

CMG 02313

# WWII HISTORY

## IWO JIMA'S Cave Men

### OPERATION OLIVE Assaulting the GOTHIC LINE

### U.S. ARMY MEDICS Unarmed & Under Fire

### B-24s OVER AUSTRIA Fire in the Sky

**+** THE U.S. NAVY'S FIRST SEAL,  
WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE'S NETFLIX FILM,  
THE BLITZKREIG BLUNDER, AND MORE!

WINTER 2025



RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL FEB. 10

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com



945 MAGAZINE STREET  
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70130  
NATIONALWW2MUSEUM.ORG

# HONOR YOUR HEROES AND LOVED ONES AT THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

**TRIBUTE GIFTS**



## CLASSIC RED BRICKS

8" X 4" CLASSIC RED BRICK



Leave a legacy on our campus with a **Classic Red Brick**. Over 10 million Museum visitors have been moved by the impact of the more than **57,000 red Victory bricks** lining our sidewalks. With three lines of personalized text, including the name of your honoree, you can **create a lasting tribute** that will be installed on the perimeter of our campus.

*Allow up to 12 months for installation.*



## COMMEMORATIVE FLAG AND CERTIFICATE

Fly a flag over the campus of The National WWII Museum in honor of your loved one, a meaningful way to pay tribute and recognize their service and sacrifice. Once flown, the **flag** will be shipped to you with a **commemorative certificate** bearing your honoree's name and the date the flag was flown. At this time, we are unable to honor date requests.

*Allow up to 4 weeks for delivery.*

## TRIBUTE BOOKS

This elegant, **44-page hardcover book** immortalizes the story of America's role in World War II through awe-inspiring images and powerful narrative. Personalize the cover with an image of your **commemorative brick or paver**, or choose to include a custom message alongside an image of **Iwo Jima** or the **American flag**.



*Allow up to 8 weeks for delivery.*



*\*Our new Slate Blue Pavers, symbolic of peace and tranquility, honor the responsibility, sacrifice, commitment, and loyalty of those who helped to preserve our freedom.*

## VICTORY PAVERS

- 8" X 4" CHARCOAL VICTORY PAVER
- 9" X 4.5" CHARCOAL VICTORY PAVER
- 12" X 12" CHARCOAL VICTORY PAVER
- 12" X 12" SLATE BLUE VICTORY PAVER\*
- 18" X 12" CHARCOAL VICTORY PAVER

Our pavers are **located in the heart of the Museum's campus on the Col. Battle Barksdale Parade Ground**, guaranteeing your commemoration will be appreciated by hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

*Allow up to 12 months for installation.*





Page 36

## Departments

### 6 Editorial

*The Six Triple Eight* Big Screen Debut.

### 10 Profile

Pioneer Draper Kauffman founded the Underwater Demolition Team (UDT), or frogmen, precursor to the Navy SEALs.

### 18 Ordnance

The last patrol of the USS *Sculpin* ended in November 1943.

### 24 Insight

Private SNAFU helped U.S. soldiers learn about military life with a laugh—and an underlying serious message.

### 30 Top Secret

How the Jablunkov Incident started Hitler's Invasion of Poland and the Second World War five days early.

### 90 Books

*The Strategists: Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt, Mussolini and Hitler—How War Made Them and How They Made War.*

### 94 Simulation Gaming

*Classified: France '44* and *World War Armies.*

*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 4 © 2025 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](mailto: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 Operation Olive: Autumn Assault in Italy

British, Canadian and Polish forces assault the stout defenses of the Nazi Gothic Line during the Italian Campaign in August 1944.

ALLYN VANNOY

### 46 Hollywood Delivers the story of the 6888th Battalion

Director Tyler Perry collaborated with *WWII History* magazine's Kevin Hymel to tell the story of the all-Black Women's Army Corps Postal Directory Battalion overseas in World War II.

D.C. MONTANA

### 52 Medics: Battlefield Mercy

Without weapons, U.S. Army medics willingly risked their lives treating the wounded on the battlefield.

ALLYN VANNOY

### 62 Hell at 21,000 feet

The Fifteenth Air Force faced a stiff fight against the Luftwaffe during a raid from its bases in Italy against a target in Austria.

PATRICK J. CHAISSON

### 72 The Army "Cave Men" of Iwo Jima

The soldiers of the 147th Infantry Regiment were tasked with rooting diehard Japanese defenders from caves and tunnels long after the island was declared secure.

JAMES BILDER

### 80 Malta: Bastion in the Mediterranean

The tiny island of Malta and its resilient people proved a thorn in the side of the Axis during pivotal operations in the Mediterranean and North Africa.

MARTIN J. DOUGHERTY

Cover: A Marine lobs a grenade while searching for enemy troops on Iwo Jima. The dangerous task of rooting out diehard Japanese troops later fell to soldiers of the 147th Infantry Regiment. See story page 72.

Photo: Naval History and Heritage Command.



# A Striking Tribute to History and Victory

## B-17 FLYING FORTRESS LEVITATING SCULPTURE

Iconic Aircraft  
FLIES IN MID-AIR  
above the base!



Shown actual size:  
Plane is about 7" W;  
Base is about  
6½" diam

Innovative technology and hidden electro magnets  
suspend the aircraft above the base

Fully dimensional plane is intricately crafted and  
individually hand-painted for authentic details

Levitation technology in this product has been licensed from  
Levitation Arts Inc. under U.S. and international patents.  
See [www.levitationarts.com/patent-notice](http://www.levitationarts.com/patent-notice)

Scan here



### The B-17 Aircraft Flies Before Your Eyes!

The historical B-17 Flying Fortress was an important symbol of America's strength and resilience. Now this trailblazing aircraft inspires a uniquely levitating collectible that conveys its power in flight! The sculpture is authentically crafted and features innovative technology with hidden electro magnets, so the airplane levitates above the base. *The aircraft literally flies in mid-air!* It's hand-painted and features a wood-finished base with a silvery title plaque and trim.

### Strictly Limited. Order Today!

Strong demand is expected for this impressive levitating plane inspired by the B-17, and it is released in a strictly limited edition. You can order yours now at the excellent price of \$149.99\*, payable in four convenient installments of just \$37.49, the first due before shipment. Your purchase is fully backed by our unconditional, 365-day money-back guarantee. So don't miss out! You need send no money now. Simply complete and return the Reservation Application today.

©2024 BGE 01-36927-001-BIGR

ORDER TODAY AT [BRADFORDEXCHANGE.COM/36927](http://BRADFORDEXCHANGE.COM/36927)     



Where Passion Becomes Art

RESERVATION APPLICATION SEND NO MONEY NOW

**The Bradford Exchange**

9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

**YES.** Reserve the *B-17 Flying Fortress Levitating Sculpture* for me as described in this announcement. **Please Order Promptly**

\*Plus a total of \$20.99 shipping and service; see [bradfordexchange.com](http://bradfordexchange.com). Limited-edition presentation restricted to 295 casting days. Please allow 4-6 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Sales are subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Mrs. Mr. Ms.

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address

City

State

Zip

Email (optional)

01-36927-001-E57401

## The Six Triple Eight Big Screen Debut

**A**fter years in obscurity, the story of the 6888th Postal Directory Battalion is coming to selected theaters and to Netflix in December with the release of the feature film, *The Six Triple Eight*. And it's a special delivery to be sure.

The film tells a tale of the trials and triumphs of American military personnel that is unique amid the chronicles of service in World War II. The 6888th was the U.S. Army's only all-female, all-Black unit of the Women's Army Corps to serve in the great conflict and actually deploy to an active theater of operations outside the continental U.S.

The catalyst for the much-anticipated motion picture is actor/filmmaker Tyler Perry, who became captivated with the people and places of the 6888th, as well as the unit's inspirational response to the duty at hand. Perry read the story of the 6888th written by Kevin Hymel, a U.S. Army historian, author and research director for *WWII History* magazine for years. It was Hymel's compelling and thoroughly researched account that finally brought the 6888th into the spotlight and inspired Perry.

Hymel was tipped off about the 6888th by co-worker Jean Davis, who mentioned the unit when the two were involved in the Army's Freedom Team Salute project in 2008. He followed the lead to produce the basis for Perry's film. *WWII History* editorial director Carl Gnam provided a big boost when he contacted Hollywood film producer Carlota Espinosa, whose enthusiasm for the tale of the 6888th grew steadily as she enlisted the support of fellow producers Peter Gruber and Keri Selig. When Espinosa further introduced the opportunity to Perry, he joined in to produce, write and direct, while Kerry Washington, star of ABC's television series *Scandal* for seven seasons, enlisted to star in the motion picture and serve as executive producer. Other Hollywood luminaries appearing in *The Six Triple Eight* include Oprah Winfrey, Susan Sarandon, and Sam Waterston.

The women of the 6888th were devoted to their task, and it was monumental. After training in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, the unit reached Britain in February 1945 after crossing the hazardous waters of the Atlantic Ocean amid the wartime threat of German U-boats. Within days, the women were presented with a three-year backlog of undelivered letters, postcards, etc., intended for American service personnel in Europe.

They took on the veritable mountain of mail with vigor, adopting the motto "No Mail, Low Morale." Assaulting the accumulated 17 million pieces, they worked seemingly endless hours in dark, dank warehouses while rats scurried over their feet and the occasional Nazi V-1 Buzz Bomb or V-2 rocket exploded close at hand, shaking the buildings to their foundations. And they delivered.

The women of the 6888th not only distributed the mail, but also endured the racial discrimination that was rife in the day. Because of Hymel's commendable effort, a gem of a vignette emerged during an interview with one of their number, Lena Derriecott King. At age 95, the vivacious King told of an evening in a local theater when she was informed by Military Police that her charges were not sitting in the area designated for "colored people." When an officer of the 6888th confronted the colonel commanding regarding the injustice, her strength of character led to an official announcement that the theater, bowling alley, and cafeteria would no longer be segregated.

Hymel has rendered a great service in the effort to remember those who made significant contributions to the war effort. Since then, he has conducted numerous interviews with the elderly veterans of the 6888th, written articles, and collaborated with Perry and the film team as an advisor.

In 2022, the 6888th was honored with the award of the U.S. Congressional Gold Star, and President Joe Biden lauded the veterans "in recognition of their pioneering military service, devotion to duty, and contributions to increase the morale of personnel stationed in the European theater of operations during World War II."

Thanks to Hymel, Perry, and now so many others, *The Six Triple Eight* brings the story of this dedicated unit that persevered through tremendous adversity to a much wider audience—and no doubt to greater acclaim that is so richly deserved.

**WWII Quarterly** Volume 23 • Number 4

**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:**  
James Bilder, Richard Camp,  
Patrick J. Chaisson, Martin J. Dougherty,  
Joseph Luster, Christopher Miskimon,  
D.C. Montana, Allyn Vannoy,  
Peter Zablocki

**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

**STEPHANIE RUPP**  
Subscription Customer Services  
customerservice@sovhomestead.com

**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](http://www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com)

**SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER  
SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:**

2406 Reach Road  
Williamsport, PA 17701

(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE USA.



# 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](http://www.battlefields.org/email-signup)

Join us and protect America's past by saving these endangered battlefields. [www.battlefields.org](http://www.battlefields.org)

www.SARCOINC.com

Ph# 610.250.3960

Anniversary

#WW2Hist.winter24

Pray for Ukraine

**British Denison Smocks**  
WW2 Paratrooper Camouflage Smocks  
**NEW**



**Full Zip 1944**  
#SMOCK-01

**Pull Over 1942**  
#SMOCK-02

VERY LIMITED

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

**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**

**New**  
**All Metal**

**WW2 Japanese Type 97 Grenade**  
Steel Body - Brass Fuze  
Inert  
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**

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

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

NEW



**KHAKI COLOR W/ DARK SHERLING TYPE LINING**

SIZES: LARGE XL, 2XL, 3XL

**\$85. #JKT-04**

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



**Inert** Pg 1  
**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**

**New** **Commonwealth Helmet**  
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**

**Steel Paratrooper Helmet WW2 New.**  
German Falschirmjager Helmet with suspension & lining. Large size. **\$54.95 #HLM018**

**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**  
**P41 Style Utilities in 'FROGSKIN' Camouflage**  
A timeless and well tested camouflage pattern from Marines in the Pacific WW2 & Korean theaters..... to French Legionnaires in Indochina  
Features- Jacket with 3 pockets -USMC embossed metal buttons -Liberal sizing for comfort -Cotton Herringbone construction. -Pants with 4 pockets and @33" inseam. -USMC left breast pocket emblem.  
Sizes: Medium Large X-Large 2XL **\$94.95 #MISC987**  
Limited Quantities

**WW1 German 'Egg' Grenade w/5 Second Fuze (Inert)**  
- Steel Replica **\$34.95 #AM244**  
**German Imperial 'EIER' Grenade**

**U.S. M23 Rifle Grenade Yellow Smoke**  
 Streamer 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 #REP06  
**P38 Pistol display gun** \$79.95 #REP05  
**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  
**M1 Garand 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 #REP02  
**PPK Pistol** \$110. #REP21  
**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**.

See our Web Site for other replica guns, as well as firing guns & parts

**New**  
**German Luftschutz steel helmet w/liner**  
 Best known for use at the homefront & occupied territory anti aircraft units. Large Size.  
**\$65. #HLM024**  
 Comes w/ free/Decal  
 Back in Stock

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

**New**  
**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**  
**(8" x 7") '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 - (Inert)**  
 M11s were used toward the end of WW2 and thru the Korean War. Launched by M-1 Carbines, M-14 Garands, M-1 & Springfields.  
**\$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)**

**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**

**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 on a rubber long**  
**\$62.95 #SHIRT-01**

**Navy USN 3711 Pilot Jacket - Used by USMC & USN pilots & aircrews, this new mnfr jacket in khaki cotton with white cotton lining, cuff collar, hem, & cuffs, is comfortable and sharp looking. USN on the left breast pocket and brown leather patch above it with Navy Wings. No name. Western sizes Med., Lg., XL 2XL. Fades and softens nicely with age!**  
**\$75. #JKT05**

**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**

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

**WW2 Panzerfaust Klein Launcher**  
**\$165. #MISC684**  
**Full Size**  
**Non-Firing**  
 STEEL LAUNCHER WITH INERT ROCKET & TRIGGER SIGHT WITH COCKING MECHANISM. REPLICA OF THE FIRST PANZERFAUST USED BY THE 3RD REICH IN NORTH AFRICA AND EUROPE. NEW.



Courtesy of Navy Art Collection

## Pioneer Draper Kauffman founded the Underwater Demolition Team (UDT), or frogmen, precursor to the Navy SEALs.

**L**ieutenant Commander Draper Kauffman was crawling across a moonlit beach on enemy-held Tinian Island when he first noticed the sound of voices. Kauffman was furious—how could one of his men be so careless as to jeopardize the entire team’s security when everything depended on silence and stealth.

The 32-year-old U.S. Navy officer was about to whisper a harsh warning to keep quiet when he realized the voices were Japanese. Kauffman gripped his sheath knife as an enemy patrol came toward him. Quickly slipping out of his swim trunks, he rolled in the sand to camouflage his body. All he could do now was pray the patrol didn’t see him.

Eleven years before this incident, Midshipman Draper L. Kauffman could never have imagined himself in command of the U.S. Navy’s toughest underwater demolition men as they scouted hostile beaches halfway around the world. He had just graduated from the United States Naval Academy, but Depression-era policies denied him a commission in the peacetime Regular Navy. As a cost-saving measure, only 50 percent of 1933’s graduating class at Annapolis would enter active duty. Weak eyes kept Draper from following his father—James L. Kauffman (USNA 1908)—into a Navy career.

Instead, Kauffman took a job with a New York-based steamship line and was assigned to the company’s Hamburg office, where he witnessed firsthand Adolf Hitler’s rise to power during the late 1930s. He developed a lasting hatred for the Nazi regime; these feel-



All Photos: Naval History and Heritage Command

**ABOVE:** A U.S. Navy demolition team works to clear obstacles and mines from a beach on Saipan prior to the Marines amphibious landing. The demolition teams were conceived and trained by Draper Kauffman and provided great service in some of the most dangerous operations of the war. **INSET:** Lieutenant Commander Draper Kauffman receives his second Navy Cross for heroism during operations on the Japanese-held island of Saipan. Presenting the medal is his father, Adm. James L. Kauffman.

ings only intensified after Germany invaded Poland in 1939.

Against his family’s wishes, Kauffman joined the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps as a driver in 1940. On May 10 of that



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](https://www.stephenambrosesetours.com)

1.888.903.3329

year, he reported for duty with the French Army in Alsace-Lorraine—coincidentally, the same day that German forces launched their blitzkrieg campaign against Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

As fierce battles raged across the region, Kauffman spent the next five weeks evacuating the wounded under frequent enemy fire despite the Red Cross markings on his vehicle. For his selfless dedication to duty, he received the French Croix de Guerre.

In mid-June, Draper was captured by German troops and sent to a prisoner of war camp at Lunéville. He spent two months there before the U.S. Naval Attaché (a friend of the family) arranged his release. Kauffman then made his way to neutral Portugal and hopped a freighter bound for England. By September 1940, he was wearing the uniform of a sub-lieutenant in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve—the only American officer then serving with that organization.

While in the U.K., Draper volunteered for a hazardous assignment with the Royal Navy's bomb disposal squads. Well aware of the risks, Kauffman felt he could best serve the Allied cause by deactivating unexploded munitions. His first mission took him to Liverpool, where he disarmed an aerial mine whose warhead was found resting on an overstuffed chair inside a private residence.

Kauffman defused dozens of German projectiles during his year with the Royal Navy. By 1941, the Germans were fitting aerial ordnance with devices that detonated the main charge if tampered with. In January, Draper's hand slipped while working on an air mine—when its anti-withdrawal mechanism began buzzing, he dashed to safety before the warhead went off. The explosion left him dazed but otherwise unharmed.

In September 1941, Kauffman—now wearing the two stripes of a RNVR lieutenant—sailed for the States to enjoy a well-earned leave of absence. While in Washington, D.C., he briefed the Navy's Chief of Ordnance, Rear Admiral William H.P. Blandy, on the Royal Navy's bomb disposal program. He also met with Rear Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Chief of Naval Personnel, regarding his future employment.

As Kauffman recalled, Nimitz opened by asking the lieutenant why he wasn't in the U.S. Navy. "Sir," Draper replied, "each time



A member of an Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) is brought aboard a rubber raft that is towed by a powered watercraft. Note the life belt that holds the diver's knife in its sheath and other basic tools.

I write applying to our Naval Reserve, I get a letter back rejecting me because my eyes aren't good enough."

"They are now," Nimitz said, concluding the interview.

Within days, Kauffman was released from the Royal Navy. On November 7, 1941, he accepted a commission with the rank of lieutenant, U.S. Naval Reserve, with his first assignment the establishment of a bomb disposal school in Washington D.C.'s Naval Gun Factory. His first task was to develop a curriculum, then find the right men to teach it. Ensign Means Johnston, Jr., an officer Kauffman described as "top-notch" in every regard, became his executive officer. Instructors included others with experience in the United Kingdom as unexploded ordnance technicians.

Kauffman's initial class of 50 bomb disposal officers came primarily from the Naval Reserve commissioning programs at Northwestern and Columbia Universities. He sought students who possessed "self-confidence, self-discipline, and self-reliance;" tellingly, his volunteers also had to be unmarried. They would begin training after the new year.

On December 15, 1941, one week after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Kauffman was sent to Hawaii on a dangerous mission. An unexploded Japanese 551-pound demolition bomb, dropped just outside an ammu-

nition bunker on Schofield Barracks, required his attention. Working with a gunner's mate named Robert Eigell, Kauffman cautiously approached the projectile and began to dismantle it.

"You know how you always think of the Japanese as being very good with tricky things like booby traps," he recalled. "It turned out that I couldn't have set that bomb off if I'd had a sledgehammer... The fuze was completely faulty."

Freshly decorated with a Navy Cross for his work in Hawaii, Kauffman returned to Washington just as his inaugural bomb disposal officers class began its 11-week program. As a final exam, his students underwent a practical exercise that lasted 29 hours straight—to see who got careless under conditions of extreme stress and fatigue.

While in Washington, Kauffman began dating his younger sister's best friend—a vivacious college student named Margaret "Peggy" Cary Tuckerman. The two got engaged on Valentine's Day, 1943, and were married May 1 in a lavish society wedding.

On the last day of their honeymoon, Kauffman was directed to meet Capt. Jeffrey C. Metzger of the Navy Staff in Washington. Metzger, who helped coordinate special operations, asked him if he had ever seen pictures of the obstacle belts that German forces were then building along the French coast. Kauffman had not and the captain described in



Members of UDT-6 climb aboard a landing craft off the island of Saipan in the Marianas. One of the lightly equipped Navy divers has an M-1 carbine slung over his shoulder, and each of the men wears the life belt that holds their knife and other equipment.

graphic detail how soldiers would drown under the weight of their own equipment if submerged obstacles forced them to step off their landing craft too far from shore.

“I want you to put a stop to that,” Metzlar said, telling Kauffman he was now responsible for setting up a school that instructed sailors how to find, mark, and destroy beach obstacles. “Pick a place to train your people,” Metzlar continued, assuring him that he could have anyone he wanted on his staff. The job also came with a spot promotion to lieutenant commander.

The newly-established Naval Amphibious Training Base at Fort Pierce, Florida, was ideal. Located on a pair of barrier islands along Florida’s Atlantic coast, it enjoyed yearlong good weather and warm water—plus its isolated location helped assure secrecy. By mid-July 1943, Kauffman and his small cadre of instructors (most of whom came from the bomb disposal school) were installed in a tent city there.

A joint Army-Navy commando outfit

called the Scouts and Raiders also trained on South Island and offered to help Kauffman welcome his first class of demolitions men—mostly ex-Seabees—to Fort Pierce. Their seven-day program of non-stop physical and emotional testing, conducted under the blazing Florida sun, instantly became known as “Hell Week”—a tradition that continues in the U.S. Navy’s SEAL selection school today.

Trainees endured long days of running on hot sandy beaches, swimming among poisonous jellyfish in rough surf, and wading through the alligator-infested Indian River while carrying rubber boats over their heads. At least 40 percent of the first class had quit or was in sick bay before Hell Week ended. “Many times I wanted to lay down and cry,” wrote one sailor, “but the sand fleas and mosquitoes wouldn’t let me.”

Kauffman also insisted that officers undergo the same training as their enlisted sailors. He directly participated in that first Hell Week, a measure that earned the respect of many students. Already, these so-called

“demolitioners” were building a spirit of esprit de corps that would help them get through many tough days in combat.

The trainees at Fort Pierce learned to work as part of a Naval Combat Demolition Unit (NCDU). Each team, consisting of one officer and six sailors, employed specialized explosive materials to reduce enemy beach obstacles. The NCDU men wore steel helmets, fatigue uniforms, life belts, and field shoes (boon-dockers), as they were not expected to do much swimming in the course of their duties.

One of Kauffman’s additional duties at Fort Pierce was as chairman of the Joint Army Navy Experimental Test (JANET) Board. The JANET Board’s mandate included coordinating service responsibilities for breaching enemy obstacles during an amphibious operation. The board also reviewed experimental equipment and techniques designed to counter shoreside fortifications like the Belgian Gate, a fence-like barrier that was recently observed on likely European invasion beaches.



A member of UDT-2 places an explosive charge to destroy a beach obstacle during assault training at Little Creek, Virginia. The Little Creek facility was established in 1942 and remains the primary base for the amphibious forces of the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Fleet.

Day and night, rows of wooden posts, steel tetrahedrons, and Belgian Gates were blown up by NCDU trainees all across uninhabited North Island. Once the students destroyed these obstacles, a crew of Seabees rebuilt them for the next class. An estimated 3,500 “demolitioners” received training at Fort Pierce during World War II.

Despite the important work he was performing in Florida, Kauffman ached for service in a more active theater of operations. For him, a door of opportunity opened in the aftermath of a near-disaster at Tarawa. A combination of poor intelligence work, unexpected tides, and heavy Japanese opposition doomed hundreds of U.S. Marines as they stormed that atoll on November 20, 1943. Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, commanding the naval attack force that put them there, later wrote: “We must never make another amphibious operation without exact information as to the depths of water or without the ability to eliminate obstacles before the landing.”

Summoned to Hawaii, Kauffman left Peggy (who was six months pregnant with their first child) for a new and extraordinarily perilous assignment as commanding offi-

cer of Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) Five. The UDTs were a brainchild of Admiral Turner, who envisioned a large force of trained swimmers responsible for hydrographic reconnaissance in addition to eliminating beach obstacles. Each team would consist of 100 men (13 officers and 87 enlisted sailors) and go to war in a high-speed transport vessel—essentially, a modified World War I-era “four-stack” destroyer. Smaller landing craft carried on board would then transport the swimmers in toward shore and recover them once their mission was completed.

In April 1944, the new commander of UDT 5 met with Admiral Turner to receive his orders for Operation Forager, the invasion of Saipan. The briefing, as Kauffman related, began when Turner showed him a chart of Saipan’s west coast.

“I want you people to swim in to the beach about eight on D Minus One,” Turner said. “Make a detailed survey of the depths of the water, the obstacles, anti-boat mines, the gun positions ashore, surf conditions, and other details important to the landing forces. I also want you to blow out all obstacles in that 1,800 by 6,000-yard area.”

Kauffman, assuming the admiral meant 8 p.m., asked him how much moonlight was available. Turner, showing his temper, barked that he wanted the swimmers to go in at eight in the morning.

To this, Kauffman protested: “You don’t swim into somebody else’s beach in broad daylight, sir!”

“You do,” Turner curtly responded.

Kauffman then went on to meet the members of UDT-5, then stationed at the Naval Combat Demolition Training and Experimental Base on Maui. There was much to do before his team shoved off for Saipan. Every man practiced long-distance swimming using a new sidestroke technique. The despised steel helmets and boondocker boots came off, replaced by cotton trunks, canvas sneakers, knee pads, and a face mask.

The only weapon to be carried was a belt knife. Other tools of the trade included a grease pencil and Plexiglas slate for recording depth soundings. Additionally, swim teams (the UDTs always worked in pairs) employed marker buoys, balsa floats, and fishing line—55 miles of it—to survey their sectors and mark enemy obstacles or coral heads for demolition. To ensure their readings were accurate, Kauffman had his men’s bodies painted with black stripes every six inches.

Midmorning on June 14, 1944, UDT-5’s “frogmen” slipped into the water off Red and Green Beaches, designated landing zones for the 2nd Marine Division’s amphibious assault the next day. With a barrage of naval gunfire shrieking over their heads, the swimmers got to work. Kauffman, eyeglasses taped to his temples, supervised operations from a motorized air mattress in the center sector.

As his swimmers neared shore, Kauffman could see splashes appear around their bobbing heads. Convinced that supporting warships (some of which were commanded by his father) were shooting short, he got on the radio to tell his Exec, Lieutenant John DeBold, they needed to lift their fire.

“Skipper,” DeBold replied, “those aren’t shorts.” Enemy shells, he explained, were making the splashes that worried Kauffman.

One UDT-5 frogman, Shipfitter First Class Robert Christensen, was killed when his “flying mattress” came under Japanese machine-gun fire. When two other swimmers were reported missing, Kauffman commandeered

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



## **2025** CRUISES ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY:

★ **MAY 24, 2025** ★  
**SEPTEMBER 13, 2025**

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](http://www.ssjohnwbrown.org)



Or call the reservation service:

**410-558-0164**





In July 1945, a U.S. Navy UDT team member rigs blocks of explosive TNT for the demolition of beach obstacles at Balikpapan, Borneo. The UDTs operated at Balikpapan in support of amphibious landings by the Australian 7th Division.

a landing craft and went in after them. Amid a shower of exploding mortar rounds, he somehow pulled both men to safety.

Of his sailors' courage that day, Kauffman remarked: "Every single man was calmly and slowly continuing his search and marking his slate, with stuff dropping all around. They didn't appear one tenth as scared as I was. I would not have been so amazed if ninety percent of the men had done so well, but to have a cold 100 percent go in through the rain of fire was almost unbelievable."

Later that day, Kauffman briefed an assemblage of Navy and Marine Corps senior leaders on beach conditions at Saipan. He reported that both Red and Green Beaches could support an amphibious assault, but the Marines' tank landing craft could not put in where the original plan specified. Suggesting an alternate route, he volunteered to lead the flotilla of tank-carrying vessels toward shore on D-Day using a borrowed "Alligator" tractor.

Kauffman's frogmen again provided valuable service during the Tinian invasion in late July. Their thorough nocturnal reconnaissance of that island's potential landing beaches convinced Admiral Turner to change

his mind about putting the invasion force ashore opposite heavily-fortified Tinian town. Working with Marines of V Amphibious Corps' Recon Battalion, sailors from UDT-5 and UDT-7 swam in to collect soil samples on two narrow strips of sand labeled White Beach 1 and White Beach 2.

Once more, Kauffman led from the front. He broke his last remaining pair of spectacles while covering himself in sand to hide from an enemy patrol but returned before dawn to pronounce the White beaches suitable for landing craft. The 4th Marine Division went in on July 24, and despite fierce enemy resistance managed to secure Tinian in eight days. Marine General Holland M. Smith, V Amphibious Corps Commander, declared it "the most perfect amphibious operation in the Pacific War."

For Kauffman, Tinian marked his last combat swim. Reassigned in September as Chief of Experiments and Development on Maui, he was promoted to the rank of full Commander a few months later. For his valor in Operation Forager, Commander Kauffman was awarded a second Navy Cross—pinned on by his father.

Now assigned as commander of all Under-

water Demolition Teams in the Central Pacific, Kauffman participated in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions. At war's end, wearing the four stripes of a Naval Reserve captain, he played a key role in preparing a number of landing beaches for Allied troops as they moved in to occupy Japan.

Despite his status as a decorated combat leader, Kauffman again faced difficulties when in 1947 he applied for a Regular Navy commission. Poor distance vision, an examining physician said, disqualified Kauffman from sea duty; putting his glasses back on, the resourceful frogman quickly memorized his eye chart and asked to retake the test. This time, he passed it easily.

Kauffman's post-war career included command of the destroyer USS *Gearing* (DD-710), attack transport *Bexar* (APA-237), and heavy cruiser USS *Helena* (CA-75). Following promotion to rear admiral in 1960, he served as the United States Naval Academy's 44th superintendent from 1965 to 1968. Retiring from the Navy in 1973, he died six years later. At his request, he was buried in the Naval Academy Cemetery.

Kauffman's legacy lives on in the Draper L. Kauffman Leadership Excellence Award, presented yearly to an outstanding Midshipman Second Class at the U.S. Naval Academy. Another award bearing his name is annually bestowed on a deserving Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal officer. The military has dedicated several training facilities in his honor, while the guided missile frigate USS *Kauffman* (FFG-59)—in commission from 1987 to 2015—recognized father-and-son admirals James and Draper Kauffman.

Known today as "America's First Frogman," Kauffman's influence is perhaps best felt at the demanding Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training School located in Coronado, California. There, aspiring Navy special operations warriors—officers and enlisted sailors alike—endure Hell Week, a rite of passage inaugurated 80 years ago by this bright, courageous, and inspiring combat leader who overcame great adversity in the service of his nation and fellow sailors. □

---

*Patrick J. Chaisson, a retired military officer and author, writes from his home in Scotia, New York.*



# Because History Matters



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



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



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



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



25267.....\$56  
German Waffen SS Grenadier  
Directing Movement, 1941-45



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](http://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](http://wbritain.com) • Tel: U.K. (0)800 086 9123



The USS Nautilus (SS-168) meets the USS Sculpin (SS-191) in 1941 in this painting by marine artist Arthur E. Beaumont.

[www.navsourc.org](http://www.navsourc.org)

## 'Dive! Dive! Dive!'—the last patrol of the USS Sculpin ended near the Caroline Islands in the Pacific in November 1943.

**T**wo days after receiving intelligence on the route of an important enemy convoy, the USS *Sculpin* (Sargo-class submarine SS-191) made radar contact with the Japanese ships near the Caroline Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean.

The sub's captain, Commander Fred Connaway, ordered the boat to make a high speed run on the surface to gain a dawn attack position. After reaching a point ahead of the convoy, *Sculpin* submerged and began an attack on November 18, 1943. As Connaway took a quick periscope observation prior to launching torpedoes, sharp-eyed Japanese lookouts spotted the periscope, and the convoy's escorts quickly forced the boat to "go deep." The *Sculpin* rigged for silent running as Connaway skillfully maneuvered the boat to avoid the escorts' futile attempts to locate her.

Connaway waited about an hour until the sound operator no longer heard the escorts' propellers and ordered the *Sculpin* to come up to periscope depth. He scanned the horizon to see if there was another chance to attack the convoy. Finding nothing, he ordered the submarine to surface. Lt. George E. Brown, the submarine's third officer related, "We surfaced in front of a Jap destroyer [*Yamagumo* (Mountain Cloud), DD 113] that had been left there as a 'sleeper' [to counter such a move]."

The *Yamagumo* spotted the submarine 600 yards off her port beam and launched a devastating attack. "Dive! Dive! Dive!" Connaway ordered. The diving officer took her down to

200 feet. Connaway gave the order to "rig for depth charge" and crewmen rushed to close the watertight hatches between compartments and secure everything that might come loose.

The destroyer raced overhead. Seaman 2nd Class Edwin K. F. Keller described how the destroyer's "screws sounded like a freight train coming through a tunnel."

Commissioned on January 16, 1939, the diesel-powered *Sculpin* was named after a spiny broad-mouthed fish. She was a Sargo-class submarine, 310 feet long, with a 26-foot beam, and a 16-foot draft. With four General Motors V-16 diesel engines, she had a surface speed of 21 knots and 8.75 knots submerged. She had a range of 11,000 nautical miles at 10 knots. *Sculpin*'s batteries gave her an endurance of 48 hours submerged. Her test depth was 250 feet. She had eight torpedo tubes (four forward and four aft) and carried a total of two dozen 21-inch torpedoes. A three-inch gun was mounted on the deck forward of the bridge along with a 20mm cannon. Five officers and 54 enlisted men completed her crew.

# When Disaster Strikes, Be Prepared!

**Don't leave home without this survival kit!**

When the going gets tough, you need to be ready. Power outages, floods, ice storms, hurricanes and wildfires have become the norm. You should always be prepared. Our Desert Camo Emergency Survival Kit will help you be up to the challenge. Having the right tool in the right place could save your bacon! The powerful **Overwatch Tactical Flashlight** is super bright for when the power goes out. The stainless steel **Heavy Duty Multi-Tool** contains a knife, can opener, pliers and screwdriver. The **Survival Multi-Function Card** has an escape rope, wrench, serrated edge saw and more. And when the heat goes out or the car is stuck in a winter storm, the **Endurance Emergency Blanket** will help keep you warm. For knowing the where and when, there's the **Pioneer Compass Chronograph Watch**, which features a compass, temperature display, 7 Strand 550 Paracord and flint in addition to keeping time.

Stauer  
Impossible Price  
ONLY  
**\$39**



**Heavy Duty  
Multi-Tool**



**Overwatch  
Tactical  
Flashlight**



**Desert  
Camo  
Carrying Kit**



**Pioneer  
Compass  
Chronograph**



**Survival  
Multi-Function  
Card**



**Endurance  
Emergency  
Blanket**

*"WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS, YOU CAN SURVIVE MOST ANYTHING."  
— STAUER PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER  
MIKE BISCEGLIA*

This could be your lifesaver. Secured in a handy **Desert Camo Carrying Kit**, these tools are essential for tackling most any disaster.

With safety at the top of everyone's wish list, this must-have kit is one of the fastest selling items in our company's history with over 30,000 sold in the first 2 months. **BACK IN STOCK** for the first time after overwhelming demand, we have **ONLY 733 KITS AVAILABLE** for this ad and half have already sold! We recommend buying three: one for home, one for the office and one to keep in your car in case trouble kicks up. If this kit doesn't meet your expectations, send it back for a full refund. **Your move, Mother Nature.**

**Kit Specifications:**

**Overwatch Tactical Flashlight**

- Three light modes
- 100 lumens

**Pioneer Compass Chrono**

- Compass, Flint, Wrench
- Temperature display
- 7 Strand 550 Paracord

**Endurance Emergency Blanket**

- 4.25' x 6.9'

**Survival Multi-Function Card**

- Rulers for measurement
- Can opener
- Bottle opener
- Serrated edge

**Heavy Duty Multi-Tool**

- Small knife
- Can opener
- Pliers & Screwdriver

**Desert Camo Emergency Survival Kit**

~~\$199~~ **\$39\*** + S&P **Save \$150**

\*You must use Insider Offer Code DCC151-01 to get this price.

**1-800-333-2045**

Your Insider Offer Code: **DCC151-01**



"Good buy. [It] has everything I need for getting along in the wild."  
— says client John B.,  
of Stauer's Survival Kits

Stauer, 14091 Southcross Drive W., Dept. DCC151-01, Burnsville, MN 55337 | [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)

**Stauer** | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY



The USS *Sculpin* docked at the Bethlehem Steel Company shipyard, San Francisco, California, May 1, 1943. The submarine had just completed an overhaul and upgrade in both weaponry and radar systems.

damage received by the first depth charges was not unusual but disconcerting,” Brown said.

Connaway maneuvered the boat away from the searching destroyer until a timely rain squall enabled the submarine to evade its immediate attacks. However, when Connaway attempted to come up to periscope depth a second time, the *Sculpin* broached because the diving officer believed the boat was still 125 feet below the surface. A crewman in the for-

All: Naval History and Heritage Command



LEFT: Navy Lieutenant Commander Fred Connaway was skipper of the USS *Sculpin* when it was lost in action on November 19, 1943. RIGHT: U.S. Navy Captain John P. Cromwell, commander, Submarine Division 43 in the Pacific theater happened to be aboard the USS *Sculpin* when it was attacked on November 19, 1943.

*Sculpin* became famous when, on her shake-down cruise, she helped rescue the crew of the sunken USS *Squalus* (SS-192) in May 1939. *Sculpin* was the first to spot *Squalus*' emergency red smoke bomb and rescue buoy. She established initial communications with the sunken boat and then directed the submarine rescue ship *Falcon* (ASR-2) to her location.

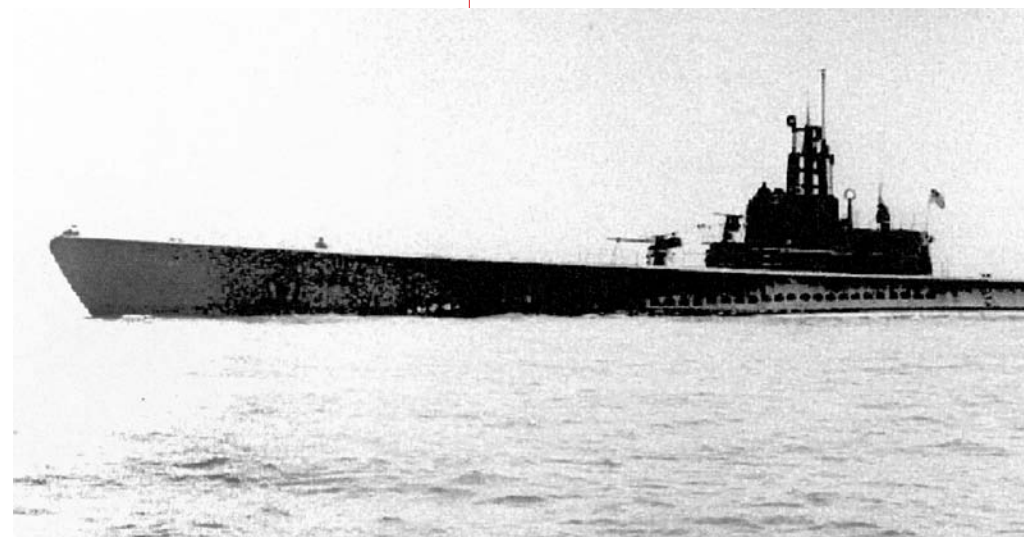
At 32, Connaway was a veteran submariner, having served three previous submarine tours (SS-123, SS-131 and SS-149), before taking command of the *Sculpin* for her ninth war patrol in November 1943. On her first eight patrols, *Sculpin* had been credited with sinking nine ships for a total of 42,200 tons and damaging 10 others, totaling 63,000 tons.

Also on board *Sculpin* this trip was Captain John P. Cromwell, Commander, Submarine Division 43, who was scheduled to form a mid-Pacific wolf pack including *Sculpin*, USS *Searaven* (SS-196), USS *Spearfish* (SS-190), and USS *Apogon* (SS-308)—in the event the Japanese fleet sortied from its base at Truk in the Carolines. Although Cromwell was senior in rank, Connaway was in command of the boat.

The sound operator heard the splashes of *Yamagumo*'s depth charges hitting the water. The 600-pound charges sank to their prescribed depth and exploded close aboard, causing the *Sculpin* to reel from the concussion. The sound reverberated inside the boat. The explosion of the second salvo damaged the boat's depth gauge, unbeknownst to the diving officer—causing it to stick at 125 feet. An exhaust valve in the after engine room ruptured, and the compartment started taking on water. Several sea valves were jarred off their seats and could not be made watertight. “The

ward torpedo room shouted over the battle phone, “The bow is out of the water!”

*Yamagumo* spotted the surfaced boat and immediately attacked. As the *Sculpin* tried to make a crash dive to safety, the crew heard the unmistakable sound of depth charges splashing into the water. At the first explosion, the boat shuddered violently and plunged further into the depths. A second and third explosion, each coming closer, brought paint chips and cork insulation fluttering down on the crew. Light bulbs shattered. The outboard vents in both torpedo rooms were



severely damaged and leaking.

“The hands on the depth charge gauge fell off in front of my face. The pressure gauges near the diving station commenced flooding,” Brown described. The concussion “jarred holy hell out of us,” Baker said.

A fourth blast knocked out the boat’s sonar and damaged the steering and diving plane gear. It tore the radio transmitter from the bulkhead and smashed the receiver. Water sprayed into the compartments from numerous leaks, shorting out electrical equipment. The diving officer lost control, and the boat plunged well below its safe operating depth of 250 feet. The pressure gauges around his diving station were all flooded out. Tons of water in the forward torpedo room forced the bow down. The boat’s engines had to run at high speed to keep from sinking further. The engine noises made it easier for the *Yamagumo*’s sonar to track the *Sculpin*.

Brown surveyed the damage. “I found the after engine room had flooded to such an extent that I believed it unwise to attempt to place a bubble in No. 4 Main Ballast Tank, which would have aided the trim considerably. The flow of water forward might short the main motor leads. We decided to bail the water forward to another compartment until we could trim the ship without endangering the main motors.” Temperatures in the sub reached more than 100 degrees.

Fireman 1st Class Joseph E. Baker said, “The air was getting worse and the heat was horrific.” The bucket brigade was exhausted and making little headway with the rising water.

The *Sculpin* could no longer stay down. The battery power was almost exhausted, and it was still six hours until sundown and the possibility of evading the destroyer. In a last-ditch effort to save the boat and her crew, Conn-

# Christmas on the Homefront

Featuring the Taxi from  
“It’s a Wonderful Life!”

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2024



### PLUS:

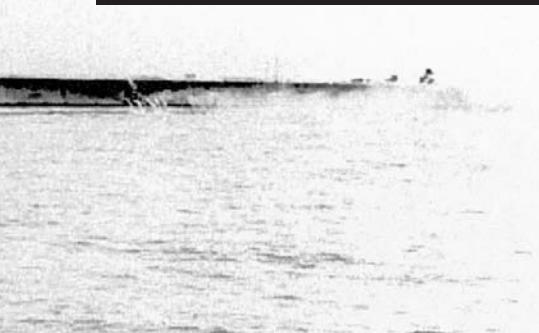
- Tanks, Jeeps & Transports
- Battle Exhibits including Authentic Helmets and Uniforms
- Stories and Artifacts of the Region
- and more!



845 Crooked Creek Rd., Gettysburg, PA 17325  
717-253-3414 • [museum@visitww2.org](mailto:museum@visitww2.org)

[visitww2.org](http://visitww2.org)

Profile of the USS *Sculpin* surfaced off the coast of California in the spring of 1943 after undergoing a major upgrade in radar and weapons systems. *Sculpin* was lost in action in November 1943 battling Japanese surface forces off the Caroline Islands in the Western Pacific.





This dramatic drawing by U.S. Navy Commander Fred Freeman depicts the final moments of Captain John Cromwell, who has chosen to remain aboard the scuttled USS *Sculpin* after a fight with a Japanese destroyer. Cromwell possessed information too valuable to be allowed to fall into enemy hands.

away decided to fight it out on the surface.

“Commander Connaway had been so calm, resourceful, and persevering during the five hours of severe depth charging that it was hard for the crew to realize that the situation was as serious as it was,” Brown recalled.

A member of the crew witnessed a debate between the two senior officers.

“Captain Cromwell asked the skipper to keep the boat down,” he recalled. “No, we’re going to battle surface,” Connaway replied. “The skipper wanted as many men as possible to escape,” the crewman said.

Brown recalled, “As he [Connaway] started up to the conning tower, he ordered me to make sure the *Sculpin* was scuttled in case we lost the one-sided engagement with the

destroyer. He still maintained his calm, collected, courageous manner.”

Connaway and the gunnery officer took position on the bridge, while the executive officer stayed in the conning tower. Connaway ordered, “Battle stations gun action. Deck gun only.”

Chief Signalman W. E. “Dinty” Moore asked Connaway, “Don’t you want to make ready the tubes?” “No, just battle surface.” Bill Cooper who heard the exchange stated, “If we’d have had those tubes ready for that Japanese ship, all we would have had to do was aim the boat at him and fire the torpedoes with a one-degree spread. We were just sitting there dead in the water.”

Moore recounted, “I think the skipper had

just given up. He knew we didn’t have a chance.” With only one three-inch deck gun, the *Sculpin* was seriously outgunned. The *Yamagumo* had six five-inch dual-purpose guns, numerous anti-aircraft guns, eight torpedo tubes, and racks holding three dozen depth charges.

Baker recalled, “They had dropped 52 600-pound charges, which is a lot of TNT. But the crew wasn’t about to give up without a hard fight first.”

The gun crews popped the hatches and swarmed up on deck. Crew members manned the 20mm cannon and 3-inch deck gun. Fireman 1st Class Joseph E. Baker was one of the eight-man crew manning the submarine’s gun. “We dashed out on deck quickly to have it out once and for all,” he remembered. “We were going to fight it out. The day was a pretty one, with white caps coming over the decks. At first when we went out on deck we couldn’t see the destroyer. Then one of the men spotted it on the starboard side...right against the sun. He was about 3,000 yards off. Immediately we went to our stations on the gun and began to fire at him. We got off the first shot, which went over him. The second round fell short. We had time to get eight rounds off, but all went over the destroyer.”

The *Yamagumo* maneuvered to get out of the line of fire from the submarine’s deck gun. Finally, she returned fire with her six-inch guns. The first salvo straddled the submarine, sending columns of seawater into the air. Then came the second salvo.

“One of the shots hit us in the main induction, another went directly through the conning tower and came out the portside, killing a number of men inside, and also some men who were out on deck, hiding from the gunfire,” Baker said. The enemy destroyer closed the range and opened up with machine guns.

“Men were being killed from the fire as they came out of the hatches,” Baker recounted.

The bridge watch team—Connaway, his executive officer, Lt. John N. Allen, and Lt. Joe Defrees, the gunnery officer—were all killed. Their deaths left Brown in command. The condition of the heavily damaged and sinking boat left him with no other choice. He ordered the crew to abandon ship and the boat to be scuttled.

“I informed Commodore Cromwell, who was in the control room, of my intentions,”

Brown said later. "He told me to go ahead but he said he could not go with us because he was afraid that the information he possessed might be injurious to his shipmates at sea if the Japanese made him reveal it by torture."

"I know too much," Cromwell said. He had knowledge of the intimate connection between submarine operations and the U.S. Navy's intercepts of Japanese communication, code-named "Ultra."

Brown wasted no time in scuttling the boat. "I considered it unwise to wait longer because the next shell might damage the hydraulic system, making it impossible to operate the vents," he recalled. "I then rang up, 'Emergency speed' and sent two chief petty officers to pass the word to abandon ship."

When the petty officers returned to the control room, they waited "a minute by the clock," then Brown ordered the vents opened. He knew it would only take minutes for the *Sculpin* to sink...not enough time for the Japanese to put a salvage team aboard.

"We heard the vents being pulled, so we dove into the ocean," Dinty Moore said. Other men scrambled out of the hatches.

Torpedoman's Mate 3rd Class Harry Toney explained, "We started out through the conning tower when we got word to go through the forward engine room hatch. I ran forward to the conning tower and remember seeing the destroyer standing by, firing dead away. Everyone was diving overboard, so I dove, too."

Machinist's Mate George Rocek was on deck when a shell hit the submarine. "I was momentarily stunned and numb all over," he remembered. "After seeing that I was intact, I jumped over the side." Rocek had been peppered with shrapnel but not seriously wounded. Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Eldon Wright headed topside. "I started to go to the conning tower but just before I reached it, a shell hit it and I jumped over the side," he said.

Several men rode the ship down. Ensign W.M. Fiedler elected to stay with the sinking boat. A crewman saw him in the wardroom with one of the Filipino stewards urging him to abandon ship. "We do not choose to go with you," Fiedler said. "We prefer death to capture by the Japanese."

Brown recalled, "As I left the conning tower hatch, water was coming waist deep

*Continued on page 95*

**UNLIKE YOUR SUMMER BEACH VACATION,  
THESE BEACHES WERE NOT THEIR CHOICE**

**FINAL OVERLORD PLAN, NORMANDY, FRANCE**  
\$99.99

**IWO JIMA LANDING PLAN**  
\$119.99

**U.S. ARMY EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATION**  
\$119.99

**USMC PACIFIC THEATER OF OPERATION**  
\$119.99

**OWN THE ACTUAL SAND FROM WORLD WAR II LANDING BEACHES**

**DAY OF DAYS PRODUCTIONS®**  
PO BOX 645, WARRENVILLE, SC 29851-0645  
803.663.7854

**ORDER ONLINE**  
[www.dayofdaysproductions.com](http://www.dayofdaysproductions.com)

**Russian Medals & Militaria**

[www.CollectRussia.com](http://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

**Atlantic Crossroads, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 144, Dept. WWII  
Tenaflly, NJ 07670  
Phone: (201) 567-8717  
Fax: (201) 567-6855

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
**CollectRussia.com**

E-mail:  
[Sales@CollectRussia.com](mailto:Sales@CollectRussia.com)

★ SATISFACTION GUARANTEED ★

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



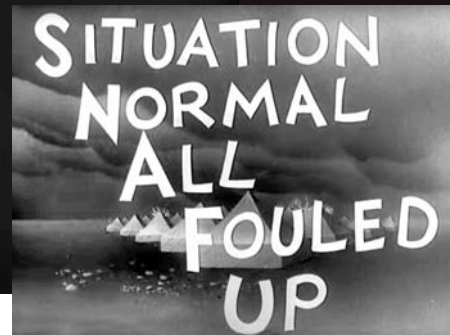
All: National Archives

## Private SNAFU helped U.S. soldiers learn about military life with a laugh—and an underlying serious message.

**B**umblng Army Private Snafu was the title character of a series of 26 short cartoons sanctioned by the U.S. War Department, produced by Frank Capra, and written by Theodor “Dr. Seuss” Geisel between 1943 and 1945. Instructional, ironic and humorous, these animated shorts set out to teach new soldiers about security, sanitation habits, and the pitfalls of general stupidity and misconduct. More than anything, Private Snafu was able to unite the troops in coping with the emotional distress of fighting in the greatest conflict the world has ever seen.

Thousands of patriotic young Americans jammed military recruiting offices the day after Pearl Harbor. Though impressive, the five million volunteers would not be enough for the challenge of fighting a two-front war in Europe and the Pacific. Anticipating entrance into the conflict, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the U.S. Congress had passed the Selective Service Act of 1940. Activating the first peacetime draft in American history added 10 million soldiers between 18 and 45 to those volunteers.

Now the federal government had to plan the best way to house them, train them, and make them battle-ready. The first was easy, but the latter proved an obstacle. There was much more to basic training than teaching a citizen-soldier how to stand at attention, march for miles on end, handle a rifle, or follow orders. What was needed was an all-in attitude, dedication, grit, and compliance.



Using a comedic approach, the U.S. military employed Private SNAFU to illustrate situations in military life and help soldiers adjust to the new normal as they left civilian concepts behind. INSET: The slogan “Situation Normal All Fouled Up” is a sanitized version of the familiar saying that both military personnel and civilians became familiar with during World War II.

Courtesy of Capra and Geisel, the Army introduced American GIs to the tongue-in-cheek Private Snafu (an acronym for “Situation Normal, All—Fouled Up”), a short, bald, motor-mouthed example of what a soldier should *not* be. The depiction of Snafu catching tropical diseases, leaking classified information, and dying from general negligence, taught the troops the downside of being naïve, careless, and continuously amorous.

Most importantly, the soldiers picked up their essential subtext—that compliance, brotherhood, empathy, and sometimes plain common sense meant survival.

The series was initially designed to educate young soldiers with limited education in military topics and improve their morale after being taken away from their homes and every-

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*

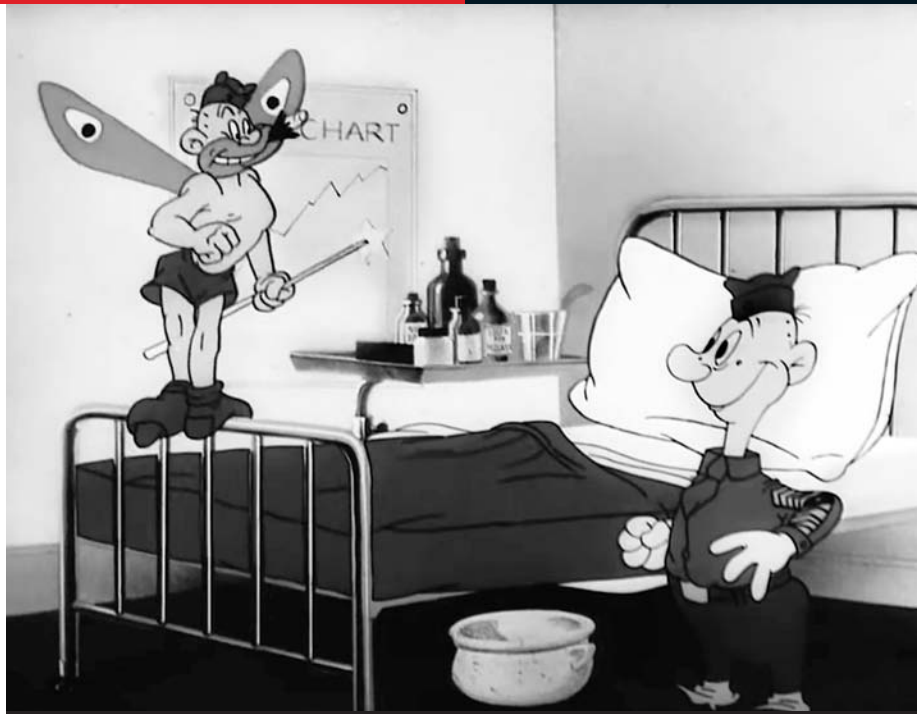


*Wonderful 3-Course Dinners*



*Overnight in First-Class Hotels*

**Toll-Free: (888) 991-6718      [worldwar2tours.com](http://worldwar2tours.com)**



Directed by Friz Freleng and voiced by Mel Blanc, “Gripes” introduced the Technical Fairy, First Class in July 1943. A gruff, tough character with stubble and a cigar, the Technical Fairy acts as a “fairy godfather” figure that provides encouragement and grants wishes that sometimes lead to trouble for Private SNAFU.

day lives. According to the National World War II Museum, the low level of education of many enlisted men was one of the biggest hurdles in assimilating them into the armed forces.

Seventy percent of all men accepted into military service had dropped out of school, with 500,000 having less than a fourth-grade education, and 4.4 million having less than an eighth-grade education. College graduates made up less than five percent of the Army’s ranks, with some estimates showing the mental age of the average soldier to be between 13 and 14 years old.

Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army assigned Brig. Gen. Frederick H. Osborn, a social science researcher before the war, to spearhead the Army’s Information and Education Division. While its most known propaganda project—Capra’s “Why We Fight” series—was a perfect overview of the seriousness of war, it was not until the Private Snafu shorts that the unit reached its first real success in educating new recruits.

Before the first episode of Private Snafu was shown in 1943, the Army instructed its troops on security, proper sanitation, and other military subjects essential to proper soldiering via 11 pre-planned lectures in large group settings. Converting hundreds of thousands of civilians with minimal education into military

specialists seemed nearly impossible.

Together with Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, Osborn had an idea of combining indoctrination with instruction into a single effort. Warner Bros. Studios, with its already blatantly anti-Nazi sentiment present in their feature films, seemed a logical choice.

The studio’s Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny cartoons, shown before feature films, were a massive hit. And, although after 1941, the cartoons often carried strong pro-war and anti-fascist messages meant to arouse public involvement, they managed to stay entertaining, lighthearted, and relatable. The Army saw that a similar format would be the perfect way to reach a newly conscripted audience of varying educational backgrounds.

To create their own indoctrination and social engineering experiment preparing soldiers for what lay ahead, the U.S. Army Signal Corps turned to the famed animated studio Warner Bros.—home of Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies, featuring Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig, all voiced by the iconic Mel Blanc. The Snafu shorts were directed by American animation legends Charles “Chuck” Jones (12), Isadore “Friz” Freleng (8), Frank Tashlin (4), and Bob Clampett (2).

Not taking any chances, the Army placed Capra, an award-winning movie maker

responsible for such Hollywood classics as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and, after the war, *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), at the helm of the project.

After the Italian-born Capra came up with the name “Private Snafu,” the team went to work creating a character known for committing blunders and infractions, then learning from the consequences of his mistakes—or dying as a result. Considered “for-military-use-only” and even classified at the time of their creation, each episode served a double purpose of having a plot about specific instructional material at its core while sneakily inserting underlying indoctrination messages.

The silly stories had the desired effect of teaching soldiers the facts of military life. In the episode titled “Fighting Tools,” Snafu neglected the upkeep and maintenance of his advanced weaponry, which led to his death at the hands of a German soldier. And in “Gas,” Snafu is saved from the vicious gas monster only after he finally embraces his gas mask training with the mask having female facial features and being cuddled and cared for by the idiotic private.

In “Booby Traps,” Snafu learned of dangers other than gunfire and staying vigilant at all times in the field. Even after his negligence sent him to heaven, he’s plagued by booby traps.

There was also the issue of personal hygiene, best exemplified in “Private Snafu vs. Malaria Mike,” which saw a malaria-armed mosquito kill the foolish private after he carelessly ignored military instruction.

Ironically, most of the instructional cartoons had more to do with the right attitude and the less obvious but ever-present subversion. While “Hot Spot” stressed the importance of a proper diet on a given march, “The Chow Hound” story centered on not wasting food.

The plots of “Three Brothers” and “Infantry Blues” focused on rumors that other service branches were safer or more glamorous. In the former, Snafu wishes he had the easier posts of his two brothers—a carrier pigeon caretaker and a K-9 dog-unit trainer—only to realize that their jobs required as much dedication and alertness as his own.

In the latter episode, a tired Snafu marches through rugged terrain, fantasizing about how much better, simpler, and safer the other military branches had it.

A Technical Fairy, First Class—a side char-

**Coin & Folder  
ONLY \$19.95!**



Obverse shown  
actual size



BATTLES OF WORLD WAR II  
Dollar Series

Only From  
Littleton



# Honor the Battles of WWII with Littleton's Officially Licensed Jeep® Brand Series!

**NEW!**

*Special introductory offer – first coin plus illustrated folder for only \$19.95!*

Enjoy big savings when you celebrate the patriotic Jeep® vehicle that drove soldiers across the battlefields of World War II with this special offer!

- ★ Approved by the Jeep® Brand, and available exclusively through Littleton
- ★ Reg. \$37.90 - **SAVE 45%** when you get the Pearl Harbor coin & illustrated display folder
- ★ Issued as \$1 legal tender for Liberia
- ★ First in 10-coin series!

You'll also receive a handpicked trial selection of fascinating coins from our **No-Obligation Coins-on-Approval Service**, from which you may purchase any or none of the coins – return balance within 15 days – with option to cancel at any time.

**Mail Coupon Now! For Faster Service**  
Visit: [LittletonCoin.com/Respond](http://LittletonCoin.com/Respond)



Serving Collectors Since 1945

**Have U.S. Coins or Paper Money to Sell? Get Top Dollar!**  
We Make it Quick and Easy.  
[LittletonCoin.com/CoinsToSell](http://LittletonCoin.com/CoinsToSell)  
*\*Currently purchasing U.S. currency within the U.S. only.*

Jeep, the Jeep grille and related logos, vehicle model names and trade dress are trademarks of FCA US LLC and used under license by Littleton Coin Company. ©2024 FCA US LLC.

©2024 LCC, Inc.

**Offer Code: 36N400**

**SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW CUSTOMERS ONLY**

**YES** Please send me the following:

QTY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
1	2025 Liberia \$1 Coin - Pearl Harbor Jeep® Dollar Coin with Folder	\$19.95	<b>\$19.95</b>
		Shipping	<b>FREE!</b>
<b>ORDER MUST BE RECEIVED WITHIN 30 DAYS</b>		Sales Tax	<b>FREE!</b>
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19.95</b>

Check payable to Littleton Coin Co.

Charge my:  VISA  MasterCard

American Express  Discover

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date  /

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt# \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:



Littleton Coin Company  
**Offer Code: 36N400**  
1309 Mt. Eustis Rd  
Littleton NH 03561-3737

acter that plays the part of a “sergeant god-fairy” granting Snafu’s wishes—shows up and allows the private to experience the unpleasant aspects of being a sailor, a pilot, and a tankman. The episode ends with Snafu back slogging through his march in the desert but now much happier and more content with his situation.

One constant message that often appeared throughout the series was that spies were everywhere and nobody was to be trusted. “Loose lips sink ships” was especially the motto in “Spies,” “Rumors,” “Snafuperman,” and “Going Home.”

In “Spies,” Snafu blabs about his everyday military life to everyone he meets and they pass it on to the enemy. As a result of his actions, a German submarine sinks the very transport ship Snafu is on, killing him and all others on board.

In “Rumors,” the focus is on the damage of disreputable gossip when the bumbling Snafu took someone’s suggestion of the skies being perfect for a bombing and turned it into a morale-hurting rumor that deterred the entire camp and saw the private locked up in an insane asylum.

In the May 1944 short, “Gas,” Bugs Bunny delivers his signature line, “What’s up, Doc?” after popping out of Private Snafu’s gas mask bag. One of 12 shorts directed by Chuck Jones, this was the first cameo by the world’s most famous cartoon rabbit.



In “Snafuperman,” the private, graced with superpowers by the Technical Fairy, brags about his powers and advantages only to have the enemy use his boasting to plan a more precise bombing of American military targets. The message was simple—information, when misused or used without caution, was detrimental to the war effort.

While cringe-worthy by today’s standards, the prejudiced depiction of Snafu’s enemies was exactly what the soldiers at the time wanted to see. Although humorous, the cartoons made it very obvious that the Germans and Japanese were formidable foes and should be treated as such. The characters were often physically larger than Snafu and very deter-

## Reddick Militaria

### Nuremburg Desk Eagles

Cast from originals, these highly-detailed castings are very nice quality and make fine looking display pieces, especially at such attractively low prices! Our Desk Eagles are taken directly from an original and are complete with all details, including maker’s RZM code. Finished in antique silver or antique bronze and mounted on a genuine marble base, they stand at 7-1/2” high.



**Antique Bronze**  
**\$59.00**

**Antique Silver**  
**\$79.00**

### Enlisted Men’s M-43 Caps



**\$57.00 Ea**

Made in Germany by the successors to the Erel company, our caps are constructed from the finest quality German wool that is custom woven to match the original colors. Fully-lined in typical, grey cotton fabric, they include proper ink stampings, correct type cardboard visor inserts, Reece keyhole buttonholes and Assmann style, pebbled aluminum buttons. Available in sizes 56-61, with the Army/SS Field Grey model also available in size 62.



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

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

mined to use that advantage to kill him.

The enemy was also dangerous because of his cunningness and bullying, not so much because of his strength. The writers and artists managed to ridicule and belittle the Axis powers while simultaneously making them appear just dangerous enough.

The animated shorts depicted the Japanese with racial stereotypes: slanted eyes, buck teeth, deformed heads, and large ears. They had no natural intelligence but used deviousness and scheming—and Snafu's blundering—to gain an advantage. Similarly, the Germans were often big brutes and buffoons quick to surrender to American military superiority.

"Oh, no—what a rifle!" screamed a huge German soldier who cowers after facing the GI's weapon. The young men whom the Army was sending into battle might have been intimidated by the Japanese and German forces—but Snafu cleverly eased some of those fears by presenting their foes as weak and morally inferior.

Although packed with much information, Snafu's stories still managed to include the same type of slapstick humor that made their Warner Bros. cousins back home so popular.



Written by Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel) in his lyrical and rhyming style, "Spies" (August 1943) features Adolf Hitler as Satan. Directed by Chuck Jones, this is another short where Snafu is the architect of his own demise—after a few drinks, his loose lips lead to the sinking of his ship.

Forever careless, the young private never did anything right and always had to pay the ultimate price for his stupidity. He was the worst soldier in the Army, to whom the young men

watching never wanted to be compared.

The public ridicule that resulted from Snafu's blunders served a perfect double pur-

*Continued on page 96*

# TIME TRAVEL. MADE POSSIBLE.

## SEE DECADES OF HISTORY.



WEDS - SUN  
MUSEUM  
OPEN  
10 AM - 5 PM

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



American  
Heritage  
Museum



All photos: Bundesarchiv via Wikimedia Commons

## How the Jablunkov Incident started Hitler's Invasion of Poland and the Second World War five days early.

**A**t around 9:30 p.m. on August 25, 1939, a German Opel staff car burst into the courtyard of the temporary headquarters of the *Abwehr* (German Military Intelligence) near the Slovakian and Polish border. The young staff officer, Heinrich Gaedcke, nodded at two plainclothes agents as he entered the inconspicuous country home.

The orders to cancel the invasion of Poland, *Fall Weiss* (Case White), set to begin at 4:30 a.m. the following day, had come through to Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the supreme command of the German armed forces, personally from Adolf Hitler just a couple of hours earlier. The phone switchboard operators worked frantically, passing the orders down as far as local regimental and battalion levels. But circumstances and world events were changing at a rapid pace. Hitler had received the bad news at 6 p.m. that his hope of a continued British and French policy of appeasement had evaporated. After being notified of a new British and Polish treaty guaranteeing the former's help should Germany attack the latter, a furious Führer ordered Keitel to "Stop everything at once!"

While Keitel's staff reached all military units in time, the HQ could not get *Abwehr* Secret Service Director Wilhelm Canaris because of his intelligence agency's clandestine method of operations and frequent relocation. Canaris oversaw the Brandenburgers—the German special forces tasked with secretive and delicate sabotage missions across the Polish border.

"The Führer has called off the invasion of Poland on political grounds," the panting young man blurted to Canaris. "You must do everything possible to halt your combat teams!"

German PzKpfw. I and PzKpfw II tanks massed along the Bra River in Poland on September 3, 1939, two days after the invasion of Poland officially ignited World War II in Europe. A group of officers is seen nearby aboard a SdKfz. 251/3 halftrack. Just days earlier, a group of German special operatives had invaded Poland early. **INSET:** Lieutenant Dr. Hans Albrecht Herzner led the group of German special forces that invaded Poland too soon after a message to suspend operations failed to reach them.

The man who would soon turn against Hitler and funnel top-secret information to the Allies seemed unfazed. By September 1939, Canaris had already made up his mind to resist the Nazi leader's world conquest, a decision that would lead to his execution in 1945.

# The Gold Rush of 2024

Stauer  
Impossible Price  
Was \$299, Now  
**\$99**

## Glimmering 24k gold in a tungsten setting



Ah, my dear compatriots, allow me to share a tale of intrigue and fortune. Picture this: a venture into the heart of a South American goldmine, where the earth yields its treasures to the daring and the cunning. With every step as we follow Diego, our mining master, the air thickens with anticipation, the scent of wealth mingling with the thrill of the unknown.

There, amidst the darkness, lies the prize we seek — veins of gold, glimmering like stars in the night sky.

Now picture this: a ring, not just any ring, mind you, but a masterpiece crafted to adorn the fingers of the discerning. Crafted with meticulous care, each piece encasing ribbons of 24 karat gold in a Tungsten setting, whispering tales of luxury and prestige.

Meticulously crafted and amazingly comfortable, you will not find anything like this in a jewelry store. As gold prices skyrocket, we have been able to craft this and hold the price under \$100 making it exclusively available with only 495 reserved for this ad. And of course we offer a 30 day no questions asked guarantee.

**SOLD OUT IN 36 HOURS**  
NOW BACK IN STOCK



*"Been a Stauer customer for many years. I've never been disappointed in their products."*

— M.L. Port St. Lucie, FL

**Gold RUSH**



*Yanacocha Gold Mine, located near Lima, Peru, is the largest gold mine in South America and the fourth largest in the world.*

A symbol of power and sophistication. This isn't just a ring, it's a statement. On any adventure, let this ring be your companion, a silent witness to your every triumph. Ahhh... the rush of a gold rush.

### Jewelry Specifications:

- 24k gold embedded in black-finished tungsten
- Whole Size 8 -14

### Men's Gold Rush Ring

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

*\*You must use Insider Offer Code GRR147-01 to get this price.*

**1-800-333-2045**

Your Insider Offer Code: **GRR147-01**



Rating of A+

**Stauer** 14091 Southcross Drive W.  
Dept. GRR147-01, Burnsville, MN 55337  
[www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)

Stauer | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY



Combat Group Jablunkov with commander Lieutenant Dr. Hans Albrecht Herzner at center (in uniform) gathers for a photo. The special infiltration and sabotage group was tasked with capturing a railway station in the opening hours of the German invasion of Poland. Actually, the unit crossed into Poland early and had to be withdrawn when orders were mishandled.



When Lieutenant Dr. Hans Albrecht Herzner did not receive orders to stand down, his German infiltration unit proceeded to attack the Polish border positions guarding this railway tunnel at Jablunkov Pass. Herzner was unsuccessful in taking the tunnel and, days later, Polish soldiers sabotaged the tunnel about an hour after Germany attacked on September 1. The tunnel was repaired in 1940.

goal to reclaim all ethnic Germans living in other countries, particularly those in Eastern and Central Europe, which gained land at Germany's expense after World War I. After the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, followed by the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Nazi attention turned to Poland. Hitler was sure the British and the French wanted no repeat of the Great War. In his mind, they would never risk a global conflict over the Central European nation, just as they had not stopped him from carrying out his *Heim ins Reich* policy up to that point.

Hitler's last assurance of an unimpeded takeover came to fruition on August 23, 1939, with the German-Soviet non-aggression pact openly suggesting that the Soviet Union would remain neutral during any German incursion into Poland. The secret protocol calling for a division of the nation shortly after the German invasion would ensure that. The orders to prepare for a full-scale attack on Poland went out to the Army, Navy, and the Luftwaffe that same day. Fall Weiss would see German forces attack Poland on multiple fronts. By the morning of August 25, 1.5 million men awaited Hitler's final directive to strike: Army Group North, eastward from Germany and south via East Prussia, and Army Group South northward through German-occupied Slovakia. The orders finally came through at 3 p.m.—the attack on Poland would commence at dawn on August 26, 1939.

The news of the Anglo-Polish treaty reached the Reich Chancellery later that afternoon, causing Hitler to falter. After a 7:30 p.m. meeting, the Fuhrer canceled the invasion of Poland. It would have to wait in light of the new British resolve.

As Hitler deliberated in Berlin, Herzner was briefing his commandos near the Slovakian-Polish border. Tough and smart, the young officer had earned his doctorate years before being hired on as a research assistant at the German Army High Command in 1938. Unbeknownst to his new employers, at the time he began his new career the young intellectual was already a member of a right-wing resistance group whose main goal was the assassination of the leader of the Nazi Party, Hitler himself. The main impetus for the secret plot was the fear that the Fuhrer would bring the German nation into a world

Canaris was pleased at the prospect of Hitler indefinitely postponing his plans to attack Poland in light of the British resolve. The cancellation order went out immediately, but in the rush one Brandenburger group was missed—with historical consequences.

When Canaris was informed later that Lt. Dr. Hans Albrecht Herzner's covert operation across the Slovakian and Polish border had already left, Canaris sent his scouts to find Herzner and his commandos before an

international incident was created.

Miles away, Herzner jotted down a message in his notebook. "Generalkommando VIII, Crossing Polish Border...at 00.30 hours, near point 627 north-northwest of Cadca." Dr. Herzner and his band of 24 irregulars were going to war—on their own.

Hitler's attack on Poland was a foregone conclusion as early as 1938 when he introduced his policy of "Heim ins Reich" (Back to the Reich). The Nazi leader made clear his

conflict that, according to Herzner and his friends, the country was unprepared to wage.

In the end, Hitler's political maneuvering and signing of the Munich Agreement in late September 1938 eliminated the perceived threat of imminent war. The pact with the Allies caused Herzner's group, which lacked a clear plan of action, to disband. Thoughts of assassination long forgotten, Herzner found himself recruited by the Abwehr to lead one of its secret commando groups.

The Brandenburger units drew personnel from ethnic German minorities in Eastern and Central Europe. Not regular army men, they were highly trained, rugged, and dangerous individuals leading covert sabotage operations. With the orders to enter Poland on the eve of the general German invasion across three fronts, Canaris's commandos, composed of many Polish-speaking irregulars, split the infiltration and disruption responsibilities between three units. Two were to smuggle in high explosives and sabotage vital military and communications targets directly across the Slovakian and Polish border. The third group, led by Herzner, had a more delicate and most important mission.

It was nearly midnight when Herzner's commandos, dressed in civilian clothing with swastika armbands as the only indication of their allegiance, listened attentively to the last debrief. Wearing his full Wehrmacht uniform, he gave a single automatic weapon, a pistol, and four ammo magazines to each of the 24 men. Trucks were already waiting outside to take them to the Polish border. Once there, Herzner's men would proceed on foot through the Beskids Mountains and toward the Jablunkov Pass. Their goal was to go hours ahead of the German invasion and, after regrouping, capture a railway station and a tunnel at the town of Mosty, three miles inside the Polish border. With the area secured, Herzner and his men would wait until dawn for the leading German units of the Army Group South.

The Mosty station was the last on a rail line running through the nearby tunnel of Jablunkov Pass that linked German-occupied Czechoslovakia and Polish Silesia. Securing the station and the tunnel was imperative to the success of the Nazi invasion of Poland as it provided the shortest route for Hitler's troops and supplies coming from Vienna

# HISTORIC GERMAN COINS & CURRENCY

## LAST SILVER COINS OF NAZI GERMANY

The infamous eagle and swastika are featured on these silver 2 and 5 Reichsmark coins of Nazi Germany. The 5 Reichsmark is the size of a half dollar and is struck in .900 fine silver. The 2 Reichsmark is the size of a quarter and is .600 fine. Both depict Paul von Hindenburg on the front. The coins were struck only 4 years, from 1936 to 1939.

**Silver 2 Reichsmark ONLY \$13 - Or get 5 for ONLY \$59**

**Silver 5 Reichsmark ONLY \$29 - Or get 5 for ONLY \$129**



## 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**



## OLD GERMAN EMPIRE BANKNOTES

This set of 3 attractive large, historic German Empire banknotes features the 20, 100 and 1000 Mark dated between 1908 and 1914. Before WWI the notes could be redeemed for over 12 ounces of gold on demand!

**Set of 3 German Empire Banknotes ONLY \$6**

**Or get 10 sets for ONLY \$39**



"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](http://www.JoelsCoins.com)

Interesting World Coins. Since 1970

Phone: 805-489-8045 • e-mail: [Orders@JoelsCoins.com](mailto:Orders@JoelsCoins.com)

P.O. Box 365-WWH, Grover Beach, CA 93483-0365



WW2 GERMAN NSDAP PAPER BUNTING FLAG - ORIGINAL



HISTORICAL MILITARY PRODUCTS



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



US WWII 2ND RANGERS ORIGINAL M1 HELMET SHELL AND LINER REFURBISHED



WW2 GERMAN PARATROOPER M38 JUMP SMOCK EARLY WAR



SS RUNES COLLAR TABS CARDBOARD TEMPLATE ORIGINAL



WW2 GERMAN EARLY WAR POLICE GENDARMERIE SHAKO IN BLACK



GERMAN WWII OFFICER ALCOSO WEHRMACHT DAGGER



MICHAEL WITTMANN FIELD GREEN VISOR "CRUSHER" CAP WAFEN SS



US M1 HELMET NET WW2 - ORIGINAL



GERMAN P38 HARD SHELL BLACK LEATHER HOLSTER GECO

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



[www.militarytour.com](http://www.militarytour.com)

Email: [dj@militarytour.com](mailto:dj@militarytour.com)

Tel: 1-800-785-8644

We welcome new suppliers

toward Warsaw, the Polish capital city. It also opened up the defenses of Cracow, Poland's ancient city and one-time capital, where Army Group South was expected to contain most of the Polish forces before driving north to Warsaw.

Herzner and his men emerged from the woods that formed a natural border between Poland and Slovakia shortly after midnight and began their secret trek up the mountains toward their target. Most were ethnic Germans born in Poland or individuals who, after the Treaty of Versailles, found themselves on the wrong side of the border. They needed little urging to strike at the Poles whom they saw as oppressors, a view strengthened by Nazi propaganda.

Herzner led one of the assault units as he and 12 men avoided Polish sentries. The latter's numbers seemed to multiply the closer the Germans got to the Mosty station. As agreed during the mission debrief, his group was to meet the other team at 3 a.m. on a hill overlooking the station. And while Herzner and his commandos arrived 15 minutes ahead of schedule, the other unit was nowhere to be seen. Unknown to Herzner,

they had lost their way inside the thick Polish forests only to be found by one of the Abwehr sentries and recalled to Slovakia.

Knowing the significance of the Jablunkov Pass, the Poles had mined the 1,000-foot-long tunnel months earlier, according to spies. The missing assault team was to approach the tunnel further down the rail line as Herzner's detachment took care of the Mosty station. It now seemed likely that his unit would have to secure the first target without alerting the tunnel guards while hoping for the arrival of the second team before moving on to take the tunnel. The brightening sky made this the only choice.

At 4 a.m., Herzner and his commandos swept down the hill, firing their weapons. The element of surprise had been lost. Besides, Herzner believed that armored reconnaissance cars of the main invasion force would be there any minute to help secure the tunnel. He also believed other teams had sabotaged the area's telecommunications buildings and telephone network.

The Polish border police, regular army troops, and railway workers put up a staunch defense but were no match for Herzner's

highly trained and well-armed commandos. The Germans promptly surrounded the station building and a few others nearby. White tablecloths soon fluttered from the structures' windows. Speaking in Polish, one of Herzner's men ordered whoever was in charge to officially surrender the building. A frightened middle-aged Polish colonel came through the door with his hands up. Herzner, the only man dressed in a German military uniform, lowered his pistol and approached the Pole. "What's the matter? Aren't Germany and Poland at war?" As one of the commandos translated, the Pole replied, "No, they aren't. You can find out for yourself."

"Wie?" (How) Herzner asked, undoubtedly already suspecting the worst.

"By calling your base on our telephone," the Polish colonel replied.

The German lieutenant did not need the translation and he now knew his situation was worse than he already thought. Minutes later, the young Polish woman sitting at the desk with the military communication equipment in the rail station's basement bowed to the tall German officer as he entered. There could not have been any doubt in Herzner's mind that



An invitation from classic battlefield tours to Military history enthusiasts who enjoy the finer things in life.

For UK and European tours, one day experiences, guided walks and expert talks.

[www.classicbattlefieldtours.com](http://www.classicbattlefieldtours.com)

Contact James on:  
[james@classicbattlefieldtours.com](mailto:james@classicbattlefieldtours.com) | 0044 0203 960 5302



German soldiers remove the gate at a checkpoint in a street in the city of Danzig, supposedly on September 1, 1939. However, under further scrutiny some analysts conclude that the photo was taken two weeks after the initial German invasion of Poland solely for propaganda purposes.



she had already done her duty and notified the tunnel security of the attack on the station. At that very moment, one mile down the road sappers were finishing arming the explosives while the Polish border patrol set up machine-gun posts at each end of the tunnel.

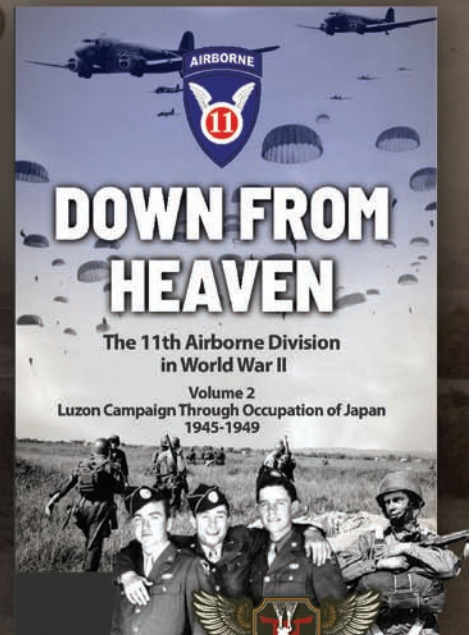
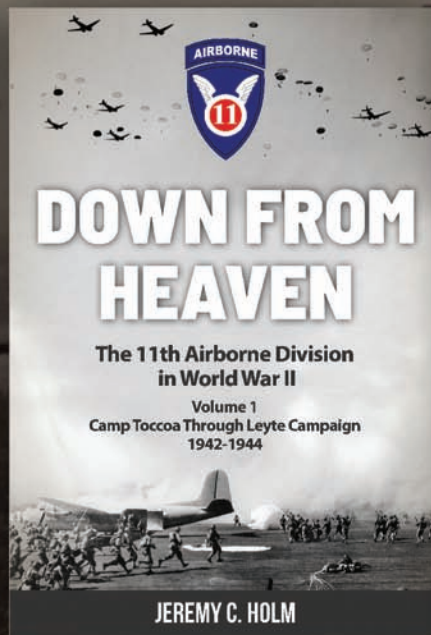
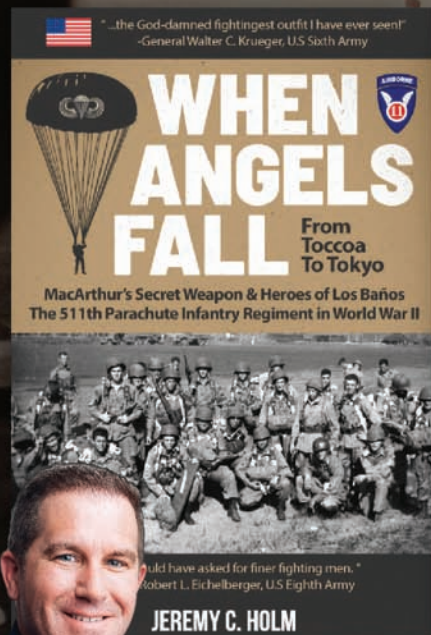
Herzner was initially reluctant to break any radio silence. Yet, an almost immediate attack by the advanced Polish guard units from Jablunkov Pass, who came to assess the damage at Mosty station, convinced the lieutenant to do otherwise. At nearly 5 a.m. and

after repelling the Poles' advances, Herzner had the Polish woman make the phone call. Still, to his aggravation, the operator from the closest telecommunications building refused to patch the call through. Now des-

*Continued on page 96*



# THE 11TH AIRBORNE IN WWII



JEREMY C. HOLM

JEREMY C. HOLM

Books by Jeremy C. Holm  
Division Historian



available at  
amazon



# OPERATION OLIVE: Autumn Assault IN ITALY

BY ALLYN VANNOY

**A**llied forces had been fighting their way up the Italian peninsula since landing at Salerno on September 9, 1943. After nearly a year they seemed poised, in late August 1944, to crack the final Nazi defensive line.

But German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring had other ideas. His last and best hope of halting the retreat of German forces before the advancing Allies was the Gothic Line, a 10-mile-deep belt of fortifications extending from south of La Spezia on the west coast to the Foglia Valley through the natural defensive barrier of the Apennines to the Adriatic Sea between Pesaro and Ravenna on the east coast. Employing more than 15,000 slave laborers, the Germans created more than 2,000 fortified machine-gun nests, casemates, bunkers, observation posts, artillery fighting positions, barbed wire barriers, and many miles of anti-tank ditches.

The assault on the Gothic Line in the autumn of 1944, was launched at the urging of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill with the aim of destroying the German Army in Italy and bringing the Western Allies into the Balkans ahead of the Soviet Red Army.

Following the Allied breakthrough at Cassino and breakout of the Anzio beachhead in the spring of 1944, the Allies liberated Rome while the Germans fell back to the north, establishing one delaying position after another—arriving at the Arno Line in July (running from the west coast of Italy, along the Arno River and into the Apennine Mountains north of Arezzo). This allowed the Germans time to consolidate the Gothic Line.

For the Allies, the Italian Front was secondary to operations in France, as indicated by the withdrawal of seven divisions from the U.S. Fifth Army during the summer of 1944 for Operation Dragoon in southern France. By August 5, Fifth Army's strength had been reduced from 249,000 to 153,000.

On the afternoon of August 10, senior Allied commanders Lieutenant General Sir Oliver Leese, commander of the British Eighth Army, and Lt. Gen. Mark W Clark, commander of the U.S. Fifth Army, and their chiefs of staff met to hear Gen. Sir Harold Alexander, commander of the 15th Army Group, outline his strategy for dealing with the German forces in Italy.

British, Canadian and Polish forces assault the stout defenses of the Nazi Gothic Line during the Italian Campaign in August 1944.

An M10 tank destroyer of the 93rd Anti-Tank Regiment passes soldiers of the 5th Sherwood Foresters in August 1944 along a dirt road during the advance toward the Apennine Mountains and the Gothic Line, the last stronghold for the German troops in Italy.





Imperial War Museum



Bundesarchiv

**ABOVE:** Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, a Luftwaffe officer who assumed command of all German forces in Italy, fought a brilliant defensive campaign. **TOP:** From left, British Eighth Army commander Lieutenant General Oliver Leese, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Allied forces in the Mediterranean commander General Sir Harold Alexander meet in August 1944 in preparation for the assault on the Germans' Gothic Line.

Alexander's original plan—as formulated by his Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Sir John Harding—was to storm the Gothic Line in the center of the German front, where most of the Allied forces were concentrated. It was the shortest route to their objective, the Lombardy Plain. But this plan was rejected by General Leese, who did not want to fight alongside General Clark.

General Leese, believing that Kesselring was not expecting a major Allied effort to the east, proposed instead that the Eighth Army attack up the Adriatic coast toward the towns of Pesaro and Rimini, drawing in the German reserves from the center of their line. Fifth Army would then attack in the center of the Apennines north of Florence toward Bologna with the British XIII Corps on the right wing of the attack fanning out toward the coast to create a pincer with the Eighth Army's advance into the rear of the German 10th Army near Rimini, closing the Germans in a pocket between the Po River and the sea. This would mean that as a preparatory move, the bulk of the Eighth Army would

have to be transferred from the center of the line to the Adriatic coast. Such a task would take about two weeks—with intelligence deception being conducted to convince Kesselring that the main attack would be in the center of the front.

General Clark readily agreed, especially on the matter of timing. He could easily hold on his left flank with the few forces he had there and shift the rest to the center for the attack. His only concern was his right flank, where the distance and possible lack of coordination between an American attack toward Pistoia and that of the British XIII Corps on the Eighth Army's left flank constituted, in Clark's opinion, a real hazard to the success of operations in the center.

An effective operation against the enemy center, even if secondary, would require that both Clark's army and the British XIII Corps

to be under the operational control of one commander and that their axes of attack be along the shortest distance across the mountains, that is, from Florence to Bologna.

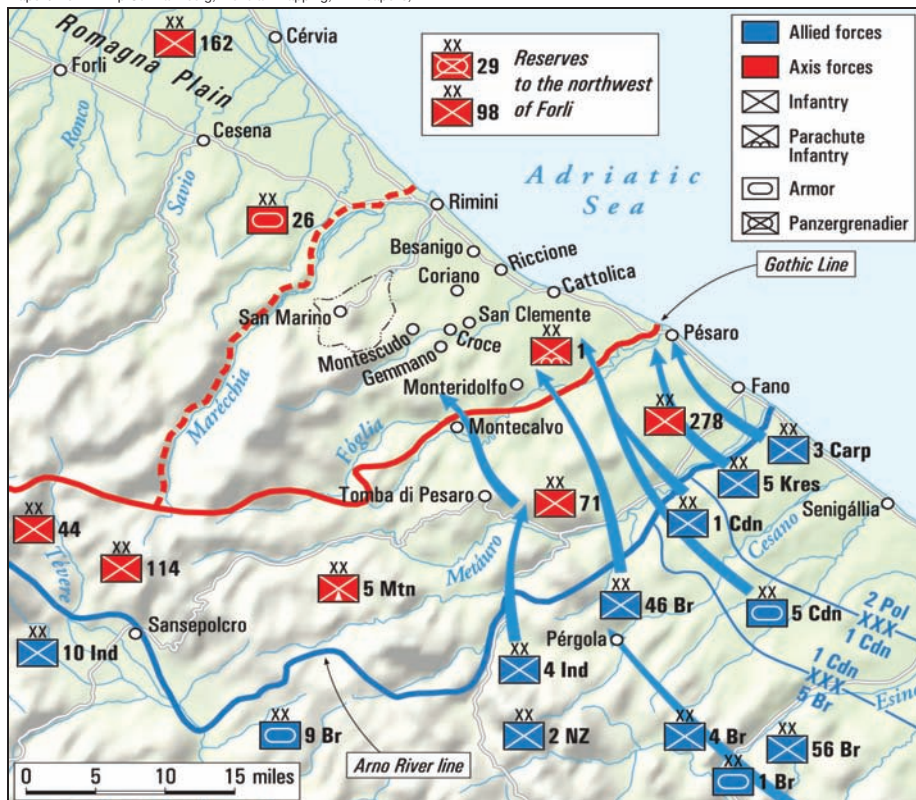
While Clark outlined his reservations, Leese offered to meet his concerns by making Lieutenant General Richard L. McCreery, the XIII Corps commander, a provisional group commander over both X and XIII Corps, but avoided any mention of placing British troops

under Fifth Army command.

Clark agreed that the new strategy promised to be effective, the only possible remaining drawback being the delay that would be imposed upon the Fifth Army's attack.

On August 13, Alexander's headquarters distributed to the army commanders the plan for the Gothic Line offensive—Operation Olive. General Alexander envisioned turning the enemy Tenth Army's flank with the Eighth Army. Controlling 11 divisions on a relatively narrow front, Leese's army was to drive through the Rimini Gap, consisting of approximately eight miles of coastal plain between Rimini and the foothills of the Apennines. Once through the gap

Maps © 2024 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



TOP: The British Eighth Army began its execution of Operation Olive, the initial assault against the German string of defenses in northern Italy known as the Gothic Line with hopes of penetrating the Nazi positions. However, the battle proved slow and costly. ABOVE: Forces of the British Eighth Army approached the German defenses at the Gothic Line in Italy in the summer of 1944 and found difficult fighting against a determined enemy.

the Canadian I Corps and the British V Corps were to deploy onto the Romagna Plain, a low-lying triangular-shaped area cut by many streams and drainage ditches bounded on the south by Highway 9, on the east by Highway 16 paralleling the coast between Rimini and Ravenna, and to the west by Highway 67, extending northeast from Forli on Highway 9 to Ravenna. From the Romagna Plain the two corps were to launch a two-pronged drive to roll up the enemy's left flank toward Bologna and Ferrara. Meanwhile, the Fifth Army, with three corps controlling nine divisions on an extended front, was to move generally northward from Florence toward the Po Valley.

Both armies were to converge on Bologna and then exploit toward the Po. Light forces, the British X Corps with the equivalent of one and one-half divisions, were to operate in the mountainous terrain that separated the main bodies of the two armies.

Alexander's resources no longer afforded the luxury of an army group reserve with which to influence the offensive at a critical point. Yet, that seemed no serious problem at the time, for both of his armies were to fight essentially separate battles. But the strategy in this offensive would require the closest cooperation between the two Allied armies and their commanders. Otherwise, Kesselring would once again be able to extricate his forces as he had in June during the retreat from Rome.

Alexander's decision to shift the main attack necessitated large-scale movement of troops and equipment to the right flank. The movement began on August 15. In eight days, 6,000 tanks, guns, and vehicles had been shifted.

By the last week of August, the Eighth Army was deployed across a 25-mile front: from the coast inland, the Polish II Corps, the Canadian I Corps, and the British V Corps. The entire force included 10 divisions and eight separate brigades. On the coast was the Polish II Corps with the 5th Kresowa Division and the 3rd Carpathian Division in reserve. To the left of the Poles was the Canadian I Corps which placed the Canadian 1st Infantry Division with the British 21st Tank Brigade attached in the front line and the Canadian 5th Armored Division in reserve.

To the west of the Canadians was the British V Corps with the 46th Infantry Division manning the right of the line and the Indian 4th Infantry Division the left. In reserve were the British 56th Infantry and the 1st Armored Divisions. In addition, on the left flank of the Eighth Army was the British X Corps with the Indian 10th Infantry Division and British 9th Armored Brigade. Also available was the 2nd New Zealand Infantry Division.

The Germans continued to improve the Gothic Line defenses during the last weeks of August. On the 10th Army front an Italo-German engineer force completed positions in a so-called advance zone (Vorfeld) of the Gothic Line located along high ridges between the north eastward flowing rivers Foglia and Metauro. Engineers worked on a coastal defense position, the Galla Placidia Line. The line extended in a westerly direction from the Adriatic town of Cattolica 10 miles northeast of Pesaro and then westward for 10 miles to the eastern boundary of the neutral city-state of San Marino. From its northwest corner the line continued seven miles northwest through the town of Sogliano to the Savio River three miles to the west and then along the Savio Valley northeast to the Adriatic 10 miles south of Ravenna.

Although the line was primarily intended as a defensive zone against an attack from the sea in some sectors, especially between Cattolica and the Savio River, it could also be used as a switch position for the Gothic Line. Even though a switch position designated Green Line II had been reconnoitered about eight to 10 miles behind the Gothic Line little work had been done on it.

Field Marshal Kesselring had orders to hold the Gothic Line indefinitely. Months of planning and preparation had gone into its construction, and veteran divisions were deployed within it. To their rear lay the rich agricultural and industrial region of northern Italy.

Facing the Eighth Army was the German Tenth Army's LXXVI Panzer Corps, defending from Pesaro to San Sisto. Initially there were just three divisions—the 1st Fallschirmjäger (Parachute) Division facing the Polish forces, the 71st Infantry Division, inland on the parachute division's right, and the 278th Infantry Division on the Corps' right flank,

which was in the process of relieving the 5th Gebirgsjäger (Mountain) Division. The Tenth Army had a further five divisions of the LI Mountain Corps covering 80 miles of front on the right of LXXVI Panzer Corps. This included the 715th, 334th, and 305th Infantry Divisions and the 114th Jaeger Division; the 44th Division was in corps reserve. Two more divisions—the 162nd Infantry Division (Turkoman) and the 98th Infantry Division (replaced by the 29th Panzergrenadier Division from August 25)—covered the Adriatic coast behind the LXXVI Panzer Corps.

In addition, Kesselring had in his Army Group Reserve the 90th Panzergrenadier Division and 26th Panzer Division, available from August 30. When the panzer corps fell back into the Gothic Line, it was to take control of Group Witthoef's 162nd Turkoman and 98th Divisions. The 162nd Division had been formed with POWs from the Caucasus and from Turkic land.

The Polish II Corps, which had been halted since August 10 along the Cesano River, prepared to resume its advance as a screen for the assembly of the Eighth Army's two assault corps. The corps was to cross the Metauro River and establish bridgeheads to be used as

Polish National Digital Archives



**ABOVE:** German panzergrenadiers, heavily armed with rifles, grenades, and anti-tank weapons, man positions in a trench along the Gothic Line near the Adriatic coast and await the inevitable attacks of the British Eighth Army in the summer of 1944. **OPPOSITE:** M4 Sherman medium tanks move into supporting positions with the infantrymen of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 46th Division near Coldazzo. The infantry and armor hit the German and Italian defenders of the Gothic Line on August 30, 1944.



Imperial War Museum

jump off points for the main attack.

For five days, beginning on August 18, the 3rd Carpathian and 5th Kresowa Divisions ground steadily forward in the kind of fighting that had come to characterize action on this part of the front. The Poles gradually pushed back the German 278th Infantry Division beyond the Metauro River, and by the evening of August 22 both divisions had drawn up to the river. But bridgeheads over the Metauro, to be exploited in the Eighth Army's main offensive, remained out of reach.

Troops of the Canadian I and British V Corps moved on August 24 into assembly areas behind the Poles. In hope of achieving surprise and making up for the lack of bridgeheads beyond the river, artillery was to remain silent until assaulting elements had crossed the river. The offensive was to begin an hour before midnight on August 25.

Plans called for both the Canadian I and British V Corps to pass through positions of the 5th Kresowa Division on the left wing of the Polish Corps. Once past the lines, the Polish division was to shift toward the coast and join the 3rd Carpathian Division in a drive on the port of Pesaro. The Polish troops would be pinched out by the advance of the Canadians toward Rimini, while the V Corps protected the Canadian left. Farther west, the British X Corps was to follow up the enemy withdrawal in the mountains.

Rather than withdraw into the Gothic Line's main zone of resistance, the commander of the LXXVI Panzer Corps had established his divisions along a series of ridges north of the Metauro. Once he had determined that the main British offensive had begun, he intended to fall back into the Gothic Line. Yet, the Germans ran the risk of being overwhelmed before they could retire.

The Metauro River and a succession of parallel ridges and rivers between the Metauro and the Romagna Plain posed obstacles to British operations. Thirty miles separated the Metauro from the Marecchia River, marking the southern edge of the Romagna Plain, the Eighth Army's objective.

When the Eighth Army attacked on schedule on August 25, both the Canadian I and British V Corps crossed the Metauro against little resistance. An hour later, as the troops prepared

to push out from their bridgeheads, the massed guns of 15 artillery battalions fired a covering barrage. By dawn on August 26, the divisions were well beyond the river and advancing steadily behind heavy artillery fire and aerial bombardment.

The Polish II Corps, along the coast, and the Canadian I Corps, on the Poles' left, advanced toward Pesaro where the coastal plain narrowed. It was planned that the Polish Corps, weakened by losses and lack of replacements, would go into army reserve and the area of the front on the coastal plain would become the responsibility of the Canadian Corps.

By nightfall on the 27th, the Allied divisions had cleared all enemy forces south of the Arzilla River and prepared to continue northwest to reach the Foglia River, last of the water barriers before the Gothic Line. German forces had been taken by surprise, and the paratroopers of the 1st Parachute Division were unable to halt the Allied advance.

Reacting to an August 24 report of an Allied landing in the Ravenna area, Kesselring canceled entrainment of the 3rd Panzer-grenadier Division for movement to France and ordered a transfer of the 26th Panzer



All: Polish National Digital Archives

**After breaking through the German defenses along the Gothic Line at the Italian town of Pesaro, infantrymen of the II Polish Corps ride atop the Sherman tanks of the Polish 1st Krechowicki Uhlan Regiment. The Gothic Line was the last major German defensive barrier in northern Italy, and the fighting along its Adriatic sector was vicious.**

Division from army group reserve to the Tenth Army's reserve. However, even after learning that the report was false, Kesselring allowed the shift of the panzer division to the eastern sector to continue. Despite the Allied attack in the area of the LXXVI Panzer Corps, Kesselring preferred to wait to see what might develop before reacting to it.

As additional reports of Allied advances along the Adriatic flank reached German headquarters on the 28th, Kesselring concluded that Alexander had launched his offensive. He authorized the withdrawal of the LXXVI Panzer Corps into the Gothic Line behind the Foglia River and enlisted the 26th Panzer Division from the army reserve to back up the Gothic Line defenses in that sector.

That night the Germans opposite the Eighth Army right wing began to fall back into the Gothic Line. Opposite the Eighth

Army's left wing, the LI Mountain Corps withdrew into the mountains.

Late on the 29th, across a 17-mile front, the British and the Canadians reached the crests of the last hills overlooking the valley of the Foglia, while the Polish Corps entered the southern outskirts of Pesaro. That night the last German troops south of the Foglia retired, withdrawing toward strongpoints around the towns of Montecalvo, Montegradolfo, and Tomba di Pesaro.

By August 30, the Canadian and British Corps had reached the German main defensive positions along the ridges on the far side of the Foglia River. During the night assault troops began crossing the Foglia to move at dawn against the Gothic Line.

At Montegradolfo, the British V Corps encountered troops of the 26th Panzer Division. Exposed to the weight of Allied firepower, the panzergrenadiers were unable to hold. Outflanking the eastern anchor of the Gothic Line at Pesaro, the Polish Corps forced the Germans to withdraw on September 2.

The Canadian Corps had taken Tomba di Pesaro to open a gap between the 26th Panzer and 1st Parachute Divisions and to pinch out the Polish II Corps against the coast during its advance. On the Canadian left the 46th Division of V Corps kept pace. General Leese ordered the British 1st Armored Division forward to join the V Corps and follow up the German withdrawal.

On September 2, the 29th Panzergrenadier Division was ordered to close the gap between the 1st Parachute and 26th Panzer Divisions. In turn, the corps reserve, the 98th Division, was ordered forward to help close a second gap that had developed between the 26th Panzer and 71st Divisions. Along the coastal sector held by the 1st Parachute Division, a blocking position was to be created using elements of the 162nd Turkoman Division with two artillery battalions in support.

After fighting for over a week the troops of the LXXVI Panzer Corps were close to exhaustion.

Kesselring intended to establish a new line along the Coriano Ridge, just before the Romagna Plain. When, on the afternoon of September 2, the Canadian Corps burst from a small bridgehead beyond the Conca River in the direction of the ridge, an imminent break-

through was expected. But mixed in with reports of progress were indications of growing resistance. To beat back a tank-led counterattack, the Canadians asked for assistance from the 46th Infantry Division, whose troops crossed the corps boundary to help drive the enemy from high ground overlooking the Canadians' left flank. In the center and on the left of the



**ABOVE:** An Italian fascist paratrooper, his Baretta MAB 38 submachine gun slung over his shoulder, talks with a German fallschirmjager during the fighting at the Gothic Line in northern Italy. These Axis troops faced the attacks of the Polish elements of the British Eighth Army. **BELOW:** Along the banks of Italy's Metauro River, a German PzKpfw. V Panther medium tank captured by the Polish 4th Armored "Scorpion" Regiment, 2nd Polish Armored Brigade, sits idle in August 1944. German and Italian forces offered stiff resistance to the British Eighth Army during the battles at the Gothic Line.



V Corps, the 56th and 4th Indian Divisions had been advancing slowly against the German positions in the Apennine foothills and were lagging behind.

Leese ordered the 1st Armored Division into action to seize what appeared to be the keystone of the German position—the village of Coriano.

After leaving its assembly area south of the Foglia, the armor found poor traction on the rain-soaked trails leading to the front, causing vehicles to break down and slowing others so that they did not reach the south bank of the Conca River until late on September 3. It wasn't until mid-morning the next day that the first tanks began passing through the area of the 46th Infantry Division.

The armor had to manage for itself as the 46th Division had not yet captured the planned jump-off points just over two miles short of the Coriano Ridge. The tankers had a five-hour fight just to reach their starting line.

At the same time, taking advantage of the Germans' lack of manpower the Canadians advanced the 1st Infantry and 5th Armored Divisions, disrupting the German defenses and by September 3 had advanced 15 miles to a second defensive line running from the coast to near Riccione. The Allies were close to breaking through to Rimini and the Romagna Plain; however, the LXXVI Panzer Corps withdrew in good order behind the line of the Conca River. Fierce resistance from the Corps' 1st Parachute Division supported by intense artillery fire provided by the 26th Panzer Division brought the advance to a crawl.

By nightfall the assault had bogged down a mile short of the Coriano Ridge, while fire from the ridge also brought troops of the Canadian I Corps to a halt. The delays had given the Germans time to bring up tanks and assault guns, and the moment when a breakthrough might have been achieved had passed.

Three more days of effort to gain the ridge failed as the 29th Panzergrenadier Division was committed into the gap between the 1st Parachute and 26th Panzer Divisions.

A week of heavy rains brought flash floods that washed out tactical bridges along inland roads, leaving only the coastal highway for supporting troops beyond the Foglia River.



Imperial War Museum

Until the flooding receded, operations of the Eighth Army were brought to a near standstill.

The first battle for Coriano commenced as the Royal Canadian Regiment attacked Riccione, while elements of the 11th Infantry Brigade, 5th Canadian Armored Division, supported by tanks of the British 1st Armored Division, attacked the village of Besanigo, southwest of Riccione. After a trek of more than 50 hours, exhausted tank crews of the 2nd Armored Brigade, 1st Armored Division, were ordered to attack the Coriano ridge but were delayed until sunset on September 4. Fighting extended from Coriano to Croce, exacting a heavy toll. At the end of the first day only 79 tanks out of 156 Shermans deployed (three battalions) were still fit for battle. The fighting continued for two days with gruesome losses on both sides along the front from Riccione to San Savino. As the first battle of Coriano came to an end, the Germans had managed to hold back the Eighth Army.

Leese decided to outflank the Coriano ridge positions by driving west toward the towns of Croce and Gemmano to reach the Maranon Valley, which curved behind the Coriano positions to the coast some two

**ABOVE:** M4 Sherman medium tanks of the 1st Canadian Armored Division stir up clouds of dust as they rumble forward during the advance toward the Germans' Gothic Line defenses in August 1944. Although the Gothic Line was breached, the German Tenth Army remained a potent fighting force. **OPPOSITE:** German soldiers wade across a river in Italy as they pull back to new defenses after the Gothic Line was breached. German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring coordinated a series of tactical withdrawals to new positions in the face of the Eighth Army advance.

miles north of Riccione.

As the pressure imposed by the Canadian attack had put the LXXVI Panzer Corps in a crisis, the Germans considered withdrawing 10-15 miles to the designated "Yellow Line" along the Marecchia River north of Rimini. Such a decision could have meant an open road to the Romagna Plain, from Bologna to Ravenna, for the Canadians. But the German command decided to make a stand at Gemmano (the action later referred to as "Cassino of the Adriatic").

As the first battle of Coriano neared an end, the 46th Division bogged down on the hills around San Clemente with the 56th Division covering its left flank. On September 4, the 167th Brigade, 56th Division, captured Montefiore Conca and launched a reconnaissance to the slopes of Gemmano.

During the night of September 4, the 56th Division moved toward Croce with the 167th and 168th Brigades supported by tanks of the 7th Armored Brigade. The sector was defended by the German 290th Infantry Regiment, 98th Division, and the 100th Gebirgsjäger Regiment.

Between September 4 and 13, the 56th Division and then the 46th Division were engaged in heavy fighting in the vicinity of Gemmano. The battle for Gemmano was one of the bitterest fights of the Italian campaign. Four attacks were necessary to push the German defenders out of their positions. The 100th Gebirgsjäger Regiment's casualties were estimated at more than 2,400. British losses for the units that took part in the action averaged 100 to 150 for each battalion.

While fighting continued at Gemmano, Leese decided it was time for a second attack on Coriano, still held by the Germans after stopping the first assault on September 5. In a meeting with the commanders of the British V Corps and Canadian I Corps, it was decided that Cori-

ano should be the target for the 5th Canadian Armored Division while San Clemente was to be taken by the British 1st Armored Division.

After a bombardment by 700 pieces of artillery as well as bomber strikes, the two divisions launched their attacks on the night of September 12 and two days later the fight for Coriano was over.

In the meantime, to the north on the other side of the Conca Valley a similarly bloody engagement was being fought at Croce. The German 98th Division held its positions with great tenacity. It took five days of constant fighting, often house-to-house and hand-to-hand before the British 56th Division captured Croce.

Also on September 14, the remnants of the German forces, near collapse, were assisted by a change in the weather. Several days of heavy rains made rivers and streams impassible to heavy equipment and halted Allied air support operations. Moreover, the Indian 4th Infantry Division was halted by artillery fire on the Ripabianca Ridge. This allowed the Germans to reorganize and restore some fighting capability as they established positions along the Maranon River running from San Marino to Riccione.

Meanwhile, with the towns of Croce and Montescudo secured, the left wing of the Eighth Army advanced to the Maranon River and the frontier of tiny San Marino. The Germans had occupied neutral San Marino over a week earlier to take advantage of the heights on which the city-state stood. By September 19, the city was isolated and fell to the Allies at relatively little cost. Three miles beyond San Marino lay the Marecchia Valley running across the Eighth Army line of advance to the coast at Rimini.

On the right on September 20, the Canadian I Corps broke through the German positions along the Ausa River, opening the way to the Lombardy Plain. The following day the Corps' 3rd Greek Mountain Brigade and the New Zealand Motor Battalion entered Rimini as the Germans withdrew from their positions on the Rimini Line behind the Ausa to new positions along the banks of the Marecchia.

Kesselring's defense had won enough time for the onset of the autumn rains. Progress for the Eighth Army became extremely slow as heavy rains turned roads into quagmires, creating a logistics nightmare. The plains became swamps as the Eighth Army found itself confronted

by a succession of swollen streams running across its line of advance. These conditions prevented Eighth Army's armor from exploiting any breakthrough, and the infantry of the British V Corps and Canadian I Corps, joined by the 2nd New Zealand Division, had to grind their way forward while the Germans withdrew beyond the Marecchia to the Uso, a few miles beyond Rimini. Positions on the Uso were forced on September 26, Eighth Army reaching the next river, the Fiumicino, on September 29. Four days of heavy rain forced a halt—V Corps being fought out and requiring major reorganization.

Since the start of Operation Olive, Eighth Army had suffered 14,000 casualties. As a result, battalions were reduced from four to three rifle companies. The LXXVI Panzer Corps had suffered an estimated 16,000 casualties. Though the Eighth Army's offensive had penetrated the Gothic Line, it had failed in its mission to destroy the German Tenth Army or break through to the Lombardy Plain. The Allies would be held on this line until the following spring. □

---

*Author Allyn Vannoy has written extensively on a variety of topics related to World War II. He resides in Hillsboro, Oregon.*





**HOLLYWOOD DELIVERS**

# **THE STORY OF THE 6888th BATTALION**

Director Tyler Perry collaborated with *WWII History* magazine's Kevin Hymel to tell the story of the all-Black Women's Army Corps Postal Directory Battalion overseas in World War II. **BY D.C. MONTANA**



**W**hen Hollywood's Tyler Perry heard a story about the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the U.S. Army's only all-female, all-Black unit of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) to go overseas in World War II, he knew he had to make a movie about it.

The story of the 6888th is one of courage, bravery and perseverance. The unit consisted of approximately 850 officers and enlisted women, who served in England clearing a backlog of undelivered mail that filled several warehouses to the brim. By February of 1945, D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge had already been fought, but as American soldiers fought their way into Germany, many were not receiving letters from home. The 6888th's mission was vital to the war effort in Europe.

Some soldiers had not received mail in more than eight months. Most of the mail could not be delivered because men had been either transferred to other units, been sent to the hospital, or had been killed. Morale was low, which could affect everything from physical and mental health, to a soldier's ability to focus during combat missions or high-pressure situations. Soldiers needed to hear from home. The importance of this mission was not lost on the women of the 6888.

After combat training at Fort Oglethorpe

in Georgia, the women crossed the Atlantic Ocean and reported for duty to Birmingham, England, on February 12, 1945. They were given six months to complete the daunting task of sorting and sending the backlogs of mail. The women of the 6888th worked in an unheated warehouse with blacked-out windows where rats scurried through countless towering stacks of unopened envelopes and packages, some of which contained food that had long since spoiled.

Dedicated to their mission, and with a sense of drive and purpose, the women developed a robust system to individually sort millions of letters and packages by creating a rotating schedule that operated in three, eight-hour shifts, twenty four hours per day, seven days a week. They devoted their time to tracking down soldiers and their locations.

The unit's assigned living quarters had been bombed prior to their arrival. As a result, the women took up residence in what had been the King Edwards Boys School before the war. As a self-contained unit, the 6888th were responsible for creating their own organizational structure, which comprised a headquarters and four postal directory companies. They also established a mess hall, a motor pool, and their own supply network—along with publishing a newsletter and establishing intramural



Kerry Washington stars as Major Charity Adams in *The Six Triple Eight*, the new movie by Tyler Perry which tells the story of the only all-Black, all-female Women's Army Corps unit to serve overseas in World War II. INSET: The women soldiers of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion parade through the streets of Rouen, France. The women broke backlogs of mail in England and France during the end of the war in Europe.



All: National Archives

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: U.S. Army Major Charity Adams inspects the soldiers of the 6888th after their arrival in Birmingham, England, on February 15, 1945; Two African-American Women's Army Corps soldiers prepare for a locker box inspection at Fort Des Moines, Iowa; Lena King (left) and Romay Davis (right).**

families of active-duty soldiers, as well as actors, athletes and veterans who supported the Army's mission in the Global War on Terror.

"My coworker Jean Davis approached me and said, 'I'd like us to do something about this unit, the 6888th,' and I had no idea what it was until she explained it to me," said Hymel.

After some initial research, he contacted three veterans from the unit, Mary Ragland, Gladys Shuster Carer, and Alice Dixon. Ragland, who enlisted in the Army after high school, had

sports teams to increase their own morale.

Although the women were given six months to accomplish their mission, they surprised their critics by completing the job in just 90 days. In three months, the 6888th had sorted and redirected an estimated 18 million parcels, all while operating in harsh and dangerous conditions.

Although the women were incredibly successful, and even went on to sort mail in France once the war ended, their homecoming was not widely recognized or celebrated. Instead, their historical feat went largely unnoticed, until nearly 65 years later in the early 2000's.

Military historian Kevin Hymel first learned of the 6888th in 2008, while working for the U.S. Army's Freedom Team Salute, a program that recognized parents, spouses and

joined after seeing a recruiting advertisement that offered Black women an opportunity to serve their country overseas.

"I traveled to her place in D.C. and did a number of interviews with her. She really gave me the bulk of the history on the 6888th. She had been a clerk and still had a lot of the paperwork," Hymel said. He then traveled to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, to research further but was surprised to discover there were no records of the unit. "I had seen this before," Hymel explained. "The records for many Black units from World War II have surprisingly disappeared."

Freedom Team Salute thanked each of the three soldiers of the 6888th in a ceremony held at Arlington National Cemetery in February 2009. Hymel published his story about the unit in the Army Historical Foundation publication, *On Point*. His job done, Hymel went on to write other articles about Americans and their battles in World War II.

In 2018, nearly a decade after writing the original story, Hymel learned that the Army planned to build a monument dedicated to the women of the 6888th at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He called Carlton Philpot, a retired Navy veteran spearheading the effort. Philpot mentioned that he had been in contact with three additional veterans of the 6888th, and Hymel asked to interview one of them to write a story to coincide with the monument's ded-

ication. Philpot connected him to 95-year-old Lena King, whose story became the inspiration for the upcoming film, *The Six Triple Eight*.

“I had such a blast talking to her,” Hymel said. “Normally I do two, maybe three interviews with a veteran to write their story, but with Lena, it was about 10 phone calls, and I enjoyed every one.” King was full of life, making her own meals and dancing on Saturday nights, and attending church every Sunday. Hymel recalled her joyous demeanor, sharp mind, and impressive recall from her time in the military. However, not all her memories were positive ones. King had endured ridicule, grief, racism, and even feared for her life on several occasions.

Then known by her maiden name Lena Derriecott, King was 18 when she enlisted in the

Bob Mahoney/Perry Well Films 2/Courtesy of Netflix



Kevin M. Hymel



**ABOVE:** Kevin Hymel (right) who wrote the article the movie was based on, served as a technical advisor on the set of *The Six Triple Eight*. Tyler Perry (center) wrote, produced, and directed the movie, Peter Guber (second from left) served as the executive producer, while Keri Selig (left) and Carlota Espinosa (right) served as producers on the film. **TOP:** From left are Pepi Sonuga, Ebony Obsidian and Sarah Jeffery in *The Six Triple Eight*. **INSET:** The Women's Army Corps went through basic training, including the use of gas masks.

U.S. Army upon graduating from Germantown High School, north of Philadelphia. She was inspired to serve her country to honor her childhood friend, Abram David, a Jewish boy who joined the Army Air Forces and had died on his first combat mission.

Hymel knew he had to do her story justice. “I was waiting for her to tell me how pivotal her time in the 6888th was, or how it had changed her in some way, but for many of the ladies of the 6888th, once they got home, they moved on with their lives and it was just forgotten,” he said. “She was surprised that somebody was calling her to talk about these two specific years of her life.” Hymel’s story was published in the February 2019 edition of *WWII History* magazine.

Not long after the story was published, Carl Gnam, Editorial Director of *WWII History*, put Hymel in touch with Carlota Espinosa, a Hollywood producer. “Carlota had con-



tacted me about another story we had published in the magazine, and when I first read Kevin’s interview with Lena, I knew this was a story Carlota should produce,” Gnam said. “Kevin and I got Carlota on the phone, and after he told her the story of Lena and the 6888th, she quickly agreed.”

Upon reading, Carlota Espinosa sent Hymel’s article to her friend/producer, Keri Selig, who then brought Peter Guber and his Mandalay Pictures on board. They developed a sizzle reel that upon its completion, Selig sent to her long-time friend and film producer, Nicole Avant, who immediately connected with Mrs. King’s remarkable story. Right away Avant knew the perfect person to bring this to the screen and presented the pro-



**ABOVE:** From left are writer/director/producer, Tyler Perry; executive producer/actress, Kerry Washington; and producer Nicole Avant, on the set of *The Six Triple Eight*. **BELOW:** Gregg Sulkin (left) plays Abran David and Ebony Obsidian plays Lena King in *The Six Triple Eight*.



Bob Mahoney/Perry Well Films 2/Courtesy of Netflix

ject to Tyler Perry, who within a day, was on a plane to visit Mrs. King in her home in Las Vegas. After that meeting, Perry knew he needed to tell this story and wrote the script in a matter of weeks.

“I didn’t know what to expect when I walked in,” Perry said, “and then this woman comes down the stairs with her jewelry and her clothes, her lipstick, her hair all done perfectly.” They sat together and King told her story. “I was beyond impressed with her memory,” he said, “but really what she gave me in every moment was the dignity and regalness that she carried.”

After a three-hour discussion with King,

Perry knew how to tell the story. “I left with a whole story and script in my head,” Perry said. “What was important to me was that factually, we got it right.”

At first, Hymel did not believe it. No one had ever wanted to make a movie out of one of his articles, especially not someone of the stature of Perry. But soon, Perry called Hymel and started asking him questions about the unit as he organized his ideas on how to tell the story on the big screen.

Thus began a years-long relationship devoted to producing a historically accurate movie about the 6888th. Perry worked hard to understand the world of the 1940s and the experience of Black women at the time. For Perry, producing a World War II-era movie was unlike any other film he had done before, but he felt pulled to share this story with the world.

“There’s something about that time period, the simplicity of it, the horror of it, the beauty of it, the pain of it, that was very intriguing to me,” he said. “It’s a very storied part of our history, and to be able to add stories that hadn’t been told to it was really something that I thought was a profound opportunity.”

Perry leaned on his colleagues and predecessors for research, “To get it right, I did have to watch a lot of World War II movies and documentaries.” For historical accuracy, Perry relied on Hymel’s vast knowledge of WWII and American military history.

Before, during and even after filming *The Six Triple Eight* the pair routinely spoke, sometimes almost daily, to make the movie as authentic as possible.

Hymel provided Perry with books and anecdotes he had gathered from interviewing countless WWII veterans, including Romay Davis and Delores Ruddock from the 6888th. Romay had also been the subject of a story by Hymel published in *WWII History* magazine in 2021. He put together a collection of photos he found of the WAC in training, so Perry and his production crew could get a visual sense of the uniforms and equipment that were used at the time.

The photos, many published in *WWII History*, depicted rows of Black women, standing at attention, wearing skirts and matching service caps. One photo showed three women donning gas masks during basic training, and another showed two preparing for a Saturday morning inspection in their barracks, a neatly packed suitcase between them. It was this knowledge, along with years of studying and conversing with veterans and service members, that made Hymel a historical asset to the production of *The Six Triple Eight*.

Central to the movie and to the unit, was Major Charity Adams, played by Kerry Washington. Adams was the first African-American woman to become an officer and first serve overseas in WWII. She was also the highest ranking African-American woman in the Army at the end of the war. Adams was known among peers for boldly fighting discrimination, advocating for desegregation in the Army, and holding her soldiers to impeccably high standards. Washington, also an executive producer for the film, prioritized learning as much as she could about the role.

“I love working with an actor [like Washington] who is going to be that involved and not just show up and say the lines,” Perry said, “but come in and create with me as a director and become the character in the moment. And that’s what she is.”

He recalled one of the most defining moments he had while working on the film. He was on set with Washington shortly before the start of filming, and the two received a knock on the dressing room door. A crew member then brought a trunk into the room, with the name “Charity Adams” painted in bold letters on the side.

“It was her original trunk, with her uniform, and letters and pictures in it,” said Perry. “Somehow, after all those years, it ended up at my feet, at the studio as we’re working on this movie. That’s how I know these women really wanted this story to be told.”

Perry also traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, to visit Romey Davis, the oldest surviving member of the 6888th. Davis, the daughter of a U.S. Navy rigger, and a middle child surrounded by her five brothers, joined the WAC in 1943. She was assigned to the motor pool, where she became a mechanic as well as a driver. Davis volunteered for an overseas assignment, and joined the 6888th as Charity Adams’s driver. “It’s good to have living witnesses, and then



BobMahoney/Perry Well Films 2/Courtesy of Netflix

be able to fact check their stories with Kevin. These women are so sharp,” Perry said. Davis passed away in June 2024 at the age of 104.

To help make the movie, Perry hired Hymel as a military history technical advisor. Before arriving on set in Atlanta, Georgia, Hymel received a phone call from Charity Adams’s son, Stanley Early III, who provided valuable insight into his mother’s character and personality. “He told me that Charity Adams always wore yellow gloves, because she wanted to be distinct from everyone else,” Hymel said.

Although filming was already in progress, Hymel mentioned that fact to Kerry Washington on the set. She called for the person in charge of wardrobe and requested yellow gloves. Washington wanted to get the story right.

With hundreds of extras playing members of the 6888th and combat soldiers, Perry found himself in a whole new world of movie making. “I have never, in my life, worked with so many people at once,” he said. “It was challenging moving that many people in one direction.”

He credited choreographer Debbie Allen for ensuring military precision and accuracy throughout the movie, particularly related to scenes with hundreds of women marching, or participating in intricate dance numbers. “The biggest thing for me was the marching,” Perry said. “It had to be completely right. When I looked at video footage of Charity marching with the women, they were in lockstep. I knew it had to be perfect.”

For Hymel, seeing stories he had been told throughout his interviews with the women of the 6888th make it onto the big screen gave him a sense of fulfillment. “The ladies of the 6888th went into a movie theater, and the white soldiers tried to make them sit somewhere else, but a Black woman officer confronted them,” Hymel said. “That was a specific story Lena told me, so I was very happy to see that scene in the film.”

Another historical feat took place in the midst of filming—on March 14, 2022, President

**Kerry Washington, as Major Charity Adams, inspects the work of her women soldiers as they try to clear the backlog of U.S. Army mail in Birmingham, England, in the new Netflix film, *The Six Triple Eight*.**

Joe Biden signed the Six Triple Eight Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2021 into Public Law 117-97. The 855 members of the 6888th were awarded for their actions during WWII. King was given her Congressional Gold Medal in a special ceremony held at her church in Las Vegas, with Perry and Hymel attending. “For everything we have been building towards for this movie, that ceremony was just such a great moment in itself,” Hymel said. Perry agreed and said he wished every veteran could be honored in that way.

The movie *The Six Triple Eight* is not only an opportunity to share an untold story with the public, it’s also a chance to educate the world on a little known, but integral, chapter of United States history. “I think the timing of it was really important and impeccable,

*Continued on page 98*

# MEDICS:

## Battlefield Mercy

BY ALLYN VANNOY

Without weapons, U.S. Army medics willingly risked their lives treating the wounded on the battlefield.

**M**en of the Medical Detachment of the 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry Regiment, 70th Infantry Division, arrived in France in December 1944, and within days found themselves in action in Alsace-Lorraine as the unit was sent to help blunt the German offensive—Operation Nordwind.

The 70th Infantry Division was formed and trained at Camp Adair near Corvallis, Oregon, with Mount Hood visible in the distance in the Cascades. The mountain would become a symbol in the infantryman's shoulder patch, the only such instance of a geographic feature to be so immortalized. The unit would prove to be as rugged as the mountain.

Born March 26, 1924, to Ed and Josephine, Vernon Staley was the oldest of five children. After graduating from high school in Prineville, Oregon, in May 1943, he was called up and inducted into the Army. After a short stay at Fort Lewis, Washington, he was sent to Camp Adair where he took basic training and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry Regiment. Even as the division was forming and getting organized, it was heavily drawn on for replacements for other units that were already seeing action. A new infusion of personnel resulted in Staley having to undergo basic training a second time.

Then, in February 1944, Staley and a number of others were sent to Denver, Colorado, for three months of medical technician training. In July, the division was shipped to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for combat field training. That's where Staley received his first experience as a medic. A soldier had a rifle grenade on the end of his M1, but used a live round rather than the special cartridge for the grenade launcher, causing the grenade to explode and strike several men. Staley and several other medics were nearby when there was a call of "Medic!" So, Staley and the others got to work on actual wounds.

From Fort Leonard Wood the division traveled to Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts, in preparation for overseas deployment. Due to a shipping shortage, only the division's infantry regiments made the initial Atlantic crossing aboard a converted ocean liner, the SS *Mariposa*; support units such as artillery, engineers were to follow weeks later.





A group of medics around a seriously wounded soldier perform an emergency foot amputation. Medics saved many lives on and near the battlefield during World War II.

The troops disembarked at Marseille, France, on December 10, and were trucked to a nearby cantonment.

In charge of Staley's medical detachment was First Lieutenant Joseph Clifford, MC (Medical Corps), 2nd Battalion Surgeon, 1st Lt. Forrest J. Beard, assistant battalion surgeon, and Staff Sergeant Richard E. Strassburger, section leader.

On December 21, the GI's of the 70th Division left their cantonment on a troop train for a three-day journey to Haguenau, not far from the French-German border, arriving on Christmas Eve.

As they disembarked from the train, the sound of distant artillery fire provided a realization that they were now close to the front. An eight-mile march with full field packs took them through the villages of Kaltenhouse and Oberhoffen-sur-Moder. By the light of a quarter moon they passed signs reading, "Mines cleared in ditches," and saw their first corpse, a dead German lying in a ditch along the road.

The infantry regiments of the division were formed into Task Force Herren under assistant division commander, Gen. Thomas Herren.

By the time they reached the outskirts of the village of Bischwiller it was 2 a.m. on Christmas morning. They were bivouacked in an old factory building. Not yet accustomed to the sounds of war, their first night was interrupted by the occasional burst of ack-ack from a nearby anti-aircraft battery.

On December 27, another night march brought them to the village of Drusenheim, where they set up positions overlooking the Rhine River. Staley and the other medics established an aid station in an old tavern. Its first casualty, Private Victor N. Estrella, How Company, the battalion's weapons company, came in the early hours of December 28.

Under artillery fire, Estrella had jumped into his foxhole and landed on his bayonet. He had received first echelon medical treatment for the deep penetrating wound in his buttock from Tech/3 Leonard Kloaner.

In the field, the wounded were first given aid by his comrades or medics. The injured would then be taken to an aid station for immediate treatment and stabilization, carried by litter bearers to a collecting station, then taken by ambulance to a clearing station.

Both: National Archives



**ABOVE:** M4 Sherman medium tanks of the 781st Tank Battalion, fighting along with the 274th Infantry Regiment, move back into the town of Wingen, Germany, on January 7, 1945, after it has been retaken from the Germans. The medical detachment of 2nd Battalion has already set up an aid station nearby to deal with heavy casualties. **OPPOSITE:** Wrapped in blankets and temporarily placed in a shell hole for cover, these G.I.s of the 274th Infantry Regiment await treatment at an aid station near the front lines after being wounded in the fight with SS troops at Wingen, Germany.

At the clearing station casualties were sorted according to the severity of their injuries; treatment administered to reduce suffering and prevent permanent disability; temporary care provided for more severe cases until they could be moved to an evacuation hospital.

An infantry regiment's medical battalion comprised a headquarters detachment, three collection companies and a clearing company. Each collection company included a platoon of medics—with an authorized strength of two officers and nine enlisted men, sufficient to provide three medics per rifle company or one to each platoon. The collection company also had a litter platoon staffed by one officer and 43 enlisted men divided into nine four-man litter teams.

Because they'd been on the move, Christmas dinner was delayed until the 29th. The turkey and cranberry sauce, along with the usual trimmings was a welcome change from the K-rations and C-rations they'd been surviving on.

After a few uneventful days, they were told on January 3 to prepare to move and boarded trucks at 2 a.m. in blackout conditions. There was so much traffic on the narrow, snow-covered roads that it took them 10 hours—exposed to winter winds in open trucks—to go 40 miles. They reached the village of Puberg, deep in forested hills close to the German border, about 11 a.m. on January 4. The battalion was ordered to prepare to move on to the village of Wingen-sur-Moder, which was held by elite troops of the German 12th SS Mountain Regiment, 6th SS Mountain Division.

On January 5, the 2nd Battalion was directed to prepare positions overlooking Wingen. That evening the battalion received further orders directing them to capture the village. German forces not only held the village, but also dominated terrain above it.

Staley's medical detachment set up their aid station in Puberg—illuminated at night by



only a single lantern and a few candles.

The battalion's assault on the village began at dawn on January 6, requiring the GIs to cross open ground. The attack continued throughout the day against intense enemy fire, causing heavy casualties. But by late afternoon half the village was in American hands.

During the dawn attack, Fox Company, after sustaining heavy casualties, was under intense enemy fire and unable to withdraw. When four litter bearers were hit attempting to evacuate the wounded across 300 yards of open ground the medical detachment's litter squad became disorganized. When Clifford was apprised of the situation, he left the rear aid station and set up an advance aid station and collecting point. Then the detachment commander led a litter squad of Privates First Class Branscum, Porter, Carter, Earhart, and Rybarczyk, into the town while under heavy machine gun fire.

The detachment's first casualty was Private Donald Brown. Attached to the 2nd Platoon, George Company, he was moving to render aid to a wounded sergeant when he was hit in the arm by machine-gun fire. Brown was able to reach the sergeant and was about to give him morphine when he discovered the man was dead. Brown then crawled to a covered position until litter bearers could reach him and evacuate him to the aid station in Puberg.

About 11 a.m., Tech/5 Theodore Fleck, aid man attached to the 3rd Platoon of Fox Company, was hit in the left shoulder by a sniper while treating a PFC Scott who had been hit in the jugular. Unable to stop the bleeding, Fleck realized the wound was fatal. Wounded and numb from the cold, Fleck managed to render aid to a number of other casualties before making his way to a collecting point to be evacuated to the rear by litter bearers.

While evacuating casualties under heavy mortar and machine-gun fire, PFCs Eddie E.

Porter and Wayne Shook were hit by sniper fire—Porter in the leg and Shook in the hand. They continued to work until they were forced to evacuate to the collecting company. Porter would recover from his wounds and return to the unit on March 8.

Following the medical detachment's losses, replacements were transferred from the Regimental Aid Station. Three were assigned as litter bearers—PFCs Paul L. Stallsmith and Milford Johnson and Private Flores; along with Tech/5 Max Freeman, a medical technician. Shortly after their arrival, Pvt. Flores was on his first assignment, with Pvt. Peter Kotsovolos, when their jeep hit a mine on the outskirts of Wingen—injuring the legs of both men.

During the assault on the village, Tech/5 Donald Conway was attached to Fox Company, which spent the night in a house it had occupied after a fierce fire-fight. Tanks with a U.S. assault force approaching Wingen—unaware that the house was occupied by fel-



low GIs—appeared to be preparing to open fire on the building when Conway ran out into the open. Amid enemy machine-gun fire, he was able to signal the tankers, who held their fire.

PFC George Brush, who was attached to the 2nd Platoon of George Company, was rendering aid to a fallen comrade when he was hit three times by sniper fire, and wounded again when a phosphorus grenade exploded nearby. Taking cover behind a wall with the soldier he was treating, he removed his burning coat, and returned to providing aid. But when another bullet mortally wounded his patient, Brush then moved on to provide aid to other wounded men.

At dusk, the German defenders counter-attacked ferociously and succeeded in isolating units of the 2nd Battalion. The battalion fought tenaciously, forcing the Germans to begin withdrawing during the night. The next day, the 2nd Battalion drove the remaining Germans from the village, but the battle had cost them some 130 casualties.

PFC Ray Waterhouse, a member of the medical detachment, a CPA in civilian life and a Seventh-Day Adventist, recalled that “bitter

experience took precedent over the events of the past for the actual terrifying sight of battle casualties with torn broken limbs, deep penetrating chest wounds and head wounds came pouring into our aid station, on blood soaked litters. The ‘battle green’ aid station group, now active in the administering of blood plasma soon became veterans in the first echelon of medical care a few yards behind the front.” Waterhouse also pointed out, “our Red Crosses painted across our helmets proved to be only an excellent target for the SS troopers.”

For its actions at Wingen, the 2nd Battalion, 274th Infantry, received a Presidential Unit Citation. Also, for their personal actions at Wingen, Bronze Stars were awarded to Captain Clifford and PFC Thomas J. Maher, who had rendered aid to a wounded soldier under heavy fire, and saved the lives of many others.

Like the others in the detachment, Staley saw his first action at Wingen while he was attached to Fox Company. Later, there was an opening for an aid man in H Company and Staley campaigned hard to get the assignment because “H Company had 21 jeeps—they rode, not walked.” With H Company, he was assigned to the 2nd Platoon machine gunners.

The morning after Wingen was secured, the aid detachment moved to set up an advance aid station in the nearby town of Zittersheim. There, they treated a number of captured German prisoners, finding them half starved and some with gangrenous wounds. They were soon ordered to move again, this time back to Puberg. This was also a short stay, moving once again on January 8, this time to the town of Oberbronn, arriving after a long truck ride in freezing temperatures.

During January 8-10, the 274th Regiment was shifted into defensive positions in the area of the towns of Philippsbourg-Dambach, with the 2nd Battalion on the right flank of the regiment, taking up positions in former Maginot Line bunkers.

After arriving in Oberbronn, well back off the line, they were told that they would be in reserve for a few days, the medics began setting up in an old Catholic hospital and convent. But by January 10, they were ordered to Niederbronn(-les-Bains), a short distance away, and set up their aid station in a bomb-damaged house. Combat units had established positions

to the northeast of the town in a rough, forested area. Realizing the possible difficulties in evacuating wounded over such terrain it was necessary to organize a forward aid station on a knoll in the mountain-like hills. The aid station was set up in a dugout, just behind the forward positions of the rifle companies. There, life-saving plasma was kept heated at body temperature over a small burner as other medical supplies were made ready for use.

The losses at Wingen left the medical section under strength, so four medical technicians volunteered to man the aid station dugouts. The rifle companies were in foxholes and pillboxes overlooking the Siegfried Line. The terrain was not suitable for ambulances, so any casualties would have to be transported by jeep over winding trails.

There was a steady 24-hour pounding of artillery. Shells frequently landed close to the aid station dugout, sometimes the shell fragments could be heard tearing through the nearby trees.

Late in the afternoon, PFC Johnson, a replacement from the Regimental Aid Station, was struck in the leg by shell fragments from a tree burst, but he carried on helping with the evacuation of several casualties.

Given the treacherous terrain and recent heavy snowfall, an attack on the battalion was not expected, but the heavy artillery fire falling on the company front meant a continued

Both: National Archives



**ABOVE:** During winter fighting, medics gingerly load a seriously wounded soldier aboard a vehicle for evacuation from a frontline aid station. The aid stations were often packed with wounded men, and the lives of many in serious condition were saved due to the close proximity of the facilities to the battlefield. **OPPOSITE:** Medical personnel arrive at an aid station with wounded aboard. During the harsh winter months, Jeeps were often used to transport wounded men due to wintry road conditions. This photo was taken in January 1945.

stream of casualties to be treated.

On the night of January 16, aid station personnel attached to Fox Company, went to evacuate a casualty from one of the Maginot Line pillboxes. “We were close to the town of Dambach,” Staley recalled. “We got a call one night that there was a wounded GI in one of the bunkers. So, we took a litter and went out—there was snow and ice. We finally got to the bunker. The guy had shot himself through the foot. We thought, ‘We’re not carrying him back over that ice and snow—he can walk.’ We put a compress on him, got him patched up, and made him walk back. We put him in a jeep and took him to the aid station. Doc Clifford worked that guy over, saying that that was the worst place (the middle of his foot) he could have shot himself, that it would bother him the rest of his life. The soldier said it was an accident. But Clifford (was angry and) said it wasn’t. Normally he (Clifford) wasn’t that tough.”

During the effort to recover the wounded soldier, no one had bothered to give the medics the password. Staley said, “We got down there (near the forward positions) and they (the sentries) said ‘Halt! What’s the password?’ We replied, ‘We’re medics, they never tell us.’ Again, ‘What’s the password?’ And you could hear the M1’s safety clicking off.” After convincing the sentries that they had come down to collect a wounded man they were allowed to pass.

As they approached the seventh day in their position, the cold and lack of sleep due to the continued artillery and mortar shelling was wearing on the medics. The vicious fighting in frigid weather near Niederbronn had reduced rifle companies to an average of 50-percent of authorized strength.

The aid station at Niederbronn was in an old hotel. There they were provided a shower under an open-air tent—the first since leaving Marseille. By 6 p.m. they were once again on the move in open trucks.

“The snow that started to fall earlier in the evening turned to slush (sleet) and after traveling a good part of the night, the slush began to turn to ice, and our overcoats froze so stiff we could hardly move our arms to keep warm,” Waterhouse recalled. “We traveled all night, though it involved only a few miles,

it was over winding trails, and our guides were cautiously watching the roads for any of the enemy that might ambush our troops.”

They arrived at Obersoultzbach, just 13 miles southwest of Niederbronn, early on January 21. A day later they moved near Wingen, where they had seen action earlier in the month. January 23 brought yet another move—a truck convoy carried them to Wimmenau, about 13 miles to the north.

While at Wimmenau two aid stations were set up in the forest. The forward aid station was set up in a large dugout near the front and the rear was in a tent. The forward aid station was manned by Lt. Beard, Sergeant Strassburger, Corporal (Breezy) Brezacek, Tech/5 Wiggins, and Tech/5 Freeman. The rear station was manned by Lt. Clifford, Tech/3 Leonard Klosner, Tech/3 Robert Cady, Corporal Jonte, and PFC Waterhouse.

After five days in the Wimmenau positions, they were alerted of another move on January 29. This took them to the town of Adamsweiler, where they paused just long enough to have a meal of cold K-rations, and then continued on to the town of Enchenberg—a distance of some 19 miles over mountain roads. There, they had a chance to talk with other aid men who shared their experiences. What they learned was not encouraging—they had completely turned over their medical units, replacing all their personnel, in the few months that their unit had been in combat.

Over the next two days the unit re-organized their aid station and litter bearers. They were able to rest and write letters home. Replacements arrived from the “reple-depple” (replacement depot) in England. This included PFC John Jest. He was in his second year of overseas duty, but had not been assigned to a combat unit before. Tech/5 Fleck, wounded at Wingen, rejoined the unit here.

On February 9, the unit moved again as the battalion’s infantry companies were placed in reserve, taking them to the town of Dehlingen, about 18 miles to the southwest.

On February 14, three more replacements arrived—Privates Daniel W. Hoover, James McBride, and George A. Pochepka. Replacements were being drawn from wherever they

could be found, these latest from army hospitals in Paris. They were assigned to the litter bearer group. They were considered to have sufficient medical experience and well qualified to carry out their duties. As replacements, they were sent with a squad experienced in dodging artillery and mortar shells.

It was at this time that the support units of the 70th Division finally arrived and the 274th Infantry rejoined its division, having been attached to the 45th Infantry Division.

Rumors were circulating that the 2nd Battalion was to prepare for the forthcoming drive

Both: National Archives



**ABOVE:** Medic T/5 Max Freeman of the medical detachment, 274th Infantry Regiment, helps a wounded man to safety. The victim was among a group of Eastern European slave laborers who escaped from the Germans during the American attack on the town of Stiring-Wendel, France. He was shot when the Germans opened fire on the fleeing laborers. **OPPOSITE:** A squad of infantrymen from the 70th Division moves through the French city of Forbach on February 23, 1945. The medical personnel of the division were often near the scene of an ongoing battle and regularly under fire themselves as they went in harm’s way to treat wounded soldiers.



to the city of Saarbrücken—a strongpoint of the Siegfried Line on the Saar River, along the French-German border. But before reaching Saarbrücken, several towns and German defensive positions would have to be dealt with. The next day the unit left for the town of Bousbach, less than 10 miles south of Saarbrücken.

The battalion surgeon, Clifford, received a promotion to captain on February 15, though he thought of himself as a doctor first and then an officer. “Captain Clifford was an easy going guy, a great guy,” Staley said. “Half the time we called him Joe—that was his first name.”

The 274th was informed on the same day that it was to make the main effort to capture the high ground—Kreutzberg and Forbacherberg Ridges—overlooking Saarbrücken, spearheading the Seventh Army’s effort to break through the Siegfried Line.

Preparations were made for an attack on the nearby town of Kerbach and high ground in the vicinity. The medics were to follow the assault parties as they moved up, setting up forward aid stations as close as possible to the front lines.

Leading the assault on Kerbach on the night of February 16, the 2nd Battalion’s Fox Company encountered strong opposition.

Based on their experience, the aid unit devised a plan to determine a casualty’s position ahead of time by telephone, speeding up evacuation from the field to the aid station.

“We found it impossible to follow up troops under automatic weapons and artillery fire without losing the advantage that speedy evacuation might give, due to the danger of having the entire aid station and its personnel a complete battle loss,” Waterhouse said. “This was experienced at Wingen when we lost many of our litter bearers in an effort to speedily evacuate casualties that were not too seriously wounded.”

After the first call of casualties came in, a half hour after tanks had passed the aid station on their way to Kerbach, litter squads were sent forward. Then, as those at the aid station waited for the litter squads to return, a steady stream of calls were received for more litter squads.

Those at the aid station sweated out reports after the litter squads had left that morning. The first squad had not yet returned when the second squad returned to the aid station. It was learned that they had encountered enemy automatic weapons fire, forcing them to seek cover in a creek. When they got back to the aid station they were covered with mud and

soaking wet. This group included PFC’s Brush, Gladany, Stallsmith, and McBride.

The first squad, which included Captain Clifford, Lieutenant Beard, Sergeant Spence, Cpl. Brezacek, Tech/5 Freeman, PFC Rybarczyk, PFC Branscum, along with Privates Hoover, Pocheпка, and Hilton, had yet to return. When they finally did return, it was learned that they had been pinned down by sniper fire while attempting to go forward to set up a forward aid station at the outskirts of Kerbach. They were forced to seek cover in a road culvert which was partly filled with water.

The battalion sent out a force to drive back the Germans and secure the road for supplies to come forward and the wounded to be evacuated. Once this was completed casualties began to flood the aid station.

Following days of fighting, the aid station was moved forward on February 19 to Kerbach—a short distance behind the front.

They set up in an old parish church where, from the upper floors they could see explosions of artillery and mortar shells on a hill in the distance. Near the rear of the aid station passed a steady stream of German prisoners. Many had serious wounds that were treated in the aid station before they were evacuated to POW hospitals.

Both: National Archives

“It was during this attack that litter bearers and aid men were struggling under the precarious circumstances set up by the open terrain, and impeded in contacting these casualties, because of a sudden burst of enemy machine gun and mortar fire,” Waterhouse said. “First Lt. Forrest J. Beard observing their plight, together with the assistance of Staff Sgt. Richard Strassburger and Corporal Brezacek, quickly left their covered position, located a suitable approach... for contacting the wounded, and assisted the aid men and litter bearers in rendering emergency medical attention, and evacuating them to the rear... Their quick action and dauntless courage in a time of emergency eliminated the possibility of further casualties, and contributed directly to the saving of many lives.”

The aid men moved a mile north to the village of Etzling on February 21. A suitable building was found—one room was used for the care of casualties, and the remaining rooms of the building for quartering the aid station personnel and litter bearers.

As they settled in, word came that recently promoted Tech/5 James O. Fouts had been killed the day before by artillery fire near the Stiring-Wendel. He was credited with the saving of many lives during the action at Wingen in early January. He was awarded the Silver Star, posthumously.

“The continued pounding of artillery on our positions was like living under a death sentence,” Waterhouse said. “A medical composite section consisting of 12 men in support of the various companies of the battalion was indeed a strenuous task for these men who give their every last ounce of strength to save the life of a fallen infantryman.”

February 23rd saw bitter fighting as the 274th dealt with attacks and counter-attacks. By March 2, the battalion was looking down from the ridges above the towns of Forbach, Stiring-Wendel, and Neue-Glashutte.

As the combat units readied to take Stiring-Wendel, the medical unit looked for a safe evacuation point for the handling of casualties, finding one in an abandoned pillbox.

The battle began the next day with house-to-house combat. The Germans used Nebelwerfers—rocket launchers capable of firing multiple heavy rockets.



**ABOVE:** Under enemy fire, a medic dashes into the open and down a city street while moving forward to treat wounded soldiers. Such a scene became commonplace, and the medical detachment of the 274th Infantry Regiment displayed great courage under fire. **OPPOSITE:** Covered by machine-gun fire from the light tank behind him, a medic of the 274th Infantry Regiment dashes forward at a contested intersection. During World War II, medics often displayed valor under fire and saved lives in the process.

“It had an unexplainable scream as it went through the air and lit in our lines,” Waterhouse recalled of the weapon known to GIs as “Screaming Meemies.” The Nebelwerfer volleys seemed to come four or five times a day with impacts so close that all the windows at the aid station were blown out.

A heavy concentration of artillery fire on forward positions during the night of March 4 brought the call for two litter squads to evacuate a number of casualties. The two litter squads included PFC’s Branscum, Rybarczyk, Calderon, Hilton, Carter, and a litter squad from the collecting company. To speed up the process, PFC Branscum delivered the litter squads in a jeep, then headed for a pre-arranged forward collection point. He hadn’t gone far when his jeep struck a mine. The explosion destroyed the jeep and threw Branscum a short distance leaving him with a sprained arm and shrapnel in one leg. He crawled about 200 yards while under artillery fire, allowing him to reach the litter bearers. Despite his wounds he was able to assist in the evacuation of more serious casualties.

PFC Dan Hoover, who had arrived as a replacement, was also wounded. He had been assisting at the aid station as a litter bearer and was then sent out as an aid man. He was hit by shell fragments when he left a foxhole to reach a wounded man.

Once the battle started, casualties arrived at the aid station with a wide variety of injuries—each more gruesome than the last. One evening a GI whose abdomen had been ripped open by a shell fragment was brought in. Asked if the man would survive, Captain “Doc” Clifford replied, “There is a slim chance that he will come through.” After being evacuated from the aid station, the unit seldom had word of a patient’s fate unless they later returned to duty.



On one occasion two casualties arrived within minutes of each other, both having had their right foot blown off. A GI had stepped on a mine and when his buddy rushed to his aid, he also stepped on a mine. Applying a large Carlisle bandage to the stub of the right leg of one of the soldiers, the wounded man was asked if he had feeling in his right foot. He said he could feel it, but those treating him knew it was a phantom feeling, since his foot was gone. A little encouragement went a long way to lifting morale and aiding in recovery, but the aid men also used discretion when discussing wounds with their patients.

As house-to-house fighting continued in Stiring-Wendel, heavy casualties made it necessary to set up an advance aid station for the handling of the seriously wounded.

While the Americans would attempt to treat their wounded as quickly as possible in the field, the Germans usually waited until after fighting had stopped before sending their medical personnel into the field under a Red Cross banner or flag of truce.

Under the cover of darkness and heavy fog, Captain Clifford and some volunteers organized a forward post in the early hours of March 5. The group included medical technicians, Tech/5 Wiggins and PFC Waterhouse, together with a litter squad consisting of Tech/5 Freeman, PFC's Rybarczyk, Stallsmith, and Calderon.

As they set up the new post, they began to receive shell fire. Added to this was a barrage of screaming-meemies that caused those in the aid station to hit the floor. Though the rounds landed a few blocks away, the concussion blew out the windows of their building.

As the 274th Infantry advanced during the afternoon, a column of men came streaming towards them along the Metz-Saarbrücken Highway. "The day after Stiring-Wendel, we could see this building with a red cross on top of it," Staley said. "We didn't know what it was. But there were these Eastern Europeans in there. When we got close they started breaking and running out of there and the Germans shot 'em in the back... I had never seen anybody that starved in my life. Some of them had been wounded, had gangrene,... I started treating their gunshot wounds, but I ran out of stuff to do it. I doubt if a lot of them ever survived." It was only later

that the GIs realized they had come upon a slave labor camp.

Early that evening a German artillery barrage landed three direct hits on the building housing the aid station, shearing off part of the roof. The medical staff, who had been working on two seriously wounded casualties at the time, were spared from injury. Though they feared the building would be struck again, they continued to treat the wounded.

During the evening of the 5th, PFC Edward Keller, an aid man attached to Fox Company, was hit in the leg by shell fragments from a tree burst as he provided aid to a wounded soldier. During action at Wingen he had a bullet crease his helmet. Though injured, he helped dress wounds and directed the walking wounded to the aid station before litter bearers arrived to evacuate him.

Every day just before dawn the Germans shelled the same part of Stiring-Wendel, an area referred to as "88 Corner." The nearby aid station had to be evacuated at that hour.

On March 6, four U.S. tanks arrived in the town, one stopping alongside the building

*Continued on page 98*

**BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON**

**F**our miles above the snow-covered city of Steyr, Captain Jack Horner peered down through his Norden bombsight in a desperate attempt to identify the target.

Horner was lead bombardier for a large force of Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers targeting the Daimler-Puch aircraft manufacturing plant some 90 miles west of Vienna. More than 100 other Americans were relying on him to find the factory and release his bombs—signaling to the rest to toggle their own payloads.

The task was made infinitely more difficult by especially aggressive swarms of Luftwaffe interceptors tormenting Horner's bomber

---

## The Fifteenth Air Force faced a stiff fight against the Luftwaffe during a raid from its bases in Italy against a target in Austria.

---

formation, even pressing in through deadly antiaircraft fire to disrupt its attack. Worse still, a stray cumulus cloud also momentarily obscured the factory.

Horner was configuring his bombsight for an “offset,” a technique used in bad weather conditions, when he spotted below him several errant Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers. If he salvoed his bombs now, they would likely hit these friendly warplanes. He had no choice but to cancel the drop.

This unexpected development left Horner's mission commander, Lt. Col. Kenneth A. Cool, with a particularly disagreeable dilemma. Should Cool order his Liberators to go around and try again, losing more aircraft to enemy flak and fighters. If the bombers attempted to strike their secondary target, precious time would be spent lining up on and attacking a low-priority objective.

All photos: National Archives



# Hell at

Hit by German fighter planes, a B-24 Liberator from the Fifteenth Air Force has erupted in flames during a bombing raid over Austria. The 15th AF destroyed a key ball-bearing plant near Steyr, Austria, on April 2, 1944.



# 21,000 Feet

**A Fifteenth Air Force B-24 Liberator in the skies above Austria during a raid on railroad infrastructure. In September 1943, the U.S. Army Air Force formed the 15th AF, based in the Foggia area of southern Italy. The six heavy bomb groups—four B-17, two B-24—flew major strategic raids in southern and eastern Europe, straining the Luftwaffe defense.**

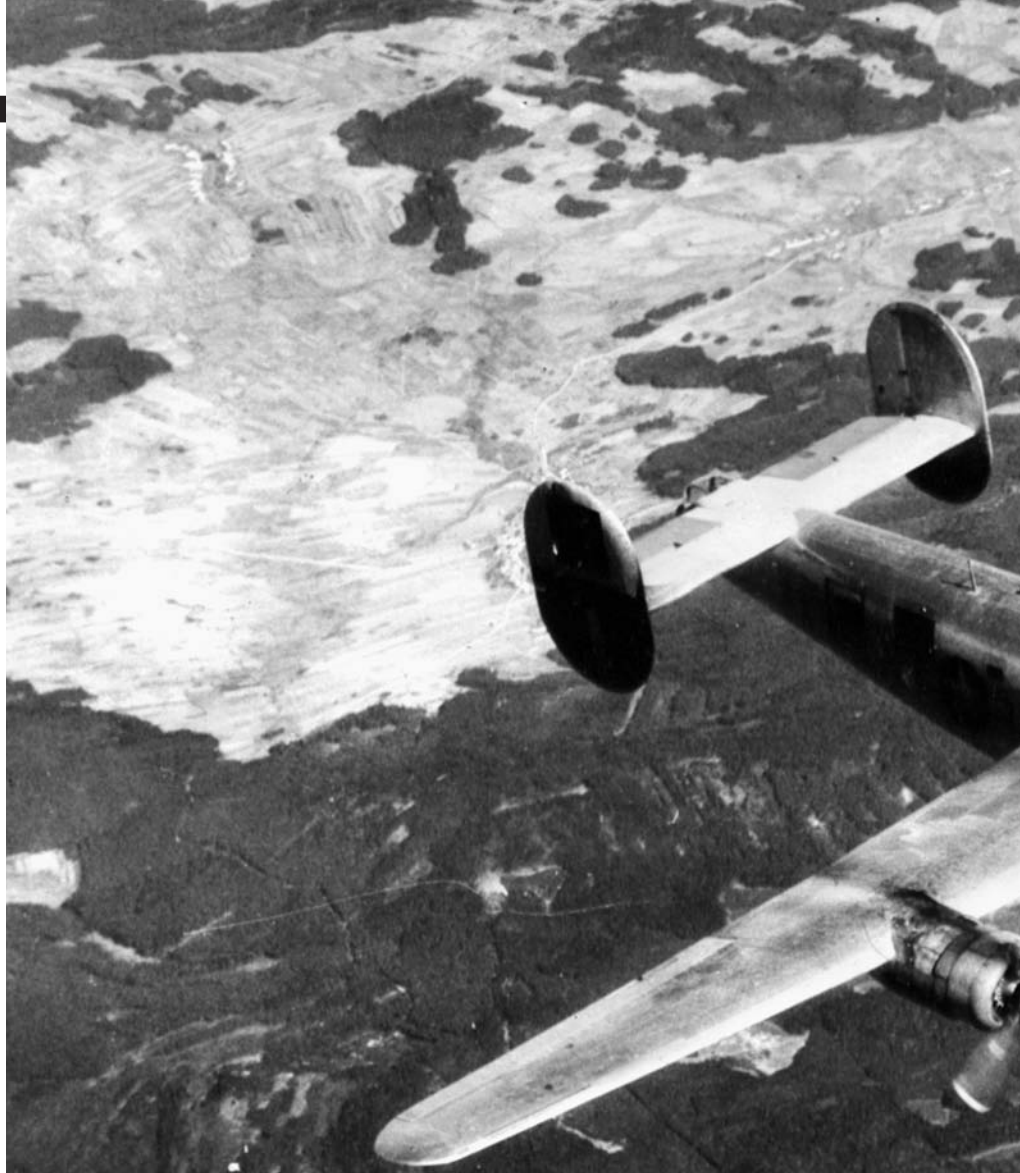
Fortunately, Cool remembered from a pre-flight intelligence briefing that the sprawling Steyr Walzgerwerke ball-bearing works sat on a direct line only one minute's flight time from the Daimler-Puch factory. Vitally, sky was clear over this strategic production facility. Cool keyed the mic on his command radio: "Come to Course Three-Three-Zero. We're bombing the ball-bearing plant."

This mission, which took place on April 2, 1944, represented a major milestone in the Allies' Combined Bomber Offensive. For 10 months, elements of the British Royal Air Force (RAF) and the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) had been attacking key manufacturing facilities in an effort to permanently ground the Luftwaffe before the Allied armies invaded France.

Initially proposed in July 1943, the USAAF called it "Operation Pointblank." The plan called for heavy bombers of the Eighth Air Force (stationed in the United Kingdom) and Fifteenth Air Force (flying from Italy) to strike high-priority industrial plants in central and southern Germany. As these factories made fighter aircraft and their component parts, destroying them was sure—in American eyes—to defeat the Luftwaffe.

Pointblank succeeded, albeit at a significant cost in men and matériel. In particular, "Big Week" (February 20–25, 1944) broke the Luftwaffe's back in terms of airplane production. Forced to decentralize its manufacturing base, Nazi Germany could no longer build interceptors in sufficient quantities to challenge the Allies' growing fleets of heavy bombers. Nor was the Reich able to adequately train replacement fighter pilots due to a chronic shortage of resources—notably fuel.

Eventually, though, the air units participating in Operation Pointblank shifted their focus to other missions. On April 1, 1944, control of the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces passed from Lt. Gen. Carl A. Spaatz's United States Strategic Air Forces (USSTAF)



to the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, under General Dwight D. Eisenhower. These bombers were needed to strike transportation nodes across northern France in order to isolate the Normandy region before D-Day—then scheduled for late May or early June.

Yet whenever conditions permitted, U.S. "heavies" went out against strategic targets even after Pointblank formally concluded. This was especially true for the Fifteenth Air Force (AF), commanded by Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining. Able to range far into southern Germany, Austria, and eastern Europe from their airfields in Italy, Twining's airmen began bombing in earnest during the first months of 1944.

By April, the Fifteenth AF had on hand four full bomb wings. Of these, the 5th Bomb Wing (BW) was the only organization in Twining's command equipped with B-17 Flying Fortresses. Flying B-24 Liberators were the 47th BW, 55th BW, and 304th BW. On paper, the Fifteenth's bomber fleet totaled nearly 800 B-17s and B-24s. The number of operational aircraft was almost always lower due to combat losses and planes in maintenance.

These units flew out of the Foggia Complex, a sprawling network of airfields that encircled the city of Foggia in southeastern Italy. Also based there were upwards of 700 fighters assigned to the Fifteenth AF. The 325th Fighter Group (FG) operated the sturdy if short-legged Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, although some of its squadrons were transitioning to the new long-range North American P-51 Mustang. The 1st FG, 14th FG, and 82nd FG utilized the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, a versatile twin-engined escort capable of accompanying strategic bombers deep into Nazi-held territory.



About 20 miles southeast of Foggia stood the town of Cerignola, headquarters for the Fifteenth AF's 304th BW. The 304th consisted of four Liberator-equipped bomb groups. First to arrive in Italy was the 455th BG, which shared a dual-runway airstrip at San Giovanni with the 454th BG. Stationed at Stornara Airfield was the 456th BG, while the 459th BG occupied another base at Giulia.

The 455th BG's B-24s made their debut in the skies over San Giovanni on February 1, 1944. Approaching bombers held a tight formation as they circled the field, peeling off one by one to land. Aided by ground crewmen, lumbering Liberators taxied to their designated revetments and shut down. The 455th could now open an important new chapter in its combat chronicle.

The story of the 455th Bomb Group (Heavy) began nearly 10 months earlier when on July 8, 1943, it was activated at Clovis Army Air Base, New Mexico. The 455th had no airplanes of its own; instead, this headquarters organization provided command, planning, intelligence, logistics, and administrative functions for four subordinate flying units. These were designated the 740th, 741st, 742nd, and 743rd Bombardment Squadrons.

Each Bombardment Squadron (BS) was authorized 16 (later reduced to 12) Consolidated B-24 Liberators. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1943, U.S. airmen flew countless practice missions over the American Southwest as they perfected the deadly business of high-altitude strategic bombing. Members of the 455th BG honed their skills at installations in New Mexico, Florida, and Utah before moving to Langley Field, Virginia, in October 1943 to ready themselves for deployment.

Lieutenant Colonel Cool, a veteran airman fresh from a combat tour over Europe and North

Africa with the Eighth AF's 93rd BG, became the outfit's first commanding officer. Many crew members remembered him as a strict taskmaster. Cool's insistence on tight formation flying unnerved several newly-minted pilots who still had trouble taming the cantankerous Liberator.

The 743rd BS's Lieutenant John Smidl called his bomber "The Beast." Flying it, Smidl recalled, was "an excruciating experience." For a novice aviator, he said, "All limbs were in motion at one time; left arm hauling and twisting, right hand sawing the throttle, feet jamming the rudder back and forth, mouth spouting curses...and, oh yes, the sweat pouring off my forehead and into my eyes."

Smidl later reflected on his training, especially the emergency procedures that later saved his life over Europe. "The more we flew the more humble we became," he observed. About his airplane, Smidl said, "The only pride I have is that after a year of struggle I finally learned to master the son-of-a-bitch and brought it to heel."

Just before it departed the States, the 455th BG received 64 factory-fresh B-24H Liberators. With a wingspan of 110 feet, overall length of 67 feet, and a height of 18 feet, the H-model was powered by four Pratt & Whitney R-1830-65 engines, each rated at 1,200 horsepower. The bomber's empty weight was just over 36,000 pounds, with a maximum loaded weight of 65,000 pounds.

Capable of reaching a top speed of 290 miles per hour and boasting a service ceiling of 28,000 feet, the Liberator had a maximum range of 2,100 miles. It could carry 5,000 pounds of bombs, although this payload was often reduced in favor of additional fuel needed to reach distant targets.

Each B-24 was manned by a crew of 10 — pilot, copilot, navigator, bombardier, and six gunners. For self-defense, the H-model carried 10 .50-caliber machine guns. Electrically-operated turrets in the nose, top, belly, and tail sported two guns each, while a single flexible weapon was mounted in both the right and left waist positions.

Throughout the war, proponents of the Boeing Flying Fortress quarreled with the Consolidated Liberator's disciples over which

plane was a better bomber. Each had its pros and cons. The B-17 was far more resistant to battle damage but flew slower than the B-24. The Liberator carried more bombs yet demanded constant attention in flight, unlike the older Fortress. The 455th's flyers, none of whom had any choice in the matter, resolved to make do with whatever aircraft they were assigned to operate.

At Langley Field, the men of the 455th BG completed final preparations for overseas movement. The group then numbered approximately 2,260 officers and enlisted soldiers, including nearly 1,000 air crewmen. In December 1943, the outfit divided into two echelons—one designated to fly the organization's B-24s into Italy with another detachment set to arrive by troop ship.

Around this time, Cool's troops began calling themselves the "Vulgar Vultures." While no one is certain how or where this moniker originated, an emblem was designed in cooperation with Walt Disney Studios. This patch, which depicted a perspiring buzzard clutching a demolition bomb, soon adorned the flight jacket of many a proud combat crewmember.

Despite a colossal effort by Army engineers, the field at San Giovanni was nowhere near ready for combat operations when the 455th BG arrived in January 1944. Neither of its two parallel 6,000-foot runways could yet accept bomber traffic, so the group's air echelon waited for nearly three weeks at a staging base in Algeria until the flight strip was declared operational.

Those who arrived by sea discovered this so-called "airfield" was in reality just an olive grove. They would sleep in pup tents they brought with them, with slit trenches for latrines. The only building in sight was an ancient residence called "The Castle," which Group HQ appropriated as an administrative space and senior officers' quarters.

Men who expected to enjoy "sunny Italy" were sadly disappointed. Staff Sergeant Henry B. Everhart, a tail gunner with the 743rd BS, said he often endured "a wet penetrating cold with rains that produced a very slippery mud that was like ice" during his first few months in San Giovanni.

Even by Army standards, the food was bad. The Vulgar Vultures unit history described a

typical breakfast as "Spam, Vienna sausages, stewed prunes and hash (heated in garbage cans), powdered eggs and bread." Lt. Ernest F. "Bud" Turner of the 742nd BS added, "There was no mess hall. Food was prepared and dished out from a food line and you then found a place where you could eat your meal. Drums of hot water were provided for washing and rinsing your mess kits."

Conditions eventually improved, which Everhart was quick to note. He remembered receiving larger six-man tents, which the troops then "set up between the olive trees." The group also acquired some larger mess tents with picnic-style tables for troops to use at mealtimes.

Everhart also recalled building "a large common shower...for bathing. It [consisted of] a series of 10-gallon barrels sitting on beams overhead. The barrels were heated with wood under them. Pipes were connected to the barrels that had a chain you pulled to get a spray of hot water."

With its B-24Hs in place at San Giovanni, the 455th BG stood ready to perform the duty for which it was trained and equipped. Bad weather, however, kept the Vulgar Vultures grounded until February 16, when 44 Liberators flew a mission that Cool scrubbed at the last minute due to heavy clouds. The group did complete a total of 17 small-scale raids during February and March, mainly in support of Allied ground troops at Anzio.



**ABOVE:** A B-24 Liberator drops 10 500-pound general purpose bombs on the ball-bearing works in Steyr, Austria, on April 2, 1944. Unlike bombers stationed in England, the four full bomb wings of the Fifteenth Air Force, based in Italy, could attack targets in southern Germany, Austria, and Eastern Europe. **OPPOSITE:** Flying in close formation to provide mutual defense against marauding German fighters, B-24 Liberator bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force drop their bombs on a target in Austria. During the April 2 raid on the Steyr ball-bearing factories, mission commander Lt. Col. Kenneth Cool stressed the importance of formation flying. As a result of Cool's quick thinking and leadership, the 455th Bombardment Group received a Presidential Unit Citation for the mission.



The coming of spring promised better weather, especially over the factories and railyards of southern Europe. The forecast for Sunday, April 2, prompted officers at Fifteenth AF to plan a full-scale raid on several strategic targets they had been unable to strike since February. The Austrian city of Steyr, home to several aviation-related industrial facilities, became their main objective. Train depots in Yugoslavia also merited attention.

Twining declared it the Fifteenth's largest mission to date. A total of 530 B-17 and B-24 bombers were to participate, 432 of them striking the Daimler-Puch aircraft factory and Walzagerwerke ball-bearing plant in Steyr. The remaining 98 "heavies" would offer a diversion by attacking marshalling yards outside Bihac and Brod, Yugoslavia.

The plan required split-second timing. As the Flying Fortresses had a slower cruising speed, those planes would take off, assemble, and bomb first. The Liberator formations were to depart later, arriving over Steyr just after the B-17s departed.

More than 150 P-47 Thunderbolts and P-38 Lightnings would support the mission. These fighters employed a clever system of rendezvous points that ensured the bombers were covered throughout their 1,000-mile flight to Austria and back. Additional escorts remained available for when contact with the Luftwaffe was most likely—while crossing the Yugoslavian coast and during the final bomb run.

Coordinating instructions came down on April 1 through the Fifteenth AF and 304th BW to San Giovanni, where Cool's operations staff crafted a field order. This document covered such details as takeoff time, weather en route, radio frequencies, and the target description. It also specified the number and type of bombs carried, as well as the quantity of .50-caliber ammunition and aviation fuel to be brought aloft.

The flight crews participating in Mission No. 18 (as this raid was designated) were awakened before 0400 hours on April 2. Dressing and eating quickly, they next received a briefing from the group staff. Senior officers reviewed the field order, taking care to provide updated

information on sky conditions and likely enemy threats.

Cool presided over the briefing. In his closing comments, he said the 455th would act as lead group for all Liberator units attacking Steyr. "This one's for me," he said, announcing he would pilot the first ship going out that day. This pleased the airmen, who knew that whenever "the Old Man" ran things personally their mission normally succeeded.

Crew members next walked to the equipment tent, where they donned heavy sheepskin-lined leather overgarments and parachute harnesses. They also drew escape kits from the intelligence officer (S2). Bud Turner described this survival gear as "a small plastic box containing a map of the area where they were going, a \$5 gold coin, a fishing hook and line, a small compass, and a small hacksaw." He added, "The kit would be returned to the S2 people at the end of the mission."

Some flyers put on electrically-heated flight suits and boots, but these bright blue outfits short-circuited frequently and often burned their wearers. Others took to hanging a pair

of G.I. issue shoes around their necks in case they were shot down. Heavy flak jackets and steel helmets were available, but not everyone could fit inside the close confines of a B-24 while clad in this bulky body armor.

Station time—when all crews needed to be on board and ready for action—came at 0648 hours, just after sunrise. Shortly thereafter, Cool started the engines on his aircraft, nicknamed “BESTWEDO” after one of his favorite expressions. Takeoff commenced at 0755 hours, with 35 Liberators of the 455th BG getting airborne. One ship returned early with a fuel leak, while the rest began arranging themselves into what was termed a “combat box.”

This formation, which effectively massed defensive firepower against enemy interceptors, normally contained 40 planes divided into two units of 20 B-24s each. Each unit consisted of three squadron boxes. The mission commander led the center box of six bombers, while on either side were seven ships each in the left and right combat boxes. The second unit flew closely behind the lead element while “stacking” itself downward slightly.

Assembling the group took time, but by 0845 hours the Vulgar Vultures were on their way. Behind them trailed 200 more Liberators. In Austria, meanwhile, a well-trained reception committee prepared to welcome the 455th with deadly bursts of flak and aircraft fire.

The Germans’ first indication of a raid that morning came from radio intelligence stations listening for Allied transmissions. American flight crews exhibited notoriously poor radio discipline, which enabled Luftwaffe monitoring posts to learn much about their enemy’s composition, route, time of attack, and even the objective.

Radar operators established the raiders’ current location, heading, and airspeed as they gained altitude over the Adriatic Sea. Fifteenth Air Force formations rarely feinted; once the bombers’ base course was determined, Luftwaffe analysts could easily predict their destination. The presence of USAAF weather planes (usually unarmed reconnaissance versions of the P-38) overhead typically validated this electronic intelligence data.

The Reich’s air defenses were centrally coordinated by a headquarters element



**ABOVE:** Sergeant Edward Vigil, assistant engineer aboard a bomber during the B-24 raid on Steyr on April 2, 1944, points to his glove, stuffed into a hole created by a fragment from a German 20mm shell. The quick-thinking Vigil used the glove to stop the leaking of hydraulic fluid, allowing the bomber to lower its landing gear and safely return to base. **OPPOSITE:** In this compelling photo, an Me-410 heavy German fighter (left) pursues a damaged B-24 Liberator bomber during the return flight of the April 2, 1944, raid on the ball-bearing plant in Steyr, Austria. The bomber is believed to have been shot down shortly after this photo was taken. The 455th Bombardment Group lost four aircraft on the mission, but through coordination between its gunners and their P-47 Thunderbolt and P-38 Lightning escorts, 27 enemy fighters were destroyed, 17 were probably destroyed, and 3 were damaged.

known as Jagdkorps I, based in Braunschweig. A number of subordinate fighter division command posts managed the Luftwaffe’s local response to Allied air raids—for instance, Jagdivision 7 (headquartered near Munich) was responsible for the defense of south-central Germany and Austria. On the morning of April 2, controllers at Jagdivision 7 began alerting single-engined and twin-engined interceptors of the *Reichsluftverteidigung* (RLV, or Reich Air Defense Force) to prepare for action against a large Austria-bound USAAF raid heading north from Italy.

Several combat-tested interceptor outfits made up the RLV. Flying from Wiesbaden, II *Gruppe Jagdgeschwader 27* (Second Group, 27th Fighter Wing—abbreviated II./JG27) had recently taken up air defense duties after departing North Africa. Its unit designation, “Afrika,” reflected JG27’s long service there. Another experienced fighter command, II./JG77 (nicknamed “Ace of Hearts”), flew off a grass airstrip at Canino in west-central Italy.

Both groups operated the Messerschmitt Me-109G-6. This single-engined interceptor was armed with two 13mm machine guns mounted above the engine, one 30mm cannon firing through the propeller hub, and occasionally two more 20mm or 30mm weapons carried in under-wing gondolas. Known as “Gustav” by its pilots, the G-6 represented a good mix of firepower and performance.

Operating from Wilz, Austria, the “Wasps” of II *Gruppe Zerstörergeschwader 1* (Destroyer Wing One—abbreviated II./ZG1) operated a day-fighter version of the two-engined Messer-



schmitt Me-110G-2. Slow but heavily armed, the Me-110 could approach enemy bombers from the rear and lob 210mm rockets into USAAF formations before closing in with its two 30mm autocannons. Three or four hits from these powerful guns were normally sufficient to destroy a “dicke Auto” (slang term for an Allied heavy bomber—literally, “fat car”).

All told, the RLV mustered 312 single- and 62 twin-engined interceptors against the Fifteenth AF on April 2, 1944. They heavily outnumbered the U.S. escort fleet, and many Luftwaffe fighters sortied twice—once as the bombers approached and again during their flight home.

Another unpleasant surprise awaited the Vulgar Vultures at Steyr. More than 100 anti-aircraft guns, 88mm and 128mm, all pointing skyward, ringed the city. These large-caliber weapons were crewed by the men and women of 24. Flak-Division, a large Luftwaffe command responsible for the defense of upper Austria.

Meanwhile, the American bombers were making their way north under near-cloudless conditions. Two more 455th BG B-24s aborted the mission with mechanical issues, leaving 32 planes in the lead combat box as it penetrated Yugoslavia at 1020 hours. Ten minutes later, over Novo Mesto, the first German interceptors appeared.

Major Horace Lanford, flying as Cool’s copilot, recalled what happened when the 455th BG came under attack at 1045 hours. “Inbound to the target, we were alerted by the top turret gunner that seven Me-109s were overtaking the Group on our right flank. I observed seven Me-109s fly up to the head of the column, opposite our aircraft, in single file. [They then] turned into the formation flying seven abreast on their firing run.”

According to Lanford, “I immediately called the fighter escort: ‘Red Dog 1, this is Large Cup 23. We are under attack by seven Me-109s and request assistance.’ Red Dog 1 responded: ‘Wa-l-l (Southern drawl) we’re kinda tied up ourselves right now but we’ll send someone up as soon as we can...’ A single P-38 appeared shortly and the Me-109s withdrew.”

Air attacks on the Vultures grew more intense as they neared Steyr. “The heaviest concentration of [enemy] fighters was encountered 15 miles west of Graz,” wrote Group Intelligence Officer Major Alvin E. Coons, “and continued the attack until the target area.” Coons identified these “bandits” as Messerschmitt Me-109s and Me-110s, as well as several Focke-Wulf Fw-190s.

“The Me-109s and Fw-190s attacked low and level,” Coons reported, while “twin-engined aircraft made attacks from the rear, firing rockets into the formation.” He evaluated the men

flying these interceptors as “very aggressive” and “experienced pilots.”

Horrified squadron mates looked on helplessly as bombers began to die. The first Liberator destroyed was “DOUBLE TROUBLE,” a 742nd BS ship crewed this morning by 2nd Lieutenant John H. Powers Jr.’s 740th BS crew. While under attack by enemy fighters, the B-24 broke formation at 1100 hours with its left wing and No. 3 engine engulfed by fire. Five crewmembers bailed out to become prisoners of war. The other five airmen were killed.

At 1115 hours, 1st Lieutenant Willis J. Pardoe’s “SHOO SHOO BABY” turned for home with its No. 4 engine shot to pieces. Unprotected, the 742nd BS Liberator endured incessant air attacks for over 30 minutes. After his gunners expended their .50-caliber ammunition, Pardoe ordered the crew to jump. Five men were taken prisoner, but the rest evaded capture with the help of Yugoslavian partisans. One month later, these lucky flyers returned to San Giovanni.

Another B-24, “GREMLIN’S GRIPE” (commanded by 1st Lieutenant Clyde P. Brunson of the 743rd BS), dropped behind the formation at 1130 hours. Flight Officer Richard J. Haney, flying on Brunson’s wing, witnessed this bomber making “a slow

descending turn to the right with [its] left wing, engine and left rudder on fire. Two men were seen bailing out and one chute opened. I then saw the ship blow up.”

It was learned later that eight crew members managed to escape, but all were made prisoner. German records credit Luftwaffe ace Captain Hans Remmer of JG27 with downing Brunson’s Liberator, his 27th and final kill. Remmer perished later that day in an encounter with P-38 Lightning escort fighters.

As the Vulgar Vultures approached Steyr, the sky around them erupted in a man-made cloud of lethal flak. A tail gunner with the 740th BS, Staff Sergeant Don Kaplanek, spoke for thousands of aircrewmembers flying on April 2 when he described this barrage as so thick “you could just get out and walk on it.” Although no 455th BG B-24s were lost to anti-aircraft fire, three ships were damaged severely while four more required minor repairs.

In the nose of Cool’s plane, Group Bombardier Horner forced himself to ignore the bursting flak, attacking interceptors, and falling Liberators. Horner had a difficult task. He first needed to identify his target, then place it in the crosshairs of his Norden bombsight so that device could calculate a release point for the 10 500-pound bombs carried on board.

When clouds and a flight of misoriented B-17s made Horner call, “No Drop!” his mission commander coolly diverted the formation to the alternate objective. Lining up on the nearby Walzlagerwerke ball-bearing factory, Horner salvoed at 1140 hours the first of nearly 2,300 demolition bombs to fall on this key industrial facility.

“Many direct hits were scored on the [factory’s] machine shops,” a Fifteenth AF report boasted, “and a large explosion occurred, covering the plant with dense smoke.” In his post-mission analysis, Group Intelligence Officer Major Coons declared, “The assembly, testing, packing and ball and roller bearing [building] was very heavily damaged. Of the total area of 116,000 square feet, only 43,000 square feet remained and that suffered internal damage.”

The Luftwaffe, however, was not done with Cool’s formation. At 1145 hours, gunfire from enemy interceptors caused 1st Lieutenant Roy R. Cheeseman’s 743rd BS ship



**ABOVE:** Wounded in action during the raid on the ball-bearing factory at Steyr, Austria, a crewman of a 97th Bomb Group B-24 Liberator is helped to a first aid tent upon returning from the bombing mission and the running air battle that took place concurrently. **BELOW:** After the Steyr raid, a wounded crewman is gingerly removed from his damaged B-17 Flying Fortress bomber to be placed on a stretcher and taken to a waiting ambulance. The costly Steyr raid was indicative of the maximum effort Allied bomber crews put forth against enemy targets. **OPPOSITE:** On April 3, 1944, the day after the Steyr raid, two B-24 Liberators of the 456th Bomb Group turn for home after attacking railroad marshalling yards in Budapest, Hungary. Allied Fifteenth Air Force bombers based in Italy conducted many raids against Axis targets in southern Germany, Italy, and other locations in Eastern Europe.





“TALLAHASSEE LASSEE” to fall out of position. Witnesses observed flame enveloping the plane’s bomb bay and waist position as it passed from view. Four flyers made it out of the stricken Liberator; they were quickly captured while the remains of those six individuals unable to escape were found later by German patrols.

Bomber crews now making their exit from the hellscape over Steyr were relieved to spot several approaching P-38s that swatted away the Luftwaffe’s most persistent interceptors. Most airmen described their flight home as a relatively routine one. Yet for 1st Lieutenant William A. Arnold and his 743rd BS ship “TURBO-CULOSIS,” quite the opposite was true.

While about 20 minutes from its objective, Arnold’s B-24 was attacked by marauding Me-109s. “A fighter came within about 50 yards of us,” Arnold recalled, “and Pete (Technical Sergeant Roland R. Keith) in the top turret with his twin .50s sent him down on fire.”

Arnold’s account continued: “Then we were hit!! TURBO-CULOSIS shuddered and lost airspeed. No. 4 engine was on fire and No. 2 engine was damaged. We were unable to keep up with the Group and it was rapidly pulling away from us. The life expectancy of our aircraft in this situation could probably be measured in seconds.”

Bill Arnold’s co-pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Richard “Dusty” Dunscomb, extinguished the engine fire but then a new crisis revealed itself. The plane, now gradually losing altitude, needed to lose weight if it was to make it over the Alps. First, the bomb load was jettisoned. Then out went waist guns and flak suits, even one flyer’s parachute. Six and a half hours after it took off, TURBO-CULOSIS completed a “more or less normal landing” at San Giovanni. Some of her crew, Arnold wryly observed, “were seen to kiss the ground” afterward.

At a cost of four Liberators and 40 crewmen, the Vulgar Vultures delivered a powerful blow to the Reich’s industrial capacity. Additionally, the outfit’s aerial gunners received credit for 27 enemy interceptors destroyed and another 17 planes listed as probably killed.

Victory claims on both sides were often greatly inflated. The RLV admitted to losing seven planes (all Me-109s) on April 2, a figure far lower than what the USAAF said it downed. Likewise, German interceptors claimed credit for 16 B-17s, 34 B-24s, four P-38s, and one P-47 that day. The Fifteenth AF’s actual losses were eight Fortresses and 20 Liberators, with no escort fighters reported as missing.

There was little rest for the 455th following its ordeal over Austria. An order presently came

down detailing 28 B-24s to bomb railyards in Budapest, Hungary, with takeoff set for early the next morning. Hardworking mechanics, armorers, and fuel personnel—the unsung heroes of the Fifteenth AF—labored all night to prepare their planes for the group’s 19th mission.

For their lead role in the destruction of a strategic manufacturing facility at Steyr on April 2, 1944, the Vulgar Vultures received the first of two Distinguished Unit Citations they would earn during the war. During their 15 months of service in Italy, these airmen flew 252 combat sorties and delivered 14,702 tons of bombs. Balanced against this record of success were 118 aircraft lost to enemy fire or accident, as well as 147 crewmembers killed in action, 268 listed as missing, and 179 made prisoner.

The 455th BG was but one of many American bomber groups to serve in combat from 1941-1945. As did every USAAF flying unit, the Vulgar Vultures regularly performed extraordinary feats of valor and daring in a harsh, unforgiving environment. Their courage, skill, and sacrifice helped win World War II. □

---

*Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired military officer and historian based in Scotia, New York.*

# The Army 'CAVE MEN' of Iwo Jima

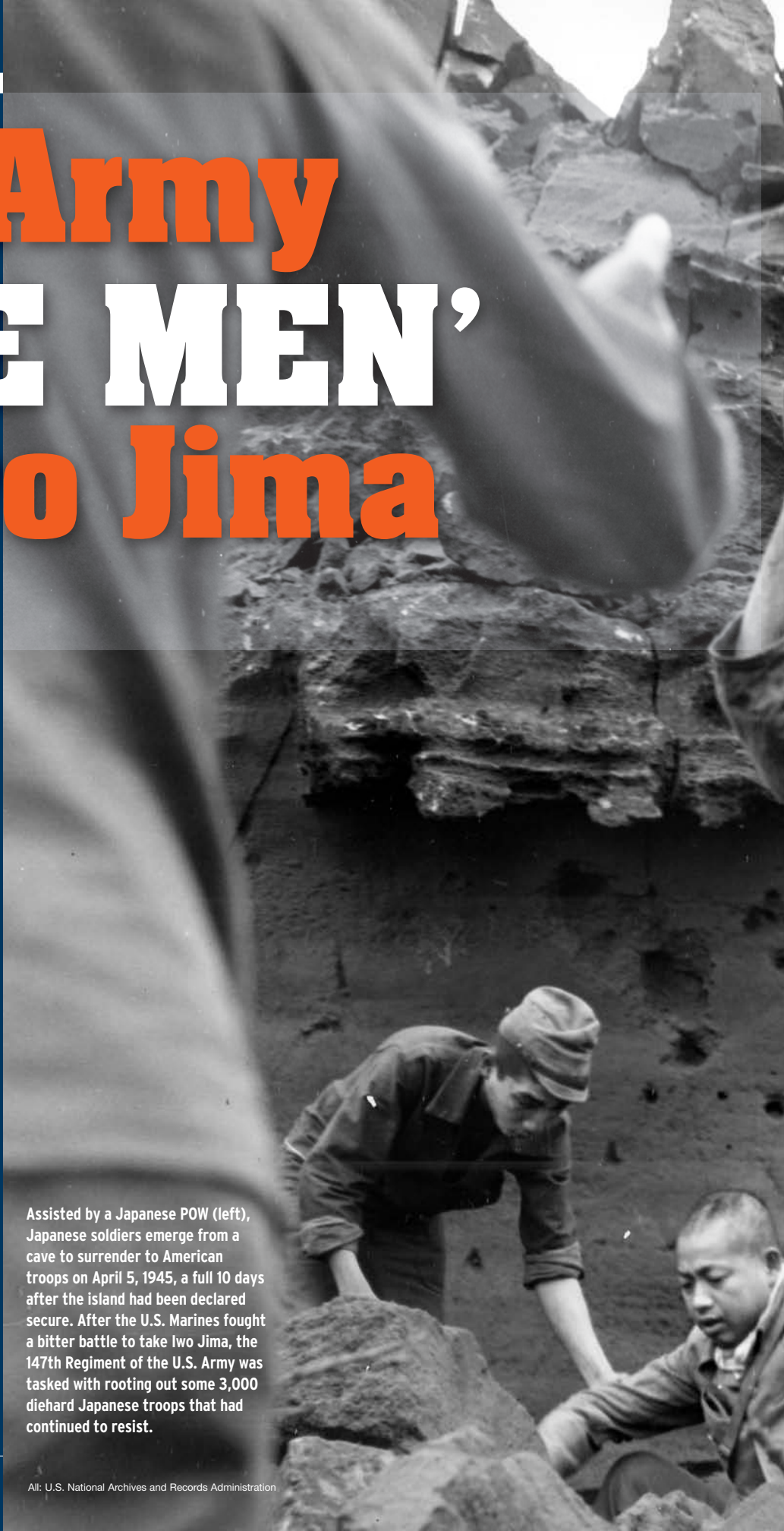
BY JAMES BILDER

**A**fter 36 days of ferocious combat, the island of Iwo Jima was declared "secure" by departing U.S. Marines on March 26, 1945.

In fact, an estimated 3,000 Japanese troops who refused to surrender were holed up in a subterranean network on the island and it would be the job of the U.S. Army's 147th Infantry Regiment to root them out.

To nearly any follower of U.S. military history the image of an American soldier, flashlight and sidearm in hand, seeking out an enemy deep below the surface of Asian soil conjures the famous "tunnel rats" of the Vietnam War. But more than two decades before Vietnam, there were the "Cave Men" of Iwo Jima, as the 147th Infantry Regiment took to calling themselves. And they would soon find that there was very little about the island that would truly be as it appeared.

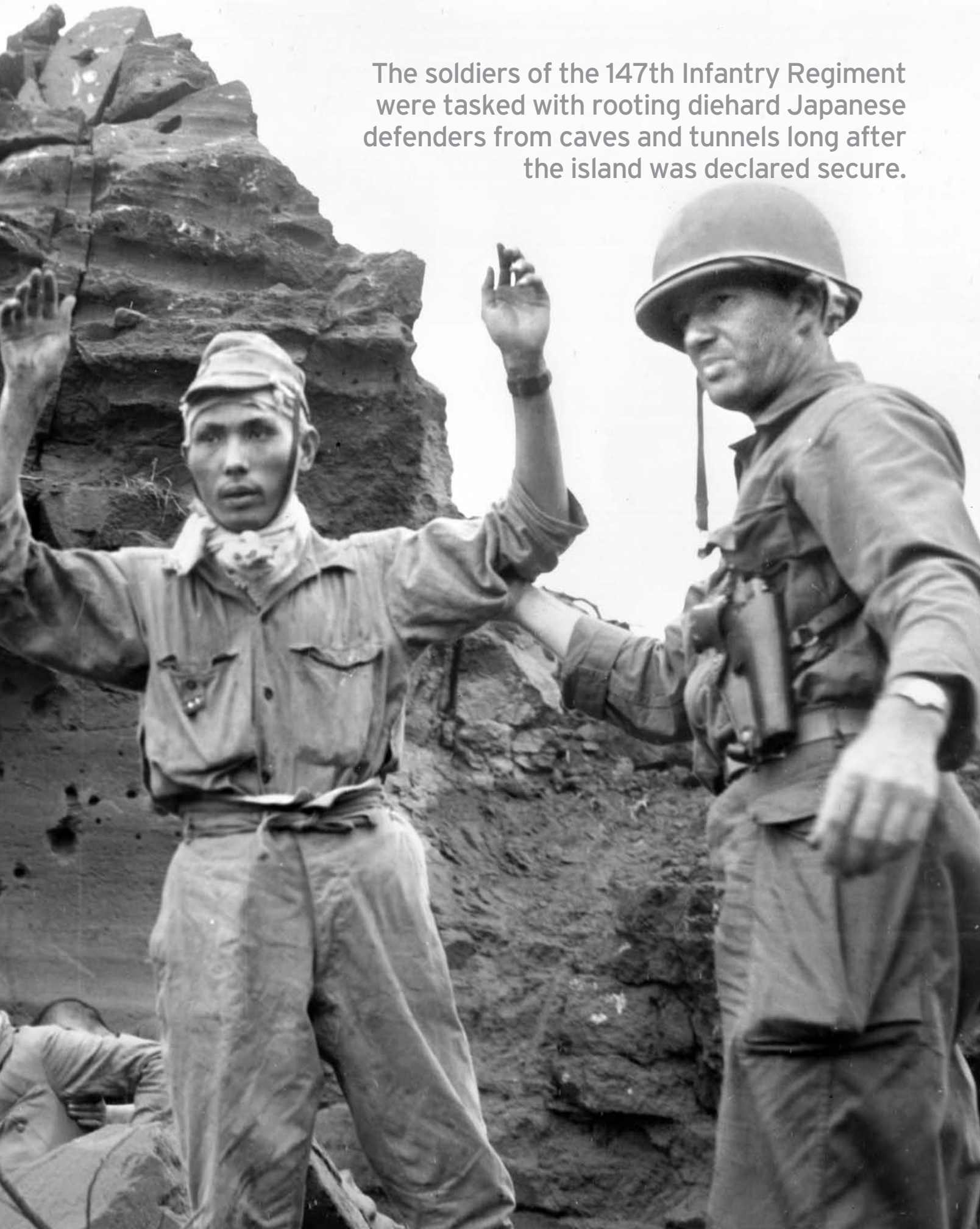
Iwo Jima was, and remains, covered in black volcanic sand and considerable mystery. Though one thing that is crystal clear about the island is the incredible performance of the U.S. Marines who fought there—the capture of Iwo Jima was the pinnacle of achievement and produced the iconic image of the Corps with the flag rais-



Assisted by a Japanese POW (left), Japanese soldiers emerge from a cave to surrender to American troops on April 5, 1945, a full 10 days after the island had been declared secure. After the U.S. Marines fought a bitter battle to take Iwo Jima, the 147th Regiment of the U.S. Army was tasked with rooting out some 3,000 diehard Japanese troops that had continued to resist.

All: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

The soldiers of the 147th Infantry Regiment were tasked with rooting diehard Japanese defenders from caves and tunnels long after the island was declared secure.





ing on Mount Suribachi. Of the 83 Medals of Honor awarded to U.S. Marines in World War II, 22 of them were for actions on Iwo Jima. The simple mention of “Iwo” deservedly sends an almost electrical sense of pride through the heart of every Leatherneck. Joe Rosenthal’s photo depicting the raising of the large American flag on the summit of Suribachi has become not only the public’s primary symbol for the Marine Corps, but a symbol of the U.S. victory in World War II on both sides of the globe.

Some 6,800 Marines were killed and roughly three times that number wounded on Iwo Jima. The 26,000 casualties make it the only battle during the war in which the Marines suffered more than the Japanese. The proportionate losses of Marines at Iwo are greater than those suffered by the Americans at Normandy on D-Day. Adm. Chester Nimitz, commander of U.S. forces in the Central Pacific, said that at Iwo Jima, “Uncommon valor was a common virtue.”

Truer words have rarely been spoken, but few realize that some U.S. Army infantrymen

were among the Americans who served on Iwo Jima and that Nimitz’s words apply to their battle performance as well. In order to learn a greater comprehensive history of the battle for Iwo Jima and the Army regiment that fought there, one has to look not only back but below, well below, the surface that covers and conceals that historic island. Japanese Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi, commanding the defenders of Iwo Jima, had his men dig a vast series of catacombs and tunnels that ran underneath both the north and south sides of the island. The labyrinth contained over 1,500 rooms and provided seemingly endless spaces for diehard Japanese soldiers to hide.

It was estimated by General Harry Schmidt, commander of Marines’ V Amphibious Corps, that there were probably some 100 to 300 surviving Japanese soldiers underground ready to continue to resist in the spring of 1945. In reality, it was closer to 10 times that estimate. However, the Americans believed that a single Army regiment could easily garrison Iwo Jima and eliminate a few hundred beaten and half-dead enemy troops who had scurried underground to lick what could only be regarded as fatal wounds.

Yes, this would only be a “mop up” of what little the Marines had left behind as they were withdrawn from Iwo to recuperate and prepare for their next hellish invasion on the way to Japan. Who better to clean up after the Marines than the Army’s 147th Regiment? Contrary to popular thought, American soldiers of the Marines and Army fought together in many Pacific battles, frequently as a composite unit. The use of what was referred to during the war as a “CAM” (Composite Army-Marine) unit was not a concept new to the Pacific theater or even to World War II. Army and Marine infantry had first fought alongside each other during the American Revolution at the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777. They would fight side by side on many occasions during the Pacific War.

Iwo Jima became a CAM operation even if few historians know or care enough to note it. The soldiers of the Army’s 147th Regiment have been dubbed “The Gypsies of the Pacific”

by Tom McLeod, who authored the regiment's unofficial history *Always Ready—The Story of the United States 147th Infantry Regiment* and is the curator of the Museum of the Pacific in Texas. McLeod's father was Capt. Prentiss R. McLeod, who served in the 147th's ranks during the war. Originally attached to the Army's 37th Infantry "Buckeye" Division of the Ohio National Guard, most of its men were from Cincinnati and southwest Ohio. The 37th Division arrived in Fiji in April 1942 to garrison and defend the surrounding islands. In early 1942, the Army wanted to "triangularize" its infantry divisions, cutting them down from the four-regiment composition of World War I to three regiments each for the new conflict. As a result, the 129th, 145th, and 148th Infantry Regiments were to remain together as the newly reorganized 37th Infantry Division.

The reorganization left the 147th Regiment officially "orphaned." But the Army quickly rectified this by sending the unit to Guadalcanal, where infantry was desperately needed. The Marines had first landed on Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942. Adm. William F. "Bull" Halsey, commanding U.S. forces in the Guadalcanal offensive, ordered the 147th Regiment to the island on October 20, 1942. When the Japanese finally evacuated the island in February 1943, the unit stayed to mop up straggling enemy soldiers.

**BELOW:** Following a blast by a flamethrower (opposite page), one of the 147th Infantry Regiment's "Cave Men" prepares to throw a hand grenade into the cave mouth to silence Japanese resistance. **OPPOSITE:** A soldier of the 147th Infantry Regiment looses a stream of fire from his flamethrower while attempting to root out or kill Japanese soldiers who refuse to surrender on Iwo Jima. Hundreds of Japanese continued to fight after the island was declared secure in 1945.

It was first on "secured" Guadalcanal where infantrymen, specifically Army soldiers, received a baptism by fire in the fine art of extracting diehard Japanese defenders from caves and tunnels without getting themselves killed in the process. It was soldiers of the 147th Regiment who were among the first to employ the tactics of "blowtorch" and "corkscrew" to kill the enemy troops underground.

Orders came down on July 31, 1943, permanently detaching the 147th Regiment from the 37th Division. Between May 1943 and March 1945, the 147th garrisoned various islands including Samoa, New Caledonia, Emirau, and then back to New Caledonia again. While garrisoning Emirau, the 147th Regiment's commander, Col. William B. Tuttle, Jr., insisted on a daily training regimen that sharpened skills on two-man flamethrower ("blowtorch") teams as well



as three-man BAR/satchel charge teams (“Corkscrew”) to perfect tactics in neutralizing enemy strongpoints and hiding places. Tuttle’s troops, even cooks and clerks, were required to become proficient in various Japanese weapons as well.

As December 1944 approached, the unit’s new commander, Colonel Robert F Johnson, informed his regiment, “We’re going right up into Tojo’s front yard.” The location was still classified, but when Johnson added to his remarks, “every man must know this and every man must be prepared,” there could be no doubt that this would be another Pacific perdition.

Mandated troop rotations in the Pacific theater had reduced the number of highly trained and combat experienced troops in the 147th by about 50 percent. Johnson had to essentially start from scratch as he ordered crash courses in such things as amphibious landings, jungle warfare, and marksmanship. The 147th began to load transports on February 24, 1945, and sailed eight days later for Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Eniwetok had been taken a year earlier by the Marines and was now the staging area for the Iwo Jima invasion forces. The 147th had been given the code name of Task Unit 11.1.2. It consisted of three battalions of infantry (approximately 3,000 men), an anti-tank company, a cannon company, and headquarters troops. The 147th arrived at Eniwetok on March 14 and was told that the regiment would remain there until month’s end when it would begin its garrison duties on Iwo.

The reprieve was extremely short lived as that same day Colonel Johnson received orders which read, “Request Task Unit 11.1.2 carrying 147th Inf. be directed proceed to Iwo Jima earliest practicable date.” The men of the 147th were leaving their staging area mere hours after their arrival. They were to be attached to the 3rd Marine Division. By this time, every man knew where they were going, what was happening there, and just how dangerous and desperate the situation must be. The regiment arrived off the coast of Iwo Jima on March 20 at around 1:30 in the afternoon. The soldiers could see as well as smell the smoldering and battered island.

Two years earlier at Guadalcanal, the

147th had fought alongside Marines and the regiment had later garrisoned with them on Emirau. It was thought that few organizations could be as well suited as the 147th Regiment to follow the Marines in at Iwo Jima. The regiment disembarked at “Purple Beach” at dawn on March 21, 1945. The sounds of battle were still very much in the air as the north end of the island had not yet been fully secured. The men were assembled near Airfield No. 2.

Initially, the 147th was to watch the coastline and then assume garrison duties on Iwo eliminating any pockets of resistance and nabbing any enemy stragglers. Those orders were changed after they arrived off the island’s coast. Their new mission would be to effectively join the battle by performing “a relief in place” of elements of the 3rd Marines.

On March 30th, a patrol from the 1st Battalion killed two Japanese sentries at a cave entrance. When the Americans cautiously entered the cave, they discovered a vegetable garden, chickens, a couple of cows, American medical supplies, weapons, and ammunition. The





**ABOVE:** The skeletal remains of Japanese soldiers discovered long after the end of fighting on Iwo Jima attests to the fanatical resolution of the enemy. Some Japanese troops resisted for months after U.S. forces had captured the island. **OPPOSITE:** Moments after a bazooka team fired a round into the entrance, “Cave Men” place small-arms fire on a Japanese-held cave and sniper holes nearby with a Browning Automatic Rifle and Thompson submachine gun. With rugged combat such as this to subdue enemy soldiers, the U.S. Army’s 147th Infantry Regiment wrote the last chapter of the U.S. capture of Iwo Jima.

enemy could steal just as effectively as they could fight.

In order to truly “secure” Iwo, Colonel Johnson decided on the tactical use of combat patrols to engage the enemy, carefully planned ambushes which consisted of skillfully pre-sighted kill zones, and “cave cleanings” conducted by men who would later dub themselves “cave men” consisting of soldiers who would go into the enemy’s caves and tunnels and fight it out with them.

James McGuire of Bravo Company remembered that the cave clearing teams “were equipped with guts, flashlights, and pistols.” James Ahern, a platoon leader in Fox Company, described how courageous and clever the Japanese were in defending their underground sys-

tem. Openings were often defended by marksmen who could pick off soldiers and Marines at a distance. If someone got close enough to throw a grenade, the enemy often had another man “playing outfield” who was prepared to catch the grenade and throw it back. McGuire was twice wounded on the same occasion by this tactic when attacking a cave. He first threw in a phosphorous grenade only to have it fly back at him. He followed up with a fragmentation grenade only to have the same thing occur. He then called up a flamethrower and finally neutralized the cave.

American soldiers equipped with flamethrowers sometimes caused the Japanese to shelter in place in a tunnel or cave, requiring another team to advance on the enemy positions and drop hand grenades or satchel charges into the openings to kill outright, or entomb (corkscrew) the enemy inside. These brutal tactics were often a last resort.

Corporal Edward Mervich of the 147th Regiment wrote, “Our superiors told us that the enemy was more valuable alive because they could write letters home to their families and tell them how good we were treating them. The plan was to convince the Japanese not to resist the invasion of their homeland.”

Technical Sergeant Terry Takeshi Doi, a Nisei (Japanese-American) soldier who was often assisted by Japanese POWs in his work, coaxed many Japanese holdouts into surrendering. Sergeant Doi regularly entered caves and once even approached a pillbox with his shirt removed to show that he was unarmed in an effort to talk to Japanese troops in their native tongue and urge them to follow him to safety. His cumulative efforts convinced many enemy troops to surrender, and he was later awarded the Silver Star for valor.

Food and water, or at least items made to look like supplies, were often used to bait traps for the nocturnal foraging parties consisting of four or five Japanese soldiers. The items were sometimes booby trapped or surrounded by trip wires. Once the waiting Americans were alerted to the presence of enemy troops, a ring of deadly fire would zero in on the pre-sighted area, and any Japanese soldiers caught inside were quickly cut to pieces. Japanese radioman Tsuruji Akikusa (from a naval air



group) was once a part of such a foraging party when he became separated from his comrades. He stumbled onto a cache of American weapons and ammunition but was more interested in finding food and water. When he opened a case of Coca-Cola (something he had never encountered before), he nearly drank himself sick, commenting, “The sweet, carbonated beverage was the most delicious thing I have ever tasted in my life.”

Isolated pockets of Japanese soldiers began to compete amongst themselves for foraged supplies and even resorted to killing each other for food and water. Japanese Ensign Satoru Omagari witnessed many such acts and said later, “My experiences changed me fundamentally. I lost faith in humanity...I encountered no glory on Iwo Jima.”

On April 4, 1945, the 9th Marines left Iwo Jima and responsibility for the entire island fell to the 147th. The official figures as of

March 31 reported that the 147th had killed 387 Japanese and captured 17. Their own losses were eight dead and 53 wounded.

In early April, the Japanese mustered a task force of approximately 200 men who came from underground near an area called East Boat Basin about halfway up the southeast coast of the island. They attacked a command post there, and the ensuing firefight lasted all night. The attack resulted in an explosion of 6,000 cases of dynamite, causing a blast that literally rocked the entire island. There were no Japanese attackers alive by morning. On April 11, Capt. James Kolb of Able Company was leading a squad-sized patrol on the east side of Iwo Jima to set up an ambush when they spotted two Japanese soldiers coming up from a hole near the area where Kolb had planned his ambush site. Kolb’s men opened fire and killed one of the enemy while wounding the other. The wounded Japanese soldier made it back into the hole and returned to his comrades. He was one of 72 men of the 2nd Mixed Brigade, which had a hospital 100 feet below ground.

Kolb summoned his Nisei interpreter, Sergeant Ritsuevo Tanaka, who spoke to the Japanese commander, Maj. Masaru Inoaka, a senior medical officer, and informed him that their only alternatives were surrender or a gruesome death that combined fire with being buried alive. In a move highly unusual for Japanese soldiers during World War II, Inoaka put the matter to his men for a vote. The vote was 69 to 3 in favor of surrender. Corporal Kyutaro Kojima, one of the three “nay” votes, immediately killed himself while the others were helped to the surface and into American captivity. Kolb had just bagged the largest number of enemy POWs taken at any time during the battle for Iwo Jima. The 147th’s figures for April alone

showed 963 Japanese killed and 664 captured. The patrols, ambushes, and cave cleanings were taking their toll. During the days that followed, the Japanese became more willing to surrender. By the end of May 1945, the official month's count for the 147th Regiment was 252 enemy killed and 186 captured.

Lieutenant James Ahern of Fox Company was leading a patrol on June 4 in the northeast quadrant of Iwo Jima when he and his men discovered what appeared to be General Kuribayashi's underground headquarters. There were still Japanese troops inside who refused calls to surrender, so Lt. Joseph "Pappy" Lenoir of the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon was called forward. Lenoir literally had hundreds of gallons of gasoline pumped into the cave and then ordered it ignited. The resulting blast was enhanced by whatever ammunition the Japanese had inside the cave. There were 54 enemy troops who somehow amazingly managed to survive and promptly surrendered. The cave was thoroughly searched, but Kuribayashi's remains were not found there. Again, Americans found the tunnels exceedingly well equipped with military supplies of all kinds. Even so, things were winding down by the end of June. The figures for that month were 17 Japanese killed and 6 captured.

There is no way of knowing how many Japanese were sealed, atomized, or burned to death inside the caves and tunnels of Iwo Jima, but the total figures for enemy casualties inflicted by the 147th Regiment from March 21 to June 30 include 1,602 killed and 867 captured. In contrast, the 147th had lost 15 dead and 144 wounded.

Most of the Japanese captured by the 147th Regiment on Iwo Jima ended up at the POW Camp at Fort Eustis, Virginia, before being repatriated to Japan at the end of the war. The last Japanese holdouts on Iwo Jima turned out to be machine gunners Matsudo Linsoki

and Yamakage Kufuku, who surrendered on January 6, 1949, to U.S. Air Force personnel of the 6000th Support Wing stationed on Iwo Jima (a satellite of Tachikawa Air Base, Japan).

The 1st Battalion of the 147th Regiment was withdrawn from Iwo Jima at the end of June, 1945, and sent to the island of Tinian in the Marianas to help provide security for the Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers that were soon to drop the atomic bombs on Japan. The personnel of the 147th's cannon and anti-tank companies were converted into infantry to help with the final mopping up on Iwo Jima.

On May 5, a force of 111 men from Charlie Company and 39 from Bravo Company left Iwo Jima to scout the island of Minami some 35 miles to the southeast. It was a volcanic rock of just one and one-half square miles that had nothing on it but a wrecked Japanese plane and a single Korean laborer who was immediately taken prisoner. That day, on the southeast end of Minami, the Army had a flag raising of its own.

Six days after the formal Japanese surrender that ended World War II, the 147th Regiment was sent to Okinawa, performing occupation duty there until December 8, 1945, when it was sent back to the States. The regiment was deactivated on Christmas Day.

In a commendation letter, Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson, commander of U.S. Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Area, wrote, "(The) members of the 147th Infantry Regiment, whose mission was the destruction of the Japanese forces remaining on Iwo Jima after organized resistance had ended, displayed consistent courage and combat ingenuity in dealing with an enemy determined upon a course of fanatical resistance. Despite conditions of terrain and placement favorable to the Japanese, morale remained at a high level and few casualties were sustained. The military proficiency and devotion to duty constantly managed by the regiment were in great measure responsible for the final security of a vital advance base." □

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



**ABOVE:** American soldiers share cigarettes with Japanese POWs on Iwo Jima. The "Cave Men" of the U.S. Army's 147th Infantry Regiment completed the hazardous task of killing or capturing diehard Japanese soldiers hiding underground on the island after it was declared secure. **OPPOSITE:** U.S. Army Air Forces Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bombers are shown on one of Iwo Jima's three airfields. American bombers damaged during raids on the Japanese home islands frequently landed at Iwo Jima, even as the fighting continued to rout out stubborn Japanese defenders in the island's extensive system of caves and tunnels.

# MALTA: Bastion in the Mediterranean

The tiny island of Malta and its resilient people proved a thorn in the side of the Axis during pivotal operations in the Mediterranean and North Africa. **BY MARTIN J. DOUGHERTY**



Following an extensive modernization, the battleship HMS Warspite sails past the battlecruiser HMS Hood at Grand Harbor, Valletta, Malta, in 1938. The tiny Mediterranean island became a bastion of British resistance to the Nazis during World War II as aircraft and submarines attacked German supply convoys bound for North Africa. However, the Maltese endured heavy bombing and reached the brink of starvation in the process.

**M**ore or less in the center of the Mediterranean Sea, Malta became one of the most strategic locations in all of World War II. As a powerful threat to Axis operations in the Mediterranean, it was under near-constant attack from 1940-1942, before the Allies could break the siege from sea and air.

Yet in and of itself, Malta was merely a small group of islands close to Italy, of no great value to the Axis as a base and with no industrial contribution to make. It was only when Italy's Benito Mussolini launched his North African campaign that Malta became so critical as a platform for Allied operations that Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly said that if Malta fell, he would strive for the best possible terms of surrender.

The Allied position in the early months of the war was complex. The German invasion of Norway in April 1940 was followed by an

advance into Belgium and France in May, presenting a clear and immediate threat to the British Isles. Already lagging behind in the race to rearm, Britain needed to look to her home defense—yet at the same time she had a worldwide empire to defend.

Egypt was critical to the Allied war effort and potentially to that of the Axis. Control of the Suez Canal was vital to a maritime strategy which called for warships to be transferred to the Pacific if war with Japan broke out and to the movement of supplies and troops from India and other parts of the Empire. If the Suez Canal could not be used, Allied shipping would be forced to make the longer voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, tying up more merchant tonnage for longer at a time when losses from Nazi U-boats were mounting.

Air power based in Italy, and the threat of attack by the Italian navy, made the Mediterranean extremely hazardous for Allied ship-





Imperial War Museum

ping. The threat was sufficient to require heavily defended convoys. However, while control of the sea was disputed these air and naval assets were tied down. The loss of Malta would reduce the Allies' ability to challenge Italian control of the Mediterranean, while if Egypt fell, all the assets tied up in the contest would be freed for use elsewhere.

Control of Egypt also potentially granted access to the oil fields of Iraq, which were coveted by the Axis powers. With their assistance, a coup in 1941 temporarily created a pro-Axis state which was ultimately defeated by minor Allied forces based there. The loss of Egypt would have permitted Axis intervention and more than likely made the situation permanent. At the same time, Axis possession of Egypt would have threatened Allied oil supplies from the Middle East. Malta was key for the defense of Egypt, though not always directly.

Unified into a country in 1861, Italy came late to the colonial scramble but managed to obtain holdings in North Africa. Expanding these and gaining new territories was a driving factor for Mussolini. He began in 1935 with an invasion of Ethiopia, and in 1939 Italy launched a campaign against Albania. This was rapidly successful, giving Italy control over the entrance to Aegean Sea.

Italy entered World War II in June 1940, and began making preparations for a campaign into North Africa. Understrength and lacking some equipment, Allied forces in Egypt had to contend with the possibility of attack from two directions. A direct advance into Egypt was



BAE Systems

**ABOVE:** Royal Air Force Gloster Sea Gladiator N5525 of Hal Far Flight Malta. When the sustained German and Italian air bombardment of Malta began, the defenders had only a few Gladiators and Fairey Albacore torpedo bombers on the island, neither well suited to fight off Axis bombers or take on Luftwaffe Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters in the air. **TOP:** A mule-drawn cart delivers supplies to the ground crew preparing a Fairey Albacore torpedo bomber for action on the island of Malta. Fuel was constantly in short supply, and such methods of delivery helped to stretch available resources for critical uses. This photo was taken in 1942.

possible from Libya and forces positioned in the Italian colonies in Somaliland, Eritrea and Ethiopia threatened British Somaliland.

In early August 1940, Italian and local troops seized British Somaliland. Though it was a blow to British prestige, the defenders were evacuated by sea and made available elsewhere. Indeed, it can be argued that the loss of British Somaliland improved the strategic position for the Allies by doing away with the need to defend a low-value area.

Success in British Somaliland also freed up Italian forces for a possible push through French Somaliland and into Egypt, and while this threat never materialized, Allied commanders had to account for the possibility. In the meantime, Italian forces in Libya launched their offensive in September. After managing to advance as far as Sidi Barrani, a pause was necessary to build up supplies for a renewed attack. As the Italians dug in, the British planned an attack.

The Allied counteroffensive began in December. Italian resistance collapsed in the face of

armored assaults and flanking movements. The Italian armored force was largely equipped with tankettes, which had proven effective in the Spanish Civil War and subsequent minor conflicts. But they were no match for real tanks and the Italian army was soon in full retreat.

British propaganda made much of the Italian collapse, creating a lasting impression that Italian troops lacked courage. This was not the case, though they were unenthusiastic about the war they had been sent to fight. Overmatched in equipment, particularly armored vehicles, and dangling at the end of a long supply line, the Italian force was impressive on paper but unprepared for the conflict in which it found itself engaged.

Thus began a long retreat over the narrow coastal strip of North Africa. With the terrain

Imperial War Museum



Wikimedia



**ABOVE:** Many of the Axis air sorties flown against Malta originated from airfields on the island of Sicily. In this photo, crewmen service a Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter belonging to Jagdgeschwader 27 (JG 27), a Luftwaffe fighter wing based in Sicily. **TOP:** The damage from continual Axis air bombardment is evident in this image of Kingsway, now known as Republic Street, on the island of Malta. The city of Valletta was devastated in the spring of 1942, and this photo was taken during that terrible April.

inland unsuited to vehicles, the coast route was the only viable avenue of advance or retreat. The North African campaign would see Allied troops harry their enemies one way then be forced back along the same route—back and forth until the tide finally turned. For now, however, the pursuit broke the Italian force. By early February, the Allies had defeated their opponents at El Agheila and taken well over 100,000 prisoners.

Malta's value as a base for air and maritime forces was readily apparent. If the convoy route could be kept open, Malta offered the chance to provide air cover; if not, then its aircraft could assist in the struggle for control of the Mediterranean. At this point in the conflict the capabilities of aircraft against major warships were not fully appreciated, but the sinking of the German light cruiser *Konigsburg* in April 1940 might have suggested the role air power was to play.

Malta was ideally placed to support such operations against the Italian fleet, but there were grave doubts as to whether the island could be held against attack. In the 1930s, British military thinkers decided that Malta was highly vulnerable in any future war and relocated the Mediterranean Fleet to Alexandria, in Egypt. Little effort was made to prepare the island for defense, as this was deemed a waste of resources. This position was revised in July 1939, with a decision to send additional anti-aircraft weapons.

Despite being lauded as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier,” Malta was a low priority for aircraft assignments. Only a handful of fighters were based there at the outbreak of war, with a few others awaiting assembly. The aircraft were Gloucester Sea Gladiators, a navalised variant of the Gladiator fighter which was introduced in 1937—the same year the Luftwaffe received the rather more impressive Messerschmitt Bf-109.

Although it had a glazed cockpit and some modern features, the Gladiator belonged to an earlier era. Built of wood and canvas, Gladiators often caught fire and their armament of four .303-caliber machine guns was adequate, at best. Its only advantage was maneuverability. The exact number of aircraft available at any given time is difficult to determine, as some were cannibalized for



All: Imperial War Museum

**ABOVE:** The Royal Navy aircraft carrier *HMS Argus* lands Supermarine Spitfire fighter planes during a ferry mission. The planes were slated for delivery to the island of Malta to boost its air defense capabilities in the spring of 1942. **RIGHT:** Taken from the aircraft carrier *HMS Victorious*, this photo shows a Hawker Hurricane fighter on the deck of *Victorious* while a Fairey Albacore biplane torpedo bomber takes off from the deck of the aircraft carrier *HMS Indomitable*, and the aircraft carrier *HMS Eagle* is shown in the background. This image was taken at sea in August 1942.



spare parts and others repaired, while replacements were put together from those in storage. There is a popular belief that at one point there were just three or four airworthy Gladiators. In reality, the number was probably greater than that—but not much.

In addition to land-based air defenses and a handful of obsolete fighters, Malta was protected by two gunboats and the Erebus-class monitor *HMS Terror*. Commissioned in 1916, *HMS Terror* mounted two 15-inch guns and had received a considerable anti-aircraft armament upgrade during a 1939 refit. These vessels were of questionable value against a major naval attack but entirely sufficient to make an amphibious assault unviable.

The Italian offensive against Malta opened in June 1940 with air attacks against the island. On the first day of the assault, no Allied planes could get into the air as the runways were still under construction. After this it became possible to get Gladiators in the air, though at times the island's interception capability was limited to a single fighter.

Even at this juncture, Malta had the poten-

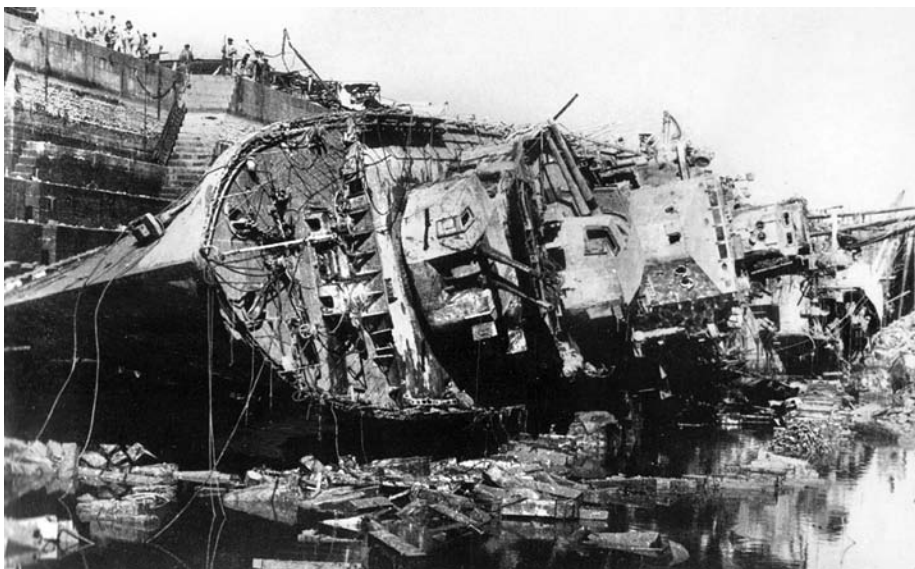
tial to strike at Axis shipping by acting as a base for submarines. This capability was expanded by the arrival of a force of Fairey Swordfish of the Fleet Air Arm. The Swordfish was known as the “stringbag,” not in a derogatory way but for its ability to handle almost any task in the same way a string bag could accommodate odd-shaped objects. Capable of carrying bombs, torpedoes or depth charges, the Swordfish was obsolete but still effective. Raids from Malta sank an Italian destroyer and caused damage to the port at Augusta.

Reinforcement continued in July, with the arrival of 12 Hawker Hurricane fighters delivered by the carrier *HMS Argus*. This was achieved by launching the aircraft off at the point where the ships needed to turn around to avoid the Italian fleet. A miscalculation could result in the fighters having too little fuel to reach the island and no alternative landing point. Multiple aircraft were lost during an attempted reinforcement in November 1940.

The fighters were effective to the point that some pilots reported Italian bombers discarding their ordnance and racing for home at the sight of a couple of Hurricanes, but turnover was



**ABOVE:** Lashed to the destroyers HMS *Penn* and HMS *Ledbury*, the British-flagged tanker *Ohio* makes port at Grand Harbor, Malta, on August 15, 1942. *Ohio* was one of five supply ships from an original complement of 14 that comprised the Pedestal convoy. Pedestal was ravaged by Axis attacks en route to Malta, but enough supplies reached port to sustain the garrison and civilian population. **LEFT:** The destroyer HMS *Kingston* was declared a constructive total loss after being heavily damaged by Axis aircraft. The warship lies on its side in dry dock at Malta on April 11, 1942.



sance aircraft, the British force came under heavy but ineffective air attack as it maneuvered to get between the Italian fleet and its base at Taranto. The two fleets engaged the next day, resulting in an inconclusive encounter fought mostly at long ranges. Torpedo attacks by Swordfish aircraft flown off the carrier HMS *Eagle* proved ineffective, and Italian air attacks similarly failed to do much damage.

high. With few spares available, aircraft had to be cannibalized to keep others flying, and losses were continuous. However, the defenders of Malta continued to exact a toll on the Italian air force. Malta had endured a great siege before, but this time she was besieged—and defended—from the sky.

The Italian Army's campaign in North Africa was dependent on supplies shipped into Libya. These convoys were harassed by aircraft and submarines operating out of Malta, inflicting losses and tying down vessels as escorts. It was not possible to completely interdict the supply lines, but each sinking contributed to the defeat of the Italian Army.

In early July 1940, heavy units of both the British and Italian fleets were at sea. The Italian force was covering a supply convoy bound for Benghazi, Libya. This was the first large-scale resupply operation since the outbreak of war and was carrying urgently needed fuel, munitions, personnel, and armored vehicles. The escort consisted of destroyers and torpedo boats, with a cruiser group and a heavy force of battleships and cruisers nearby should they be required.

The British were protecting a supply convoy to Malta and one engaged in evacuating civilians. Their dispositions included a cruiser group, a single battleship and escorting destroyers, and a force of two battleships, an aircraft carrier and destroyers. While the convoys were the priority, the British commanders considered a clash with the Italian Navy to be desirable.

Although the battle of Calabria was inconclusive, both sides claimed victory. This was not unreasonable; the convoys got through and some damage was inflicted upon the enemy. With the strength of surface forces more or less equal and the Royal Navy operating from distant bases, the main maritime threat to Italian convoys was the force of submarines based in Malta. These inflicted losses but suffered accordingly.

Even when not at sea, the submarines were vulnerable. Plans to construct bombproof pens for the submarine force were scrapped before the war. The only option was to try to hide them by submerging when an air attack

What became known as the “battle of Calabria” began on July 8. Detected by reconnais-

began. This was largely successful, but for the wrong reasons. A downed enemy pilot was asked why the Axis air forces were not attempting to bomb the submarines, to which he replied that pilots were ordered to ignore them. So badly hidden were the boats that the enemy assumed they were decoys. A more serious threat to the submarine force was naval mines, liberally laid by the Italian forces around Malta to make resupply difficult and as barriers around the naval supply lines.

Despite these hazards the submarine force, designated the Tenth Submarine Flotilla, pressured the Italian supply lines as best it could. The difficulty of supplying Malta meant that sufficient torpedoes were never available, so commanders were ordered to pass up all but the most lucrative targets such as tankers or major warships. Had they possessed sufficient ordnance, the submariners might have inflicted much greater losses on enemy shipping, but instead they were placed in a vulnerable position without gaining full advantage from their forward deployment.

Despite prewar planning for an invasion of Malta, it was clear that the Italian forces would not be able to capture the island by direct assault. Air attacks were failing to wear down the defenders quickly enough, and accusations were made that Italian aviators were not sufficiently aggressive. From January 1941, Luftwaffe squadrons began arriving in Sicily and launching attacks against Malta.

Many of the aircraft were Junkers Ju-87 Stukas—excellent dive bombers, but slow and vulnerable to interception. Allied pilots soon learned that a Stuka was an easy target while making its dive to attack. Hurricane pilots would wait above the enemy formations, breaking off one by one to chase a Stuka in its dive. Closing fast from behind against a predictable target, kills were so common that this kind of attack became known as a “Stuka Party.” To be shot down by a Ju-87 rear gunner under these circumstances was a source of great embarrassment.

Having increased the pressure on Malta, the Luftwaffe squadrons based in Sicily were given a wider role revolving around attacks on Allied shipping. Capital ships were prime targets, and especially aircraft carriers. Originally seen as a support element for the bat-



Imperial War Museum



Wikimedia

**ABOVE:** British ground crewmen prepare to take a midday break as they service aircraft for the defense of Malta on January 20, 1943. Several men are seen finishing their task to keep a Supermarine Spitfire fighter serviceable. Fuel was a precious commodity on Malta, and these men used bicycles quite frequently to move from airfields to other facilities. **TOP:** Hawker Hurricane Mk II fighters of No. 185 Squadron RAF are lined up at Hal Far on the island of Malta. Although the Allies reinforced the air defenses of Malta several times, combat losses reduced their strength significantly during the battle for supremacy in the Mediterranean. **OPPOSITE:** The aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* is shown at Grand Harbor, Malta. A pre-World War I super dreadnought built for the Chilean Navy, *Eagle* was purchased by Great Britain and converted into an aircraft carrier. The carrier's crew served heroically until *Eagle* was sunk by the German submarine *U-73* in 1942.

tlehips, the effectiveness of carriers was now being fully appreciated. In November 1940, Swordfish from HMS *Illustrious* entered Taranto harbor and inflicted heavy damage on the battleships of the Italian Navy, not only putting ships out of action for a time but prompting a move to the greater security of Naples.

The Taranto raid tipped the balance of power in the Mediterranean for a time, and the change of home base impeded Italian naval efficiency. This did not prevent a successful sortie on November 17, just five days after the Taranto raid. The intent was to prevent reinforcement of Malta's air strength, and in that it succeeded. The British force turned back to Gibraltar after launching its aircraft, most of which had insufficient fuel for the transit. Another reinforcement operation was launched in late November, and once again the Italian Navy sortied to intercept it. The result was an inconclusive naval engagement off Cape Spartivento on November 27.

The Allied decision to send troops to Greece, starting in March 1941, was made necessary by the German move to assist Italy in conquering the region. Italy had been at war with Greece since October 1940, but without German intervention the campaign had stalled. Moving troops from North Africa weakened the Allied position there and exposed the escorting naval assets to attack. On January 10, 1941, while providing air cover for the troop convoys, HMS *Illustrious* was attacked by Ju-87s. At the time her fighters were out of position and, severely damaged, the carrier headed for Malta to make repairs.



Wikimedia

There was really no alternative for *Illustrious* than to head for Malta. With her steering out of action, she could only be guided using her engines. However, Malta was anything but a safe port. While repairs were being made, the carrier was a large and static target, suffering further damage from air raids while in dock. *Illustrious* was able to escape from Malta on January 23, going first to Alexandria and ultimately to the United States for major repairs.

In late March, the British carriers achieved a measure of revenge when aircraft from HMS *Formidable* temporarily immobilized the Italian battleship *Vittorio Veneto* and crippled the cruiser *Pola* off Cape Matapan. This engagement, the Battle of Cape Matapan, came about as a result of an Italian sortie to intercept Allied troop convoys to Greece. While the heavy units of the Italian force were able to leave the battle area, *Pola* and a force sent to assist her were caught after dark at point-blank range by a British force that had trained extensively for night actions. The Italian Navy lost three cruisers and two destroyers, inflicting virtually no damage in return.

While the British were weakening their forces in North Africa in order to assist Greece, the Axis presence in North Africa was greatly strengthened. Days after the Italian defeat at El Agheila, German troops began landing in Libya. After a period spent acclimating and reorganizing, this new "Afrika Korps" launched its first offensive in March 1941. German tanks were vastly more potent than their Italian counterparts and, more importantly, they were well handled. Close cooperation between infantry and armor resulted in defeat for the less well coordinated British forces, compelling them to retreat.

Logistics played a huge part in the desert war. Just supplying enough water to drink and fill vehicle radiators required fleets of trucks, which in turn needed fuel and supplies for their crews. The supply line could be shortened by possession of a port close to the battle area, and to this end Tobruk in Libya was a major Axis objective. Although the Allies were driven back past Tobruk, it remained in the hands of Australian troops, forcing the Afrika Korps to operate at the end of a long supply line.

Meanwhile, losses suffered at the hands of Allied fighters over Malta prompted the deploy-

ment of German fighter squadrons. Not only were the pilots experienced and well-trained, their BF-109 fighters were superior in performance to the Hurricanes used by the Allies. Losses quickly mounted, with damaged aircraft cannibalized to keep a rapidly depleting force operational. More Hurricanes were brought in, but the Axis powers enjoyed near-complete air superiority over Malta.

The presence of an effective Axis fighter force made it impossible to launch air strikes from the island and reduced the defenders' ability to inflict losses on raiding aircraft. Malta was forced onto the defensive, fighting for survival rather than acting as a base to interfere with enemy convoy operations.

Despite these hazards, a destroyer force was assembled and based out of Malta. This exposed ships to air attack when in port but allowed some pressure to be put on the Axis convoys heading to Africa. This lasted until May, when the force was reassigned to the battle for Crete. During this time, Axis air power dominated the central Mediterranean, allowing their convoys to go through almost unopposed and making the area untenable



Wikimedia

for Allied vessels. British Reinforcement attempts brought in a few extra planes now and then, but not nearly enough to fend off the constant bombing raids.

This desperate situation continued even after German fighter squadrons were transferred to the new Eastern Front in June 1941. The air warfare capability of Malta, though determined, was feeble, and the Italian Air Force continued to pound the island on a daily basis. It was not enough for the island to endure; with the Afrika Korps threatening to drive into Egypt, Malta had to find a way to mount an offensive against the Axis supply convoys.

The only solution was major reinforcement of Malta's air forces, and the provision of large quantities of spares and supplies. This began in June 1941, with convoy GM1 driving through from Gibraltar to Malta. Despite attacks by aircraft, torpedo boats, and submarines the convoy reached Grand Harbour in Malta, delivering the first of several shipments of supplies.

Malta's strength increased through the late summer, to the point where a bomber force was once again able to operate from the island. Defenses and aircraft maintenance capabilities were improved, the latter greatly increasing the efficiency of the air units operating from the island—making it a possible staging area for supplies headed for Egypt.

This activity was strongly opposed from the

**ABOVE:** A ground crew services a Supermarine Spitfire V fighter of No. 603 Squadron RAF in a revetment of sand-filled empty fuel cans at Ta Kali, Malta. A British soldier and sailor pitch in to assist with the refueling and rearming of the aircraft. **OPPOSITE:** Lt. David McCampbell, launching officer aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp*, gets the ready signal from the pilot of a British RAF Supermarine Spitfire fighter in preparation for takeoff during a ferry mission to the island of Malta. In this photo from *Wasp's* second ferry mission on May 9, 1942, a Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter is seen with wings folded in the background. McCampbell went on to be the highest scoring U.S. Navy fighter ace of World War II in the Pacific with 34 aerial victories.

air and at sea. In late July an attack was made by Italian small-boat raiders, which was repulsed by coastal artillery with heavy losses. Despite such efforts Malta grew in strength. Forces based there had a profound effect on the flow of supplies into North Africa. What got ashore had then to be conveyed hundreds of miles to the Afrika Korps, greatly limiting its capacity for offensive operations against Tobruk.

Allied attempts to relieve Tobruk were unsuccessful during the summer, but in November 1941 a renewed Allied drive struck the Afrika Korps as it was making another attempt to take the port. The deciding factor here was supply levels. Almost out of fuel after days of heavy fighting, the Afrika Korps was forced to retreat with just a handful of tanks remaining operational.

The transfer of German fighter squadrons to the Eastern Front had permitted Allied pilots to gain control of the skies around Malta, but in January 1942 it seemed that the Soviet Union might already be defeated. Powerful Luftwaffe air groups returned to Sicily, inflicting heavy casualties on Allied strikes out of Malta and on the island's fighter force.

The outmatched Hurricane pilots petitioned for Spitfires, which could meet the Bf-109 on equal terms, and from March the first aircraft began to arrive. Once again the method of delivery was to fly the aircraft off a carrier at the closest point of approach. While this did away with the necessity of fighting a convoy all the way through and risking contact with the extensive minefields around Malta, it was slow and inefficient. Nevertheless, the arrival of Spitfires enabled Allied pilots to defend the island even if little power could be projected from it.

Luftwaffe control of the air cleared the way for supply convoys into Libya, enabling German forces there to regain their strength. Having been driven all the way back to El Agheila, the Afrika Korps remained on the defensive until January 1942. By this time it was the Allies who were suffering logistics problems, forcing them to fall back on a defensive line running through Gazala. This held up the German advance until May 1942, when the line was breached by a new offensive. Tobruk was taken, greatly shortening the Axis supply line, and the Allies were

driven all the way back to El Alamein just inside the Egyptian frontier.

It was here that the Afrika Korps launched its final major offensive in North Africa. Despite a critical shortage of fuel caused by Allied attacks on the convoys and supply lines, an out-flanking movement was planned to take place near Alam el Halfa. Such assaults were the trademark of the German armored forces but relied on sufficient fuel. Allied reinforcements would soon make the situation untenable for the Axis forces, so the decision was made to launch the attack and hope a tanker got through in time.

As the battle raged from the end of August until September 5, Allied air power interdicted the Axis supply routes. Ships carrying fuel were sunk, crippling the armored forces, and after days of hard fighting the offensive was repulsed. An immediate Allied counterattack might have been a disaster, running into prepared anti-tank positions as others had in the past, but this time the Allies were content to wait for reinforcements and prepare a decisive blow.

The Axis leaders had considered an invasion of Malta even before the war, and various plans were put forward for an invasion using paratroopers as well as an amphibious landing. Such an assault required air superiority, which the Axis powers currently enjoyed. However, the arrival of more Spitfires gradually tipped the balance.

Although the Allied “club runs,” as the delivery operations were known, tied up aircraft carriers and their escorts, they were essential to thwarting the proposed invasion. As Axis aircraft losses mounted it became apparent that Malta could not be successfully assaulted. Its ability to interfere with Axis supply convoys could be suppressed by continued air attacks, but the island’s powerful fighter defenses were inflicting a fearful toll in return.

Malta was entirely dependent on supplies brought in by sea. Submarines could bring a little cargo, but for the fighters to remain operational it was necessary to push large convoys through to the island. By late summer 1942, the situation was desperate. Even basics such as food and clothing were in short supply, while lack of ammunition and fuel crippled the island’s defense.

To restore the situation, the Allies launched two convoys—one from Gibraltar and one from Egypt—under heavy naval escort. The latter was forced to turn back after running low on ammunition, but part of the Gibraltar convoy reached Malta. Both sides lost heavily in a series of engagements along the way.

A renewed effort to resupply Malta was made in August. Codenamed “Operation Pedestal,” this was one of the pivotal moments of the war. Malta’s fuel supplies were all but exhausted, and without air cover the island could not be defended. Everything depended on getting a

tanker through to Malta, but resistance was heavy. The Allies lost HMS *Eagle* along with a cruiser, three destroyers, and most of the merchant ships.

The convoy became dispersed, making defense even more of a problem than it had been. During the worst of the voyage, one destroyer captain reportedly said that so long as there was anything afloat he would put his ship beside it and fight through to Malta. This officer was a survivor of the Convoy PQ17 disaster far to the north, and made good on his word. Almost 24 hours after the rest of the convoy, the heavily damaged tanker *Ohio* was towed into Malta by three destroyers. The fuel she carried revitalized the defense of the island.

Finally able to operate fighters in strength, the defenders of Malta changed their tactics. More aggressive interceptions using larger forces inflicted heavy losses on the Axis air raids. Among other results, this reduced the pressure on the island’s submarine force. For some time its base had been a target for heavy attack, greatly hampering the force’s offensive capability, but now it became possible to operate more freely. Combined with air attacks on shipping, this once again impacted the Axis convoys into North Africa.

When the Axis advance had stalled near El Alamein, the Allies did not launch an imme-

*Continued on page 98*

Naval History and Heritage Command





Hitler, far right, with other German soldiers in World War I. He considered his war experience vital to his leadership, but it was out-dated two decades later.

## Hitler's Great War service led to a mania for powerful weapons, at the expense of trucks and supply chains.

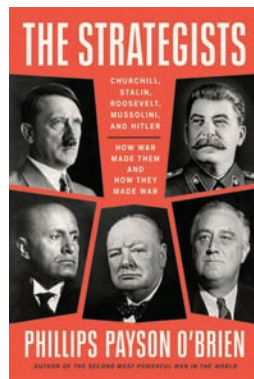
**A**dolf Hitler served in a Bavarian regiment on the Western Front during nearly all of World War I. He reached the rank of corporal and served mainly as a dispatch runner. The future Führer received two injuries during his service, the first a wound during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and the second a blinding by mustard gas in 1918. Most veterans of that conflict did not relish the memory of such things, but Hitler thought it was a wonderful experience, full of meaning and importance for him. Before the war he had been a drifter with no apparent future. His military service gave him the purpose he so desperately needed.

During World War I Hitler became fascinated by large, powerful weapons. The heavy caliber howitzers and mortars the German army used against the British and French gave him a sense of power and awe. When tanks appeared on the battlefield Germany struggled to respond to them, building only a few

of their own and using captured examples when they could. Hitler saw in them power and brute force, preferring the heavier models which emphasized firepower and armor protection over the lighter, faster models. Over time, these beliefs solidified into dogma in his mind.

Decades later, on October 28, 1941, the former corporal ruled Germany, Austria and seven occupied nations in Europe. By that evening the Axis forces had just captured nearly 750,000 Soviet troops around Kyiv in Ukraine. Hitler sat in his headquarters in East Prussia eating his customary vegetarian meal with sparkling mineral water, confident that his genius and leadership was about to give Germany another great victory. He regaled his dinner companions with tales of his experiences, including Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge, commander of German 4th Army.

Along with his fellow general officers, Kluge had cause for worry, however. The



# ★ WAR ★ THUNDER



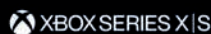
New?  
GET YOUR  
**FREE**  
BONUS

Over 700 of historically accurate aircraft and ground vehicles

**PLAY NOW FOR FREE**  
**WARTHUNDER.COM/FLY**



Windows



12

www.pegi.info

## 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](http://www.RegimentalColors.com)

f G+

Wholesale welcome!

OVER 3.5" TALL!

## 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](http://www.realwarphotos.com)

## Jessen's Relics

military memorabilia

Specializing in Original Militaria 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](mailto:ahjessen@mindspring.com)

[www.jessensrelics.com](http://www.jessensrelics.com)

## New and Noteworthy

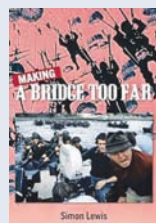
**Clearing the Way: U.S. Army Engineers in World War II** (Chris McNab, Casemate Books, 2024, \$29.95, HC) Covers the vital role of military engineers using original manuals and field reports.



**Tenth Army Commander: The World War II Diary of Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr.** (Edited by Christopher Kolakowski, Casemate Books, 2024, \$34.95, HC) Buckner led the U.S. Tenth Army during the Battle of Okinawa and died in action on June 18, 1945.



**Through Blood and Brotherhood: Comrades and Enemies in Yugoslavia** (Brian R. Johnson, Casemate Books, 2024, \$34.95, HC) From the diary of a young German conscript in occupied Yugoslavia, with many original photographs.



**Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps** (Ian Baxter, Pen and Sword Books, 2024, \$26.95, SC) From the publisher's *Images of War* series, its photographs show how the camps were freed and what the Allies found when they did.

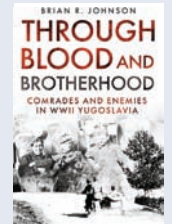
**The German Way of War: A Lesson in Tactical Management** (Jaap Jan Brouwer, Pen and Sword Books, 2024, \$26.95, SC) The author provides examples of German military prowess, arguing they were tactically superior to Allied forces.

**Making A Bridge Too Far** (Simon Lewis, Goodknight Books, 2024, \$29.95, HC) Delves into how the classic World War II film was made and how the cast and crew strived to make it an such an epic.



**Jagdpanzer** (Thomas Anderson, Osprey Publishing, 2024, \$50, HC) Goes into detail on the employment, organization and history of German self-propelled antitank guns.

**U.S. Army Ford M8 and M20 Armored Cars** (Dider Andres, Casemate Books, 2024, \$39.95, HC) These vehicles saw wide use in reconnaissance and cavalry units. Well illustrated and of interest for modelers and vehicle historians.



forces in the east were winning great victories but their logistic support was precarious. With the Soviets destroying their rail lines, the Germans needed hundreds of thousands of trucks to keep their troops supplied. Germany could not make enough of its own trucks, so it used vehicles from captured territories, but this only increased the logistical strain by requiring a variety of spare parts and tires. German forces had to take frequent pauses for supplies to catch up.

Hitler did not care about the pace. "It's the infantryman who sets the pace with his legs," he told his guests. What German soldiers needed were more powerful tanks and artillery, not trucks. The German army did not need to move fast so much as it needed to hit hard. Hitler pushed this view on his soldiers; after all his genius had gotten them this far. Within a few months, however, the inex-

orable German advance was stopped, its troops freezing in the Russian winter, desperate for warm clothing and working trucks. Hitler still pushed his viewpoint; for the rest of the war Germany got bigger and more powerful tanks and wonder weapons, but never had enough trucks.

Hitler and the leaders of the other major western combatant nations all brought experiences of prior conflicts with them to their roles as commanders-in-chief. In Hitler's case, it led to initial success but eventually to utter defeat. The stories of how their pasts informed their wartime actions is thoroughly relayed in *The Strategists: Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt, Mussolini and Hitler—How War Made Them and How They Made War* (Phillips Payson O'Brien, Dutton Books, New York NY, 2024, 544 pp., notes, bibliography, index, \$30, HC).

This book delves into the backgrounds of its

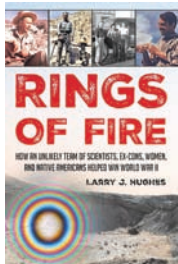
subjects in great detail, but with a clear narrative that gives the reader a thorough understanding. The depth of research is apparent. The author further succeeds in winding together the disparate stories of these five men to show how their actions and interactions affected the course of the war. This book is readable and enjoyably so. The work deftly reveals how knowing what influences a leader's mindset allows insight into how they will decide, act and react under the stress of war.



**Destroyer Captain: The Life of Ernest E. Evans** (James D. Hornfischer and David J. Hornfischer, Caliber Press, New York, NY, 2024, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$20, SC)

Lieutenant Commander Ernest E. Evans arrived at his new command, USS *Johnston* (DD-557) at the Seattle-Tacoma shipyard. The ship had yet to be completed; workers were still welding and riveting. Still, he thought the ship was beautiful, with its five 5-inch gun turrets, two quintuple torpedo tubes and clean profile. His job now meant getting the Fletcher-class destroyer ready for combat. When the ship was commissioned on October 27, 1943, Evans spoke to his assembled crew. His words to them were clear, unambiguous. "This is going to be a fighting-ship. I intend to go in harm's way and anyone who doesn't want to go along had better get off right now."

Evans proved true to his word. He did not survive the war, though he earned a posthumous Medal of Honor for his actions at the Battle off Samar on October 25, 1944. This biography reveals the man and his courage as a naval officer. The author is a known and accomplished Pacific War historian with several prior books to his credit. This one compares favorably with his established body of work.

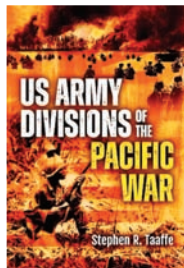


**Rings of Fire: How an Unlikely Team of Scientists, Ex-Cons, Women and Native Americans Helped Win World War II** (Larry J. Hughes, Stackpole Books, Lanham MD, 2024, 600 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibli-

ography, index, \$34.95, HC)

The Polaroid Optical Ring Sight greatly increased the accuracy of gunners. It is little known that the creation of this sighting system was the result of a combined effort of a disparate group of Americans, including optics experts, miners, moonshiners, Soldiers, Marines, and even an artist. Many of them worked on finding and mining the calcite crystals needed for the sight's function. Some had to overcome personal obstacles in their efforts, but soon they were making ring sights for anti-aircraft guns, Naval vessels, aircraft and even bazookas. Postwar, they found use in camera systems, including those used by NASA in the Apollo Program.

Readers are treated to a curious and unknown story of the war in this new book. Weapons and their effects are often discussed, but the background as to how most of them are created and produced is rarely mentioned. This book is a clever mix of history and geology come together to tell a new story of the war.



**U.S. Army Divisions of the Pacific War** (Stephen R. Taaffe, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2024, 222 pp., maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, \$34.95, HC)

The Marine Corps fielded 484,000 troops in the Pacific during the war; the US Army contributed 1.77 million. It sent nineteen infantry and one airborne division into the Pacific theater, along with numerous supporting units. Ten of these divisions were National Guard units, often overlooked despite their overall good service. The rest were a mix of Regular Army and units raised during the war. Despite the army's attempt to make each unit uniform, over time they all developed their own unique features, traditions and ethos. Leadership featured prominently in a division's battlefield performance. In the end they played their part in defeating Imperial Japan at a cost of 188,000 casualties, far less than expected. While the Marine Corps richly deserves its accolades, it is a little-known truth the US Army played the largest role in the ground.

This book seeks to redress an imbalance in the coverage of U.S. Army units in the Pacific Theater and succeeds with its detailed writing and smooth chronological narrative. Each divi-

# 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](mailto:gpete2000@aol.com)

# Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

## INTERESTING BUT FLAWED PVP EMERGES ALONG WITH MORE CONTENT FOR A SOLID STRATEGY OUTING

### WORLD WAR ARMIES

PUBLISHER HYPEMASTERS, INC. • GENRE STRATEGY • SYSTEM PC • AVAILABLE NOW

In the realm of competitive World War II games, there are plenty of options out there for folks who want to go head-to-head against like-minded wargamers. One recent crack at PvP (Player versus Player) arrived earlier this year in the form of *World War Armies*, which ultimately proves interesting while falling victim to the pitfalls of its genre.



On the surface, *World War Armies* has a ton of promise. It's a cross-platform real-time strategy game that pits players against one another across the various platforms on which it's available. You can build up your own unique deck—including over 70 units you can unlock as you progress—and win battles by capturing strategic points across the map. It's a formula that's incredibly familiar, but also somewhat novel in the setting of cross-platform play. Unfortunately, game-crashing bugs are just a portion of what takes *World War Armies* from intriguing to occasionally egregious.

Out of all the complaints one might have about the multi-player experience, there's a single demerit that can be found in all too many mobile and mobile-adjacent games. With the ability to purchase superior units, there is very much a pay-to-win issue at play depending on who your opponent is. The matchmaking isn't quite up to snuff either, mixing in matches against bots with battles against real human opponents, particularly in the early stages. These AI battles are disguised with genuine-sounding usernames, but you can generally tell when you're playing against someone who isn't the computer.

On the bright side, all of the issues with *World War Armies* are fixable, if the developers choose to do so. What we have now is essentially a mobile game ported directly to PC, which is never an ideal scenario. Hopefully Hypemasters sees some of the apparent flaws for what they are and makes this a more enjoyable experience no matter what platform the player is currently using.

### CLASSIFIED: FRANCE '44 (DLC)

PUBLISHER TEAM 17 • GENRE SIMULATION • SYSTEM PC • AVAILABLE NOW

It didn't take long for *Classified: France '44* to add to its base game with some expansions, and the second DLC touched down back in May 2024. This one offers up some handy new gear in the form of an Agent Pack, which is available to purchase individually or as part of the Season Pass.



Among the new gear that aims to assist you in your covert ops are a new Special Ops map—"Radar," as well as the new Winchester 1912 weapon, the new Beretta "Compact" weapon variant, and the new Female Resistance Agent clothing set. There are also two new Special Ops missions—"Over Hill Under Hill" and "Make Every Kill Count." All in all, it's a compact mix of cosmetics and practical in-game

items, and the individual price for it and other DLC sets comes in at \$5.99 a pop. If you're hankering for more content after that, the \$19.99 Season Pass covers the first four DLC packs, so there's more to come, some of which may be out by the time this issue is in your hands. We first covered *Classified: France '44* ahead of its eventual launch in March 2024. The turn-based strategy game puts players in command of a special-ops team of Allied commandos and French resistance fighters in the months leading up to the June 1944 Allied Invasion of France. Since launch, it has garnered overall "Mostly Positive" reviews on Steam, and is also available on PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X|S. *Classified: France '44* features a morale system that highlights the impact of every single shot on your team and the enemy, and the nature of the tough, authentic combat encourages the use of stealth tactics to make it through in one piece. It's an interesting and strategic outing, with ambushing your enemy in place as one of the best ways to succeed in an increasingly hostile environment. Further expansions were promised prior to the main game's launch, and it's nice to see the team at developer Absolutely Games continue to deliver on said promise. ■

## 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



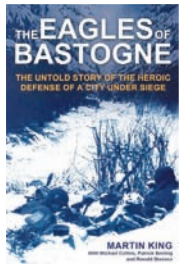
CALL 800.219.1187

OR ONLINE

www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

Publication Title: WWII History Magazine. 2. Publication Number 1539-5456. 3. Filing Date 10/1/24. 4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly. 5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 4. 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$29.95. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Fairfax County, Virginia 22101-4554. Contact Person: Mark Hintz. Telephone (including area code) 703-507-4978. 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. 9. Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Mark Hintz 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. Editor: Michael Haslekov, 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. Managing Editor: Carl Onam 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. 10. Owner: Full Name: Sovereign Media Company, 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. Mark Hintz 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. Carl Onam 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Mdelan, Virginia 22101-4554. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities. None. 12. Tax Status: N/A. 13. Publication Title: WWII History Magazine. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Fall 2024 issue. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation. Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: a. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run) (1) Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 21446. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541-0. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails including Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution outside USPS 4595 (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS-D. C. Total Paid Distribution - 26041. D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County copies included on PS Form 3541-0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541 (2) (1). (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies mailed by Other Classes Through the USPS (eg. First Class mail) (1). (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means) (1). (5) Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (1). (6) Total Distribution 26041. G. Copies Not Distributed 8744. H. Total 24297. I. Percent Paid 100%. Number Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: a. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run) (1) Mailed Outside County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 19439. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541-0. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails including Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution outside USPS 5437. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS-D. C. Total Paid Distribution - 24876. D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County copies included on PS Form 3541-0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541 (2) (1). (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies mailed by Other Classes Through the USPS (eg. First Class mail) (1). (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means) (1). (5) Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (1). (6) Total Distribution 24876. G. Copies Not Distributed 8169. H. Total 33045. Percent Paid 100%. 16. Electronic Copy Circulation. Average No. Copies Each issue during Preceding 12 Months: A. Paid Electronic Copies 227. B. Total Paid Print copies + paid Electronic Copies 26268. C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies 26268. D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) 100%. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: A. Paid Electronic Copies 230. B. Total Paid Print copies + Paid Electronic Copies 25106. C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies 25106. D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) 100%. 17. Publication of Statement of Ownership If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the Winter 2024 (12/1/2024) issue of this publication. 17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager or Owner Mark Hintz. Date 10/1/2024.

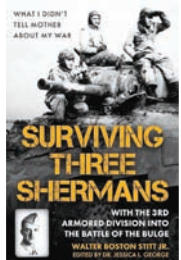
sion gets a fair look at its successes and failures. The author also discusses how they evolved and improved over the course of the war.



*The Eagles of Bastogne: The Untold Story of the Heroic Defense of a City Under Siege* (Martin King, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2024, 224 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$34.95, HC)

On the morning of December 19, 1944, artillery began to fall on the men of the 482nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion. The crew of one M16 halftrack, which carried an open turret with four .50-caliber machine guns, quickly suffered three men wounded. They were preparing to move out of the area when a German King Tiger tank appeared. The vehicle's gunner, Technician Fifth Grade Davidson, wounded in the leg, asked to be lifted into the turret. The panzer opened fire with its machine guns and hit two men just as Davidson trained his four weapons on it. The deluge of .50-caliber rounds hitting the tank had no hope of penetrating its thick armor. Perhaps it was simply the cacophony of hundreds of heavy bullets hitting the tank or maybe they damaged the Tiger's optics or sights, but it quickly retreated and the Americans went to the aid station.

Bastogne is the most famous of the towns fought over during the Battle of the Bulge. This new work recounts the stories of its defenders. The book effectively compiles accounts from the various units which defended the town.

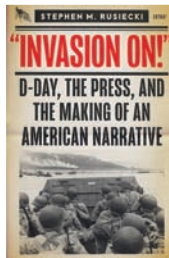


*Surviving Three Shermans With the 3rd Armored Division into The Battle of the Bulge* (Walter Boston Stitt, Jr., Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2024, 191 pp., photographs, bibliography, \$34.95, HC)

On September 19, 1944, Walter Stitt, serving as a loader in an M4 Sherman, lost his first tank. Embroiled in a fierce battle, the tank's coaxial machine gun saw so much use the barrel overheated and jammed. The lieutenant in the commander's hatch, stunned by the fighting, froze for a moment, despite radio calls telling him they were being shot at. Looking

through a periscope, Walter saw a German round flash past. Finally, just after the shell-shocked officer said "Back up," another German round crashed into the turret, killing the commander and gunner and trapping Walter inside. He crawled forward and got out through the driver's hatch just as a second round set the tank on fire. Bleeding from his leg, Walter ran to a nearby tank and asked for a bandage. A hand appeared from a top hatch with a bandage, so Walter had to climb up and get it. When he did, a burst of submachine gun fire hit the tank, aimed at him. He spotted the enemy soldier under a bush and shouted the location to the crew in the tank. The German did not survive their response.

This book is part memoir and part a collection of the author's letters home. It is a creative work, showing the difference between what was happening on the battlefield and what he revealed to his loved ones.



*"Invasion On!" D-Day, the Press, and the Making of an American Narrative* (Stephen M. Rusiecki, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2024, 330 pp., notes, bibliography, index, \$39.95, HC)

From the time the invasion fleet arrived off the Normandy coast and the first pathfinders parachuted out of their aircraft inland, the press was formulating a narrative of the event which would inform the American view of the event up to the current day. The story which permeated the radios and newspapers for days after the landings focused on four ideas: the importance and scale of the invasion, the brilliance of the Allied leadership, an almost religious enshrinement of the events and the courage and superiority of American soldiers. The result turned June 6, 1944, into an enduring legend.

This book examines the process of news reporting during the D-Day invasion, including what information was and was not available to the press at the time and how they assigned significance to certain events. It reveals how the press can distort or fabricate facts to manipulate public perception. The book is well researched and contains many interesting anecdotes which add to its story, showing the myriad personalities involved in crafting the accepted D-Day narrative. □

## Ordnance

*Continued from page 23*

over the sill, and I am certain no one left the ship after me."

The Japanese destroyer continued to fire on the *Sculpin* and her crewmen in the water before dispatching ship's boats to rescue the 42 survivors. Moore said, "Every one of them were leering at us. They all had guns."

One badly wounded sailor was thrown back in the sea because of his condition. Many of the survivors on board the *Yamagumo* were wounded. "There was blood all over the place," Keller recalled. He didn't realize he had been wounded. "I looked down at my chest and saw blood everywhere. It was dry, but right then I thought I was going to die."

*Yamagumo* sent a message announcing the *Sculpin*'s destruction, which was immediately picked up and decoded by Station HYPO, the U.S. Navy's intercept station in Hawaii. Capt. W. J. Holmes in *Double Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific during World War II* wrote, "Some eight hours later, the Japanese destroyer *Yamagumo* reported sinking a submarine...when the *Sculpin* remained silent we knew that she had gone."

The survivors were taken to the Japanese naval base at Truk and brutally tortured for 10 days before being loaded on two aircraft carriers—*Chuyo* and *Unyo*—that were returning to Japan. *Chuyo* carried 21 of the survivors in her hold. On December 2, the carrier was torpedoed and sunk by the USS *Sailfish* (SS-192), and 20 of the American prisoners perished. One man was saved when he was able to grab hold of a ladder on the side of a passing Japanese destroyer and hauled himself on board. The 21 survivors on *Unyo* arrived at Ofuna, Japan, on December 6, and were sent to labor in the Ashio copper mines for the duration of the war.

Ironically, the *Chuyo* was sunk by *Sailfish*, which *Sculpin* had helped to locate and raise after that submarine, then named *Squalus*, had been sunk some four and one-half years before. □

*Author Richard Camp is a retired U.S. Marine colonel and Vietnam veteran. He has written 13 fiction and nonfiction books and more than 100 articles.*

pose—it made the soldiers laugh while cautioning them against suffering the same fate.

Yet, the writers were always aware of the seriousness of their project and the impact it would have on the lonely young men thousands of miles from civilian normalcy.

The possibility of death was always present for Snafu. After all, non-compliance and stupidity got him killed in six out of the first thirteen episodes, with the remaining adventures having him end up in a German prison, a military jail, and the psych ward.

Unlike Daffy or Bugs, when Snafu died, he was dead for that episode. Although humorous, the cartoons had to be sensitive to the real fears that came with military life—they had to be educational, funny, and most importantly, authentic to the troops in the audience.

What endeared Snafu to the young soldiers was that, like them, the lonesome private was always overworked, uncomfortable, dirty, bored, exhausted, and all-too-close to danger. Accepting Snafu's fate when he did what he should not have, allowed the American GIs to see all the training and hardships they had to endure as essential to their survival. Together with Snafu, they learned that maintaining discipline and doing their duties, while seemingly trivial at the time, enabled the military to run accordingly, keeping them safe.

Private Snafu finished with the end of the Second World War. It had completed its intended mission of instructing less-educated young men in proper military safety and procedures. Yet it managed to do so much more. It allowed a citizen army to see the larger picture of why they were fighting and what needed to be done for that fighting to stop so they could all go home.

Weary of war, they were ready to go back to civilian life and rejoin their other favorite cartoon characters that stayed behind—Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig. To the men, Snafu was left behind along with their uniforms, rifles, and gear—a much-needed tool of war, no longer necessary in the time of peace. □

---

*Peter Zablocki is a historian, author, and educator living in Denville, New Jersey. Visit [www.peterzablocki.com](http://www.peterzablocki.com).*

perate for information and worrying about why the Army Group South units were nowhere to be seen, the German officer ordered one of his men to confiscate a locomotive and take it back across the Slovakian border toward division headquarters.

The frightened Polish woman promptly handed the telephone to the German officer when it rang. Herzner had been pacing back and forth inside the small windowless basement and now rushed to grab it from her. The divisional intelligence officer screamed through the receiver. The lost assault team had been found and recalled; there was no attack on Poland on this day. The Fuhrer had canceled it. "Retreat at once! Release your prisoners, vacate the station building, and return by the quickest route."

Herzner rounded up his men, telling them reinforcements were not coming. The group might have carried out its mission, but there was now nothing left to do but disappear into the mountains. With an armed Polish detachment close behind, the commandos finally snuck back across the Slovakian border early in the afternoon. At Polish headquarters, there was no longer any doubt of Hitler's plans for Poland in 1939.

Following the August 26 incident, the Poles secretly stepped up their mobilization campaign. By the time of Hitler's attack five days later, they had activated three-quarters of the Polish armed forces. Meanwhile, the German government did not acknowledge the incident, and the Poles, under a gag order from the British and French, chose not to pursue any official countermeasures.

German General Eugen Ott, the commander of the 7th Infantry Division stationed across the border from Mosty, sent an official apology to his counterpart in the region, Polish Gen. Josef Kustron of the 21st Mountain Infantry Division. Ott claimed a crazed individual acting on his own was responsible for the Jablunkov Incident. It was a veiled excuse and the Poles knew it was only a matter of days before the Germans invaded.

The situation on September 1, 1939, would be much different. Having wavered in his resolve for a few days after the announcement of the British pact with

Poland, at 12:40 p.m. on August 31, Hitler reinstated his order to invade Poland. "Since the situation on Germany's eastern frontier has become intolerable, and all political possibilities of the peaceful settlement have been exhausted, I have decided upon a solution by force," the Fuhrer would explain. Hitler began his war with another covert operation, this one a bit more known to history. Mere days before Herzner's invasion, the German leader told his military commanders, "I will give a propagandistic cause for the release of war, whether convincing or not. The winner is not asked later whether he said the truth or not."

In line with the Jablunkov Pass and Mosty mission of August 25-26, the new operation was launched less than a week later. This time a small commando unit would give Hitler his cause for war with a mock attack on a German radio station in Gleiwitz by SS units dressed as Polish insurgents. Leaving behind a planted dead body of a Pole as proof of the Polish presence and deception, the commandos broadcast a message in Polish. "Attention! Here is Gleiwitz! The radio station is in Polish hands!"

When the Germans finally crossed the Polish borders in the early hours of September 1, 1939, Herzner was still debriefing from his successful, albeit failed, mission. He was nominated for an Iron Cross, but rejected because his August 25 skirmish took place before the war began. Ironically, what his men accomplished, the main invasion failed to repeat—the Poles detonated explosives blocking the Jablunkov Pass less than an hour after the September 1 hostilities began.

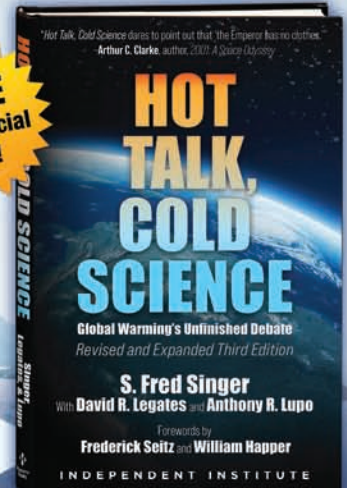
Following his actions in the fall of 1939, the Abwehr promoted Herzner to lead the "Nightingale Battalion," a pro-German volunteer Ukrainian unit tasked with sabotage and diversion, first against Poland and later the Soviet Union. His clandestine actions finally won him the Iron Cross shortly before being severely wounded on the Eastern Front in late 1941. After months of rehabilitation in a German sanatorium, the avid swimmer was found drowned in one of the complex's pools on September 3, 1942. His death, like his otherwise obscure life, were all but lost to history like his untimely invasion of Poland in the late summer of 1939. □

# Global Warming Hoax?



**Explosive Book Reveals Fact From Fiction . . .**

**FREE  
With Special  
Offer!**



**Every American must know how DECADES of dubious scientific data could restrict their freedoms.**

If you ever suspect that you (and everyone else) have been lied to about the causes of “global warming” — then . . .

Here’s one way to find out.

In the bestselling book *Hot Talk, Cold Science* you’ll discover why global warming has been one of the most hotly debated issues throughout the world for the past 40 years.

Plus, you’ll see how you may have been misled about climate change by government officials, scientists, and various foundations.

**Why is this so important?**

Ultimately, it comes down to controlling how we’ll live our daily lives in the coming years.

Everything from where you live . . . to what kind of vehicle you drive . . . to what your children learn in school . . . to what food you can eat . . .

We’ve already seen it happen with the Biden administration.

And sadly, it’s just the start.

That’s why you **MUST** get a copy of *Hot Talk, Cold Science* today.

In the expanded third edition of this controversial bestseller, the authors and renowned climate experts reveal:

- **Why there is NO climate crisis** arising from human activities now . . . nor on the horizon over the upcoming years (p. 103)
- **How the ice mass in Antarctica has actually been *increasing*** since 1979 and NOT decreasing like we’ve been led to believe (p. 64)
- **The carbon dioxide disconnect** and why there is ZERO evidence linking carbon dioxide to climate change (p. 66)
- **How the BIGGER problem of “global cooling” has been overlooked** and why it could cause far greater hazards to humans than global warming (p. 174)
- **How a FAKE consensus of scientists and CORRUPTION of the peer-review process** have been purposely misused by politicians to further their agendas since 1990 (p. 56)
- **The “Hockey Stick” scandal** in which a small group of scientists conspired to rewrite climate history so they could

claim that temperature increases in the 20th century were “unprecedented” — and how it was debunked! (p. 73)

▪ **And much, much more . . .**

Those are just a handful of the little-known facts (which are never reported by the mainstream media!).

**Discover What the “Establishment” Doesn’t Want You to Know**

Now, keep in mind — the “Establishment” does NOT want people like you and me knowing the facts and the real reasons behind climate change.

Because the more people who know the real truth . . . the less chance they have of succeeding.

This is why we’ve made it a priority to get this must-have, 234-page book into the hands of as many Americans as possible.

And Newsmax wants to put a copy of it in your hands absolutely **FREE**.

To secure your **FREE** copy of *Hot Talk, Cold Science* simply follow the instructions below:

“*Hot Talk, Cold Science* provides the reader with important facts and evidence conveniently overlooked by climate alarmists . . .”

– U.S. Senator Ted Cruz

**Claim Your FREE Book Offer!**

**Call: 800-497-4043**

**Online: [ColdScience611.com/NMX](http://ColdScience611.com/NMX)**

## 6888th BATTALION

*Continued from page 51*

and that's not because of us," Perry said. He reflected on current events, such as banning or censoring books from schools and public libraries across the country. Many proposed bans include reading materials that discuss topics of racism, religion or sexual orientation. "What I'm really worried about is groups wanting to ban certain parts of history, and not wanting children to know the good, the bad and the ugly of this country, and only wanting to paint it as one thing," he said. "I think it's important that people remember that there were so many different kinds of people that contributed to the history of America."

Hymel appreciated that his story was chosen to serve as the inspiration behind the film.

"Every level of this has been so enjoyable to me," he said. "I'm just honored that it's happening."

Perry had the pleasure of showing King an early version of *The Six Triple Eight* at her home. The two gathered together to watch the movie on an iPad. To Perry, she was the most important person that he needed approval from before moving forward with the film. "She was emotional and moved," he said, upon showing King the movie. "She cried, she laughed, she smiled, and she saluted the screen."

But what mattered most, Perry said, was what King said to him right before he left—"Thank you so much for letting the entire world know that Black women contributed to the war efforts." King died on January 18, 2024, at the age of 100.

Perry and Hymel have ensured that her story and the legacy of the all-Black, all-female 6888th will get the long-overdue recognition and honor that it deserves. The efforts of these women will no longer go untold, or unnoticed. "It's not Black history, it's not white history, it's the history of our country," Perry said, "and I think it's very important that all of those stories have their place and they have a voice."

*The Six Triple Eight* will be in select theaters December 6, 2024, and will stream globally on Netflix on December 20. □

## 70th DIVISION MEDICS

*Continued from page 61*

that housed the aid station. The commander had just dismounted from his tank when a shell burst next to the house, and a fragment hit the left side of his chest. Assistant battalion surgeon Lieutenant Beard, Cady, Klosner, and three litter bearers rushed the tank commander into the aid station, but found that his wounds were fatal. As shells continued to fall, the aid men worked on walking wounded and litter cases, expecting any moment that their building would become the target of artillery fire.

"All through our fighting in this sector and throughout our fighting in various towns we received the able support of Chaplain William Henderson and his assistant Tech/5 Jim Cochran," Waterhouse said. During the action at Stiring-Wendel, Henderson assisted in evacuating the wounded while under fire and Cochran was wounded while assisting litter bearers and rendering first aid.

On March 8, replacements were received, bringing the unit back to full strength. The replacements included Sgt. John F. Kane, PFC's John R. Conlan, Dennis B. Hall, and Maurice H. Stahl. Two days later the unit went into battalion reserve.

In the next few days the 70th Division would assault Siegfried Line defenses and secure the city of Saarbrücken as German troops were forced to withdraw from the area. They spent the next few weeks mopping-up the area west of the Rhine until the German surrender, then became part of the Army of Occupation.

Army medics in Europe in 1944/45 were continually on the move and exposed to the elements, with the constant threat of injury or death. But they saved the lives of thousands of GI's, as well as civilians and German POWs.

PFC Vernon Staley was transferred to the 3rd Infantry Division, returning to the States in 1946. Back in Oregon he raised a family and had a career as a machinist. In March 2024, he celebrated his 100th birthday. □

*Author Allyn Vannoy, who has written extensively on a variety of topics related to World War II, lives in Hillsboro, Oregon.*

## MALTA

*Continued from page 89*

diate counter-offensive. Instead, they concentrated on building up strength for an overwhelming assault. This came in late October 1942, finally breaking the Axis defense 10 days later. Another rearguard action along the coastal strip followed, reaching El Agheila in late November. There would be no further Axis success in North Africa.

Early in 1943, the British pushed into Tunisia, gradually driving the Afrika Korps north. American troops had also landed in North Africa, and despite stubborn resistance the Allies reached Tunis in May, 1943. Some units were evacuated, but more than 250,000 Axis troops were taken prisoner. In addition to this enormous loss of manpower, the Axis also lost its foothold in Africa. No further threat to Egypt existed, and the way was open for a push north across the Mediterranean.

Allied advances in North Africa drew Luftwaffe elements away from Malta to support the beleaguered Afrika Korps. Indeed, a convoy in late November suffered only minor losses, and subsequent convoys met little resistance. Malta was now a well-supplied, fortified base from which to dominate the central Mediterranean.

Ultimately, Malta dictated the course of the war in the Mediterranean and North Africa. Strong forces there choked the Axis supply lines and crippled the land campaigns, while heavy pressure on Malta forced the Allies to risk irreplaceable naval assets under extremely hostile skies. Forces involved in these battles were unavailable for use elsewhere, perhaps impacting campaigns in other theaters of war.

It is interesting to speculate what the Allied carriers tied up on "club runs" might have achieved, or how the German squadrons in Sicily might have influenced another campaign. What is clear is that Malta's pressure on Axis supply convoys was instrumental in the defeat of the Afrika Korps and future Allied offensive operations in the Mediterranean theater. □

*Martin J. Dougherty hails from northeast England. In addition to writing many books and articles, he is an accomplished swordsman.*

# THE VIEW FROM MY FOXHOLE

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



WILLIAM SWANSON



"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*

"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*

"Truly an  
unforgettable  
memoir."

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

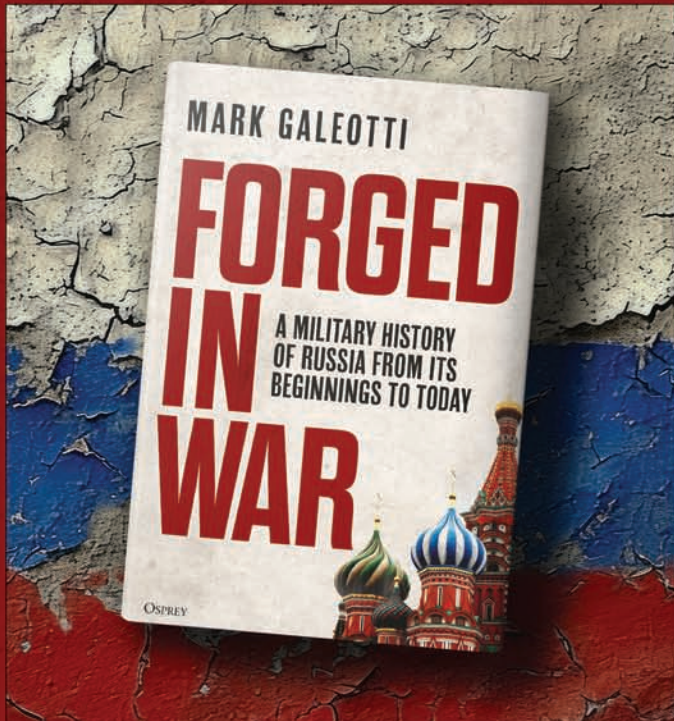
AVAILABLE ON AMAZON, BARNES & NOBLE, TARGET BOOKS

  
PERMUTATED  
PRESS

NEW FROM OSPREY PUBLISHING

# FORGED IN WAR

A MILITARY HISTORY OF RUSSIA FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO TODAY



Putin retains his stranglehold on power in Russia despite an almost ruinous invasion of Ukraine. The answer to *how* and *why* can be found in Russian history.

On sale November 5, 2024  
9781472862518 U.S.\$35

“Masterful and absorbing.”

LEON ARON

AUTHOR OF *RIDING THE TIGER: VLADIMIR PUTIN'S  
RUSSIA AND THE USES OF WAR*

“A real tour de force of analysis.”

LORD LOTHIAN

OSPREY

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY ON [OSPREYPUBLISHING.COM](https://www.ospreypublishing.com) OR WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD