I, the survivor. You, the witnesses. And together we must, in our golden years on this earth, again do battle with the forces of man's worst evil so that what I saw and you lived through almost 50 years ago—what we saw—will not be tossed aside as insignificant in the annals of man's history. It must be made so important that no one can ever say it didn't happen that way, and therefore they could be allowed to repeat it.

The camp atop the Ettersberg did not disappear following its liberation. Located on the east side of the "Iron Curtain," the Soviet government turned the camp into a ready-made place for the incarceration, from 1945 to 1950, "of persons who had served the National Socialist regime in an official capacity," but also included victims of arbitrary arrest.

In September 1958, the National Buchenwald Memorial (*Nationale Mahn-und Gedenkstätte Buchenwald*) was established under the auspices of the East German government. A monumental complex, designed and built by the East Germans, has been established near the entrance to the camp.

Sadly, the lessons of the Holocaust seem to have largely been forgotten. Perhaps, by bringing to light the details of such horrendous examples of "man's inhumanity to man" as perpetrated at Buchenwald and elsewhere, the world can begin to understand how such terrible things can happen and do everything possible—to include preemptive war—to ensure that they will not happen again. □

This article was adapted from The Beasts of Buchenwald Trilogy and Buchenwald: Hell on a Hilltop by Flint Whitlock, editor of WWII Quarterly.



Defendant Christof Ludwig Knoll, a former political prisoner and block leader, testifies at the trial of former camp personnel and prisoners from the Dachau concentration camp on December 7, 1945.



U.S. Navy

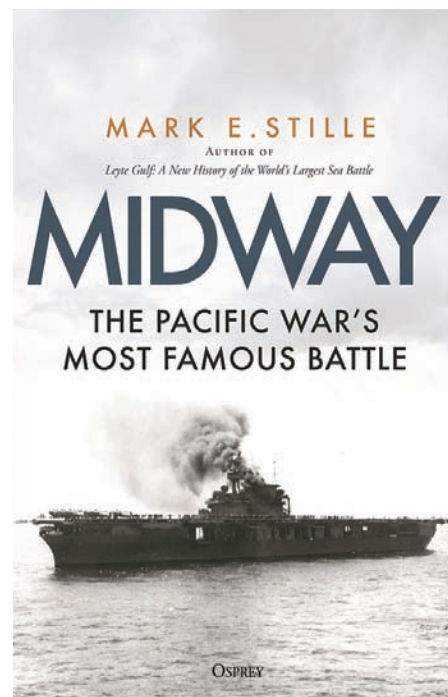
A series of intelligence failures affected the outcome of Midway, the pivotal naval battle of the Pacific War.

Japan's striking force sailed for Midway on May 27, 1942, a day later than planned, after some late preparations were complete. Its commander, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, requested the operation be delayed another day as well. His superior, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, refused. The attack on Midway depended on favorable tidal conditions to land the invasion force. A delay would mean postponement.

As the fleet neared Midway, problems in the Japanese system of intelligence sharing began to hamper operations. Reported sightings of American submarines were not sent to Nagumo. In one case, a submarine sighting report was not passed on because it was discounted and the staff felt it more important to maintain radio silence. Even worse, on June 3 the radio interception unit aboard Yamamoto's flagship, the battleship *Yamato*, detected the call sign of an American aircraft carrier near Midway. A similar unit aboard Nagumo's flagship failed to pick up the same signal.

Further, while the Japanese could not read American naval codes, they were able to analyze message traffic. They could determine if a message was marked urgent or routine, and they could measure the amount of radio traffic. A higher amount of radio messages could indicate more activity. Radio traffic coming from Hawaii was higher, and a greater percentage of that traffic was marked urgent. One Japanese officer even saw this and apparently notified the carrier *Akagi*, part of the striking force.

Additional intelligence came from the Japanese submarine *I-168*, assigned to observe Midway.



The SBD Dauntless aircraft gained lasting fame for its combat role at the Battle of Midway, but it also served well as a scout during the battle's opening moves.

The “Little Pink Miracle” That’s Revolutionizing CoQ10

Pioneering Anti-Aging MD combined this pink power-generator with the world’s most absorbable CoQ10 – revitalizing millions of Americans suffering from occasional fatigue and other symptoms of aging.

Millions of Americans rely on caffeine and sugar to get through their to-do lists. Yet a “little pink miracle” is helping adults over 50 to regain the youthful energy of a 20-something.

The Surprising Link Between Flamingos and Endless Energy

South Florida doctor and anti-aging pioneer, Dr. Al Sears reveals the secret to all-day energy and vitality. He says it lies within one of nature’s most beautiful and iconic creatures – the flamingo.

Combining this energizing pink nutrient with the unique and well-established powers of CoQ10 might solve people’s feelings of fatigue and many common aging symptoms.

Nature’s Most Potent Energy-Boosting Nutrient

“Most people don’t realize that flamingos are born gray. But their diet is made up almost entirely of one incredible pink nutrient. And that’s what turns their feathers bright pink,” says Dr. Sears, “But what’s more remarkable is that while small birds live 2-5 years, and hawks and eagles can live up to 25 years. Flamingos often live up to 50 years – and the record is 83.”

Astaxanthin (asta-zan-thin) is a revitalizing pink nutrient. It’s a special type of antioxidant carotenoid with 6,000 times the free radical scavenging power of vitamin C.

Researchers have shown it helps promote a healthy immune system. It also supports healthy blood sugar and focused eyesight. It also helps boost endurance and athletic performance.

In fact, experts agree, astaxanthin is the single most powerful antioxidant in the world.

Astaxanthin may explain the flamingo’s incredible lifespan. It also gives salmon their similar pink color. And, more importantly, the strength and endurance they need to swim upstream against powerful currents during their spawning season.

The Most Powerful Source of Lasting Natural Energy – No Caffeine Jitters, Sugar Crashes, Or Artificial Anything

Dr. Sears added astaxanthin to Ultra Accel Q, his already groundbreaking supplement. This is the product’s fourth generation. It leads the industry in quality and

efficacy. It has already sold over 725,000.

Ultra Accel Q combines the highest-potency astaxanthin available today with a vitamin-like nutrient called PQQ. It also includes the most absorbable CoQ10 form available – ubiquinol.

Creating the purest, cleanest source of lasting natural energy available anywhere.

PQQ and CoQ10: The Dynamic Duo for Cellular Energy Production

Pyroloquinoline Quinone or PQQ earned the nickname “Mitochondrial Fertilizer” because it promotes the growth of new mitochondria within your cells.

Your mitochondria are the “power plants” that generate your body’s energy. Mitochondria are crucial for producing energy. More power plants are the first step to igniting energy and stamina throughout the day.

The next step is fueling all those new “power plants”. And that’s where the 4th generation of CoQ10 comes in.

CoQ10 is the high-octane fuel that powers all our activities, like thinking, breathing, walking, and running. It also acts as a potent antioxidant that protects your mitochondria from damage and helps them function at peak efficiency.

“We used to need tremendous doses to even come close to meeting the CoQ10 needs of adults over 40.” But Dr. Sears says he has identified the world’s most absorbable form – a way to not only meet but exceed the needs.

Dr. Sears insists on Ubiquinol – it is by far the most absorbable form of CoQ10. Dr. Sears was the first to offer this energizing nutrient to American health enthusiasts like you.

PQQ and CoQ10 enhance energy production at the cellular level. And when combined with astaxanthin, the results are truly remarkable.

Real People, Real Results: Ultra Accel Q is Changing Lives

Early reviews of Ultra Accel Q have been nothing short of incredible. Men and women wake up feeling refreshed, energized, and ready to take on their day.

William M. from Jupiter, Florida writes, “At 64 years old, I cannot remember feeling this good, even as a kid. I’m exercising again, yoga, push-ups, jumping



Energize your life with Ultra Accel Q – Now with three of nature’s most potent rejuvenators!

jacks... I feel so good it’s almost beyond description.”

“I have girlfriends 10 years younger than myself, and when we go out, people think I’m the youngest... Even though I am 67, I feel 40.” That is from Dianne M., Victoria, Australia

And Mark H. says, “I’m 60 years old and work physically every day. And basically, I never get tired. I have three granddaughters that live with me. They are 2, 4, and 7 years old... I feel like I’m one of them!”

Now It’s Your Turn to Feel True Lasting Natural Energy

You could be just days away from experiencing the rejuvenating spark that comes with fueling real cellular energy. And as the days and weeks pass, that spark will grow into the kind of boundless energy and vitality typically reserved for people years, even decades younger.

You’ll start every day feeling confident, vibrant, focused, and optimistic. I’m talking about the kind of vitality that people can’t help but notice. So, get ready for the admiring comments about how great you look and how much energy you have. Because that’s the power of Ultra Accel Q.

It’s Not Surprising That Ultra Accel Q Is Quickly Gaining Popularity

It’s making waves in the industry and creating a buzz among people who are fed up with feeling tired, sluggish, and

mentally foggy.

And because Ultra Accel Q is only available through Dr. Al Sears’ company Primal Force, demand is high, and stocks are running out faster than they can be replenished.

That’s probably because Dr. Sears is currently offering readers a risk-free trial of Ultra Accel Q.

Get Ultra Accel Q Before It’s Gone!

“It’s not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. The reason? Dr. Sears doesn’t want profit-driven third-party retailers raising the price of a unique, revolutionary product that has the power to truly transform people’s lives.

“We want to keep Ultra Accel Q affordable for anyone who wants to try it. And not only can we ship directly to the customer, but we’re able to get orders in the mail within 24 hours.”

And for anyone who still feels skeptical, Dr. Sears is backing every order with a risk-free, 100% money-back guarantee.

To take advantage of this special offer, simply call the Sears Toll-Free Health Hotline at **1-800-210-2324** now. Use Promo Code **WWHUAQ724** when you call.

Due to recent media exposure for Ultra Accel Q, Primal Force is experiencing unprecedented demand. If the phone line is busy when you call, please try again to avoid missing this exclusive one-time-only offer.

Its commanding officer, Lt. Cdr. Tanabe Yahachi, sent a report highlighting increased activity on the atoll. Between 90 and 100 aircraft sorties took off from the island each day. Many of these were Consolidated PBV Catalina reconnaissance planes, which took off at dawn and returned in late afternoon, indicating long-range missions. Work lights could be seen on Midway at night. This was much more activity than would be expected from a target which did not suspect an attack.

Taken together, these separate reports clearly indicated the U.S. Navy knew the Japanese were planning something imminent. However, no one on the Japanese staff combined these reports into a coherent narrative that may have spurred a change in plans or at least increased caution. Likewise, no one sent any of this information to Nagumo. Other shortcomings in cooperation further hampered the Japanese. The submarines which provided scouting forces were poorly coordinated, and many arrived late to their patrol areas. One submarine, tasked to rendezvous with and refuel a flying boat, arrived at the French Frigate Shoals only to find its lagoon occupied by American ships.

While the Japanese failed to assess their intelligence, the Americans prepared for the coming battle. Overnight on June 2-3, American commander Adm. Frank Jack Fletcher moved his two carrier task forces 175 nautical miles west of their original planned location, placing them 260 nautical miles north of Midway. Overcast weather greeted the American that morning, but Fletcher ordered a search by 20 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers from the carrier USS *Yorktown* just to be sure. The two other carriers, *Enterprise* and *Hornet*, under the command of Adm. Raymond A. Spruance, kept full strike forces spotted on their flight decks.

While the Dauntlesses took off for their search areas, the first indication the Japanese offensive had begun was received by the carrier task forces at 0445 hours. Japanese carrier aircraft had bombed Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands far to the north an hour earlier, and Catalinas from Midway were beginning to send in contact reports of Japanese ships. Unlike the Japanese in this instance, the Americans paid attention to their intelligence.

These critical occurrences affected the outcome of the Battle of Midway, a turning point in World War II in the Pacific. The combat

which followed proved intense and unrelenting, each side knowing the importance of victory to their respective causes. A full accounting of this historic action is presented in *Midway: The Pacific War's Most Famous Battle* (Mark Stille, Osprey Publishers, Oxford, UK, 2024, 328 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, notes, index, \$35, HC).

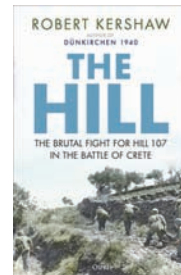
The author is a former naval intelligence officer and recognized authority on the Pacific War with numerous previous works to his credit. This new book provides a detailed look at the Battle of Midway using the author's strengths. These include sober, unbiased analysis of each side's attributes, both positive and negative, extensive research, and a clear writing style which is engaging and readily grasped by the reader. There are hundreds of books about Midway for the reader to choose from; what makes this new title stand out is the completeness of its account and its smooth narrative.



D-Day, The Invasion that Saved Civilization: To the Last Cartridge, Book II (Flint Whitlock, Cable Publishing, Brule, Wisconsin, 2024, 290 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, \$18.99, SC)

There are no large cities and few sizable towns in Normandy between Cherbourg and Caen. One of those towns is Sainte-Mère Église, a crossroads valuable for the invading Allied forces in June 1944. Allied planners knew that if they controlled this town, they could control the peninsula. The U.S. 82nd Airborne Division received the task of capturing it on the first day of the invasion. Sergeant Spencer Wurst later said, "It may seem naive now, but at no time did we ever dream that we would not be successful in Normandy. We never even mentioned the possibility of defeat." The C-47s carrying the paratroopers were scattered by weather and ground fire, so many soldiers wound up landing miles from their assigned drop zones. Wurst, however, dropped right over Sainte-Mère Église; he saw fires in the town and tracer rounds whipping past him in the dark. When Wurst and his comrades hit the ground, they oriented themselves, gathered into whatever groups they could, and attacked the nearest Germans they could find. The liberation of Europe was underway.

This new book is a collection of major actions and events of D-Day, gathered by an eminent and widely published author with extensive study of the Normandy campaign to his credit. Each chapter is a vignette of a small battle that made up the larger D-Day operation, such as Sainte-Mère Église, Pegasus Bridge, Omaha Beach and many others. It is a good book full of interesting battle stories, written in the author's engaging prose.



The Hill: The Brutal Fight for Hill 107 in the Battle for Crete (Robert Kershaw, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2024, 368 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, notes, index, \$30, HC)

Captain Stanton Johnson's company of New Zealand infantry slowly recovered from a bombing raid by the German Luftwaffe. He had three platoons with 117 rifles, seven Bren guns, nine Tommy guns, a Lewis gun, and Browning machine guns stripped from wrecked RAF aircraft dotting the airfield his company was assigned to protect. The huge clouds of dust raised by the bombing slowly started to dissipate, revealing the sky above. His orders specified his company remain in their defensive positions until the enemy paratroopers landed. No one mentioned anything about enemy gliders, but many of them came down, obscured by the dust. Johnson could hear firing to his left and right; it would be suicide to try and cross the flat airstrip, as bullets cracked over it. More gliders appeared, and Johnson's men opened fire, raking the flimsy aircraft with rifle and machine-gun fire. Most of those Germans never made it out of their gliders. The few that did were quickly cut down. The battle was on.

The German airborne assault on Crete started a bitter struggle for control of the island. This new book focuses on the three-day struggle for Hill 107, which overlooked an airfield the Germans needed to land reinforcements. The narrative looks at the battle from the perspective of combatants on both sides. It is well-written and full of good detail, providing a well-rounded view of the battle.

Betting Against America: The Axis Powers' Views of the United States (Harry Yeide, Case-

New Blood Flow Breakthrough Helps Men Enjoy Strong, Long-Lasting Intimacy – At Any Age

Men across America are raving about a newly enhanced potency supplement that helps achieve healthy blood flow on demand

After age 40, it's common knowledge that performance begins to decline in many men. However, a new, performance empowering pill is showing that any relatively healthy man can now enjoy long-lasting, and frequent intimacy – at any age.

This doctor-designed formula, created by leading anti-aging expert Dr. Al Sears, has already helped men overcome low and sinking libido -- and has recently undergone a potency-enhancing update – with remarkable new results.

When the first pill -- **Primal Max Black** -- was first released, it quickly became a top-selling men's performance helper, promoting intimacy across America.

It worked by supporting healthy testosterone levels. However, Dr. Sears soon realized that this isn't the only challenge men face with performance. That's when he turned his attention to blood flow.

And this became **Primal Max Red**.

THIS PROVEN SOLUTION IS MORE MECHANICAL THAN HORMONAL

Truth is, once blood flow slows down for men, no matter how exciting it is, it won't be enough without the necessary amount...

So enjoying intimacy without healthy blood flow becomes difficult for most men.

Luckily, a Nobel prize-winning scientist discovered the simple answer to help support performance strength and confidence -- by boosting vital blood flow -- and enhancing this essential performance function.

Using this landmark Nobel Prize as its basis, **Primal Max Red** enhanced healthy blood flow for untold millions of men around the world with the use of strong nitric oxide boosters.

While **Primal Max Black** helped maintain optimal testosterone, **Primal Max Red** tackles a lesser-known challenge.

Director, Al Sears MD, who has authored over 500 scientific papers and has appeared on more than 50 media outlets including ABC News, CNN, ESPN, Discovery, Lifetime, and many more say, *"Less than optimal blood flow can be part of a huge problem that affects a lot of men. And it needed to be addressed once and for all, so men would not dwell on it. Then, once we optimized it and had a great deal of success, we set out to see if we could do even better."*

The former formula had excellent results. However, new research showed that for even faster, anytime, anywhere results, increasing the dose of a key compound was needed.

So, one of the three nitric oxide boosters in the new **Primal Max Red**, L-Citrulline, was clinically boosted to 9000 mg, and the results were astounding. Which is no surprise considering that 5000 mg is considered a "normal amount" -- giving the new version nearly doubled the blood flow boosting power.

Men who had previously been unsure about their power and stamina were overjoyed to be back to their old selves and to get and maintain a healthy bloodflow when they needed it.



A new discovery that increases nitric oxide availability was recently proven to boost blood flow 275% - resulting in improved performance.

BETTER BLOOD FLOW, STRONGER RESULTS

The best way to promote healthy blood flow throughout the body is with the use of **Primal Max Red**. By using it, when exciting signals leave the brain, blood flows much faster like it used to.

This critical action is how men across the country are enjoying full and satisfying performance at any age. No need to bother with testosterone-boosting shots, blue pills, or shady capsules that have no effect.

Primal Max Red can effectively promote healthy blood flow that most men can use for maximum intimacy. This is leading to more greater capacity and satisfaction, coupled with long-lasting performance.

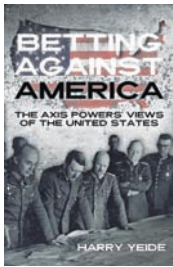
"There was a time when men had little control when it came to boosting their blood flow," Dr. Sears said. "But science has come a long way in recent years. And now, with the creation of nitric oxide-boosting **Primal Max Red**, men can perform better than ever, and enjoy intimacy at any age."

Now for men across America, it's much easier to stay at their performance peak as they get older.

HOW TO GET PRIMAL MAX RED (AND FREE PRIMAL MAX BLACK):

To secure free bottles of **Primal Max Black** and get the hot, new **Primal Max Red** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-908-4671** TODAY. "It's not available in retail stores yet," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer." Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Primal Max**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. "Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back."

Call NOW at **1-800-908-4671** to secure your supply of **Primal Max Red** and free bottles of **Primal Max Black**. Use Promo Code **WWHPMX724** when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!

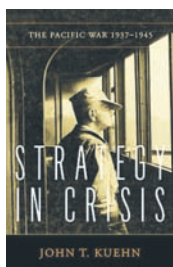


mate Books, Havertown, Pennsylvania, 2024, 491 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, notes, index, \$37.95, HC)

The United States played an important role at the end of World War I. Even

during the 1930s, gripped by economic depression, America had enormous actual and potential industrial capacity. Going to war with the United States was not the smart move, particularly for nations already at war with opponents such as the United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and China. That is just what the Axis powers did, however. For example, Hitler had such little regard for the U.S. that when he declared war shortly after Pearl Harbor, the Germans had little useful intelligence about America. They used estimates of American capability that had failed them in 1918, including how long it would take the U.S. to train its military and how quickly it could ship troops overseas. In both 1918 and 1942, their guesswork proved inaccurate. Hitler's belief that Americans could only make movies and build automobiles quickly came back to haunt him.

The author uses the diaries of high-ranking Axis officials, intelligence reports, and declassified intercepts of Axis communications traffic to create a thorough investigation of the Axis viewpoint of the United States. The book is informative, engaging, and clearly written. It weaves the various accounts and reports used into a coherent narrative of Axis miscalculation.



Strategy in Crisis: The Pacific War 1937-1945 (John T. Kuehn, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2024, 221 pp., maps, notes, bibliography, index, \$29.95, HC)

The Pacific War of 1941-1945 really stems from the Sino-Japanese conflicts of the 1930s. It most likely would not have happened had Japan not been embroiled in a war in China, which began with sporadic skirmishing and "incidents" in the early 1930s. By 1937, this fighting evolved into ongoing warfare, which drew condemnation from many world powers. Even after the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941,

in many ways the Japanese still considered China the primary theater of conflict until growing American power revealed the dire threat the United States posed to them. The Axis failed to develop a coherent grand strategy to fight the Allies, while those Allies successfully waged coordinated coalition warfare, dooming Imperial Japan to defeat.

This new work examines the period from 1937 to 1945 through the lens of strategy. The author considers not only the two major players, the U.S. and Japan, but also the other major powers, including the British, Australians, New Zealanders, Dutch, and the Soviets, who entered the war late but always loomed large in Japanese considerations. The text is interesting and well-supported, and the author does a creditable job pulling together the various pieces of a large puzzle and presenting to the reader in a useful, easy to follow way.



No Sacrifice Too Great: The 1st Infantry Division in World War II (Gregory Fontenot, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Missouri, 2023, 571 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, notes, index, \$39.95, HC)

The U.S. 1st Infantry Division, nicknamed "Big Red One" for its distinctive shoulder patch, fought during the entirety of U.S. combat involvement in the North African, Italian, and European campaigns. It landed in Vichy France in November 1942, and continued to serve until the end of the war, finishing its service in Czechoslovakia in May 1945. Seventeen soldiers from this division received the Medal of Honor for their actions during the war. The unit's battles list among the most important of the war: Tunisia, Sicily, Normandy, Aachen, the Ruhr, and elsewhere. Like the rest of the U.S. Army, it entered combat raw and untested; its officers and soldiers had to learn hard lessons and improvise in action and during the all too brief lulls. By war's end, however, the 1st Infantry Division was second to none.

The author is a retired U.S. Army officer with several good works on the service to his credit. This examination of the division includes numerous accounts of unit members, from privates to generals. The author also uses

his experience and reasoning skills to make this book one of analysis as well as history.



Tuskegee Airmen: Dogfighting with the Luftwaffe and Jim Crow (Samuel de Korte, Air World Books, Yorkshire, UK, 2024, 209 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$34.95, HC)

The 332nd Fighter Group was the only segregated American fighter group to see combat service during World War II. They had to fight to get there before they could fight the Germans, overcoming the prejudices of those who thought black citizens unsuited to military service. Their training took place in Tuskegee, Alabama, forever associating them with that place. After arriving in the Mediterranean theater, these pilots proved their abilities against the Luftwaffe, escorting bomber missions and carrying out ground attack missions. Along the way they fought fierce battles against the Germans, such as the one over Anzio on January 27-28, 1944, when they opposed flights of German fighters attacking Allied shipping off the landing beaches. Later in the war, the 332nd earned a Distinguished Unit Citation for its actions during a mission to Berlin on March 24, 1945.

This new book is a fitting tribute to the 332nd, thoroughly covering its fight against both the enemy in the air and racism on the ground. The writing is well-balanced between these two stories. The author's effort pays off in the book's coverage of what may seem two competing narratives but are heavily intertwined. The prejudice these young men faced spurred them to prove themselves in the air, and that success flew in the face of those who sought to keep them out of combat roles.



The German Way of War on the Eastern Front 1941-1943: A Lesson in Tactical Management (Jaap Jan Brouwer, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 208 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, \$42.95, HC)

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union that began on June 22, 1941, involved three mil-

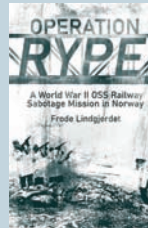
New and Noteworthy

My Darling Boys: A Family at War 1941-1947 (Fred H. Allison, University of North Texas Press, 2024, \$34.95, SC) All three sons in the Allison family fought in World War II, all of them in the U.S. Army Air Forces. This book tells of their experiences flying missions and in one case, becoming a prisoner of war.



Fighting the Red Army in Festung Posen (Hans Klapa and Alfred Kriehn, Pen and Sword Military, 2024, \$32.95, HC) Firsthand accounts of two German veterans who fought in the fortress city of Posen near the war's end.

Operation Rype: A World War II OSS Railway Sabotage Mission in Norway (Frode Lindgjerdet, Casemate Books, 2024, \$37.95, HC) To prevent the Nazis from reinforcing their forces in Norway in the final months of the war, the OSS launched a daring mission to sabotage the Norwegian railway system. This book recounts that operation.



Witness to Neptune's Inferno: The Pacific War Diary of Lieutenant Commander Lloyd M. Mustin, USS Atlanta (CL51) (David F. Winkler, Casemate Books, 2024, \$34.95, HC) This memoir by an officer assigned to an anti-aircraft cruiser that fought at Midway, the Eastern Solomons, and Santa Cruz.

The Soviet Infantryman on the Eastern Front (Simon Forty, Casemate Books, 2024, \$28.95, SC) This well-illustrated work provides a summary of the Soviet infantryman, including training, organization, armament, and battlefield experience.



The German Infantryman on the Eastern Front (Simon Forty and Richard Charlton-Taylor, Casemate Books, 2024, \$28.95, SC) This companion to the above title provides a similar look at the German foot soldier during the war's largest land campaign.

Tokyo 1944-45: The Destruction of Imperial Japan's Capital (Mark Lardas, Osprey Publishing, 2024, \$25, SC) The air campaign against Tokyo, was one of the most destructive in human history. This includes the deadliest raid in history, on March 10, 1945, in which over 100,000 died.



The Cactus Air Force: Air War Over Guadalcanal (Eric Hammel and Thomas McKelvey Cleaver, Osprey Publishing, 2024, \$22, SC) Firsthand accounts to tell the story of the airfield at Guadalcanal that was central to the campaign for that island.



lion German troops and their allies, against nearly five million Soviet soldiers. There has been no conflict of this scale before or since. Hitler expected it to be over in six months, with Moscow and Leningrad in German hands and the corrupt and inefficient Soviet system collapsed under the strain. Despite all their gains, the Germans advanced no farther than the outskirts of Moscow and, despite a long siege, never occupied Leningrad. In 1942, the German offensive resumed, but stalled again at Stalingrad, where after a long battle the tide turned against Germany, which never again managed to gain the initiative.

This new volume on the Eastern Front looks at it as a whole, using accounts from soldiers, officers, and civilians on both sides. The actual course of the fighting is examined, including the organization and tactics of both armies. The author also looks at how the vast size of the combat area and its terrain affected the fighting. The German attempts to control the civilian populations of their conquered territories and how those civilians dealt with their situation gets special attention as well. Finally, the book also covers each side's logistics, production, and ability to innovate and upgrade their forces. □

Regimental Colors
Toys of Yesteryear

Fine, all wood, old-fashioned toy soldiers and cannon for generations of playing, collecting, learning.

SEE ALL THE EXCITING TOYS AT:
www.RegimentalColors.com

f G+

OVER 3.5" TALL!

WORLD WAR 2 BOOKS

USED AND OUT OF PRINT

T. CADMAN
SEND \$1.00 FOR CATALOG TO:
T. CADMAN DEPT.-A
5150 FAIR OAKS BLVD., #101
CARMICHAEL, CA 95608

SUBSCRIBE TO

WWII HISTORY

Call (800) 219-1187
or online at
www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

COMMANDOS: ORIGINS TAKES US BACK TO THE BEGINNING AND MEN OF WAR II LAUNCHES FULL FORCE

COMMANDOS: ORIGINS

PUBLISHER KALYPSO MEDIA • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC, Xbox Series X|S, PlayStation 5 • **AVAILABLE** 2024

The vaunted *Commandos* series is going back to the beginning in the latest entry, appropriately titled *Commandos: Origins*. This one takes players back to the days where Green Beret Jack O'Hara first met his five teammates to form the squad we know today, taking on some of the most daring missions in a vivid World War II setting.

While we're going back further into the history of these characters, the unique skills of the Green Beret, the Sapper (Thomas Hancock), the Sniper (Francis T. Woolridge), the Marine (James Blackwood) and the Spy (Rene Duchamp) are more vital than ever before. Players will need to put both their stealth and



sabotage skills to the test if they want to succeed across a variety of missions that take them through the Arctic to the African desert and everywhere in between.

There are more than 10 missions in all, each offering a harrowing trip through these historically authentic World War II locales. At the time of this writing, *Origins* is still just set for a broad 2024 release window, but we recently got a closer look at what it has to offer in a showcase from Microsoft and IGN. In addition to showing off more gameplay, the showcase took the opportunity to highlight summer 2024 launch plans for a Closed Beta Test.

The new Beta Test—which may be live by the time you're reading this—follows an early alpha playtest. Developer Claymore Game Studios has already taken feedback from that test and started implementing it into the work in progress, and they're hoping to get more valuable information from the Closed Beta.

The key elements that make the *Commandos* series special appear to be nicely intact in *Origins*, which homes in on the real-time tactical stealth we've come to expect. Everything from the makeup of your team to the environments themselves makes for a handful of ways to go about each mission. You can opt to sneak and focus on the stealth mechanics, or come up with other clever ways to go around or through the many fortified targets you'll be tasked with overcoming. If any of the missions seem particularly imposing, you can always enlist a friend to team up in two-player cooperative play, either locally via split-screen or online.

Hopefully by the time you have this issue we've learned exactly when to expect *Commandos: Origins*. When it does launch, you'll be able to play it on PC, Playstation 5 and Xbox Series X|S, including a day one launch on Xbox Game Pass for both console and PC.

MEN OF WAR II

PUBLISHER FULCRUM PUBLISHING • **GENRE** SIMULATION, STRATEGY **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

The *Men of War* series first kicked off with *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II* in 2004 and has gone by a few other names since. Fans have eagerly been awaiting the return to its roots in *Men of War II*, which finally arrived after some delays to take us back to World War II once again.

Regardless of its setting, the *Men of War* games have always focused on defeating an enemy that greatly outnumbers your own forces while commanding a limited number of troops. *Men of War II* blends historically accurate campaigns on the Eastern and Western fronts, with two large dynamic campaigns in place to make the player feel like they're more than a simple field commander. Those who take on the challenge will be leading their own division as part of a detailed war operation, improving and upgrading your army along the way with more enhanced capabilities.

In addition to single-player action, the missions in *Men of War II* can be tackled with the help of friends via cooperative play that supports up to five players. Each player can call for their own reinforcements during battle, and



will have their own personal divisions, from those who command infantry to those who specialize in artillery so they can keep up a constant bombardment to help the squad advance forward. There's also the option of another player providing tank support, for instance, and missions scale depending on how many friends you end up bringing along for the ride.

Featuring three main factions at launch—including the Allies, the Soviet Union and the Third Reich—and over 300 types of vehicles available, *Men of War II* is a welcome arrival after a lengthier-than-planned wait. It was originally scheduled to launch in September 2023, but the response from public playtests that were held between March and August of last year led to a delay. *Men of War II* finally arrived on May 15, 2024, so you can now see how that player feedback helped shape the end result on PC. ■

Continued from page 21

as McGovern described them, “papers [that] represented thirteen years of research work and the complete plans” for the V2, and sealed the mine entrance with dynamite. The engineers then joined von Braun and his team in Bavaria, but not before telling the general location of the mine to Karl Otto Fleischer, a manager at the Nordhausen factory.

Fleischer did not go to Bavaria. He stayed in the Nordhausen region, and by mid-May Staver had found him. By then von Braun was in U.S. custody and American investigators who had questioned him tipped Staver that Fleischer might know the general location of the documents cache. Fleischer hadn’t volunteered this information, so Staver tried to trick him. He confronted Fleischer and told him that von Braun, now in U.S. custody, had said that Fleischer knew where the documents were and he (Fleischer) could help the Americans find them. Von Braun had said no such thing, but Fleischer didn’t know that.

The ruse worked. Fleischer agreed to search for the hiding place. On May 21, Fleischer found the mine near the town of Dörnten. Staver had his documents, but now he had another problem. Because of the American-British zonal border adjustments, Dörnten would become part of the British zone in just six days.

Staver needed Army Ordnance headquarters to dispatch enough trucks to haul away the 14 tons of documents. Army Ordnance headquarters was in Paris, and there were no reliable communications between Paris and Nordhausen. Staver convinced a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot who was flying to Paris to bring him along as a passenger, wedged into a small space behind the pilot’s seat. Staver got the authorization for his trucks, returned to Nordhausen, and found that British survey teams had been scouting the mine. Staver had detailed a team of Germans, supervised by an Army Ordnance officer, to clear away the debris blocking the mine entrance. When the British appeared, the American officer, who was dressed as a workman, pretended to be German. Fleischer told the British they were geologists looking for ore samples. The British eventually left, but Staver was concerned enough to accelerate the pace of activ-

ity at the mine. The shafts were cleared, and Staver’s team found all the documents and loaded them on trucks. The trucks drove away from Dörnten early on the day the British took control of the area.

The Americans left lots of technology for the Russians and British. Many of the test facilities and production works were too large to dismantle and remove. But the efforts of Staver, Hamill, Putt and other American technicians did have an impact. Boris Chertok, a key figure in creating Russia’s space program, served on a Soviet technology exploitation team (similar to CIOS) during the war. He was part of the Russian contingent that finally occupied Nordhausen.

In his memoirs, Chertok recalled “out of all the tail and middle sections, tanks, instrument compartments and nose sections [we found] we could assemble at least 15, and maybe even 20, missile bodies. But the situation was a lot worse with the innards. We did not have a single control system instrument that we could use. There were also no engines and no turbopump assemblies that we could clear for installation” into the reassembled rockets.

The Soviets had to recruit German technicians to recreate many of the V2’s critical components. In contrast, when the Americans brought Von Braun and much of his team to the U.S., they were able to work with the V2 parts and support assemblies Hamill had spirited out of Nordhausen, as well as the technical documents Staver found. The German rockets and the German scientists who built them helped the U.S. create its ballistic missile program and then its space program. The high-tech scavenger hunt had paid off for the Americans, yielding technologies and technicians that would be instrumental in the looming Cold War. □

*Don Smith is a retired Army Field Artillery/ Military Intelligence officer. He holds a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Virginia and a master’s in strategic intelligence from the Defense Intelligence Agency’s Joint Military Intelligence College (now the National Intelligence University). He teaches Geographic Information Systems (GIS). His book, *Steinstuecken: A Little Pocket of Freedom, the story of a West Berlin community surrounded by Communist territory during the Cold War*, is now on sale.*

Continued from page 35

Saitō’s Combined Battle Headquarters as opposed to a separate 5th Base Force Headquarters as late as July 3, according to the testimony of Saitō. All these factors place Tsujimura with Saitō personally. Tsujimura had also lost his chief of staff on July 4, leaving him to perform seppuku solo. Both the Yoshida and Hirakushi accounts can be aligned under the pretense that Hirakushi confused the identities of the naval officers in retrospect, an understandable mistake given the more than 20 years that had passed before Toland interviewed him.

But what of the fourth charred body in the cave? This is theorized to be Saitō’s chief of staff, Col. Takuji Suzuki. Suzuki likely followed suit with Saitō and committed suicide later in the afternoon of July 6 or that evening. His remains would have been burned in the cave along with the other three individuals.

Major Hirakushi’s post-war account simply does not add up. While his version of events is self-aggrandizing, to claim that he consciously fabricated it would be conjecture. Hirakushi was the only senior surviving Army officer present with Saitō’s staff for the duration of the battle. He was captured after being shot in the gyokusai. He recounted his story to Toland nearly 25 years after the facts. In that time he likely elevated the reality of his role and his relationship with the senior commanders and mentally modified events. Exactly why Hirakushi gave his captors a false name is perplexing. He told his interrogators that he was a member of Saitō’s staff, then divulged large amounts of information on how the Japanese conducted the battle, and then guided them on a tour of the island.

Nagumo carried out his duties at Saipan as best he could. While contemporary histories paint him as being defeated in spirit, he appears to have wanted to continue fighting at Saipan but was overruled by his Army counterparts. Rather than commit Seppuku with army officers, he chose to die in privacy with a fellow naval officer. The only certainty is that he and Yano are still somewhere in Paradise Valley. □

First-time WWII History contributor Jack Adamson lives in Dickson, Tennessee.

BALLOON BATTALION

Continued from page 71

scars of war seemed to have disappeared.

“They had cleaned up the place so nice that a lot of the places you wouldn’t even believe that it was bombed. I got up and shook [President] Obama’s hand, and he said, ‘Dabney, I know who you are.’”

Waverly B. Woodson, Jr., a 320th Battalion medic, received the Bronze Star for valor under fire in Normandy. “D-Day was the most emotional and dangerous day in my life,” he remembered. “As a young soldier far from home, the assault units waited patiently to begin their mission. Everyone knew the first 24 hours would be critical to the course of the war.”

Along with Woodson, three other medics from the 320th—PFC Warren Capers, Corp. Eugene Worthy and Staff Sergeant Alfred F. Bell—set up a dressing station and aided more than 330 soldiers on a beachhead on D-Day. Capers was recommended for a Silver Star.

Henry Parham, who received the French Legion of Honor in 2013, died at 99 in July 2021. “I did what I was supposed to do as an American,” Parham said about his D-Day participation. “I managed to survive with God’s strength and help. I prayed to the good Lord to save me. I did my duty.” In his later years, Parham had spoken to many organizations and civic groups in his home state of Pennsylvania about his war experiences.

“When we invaded, I didn’t think I’d come out alive,” Dabney said. “The way the gunfire lit up the beaches, I won’t be standing when it’s over. The Lord was with me.” He was wounded in the leg during the opening moments under fire at Omaha Beach, but he bandaged it, carried on, and did not mention it to anyone. He died quietly in Roanoke on December 12, 2018.

The story of the 320th Battalion is one of dedication, perseverance, and at long last, recognition that continues to resonate today. □

Dr. Forest Isaac Jones, an educator and author, resides in Salem, Virginia. He writes on a variety of topics.

HMS WARSPITE

Continued from page 83

props. A growing list to port was corrected with counter flooding, but she was still taking on water.

The huge battleship could only make seven knots as she limped into the Firth of Forth under her own power at 11 a.m. Two of Britain’s newest battleships, *Anson* and *Howe*, were anchored there. As *Warspite* passed, their ship’s companies assembled, lining the decks and cheered the Grand Old Lady, envious of her storied exploits. There may never be another ship with a battle record like the legendary *Warspite*, and she wasn’t done yet.

At Rosyth, her worn-out gun barrels were once again replaced. Instead of the time-consuming process of removing her warped propulsion shafts for straightening, efforts were made to straighten them in position so that she could return to the war quickly. The result left the outboard starboard shaft in good condition and the inboard shaft in fair condition.

On the port side, the inboard shaft still wobbled and the outboard shaft was still “seized solid.” When she was finally released from the dockyards, she could only cruise at seven knots, and still only three of her four turrets could rotate. Predictably, the steering defect still plagued her. Though no longer a frontline ship of war, she was back on duty.

At this stage of the war, it did not matter. The German and Italian fleets were a distant memory. There would be no more duels between the big-gunned battleships except in the Pacific. All of the ocean’s big gun ships, now eclipsed by aircraft carriers, were relegated to shore bombardment. That is what *Warspite* was again called upon to do.

After gunnery practice with the new barrels, *Warspite* gingerly moved to the still Nazi-occupied city of Brest, France. There on August 25, she opened fire on shore batteries that housed 280 mm (11-inch) guns. In all, she expended 213 shells on various targets before slowly moving on to Le Havre. There she fired her guns again in support of a British advance.

After refueling and rearming at Ports-

mouth, *Warspite* crossed the Channel once again in late October. This time she and the monitors *Erebus* and *Roberts*, with their own 15-inch guns, were to support Allied efforts to clear the Scheldt River estuary of its persistent German garrison in order to open up the port of Antwerp to Allied supply ships.

They slowly worked their way up the estuary following the minesweepers. On November 1, beginning at 8:20 a.m., *Warspite* and the monitors used their big guns to clear the way for amphibious landings.

Throughout the day, *Warspite* fired another 353 shells at targets of opportunity on Walcheren Island. The shelling of enemy positions ceased at twilight and the aging ship slowly pulled away from her firing position and put out to sea.

Since D-Day, she had fired over 1,500 rounds of 15-inch high-explosive and armor-piercing shells at the Germans. Her barrels again showed considerable wear. She had fired her last shot. The sputtering remains of the European war moved inland. For *Warspite*, the Grand Old Lady of the Royal Navy, her work was done.

At war’s end there were voices in Britain that advocated turning the “old lady” into a museum to share her story with future generations. But the country was exhausted from war and funds would be difficult to find. Instead, in July 1946 she was consigned to the wrecking yard to be broken up and sold off as scrap. It was the fate of almost all of the ships from this titanic war.

But *Warspite* refused to go quietly. In 1947, after having her guns and electronics removed, she was being towed to the wrecking yard during an unexpected storm. The hawsers parted from her towing tugs and she ran aground on the coast of Cornwall. It would be late 1950 before she could be refloated and resume her last journey.

Pieces of her are still on display at various places throughout Britain, as tribute to her contributions to King and country in two wars. Her 15 battle decorations, the most of any Royal Navy ship in history, are a proud memory. □

The author, a retired aerospace engineer, lives in Alhambra, California.



STEPHEN AMBROSE HISTORICAL TOURS PRESENTS

D-DAY TO THE RHINE: A TOUR YOU WON'T FORGET

Travel with us May 31 - June 13, July 11 - 24 and September 5 - 18, 2025



Follow the path of America's best and brightest in WWII as you travel from England to Normandy to the Ardennes on our D-Day to the Rhine Tour. Stand in the foxholes where the men of Easy Company fought on our Band of Brothers® Tour, designed by Stephen E. Ambrose. Pay homage to the fallen on our Battle of the Bulge, Italian Campaign, WWII in Poland and Germany, In Patton's Footsteps and Ghost Army Tours. ***Our WWII and American History tours are unrivaled in their historical accuracy!***

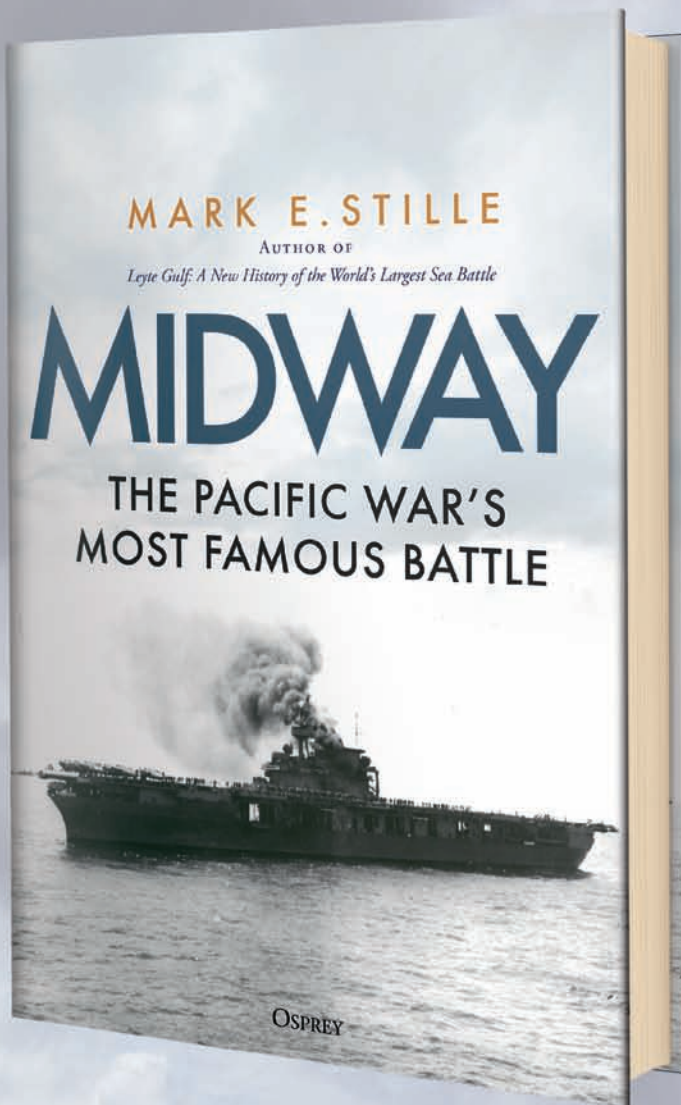
STEPHEN AMBROSE
ESTD 1979
HISTORICAL TOURS

EXPLORE NOW AT STEPHENAMBROSETOURS.COM

1.888.903.3329

NEW FROM OSPREY PUBLISHING

A detailed re-examination of Midway, one of the most significant battles in the Pacific Theater of World War II.



In April 1942, the Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy was at the zenith of its power. But only a few months later, in June 1942, the US Navy managed to inflict a decisive defeat on this mighty force off Midway Atoll and the strategic initiative in the Pacific Theater passed to the US Navy.

Midway is the most famous naval battle of WWII, and one of the most mythologized. Pacific War expert Mark Stille provides a detailed analysis of this pivotal battle, with unparalleled level of insight and thorough analysis into one of the decisive moments of the Pacific War.

Hardcover • U.S.\$35 • ISBN: 978-1-4728-6206-8
On-sale: September 10, 2024

OSPREY

AVAILABLE ON [OSPREYPUBLISHING.COM](https://www.ospreypublishing.com)
AND WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD