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WWII HISTORY
WWII HISTORY - DECEMBER 2018 Volume 18, No. 1
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M6A3 HIGH EXPLOSIVE ROCKETS FOR THE M1, M1A1 & M9 BAZOOKAS

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MISC464

Inert

GERMAN WW2 FRAGMENTATION SLEEVE FOR STICK GRENADES

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MISC669

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Inert

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Inert

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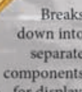

German WW2 M39 Egg Grenade

Accurate inert steel reproduction with detachable Fuse assy. Full Size.

$22.95 MISC680

M11A3 WWII DUMMY RIFLE GRENADE

Rare! Lost in the warehouse for 10 years. Repainted and may have minor storage dings on fins. These don't exist anymore

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Please note: No dummy grenades to California - Some States may have restrictions on ownership of INERT grenades. Check your local & State laws.

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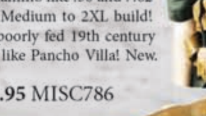

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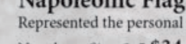

Napoleonic Flag

Represented the personal guard of Napoleon. Size: 3x5 **$34.95** FLAG03

WW2 JAPANESE ARMY HELMET W/ NET

Steel helmet complete with suspension, chin strap, and helmet net as used by Japanese forces during WW2. Excellent quality and perhaps even better than the original. New made.

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German Imperial WWI Flag

Classic German Imperial Flag that adorned Battleships, Army, and Headquarters installations from the late 1800s through 1918. Befitting that we can offer this classic war flag in 3'x5' cotton 100 years after it flew during the War to End all Wars!

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WW2 style waist belt allowed the BARgunner to pack 12 BAR magazines **$26.95** BAR117

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When is a spade not just a spade? When it's a Mortar too! Sarco has the 'Kamabee Keep' rework of the coolest mortar design in the history of warfare. Innovative Russian designers took the concept of the standard 'Entrenching Tool' that every soldier wore on his belt, and elevated it to 'Heavy Weapon Status', by allowing it to dig trenches & also fire 37mm Mortar Rounds! Designed in the late 1930s and fielded against Finland in late 1939/40 in the Russo Finn War, and throughout WW2 along the Russian Front. Never been on the U.S. or World market! It can be attached to your belt using the canvas & leather carrier, be detached to operate as a small shovel, or used to lob rounds on the enemy. Transforms into a mortar in @15 seconds with practice. This is a new made replication of the original and is non-firing. Sarco Inc. carries this item exclusively and they are currently in stock. We also have the 'late war' style 15 round bandoleer used by troops to carry mortar ammunition including Mosin Nagant Rifle ammunition. To top it off, we have replica 37mm Mortar inert display rounds available too ! The only place to see this item in the entire world is in a Russian military museum. Truly this is a piece of ordnance lost to history!

The design concept was amazing and its impact could still be amazing in this day & age! Imagine a platoon of infantry Riflemen also each carrying 15 mortar shells and working as a fire and maneuver machine. Stalinist purges and a failure to develop better ammunition put this idea to sleep before its time!

37mm Spade Mortar Assembly....................................**$175.00** MISC458
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Chest Bandolier w/ Mosin Pouch................................**$65.00** MISC429
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$325.00 MISC397

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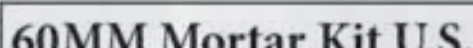


$200.00 MISC621

PLEASE NOTE: There is an additional $15 Handling fee on this item per item.

U.S. Pineapple Grenade (inert)

Inert cast iron body with inert US GI fuse lends authenticity to this iconic staple of the American serviceman in the last century. Introduced in WW1, the original designed grenade progressed through evolutions to serve in WW2, Korea, and beyond to retirement @1969. A very deadly grenade due to its girth and castellated body which reminded GIs of a Pineapple. Comes with WW2 era, (1943) 'overpaint Yellow' band and O.D. green body.

$11.50 ea, 3 for $32.00 AM026

(Some States may have restrictions on ownership of INERT grenades. Check your local & State laws)

M3 GREASE GUN

M3 Replica Non-Firing Grease Gun with Accessories

(inert)

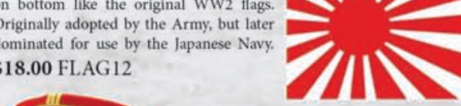
Full Size, mostly-metal replica of the venerable M3 Grease Gun used in WW2, Korea, Vietnam and in classic war movies like the Dirty Dozen, Attack Force Z, Kelly's Heroes etc. We sold out of these a year ago and are fortunate to have another small batch. These have been made exclusively for SARCO. Features telescoping stock and magazine. A terrific display piece! Gun does not have functioning internals and cannot be made to fire.' Gun comes with the WW2 style canvas gun case & sling.

$195.00 REP38

Japanese Rising Sun Flag

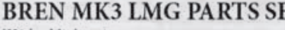
Cotton 3'x5' flag with loop on top and cord on bottom like the original WW2 flags. Originally adopted by the Army, but later dominated for use by the Japanese Navy.

$18.00 FLAG12



BREN MK3 LMG PARTS SET

Regarded as the Lightest of the Bren Guns, the MK3 had lightening cuts made to the receiver and usually was found with a barrel @2-3/4 inches shorter than the MK2 series barrel. Nevertheless, both sized barrels were used on this gun in WW2. This model was envisaged as an answer for Airborne and Infantry troops fighting in the jungles of the Pacific, but actually once production started in 1943, it found its way to every theater of the war. Our kit comes with the correct receiver cut to BATF specifications, a MK2 barrel and 5 - .303 cal. magazines.



MKIII Kit w/5 mags plus very good MK2 barrel........ **$385.00 each,**
10 or more kits.. $365.00 each BREN121
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$115.00 MISC722

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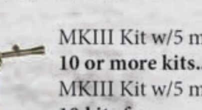

Pup Tent, USGI

Always sell out of these so we are fortunate to bring you a new batch of the good ole' G.I. Pup tent in durable OD canvas with 6 tent poles,8 stakes, and two ropes. Canvas is in very good shape, but may be slightly faded from Army use and the U.S. logo may be faded away. Snaps and grommets are all present, solid, and serviceable. Great for kids in the back yard, hard corps camping or just using the shelter halves to cover your gear. Very limited.

$75.00 MISC762

GERMAN MP40 SMG (non-firing)

Famous full size display gun with operating bolt, recoil assembly, folding stock, mag catch and trigger. Saw combat throughout Europe, Africa, and even Vietnam! Bound to spark interest and conversations from all who see it. Realistic metal and plastic construction and it comes with steel magazine and leather sling.

$210.00
REP02

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REMEMBER THE MOVIES ZULU & ZULU DAWN? HERE IS THE REGIMENTAL FLAG OF THE BRITISH 24TH WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

2nd Battalion, 24th Foot Colors with their battle honors is a beautiful tribute to their sacrifices from clashing with Napoleon at Talavera, charnel conflagration at Chillianwallah, and the truly legendary stand of their unit at Rorkes Drift , South Africa where against all odds and with stellar leadership, a Company of the 24th defended against an attack by over 4,000 Zulu warriors. A beautiful wall hanger. Size 53" x 33". 2 grommets for use on pole. **$29.95** FLAG32

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Whether storming fortress Tangiers, repelling Napoleons Imperial Guard at Waterloo, Crimea, or the Gothic Line, this Regiment has famously made great 'in roads' in the history of warfare. 3'x5' flag with fringe is a beauty for wall display and perfect for any 'Anglophile'!

$25.00 FLAG30

U.S.A. WW2 48 Star Flag

3'x5', Perfect for displays and reenactments where flying the correct version of the flag matters. Cotton.

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German WWII Paratrooper Helmet M38 Fallschimjager

Steel Paratroop helmet used by the famed 'Fallschirmjager' regiments. Complete with markings and leather liner with suspension. New. U.S. Size 7.5" (Large) U.S. Size 7.5" (Large). **$49.95** HLM018

German Balkenkreuz 'Vehicle Cross' Flag

Adopted emblem from WWI that found greater prominence during the WW2 where it was painted on hulls and as a 'Flag' applied to the top of the engine compartment to allow visual recognition by the Luftwaffe pilots, primarily in the Eastern campaign. All cotton, size 3' by 5' with loop and bottom draw cord.

$$22.00 FLAG21

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Cover: Private Robert Leigh, 83rd Infantry Division, carries a variety of weapons taken from German prisoners captured during the Ninth Army's advance into Germany.

See story page 64.
Photo: National Archives

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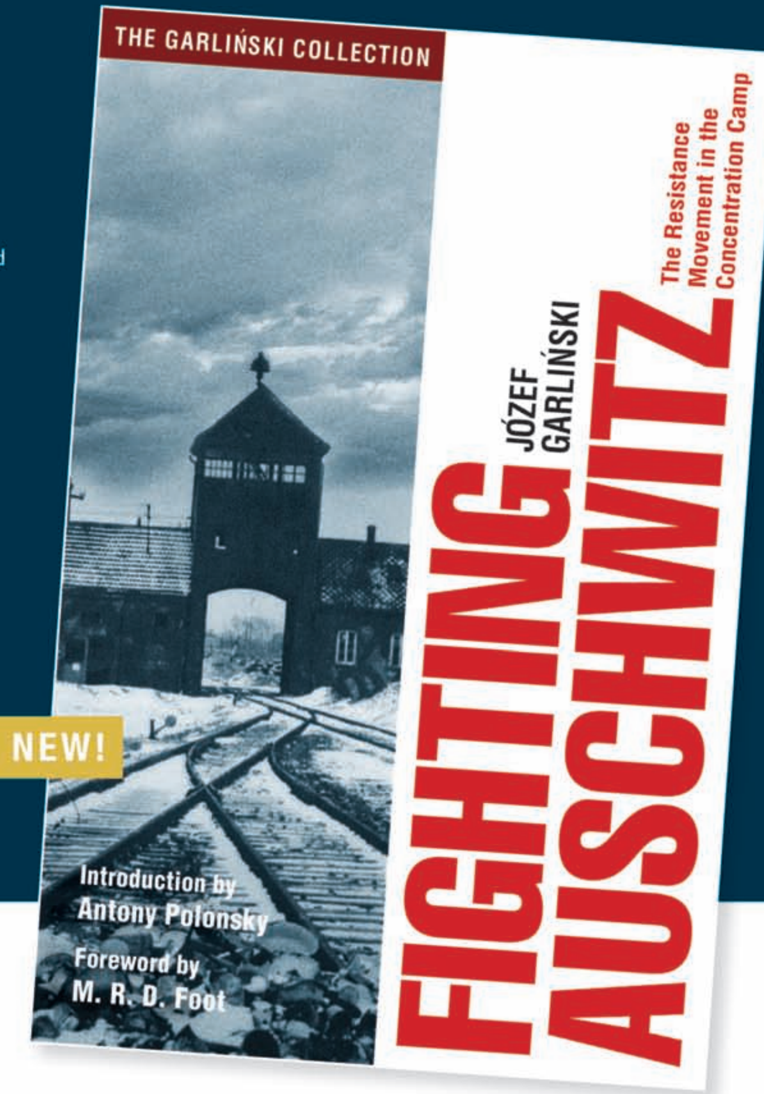

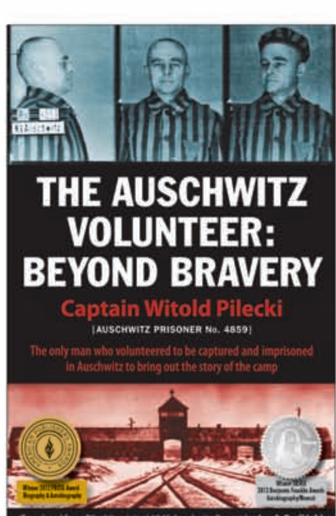

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Editorial

A graveyard of ships at Bikini Atoll.

AT THE DAWN OF THE COLD WAR, THE UNITED STATES PROBED THE POTENTIAL destructive power of nuclear weapons, particularly their effect on warships. In the summer of 1946, one of its earliest efforts was dubbed Operation Crossroads, the first nuclear tests since the detonation at Trinity site in New Mexico, prior to dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended World War II.

The chosen location for Operation Crossroads was Bikini Atoll, a tranquil cluster of 23 small islands surrounding a lagoon in the Marshall Islands of the South Pacific. A pair of nuclear detonations was planned, and 167 native residents were told in February 1946 that they would have to leave their homes because of research that might one day be a deterrent to future wars. On March 7, the natives boarded LST-861 for a move to Rongerik Atoll, 128 miles east of Bikini, after their chief had said, "We will go, believing that everything is in the hands of God."

Channels were blasted through the coral reef at Bikini to gain access to the lagoon, and the target fleet included *Nevada* and four other old battleships, two aircraft carriers, two cruisers, 11 destroyers, eight submarines, and three captured warships that belonged to former enemies Germany and Japan. Other auxiliary vessels were also among the target ships, and an array of small animals and insects was brought to the scene as well, later to be examined for the effects of radiation.

Test Able was carried out on July 1, 1946, as a Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber dropped a single bomb, nicknamed Gilda, with a 23-kiloton payload. It detonated at an altitude of 520 feet, missing the *Nevada,* its orange-colored aiming point. Ships were sunk or damaged, but the extent of the destruction was unimpressive—although the horrific effects of radiation were just beginning to be understood. Test Baker was carried out on July 25, the bomb suspended beneath the landing craft LSM-60 and detonating at a depth of 90 feet.

Between 1946 and 1958 a total of 23 nuclear tests were conducted at Bikini Atoll. The site became extremely radioactive, and the natives were never able to return to the island permanently. Small groups returned a couple of times during the 1970s, but they were later withdrawn, and the atoll remains uninhabited to this day.

Bikini has been designated as a ship graveyard by the U.S. Navy. While *Nevada* and others that participated in the tests do not rest there, many ships significant in the drama of World War II are on the bottom of the lagoon. These include the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga,* the only ship sunk during the Baker test. *Saratoga* was carrying surplus aircraft, vehicles, and ammunition when the atomic blast lifted the 37,000-ton ship out of the water. Today, the wreck is a popular scuba diving attraction.

The Japanese battleship *Nagato* lies upside down in the Bikini lagoon. After the Baker test, she began to list slowly to starboard. Five days after the detonation, the old battleship, flagship of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto during the Pearl Harbor raid in 1941, capsized and went to the bottom in just 110 feet of water. The *Nagato* is listed as one of the top scuba diving wrecks in the world today.

The *Nevada* and several other survivors of Operation Crossroads were later used for target practice or towed elsewhere. Some were first towed to Pearl Harbor and then to San Francisco for damage assessments, and others, including the German heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen,* consort of the famed battleship *Bismarck,* were towed to Kwajalein Atoll, where they later sank due to the damage sustained at Bikini.

—Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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German Submarine U-5

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By Duane Schultz

BELOW: German paratroopers move through the rubble of the abbey of Monte Cassino to take up defensive positions after the bombing.
LEFT: Clouds of smoke and debris billow skyward from the abbey of Monte Cassino as Allied bombers destroy the ancient structure thought to be in use by Germans as an observation post.

Bombing the Abbey

The Allied bombing of the abbey at Monte Cassino remains one of the most controversial events of the Italian campaign.

FOR THE THOUSANDS OF ALLIED SOLDIERS WHO HAD FOUGHT AND SUFFERED for so long in the shadow of the abbey of Monte Cassino, Tuesday morning, February 15, 1944, was a time of joy and celebration. The men hated and feared the abbey, standing four stories tall atop the 1,700-foot mountain above them. The troops knew that it was finally going to be destroyed, and they were more than eager to see it happen.

"Like a lion it crouched," wrote American Lieutenant Harold Bond, describing the abbey 20 years later, "dominating all approaches, watching every move made by the armies below." Everyone was convinced that German soldiers occupied the abbey as an observation post to track the Allies' movements in the valley below and thus direct artillery fire on them. Clare Cunningham, a 21-year-old lieutenant from Michigan, said, "It seemed like we were under observation all the time. They were just looking down on us all day long. They knew every move we were making."

Thirty years after the war, the passion, fury, and hatred of the abbey remained with British Lieutenant Bruce Foster when asked what he thought about the destruction in 1944. "Can you imagine," he said in reply, "what it's like to see a person's head explode in a great flash of grey brains and red hair? Can you imagine what it is like when that head belonged to your sister's fiancé? I knew why it happened; I was positive it was because some bloody … Jerry was up there in that bloody … monastery directing the fire that killed Dickie, and I know that still."

No place below the abbey was considered safe from enemy fire. Sergeant Evans of the British Army wrote that the abbey "was malignant. It was evil somehow. I don't know how a monastery can be evil, but it was looking at you. It was all-devouring.… It had a terrible hold on us soldiers.… It just had to be bombed." According to another soldier, Fred Majdalany, "That brooding monastery ate into our souls."

On the morning of the bombing, hundreds of rear-echelon troops and dozens of war reporters showed up to watch. War correspondent John Lardner wrote in *Newsweek* magazine that it was "the most widely advertised single bombing in history."

"A holiday atmosphere prevailed among the soldiers," historians David Hapgood and David Richardson wrote. "For almost all the men of the [American] Fifth Army, this Tuesday was a rare day off from the war. Soldiers … scrambled for positions from which they could watch what was to come. Some stood on stone walls, others climbed trees for a better view. Observers—soldiers, generals, reporters—were scattered over

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the slopes of Monte Trocchio, the hill that faced Monte Cassino, three miles across the valley. A group of doctors and nurses had driven up in jeeps from the hospital in Naples. They settled themselves on Monte Trocchio with a picnic of K-rations, prepared to enjoy the show."

The first bombers appeared in the clear blue sky at 9:28 that morning. For approximately four hours, until 1:33 that afternoon, wave after wave of bombers, some 256 in all, dropped 453 tons of bombs on the abbey. Artillery pounded the target as well. The *New York Times* described it as the "worst aerial and artillery onslaught ever directed against a single building."

John Blythe, a New Zealand officer, wrote that as the planes came in "the smoke began to rise, the vapor trails grew and merged, and the sun was blotted out and the whole sky turned gray." With every new explosion and burst of artillery fire and flame erupting from the abbey, the cheering among the observers grew louder.

Martha Gellhorn, an American war reporter, wrote that she "watched the planes come in and drop their loads and saw the monastery turned into a muddle of dust and heard the big bangs and was absolutely delighted and cheered like all the other fools."

When it was over, the rubble was spread over the seven-acre site with only a few jagged pieces of wall still standing. But it quickly became the site of condemnation and controversy over the necessity of destroying it. Ultimately, though the Allies did not believe it at the time, the Germans had the propaganda advantage: no German soldiers had ever been stationed in the abbey.

The Germans had forbidden their troops to enter it in order to protect it from Allied destruction. Also, they had not needed to use that vantage point to observe Allied troop movements. The Germans had built ample observation and defensive positions up and down the hillsides to within 200 yards of the monastery's foundation. They could see everything they needed to see and direct artillery fire wherever needed without ever having to enter the abbey.

The 80-year-old abbot, Don Gregorio Diamare, and 12 monks had hidden in the crypt during the attack. When they dug out of the rubble, a German officer confronted the abbot and demanded that he sign a formal statement to the effect that there had been no German troops in the abbey. He did so.

Then, on orders from German Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, the SS took Diamare to a radio station in the German embassy in Rome where he broadcast to the world what had happened to his beloved monastery, weeping openly as he spoke. Iris Origo, an American woman living in Rome, heard the broadcast, which she described as "terribly moving." Goebbels ordered a film to be made; in the narration he spoke of the Allies' "senseless lust of destruction," while Germany was struggling to defend and save European civilization.

The ruins of the abbey of Monte Cassino stand as stark evidence of the ravages of war in these two images. A second Allied aerial bombardment occurred in March 1944, a month after the first sorties that virtually leveled the monastery. Allied artillery also took its turn to pound the structure during the arduous advance up the Italian boot.

The German propaganda campaign made much of the fact that three months before the bombing they had, with the abbot's permission, evacuated some 70,000 books and priceless paintings from the abbey for safe storage in Rome.

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, the German commander on the Italian front, expressed outrage that "United States soldiery, devoid of all culture, have … senselessly destroyed one of Italy's most treasured edifices and have murdered Italian civilian refugees—men, women, and children." It was unfortunate but true that as many as 250 Italian civilians who had taken refuge in the abbey were killed in the raid.

In an effort to counter the German propaganda, Americans also made newsreels, describing the military necessity of destroying the monastery because German soldiers were occupying it and attacking Allied soldiers. "It was necessary," the Pathé newsreel announced, because the structure "had been turned into a fortress by the German Army."

Officials in Washington and in London were concerned about the condemnations expressed in newspaper headlines around the world. Two weeks later, Victor Cavendish-Bentinck of the British Foreign Office wrote a memo suggesting that "we had better keep quiet" about the fact that there was no clear evidence that the Germans had been using the abbey for defensive purposes, even though four days before the bombing, The [London] *Times* had indeed written that "the Germans are using the monastery as a fortress."

The U.S. State Department, on the other hand, took the public position that there was "indisputable evidence" that the Germans occupied the monastery. President Franklin Roosevelt held a press conference at which he said the abbey had been bombed because "it was being used by the Germans to shell us. It was a German strongpoint. They had artillery and

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German paratroopers man a machine-gun position in the ruins of the abbey of Monte Cassino. Several Allied attempts to capture the ruined abbey failed.

everything up there in the abbey."

The Allied soldiers trying to take Monte Cassino had been correct in thinking they were under constant observation, although it had not been from the abbey. But there was no way the battle-weary men, freezing in their ice-filled foxholes for months while under enemy fire, could have known that the tallest structure around was not housing German soldiers.

The bitterness toward the abbey grew with each failed attempt to take the hill. By the end of January, assaults against Monte Cassino had already cost the lives of 11,000 troops. But despite such losses no one in the Allied high command had requested that the monastery be bombed, not until the arrival of fresh troops and their new commander. More troops were needed because by early February the two leading American divisions, the 34th and 36th, had lost some 80 percent of their effective strength.

Major General Lyman Lemnitzer believed that the American units then on the front line were "disheartened, almost mutinous." They had lost 40,000 men killed and wounded in the Italian campaign by early 1944, with another 50,000 out sick with everything from trench foot and dysentery to combat fatigue. Another 20,000 men had deserted. A psychiatrist visiting the front wrote, "Practically all men in rifle battalions who were not otherwise disabled ultimately became psychiatric casualties." They had been in combat too long without relief. British frontline units experienced similar levels of desertion and shell shock.

To replace American losses, a multinational outfit was transferred to Mark Clark's Fifth Army from the British Eighth Army. Called the New Zealand Corps, it included the 2nd New Zealand Division, the 4th Indian Division, and the 78th British Division. They had had extensive combat experience in Italy and North Africa.

Their commander was 56-year-old Lt. Gen. Sir Bernard Freyberg; although born in England, he moved with his parents at age two to New Zealand. A giant of a man, his nickname was inevitably "Tiny." Freyberg had been a dentist before becoming a soldier. Wounded nine times

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in World War I, he had been awarded the Victoria Cross, among other decorations, for bravery in combat.

Clark was resentful that his own units, which had sacrificed so much and lost so many men trying to take Monte Cassino, would not be allowed the honor (and the great publicity for Clark personally) of taking the hill. Clark considered Freyberg "a prima donna [who] had to be handled with kid gloves." Other commanders, including British and New Zealand officers, thought Freyberg was stubborn, obtuse, and difficult to deal with. Maj. Gen. Francis Tuker, commanding the Indian Division, described Freyberg as having "no brains and no imagination."

Once Freyberg inspected the battle site, he insisted that the abbey would have to be destroyed before his troops could take the hill. "I want it bombed," he said, claiming it was a military necessity if his attack on Monte Cassino were to succeed. Many others agreed, including two American generals, Ira Eaker of the Army Air Forces and Jacob Devers of the Army. After a low reconnaissance flight over the abbey on February 14, they reported seeing radio antennas as well as what looked like German uniforms hanging on a clothesline in the courtyard. That same day, the Army Air Forces released an intelligence analysis stating, "The monastery must be destroyed and everyone in it, as there is no one in it but Germans."

Mark Clark opposed the idea at the time and wrote in his memoirs that, had Freyberg's outfit been American, he [Clark] would have refused permission to bomb. He referred the request to his superior, British General Sir Harold Alexander, pointing out, "Previous efforts to bomb a building or a town to prevent its use by the Germans … always failed…. Bombardment alone never has and never will drive a determined enemy from his position."

Clark also noted, "It would be shameful to destroy the abbey and its treasure," adding that "If the Germans are not in the monastery now [and he was still not convinced they were], they certainly will be in the rubble after the bombing ends."

Freyberg continued to press Clark and Alexander to agree to proceed with the bombing, reminding them that if they refused his request to destroy the abbey, they would be blamed if his attack on Monte Cassino failed.

Pressure on Alexander also came from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "What are you doing sitting down there doing nothing?" Finally, Alexander capitulated and gave his permission to proceed with the bombing.

Clark had to obey, but as insurance he demanded written orders from Alexander commanding him to bomb the abbey so that it would not be seen as his decision. Later, he condemned Alexander for making that decision, which Clark argued should have been his as Fifth Army commander. He added, "It is too bad unnecessarily to destroy one of the art treasures of the world."

The bombing was considered successful; little was left of the abbey. But the followup ground attack was a costly failure. Clark was correct when he asserted that it had been "a tragic mistake. It only made our job more difficult." Churchill wrote simply, "The result was not good." German troops swarmed over the ruins and quickly established defensive positions. Freyberg was late launching his ground attack, which historian Rick Atkinson described as "tactical incompetence in failing to couple the bombardment with a prompt attack." The attack did not begin until that night and was carried out by only one company, which lost half its men before they had even traversed 50 yards.

Atkinson quoted the official British conclusion that obliterating the abbey "brought no military advantage of any kind." The official U.S. Army evaluation of the affair concluded that the bombing had "gained nothing beyond

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destruction, indignation, sorrow and regret." It had all been for nothing.

It took three more months of fierce fighting before Monte Cassino was finally captured at a staggering cost of 55,000 Allied troops killed and wounded along with 20,000 German casualties. The battle to take the hill was fought by Americans, British, French, Poles, Australians, Canadians, Indians, Nepalese, Sikhs, Maltese, and New Zealanders.

Clark had grown increasingly frustrated, criticizing Freyberg in his diary as indecisive, "not aggressive," and "ponderous and slow." By the end of March, the New Zealand Corps was taken off the line, having suffered more than 6,000 casualties in 11 days. Finally, on May 18, a contingent of Polish soldiers reached the ruins of the abbey and ran up a Polish flag to show their final victory.

The reconstruction of the abbey began in 1950, and in 1964 the new structure was reconsecrated by Pope Paul VI. But reminders of the fighting linger in personal memories and massive, well maintained cemeteries. The British cemetery contains more than 4,000 graves, with the British, New Zealand, and Canadian dead in the front and the Indian and Ghurka dead in the rear. The Polish cemetery holds the graves of more than 1,000 men, out of the 4,000 who died there. There are 20,000 graves in the German cemetery with three bodies buried in each grave. An American cemetery, where the dead from Monte Cassino and other battles of the Italian campaign are interred, lies 90 miles north of Monte Cassino and houses some 8,000 graves.

Memories of the Italian campaign and the destruction of the abbey stayed with many of the veterans for a lifetime. Some returned years later to visit the battle sites and graves. In 1994, Cyril Harte, a British soldier, returned to Monte Cassino and described how he felt when "that heartbreak mountain, which had cost the lives of so many infantrymen of all nations, came into view. Just for a moment, my heart stopped beating. That hasn't changed. It still loomed forbiddingly and I chilled at the thought of the enemy who looked down on us."

At that moment Harte believed that German soldiers were still in the abbey watching his every move, just as he had been so certain they were 50 years before.

Duane Schultz has written more than two dozen books and articles on military history. His most recent book is Patton's Last Gamble: The Disastrous Raid on POW Camp Hammelburg in World War II *(Stackpole, 2018). He can be reached at www.duaneschultz.com.*

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Captain William Meyer commanded the destroyer USS *Ringness* during World War II. While operating off Okinawa, *Ringness* evacuated wounded men from a warship that had been struck by a Japanese Kamikaze suicide plane and narrowly missed being struck itself. BELOW: Captain William Meyer photographed after the war.

NROTC Success

Naval ROTC graduate William C. Meyer served in World War II and went on to remain a career naval officer.

MORE THAN 16 MILLION AMERICANS SERVED IN THE U.S. MILITARY DURING World War II, but as fluid as the situation was in the Pacific, and considering the priority given to the European Theater, it is difficult to obtain an accurate count of how many served in the Pacific at any one time during World War II. However, thanks to historians who have given attention to the demographics of the war, it is estimated that at least three million Americans served in the Pacific by war's end.

Throughout much of its history, the United States Navy has depended on graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy to fill its needs for qualified officers. However, the Naval Academy itself was not established until 1845, just six years before the commencement of the American Civil War. Before that, officers in the U.S. Navy, in imitation of the British and other navies, trained future naval officers on the job as seagoing apprentices, better known as midshipmen. The first class of midshipmen to attend the Naval Academy consisted of just 50 men. Today the academy graduates closer to 1,000 men and women every year.

With the outbreak of the American Civil War, the biggest war in U.S. history to date, the Navy suffered from a shortage of officers. Not only did the Naval Academy not produce enough officers for a rapidly expanding Navy, but also a large number of both commissioned officers and midshipmen swore allegiance to the Confederate Navy; and with the U.S. Navy heavily involved in blockading the southern states, this left the North in a difficult situation which was not completely rectified until after the war was over.

World War I created more difficulties for the U.S. Navy in that this war, the first fought on such a large geographical scale, proved that the Naval Academy alone could not produce adequate numbers of officers for a navy about to fight a global war. As a result, following the lead of the Army, the Navy experimented with the idea of educating and training officers outside the Naval Academy. In 1925, both the Congress and the president approved the establishment of a Naval Reserve Officer Training Program (NROTC). Six universities were selected for this experimental program, which started in the fall of 1926. They were the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Washington, Harvard, Yale, the Georgia School of Technology, and Northwestern. During World War II, 12 percent of the officers who served were graduates of NROTC programs.

The first commander of the NROTC Program at Berkeley was then Commander Chester W. Nimitz. He was not only the commander of the program, but also taught naval science to the cadets. One of the graduates from the NROTC program at Berkeley was William C. Meyers. Meyers was born in Ukiah, California, in 1913. However, his family eventually moved to the Berkeley/Oakland area of California, where young Meyer went to school. He came to know Commander Nimitz at this time because he went to school with and became friends with his son, Chester, Jr., who also became a naval officer and served in submarines as his father did in the early days of his naval career.

Meyer also came to know the Nimitz family through his father, who for a number of years assisted Nimitz by teaching navigation to the NROTC cadets who attended Berkeley. Later, in 1930, no doubt influenced by both his friendship with Chester

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Naval History & Heritage Command

ABOVE: Captain Meyer received command of the destroyer USS *Ringness* in June 1944 and took the ship and its intrepid crew into harm's way in the Pacific. RIGHT: While in command of the destroyer *Ringness*, Lieutenant Commander William Meyer, standing center, with key personnel aboard the warship.

Jr. and his father's friendship with Chester Sr., Meyer applied for entrance to U.C. Berkeley and the NROTC program and was accepted to both. Upon graduation he received a commission as an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve. He worked for a number of years as a civilian engineer, but in 1939 his naval reserve unit was put on alert for possible mobilization. The war in Europe had started, but Pearl Harbor and American's entry into the war were still two years away.

Although on alert, Meyer continued at his civilian job until late 1940, when he received orders to report to the stores ship USS *Aldebaran* (AF-10). The skipper of *Aldebaran* was Captain Royal W. Abbott, a Naval Academy graduate. According to Meyer, he was "by the book," and "good, but strict." And being an academy man, he did not trust reservists. He observed these young reservists every minute they were on watch. He went so far as to have a rearview mirror installed on the bridge so that he could see what they were doing behind him. "I don't think he ever came to trust us in the entire year that I was aboard," Meyer remembered.

During his time aboard *Aldebaran*, young Meyer and the rest of the crew were kept busy running supplies from the West Coast to Hawaii to meet the needs of the Pacific Fleet recently moved there from the West Coast. In the late summer of 1941, Meyer and the rest of the crew still aboard *Aldebaran* had a break from their routine and took cement, some 6-inch coastal defense guns, ammunition, and other materiel to Pago Pago in American Samoa. Pago Pago is the only natural deepwater port in that part of the Pacific, and the United States was preparing for its defense in case war broke out with Japan, something U.S. military planners had been preparing for since the early part of the century.

Back in Hawaii from her mission to Pago Pago, *Aldebaran* prepared to resume her routine of running supplies from the West Coast to Hawaii. The ship departed Hawaii on December 1, 1941, and arrived in San Francisco on December 6. Of course, on December 7, in Hawaii, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. There was nothing routine about Meyer's time in the Navy after that.

Sometime late in December, Meyer heard about a new type of ship that the yards were constructing for the Navy, something smaller than a destroyer, even smaller than a destroyer escort. It was a patrol craft. They were so small and so many were built during the war that they were not even given names. They were simply called PCs for short and given numbers.

At this time, literally just weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Admiral Nimitz had yet to replace Admiral Husband Kimmel as commander of the Pacific Fleet in Hawaii. He was still Chief of the Bureau of Navigation and less than a household name. Meyer then wrote a personal note to Nimitz (the last time he would feel free to do so for the rest of the war) asking about this new type of craft and also wanting to know if he could get assigned to one of them. Not long after sending the letter, Meyer received orders to report to New Orleans, where he found USS *PC-476*. She was 173 feet long, had depth charges, sonar, and one 3-inch gun, but no radar. She was designed for antisubmarine warfare, but like a lot of other types of vessels, would perform a multitude of tasks.

To his surprise, not only had Meyer been assigned to this new type of craft, but he was also the ship's new skipper. He was a lieutenant (j.g.), and to help him launch his first ship he had two other officers, both "Ninety-Day Wonders" fresh out of college. Ensign R.D. Butler and Ensign D.P. Wilber had just graduated from the NROTC program at Northwestern University, and neither one had ever been to sea before. They, like thousands of others, were going to help win the war.

In addition to the three officers aboard *PC-467,* there were 44 enlisted men. Half of them were reservists recently called to active duty, and the rest were regular Navy. Meyer's chief

engineer was a machinist mate first class by the name of J.G. Rivers. All of his experience was with steam engines, but the PCs were powered by two General Motors diesel engines. In those desperate early months of World War II, there was no time to send men off to school to learn how to maintain those diesel engines. Rivers, like many others, turned to the owner's manual and taught himself. And the regulars mentored the reservists to bring the ship up to fighting standards. Likewise, Meyer was impressed with how willing and how fast his two young NROTC neophytes assimilated and learned their responsibilities.

In the spring of 1942, *PC-476* was assigned to accompany the escort aircraft carrier USS *Long Island* (CVE-1), through the Panama Canal to the West Coast and out to Hawaii. It was accompanied by *PC-477* and a World War I-vintage, four-stack destroyer. When they arrived in Hawaii, as requested earlier by Meyer, a fourth officer joined the ship. Ensign W.G. Anderson was another NROTC graduate.

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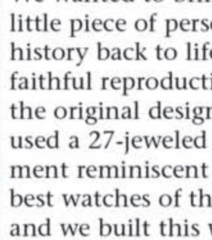

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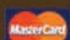
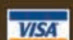

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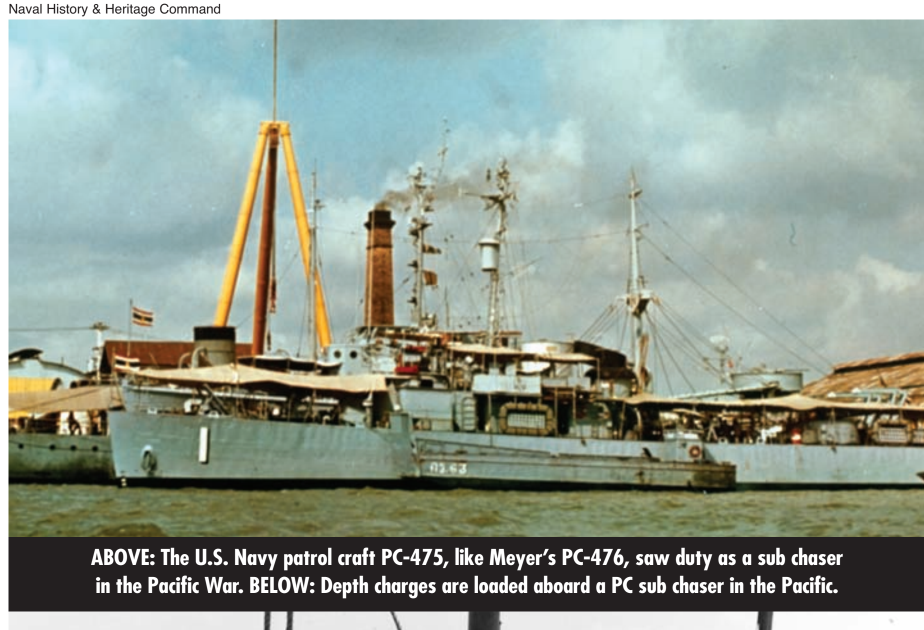
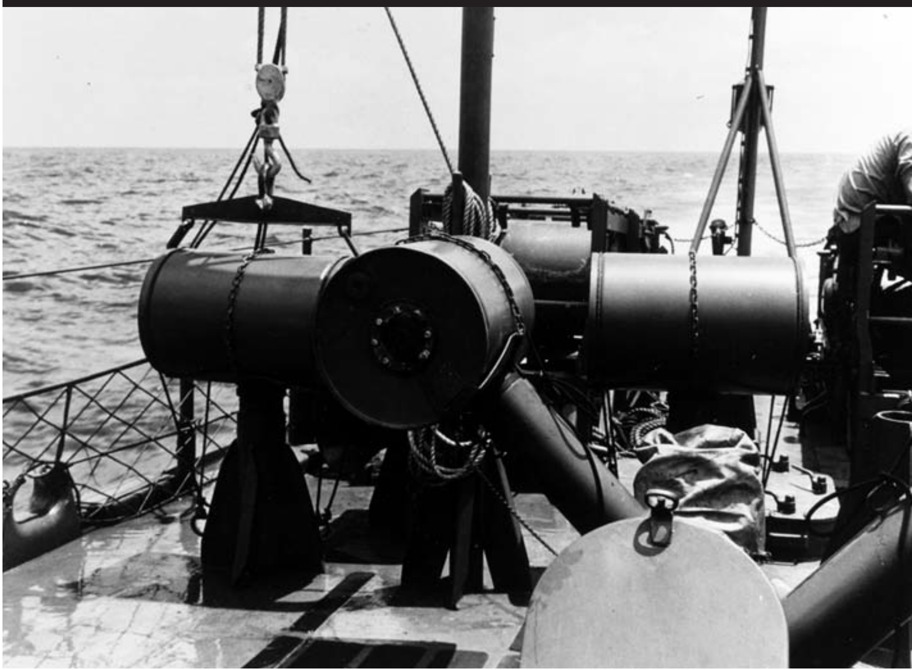


ABOVE: The U.S. Navy patrol craft PC-475, like Meyer's PC-476, saw duty as a sub chaser in the Pacific War. BELOW: Depth charges are loaded aboard a PC sub chaser in the Pacific.



Naval History & Heritage Command

After a few months in Hawaii, *PC-476, PC-477,* and *PC-479* headed for the South Pacific. They went via Palmyra Island and American Samoa, where they refueled before arriving in New Caledonia. In October 1942, they were ordered to Guadalcanal where they guarded the beaches off Lunga Roads against enemy submarine attack.

The PCs were stationed at Tulagi, across Iron Bottom Sound from Guadalcanal, as were the PT-boats. In early December 1942, during the waning days of the Japanese effort to resupply their starving troops on Guadalcanal, the PTs participated in a battle off Cape Esperance. During the battle, they sank the Japanese destroyer *Teruzuki* with Rear Admiral Raizo Tanaka, the squadron commander, aboard. The following day *PC-476* was ordered to rescue one of the PTs that had run aground off Cape Esperance. On the way, they found a ship's boat from *Teruzuki* abandoned and dead in the water. *PC-476* towed it back to base. Aboard was found a suitcase with an admiral's uniform, plus his sword and dagger. Also in the suitcase was a roll of maps showing all of the American gun positions on Guadalcanal. These were turned over to the Marine Corps. Meyer kept the sword and dagger. It was only later that Meyer found out that they belonged to Tanaka, who was rescued without his belongings and went ashore on Guadalcanal. At the time, Meyer knew nothing about Tanaka. This all came to light after the war.

In early January 1943, Meyer and *PC-476* were ordered to rendezvous with the submarine USS *Nautilus* off the coast of Santa Isabel Island in the Solomons. With the help of some coastwatchers, *Nautilus* had rescued some Catholic nuns originally from Long Beach, California, and some plantation owners and their families. *PC-476* successfully rendezvoused with *Nautilus* in the dead of night without the help of radar and transferred more than 20 civilians, delivering them safely to Guadalcanal. From there they were transported to New Zealand and then on to their respective home countries.

With Guadalcanal secured, in June 1943 Meyer was relieved of command and sent back to the States, where he took command of a new destroyer escort, USS *Newman* (DE-205). *Newman,* with Meyer in command, operated in the Atlantic and Mediterranean doing convoy duty until June 1944. He then took command of a high-speed destroyer transport, USS *Ringness* (AP-100), named after a doctor who had lost his life on Guadalcanal.

Ringness carried four landing craft and could also transport up to 150 troops for amphibious landings. From the East Coast, *Ringness* headed for the Pacific to join Task Force Baker at Guadalcanal in preparation for the landings on Okinawa in April 1945. She also had 5-inch guns, depth-charge racks, and hedgehogs, throw-ahead weapons used against submarines. *Ringness* also had sonar, and although designated as an attack transport she was also used as an escort vessel. During the Okinawan operation—the last battle of World War II—she served as a picket, giving warning to the main fleet of incoming Japanese aircraft, most of which were kamikazes. During this time, *Ringness* was involved in rescuing survivors of ships that had been hit.

Then one morning at around 0200 hours while the ship was on picket duty in the far northwest of Station 15 on the line, a kamikaze aimed for *Ringness*. When it was around five miles out, according to her radar, Meyer ordered up flank speed and purposely did not open fire on the attacking plane, knowing that the gun flashes would give the attacking pilot a definite target. As a result, the plane narrowly missed the stern of *Ringness* and crashed into the sea.

After Okinawa, *Ringness* was ordered to the Philippines to train for the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands. Her task was to carry in underwater demolition teams (UDTs). However, during her training she was pulled to accompany escort carriers to Ulithi Atoll. This was in late July 1945, and on August 2, on the way back to the Philippines Meyer received a

message that read, "SURVIVORS IN THE WATER. PROCEED AT BEST SPEED TO EFFECT RESCUE!"

The survivors, as Meyer was to learn, were from the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis,* which only days before had dropped off part of the first atomic bomb at the island of Tinian in the Marianas. From Tinian, *Indianapolis* sailed to Guam and then headed west for the Philippines. The cruiser was without escort even though the captain of Indianapolis, Charles B. McVay, III, had requested one. The Japanese submarine I-58 sighted Indianapolis just before midnight on July 29 and sent her to the bottom. By the time *Ringness* and other rescue ships arrived on the scene several days later, only 316 of the original 1,199 officers and men were still alive to be rescued.

Ringness was one of the first ships to arrive on the scene, and as luck would have it one of the first people she pulled out of the water was Captain McVay. He was with a group of survivors clinging to three life rafts that were tied together. McVay was later court-martialed for not zigzagging his ship. He was also the only captain in the history of the U.S. Navy to be court-martialed for losing his ship in combat. His career was over, and in 1969 he committed suicide.

Those who served aboard *Ringness* are considered members of the Indianapolis Survivors Association, and for years after the war attended not only their own ship's reunions, but also those of Indianapolis.

Meyer never saw Admiral Nimitz during the war, but afterward he did elect to stay in the Navy and transferred from the reserves to the regular Navy. Their paths crossed again where they had first met back in the 1920s when young Meyer became friends with Chester Jr. Captain Meyer ended up back at U.C. Berkeley after the war, where he was a professor teaching naval science to a new generation of NROTC students. It was not uncommon for then retired Admiral Nimitz, living in Berkeley at the time, to call Meyer and say, "Meyer, bring a couple of midshipmen up here. I want to play some horseshoes!"

Meyer would then bring a couple of midshipmen over to play horseshoes with the admiral while Mrs. Nimitz baked fresh bread. They would all then sit in the living room, eat fresh baked bread, and chat with the admiral. Nimitz died in 1966, and Captain Meyer retired from the Navy two years later.

Bruce Petty is the author of five books, four of which concern World War II in the Pacific. He is a resident of New Plymouth, New Zealand.

NAZI ARMBAND - OFFICER

WW2 GERMAN LUFTWAFFE PILOT GOGGLES

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WW2 US ARMY RANGERS DIAMOND PATCH ORIGINAL

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Eyes in the Sky

High-performance single- and multi-engine tactical airplanes, while essential for helping to win World War II, were not the only important air assets employed by the United States in that global conflict.

DESPITE BEING CAUGHT UP IN THE TIDE OF ISOLATIONISM PREVALENT DURING the interval between the world wars, the United States Army was lucky enough to have Congressional funding for the further development and expansion of its fledgling air arm, known initially in 1926 as the Army Air Corps and in 1941 renamed the Army Air Forces. The potential of air power, as exhibited during the conflict of 1914-1918 and hinted at by the rapid technological advancements in aircraft designs and capability in the two decades after that conflict guaranteed its participation in future wars, assuring its inclusion in all the military arsenals of the world's major powers, including the United States.

Throughout the period, the U.S. Army procured and tested new tactical aircraft, built bombing and gunnery ranges, created training and tactical doctrine, and finally, the Air Corps built a worldwide aircraft communication system that emphasized air-to-ground and ground-to air capability. Although the Air Corps had mostly tactical aircraft in its inventory during the interwar years, it nevertheless stressed as part of its training and doctrine an ever-widening role for aerial reconnaissance and observation.

Problems did surface between U.S. Army aviators and ground commanders about what constituted observation and reconnaissance from the sky. Part of the ongoing disagreement was the issue of what type of planes should be used to execute those tasks. One school of thought that took hold among the Army hierarchy was that aerial observation should be limited to the immediate or adjacent battlefield areas and used mainly for the adjustment of friendly artillery fire. This approach called for the use of slow-flying machines that could loiter over the target area for the maximum time possible. Detractors of this theory, mostly Air Corps officers, argued that such aircraft designs would be at the mercy of enemy antiaircraft as well as small arms fire and susceptible to fighter attack. They went on to claim that the slow, unarmed observation craft would need friendly escort fighters with them over the target area to make sure the mission was accomplished. These conflicting concepts continued unabated into World War II.

When America was plunged into World War II on December 7, 1941, the country was woefully unprepared. Its Army numbered merely 190,000 troops, including the Army Air Corps, and much of its weaponry was outdated. Major military maneuvers of 1941 and 1942 were designed to test new weapons and new doctrine. It was during these exercises that the U.S. Army decided to test the reliability and capability of certain aircraft to be used for aerial observation and artillery spotting. Once again, the Army Air Corps and the Army ground forces clashed over what type of aircraft should be designated for these jobs. The former continued to promulgate the thesis that observation missions required modified combat aircraft due to the need to perform aerial reconnaissance with the least risk as possible from hostile fire, whether originating from the ground or the air. The latter view, as espoused by the Army ground forces, favored a small, lightweight, and inexpensive machine to serve solely as a vertical extension of an artillery observation post. These aircraft, in their opinion, would not be required to penetrate far beyond the enemy's front lines.

With its goal in mind, the Army ground forces proceeded to test the effectiveness of small aircraft for artillery spotting, aerial observation, command control, communication, wire laying, and medical evacuation. In the summer wargames of 1941, the Army tested commercially built aircraft designs that were unofficially designated liaison or "L" aircraft. The term became official during the April 1942 military maneuvers. Equipped with two-way radios, these two-seater single-engine craft were manned by a pilot and an observer.

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During training exercises at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, a Piper Cub radios corrections to a fire control center. Light observation aircraft performed in a variety of roles in World War II.

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A Piper L-4 light aircraft takes off from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Ranger* to provide artillery spotting information and intelligence during Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942.

turers such as Piper, Taylorcraft, and the Stinson Division of the Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation built the liaison aircraft used by the Army ground forces in World War II. Piper built the ubiquitous L-4, which was one of the primary observation planes used by the Army during the war, while Taylorcraft supplied the L-2 and L-3 models, essentially variants of the L-4. In 1943, Consolidated Vultee produced the L-5, which was based on the other L series models but was the only designed and purpose-built military observation aircraft used by the United States during the entire war.

The "L" planes variants were inexpensive, easy to operate and maintain, aerodynamically sound, and could land almost anywhere, which earned them the nicknames "puddle jumpers" and "grasshoppers." By February 1942, the Army had 1,600 of these on order with the condition that they were to be used mostly for artillery spotting and remain 1,800 yards within friendly territory when on a mission. Subsequent Army regulations allowed pilots to determine for themselves what constituted 1,800 yards of friendly ground. This was a wise directive since World War II liaison pilots were very often too preoccupied dodging enemy antiaircraft fire to determine the friendly land boundaries within which they were supposed to stay.

On June 6, 1942, an organic Army aviation program was established. This provided Army ground forces with two pilots and one aircraft mechanic for each field artillery battalion and additional one or two pilots for the artillery headquarters. Each Army division was slated to have a minimum of six pilots and six planes to a maximum of 10 pilots and 10 aircraft. This number would be raised by the end of the war to 16 aircraft per Army division. During the war the Army Air Forces were given the responsibility for the procurement of liaison planes, spare parts, repair materials, and all auxiliary flying equipment.

In early 1942, the Army established the Department of Air Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and in June of that year began to organize organic Army aviation. The department's function was to train pilots to fly fire adjustment missions for the Army's field artillery. Lt. Col. William F. Ford, both an artillery officer and a certified pilot, was selected to be the organization's first director. In addition to Fort Sill, flight training was also carried out at Pittsburg, Kansas, and Denton, Texas. By the close of the war several thousand pilots had passed through the department's training facilities. The first class began the course work at Fort Sill on August 1, 1942, and comprised 19 students. It finished its training on September 18 the same year. The first five classes at Fort Sill were made up of officers and enlisted men from the Army ground forces and the Army service forces. During 1943, however, the Army discontinued bringing enlisted men into its organic aviation program because its needs were such that qualified enlistees were being sent to officer candidate schools to fill vacancies in the armor, artillery, and infantry branches. As a result, fewer pilots were trained, but the Army made up for this shortfall in pilots by using the training slots for liaison aircraft mechanics. Liaison pilots were in turn given some cursory maintenance training to allow them to make simple repairs to their planes in the field.

On November 9, 1942, three Army liaison L-4s, under the command of Army Captain Ford E. Allcom, took off from the deck of the aircraft

THE L-5 STINSON SENTINEL WAS KNOWN AS THE FLYING JEEP

The L-5 Stinson Sentinel observation liaison aircraft was the only purpose-built plane of its type manufactured in the United States during World War II. Known as the "Flying Jeep," it was manufactured by the Stinson Aircraft Company of Wayne, Michigan, later a subsidiary of the Vultee Aircraft Corporation.

The L-5 series and its five variants were manufactured between December 1942 and September 1945 for a total of 3,590 built. In terms of light observation aircraft, production numbers for this unarmed two-seater were second only to the Piper L-4 Cub.

The fuselage was constructed using chrome-moly steel tubing covered with doped cotton fabric. The wings and empennage were made of spruce and mahogany plywood box spars and plywood ribs and skins also covered with fabric. The only aluminum, which was in short supply, was on the engine cowling, tail cone, framework for the ailerons, rudder and elevator, and landing gear fairings. The L-5 was powered by a six-cylinder, 190-horsepower Lycoming 0-435-1 piston engine.

The L-5 was introduced into service with the U.S. Army Air Forces in the spring of 1944 and made its debut in the Italian campaign. Soon thereafter it was used by all the branches of the U.S. military as well as the British Royal Air Force. A large number of these craft were purchased by the Army for use as an adjunct of the close air-ground support mission. Faster and more powerful than the L-4 and L-5 liaison planes, the later variants of the L-5 were essentially upgraded and improved versions of those two earlier models. A strong and robust engine allowed the later L-5 to take more effective evasive action against enemy antiaircraft fire and fighters. It was equipped with a powerful radio, which greatly enhanced its air-to-ground and air-to-air communications capability.

Because of its effectiveness, the L-5 was cross-utilized by the Army ground forces and Army Air Forces in Italy. A number of L-5s were flown by Army Air Forces pilots as observers to direct American fighters and fighter bombers, including P-51s and P-47s, on strafing and bombing runs. Conversely, these missions were also flown with Army liaison pilots at the controls and with Army Air Forces pilots acting as observers. These operations in Italy were known as "Horsefly" missions and were quite successful.

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carrier USS Ranger cruising off the coast of North Africa during the opening phase of Operation Torch. This signaled the first combat mission ever undertaken by U.S. Army liaison aircraft. The little planes had no problem lifting off the carrier and then proceeded to a landing strip near the coast, all the while maintaining radio silence. While over the Allied invasion fleet, the planes were mistaken for German aircraft and were shot at. Taking evasive action, Allcom's flight continued to head for the coast, where he was fired on again, this time by antiaircraft gunners of the U.S. 2nd Armored Division, believing the American flyers were German. With part of his cockpit shot away by the friendly fire, Allcom managed to land safely only to be wounded by machine-gun fire from Vichy French forces. The captain was fortunate enough to be aided by area civilians, who rushed him to a U.S. Army aid station for treatment.

A pilot and his spotter fly above the Philippine jungle in an L-5 Sentinel in 1945. Pilots of light observation aircraft often braved enemy antiaircraft fire to gain valuable intelligence or direct artillery.

A number of significant problems arose from the use of liaison aircraft during the North African campaign. The most troublesome was that there were not enough planes to effectively set up a workable artillery-spotting regime. Many times, the available planes were employed for other purposes such as command and control and communication missions, thus reducing their use for their main job of providing needed artillery adjustment for infantry and armored units. A second critical problem was the shortage of trained aerial observers. This caused some ground commanders to try to solve the issue by hastily training rear echelon personnel—cooks, clerks, infantry, and artillerymen—to be flight observers. The lack of results was predictable, and the chronic shortage continued throughout the North African operation. It was not until late 1943 and 1944 that the Department of Air Training addressed this issue by greatly expanding its training of observers.

A third problem reared its ugly head in the form of the very apparent antagonism between the Army ground forces and the Army Air Forces over what constituted aerial reconnaissance and battlefield observation. The latter branch pressed the issue of the difficulty of liaison air assets being able to perform battlefield observation due to their vulnerability to enemy air and ground fire. Lt. Gen. Carl W. Spaatz, the Army Air Forces commander in North Africa responsible for the Allied tactical and strategic air operations in that theater, felt that close air-ground support and aerial reconnaissance could only be maintained by gaining air superiority over the German Luftwaffe. To him, this required the use of Allied fighter planes to fly cover for high-speed photoreconnaissance aircraft that were capable of both observing and photographing enemy ground activity. Since the Army ground forces did not have this ability, control of aerial reconnaissance and observation by default fell to the Army Air Forces. The result was that now the former branch could concentrate on conducting artillery fire-adjustment missions.

As the Army ground forces and Army Air Forces had conflicting ideas about who should have and employ liaison aircraft during World War II, the latter had never been favorably disposed to the former having organic aviation units and believed it should be responsible for all the U.S. Army's aviation requirements. The two branches based their divergent views on the use of liaison aircraft on their differing views regarding doctrine over that use. For example, in early 1944, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces Henry "Hap" Arnold and Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, head of the Army ground forces became embroiled in a controversy about whether liaison aircraft should be under the authority of the Army Air Forces. General Arnold cited the North African and Sicilian campaigns as examples of what he deemed the misuse of L-4s in combat. He stated that General Spaatz felt the Army needed a liaison design that had higher performance capabilities than the L-4. He went further and claimed that there had to be better coordination between ground commanders and the aircraft providing close ground-air support. Arnold felt that both of these could be achieved if Army Air Forces pilots and liaison pilots took turns flying as pilot and observer on these missions, during which the observer would call in the mission to the combat strike aircraft providing close ground-air support after receiving ground coordinates from the ground commanders.

General Arnold stressed that liaison planes should have no less than 100-horsepower engines, which would better align them with the speed of friendly fighters and fighter bombers. He got his wish with the introduction into service in the spring of 1944 of the 190-horsepower Stinson L-5 liaison design. He went on to push for the Army Air Forces to control all artillery spotting and liaison missions and have these tasks phased out of Army ground forces responsibility.

On February 16, 1944, General McNair issued a rebuttal to Arnold's proposed plans for revamping the aerial reconnaissance and observation responsibilities. McNair reiterated the premise that the Army ground forces retain control of its own aircraft since ground commanders would be in a better position to decide how and when to employ liaison air assets than air force commanders. McNair continued his argument by stating that the War Department had created the ground forces air element with the acquiescence of the Army Air Forces because the latter recognized its inability to properly perform battlefield aerial observation and artillery adjustment fire. Regardless of the back and forth arguments issued by both sides, there was no immediate resolution of the doctrinal impasse between Arnold and McNair.

Later in the summer of 1944, the War Department reviewed the positions of both sides of the issue and accepted the stand of the Army ground forces. However, the War Department granted the Army Air Forces the right to have its request to have a larger role in liaison missions reexamined in the event organic Army aviation was expanded during the war. Such an expansion did occur in 1945, but the War Department, because Japan had surrendered,

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never did address the Army Air Forces petition for such a review when it came.

While liaison aircraft, mainly L-5s after the spring of 1944, were used during the Italian campaign, the most extensive use occurred over the battlefields of France, Belgium, and finally Germany. From D-Day to V-E Day, they performed 97 percent of all artillery adjustment missions in the European Theater. These aircraft were also responsible for a high percentage of battlefield observation missions, complemented in part by Army Air Forces reconnaissance planes. Due to the generally open, rolling terrain found in northwestern Europe, aerial observation and artillery spotting was relatively easy. Any German soldier who saw an enemy liaison plane in the sky knew very soon a lethal American artillery barrage would break over his head. This made German movement during daylight hours problematic.

Liaison pilots found that fields and farm roads in theater served well as makeshift landing strips. Even in snowy conditions, which visited Western Europe with a vengeance in the winter of 1944-1945, the little planes could land almost anywhere if fitted with skis.

By the autumn of 1944, the tactical advantage had turned in favor of the Allies, thereby providing additional opportunities for more effective use of liaison aircraft in combat. Better coordination between friendly artillery batteries and spotter aircraft brought increasingly faster response times to fire mission requests from ground commanders. Inclement weather during late 1944 and the beginning of 1945, however, drastically reduced the effectiveness of the liaison planes. The extremely harsh weather grounded all aircraft for lengthy periods of time. Stories abounded of individual L-4 and L-5 pilots braving the elements long enough to fly fire support operations to aid beleaguered American troops, especially during the bitterly fought Battle of the Bulge between December 1944 and January 1945.

During World War II, especially in Europe, liaison planes had to deal with the threat of enemy aircraft. One of the most vociferous arguments between the Army Air Forces raised against the retention of liaison assets by the Army ground forces was the inherent vulnerability of these planes to enemy fighters. The Army Air Forces' contention in this case was certainly correct: L-4s and L-5s were no match for the swift and deadly German fighters that they might encounter over the skies of northwestern Europe. In addition, the German high command offered what amounted to a bounty on the heads American liaison aircraft. Luftwaffe pilots were awarded various types of air medals and leave points for destroyed liaison planes.

Near the front lines in France, mechanics assemble an L-5 light aircraft in the field. The plane was soon in the air conducting surveillance and spotting missions.

During 1944 and the first part of the following year, a number of L-4s and L-5s were lost to German fighters and ground-based antiaircraft fire as the Allies advanced across France and into the Reich. The liaison pilots were able to use a degree of aerial chicanery against enemy aircraft that improved their chances of survival when they met hostile warplanes. When attacked by enemy fighters, the L-4 and L-5 pilots would dive for the deck and then fly as slowly as possible. This action would force the attackers into a stall. Recovery was almost impossible at the low altitudes the American planes were flying if the latter attempted to intercept the liaison aircraft. Liaison pilots would also try to lure enemy warbirds over the American lines, where the Germans would then have to face U.S. antiaircraft ground fire, as well as roving Yank airplanes. But the best defense against hostile planes was always remembering that discretion was the better part of valor, in other words avoiding air space containing German combat aircraft.

Although most liaison pilots always attempted to sidestep areas where enemy airpower and/or ground fire could hinder their work and even cause their destruction, some intrepid liaison skippers went looking for ways to make life difficult for the Nazis. A vivid case was the action of Major Charles "Bazooka Charlie" Carpenter, chief of the U.S. 4th Armored Division's reconnaissance aircraft detachment. On September 19, 1944, the opening day of a series of tank battles on the Western Front spanning 11 days and known as the Battle of Arracourt, fought in the Lorraine region of northeastern France and second only to those armored engagements fought during the Battle of the Bulge, Major Carpenter was conducting a routine reconnaissance patrol. Seeing German tanks sneaking around a platoon of American tank destroyers, he put his L-4H into a dive and out of the rain and fog attacked the offending panzers with 2.36-inch bazooka rockets he had fitted to the fuselage of his plane. Although he failed to score any hits on the enemy armored vehicles, his actions were enough to alert his comrades on the ground to the potential danger. The U.S. tank destroyers as a result were able to turn the tables on their would-be attackers and eliminate the advancing enemy armor. Later the same day, Carpenter once more assaulted enemy tanks, diving at an 80-degree angle and pulling up only 1,500 feet from the ground while delivering hits from his missiles on two German tanks, causing their crews to abandon both vehicles.

Another innovative way to use the liaison planes was suggested by none other than Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. As his Third Army neared Germany's one-mile-wide Rhine River, the western boundary of the Third Reich, he wanted to use L-4s and L-5s to airlift American troops across that waterway to secure bridgeheads on the east bank of the river. The novel scheme was only put aside when the U.S. First Army in early March was able to capture intact the large Ludendorff railway bridge over the Rhine at Remagen.

As in Europe, liaison aircraft played a significant role in the Pacific, albeit on a smaller scale.

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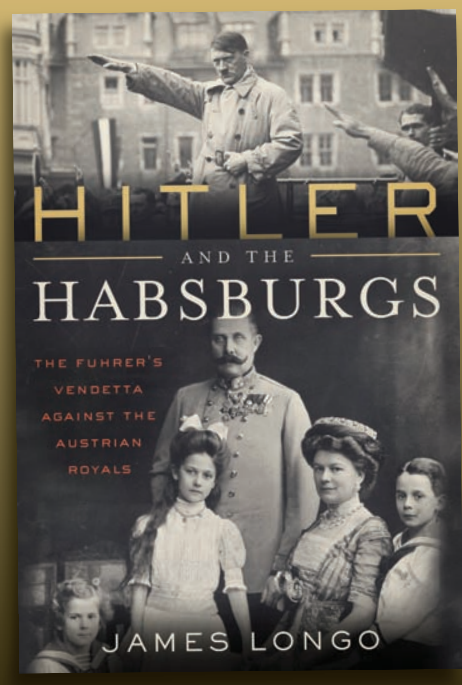

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The reason for the different level of participation was that, unlike in the European Theater, warfare in the Pacific was based on amphibious landings supported by massive naval and air bombardments, usually against small islands. This often meant that L aircraft were brought onto shore crated and then assembled after the objective was won by the ground forces. Sometimes the planes might not be off-loaded onto land for days after the American landings. As a result, the surveillance craft would be flown off jury-rigged flight decks made of sheets of steel matting placed over the decks of converted Navy LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) forming a seaborne runway. This practice was first initiated during the Anzio landings on the Italian west coast in late January 1944.

Of course, once in the air the planes were not able to land back on the LSTs. The solution to this fundamental problem led to the introduction of an apparatus vital in the recovery of aircraft flown off these vessels. Named after its inventor, Army Air Force Captain James H. Brodie, the "Brodie Device" was first and only used during the fight for the island of Okinawa in April 1945. The captain's invention consisted of four masts extended over the water from the deck of an LST and supported by a strong horizontal steel cable. A trolley with an attached sling underneath ran alongside the cable, and in turn the sling caught a hook that was attached to a moving L-4 or L-5. If properly arrested by the sling the plane would stop immediately in midair and then could then be lifted to the deck level of the LST and hoisted aboard. A specially reconfigured LST launched and retrieved a number of liaison craft off its deck during the Okinawa operation without loss of a plane or pilot. As was the case in Europe, the liaison aircraft in the Pacific acquitted themselves with distinction by performing myriad functions, including calling in timely naval gunfire support for U.S. troops conducting amphibious operations.

"L" aircraft, although small, single-engine, slow, and unarmed, added a valuable dimension to both artillery spotting and battlefield observation during World War II. They provided artillery batteries and field commanders with much-needed information about enemy targets, positions, and movements much more rapidly than during the World War I, thus reducing the time required for artillery fire to be delivered against enemy positions. They also served well in capacities such as medical evacuation, command and control, relaying communications, and wire laying. They were easy targets for enemy air and ground fire, but the loss rate among them was minor compared to the 3,500 deployed in the war. □

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By Michael D. Hull

Bridgeman

American OSS operative Colonel Peter Ortiz fires at German soldiers with a Thompson submachine gun as he joins with members of the Maquis, the French resistance, to spread mayhem behind the enemy lines. INSET BELOW: U.S. Marine Colonel Peter Ortiz is pictured in uniform.

Undercover Hero

Fighting for the Allies in World War II, OSS operative Peter Ortiz survived many harrowing encounters with the enemy.

HELPING TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE GREAT ALLIED INVASIONS OF NORTHERN and southern France in the summer of 1944, a number of U.S. Marines with special language skills and backgrounds served with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

In German-occupied France and the Balkans, they distinguished themselves in hazardous sabotage and intelligence-gathering missions while serving alongside French Resistance groups and airdropped squads of the elite British Special Operations Executive (SOE). Their gallant efforts paid off when the invasion forces landed.

Along with three comrades, one of the Marine Corps heroes is still remembered in the small town of Centron in southeastern France. There is a plaque in the mayor's office, and the town center bears his name. It is that of Major Peter (Pierre) J. Ortiz.

One of the most remarkable Marines to serve in World War II, Ortiz and his team—two leatherneck sergeants and a Free French officer—surrendered to the Germans rather than allow them to destroy the town in August 1944.

A veteran of the legendary French Foreign Legion before joining the Marine Corps, the tall, handsome Ortiz emerged from the war as the most decorated U.S. soldier to serve with the OSS. He was a courteous, compassionate man, and his fearlessness amazed all who knew him. Two Hollywood films were loosely based on his exploits.

Born in New York City on Saturday, July 5, 1913, Pierre Julien Ortiz was raised in affluence. He was the son of Philippe Ortiz, a French-Spanish art dealer, and his Swiss-born wife, Marie Louise. The boy was sent to a secondary school in France, preparatory to going on to a university in Europe or the United States.

But adventure beckoned, and the multilingual youngster shocked his family in January 1932 when he abruptly left school and made his way to Sidi-bel-Abbes in northwestern Algeria, site of a commune and the headquarters of the Foreign Legion. Nineteen-year-old Pierre promptly joined the 1st Regiment.

Six feet, three inches tall and a natural athlete who loved running, climbing mountains, and riding horses, he wanted to "live a man's life," as he told English journalist G. Ward Price, the author of *In Morocco with the Legion.* Philippe Ortiz, meanwhile, rushed to North Africa in a bid to deter his impetuous son. General Paul Rollet, the "father of the Legion," listened to his concerns and said that an "irregular" enlistment could be canceled. After Rollet gave him a guided tour of Sidi-bel-Abbes, however, the senior Ortiz was won over. He became a fervent supporter of the Legion and, after returning to Paris, founded the Friends of the Foreign Legion.

His son, meanwhile, adjusted quickly to the harsh life in the North African desert, where the tough legionnaires ranged far and wide—on foot, riding camels, or driving armored cars and trucks—while campaigning against rebellious natives. Ortiz underwent parachute training and took part in skirmishes with Morocco's fierce Berber tribesmen, who were seeking independence from France. He was promoted to sergeant in 1934, becoming the youngest non-commissioned officer in the Legion. When his hitch was up, he

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sailed home to his family, now living in La Jolla, California.

When Great Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany on September 3, 1939, Ortiz knew that he could not stay out of the action and sailed from Canada that October. His ship was torpedoed by a U-boat, but he was able to reach Europe aboard a French destroyer. He then made his way to the Mediterranean and rejoined the Foreign Legion, which was fighting alongside the British Eighth Army in the Western Desert. As part of General Marie Pierre Koenig's Free French Brigade, the legionnaires fought gallantly against the German Afrika Korps and its Italian allies.

Ortiz was commissioned a second lieutenant and campaigned for two years before his regiment was overrun by the Germans. Now a five-year veteran of the Legion, Ortiz was seriously wounded and taken prisoner. He was shipped to a concentration camp in Austria, where German surgeons patched him up. After partially recovering, Ortiz began several attempts to escape. Eventually succeeding in October 1941, he was able to make his way to neutral Portugal. He then sailed from Lisbon to California for a much-needed rest.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and thrust America into the war, Ortiz wanted

Dick Camp

ABOVE: Ortiz receives his first Navy Cross for his activities in France with the Maquis. His second Navy Cross was awarded for surrendering to the German Staats Polizei to spare French civilians from reprisals. OPPOSITE: Ortiz photographed on his return to the U.S. after serving in the French Foreign Legion.

to rejoin the fight. But he had not fully recovered from his wounds, and the armed forces would not accept him. So, he had to spend several months impatiently getting back into shape before he could pass the Marine Corps physical examination. He joined the corps in June 1942.

At the Parris Island, South Carolina, training depot, Ortiz found himself to be an unusual recruit. He wore French decorations for valor and observed that the training was not as tough as what he had experienced in the Foreign Legion. After later receiving more parachute training and gaining a commission as a reserve second lieutenant, he was sent abroad—ironically back to Morocco.

Ortiz organized a patrol of Arab tribesmen to scout German forces on the Tunisian front. Disguised and fluent in Arabic, Ortiz led his men on a series of successful sorties—until Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa on November 8, 1942. Then, his allies appeared to be more of a threat than the Germans and Italians. Unsuspecting U.S. troops shot at him and captured him. They did not believe that he was a U.S. Marine, but Ortiz was eventually able to assure an Army officer of his identity and mission.

Ortiz served later with a British Army reconnaissance unit scouting the German 21st Panzer Division. While undertaking a one-man patrol one night, he was shot in the hand and leg. But he managed to repel the enemy troops by lobbing hand grenades and made it back to his unit.

After recovering from his wounds, Ortiz was promoted to captain and seconded to the OSS for special operations in France as a prelude to the planned Allied invasion. Encouraged by General Charles de Gaulle, the Free French leader, the OSS and the SOE were active during 1943 in equipping and training French Resis-

tance fighters as they harassed the German occupation forces. Ortiz's next destination was to be the Vercors Plateau in the southeastern Haute-Savoie Department, a craggy, forested region that was the clandestine base for 3,000 Maquis patriots.

Five months before the planned Operation Overlord, a three-man Allied squad was chosen for a special mission code-named Operation Union. Its members were Ortiz, H.H.A. Thackwaite, a prominent British undercover warrior, and an experienced French radio operator named Monnier. Their objective was to analyze the strength of the Maquis and other resistance groups and determine how effectively they could harass the Germans during and after the Allied invasion.

Wearing civilian clothes, the three men parachuted from a Royal Air Force bomber into the Vercors region on the moonless night of January 6, 1944. After linking up with the resistance fighters, they changed into uniforms to show that it was an official military operation. Finding the maquisards eager to fight but poorly armed and trained, the Allied trio evaluated the situation and sent regular radio reports to London.

Ortiz demonstrated his fearlessness during the operation. Wearing civilian clothes and a cape, he made a habit of strolling into German-occupied towns and listening to local gossip. One night, he found himself sitting in a café near some German soldiers who were grousing about the troublesome maquisards and their hated American allies. It was too much for Ortiz. He sprang to his feet, threw open his cape, and brandished two .45-caliber automatic pistols. He ordered the startled Germans to drink a toast to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the U.S. Marine Corps and then slipped outside into the darkness.

Getty Images

Ortiz also developed a reputation for thievery. After somehow getting hold of a Gestapo pass, he stole German Army vehicles for the maquisards. When four downed RAF airmen needed help in getting out of France, he guided them to the border of neutral Spain.

The trio succeeded eventually in organizing the resistance fighters into effective fighting units, and they expanded their harassment operations. But the Germans countered, and the Frenchmen had to face superior panzergrenadier battalions with insufficient guns and ammunition. Although they fought bravely, the resistance groups were forced onto the defensive and had to resort to hit-and-run raids when possible.

By May 1944, the Allied planners realized that a more intense effort had to be launched swiftly in support of the resistance. Thackwaite, Ortiz, and Monnier were extracted, and two new specialist teams—code-named Justine and Eucalyptus—were parachuted into the area. Fighting in the Vercors region intensified when the Allied armies landed in Normandy on June 6 and as they pushed inland.

With the Wehrmacht gaining the upper hand in Haute-Savoie, the Allied planners decided to launch a new effort, code-named Union II, to assist the resistance fighters in sabotage and other direct actions against the enemy. Newly promoted to major, Ortiz was given command of a team that comprised five other Marines: Gunnery Sergeant Robert LaSalle and Sergeants John P. Bodnar, Frederick J. Brunner, Charles E. Perry, and Jack R. Risler; Joseph Arcelin, a Free French officer, and Captain Francis Coolidge of the U.S. Army Air Forces. Ortiz carried a million francs for the maquisards, and the team was to airdrop 864 containers of weapons and other supplies.

The Union II mission got underway on

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August 1, 1944, two weeks before Operation Anvil, the Allied invasion of southern France, when B-17 heavy bombers of the U.S. Eighth Air Force's 388th Bombardment Group took off from Knettishall Airfield in Suffolk, England. When the plane carrying the Union II team swung in low over the French Alps to its drop zone, Ortiz and his men jumped. Their parachutes were yanked open by cables attached to the bomber. Tragically, Sergeant Perry's cable snapped, and he fell to his death.

After solemnly burying their comrade, Ortiz and his men spent several weeks instructing local maquisards in the use of their new weapons before making their way to the town of Beaufort, where they linked up with a contingent of the FFI (French Forces of the Interior). The Americans and Arcelin then moved on under German shellfire to the town of Montgirod.

When the enemy blasted the town because it had harbored resistance fighters, Ortiz and his men were forced to hide in the surrounding mountains with the French Bulle Battalion. But they had to stay on the move because the Germans had been on their trail and eventually surrounded them. Ortiz, meanwhile, lost another man. Gunnery Sergeant LaSalle was felled by a high fever and had to be tended by an English-speaking priest.

Laura Lacey

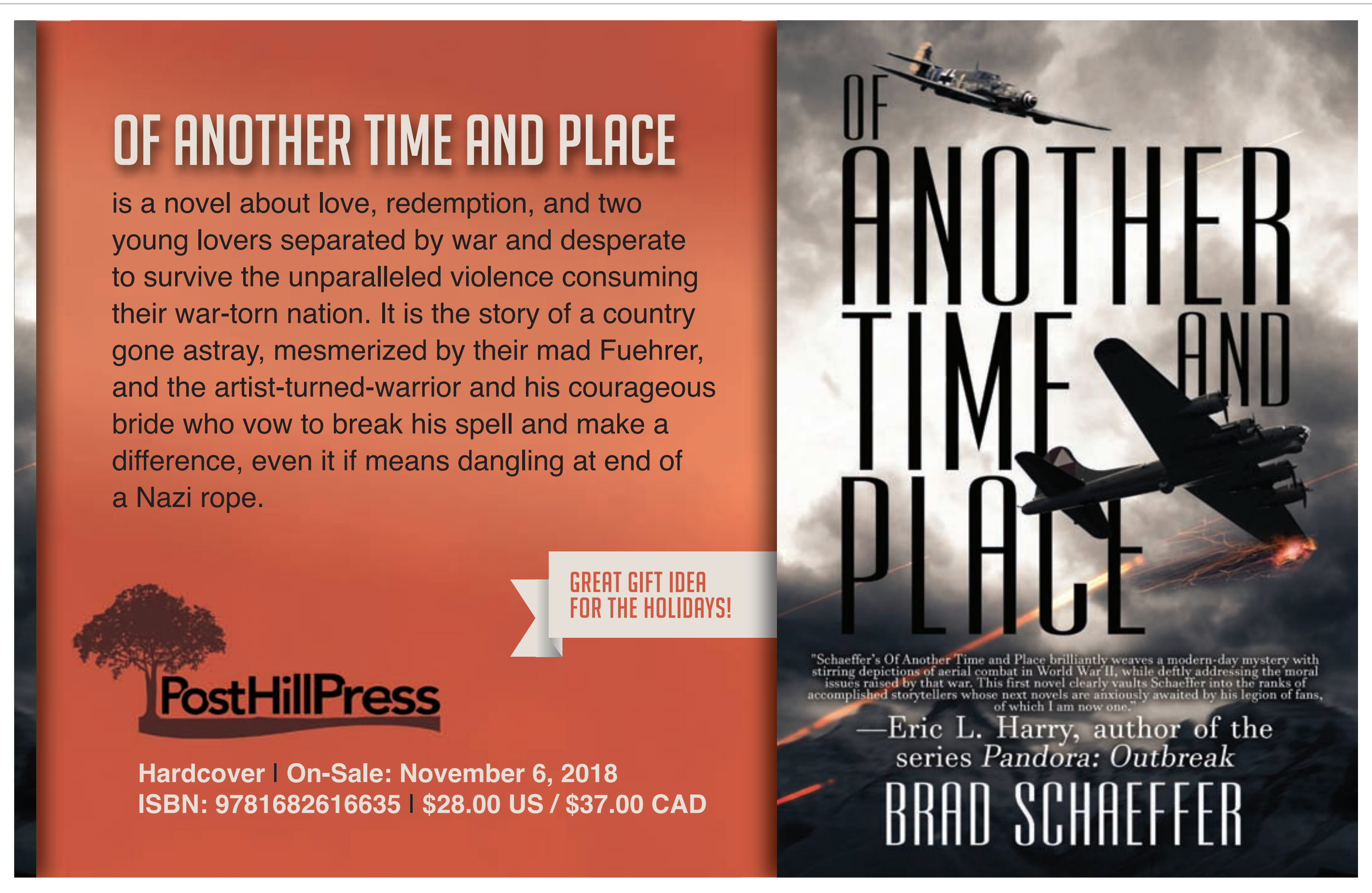
Then-Major Peter Ortiz poses second from left in this photograph of men involved in the Union II mission. The image was taken shortly after the operatives landed in France to begin their covert operations.

After bidding farewell to him at twilight one day, Ortiz and his five survivors crawled through mountain gullies and managed to breach the enemy lines. Operation Anvil, meanwhile, had just gotten underway, and German forces were starting to retreat. The Union II men made their way to the village of Longefoy where the people gave them food and shelter for the night. On the following day, August 16, Ortiz and his men trudged on to the town of Centron.

They marched in single file through the streets but then ran into an enemy convoy. German soldiers jumped from the trucks and opened fire while armored cars moved in with machine guns firing. The Allied team hastily dispersed. Brunner and Coolidge dived into a river and escaped, while Major Ortiz and the others fled back into Centron. A house-to-house melee raged as Ortiz, Arcelin, Bodnar, and Risler held off a German battalion.

The four men intended to fight on until their ammunition ran out, but townspeople told them that Centron would receive the same brutal treatment as Montgirod and other French communities unless they surrendered. The town would be leveled and its residents executed. So, Ortiz ordered his three companions to escape while there was still a chance, but they refused to leave him alone. Ortiz strode out under a white flag and negotiated with Major Kolb, the German battalion commander. The American promised that he and his men would lay down their arms if the town was spared from retribution. Kolb agreed and kept his word.

After the surrender, Arcelin tried to escape but was swiftly recaptured. Sergeant Brunner, meanwhile, linked up with Gunnery Sergeant LaSalle, and they headed separately for safety. LaSalle went south and met Anvil troops who were moving northward, and Brunner met a resistance group that helped him reach England.



Ortiz and the other OSS warriors were herded north to Marlag-Milag Nord, a naval prisoner-of-war camp at Westertimke, near Bremen. Ortiz made several unsuccessful attempts to escape during the long journey and was beaten. But he and his comrades were glad to find that Marlag-Milag was one of the more hospitable stalags. And there was reason for hope. Through a black market network active within and outside the camp, the prisoners learned that troops of the British 21st Army Group were getting close.

Escape attempts were forbidden, but Ortiz—the senior American prisoner there—decided to try anyway. Along with Navy Lt. (j.g.) Hiram Harris, he made his first attempt on December 18, 1944. After spending more than an hour cutting a hole in a wire fence, Ortiz made it into a field outside the compound. But a patrol nabbed Harris and sounded the alarm. Spotlights zeroed in on Ortiz, and he, too, was recaptured. The two men were roughed up and placed in solitary confinement.

Major Ortiz refused to give up. In February 1945, he planned another escape attempt, this time with Marine Lieutenant Walter W. Taylor, another OSS operative, who had been captured near Nice. The pair scrounged a small supply of food, clothes, and maps, but the plan was squelched on April 10 when the camp commandant abruptly ordered the POWs to prepare to move. There was confusion while the prisoners assembled, and many others found hiding places in the camp.

Laura Lacey

Colonel Peter Ortiz chats with with members of the French Maquis shortly after his arrival. Ortiz received the Navy Cross, Purple Heart and other decorations for his heroism and perilous service while fighting the Nazis in World War II.

Less than three hours after the commandant's order, the column set out, heading northeast toward the Baltic port city of Lubeck. The grueling trek was expected to take eight days. The German guards kept a close watch on Ortiz. After the prisoners had trudged along for three hours, chaos suddenly erupted when RAF Spitfire fighters swooped down and started strafing the area. Taking advantage of the breakdown, Major Ortiz, Lieutenant Taylor, an Army Air Forces lieutenant, and a Royal Marine warrant officer dashed into the woods and waited quietly until the column eventually moved on.

The four men listened for sounds that would indicate the approach of advancing British troops, but there were none. Hiding by day and wandering by night, they waited for 10 dispiriting days. Weary and sick, they then agreed that there was little recourse but to return to Marlag Nord, where there were huts, blankets, and food. After making their way back, they found that few guards were left and that the remaining Allied prisoners had virtually taken charge of the compound.

A few more days of waiting followed while the POWs listened to the distant thunder of artillery. Then, on April 28, 1945, spirits soared in the camp when the plaintive sound of bagpipes was heard. Spearhead tanks of Lt. Gen. Sir Brian G. Horrocks' British XXX Corps rumbled in and liberated Marlag Nord. Horrocks's forces had taken nearby Bremen the day before.

The indestructible Major Ortiz was evacuated to Brussels, where he reported to the OSS headquarters and asked for another combat assignment before returning to California. He was

Continued on page 90

THE RED ASS SQUADRON GOES TO WAR

A young fighter pilot survived and became a combat veteran as a member of the 356th Fighter Squadron.

BY CHARLES W. SASSER

Unlike bomber crews that went home if they survived a designated number of missions, World War II fighter pilots like Lieutenant Jim Carl, 354th Fighter Group, United States Army Air Forces (USAAF), flew until the war ended, they got shot down over enemy territory and were captured, or they died.

"If you get through five missions," Major "Pinky" O'Connor, one of three squadron leaders of the 354th, bluntly told replacements, "you will probably get smart enough to survive."

America's premier aircraft when the United States entered World War II were the heavily armed Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, nicknamed "The Jug" because of its bulk, and the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Due to their limited range, however, neither was able to provide long-distance cover for bombers on missions into Nazi territory over occupied Europe, which left the bombers unprotected and vulnerable. The appearance of the North American P-51 Mustang, considered the best all-around fighter plane of World War II, changed the character of the Allied air war.

Its development was due not to the Americans, but instead to the British. A U.S. airplane manufacturer built it to British specifications in 1941, prior to the United States entering the fight. The early model lacked power at higher altitudes, but the 1942 version fitted with a Rolls Royce Merlin engine attained a top speed of 440 miles per hour, an altitude capacity ceiling of 30,000 feet, and an extended range that enabled it to provide fighter protection all the way from England to Poland and back, a round trip of 1,700 miles. It could outrun, outclimb, and outdive any fighter fielded by the enemy.

"When I saw Mustangs over Berlin," Reichmarschall Herman Göring, commander of the German Luftwaffe, is said to have commented, "I knew the jig was up."

The 354th Fighter Group, flying P-51 Mustangs and composed of three squadrons—354th, 355th, and 356th—deployed to Kent, England, in 1943 to fly escort for Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses and Consolidated B-24 Liberators on long-run bombings into Nazi territory. During its short tenure in Kent, the 354th shot down 68 enemy planes and lost 23 of its own.

"Your job," the commanding general of the USAAF told the new unit, "is to achieve air superiority."

Allied tactical air forces pounded the Luftwaffe relentlessly in the air and on the ground during the months prior to the Normandy D-Day invasion in order to achieve that superiority. Massive wide-ranging air assaults knocked out roads and rail lines, bridges, enemy convoys, troop movements, artillery emplacements, armor, and other targets of opportunity.

The first large-scale American bombing raid deep into the Reich with fighter protection all the way took place on January 11, 1944. Targets for the strike force of 663 B-17s and B-24s were Luftwaffe airplane and parts factories in Oschersleben, Halberstadt, and Brunswick. Fighter support consisted of 11 groups of P-47s, two groups of P-38s, and a single group of 49 P-51 Mustangs. The short-range American fighters had to turn back, but the Mustangs proved more than a match for the Luftwaffe interceptors, destroying a number of enemy fighters while suffering no losses of their own.

Two weeks after D-Day in June 1944, the 354th Group moved into France to support the Allied advance and take on Göring's Luftwaffe. Lieutenant Jim Carl, a lanky native of Quapaw, Oklahoma, and fresh out of flight training on the P-51, linked up with

North American P-51D Mustang fighters, drop tanks of fuel attached under their wings, perform a sweep for enemy aircraft east of the great Rhine River in the spring of 1945. Several former Mustang pilots, including Lieutenant Jim Carl, signed the Military Gallery print of this stunning painting by artist Robert Taylor.

Painting © Military Gallery; www.militarygallery.com

the group a month later and was assigned to the 356th "Red Ass Squadron." Squadron leader Major "Pinky" O'Connor had unintentionally coined the nickname after a long flight when he climbed out of his Mustang rubbing his butt and groaning, "Aiieee! Is my ass ever red!"

The squadron's official emblem became a cartoonish red donkey wearing a broad grin.

Like most new pilots thrown into the mix, Carl had to learn his craft quickly. He began to count off the missions until he reached the magic number of five.

National Archives

His first mission turned out to be anticlimactic. At the controls of *Quapaw Squaw,* named after his hometown, he flew wingman to "Pop" Young on a bomber escort. At 24, Pop was one of the older flyers. Carl was 21.

En route, the raiders flew over lines of grooves marking the World War I trenches that scarred the French countryside. Lieutenant Carl stared in disbelief, his thoughts briefly on all the men who had died in those trenches—and now the Americans were back again.

Over the target, an enemy airfield, the clear sky exploded with flak and antiaircraft fire. It seemed a miracle that a single airplane might make it through unscathed. Carl was reckoning himself a goner—and on his first mission at that—when Pop Young reported engine trouble. As his wingman, Carl turned back with Pop to escort him to base.

Four missions to go.

Lieutenant Carl's second mission involved an air-to-ground attack on a freight train loaded with fresh troops and supplies steaming across a wide plain toward the German front. Armed with quad .50-caliber machine guns and two 250- or 500-pound bombs mounted on wing racks, the P-51 excelled in ground attack and support as well as in air combat.

In a long line, the Mustangs made runs on the train at more than 400 miles per hour while German troops in green and gray uniforms on flatcars unlimbered their cannons and machine guns on the attacking fighters.

Carl rolled *Quapaw Squaw* directly at the approaching locomotive and strafed the train all the way to its caboose. Tracers from German machine guns flashed through the formation like meteors. A train wheel blasted into the air and whizzed past Carl's cockpit.

He flew so low that he caught expressions on the faces of flatbed antiaircraft crews before they and their cars were reduced to kindling, blood, and bone chips. On his climb out, he glanced back over his shoulder and saw the train derailed, cars overturned and smoldering, surviving troops running for the hills.

Three to go.

He acquitted himself well in air-to-air encounters and acquired a reputation for being cool and deadly under fire. During one dogfight, the 354th Group with 38 Mustangs engaged a superior force of 51 German Messerschmitt Me-109s and Me-110s. Buzzing like giant bees at 20,000 feet, planes of both teams mixed it up in a furious maelstrom of violence, ducking and darting and sweeping, muzzles flashing and flaming. A gnat against a distant cloud one moment quickly became a flying dragon spitting fire the next. There was no time for thinking at such speeds, only action.

Outflown and outgunned, the Germans broke off contact and fled with their figurative tails between their figurative legs. *Quapaw Squaw* survived with only a few holes in her fuselage. Lieutenant Carl was still in the fight.

A few days later, about 40 planes from the 354th flew at 10,000 feet approaching an enemy ground installation when someone radioed an alarm: "Bogeys!" German Messerschmitts swarmed out of the clouds like frenzied hornets.

"Break left! Now!" Group leader Major Carl Depner ordered.

The formation broke in a single unit, jettisoning its bombs to lighten the planes for aerial combat. Mustangs climbed in waves and burst through the bogeys with guns blazing. Lieutenant Carl swept onto an enemy aircraft's backside and laid on his trigger, anticipating a kill.

His guns malfunctioned. He found himself defenseless and surrounded by vampires. His only recourse was to fly like hell in the middle of swarming airplanes all shooting at each other. Fighters, both enemy and friendly, exploded in bright balls of fire or streaked toward earth trailing smoke and flame.

Major Depner's wingman, Boze, was shot down and killed. Moments later, Depner got hit. He pulled out of the fight and headed for home. Fire in the cockpit forced him to parachute out. That was the last anyone heard of him.

Those were the only American planes lost in the dustup, while the Germans lost nearly two

ABOVE: During his second combat mission, Lieutenant Jim Carl participated in an attack on an enemy train. In this image box cars erupt in smoke and flame as .50-caliber bullets tear into them in a successful fighter interdiction. BELOW: His cap tilted at a jaunty angle, Lieutenant Jim Carl stands beside his P-51 Mustang fighter, nicknamed the *Quapaw Squaw*. OPPOSITE: P-51D fighter aircraft of the U.S. 356th Fighter Squadron maintain a tight formation during a mission over Europe. During the last days of the war, enemy targets became fewer and fewer.

National Archives

"WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?" CARL SCOLDED HIM. "YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO MAKE ANOTHER RUN." "I DID IT TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE," THE MAJOR REPLIED WITH A SHRUG.

dozen blasted out of the sky. And Carl had not fired a single shot.

This was *Quapaw Squaw*'s magic mission of five. Carl was beginning to think he might make it after all.

The Red Asses' squadron leader, Major O'Connor, ballsy and cavalier, took care of his men and thereby commanded a great deal of respect. During a raid on a heavily defended German airfield, Carl sprayed a .50-caliber swath of destruction into enemy fighters caught by surprise on the ground. He pulled out of his run and circled at 1,000 feet. Several shattered Messerschmitts spewed flame and smoke into the air. A fire truck at the end of the asphalt runway near some concrete revetments had overturned and burst into flames. Tracers zipped up from hardened antiaircraft sites.

Major O'Connor was on the radio calling off the attack when Carl noticed an undamaged Me-109 partly concealed underneath a tree off to one end of the landing strip.

"Hallum Two," he radioed Pinky. "I'm making another run on the bogey hiding underneath the tree."

"Roger, Squaw Man."

Carl dipped a wing into a belly-wrenching dive almost straight down at the parked aircraft. He felt the smooth stutter of his .50-caliber machine guns throughout his body as he gnawed up turf, the tree, and the Me-109. He zoomed through the black and red ball of gasoline flame he had ignited and pulled up in a wild, weaving flight through streams of tracers attempting to bring him down.

Typically, Major O'Conner never left one of his fighters alone in a fight. While Carl was taking care of the hidden Me-109, O'Connor was raising hell at the opposite end of the airfield, creating a diversion. When the squadron returned to base near Cherbourg, Pinky had almost as many holes in his Mustang as Carl had drilled through the parked Me-109.

"What the hell were you thinking?" Carl scolded him. "You didn't have to make another run."

"I did it to give you a chance," the major replied with a shrug.

Shortly after that, Major O'Connor was shot down during a long escort of B-17s. He parachuted out directly on top of an SS gun crew.

Other pilots got shot down more than once and lived to tell about it. Captain James Edwards, a big, tall boy and winner of two Distinguished Flying Crosses, was busted out of the air twice and wrecked two other airplanes while trying to bring them home riddled by gunfire.

"You keep losing planes," Carl admonished him, "and they'll make you start paying for them."

Even *Quapaw Squaw* was shot down on what was to be a routine sortie. Since that particular mission expected little or no contact, Carl allowed a rookie named Homberg to fly the *Squaw*. A battery of German 88s on the ground brought her down like a meteor. That was Homberg's first and last mission.

Carl named his replacement Mustang *Quapaw Squaw II*.

Most fighter pilots developed a grudging respect, even admiration, for pilots of the opposite uniform. Shooting each other down was nothing personal. It was not about killing a man; it was about killing a machine.

In supporting the Allied advance after D-Day, the 354th basically followed General George

National Archives

Patton's Third Army across France, into Belgium and the Battle of the Bulge, then across the Siegfried Line into Germany. Lieutenant Carl was up to 60 or so missions in his logbook, and the Red Asses were sweeping out ahead of Patton when he encountered an Me-109 jock in a one-on-one dogfight that could end only one way—with the destruction of one or the other.

Although the savage-looking Me-109s were not quite on par with the mosquito-like P-51s, they could be quite formidable when flown by a top-line pilot who knew his way around the sky. As a dozen or so Me-109s bounced the Mustangs out of the sun, Carl tacked onto an enemy plane that began twisting into maneuvers Carl would not have thought possible before now. The dogfight degenerated into a deadly game of tic-tac-toe played at speeds in excess of 400 miles per hour.

Carl seized the first advantage by grabbing onto the guy's exhaust and zig-zagging with him through the air, sending tracers slashing after him. The Me-109 seemed to dive every time just before the bullets reached him.

The German suddenly switched positions with Carl in a maneuver so skillfully executed that it left Carl breathless with astonishment. The Me-109 was now on the American's ass.

Carl feinted, bobbed, and weaved across the sky, trying to shake the Me-109 before tracers flashing past his cockpit caught him. The guy might fly like a superhero, but, fortunately, he could not shoot for crap. That was the only thing that saved the American.

The two fighter planes dueled it out for what must have seemed an eternity to the combatants. First one took the advantage, then the other, each unable to administer a fatal blow.

They broke apart and circled warily at a distance, each striving to fight out of the sun while forcing the other to fight into it.

They charged like gladiators, weapons blazing. Lead spanged into *Quapaw II*'s fuselage. The fighters passed wing tip to wing tip at a combined speed of more than 800 miles per hour. Carl glimpsed his rival's face—young and encased in a brown aviator's cap, ear pieces loose, intense and concentrated—nothing like the gross caricatures on the "Know Your Enemy" propaganda posters.

Carl pulled into a turn so sharp he thought his wings were ripping off. That put him back on the hotshot's tail. The German dived with Carl in pursuit, his aircraft vibrating at speeds beyond its red line. The earth below rushed at him.

The gun camera of an American P-51 Mustang fighter captures the demise of a German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter that has taken evasive action resulting in a steep dive. Bullets from the Mustang's .50-caliber machine guns are seen striking the German aircraft, which bursts into flames.

The first one to "chicken out" would find himself at a crucial disadvantage, as it would permit the other a tail position in good machine-gun shape at a relatively slow recovery speed. The German bobbed and weaseled, making himself a difficult target and apparently determined to bury them both in the ground rather than pull out of his dive.

Carl glimpsed trees and fences coming at him. A farmhouse. Some geese flying.

At the last instant, just when it appeared both planes would crash, the German "chickened out" and leveled off just above the tree line. Evasion lay in his climbing to a more favorable level for maneuvering, which meant giving up precious speed and making himself vulnerable to his pursuer.

Tree branches quaked and bowed from the combined speed of the two fighters' slipstreams. Carl anticipated his foe's next move and caught the Me-109 in his sights as it pulled up and out. He squirted it with his quad-50s, tumbling it through the low air like a pheasant shotgunner in flight. It burst into bright flames as it struck the ground. Burning parts of it exploded in all directions. No pilot could have lived through such a conflagration.

Momentary sadness and guilt overcame Lieutenant Carl as he pulled back on *Squaw II*'s throttle and circled the field, wagging his wings in tribute. He thought he might have liked to have congratulated the German over a cup of coffee on a duel well fought.

P-51 Mustangs flew 213,873 sorties during the war, losing 2,520 planes to all causes, including enemy action. In turn, Mustangs shot down 4,950 enemy aircraft, a feat second only to the carrier-borne Grumman F-6F Hellcat used in the Pacific War.

The three squadrons of the 354th Fighter Group in Europe destroyed more enemy aircraft in aerial combat, 701, than any other while losing only 63 of their own pilots.

Jim Carl flew 86 combat missions with the Red Ass Squadron, won two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and left the USAAF as a lieutenant colonel. He lost a lot of friends during the final year of the war.

Charles Sasser is the author of the classic book of sniper warfare titled One Shot-One Kill. *He has written dozens of other books and articles and appeared on numerous television networks including ABC, Fox, the History Channel, and CNN. He is a veteran of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army Special Forces. He resides in Chouteau, Oklahoma.*

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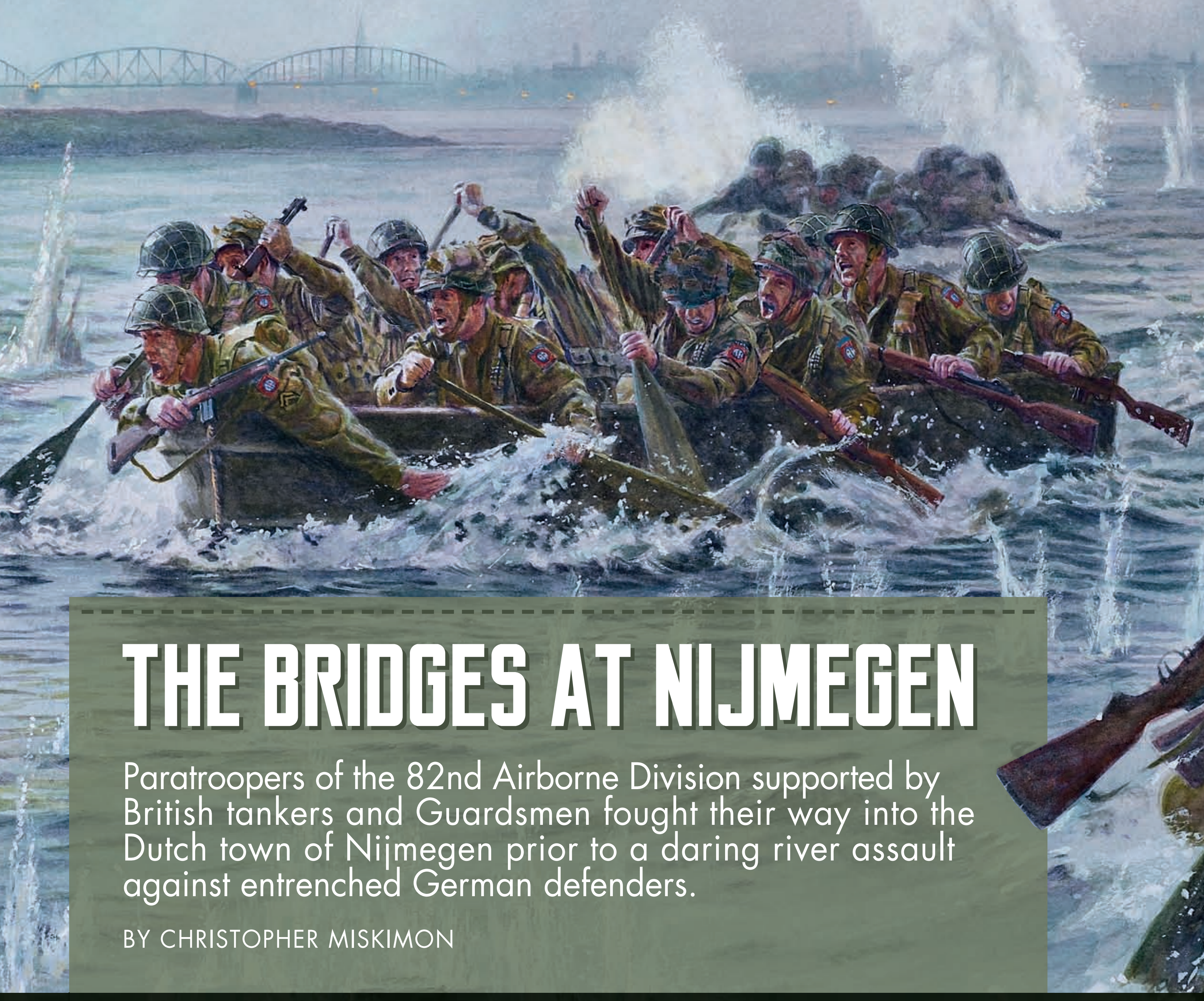
Lieutenant Colonel Ben Vandervoort's 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (2/505) was fighting its way through the Dutch town of Nijmegen on September 19, 1944. As he observed, two of his rifle companies worked their way up a pair of city blocks, supported by British tanks that eagerly zipped down alleys and side streets to assist their American allies with cannon and machine-gun fire.

The goal was to fight through to the town's bridges. The infantry pressed forward, ignoring their flanks. If the enemy appeared there, they sent a tank back to deal with them. Vandervoort's men took the high ground, moving to the upper floors of the local houses and advancing rooftop to rooftop. He recalled it as chaos.

"Nijmegen wasn't all that neat and tidy," Vandervoort remembered. "In the labyrinth of houses and brick-walled gardens, the fighting deteriorated into confusing, face-to-face, kill-or-be-killed showdowns between small momentarily isolated groups and individuals. Friend and foe mixed in deadly proximity. Germans would appear where you least expected them. You fired fast and straight or you were dead."

As conceived, Operation Market Garden was simple and bold. A series of airborne landings would pave the way for an armored thrust straight through German lines and across the Lower Rhine River in Holland, opening the way for the Allies to strike deep into the heart of the Third Reich. Success could bring the war to a faster conclusion by outflanking the prepared defenses of the Siegfried Line. The plan required seizing a series of bridges, the last one over the Rhine at Arnhem. The first part of the plan, Market, was the airborne landings using three divisions. The paratroopers would seize bridges and vital terrain and hold them until the ground forces, code named Garden, advanced through their positions and to Arnhem. The ground forces were spearheaded by the British XXX Corps, heavy in tanks and mechanized firepower. The plan was not universally liked by



THE BRIDGES AT NIJMEGEN

Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division supported by British tankers and Guardsmen fought their way into the Dutch town of Nijmegen prior to a daring river assault against entrenched German defenders.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

the Allied Powers; their logistical system was strained, and this plan gave supply priority to the British over the American armies to the south. However, if it worked there was a real chance to shorten the war, so the Allied supreme commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower approved the plan despite the risk.

In the event, that risk did not pay off. The three airborne divisions landed with the American 101st closest to the front, the American 82nd in the middle, and the British 1st Airborne farthest into the German lines nearest the Rhine and Arnhem. Unfortunately, Allied intelligence failed to detect a pair of German SS panzer divisions recently transferred to the area for reconstitution. Heavy, desperate fighting ensued, and ultimately the Arnhem Bridge did indeed prove to be "a bridge too far." However, the final bridges the Allied advance reached, those over the Waal River at the Dutch town of Nijmegen, were the focus of intense combat and courageous acts of bravery by paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne and soldiers of XXX Corps.

By late 1944, Brig. Gen. James Gavin's 82nd Airborne was well on its way to establishing its reputation as one of America's hardest fighting divisions. Operation Market Garden was the unit's fourth combat jump, with previous airborne landings in Sicily, Italy, and Normandy. The division had three parachute infantry regiments— the 504th, 505th, and 508th—along with the 325th Glider Infantry and three artillery battalions using pack howitzers that could be air-dropped in bundles or landed in gliders. These formations would parachute into drop zones (DZs) generally to the south of Nijmegen and seize ground around the towns of Grave and Groesbeek as well as move against the larger town with its bridges over the Waal River. Once in control of its objectives, the division was to defend them until XXX Corps arrived to relieve them.

Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks' XXX Corps was the spearhead for the British Second Army. During Market Garden the corps' lead

Paratroopers of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division paddle furiously across the Waal River at Nijmegen in the Netherlands during Operation Market Garden. Commanded by Major Julian Cook, the paratroopers seized a bridge across the river in an epic amphibious operation. © 2018 Osprey Publishing

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The daylight airborne drop into the Netherlands during Operation Market Garden was accomplished with precision. The heroic effort that followed, however, came up short in the face of strong German opposition. BELOW: Airborne troopers roll a 57mm gun aboard a glider in preparation for the airborne phase of Operation Market Garden in September 1944.

unit was the Guards Armoured Division led by Maj. Gen. A.H.S. Adair. It was equipped with a mix of armored vehicles including Sherman and Cromwell tanks, Daimler armored cars, and half-tracks. There was also ample artillery and air support available. The XXX Corps' greatest handicap was the single road it was forced to travel down due to the wet and often boggy terrain, which kept the vehicles close to the road for fear of becoming mired. This made it easier for the defending Germans to target the British column.

Nijmegen was significant to the advance primarily due to its two bridges over the Waal River, which was 400 yards wide. One was a road bridge, the Waalbrug, and the other a railroad span, the Spoorbrug. Early in the battle these bridges were lightly defended by second-rate troops, but the German command quickly reinforced Nijmegen with experienced SS troops. There were a number of other German units in the area, including reserve, training, and police formations. Most of the German units were understrength and underequipped, but there were enough veterans to facilitate the hasty formation of battle groups known as kampfgruppen (KG) to improve the defense.

The airborne operation began on Sunday, September 17, 1944, and in most respects went well for the 82nd Airborne Division. Most of the troops landed close to their assigned landing zones, making it easier for units to assemble and move on their objectives. Colonel Reuben Tucker's 504th quickly seized most of its bridges over the Maas-Waal Canal along with the Grave Bridge, which it attacked from both ends at once, resulting in a fast, relatively easy victory. Colonel William Ekman's 505th dropped south of the town of Groesbeek and rapidly moved onto the nearby heights. Occupation of the heights brought a key defensive terrain feature under Allied control. The paratroopers there could protect against any enemy moves out of the nearby Reichswald, or National Forest. The 508th, commanded by Colonel Roy Lindquist, parachuted in south of Nijmegen and also seized nearby high ground and set up solid defensive positions. However, they did not move up the riverbank into Nijmegen to take the bridges. This would have severe consequences for the later fighting, although for unknown reasons the taking of the bridges was not assigned as high a priority as hindsight proved it should have been. The chance to capture the bridges before the Germans had adequate defenses prepared simply slipped away.

Initially, the Nijmegen area was populated by numerous German rear-echelon units and a few weak combat formations. This was exemplified by the fact that while 82nd Airborne captured only 156 prisoners the first day, they were from 28 different units. There were almost no prepared defenses within the town. German troops there included an NCO school company, a mixed antiaircraft unit of 20mm and 88mm guns, and two companies of reserve policemen and railroad guards. On September 17, these troops were reinforced by KG Henke, led by Oberst (Colonel) Fritz Henke, who normally led a parachute regiment. His force of four reserve companies combined with the existing garrison for a total of about 750 soldiers. It was too small a force to stave off a concerted attack by the American paratroopers, but more help was coming.

Later on September 17, the 10th SS Panzer Division "Frundsberg" was ordered to move from Arnhem to the Nijmegen area and attack the Allied airborne forces before they could consolidate their positions. They were to seize the bridges and prevent the paratroopers from linking with the advancing British. Several kampfgruppen were dispatched to Nijmegen to hold the bridges there. The first was KG Reinhold, set up on the north side of the Waal River, the opposite side from the attacking Allies.

Three more battle groups set up on the south side of the Waal, guarding the approaches to

both bridges; a little more than 1,000 yards separated their southern spans. KG Henke, already arrived, set up around the south end of the Spoorbrug rail bridge. KG Euling took positions at the south end of the Waalbrug road bridge in a park known as the Hunnerpark, an old fort named the Valkhof, and a traffic roundabout leading to the bridge. Digging in between these two battlegroups was KG Baumgartel. The Germans had more than 3,000 troops between them, a mix of panzergrenadiers, reserve troops, combat engineers, and gunners for the hastily gathered antiaircraft and antitank guns. The division's remaining artillery set up on the north side of the bridge while forward observers were placed in the front lines. Many, though not all, of the German troops were experienced Waffen-SS men. The German commanders ordered the bridges prepared for demolition but delayed destroying them in the hope they could be used to mount counterattacks later.

On the morning of September 19, the lead tanks of XXX Corps reached the 82nd Airborne and quickly moved toward Nijmegen. By now the German reinforcements were firmly in place, and it was apparent it would take more than the paratroopers' light weapons to punch through the enemy lines south of the bridges. Generals Horrocks, Adair, and Gavin met to plan the next moves along with British General Frederick "Boy" Browning, the overall airborne commander. Gavin was still concerned about the thin American line near Groesbeek but was confident he could spare his reserve battalion, 2/505, commanded by Lt. Col. Vandervoort, for an attack on Nijmegen. The generals discussed the situation and decided 2/505 would join with elements of the Guards Armoured Division for a joint attack against the German defenses south of the bridges.

Two task forces were formed, one for each bridge. The eastern group was made up of Companies E and F of 2/505, most of No. 3 Squadron, 2nd Grenadier Guards, an armored unit, and No. 2 Company, 1st Grenadier Guards, a motorized infantry battalion. They would make an assault against the defenders of the road bridge. The western task force, which would attack the rail bridge's defenses, included Company D 2/505, five Sherman tanks from No 3 Squadron, and a platoon of British infantry from the 1st Grenadier Guards. Reconnaissance troops from the 2nd Battalion, Household Cavalry Regiment (2/HCR) were also in the area. Both task forces had fighters from the local Dutch resistance to guide them through the narrow streets to their objectives. Dutch fighters also infiltrated the bridge area and several times cut wires to the demolition charges the Germans had placed. The Dutch also believed the Germans placed a switchboard for these demolitions in the town post office.

Vandervoort's paratroopers linked up with their British counterparts and prepared to attack. Vandervoort was proud of his mostly veteran men and later stated, "Except for a few handpicked replacements, yet to be bloodied in combat, they were aggressive, skilled warriors. Their marksmanship, battle reflexes and survival instincts were finely tuned by being shot at—close and often. There were fraternal bonds between the battalion officers and men, especially the lieutenants. They were outstanding. They were raised to be last in the chow line and first out the door in the jump line."

The entire force assembled at the Sionhof Hotel south of Nijmegen. At 1:45 PM, the column set out northeast up the Groesbeeksweg road toward Nijmegen. Two dozen Dutch resistance fighters accompanied them. They said there would be no resistance until about 600 yards south of the bridges, but the German positions were strong and included antitank guns. Nearer to the town the force would split into two parts for the final approach. Soon, however, the column was besieged by a different force: crowds of Dutch civilians who came out to greet the Allied soldiers as liberators.

Lieutenant James Coyle, a platoon leader in E Company, recalled it looked like a victory parade. "The Dutch people lined the roads in crowds that cheered us on our way." Company D First Sergeant John Rabig was riding a tank with his men and recalled the adoration of the civilians as well, though they also provided a warning of sorts. "Dutch people were crowded along the sides of the road. The nearer we got to Nijmegen, the fewer people there were. Soon the people just disappeared and we were smart enough to know the shooting would soon start—and it did."

The western task force split off toward its objective. Vandervoort stayed with the eastern group that captured the post office, which turned out to be empty. This made sense because it would have been foolish for the Germans to set up the explosives switchboard on the south side of the bridges. Along the way they were stopped by a Dutch woman who turned over a recently shot-down British pilot she was hiding in her house. She turned the flyer over to the Americans, even writing down the names of the men she gave him to. Afterward, the column moved on.

As the Allied attack got underway in earnest, reconnaissance troops from 2/HCR deployed

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Dutch civilians line the road as American paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division pass through the town during Operation Market Garden. The civilians greeted the Americans as liberators and cheered them until the soldiers neared areas where German troops were still active. RIGHT: British General Frederick "Boy" Browning, left, overall commander of the airborne phase of Operation Market Garden, chats with Brigadier General James M. Gavin, the young commander of the American 82nd Airborne Division.

to observe the flanks and gain observation over the river. They rode in small, nimble Daimler armored cars armed with a small 2-pounder (40mm) cannon. One of the British officers, a Captain Cooper, found himself under fire near some American paratroopers, who asked him to use his vehicle's guns to support them. A pair of dug-in 88mm guns were firing away from across the river, so Cooper had his men return fire with their 2-pounders, driving the German gun crews away from their weapons. Their success was short lived, however, as a well-camouflaged 88mm opened fire from beyond the range of the diminutive 2-pounders. Cooper determined the gun's position on his map and sent the grid coordinates to the Royal Artillery, just then coming into action. The very first salvo of six 25-pounder shells found the target, silencing it.

The Germans responded with a barrage of their own 105mm artillery. Cooper left his vehicle to take cover in an American trench. The shelling went on for an hour and a half, leaving Cooper deaf and covered in dust. He recalled, "This sort of shelling is perfectly bloody and gives you a splitting headache…. Every now and again the spandaus opened up from the other side of the river and bullets whistled over our heads. These American troops are splendid types— extremely brave, cheerful and indifferent to the worst. The bridge, an enormous, girdered affair, has been wired for blowing, which the 'underground' have twice cut, and is covered by every conceivable German weapon."

As the reconnaissance troops dueled with the German guns, the task forces attacked. Lieutenant J.J. Smith of E Company was one of the first men in the eastern force's attack. As he moved forward, German antitank guns opened a withering fire. "The Sherman tanks that were leading the attack ran into enemy resistance and were receiving extremely heavy fire from 88s…. The enemy immediately placed small arms and mortar fire on the lead elements of the infantry, which was 1st Platoon of Company E. All the mortar fire and artillery fire … came from this side of the bridge and it seemed to be observed fire. We later determined this to be true as we discovered snipers and enemy observers had radios and seemed to be in communication with the guns firing." The British tanks, despite the incoming 88s, immediately began shooting into the nearby buildings, peppering the area with fire.

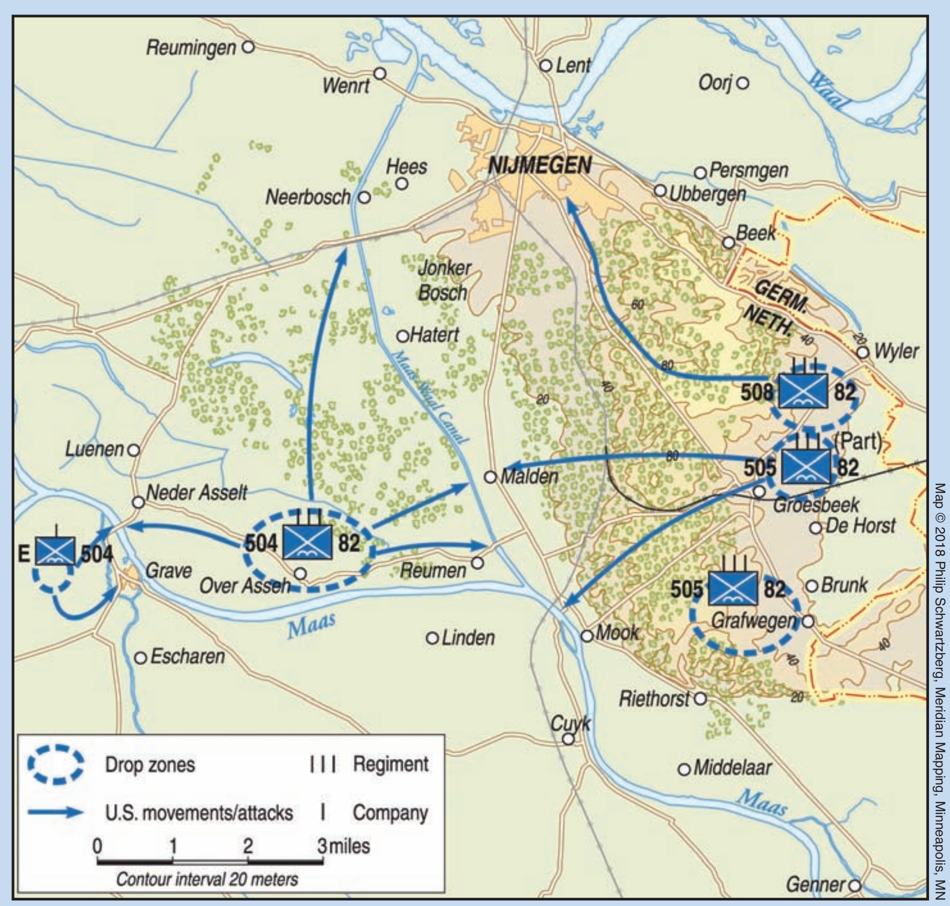
The Germans laid their defenses well. Camouflaged antitank guns covered all the intersections, and MG-42 machine guns, with the distinctive ripping sound of their high rate of fire, were set up in nests in houses around the guns so they could support each other. The lead British tank was quickly knocked out, along with one of the German antitank guns. Two more Shermans were soon hit as well, putting both of them out of the fight. The American paratroopers quickly fanned out into the surrounding buildings; it was suicide to fight in the open streets because the German fire was too heavy. The British infantry, bringing up the rear of the column, smoothly moved off to one side to attack the Germans on their flank, but interlocking machine-gun fire stopped them as well.

One of the Guard's infantry platoon commanders, Lieutenant Dawson, found a house from which he could overlook the German defenders. He quickly brought up all the automatic weapons he had and directed their fire onto the enemy. A large number were killed and wounded, but one of their 88mm guns managed to return fire, scoring direct hits on the house. This forced the British troops to evacuate before it collapsed.

The Americans were also aggressively attacking. Most of the buildings were two-story brick and stone row houses, usually with attics and many with flat roofs. The paratroopers took advantage of this, moving from rooftop to rooftop and placing machine guns in the upper floors to cover the advance. Any German who exposed himself was greeted with machine-gun fire. The Guards' Shermans went with them, adding their own machine guns to the fray. These fire teams supported other paratroopers, who used alleys, backyards, and windows to stay out of the line of enemy fire and turn their flanks. At times they would knock holes in the interior walls of homes and push forward without having to go outside.

The aggressive young airborne lieutenants controlled the action, keeping the assault squads on line. As soon as those men got into the targeted buildings, the support teams would join them to secure the houses and get ready to push on to the next one. Once a few houses in a block were taken, they would start bursting through walls to take the adjacent structures until an entire block was in their hands; then the process would be repeated on the next block. Private Carl Beck was a rifleman in Company E's 1st Platoon. "We went into

BELOW: The three regiments of the 82nd Airborne Division parachuted into drop zones in the Netherlands and advanced to the town of Nijmegen, where they found the bridges across the River Waal heavily defended. OPPOSITE: Tanks of the British XXX Corps advance along the narrow highway toward Nijmegen, where Allied troops fought the Germans doggedly defending bridges over the Waal River.



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THEIR MARKSMANSHIP, BATTLE REFLEXES, AND SURVIVAL INSTINCTS WERE FINELY TUNED BY BEING SHOT ATCLOSE AND OFTEN. THERE WERE FRATERNAL BONDS BETWEEN THE BATTALION OFFICERS AND MEN, ESPECIALLY THE LIEUTENANTS.

houses from the front and out the back, over the fence and into another house. Then out the front door, go across the street and into the front of another house."

Lieutenant Colonel Vandervoort watched his men with pride and awe as they advanced toward the bridge. He was particularly impressed with the way they worked so closely alongside the British Guardsmen. "For soldiers of different Allied armies, it was amazing how beautifully the tankers and troopers teamed together." All of them were veteran soldiers, and Vandervoort credited the Guards commander, Lt. Col. Edward H. Goulburn, with having trust and faith in his tank commanders to move off on their own to support the Americans. The tanks moved up alleys and through yards to fire on enemy positions. It took a lot of initiative and skill to stay together and not let either tanks or infantrymen expose themselves by getting too far ahead of the other. Still, the Germans fought with similar courage, and despite the best efforts of the Allied task force, the attack was halted short of the bridge as darkness arrived.

The western task force had its own ordeal. The smaller force worked its way through the narrow streets, skillfully guided by the Dutch resistance, until it was only 200 yards from the southern end of the railroad bridge. With dusk approaching, the column attacked immediately, hoping to storm through before the coming night impeded them. As the Shermans joined the infantry in the assault, two of them were knocked out by accurate fire from antitank guns on the other side of the river. The infantry took heavy fire from German troops dug in on the railroad embankment and in several houses around it. It was a tough strongpoint well supported with artillery fire, and the Anglo-American attack stalled. The infantry fell back a short distance, took cover in a number of houses, and dug in, assuming they would be counterattacked during the night. This was a common German tactic, and the experienced troops expected fast counterattacks. The eastern task force also expected a night action and prepared for it.

That night, however, they were gratefully disappointed. Even the SS panzergrenadiers were rattled by the sudden appearance of tanks and infantry, since they thought there were still more German troops ahead of them. During the night they set fire to several houses to provide light in case of a renewed Allied attack, and the troops around the railroad bridge pulled back, shrinking their perimeter. The Germans were still determined to hold the south ends of both bridges but they were unwilling to advance and risk cutting off their only avenue of escape across those bridges. September 19 ended in stalemate.

Once General Gavin learned of the setback, he created a new plan. If they continued attacking the bridges from the southern end, it would take time, and the Germans would probably destroy the bridges rather than lose them to the Allies. Gavin knew the best way to take a bridge was from both ends at once, so he decided to put a force across the river and assault the northern ends of the bridges while the task forces on the southern end continued putting pressure on the defenders there. He took the plan to Generals Browning and Horrocks. Browning approved the idea, but the airborne troops had no boats available, and the Germans had stripped the river of all local craft.

Horrocks, however, had 32 boats in his engineer units and ordered them forward, giving them priority to move up along the narrow roadway XXX Corps was using for its advance. The boats were supposed to arrive at 8 AM on

the 20th, but traffic jams along the road delayed their arrival until 2 PM. Gavin wanted to start the crossing in the morning, but the late arrival of the boats meant the crossing had to go at 3 PM.

The plan involved sending a battalion across the river downstream from the bridges. Major Julian Cook's 3/504 was available, recently relieved of defensive duties by troops from XXX Corps. H and I Companies would go in the first wave, accompanied by a few men from Headquarters Company, including Major Cook. The second wave would bring G Company and the rest of the headquarters troops. While 3/504 crossed the river, 2/504 would provide covering fire from the south bank. The 376th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion would also support the crossing with its pack howitzers, joined by all available British artillery, more of which arrived each hour. The artillery would fire a 10-minute preparatory bombardment on the German defenses. Afterward, fighter-bombers would strafe and bomb the enemy for 10 more minutes, from 2:45 to 2:55. As soon as the planes were finished, the artillery and mortars would fire smoke shells to cover the crossing. Tanks of the 2nd Irish Guards would also give fire support and fill any gaps in the smoke screen with their own smoke rounds.

Once on the far bank, the paratroopers would have to cross up to 800 yards of open field to an embankment with a dike road atop it. There were German defensive positions along this dike, and once there part of 3/504 would establish blocking positions and patrols to the north and west while the rest attacked eastward toward the bridges. They would reach the rail bridge first and move on to the road bridge. Meanwhile, the task forces on the south sides of the bridges would attack in force to break through, enabling the combined Allied forces to capture them. It was risky plan, but the American paratroopers understood the dire straits their British counterparts were in at Arnhem. A short, intense assault would incur heavy casualties but save lives in the long run.

The task forces renewed their attacks on the south side of the Waal on the morning of September 20, while 3/504 waited for the boats to arrive. They were methodical, gradually tightening the cordon around the southern approaches to the bridges. At about 2:30 PM, as the tanks were moving into position to support the crossing, the trucks bearing the boats arrived. One was hit by German fire as it approached the riverbank, reducing the number of boats to 26.

Major Cook's men realized how risky the river assault would be, but once they laid eyes on the boats the situation became even more serious. The craft were known as "Goatley" boats, collapsible affairs made of wood and canvas, weighing 200 pounds and about 19 feet long. Each could carry 13 troops with three engineers. The engineers had to assemble them, and the paratroopers helped as the time to launch the attack grew near. Each boat should have had eight oars, but some had only two; the paratroopers would have to row using rifle butts.

The artillery preparation went off as planned, and soon it was time to go. Cook and his men rushed down to the riverbank, manhandling the boats into the water and climbing aboard. Smoke covered the far bank as the tanks and mortars sent more smoke rounds sailing overhead.

Captain Moffatt Burriss commanded I Company. He and his unit hid behind a berm most of the day and had yet to see the river they would cross. "We were not shown the river before crossing. We waited the other side of the levee most of the day. Had we seen what we were expected to cross in daylight, we probably wouldn't have done it! I still wonder how any of us survived the crossing."

The Germans contested the assault as soon as they perceived it. Lieutenant Thomas Pitt

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: An Allied Sherman tank sits in the distance in this photo of a war-ravaged Nijmegen street. The Germans fought desperately in defense of the bridges over the Waal at Nijmegen, and one soldier, his body covered with a poncho, has paid with his life. BELOW: American airborne troops patrol a street in Nijmegen shortly after the town was secured. A British soldier watches them as he crosses in the distance.

watched the air support roar in. "Two Spitfires [actually Typhoons] came over and started to strafe the opposite banks … where the Krauts were dug in. About the second pass, the Germans got one of the Spitfires and the other one went home. So that was the end of the air cover." Pitt also watched British tanks move up and start firing smoke and high-explosive rounds. "They opened fire and they put a lot of iron down in a short period, but in a couple of minutes the counterbattery came." German artillery from the north side of the river began answering the Allied attack. Luckily for the British tankers, most of the 88mm guns were sited for antiaircraft work and could not bear on the tanks as they used rubble around some factory buildings and a power station for cover.

The men in the boats paddled into the smoke covering the river. The Germans knew the smoke meant a crossing and poured fire into it using machine guns and 20mm flak guns along with the artillery. The paratroopers frantically paddled across the 400 yards of the river, aware of how vulnerable they were. Soon the smoke started clearing in the breeze, fully exposing them to enemy view. Incoming fire now poured in with even greater accuracy. The 20mm flak guns were particularly bad; a single hit would blow a man's body apart, showering blood and viscera. Halfway across, the boats were within mortar range and bombs showered down. One hit a boat directly, blowing it apart and leaving the survivors in the water, festooned with heavy ammunition and equipment. The other boats could not stop to help them.

Browning and Horrocks observed the crossing from the roof of the power station. They watched as boats were blown apart, sank, or drifted downstream with their occupants dead and dying. It was a horrible scene, but as they watched the survivors kept going. They paddled with rifle butts or used their helmets and kept as low as they could, desperately racing for the far shore. Suddenly, they were there. Boats grounded on the far bank, and paratroopers poured from them, running for the embankment. Only 13 boats reached the shore, but once they were empty the engineers pushed off and began paddling back through the torrent of steel and fire to pick up the next wave. Eleven made it back. Meanwhile, the tankers began spotting the deadly flak guns and targeted them; most were emplaced in an old fortress called the Hof Van Holland.

On the north bank only 125 paratroopers were still able to fight, but they quickly formed into small groups and attacked the German defenders. The Americans were enraged; they had endured utter hell crossing the Waal and seen many friends lost. Now they assaulted the dike with fury and rage. Captain Burriss ordered his men to shower the dike with grenades. A flurry of explosions thundered across the enemy-held embankment and broke their spirit. Paratroopers followed the blasts and tore into the defending Germans, some of whom were aged reservists and others teenage boys. Burriss recalled that the enraged paratroopers took no prisoners, even when Germans tried to surrender. Within 30 minutes the dike was in American hands.

Military History Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

Allied soldiers cross the road bridge over the Waal River at Nijmegen after the fierce fight with German defenders in the area. The burned-out vehicles in the foreground are evidence of the intensity of the battle.

Some paratroopers set up defenses along the dike while others, gradually being joined by the following waves, formed up to move on the bridges. Major Cook and a captain took over a group of 30 men and immediately moved against the rail bridge. They kept the enemy off balance by constantly attacking, keeping the pressure on until the enemy broke and ran. There were only five boats left after the final trip across, and the newly arrived paratroopers joined their comrades in the attack, fanning out toward the bridges and the remaining enemy strongpoints.

First Lieutenant James Magellas led a squad-sized group against the Hof Van Holland fort, which held the flak guns that had so decimated the paratroopers during the crossing. Magellas had lost half his platoon in their boat, which had been hit by mortar fire. He ordered his men to fire at the flak and machine guns until the German were suppressed, and then the Americans charged ahead, throwing grenades. This drove the Germans inside the fort, where they remained while Magellas and his men disabled the guns. The Germans would continue to resist the rest of the day until follow-on troops from 1/504 cleared the fort, taking 30 prisoners.

Other groups reached the Spoorbrug rail bridge and ran into stiff resistance, but each German strongpoint was taken in turn. A 19-man force led by Lieutenants Edward Sims and Richard LaRiviere reached the northern end of the bridge after neutralizing the last scattered enemy positions, only to find a new threat. About 500 Germans, those who remained of the defenders at the southern end of the bridge, were now moving across it. Having seen the success of the river assault, they realized their only avenue of escape was about to be cut off and chose to retreat before the paratroopers could consolidate their blocking positions.

Captain Carl Kappel of H Company watched their desperate attacks. "These units made several counterattacks … which were easily dealt with.… Two German machine guns were mounted to sweep the long axis of the bridge and the German situation was now hopeless. One of the German prisoners who could understand English was ordered out on the bridge to tell the Germans to cross to the south side and surrender. He was shot by the Germans pinned on the bridge. They were again swept by machine-gun fire, and many leapt from the bridge, even though they were not over the river. None surrendered at this time." The para-

Continued on page 90

In the spring of 1944, Allied forces under General Douglas MacArthur moved to expand their hold on the island of New Guinea, but a single Japanese bomb wreaked havoc on a landing beach.

FIRESTORM at Hollandia

BY GENE ERIC SALECKER

BY April 1944, American and Australian troops were moving westward along the northern edge of New Guinea, reclaiming territory taken by the Japanese in early 1942. After hard-fought battles to capture Gona, Buna, and Sanananda in eastern Papua New Guinea, in late 1942 and early 1943, General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Southwest Pacific Area, had captured Salamaua, Lae, and Finschhaven in northeast New Guinea. Next, MacArthur captured the Japanese supply base at Saidor, 52 miles east of the enemy stronghold of Madang. Either unable or unwilling to commit their troops to a battle in the Madang area, the retreating Japanese withdrew farther west. While the Australians advanced against Madang, MacArthur set his sights on the coastal villages of Wewak and Aitape in northeastern New Guinea and Hollandia near the border in Dutch New Guinea.

By this time the Allies controlled the air and the seas around New Guinea. Although there were still about 60,000 Japanese soldiers on New Guinea, they were short of supplies, and morale was dangerously low. On the other hand, the Allies had continued to grow more powerful. By the beginning of 1944, MacArthur had five American divisions, three regimental combat teams, and three engineer special brigades, along with five Australian divisions, at his disposal. Also, his Fifth Air Force had about 1,000 combat aircraft and his Seventh Fleet had a large array of warships, cargo vessels, transports, and landing craft.

Instead of attacking Wewak, where the Japanese were concentrating and expecting this to be his next landing site, MacArthur proposed to jump his army 275 miles up the coast to capture the village of Aitape, site of three Japanese airfields. At the same time he would push two divisions of Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger's I Corps 125 miles farther west to capture the major Japanese air and supply base at Hollandia. By deciphering captured Japanese codebooks, the Allies knew that the Hollandia area, with its three airfields, was lightly defended. MacArthur was going to bypass Wewak and land behind the Japanese, trapping the Imperial soldiers between the Australian troops that continued to push westward overland and the recently landed American troops.

Two landing zones were selected in the Hollandia area. One would be at Tanahmerah Bay on the west side of an outcropping of land formed by the Cyclops Mountains. Thought to be a lightly defended area, the 24th Infantry Division, a regular Army unit commanded by Maj. Gen. Frederick A. Irving, would storm ashore at two separate beaches, Red Beaches 1 and 2, and then drive inland on a well-established old Dutch road toward the airfields, which had been constructed on a strip of land sitting between the southern edge of the Cyclops Mountains and a large meandering body of water known as Lake Sentai.

Simultaneously, a landing was to be made at Humboldt Bay on the eastern side of the Cyclops Mountains outcropping. The 41st Infantry Division, National Guard troops commanded by Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller, would land at White Beaches 1 through 4. Thought to be more heavily defended, the strongest force would land on White Beaches 1 and 2 on a narrow strip of land about 2½ miles south of Hollandia town. Each beach was only about 700 yards long and 100 yards deep with a mangrove swamp directly behind. Another landing area, White Beach 3, was no better, situated on the tip of a finger of a peninsula separating large Humboldt Bay from small, hidden Jautefa Bay. On the northwestern shore of Jautefa Bay sat the small native village of Pim, which had a jetty and the start of a road leading to the eastern side of Lake Sentai. While most of the attackers

Australian War Memorial

A pall of smoke rises over both American and Japanese equipment and supply stores at Hollandia on the island of New Guinea after a single bomb touched off an ammunition dump and the conflagration rapidly spread.

would come ashore at White Beaches 1 and 2, a battalion of soldiers in LVT amphibious tractors and DUKW amphibious trucks would land at White Beach 3, rumble across the finger-like peninsula, splash into Jautefa Bay, and make a final landing near Pim at White Beach 4.

Throughout the month of March and into mid-April, MacArthur kept up the illusion that his next objective was Wewak, launching several aerial bombing runs and even a few naval bombardments. At the same time, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney's Fifth Air Force struck at the Hollandia airfields, wiping out almost all of the 350 defending Japanese planes. On April 20, the three invasion convoys, headed for Aitape, Tanahmerah Bay, and Humboldt Bay, rendezvoused near Manus Island. On the 21st, the ships bearing the invasion force for Aitape, code named Persecution Task Force, broke off and headed southeast toward their landing beaches. The rest of the ships, containing the invaders for Hollandia, code named Reckless Task Force, continued on. At 1:30 AM on April 22, D-day, the remaining convoys split. The Central Attack Group carrying the 41st Division headed toward Humboldt Bay, while the Western Attack Group, with the 24th Division, went toward Tanahmerah Bay.

At first light on April 22, 1944, the two invasion fleets began their preinvasion bombardment while airplanes from a supporting carrier task force made bombing and strafing runs on the area. The Japanese had about 7,600 men in the area, but most were service troops. Only about one out of every 10 Japanese soldiers carried a rifle. Caught completely by surprise, most of the enemy soldiers fled into the jungle. Surprisingly, when the first American troops from the 24th Division stormed ashore at Red Beaches 1 and 2 they were greeted by only a few scattered rifle shots. Enemy opposition was almost nonexistent.

As the following waves quickly raced ashore, the first wave searched for the old Dutch road that was to lead them off the beaches and toward the Lake Sentai airfields. As troops and supplies started to pile up on the two beaches, the men discovered that there was no "old Dutch road." Wrote naval historian Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, "There simply was no way to get men or vehicles off this beach except by the way they had come; they might as well have landed at the base of an unscalable cliff."

At Humboldt Bay, the preinvasion bombardment hit a Japanese ammunition dump. Captain Bern Anderson, the landing control officer, reported, "A fire in an enemy dump on the right side of Beach White One was plainly visible and was picked up well out to sea." Two companies

National Archives

ABOVE: During the hours before the lone Japanese plane dropped its bomb and ignited a tremendous series of fires and explosions, American soldiers go about their business on Pancake Hill overlooking Humboldt Bay on April 22, 1944. OPPOSITE: The charred remains of Japanese ammunition and supply dumps, either set ablaze by the preinvasion bombardment of Hollandia or the fires that resulted from a single Japanese bomb, bear mute testimony to the intensity of the explosions and flames as American soldiers trudge past.

of infantry hit White Beach 1 two minutes behind schedule, followed by a reinforced rifle platoon landing at White Beach 2. On the southern finger of land, at White Beach 3, a rifle company came ashore and secured the southern entrance into Jautefa Bay. Noted Captain Anderson, "The beach frontage [at White Beach 1] ... was filled with large quantities of Japanese supplies of all kinds, including large dumps of rations, ammunition, and aerial bombs." A 41st Division infantryman added, "We discovered the largest Japanese ammunition dump that I have ever seen. It covered the beach for about a mile and must have been 200 [sic] feet deep." Like the landings at Tanahmerah Bay, the landings at Humboldt Bay were unopposed.

As the fire in the Japanese supply dump continued to burn, the 41st Division troops moved north toward Hollandia town and west toward Lake Sentai and the airfields. Simultaneously, the 24th Division soldiers were inching their way eastward along a series of small trails, none of them large enough to move supplies. Since the 41st Division was having an easier time, 24th Division commander General Irving made the decision to have his followup supplies sent to Humboldt Bay on D+1. White Beaches 1 and 2 would now be the supply points for both advancing divisions.

Pushing their way off the crowded White Beaches, the 41st Division soldiers captured Pancake Hill, a slight promontory just north of the beach peninsula, and pushed on toward Hollandia. By nightfall they were near the town. And still there was no heavy opposition from the Japanese.

At White Beach 1, the 116th Engineer Battalion came ashore and tried to build an exit road off the beach. When the sand proved to be too soft for wheeled construction equipment and the swampy land behind the beaches limited the site of such a road, most of the engineers turned to helping unload seven large Landing Ship, Tanks (LSTs) that were bringing in all kinds of supplies. The big ships, easy targets for Japanese night aircraft, needed to be unloaded and out of the area as soon as possible. With no exit road in existence yet, the supplies began to pile up, literally. Large stacks of food, ammunition, gasoline, and other essentials began to grow sky high along White Beaches 1 and 2.

Early on the morning of April 23, D+1, the 41st Division soldiers began their move against Hollandia. By 11:15, the town was in American hands. Below the Cyclops Mountains, advancing troops from both the 24th and 41st Divisions began to run into some Japanese resistance as they forced their way over the narrow native trails toward Lake Sentai and the three enemy airfields. By nightfall, the two divisions were still miles from their objectives.

Back on the beaches, there was still mass confusion. "On D plus one," wrote military historian Robert Ross Smith, "more troops, vehicles, and supplies began pouring onto White Beaches 1 and 2. Only slow progress could be made on exit roads, and beach congestion increased." The 532nd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, along with two companies of infantrymen, brought ashore more than "4,200 tons of ammunition, drummed fuel, rations and other supplies," including more than 300 vehicles. All of this was piled on the two beaches beside the burning Japanese supply dumps. In

the late afternoon the situation was alleviated somewhat when the 532nd Engineers used their LVCPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) to ferry about 500 tons of supplies directly from some LSTs to the jetty at Pim in Jautefa Bay.

Shortly after dusk on D+1, around 8:45 PM, a lone Japanese plane, flying "too low above the beach for radar detection," skirted past the Cyclops Mountains and, perhaps guided by the flames from the still burning Japanese supply dump, dropped three bombs on White Beach 1. While two bombs exploded harmlessly in the soft sand, the last landed directly on an enemy ammunition pile at the base of Pancake Hill. Captain Eugene Pfile, 92nd Evacuation Hospital, was in a foxhole on Pancake Hill. He recalled, "What a night to remember! We were in our foxholes.... Just at dusk a lone raider came along the beach below us. There was no radar and no search lights. By a lucky hit, he dropped 3 bombs on the Jap ammunition dump [probably guided by the fire on the beach from the dumps burning from the previous shelling.] Explosions were more or less continuous—some tremendous enough to shake the earth where we were on a hill about a mile [4 seconds by sound] away."

Almost immediately, the fire spread to an American gasoline dump, causing tremendous explosions that sent fire and debris out in all directions and started fires among the stacked American supplies. Sleeping near the holocaust, out of 30 men and one officer of the 287th Ordnance Medium Maintenance Company, 18 men and the one officer were wounded while seven men were missing. After evacuating the wounded, the rest of the company began rolling gasoline drums into the bay, while two technical sergeants manned bulldozers and tried to rescue antiaircraft guns and other vital equipment from the path of the fire.

Farther along the beach, the men of the 532nd Engineers began work on a firebreak. "Gasoline drums were rolled to the right and left to cut a thirty-yard open strip from the beach through the area," penned the engineer historian. "Bulldozer operators were on the spot pushing barrels and supplies into the water. Human supply chains were organized and the supplies passed from one man to another until they reached the safety zone. Roller conveyors were hastily set up. Every man worked frantically to save everything he possibly could." Likewise, men from the 116th Engineer Combat Battalion, including three bulldozer drivers, worked feverishly to make a firebreak. "They dared to work over unexploded shells only 75 yards from the flames. They pushed between the blazes and slots containing high octane gasoline—and with a 20-ton dump of TNT at their backs 100 yards away."

An observer on one of the LSTs, Major Elmer P. Volgenau, wrote,

"The holocaust on White Beach as viewed from the sea was so awesome and terrifying as almost to defy description. Great billowing black clouds of smoke were flung thousands of feet into the air from exploding drums of gasoline, while the oil, lubricants, rations, vehicles, and hundreds of tons of miscellaneous stores and gear burned below it in a solid, hideous, frightening wall of flame five hundred feet in the air for a mile and a half along the beach."

Australian War Memorial

The Collecting Platoon of Company B, 262nd Medical Battalion had set up an aid station in the center of the dump area for easy access from any part of the beachhead. Immediately upon the eruption of the Japanese ammunition dump, the two officers and 44 men "worked feverishly" to collect and aid the victims of the blast and continuing fires. "The litter bearers moved continuously through the holocaust of burning dumps and tremendous explosions. Again and again they returned to the inferno to rescue their comrades while the remainder of the personnel stayed in the aid station to treat the wounded." For their heroic efforts in aiding the many wounded and braving the flying shrapnel and growing flames, the Collecting Platoon was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, the highest award that can be attained by any military organization.

Helping to evacuate the wounded were members of the 41st Division Military Police Platoon. "Most of us MPs with the other troops ran towards White Beaches 1 and 2, usually barefoot and unclothed from our bivouac," recalled one MP. Two MPs were cut off by the rapidly growing fire and had to "creep 1500 yards up the beach and inland through fire, burning oil, exploding gas and ammo." Upon reaching safety, one man discovered that he was wounded in the left arm, left shoulder, and left thigh. When he removed his fatigue jacket, "most of it fell off in burnt pieces. His back was a mass of blisters, blood, and sweat."

"At first, we seemed to confine the fire by this fire-lane," wrote the historian for the 41st Division. "Then flames hit another ammo dump. When it exploded, bullets and metal fragments sprayed the beach.... The fire leaped our 30-yard break and flamed new heaps of supplies. Flames raced from dump to dump. Again and again, explosions showered the beach with murderous missiles." A 2nd Engineer Special Brigade historian added, "The work put into the construction of the fire break was in vain for the flames jumped across it as if it was not even there."

"Now it was apparent that the lack of dispersal areas on White Beach 1 and the rush to unload the ships, which in turn had dictated the establishment of gasoline dumps, supply dumps, and ammunition dumps close to one another, and even adjoining one another, would inevitably result in great losses to the Allies," wrote chief engineer Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Casey. As the fire continued to burn and spread, acts of heroism

became commonplace on White Beach 1.

As the flames jumped the firebreak, 1st Lt. Wortham W. Dibble, Company B, 41st Engineer Brigade, remembered that a wounded man was in a dugout on the beach, close to the dump area. Organizing a rescue party, Dibble led the men through the flames and exploding shells and returned with the wounded man. Another officer, 2nd Lt. Robert F. Dalton, Headquarters Company, helped pull six wounded men from "the middle of the firebreak with gasoline fires raging not more than twenty-five feet on either side of them." Once these men were safe, Lieutenant Dalton ran back into the holocaust to rescue another wounded man. Noted a 41st Division historian, "That act of heroism undoubtedly saved the man's life for the next morning that foxhole was filled with debris and blackened dirt."

During the night, four enlisted men of Company B, 532nd Engineers, offshore in an LCVP, saw the signal of a blinker light through the darkness and smoke signaling that there were men trapped on the beach. "As we closed in, a heavier explosion rained fragments into the sea around us, but we charged on in," one of the rescuers recalled. "We grounded, helped men aboard, and shoved off. Explosions shook the beach and wounded two of the men we were saving. We carried our casualties down-shore south across Jautefa Bay Channel to White Beach 3 and returned to save more men."

Even a war correspondent became a hero. Bedded down on the beach before the bombing, a number of war correspondents dove for cover when the first explosion erupted. As the others ran for safety, 1st Lt. John L. Cross of the New Rochelle, New York, *Standard-Star,* picked up a wounded man and started toward an aid station. Explosions hurled him to the ground eight times, but Cross never let go of the wounded man. Once at the aid station, Cross could not find a doctor, so he treated the man himself. While doing this, other wounded men were brought in. Assuming that Cross was the doctor, the wounded men were left in his care. Rising to the occasion, the correspondent applied sulpha powder and bandaged the wounds and burns.

Out at sea, crewmen on various naval ships could see the tremendous explosions and spreading flames and wondered at the cause. As the sun came up, they could finally make out what was going on. An observer on one of the LSTs, Major Elmer P. Volgenau, wrote, "The holocaust on White Beach as viewed from the sea was so awesome and terrifying as almost to defy description. Great billowing black clouds of smoke were flung thousands of feet into the air from exploding drums of gasoline, while the oil, lubricants, rations, vehicles, and hundreds of tons of miscellaneous stores and gear burned below it in a solid, hideous, frightening wall of flame five hundred feet in the air for a mile and a half along the beach."

"All this made 24 April a hectic day in Humboldt Bay," wrote Samuel Eliot Morison in a vast understatement. "Five LSTs arrived on schedule with men, supplies and equipment; two APAs [fast-speed transports] and seven LSTs diverted from Tanahmerah Bay ... also arrived. And all twelve LSTs were scheduled to leave the same day in order to pick up more loads." As the LSTs diverted from the 24th Division beachheads neared Humboldt Bay, they recorded what was seen on the beach. The commander of LST 227 found "large fires and great explosions ... centered in munitions and provisions dumps on White Beach #1." Wrote the captain of LST 269, "The continuous shower of shrapnel and burning debris made it inadvisable to approach this beach."

With the coming of daylight, Captain Anderson, the landing control officer, tried unsuccessfully to get a YMS (Auxiliary Motor Minesweeper) in close enough to shore to use a firehose on the conflagration. Next, Anderson sent a "canvass of vessels" toward the beach to attempt to use their handy billy gasoline-powered pumps to spray water on White Beach 1, but it was discovered that they "had insufficient hose to reach from the beach to the fire." As Captain Anderson concluded, "Consequently, no suitable fire-fighting equipment was available."

Throughout the rest of April 24, D+2, the engineers, collecting platoon, and others did what they could to save people and supplies from the immense fire. A 41st Division historian wrote, "The following morning relief parties were formed but the intense heat drove back all efforts to salvage supplies. Additional medical men were called to the area to administer first aid and much effort was made to quarter and feed the many transients who were cut off from their units during the fiery night." Collecting Platoon of Company B set up its aid station as close to the fires as possible and continued to bring in wounded and burned men. "Despite falling metal fragments," a division historian recorded, "litter men moved through the blazing, smoking dumps on rescue missions. Aid men worked under the same menace to save wounded whom the bearers brought in. Several times, they had to move the station itself away from the flames."

Eventually, after every living soul had been evacuated, firefighting efforts on White Beach 1 had to be abandoned. It was just too dangerous. Noted Major Volgenau, "Shortly after the 2d Engineer Special Brigade working and rescuing parties evacuated the beach due to the tremendous heat and danger of exploding projectiles of all kinds, the raging fire reached its maximum intensity in an intensity of destruction that made everyone gasp. None who saw it will ever forget the White Beach fire at Hollandia set off by one unlucky Jap bomb."

While the fires and explosions continued, the men went to work to try to unload the 12 LSTs waiting offshore. In trying to utilize White Beach 2, most of the big ships grounded too far out in the bay. Only one vessel was successfully unloaded on April 24. The next day, D+3, at high tide, the remaining 11 ships sped toward the beach. Although they grounded in three or four feet of water, herculean efforts were undertaken, and by nightfall all but two of the ships had been successfully unloaded. To avoid the congestion of supplies on White Beach 2 that had piled up on White Beach 1, most of the supplies and ammunition was carted by LVTs across Jautefa Bay to White Beach 4.

"The fires and explosions continued until D plus 4 day," reported Captain Anderson. "These fires destroyed practically all the bulk supplies

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ABOVE: White Beach 1 at Hollandia is shrouded in smoke as both American and Japanese supply and ammunition dumps go up in explosions and flames during operations on the island of New Guinea in April 1944. Twenty-four Americans were killed in the blasts and subsequent fires. OPPOSITE: American soldiers of the 41st Infantry Division and attached Sherman tanks move out from White Beach 1 at Hollandia while a Japanese ammunition dump burns in the distance. This photo was taken on April 22, 1944, before the American supply dumps went up in flames later that day.

that had been landed on D and D plus 1 days, consisting mainly of rations and ammunition; a number of vehicles still in the area; and all of the Japanese material within the limits of the fires. By D plus 5 day [April 27] the fires had burned out sufficiently for work to be started on clearing the area for further use by LSTs." Almost all of the supplies brought ashore on D-day and D+1 had gone up in flames, almost 60 percent of the rations and ammunition allotted to the 41st Division for the entire Hollandia campaign. General Eichelberger immediately radioed a request for "duplication of all bulk stores which had been unloaded from LSTs at Humboldt Bay on D-Day and D plus 1." Knowing that the new supplies could not possibly reach Hollandia for at least a week, Eichelberger also issued orders to cut rations and limit combat operations. Remembered 41st infantryman Francis Catanzaro, "Until further notice, we were told, we would be on one-third rations: one box of K-rations per day."

Catanzaro went on, "Because of the food shortage, all patrols were ordered to look for Japanese rations in and around all buildings. The worst of the ration emergency lasted about one week. During that time, we were able to find a few bags of rice and some canned salmon that helped get us through the crisis." Worse than the lack of rations for most men was the loss of cigarettes. "With the exception of a few Japanese cigarettes we found in buildings, K-rations were the only source of cigarettes." However, there were only four cigarettes in each K-ration box. "Most of the smokers really suffered when their supply of cigarettes ran out," Catanzaro, a nonsmoker, recalled. He added, "I learned what a strong addiction tobacco could be."

The 41st Division had lost the equivalent of 11 LST loads of equipment in the Hollandia fire, estimated at about $8 million in 1944 dollars. Twenty-four men had been killed, and another 100 had been wounded. The casualty figures could have been a lot higher if not for the heroic actions of so many officers and men. In the 532nd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment alone, six officers were awarded the Silver Star, and three officers and 23 enlisted men received the Bronze Star for their heroic actions in the Hollandia holocaust.

Fortunately, the firestorm on the beach had not impeded the movement of the troops in the field. On April 25 and 26, infantry units were carried across Lake Sentai in LVTs and deposited on the shores below the three airfields. Facing only sporadic enemy gunfire, the three objective airfields were captured on the 26th. Over the next few days, patrols spread out in all directions, but a major clash never came. Within days of their capture, the three Hollandia airfields were being used by General Kenney's Fifth Air Force planes.

At Aitape, one regiment of the 41st Infantry Division and one from the 32nd Division had stormed ashore on the same day as the Hollandia operation, April 22. Finding no Japanese resistance, the three enemy airfields were in American hands by nightfall. Australian engineers had one of the airstrips operational within two days, and an Australian fighter squadron moved in to help push the retreating Japanese farther westward into the interior of New Guinea.

In spite of the horrific fire that left more than a mile of beachfront blackened with mounds of smoldering debris and burned vehicles sitting with melted tires, MacArthur's leap behind enemy lines had been a success. With the loss of fewer than 200 killed and about 1,200 wounded at both Hollandia and Aitape, MacArthur had dealt the Japanese on New Guinea a major blow. In the long run, the Hollandia area proved to be an excellent deep water harbor, and the airfields were improved to handle hundreds of Allied planes. The improved airfields and excellent harbor were used in future operations along the coast of New Guinea and even for operations into the Philippines.

Although labeled a success, the Army logistics section (G-4) knew that mistakes had been made. "[The Hollandia operation] was a logistical nightmare due primarily to the fact that too much was thrown too soon into too small an area," G-4 admitted. "Many more vehicles, pieces of heavy equipment, and supplies were landed on the first three days than could be cleared from the beaches."

Captain Anderson, the landing control officer, noted in his report, "Due to construction schedules laid down in advance of the landing, a large number of engineering personnel and a large amount of engineering equipment were landed on D-day and D plus 1 day." He added, "Unloading this equipment during the earliest phases of the landing interfered with getting combat equipment clear of the beach, added materially to the congestion on the beach, and contributed in this case to the losses suffered from fires. It is strongly recommended that no elements be included in D-day echelon which are not intended to be used directly for the essential purpose of capturing the objective area."

By April 1944, with the experience of so many previous successful landings behind them, the Allied planners should have known better. It was a costly, deadly price to pay for one Japanese bomb.

Author Gene Eric Salecker is a retired teacher. His latest book, published in 2014, is The Second Pearl Harbor: The West Loch Disaster, May 21, 1944.

RESCUE PLANE DOWN

Air Force Medical Service

"AWE C'MON, MOM," Cecil Petty told his emotional mother before leaving Homer, Illinois, in February 1941. "Who knows, I might be a hero." But being a hero was probably the furthest thought from Petty's mind more than a year later as he sat in the cockpit of his C-47 Skytrain, the *Lana Turner,* as Japanese shells exploded around him.

On October 20, 1942, the 26-year-old U.S. Army Air Forces lieutenant was trying to take off from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. His aircraft held 18 wounded Marines, some of whom had been fighting the Japanese for two months and were suffering injuries, jungle infections, and mental distress from constant combat. Petty's mission was to fly them to an Army hospital in the New Herbrides.

Petty, his copilot, Lieutenant Eugene Ecklund, and their two crewmates—a crew chief and a radio operator—were part of the Army Air Forces 13th Troop Carrier Squadron, "The Thirsty 13th," hauling ammunition and fuel to the Marines on the island and bringing out the wounded. They were helping the Marines defending Henderson Field from the Japanese. For this flight, they were joined by two U.S. Navy navigators and a pharmacist's mate. The shelling they endured was part of a Japanese attempt to soften up the Americans before attacking the airfield.

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RIGHT: A U.S. Army Air Forces C-47 Skytrain aircraft soars over a coastline. The *Lana Turner,* a C-47 piloted by Lieutenants Cecil Petty and Eugene Ecklund, disappeared with 25 men onboard after departing from war-torn Guadalcanal on October 20, 1942. ABOVE: Pilot Lt. Cecil Petty, from Homer, Illinois, signals he's ready for takeoff from his C-47. Before leaving home, he told his mother that the war might make him a hero.

Japanese artillery salvos delayed planes from getting into the air. When the shells started exploding around the airfield, ground crews offloaded the wounded, and everyone else dove for foxholes. Among the Japanese artillery pieces was an American 155mm cannon they had captured in the Philippines and were now using against its former owners. When the shelling stopped, the wounded were loaded back on board; then the shelling resumed. Again, the wounded were offloaded, and everyone headed for foxholes. By the time the wounded were loaded a third time, the sun was setting. To help Petty and Ecklund see well enough to take off, three Marines stood in large shell holes on the runway, pointing flashlights at the plane so Petty could weave around them.

No shells came, so Petty started up the aircraft and headed down the runway, taking off into the darkening sky. But the *Lana Turner* never arrived in the New Hebrides. The next day, the squadron's operations center at Plaine des Gaiaccs (Plain of Gaiac Trees) on New Caledonia listed the plane as missing in action. Speculation ran rampant. Men wondered if the plane had been shot down, had engine trouble, or simply crashed into the sea. The more optimistic men speculated Petty had landed on an island and been saved by friendly natives.

Searches commenced immediately. Although busy with their mission for the Marines, crews searched the seas for any sign of the *Lana Turner.* They looked for wreckage, rafts, and parachutes, anything that might

When the C-47 Skytrain *Lana Turner,* filled with wounded, went down in the Coral Sea off Guadalcanal a desperate search ensued.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

National Archives

ABOVE: The Japanese continually shelled Marine-held Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Enemy salvos repeatedly delayed the *Lana Turner,* forcing Lt. Petty to take off at dusk. BELOW: Ambulances line up behind a C-47 of the 13th Troop Carrier Squadron, "The Thirsty Thirteen," on Guadalcanal. Patients had to be loaded and offloaded three times from the *Lana Turner* before it was safe to take off.

Seth P. Washburne

provide a clue to the plane's fate. They found nothing. It was as if the Coral Sea had swallowed Petty's aircraft whole.

As the days passed, fellow Thirsty 13th pilots flew their missions to Guadalcanal and the New Hebrides, hoping that Petty and his plane would eventually be spotted. By the seventh day, some of the officers proposed closing the case and declaring the crew lost. It had simply been too long. "No! No!" shouted one of Petty's friends. "Petty will make it," he argued. "Petty will make it."

At daybreak on the eighth day, more than 300 miles away at Nouméa, New Caledonia, a radioman on a Navy ship, the SS Lurline, picked up a faint signal from a portable emergency transmitter as the ship pulled into port. The ship had just passed through an electrical storm, and the air was clear for long-distance transmissions. The captain passed it to the naval commander ashore, who relayed it around the area. Could it be Petty's plane, or were the Japanese using a captured transmitter to lure the Americans into a trap? The Navy dispatched a destroyer, the USS *Barton,* to the scene.

Back at Plaine des Gaiacs, the men in the headquarters had their doubts, but the men on the flight line had none. Lieutenant Phil Remaklus got orders to fly out to the signal. When he reached his C-47 he found a crowd of men, all wanting to go along. He offered a sergeant who had qualified as a parachutist the opportunity to make the trip, but the sergeant had night duties so he begged off.

On the runway, men prepared food to be dropped to the survivors. They stuffed Spam sandwiches into three blue barracks bags, and one man added a bottle of Hennessy Cognac. They wrapped everything up in a life raft's plastic cover, then wrapped the whole thing in the life raft. They were attaching the container to a parachute when Remaklus told them to stop. It would drift too much, he told them. One of the squadron members later complained that Spam sandwiches made for a terrible first meal. "I would have wanted to shoot the supply plane for dropping that," he said.

Remaklus took off, flew north to the coordinates, and reached the designated spot after flying for less than an hour. To his surprise and amazement, he saw a downed C-47 resting on a submerged coral reef. Atop the plane stood men waving frantically. Remaklus circled the stricken plane and dropped his supplies. Below, one of the men jumped off the plane, swam over to the package, and retrieved it.

Remaklus radioed in his find. Soon, the Navy dispatched three Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boats to rescue the crew but kept the *Barton* steaming toward the area. The ordeal had ended, but how had these men flown so far off course? How had they ended up on a coral reef, and how had they survived for eight days?

Eight days earlier, after Petty had lifted off from Henderson Field and flown for about an hour, a lightning bolt hit the *Lana Turner*, knocking out the radio. The crew chief reported the situation to Petty, adding that he was having trouble with the voltage regulator system. The plane's electrical power dwindled. Worse, the radio compass could not locate the New Hebrides' radio beacon. (It was later discovered that someone on the island had forgotten to refuel the electric generator that powered the beacon.)

Soon the plane lost electrical power, leaving her dark. Petty and Ecklund found themselves flying blind above the vast sea. The *Lana Turner* was supposed to arrive in the New Hebrides around midnight, but the hour came and passed, and there was still no island. The two inexperienced navigators took an hour to calculate their position using celestial navigation. They could only tell where they had been, not where they presently were.

Leaving Ecklund at the controls, Petty made his way to the rear of the plane, careful not to step on the wounded. When he came across a Marine lieutenant colonel, he introduced himself, shook hands with the officer, and whispered to him that they were lost. Marine Lt. Col. Randolph McCall was furious. He had endured fighting on the island for the last two months until an infected leg sent him to the hospital. He had tried to fly out on a Marine aircraft but was accidentally loaded onto Petty's in the confusion and darkness after the Japanese

shelling. In harsh language, he told Petty he did not trust Army pilots and that his navigators were terrible. Petty just smiled and told McCall the navigators were Navy men.

Petty then announced the situation to everyone. Some prayed, others hoped, and some shook with worry. As the plane droned on through the night, the men grew dead silent. The only sound was the breathing of the wounded.

Fuel ran low. Every time the fuel light blinked on (the one source of power still working in the aircraft), Petty and Ecklund switched to auxiliary tanks and back to regular tanks. Petty throttled back on the plane's engines to save fuel and pointed the plane in whichever direction his navigators recommended. In the predawn hours, Petty chased after several islands, only to discover they were merely cloud shadows.

Over one supposed island, Ecklund noticed there were no clouds above it. It was not a shadow, but it was not an island. It was a coral reef. Petty pointed his plane toward the light-colored water and leveled off.

Just then one of the Navy navigators looked out his right window and saw the engine sputter and stop. When he told everyone about the reef just ahead, they sang out with cheers and thank-yous to God. Then the other engine cut out over the reef. Petty and Ecklund strapped on their helmets, lowered the plane's flaps, and turned the craft into the wind as they descended closer and closer to the water. They reduced speed to 60 miles per hour as the tail touched the sea.

The *Lana Turner* hit the water with an ear-splitting crash, then skipped along the waves until slowing to a stop, bobbing in the water. It had reached the coral reef. The Navy corpsman cracked two ribs in the rough landing. Water filled the plane, reaching a depth of three feet, but at least it landed atop the reef. The wounded Marines checked their injuries. Fortunately, the landing produced only a few bumps and scrapes. They started asking each other their names, units, homes, and when they joined the Corps. Collectively, they recited the Lord's Prayer.

Some of the men secured the plane's tail wheel to the reef using the plane's static line. To sink the plane onto the reef, the crew used machetes to punch holes in the wings. They also took off the fuel tanks' caps and filled the tanks with water. It worked. The plane settled on the coral surface with its left wing sticking three feet above the waterline. To make themselves more visible to planes, the men draped a parachute over the *Lana Turner*'s tail.

All: Seth P. Washburne

ABOVE: Jubilant members of the *Lana Turner* cheer their rescuers. The men had survived on the coral reef for eight days while awaiting rescue. They hung a parachute on the rear stabilizer to make the aircraft more visible. MIDDLE: One of the three Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boats rests on the coral reef. Its pilot deliberately drove onto the reef to reach the *Lana Turner* but the maneuver crushed the aircraft's hull. TOP: The *Lana Turner* rests on a coral reef with no land in sight. Its left wing broke the water while the right remained submerged. Crew and patients cluster on the fuselage, eager for rescue.

The crew helped some of the wounded onto the top of the fuselage, laying them on tarps, life rafts, and seat cushions, which made sitting more comfortable. The delirious malaria patients remained in the cabin hanging from rigged hammocks made from parachutes to keep them out of the water.

Petty and Ecklund handed out food, consisting of C- and K-rations. Everyone was allowed one meal a day. They also rationed the plane's three-gallon water supply. Each man would get two ounces twice a day. Through it all, Petty kept repeating the Lord's Prayer. Lt. Col. McCall outranked Petty, but when he saw the job Petty was doing he decided to let the lieutenant stay in command.

The plane's radio operator immediately started using a hand-cranked emergency portable radio transmitter with an antenna—known as a Gibson Girl—to send out an SOS

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Naval History & Heritage Command

ABOVE: The Navy destroyer USS *Barton,* commanded by Lt. Cmdr. Douglas H. Fox, rescued both the *Lana Turner*'s occupants and the three PBY crews. The ship was already packed with 235 sailors from the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet,* which had been abandoned and sunk off Guadalcanal. TOP: A PBY crew resort to sitting atop their downed aircraft's wing after attempting to recue another air crew in the Pacific. Members of the *Lana Turner* spent the night on a damaged PBY's wing to keep it balanced.

signal. The radio had both a balloon and kite to elevate the antenna, so the operator stuck the deflated balloon onto one end of a long tube and stuck the tube's other end into the water. The hydrogen in the water inflated the balloon and gave it buoyancy. The balloon, with antenna attached, rose over the plane as the men watched. Suddenly, it burst, and the antenna dropped out of the sky. The men had a second balloon but decided to save it for an emergency. Instead, they attached the antenna to the kite and flew it overhead. Everyone took turns transmitting their location every 15 to 30 minutes. Unfortunately, the transmitter was set to commercial ship, not military, frequency.

The navigators took sun shots and discovered they were 300 miles off course. They had landed on French Reef, some 40 miles northwest of Art Island and another 40 miles from New Caledonia. They realized they were too far from the regular air and sea lanes for anyone to pick up their limited transmissions.

In the course of the day, one man managed to shoot a fish, which McCall cut into small pieces for everyone. Around 4 PM, the men saw a plane flying well to the west. They fired a flare and tried using a mirror to attract its attention, but the effort failed.

By the second day the men had exhausted the food supply, except for some chocolate D-Bars and canned tomato juice. Occasional rain squalls staved off dehydration. While the wounded never asked for more water than was rationed, as the days passed they tried to bolster their spirits by talking about all the steaks and pies they would enjoy when they got home. It pained Ecklund to hear such talk.

Most of the men spent their nights sleeping inside the plane and going topside onto the fuselage during the day. None went onto the wings. McCall spent his time sitting in Petty's seat, keeping his infected leg propped up on the control panel to ensure it stayed dry. Sitting next to him was Major A.J. Narum, who shared his pocket Bible. McCall prayed away his fears and asked God to help him and all the men onboard. He also kept his service pistol hanging on the headrest in case anyone went crazy. "I knew that in time all of us would," McCall later wrote, "but I hoped I would not be the first, because I wanted to be able to take charge as the men would expect me to."

One day stretched into another. Petty constantly checked the injured and the transmitter. He also distributed liquids. All the while, the Lord's Prayer played in his head. Oddly enough, it was not in his voice, but the voice of Marjorie Hartenblower, a woman who sang at his church back home. On the fourth day, Petty had done all he could to take care of everyone and keep up their spirits. For the first time, he laid down and slept.

Despite the dangerous situation, the men enjoyed the peacefulness, particularly the sunrises, sunsets, and the starry nights. "It was beautiful," recalled one of the navigators. "I always thought we were going to get rescued."

On the fifth night a storm blew across the reef. Rain poured down, and waves crashed against the plane's tail. "We were sure glad that C-47 was built better than it had to be," explained Petty, "because it really withstood a pounding." The men took advantage of the situation by collecting rainwater on ponchos and draining it into helmets, doubling their ration for the next two days.

Desperate for rescue, one of the two navigators recommended using a lifeboat to look for help. The officers talked it over and agreed it was worth a try. They gave Petty and his two-man crew half the water supply and helped them rig a small parachute sail. Once they were ready, they headed out for New Caledonia. With the winds and current against them, they had to paddle.

After hours of arduous paddling, the crew of three reached another reef about 15 miles out, yet they never lost sight of the *Lana Turner,* "even fifteen miles away and at night," explained the navigator. When a seagull landed on the raft, the navigator grabbed it by its legs

and killed it. The men also caught some fish. But the adventure was short lived. Late that night, strong winds buffeted the raft and drove it back in the direction of the aircraft.

By the next morning, the whole group was together again with little to show for their efforts. The men on the *Lana Turner* were not angry about the water supply situation since they knew Petty's crew needed it to keep hydrated while paddling. The next night it rained lightly for about a half hour. The men caught water in their helmets, replenishing the water supply.

When the skies cleared after the rain on the eighth day, McCall decided it was a good time to try again to send a message on the Gibson Girl, reasoning that the atmosphere would be clear after a rain. Instead of the usual SOS, he sent a message giving the plane's nautical location and that 25 men were getting hungry and needed aid. The radio operator sent the message every few minutes for an hour; others sent the message every hour for the rest of the day.

That afternoon the men spotted Lieutenant Phil Remaklus's C-47 as it closed on their location and flew over them. They cheered and pounded on their craft. Petty was inside the airplane when he heard the commotion. He ran topside to see everyone pointing south. Just then Remaklus flew back over and tipped his wing in greeting. He circled and dropped food, water, and blankets. Petty dove into the water, swam to the supplies, and brought them back.

The men celebrated their pending rescue two ways: McCall led the men in the Lord's Prayer, and the men found the bottle of Hennessy. By diluting the drink with water, they were able to make enough for everyone. The simple shot got the men drunk. Their dehydrated bodies quickly succumbed to the cognac's effects. "I've never had so much fun in my life," recalled McCall. The buzz only lasted 30 minutes, and then the men returned to their sober state.

Two planes, a C-47 and an Australian Air Corps Lockheed Hudson bomber, followed Remaklus. Both dropped more supplies. The men wolfed down their new meals and just as quickly threw them back up. Their bodies could not handle the richness after a weeklong liquid diet. They used the remaining food to make soup. By igniting deicing fluid in a dye marker can wrapped in insulation asbestos, they created a stove. To cook over it, they mixed navy beans, tomato juice, and other ingredients into their rain-catching, five-gallon aluminum can. Once heated, the men could digest the simple soup.

The next day, three PBY flying boats appeared in the sky, circled overhead, and splashed to a landing in 10-foot swells. They taxied near the *Lana Turner* but could not get onto the reef. They then pitched out life rafts with two-man crews, who paddled through the rough surf. The first raft took on six survivors, including McCall, while the other two loaded the rest. As the rescuers paddled back to their planes, rough waters knocked the men off their rafts, but they quickly climbed back on board. High winds scattered the rafts, while the first raft kept getting thrown back by the reef's surf. Seeing the survivors' dilemma, one of the PBY's crew climbed onto the wings and threw lines to the first raft, but they fell short.

Air Force Medical Service

ABOVE: Three years after his odyssey in the tropical Coral Sea, Lt. Col. Petty receives a medal while in snowy France. Petty would drop paratroopers on D-Day over Normandy with the 92nd Troop Carrier Squadron and survive the war a hero. BELOW: Navy Lt. Cmdr. Douglas H. Fox died two weeks after his rescue of the *Lana Turner* and three PBYs when two enemy torpedoes sank the USS *Barton* in the First Naval Battle of Guadalcanal.

Naval History & Heritage Command

While the other rafts reached the other two PBYs, the first PBY turned on its engines and headed toward the stuck raft. The plane ran up on the reef, crushing its hull in the process. The survivors boarded, but to keep the plane balanced they had to climb onto the wings. That night, the skies opened up, drenching the men on the wings as 10-foot waves rocked the PBY. The crew remained inside the plane, some standing in waist-deep water.

The other two PBYs faired only slightly better. Since both had lost rivets during the rocky landings and the rough seas, their crews did not want to risk a takeoff. They radioed for a ship pick-up and spent the night bobbing in the sea, drifting west in enemy-patrolled waters.

The next morning, the destroyer *Barton*, under Lt. Cmdr. Douglas H. Fox, arrived near the reef. The destroyer was already loaded down with 235 survivors from the aircraft carrier *Hornet*, which had been sunk two days earlier. Knowing that the reef was too shallow to risk his ship, Fox ordered two whaleboats to retrieve the reef-bound PBY. The two boats were quickly dropped into the water, but the first boat's engine failed, leaving the second boat to go in alone. As it approached the reef, the boat's officer heaved a line to the men, but it too fell short. He tried again and again without any success. Finally, an ensign took the line and swam through the reef to the PBY.

The whaleboat now had a secure line connecting it to the stranded PBY. The men would have to sit in a small raft and pull themselves along the line to the whaleboat. McCall, as the senior officer on board, went first. He climbed into a raft and hauled himself hand over hand along the 200-foot line to the whaleboat, no easy task in the heavy swells. "It seemed to me that it took a week to cover the distance," McCall remembered. Exhausted, gagging on salt water, and with his eyes burning, McCall reached the whaleboat, where the crew hauled him aboard and offered him alcohol-laced coffee, which he happily accepted. "It was black, hot, and wonderful." Just then the line snapped, delaying the rescue yet again.

Its engine repaired, the second whaleboat arrived, armed with a throwing gun. Its bowman fired two lines at the remaining men. Both missed. Then the coxswain maneuvered the boat atop a 10-foot wave. When the craft crested, the coxswain turned it sharply, and the bowman fired his last line. It landed close to the PBY, and the men hauled it in. Since most of the survivors were too weak to pull themselves, a single sailor in a raft made repeated trips to the PBY and ferried survivors from the

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Hard Road to the Rhine

Armored infantrymen of the 8th Armored Division advance warily during Operation Grenade on March 2, 1945. Part of the U.S. Ninth Army, the troops are fighting near the town of Rhinesburg, Germany, near the great river that was the last natural barrier to the heart of the Third Reich.

All photos: National Archives

JANUARY 1945—with World War II in its sixth year—found the Allied armies going on the offensive after the Battle of the Bulge, but they were still west of the Rhine and six weeks behind schedule in their advance toward Germany.

Closing to the Rhine was not easy. Although U.S. and French units of Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers' Sixth Army Group had reached the western bank around Strasbourg in late 1944, the river proved too difficult to cross. Even if an assault could have been mounted, the Allied forces would have been too far away from the heart of Germany to pose any meaningful threat. The key to eventual victory lay in the central and northern Rhineland, but three factors delayed an advance: the failure of Operation Market Garden, the British-American airborne invasion of Holland, the onset of an extremely wet autumn and harsh winter, and the unexpectedly rapid recovery of the German Army in the wake of recent Allied advances.

A coordinated Allied campaign proved difficult to achieve. General Omar N. Bradley's U.S. 12th Army Group was licking its wounds after the almost disastrous Ardennes counteroffensive, and it was clear to Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, commander of the British 21st Army Group, that the Americans would not be ready to undertake a major offensive for some time. Despite its vast reserve of manpower, unlike the critically depleted British Army, the U.S. Army had become seriously deficient of infantry replacements. Monty made the first move.

Meanwhile, on January 12, the Soviet Army launched a long-awaited, massive offensive from Warsaw toward the River Oder—and Berlin. This was just in time, thought Montgomery and General Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower, the Allied supreme commander. By the end of the month, the Russians were only 50 miles from the German capital. While

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

During Operations Veritable and Grenade, Allied troops under Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery reached the great river.

the Americans were recovering, it devolved on the 21st Army Group, still supported by Lt. Gen. William H. "Texas Bill" Simpson's U.S. Ninth Army, to take over the battle as soon as winter loosened its grip.

Monty and Ike agreed that the next stage should be to break through the Germans' formidable Siegfried Line and close up to the left bank of the Rhine. The main objective was the historic city of Wesel, on the opposite side of the great river in flat country just north of the Ruhr Valley. It was here that Montgomery had originally sought to seize a bridgehead in September 1944, and common sense still favored it. Accordingly, two well-knit, almost copybook offensives were planned for February 8, 1945: Operation Veritable on the left flank and Operation Grenade on the right, adjacent to the boundary with Bradley's 12th Army Group.

Monty announced that the 21st Army Group's task was to "destroy all enemy in the area west of the Rhine from the present forward positions south of Nijmegen (Holland) as far south as the general line Julich-Dusseldorf, as a preliminary to crossing the Rhine and engaging the enemy in mobile war to the north of the Ruhr." Three armies would be

involved in the offensives: the Canadian First, the British Second, and the U.S. Ninth.

Commanding the Canadian force was the distinguished, 57-year-old General Henry D.G. "Harry" Crerar, a World War I artillery veteran and a man of cool judgment and cold nerves. The "ration strength" of his First Army exceeded 470,000 men, and no Canadian had ever led such a large force. The British Second Army was led by the skilled, unassuming Lt. Gen. Sir Miles "Bimbo" Dempsey, a 48-year-old World War I veteran of the Western Front and Iraq who later acquitted himself well in the Dunkirk evacuation, the Western Desert, Sicily, Italy, and Normandy. Tall, bald, Texas-born General Simpson, commanding 300,000 men of the U.S. Ninth Army, had served in the Philippine Insurrection, the 1916 Mexico punitive expedition, and on the Western Front in 1918. Eisenhower said of the 56-year-old officer, "If Simpson ever made a mistake as an Army commander, it never came to my attention."

With 11 divisions and nine independent brigades, the Canadian Army would clear the way in February 1945 up to the town of Xanten; the Ninth Army, with 10 divisions in three corps, would cross the Roer River and move northward to Dusseldorf (Operation Grenade), and the four divisions of the Second Army would attack in the center.

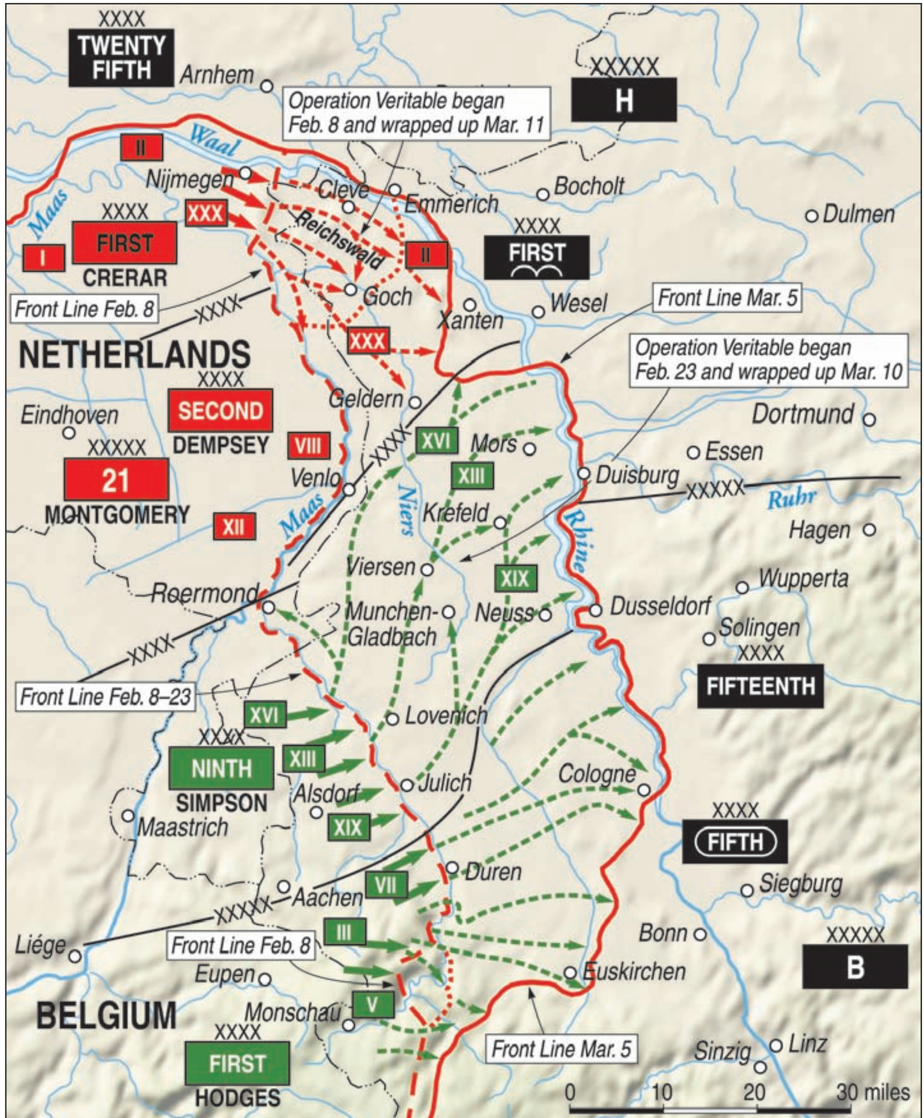
Although he was in customary high spirits about the operation, Montgomery knew that it would be no cakewalk. "I visited the Veritable area today," he warned Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, on February 6. "The ground is very wet, and roads and tracks are breaking up, and these factors are likely to make progress somewhat slow after the operation is launched." Besides expected opposition from at least 10 well-entrenched Wehrmacht divisions, the Allied troops would have to face minefields, flooded rivers and terrain, a lack of roads, appalling weather, and tough going in the gloomy, tangled Reichswald and Hochwald forests.

Montgomery won final approval for the great dual assault on the Rhine on February 1, and the preparations were hastily finalized under tight security. Strict blackout regulations were enforced, and a cover story was concocted to convince the enemy that the offensive would be in a northerly direction to liberate Holland, rather than an eastern thrust into Germany. Daytime gatherings of troops were forbidden unless under cover; large concentrations of vehicles, weapons, and ammunition were camouflaged or concealed in farmyards, barns, and haystacks, and rubber dummies of tanks and artillery pieces were positioned along an imaginary battle line where they might attract the attention of enemy patrols. Logistical feats were accomplished speedily as thousands of men, vehicles, and equipment were transported to the forward assembly lines.

The British and Canadian soldiers worked around the clock. Sappers built and improved 100 miles of road using 20,000 tons of stones, 20,000 logs, and 30,000 pickets, and 446 freight trains hauled 250,000 tons of equipment and supplies to the railheads. It was estimated that the ammunition alone—all types, stacked side by side and five feet high—would line the road for 30 miles. Engineers constructed five bridges across the River Maas, using 1,880 tons of equipment. The biggest was a 1,280-foot-long British-designed Bailey bridge. Outside Nijmegen, an airfield was laid in five days for British and Canadian rocket-firing Hawker Typhoons, which would support the offensive.

Meanwhile, a formidable array of armor and specialized vehicles was assembled. It included Churchill, Cromwell, Centaur, Comet, Valentine, and Sherman heavy and medium tanks; Bren gun carriers, jeeps, half-tracks, and armored cars; amphibious Weasel, Buffalo, and DUKW cargo and personnel carriers; and 11 regiments of "Hobart's Funnies," Churchills and Shermans fitted with antimine flails, flamethrowers, and bridging equipment. Invented by Maj. Gen. Sir Percy Hobart, these had proved invaluable in the Normandy invasion and the clearing of the flooded Scheldt Estuary by Crerar's army.

Map © 2018 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



Operation Veritable in the north and Operation Grenade in the south constituted major components of the Allied Rhineland Campaign intended to reach the Rhine River and position Allied forces to invade the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany.

Canadian artillerymen fire their Bofors guns over open sights during close combat with defending German troops on the road to the town of Cleve. The guns were brought forward to support Canadian and British infantry units pressing forward against stiff resistance during Operation Veritable.

Under the command of the Canadian First Army, the Veritable offensive was to be spearheaded by the seasoned British XXX Corps led by 49-year-old Lt. Gen. Sir Brian G. Horrocks. He returned from leave in England to plunge into preparations for the largest operation he had ever undertaken. A much-wounded veteran of Ypres, Siberia, El Alamein, Tunisia, Normandy, and Belgium, the tall, lithe Horrocks—nicknamed "Jorrocks" by his mentor, Montgomery—was a charismatic officer who led from the front and was regarded as one of the finest corps commanders of the war.

Horrocks regarded Monty's overall plan for the offensive as "simplicity itself." The XXX Corps was to attack in a southerly direction from the Nijmegen area with its right on the River Maas and its left on the Rhine. "Forty-eight hours later," said Horrocks, "our old friends, General Simpson's U.S. Ninth Army, were to cross the River Roer and advance north to meet us. The German forces would thus be caught in a vise and be faced with the alternatives, either to fight it out west of the Rhine or to withdraw over the Rhine and then be prepared to launch counterattacks when we ourselves subsequently attempted to cross…. In theory, this looked like a comparatively simple operation, but all battles have their problems, and in this case the initial assault would have to smash through a bottleneck well suited to defense and consisting in part of the famous Siegfried Line."

Horrocks decided to use the maximum force possible and open Operation Veritable with five divisions, from right to left, in line: the 51st Highland, 53rd Welsh, 15th Scottish, and the 2nd and 3rd Canadian, followed by the 43rd Wessex and Maj. Gen. Sir Alan Adair's proud Guards Armored Division. On the morning of February 4, Horrocks briefed his commanders in the packed cinema in the southern Dutch town of Tilburg. Clad in brown corduroy trousers and a battlefield jacket, the unpretentious general drew a warm response as he crisply outlined the offensive, radiated confidence, and moved from group to group with a friendly and humorous word. Like Montgomery, he made a practice of keeping all ranks informed about operations.

Despite his recurring pain and high fever incurred after being seriously wounded by a German fighter plane in Bizerte two years before, Horrocks was hopeful as the D-day hour neared. But he and General Crerar grew concerned when three days of heavy rain made the roads muddy and slushy. A hard crust of ice that would have ensured the rapid movement of men and armor had thawed, and the roads were sinking.

On February 7, men of the Canadian 1st Scottish Regiment peered across the surrounding fields and were alarmed to see them waterlogged. As a defense measure, the Germans had blasted holes in the Rhine's winter dikes, and a foot of water now covered the entire area. The flood level reached 30 inches in two hours and was rising at the rate of one foot each hour. Half of the battlefield ahead of Crerar's army was soon under five feet of water, and the rest of the polderlands bordering the Rhine were a muddy morass. Silent but alarmed, Horrocks listened to reports filtering into his command post. How could 90,000 men and vehicles of his spearhead force be funneled into action through murky water and along roads that were now muddy ruts? But the lines were drawn, and he prayed that this might be the final battle of the long war.

The British and Canadian assault troops waited anxiously on February 7, oiling and loading rifles and machine guns, topping up the fuel levels in tank engines, scribbling letters home, and trying to get some rest. But there was little sleeping that night when the dark sky was rent by great flashes and distant explosions. Aimed at softening up the German defenses, 285 Avro Lancaster heavy bombers of Royal Air Force Bomber Command, led by 10 De Havilland Mosquito pathfinder fighters, thundered overhead. They flattened a number of Rhineland towns that were known to be enemy strongpoints, including Goch, Weeze, Udem, Geldern, and Calcar.

Especially hard hit that night was the beautiful, historic city of Cleve, the gateway to the Rhineland and the key rail and communications center through which the Germans could funnel reinforcements. The Lancasters dropped 1,384

ABOVE: The town of Cleve, Germany, was devastated by Royal Air Force bombers during multiple heavy air raids in preparation for Operation Veritable in early February 1945. LEFT: On February 8, 1945, British Churchill tanks crawl warily forward while firing in support of infantrymen who have come upon heavily defended enemy positions. The Germans tenaciously resisted the Allied push to the Rhine.

tons of high explosives on Cleve, an inspiration for Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* and the birthplace of King Henry VIII's meek, homely fourth wife, Anne. Cleve was more devastated than any other German city of its size during the war. Generals Crerar and Horrocks agreed that the RAF raid was tactically necessary to save many Allied lives, but the latter "simply hated the thought of Cleve being 'taken out.'"

Horrocks recalled later, "It was the most terrible decision I had ever had to take in my life. I felt almost physically sick when I saw the bombers flying overhead on their deadly mission." He blamed the RAF for dropping high explosives instead of incendiaries, which he had requested, and for reducing Cleve to rubble and huge craters that later held up the Allied advance.

At 5 AM on Thursday, February 8, 1945, while Cleve still burned, a massive artillery bombardment paved the way for Operation Veritable. Lined up between 10 and 15 yards apart, 1,400 field and antiaircraft guns of numerous calibers, mortars, medium machine guns, and high-explosive rocket launchers opened up with a deafening roar. It was the heaviest barrage employed so far by the British Army during the European war—greater than anything in Normandy and the historic bombardment at El Alamein on October 23, 1942. More than half a million shells were put down on a seven-mile front.

The Veritable barrage lasted for 2½ hours on that gray, rainy morning as General Horrocks watched and listened from a command post platform that Royal Engineers had built halfway up a large tree. "The noise was unbelievable," he reported. Below him, the area teemed with armored vehicles, and the air was filled with the roar of engines.

When the artillery barrage stopped, there was an eerie silence as smoke was fired across the XXX Corps front. This was aimed at making the Germans think that the infantry attack had been launched. Enemy gunners who had survived the first bombardment then rushed to their weapons and opened up. British flash spotters zeroed in on the battery positions, and, after 10 minutes of silence, the Allied barrage erupted again, concentrating on the German guns that had been located. In addition to the artillery, each British and Canadian division employed "pepper pot" tactics, with every weapon not used in the assault blasting enemy positions. The effect was so devastating that when Horrocks' men went forward the German gunners were still crouching in their trenches.

The XXX Corps tanks and infantry advanced against befuddled enemy defenders, and little initial resistance was met. "The enemy had been over-awed by the bombardment," observed Captain Peter Dryland, adjutant of the 7th Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. But continual rain had turned the terrain into a quagmire, and the Allied tanks and infantrymen had to struggle through mud. "Our worst enemies that day were mines and mud," Horrocks reported. "Mud, and still more mud."

Personnel carriers carrying troops heaved through the mire, and supporting tanks ploughed into the woods. But it was tough going from the start. After the first hour almost every Allied tank had bogged down, and the infantry had to forge ahead on their own. Some tanks simply sank in the mud, others hit mines, and still others were blocked by felled trees or craters gouged by the Allied bombing and artillery barrage. Yet the British and Canadian riflemen and tankers pushed on doggedly.

On the left flank the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division cut the main Nijmegen-Cleve road, and then half of the force turned back to attack and capture the strongly held village of Wyler after a stiff fight. The other half moved to support the 15th Scottish Division advancing on the right, while its 44th Brigade pushed through minefields to breach the northern extension of the concrete and steel Siegfried Line. Meanwhile, on their right men of the tough 53rd Welsh Division disappeared into the dense, gloomy Reichswald, pushing through tangled thickets and along narrow, soggy trails. Farther to the right, the famed 51st Highland Division plunged into the southern part of the Reichswald, east of the River Maas, and encountered strong German opposition.

Conditions worsened for the Allied troops. Flood levels rose steadily, and the only narrow road in the Reichswald available for the advance was soon under several feet of water. The enemy opposition increased, with heavy artillery barrages and the hasty deployment of fresh reserves, including two armored and two parachute divisions. Eventually, a total of 10 divisions—three of them armored—were bat-

tling the British and Canadian units. It was a toe-to-toe struggle in rain, sleet, and snow, with numerous hand-to-hand melees and bayonet charges, while casualties mounted alarmingly. But the attack never slackened, and the Tommies and Canucks slogged on staunchly to seize vital German positions.

The Reichswald was a soldier's battle, influenced chiefly by the battalion commanders. General Horrocks said he was "almost powerless to influence the battle one way or the other, so I spent my days 'smelling the battlefield.'" He made a habit of visiting brigade and battalion headquarters that were having "a particularly grueling time.

The appalling conditions endured by the Allied soldiers were reminiscent of the Battle of Passchendaele, where more than 300,000 British and Commonwealth troops were killed in 1917, and the Hürtgen Forest, in which several American divisions suffered 33,000 casualties in the autumn of 1944.

The Reichswald-Hochwald struggle was not the sort of campaign General Horrocks wished to command. It had to be fought, but it was grim and painful throughout, with no scope for brilliant tactics or avoidance of heavy losses. As a former infantryman himself, he agonized over the casualty lists, especially when they contained familiar names. Popular with both his officers and other ranks, he regarded the deaths as a great waste and personal loss.

Almost from the start of Operation Veritable, Horrocks' corps found itself out on a limb. On February 9, the Germans blew up the discharge valves on the River Roer dams, and a wide strip of surging floodwater prevented General Simpson's powerful U.S. Ninth Army and elements of Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges' U.S. First Army from crossing for two crucial weeks. Operation Grenade was postponed, but Simpson had the consolation of knowing that once the river had subsided the enemy could never again hold his army in check. Nevertheless, the delay had a damaging effect on Operation Veritable.

Days passed, and the fighting raged in the Reichswald. The 43rd Wessex Division fought its way through the ruins of Cleve, and, after a bitter struggle, the fortified town of Goch was taken by men of the 51st and 15th Scottish Infantry Divisions. Horrocks viewed this as the turning point in the campaign. In the smaller Hochwald, defended by fanatical German paratroopers who gave no quarter, the Canadians fought gallantly to avoid being pushed back and eventually prevailed.

Of all the many obstacles faced by the British and Canadian troops, none were more nerve wracking than the enemy minefields. Major Martin Lindsay was leading the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders through two feet of mud in an attempt to knock out a German strongpoint astride the Mook-Gennep road when he noticed that his men had grown quiet. There was a sudden explosion, and a company commander 10 yards ahead fell groaning.

Lindsay ordered everyone to stand exactly where they were and shouted for help from mine-prodders and stretcher bearers of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa. He looked around and realized that he and his men were in a 50-yard-wide strip of no-man's land between the German and Canadian positions. Lindsay waited, standing on one leg and not daring to put the other to the ground while the Canadian rescuers carried out the company commander and a stretcher bearer who had trodden on a mine. Each step of the way was gingerly prodded first, and Lindsay followed the other men to safety, planting his feet precisely in the tracks of the Cameron Highlander ahead.

After a week of bitter fighting through its bottleneck, the XXX Corps managed to widen the front so that General Crerar could commit the Canadian 2nd Corps commanded by the gallant, innovative Lt. Gen. Guy Simonds on the northern flank. At 42, Simonds was the youngest general ever to command a Canadian corps in battle. The 2nd Corps now bore the brunt of the assault on the strongly defended Hochwald, with the first major objectives the villages of Calcar and Udem.

It was slow, tough going for the Canadians. High-grade troops of General Heinrich von Luttwitz's 17th Panzer Corps and General Alfred Schlemm's First Parachute Army were well concealed and dispersed, and their defense lines were deep. Marshy fields and thick woods favored the enemy, and continual poor weather prevented the Canadians from calling in the rocket-firing Typhoons to deal with enemy strongpoints.

In this poignant photograph taken on February 23, 1945, soldiers of the U.S. Ninth Army rush to provide aid to a comrade who was killed moments earlier during a German artillery barrage. As Allied spearheads thrust deeper into Germany, the Nazi defenders fought with great tenacity.

It took the Canadian infantry six days of harsh fighting to clear the Germans from a small, dark forest near Moyland, blocking the advance to Calcar. About three miles to the southeast, another bloody battle ensued for control of the road linking Calcar with Goch. Although the Canadians soon got astride the road, their hold on it became precarious when the Germans launched fierce counterattacks for two days, including a night thrust supported by tanks. In less than a week, the Canadians had suffered 885 infantry casualties. German losses were higher, and by now Operation Veritable

had become increasingly a battle of attrition.

It was a grueling and fluctuating struggle in which the British and Canadian spearhead units, reinforced by the 11th British and 4th Canadian Armored Divisions, gained ground while trying to push through the "Hochwald Gap" and breach the 20-mile-long "Schlieffen Position," a formidable defense line running from Udem to Geldern. But progress was slow and costly. Besides the abysmal weather and endless mud the Allied soldiers had to face more minefields, antitank ditches, and murderous fire from German panzers, deadly 88mm flak guns, and mortars. The volume of enemy barrages, which included guns fired from across the Rhine, was the heaviest encountered by British troops in the Rhineland.

Yet, against heavy odds in one of the bitterest campaigns of the European war, the gallantry of Crerar's army and Horrocks' corps began to pay dividends. British and Canadian troops managed to clear the last enemy units from the Reichswald on February 13 and reach the southern bank of the Rhine, opposite Emmerich, the following day. By February 17, the Canadians reached the Rhine on a 10-mile front. Meanwhile, progress was being made farther south by American units. On February 17-18, Lt. Gen. Alexander M. "Sandy" Patch's Seventh Army crossed the River Saar and attacked near Saarbrucken, while units of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr.'s Third Army breached the Siegfried Line north of Echternach, Luxembourg.

Then, before dawn on February 23, four divisions of General Simpson's Ninth Army and two from Hodges' First Army began to cross the River Roer at several sectors near Julich and Duren. A measure of surprise was gained because the floodwaters had not yet fully subsided, giving the German defenders a false sense of security. Simpson's divisions suffered fewer than 100 casualties on the first day, and by the evening of February 24 his combat engineers had laid 19 bridges, seven of them fit for armor to cross. Because the Canadian First Army had drawn the bulk of the German reserves upon itself, Simpson's army built up pressure and his armor broke away on the last day of February. His right flank reached the Rhine south of Dusseldorf two days later, and his left flank linked up with the Canadians near Geldern on March 3.

Farther north, with Wesel and its Rhine bridges only 15 miles distant, intense clashes continued between the British-Canadian forces and the Germans, who were fighting more stubbornly than ever to defend their home soil. More fresh enemy troops were deployed and new defenses hurriedly prepared. The odds against survival were still high for the Allied soldiers, especially the infantrymen. Out of 115 men of B Company of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders who had landed in Normandy seven months before, only three were left by February 26, 1945.

But the fighting spirit and discipline of the Allied troops eventually gained the upper hand. There were numerous acts of sacrifice and valor among the British and Canadian infantrymen, gunners, and tankers during the Reichswald-Hochwald campaign, and four Victoria Crosses were awarded, two of them to Canadians.

Platoon Sergeant Aubrey Cosens of the Queen's Own Rifles distinguished himself while Sherman tanks of the 1st Hussars were trying to overwhelm stubborn German parachute troops in the hamlet of Mooshof, near the Calcar-Udem road, early on the misty morning of February 26. A quiet, tough loner from the northern Ontario backwoods, the 23-year-old Cosens directed tank fire against a farmhouse to break up an enemy attack. Braving a hail of mortar and shellfire, and armed with only a Sten gun, he dashed into the house after a Sherman had rammed it. Cosens killed at least 20 Germans and took as many prisoners, and his actions saved the lives of his men. While on the way to report to his company commander, he was shot in the head by a sniper. He was posthumously awarded Great Britain's highest decoration for valor.

The second Canadian VC went to acting Major Frederick A. Tilston of the Essex Scottish Regiment for his gallant leadership in an assault on German defenses at the edge of the Hochwald early on the morning of March 1. During fierce fighting, the affable, mild-mannered Ontario College of Pharmacy graduate led his C Company across 500 yards of open ground and through 10 feet of barbed wire to reach two enemy trench lines. Although wounded in the head, Tilston silenced a machine-gun post with a grenade while his men cleared the trenches and then organized defenses against a German counterattack. He crossed bullet-swept ground six times to carry ammunition to a hard-pressed flanking company and received multiple shrapnel wounds in his legs. He refused medical aid. Tilston's wounds were so severe that both of his legs had to be amputated.

By March 10, 1945, after a month of costly fighting, the Reichswald campaign was completed and the western bank of the Rhine was in Allied hands. The German high command had ordered a withdrawal on March 6, and the last pockets of enemy troops hurried across the river, destroying bridges and ferries behind them.

The toll was high on both sides in Operation Veritable. From February 8 to March 10, the Canadian First Army suffered 15,634 casualties, of whom almost two-thirds were men of the British XXX Corps. Of the 5,414 Canadian losses, almost all were in the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Divisions. German losses were an estimated 22,000, with a further

22,000 taken prisoner.

General Horrocks was deeply disturbed about the "butcher's bill" in a campaign that was generally overlooked later even by eminent military historians. "This was the grimmest battle in which I took part during the war," he said. "No one in their senses would choose to fight a winter campaign in the flooded plains and dense pinewoods of Northern Europe, but there was no alternative. We had to clear the western bank of the Rhine if we were to enter Germany in strength and finish off the war." In a letter to General Crerar, Eisenhower summed up, "Probably no assault in this war has been conducted in more appalling conditions than was this one."

Later in March 1945, Horrocks and his battered corps were heartened when British Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited them. With the 51st Highland Division's massed bagpipes and drums sounding, Horrocks reported, Churchill "was visibly moved as he stood for the first time with his feet firmly planted on the territory of the enemy which he had been fighting for so long."

Allied forces had closed to the Rhine, but getting across the river, swollen to 1,500 feet wide, was another matter. While Montgomery crushed the last enemy resistance in the Lower Rhineland and secured a springboard for a massive British-American crossing north of the Ruhr, the northern corps of Hodges' U.S. First Army reached Cologne and wheeled southeast to strike the Germans in the Eifel sector. Patton's Third Army attacked them frontally, and his freewheeling armor raced to the Rhine near its confluence with the Moselle River. But a dozen bridges between Coblenz and Duisburg were down, and every Allied attempt to seize a crossing was foiled.

Then, on the afternoon of March 7, a task force from Maj. Gen. John W. Leonard's U.S. 9th Armored Division came upon the big Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, 20 miles northwest of Coblenz. It was intact but set to be blown up within an hour. In one of the most dramatic feats of the war, combat engineers hastily cut the demolition cables while infantrymen raced across. Ten days later, the span collapsed from bomb damage and heavy use, but engineers had laid pontoon bridges, and the advance across the Rhine continued.

Patton's army seized crossings at Nierstein and Oppenheim, but these and the Remagen operation could never be more than secondary. The Third Army was too far south to have a decisive impact, and the Remagen bridgehead led into the mountainous Westerwald region. The key to breaching the Rhine barrier lay firmly in the north, where Montgomery was marshaling forces for a major crossing.

ABOVE: On March 2, 1945, British soldiers prepare to climb aboard Kangaroo personnel carriers in preparation for an assault on German positions around the town of Kervenheim, Germany, east of Xanten. OPPOSITE: Soldiers of the U.S. Ninth Army's 29th Infantry Division wade through deep water near the town of Julich, Germany, on February 24, 1945.

At 5 PM on March 23, along the hazy western bank of the Rhine, British gunners opened up the biggest artillery barrage of the war, and Monty's Operation Plunder—involving 1.25 million men of his 21st Army Group—was underway. Buffaloes carrying assault troops of the 153rd and 154th Infantry Brigades lurched into the dark waters and followed taped routes to the far bank. The first men to scramble ashore, around 9 PM, were Highlanders of the legendary Black Watch Regiment. The 51st Highland Division and the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division crossed the river near Rees and Emmerich, while, upstream near Wesel, Lancasters of RAF Bomber Command softened up the way for an assault by Lt. Gen. Sir Neil Ritchie's British 12th Corps. General Simpson's U.S. Ninth Army crossed the Rhine between Wesel and Duisburg. Although the initial crossings went smoothly and with only token resistance from German units exhausted and depleted by the actions west of the river, enemy shellfire was heavy and the 51st Highlanders had to repel a fierce counterattack by panzergrenadiers.

Within a few hours, on the sunny morning of March 24, came Operation Varsity, the subsidiary assault of the historic Rhine crossing, and much-needed reinforcements for the Allied troops on the eastern bank. Standing on a hilltop behind Xanten with Field Marshal Alan Brooke, Prime Minister Churchill shouted excitedly, "They're here!" With a great roar overhead appeared 4,000 transport planes, tugs, and gliders of Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps. In the next 10 minutes, more than 8,000 paratroopers of the British 6th and U.S. 17th Airborne Divisions were dropped.

Meanwhile, working tirelessly and under fire, Monty's Royal Engineers hastily laid several Bailey and pontoon bridges across the northern Rhine for the continuing Allied buildup. A total of 155 sappers were killed or wounded, and General Horrocks said, "I have always felt that the Rhine crossing was probably the sappers' finest hour of the whole war."

British, American, and Canadian troops and equipment were soon flowing steadily over the Rhine, and by the end of March 1945, men of General Jean Lattre de Tassigny's French First Army had crossed the river. Every Allied army now had troops on the eastern bank, and the end of the war in Europe was only a month away.

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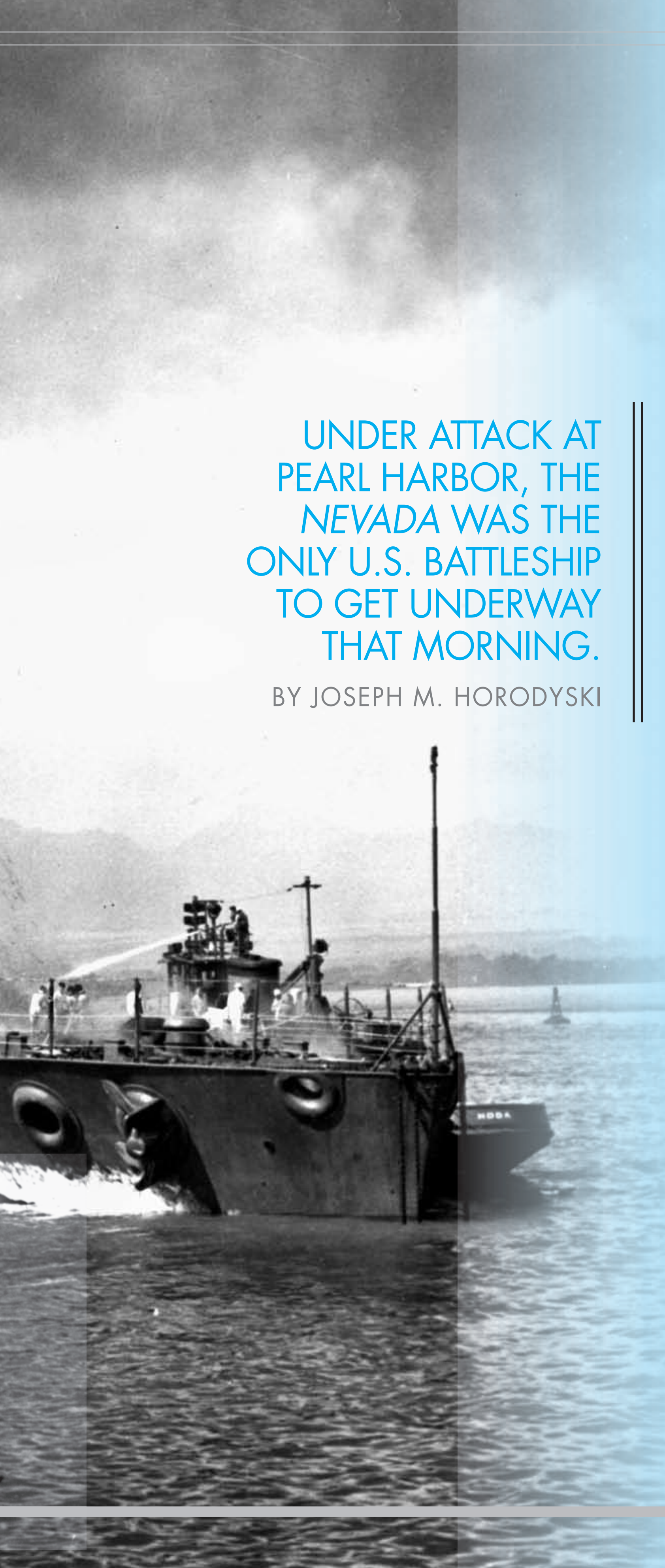
Down by the bow after being hit repeatedly by Japanese bombs and torpedoes during the attack on Pearl Harbor, the USS *Nevada* is assisted by the harbor tug *Hoga*, standing off the port bow to fight fires that continue to rage aboard the stricken battleship. The *Nevada* was the only capital ship of the U.S. Navy to get underway on December 7, 1941.

Nevada's RUN TO THE SEA



UNDER ATTACK AT PEARL HARBOR, THE *NEVADA* WAS THE ONLY U.S. BATTLESHIP TO GET UNDERWAY THAT MORNING.

BY JOSEPH M. HORODYSKI

DURING THE DARK DAYS of December 1941, when it seemed as if American and British bases were falling like dominoes across the Pacific, two incidents during the Japanese attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor gave American morale a much needed boost.

One of these occurred when Army Air Corps lieutenants George Welch and Ken Taylor managed to get airborne in their two Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters from their base at Haleiwa Field and between them downed five enemy aircraft that Sunday morning, ending their attacks only when their ammunition and fuel were exhausted. But their exploits were not fully known until after the attack was over, they had been debriefed and their claims verified, and their story appeared in newspapers to a country hungry for positive war news. They achieved their exploits in the open skies over Hawaii, mostly unseen by those on the ground below.

The second incident was more widely witnessed. The World War I-vintage battleship USS *Nevada* was the only capital ship that day that managed to get underway during the attack and attempt an escape from the confining waters of Pearl Harbor to the open sea; battered and heavily damaged, her captain chose to beach her on a nearby spit of land so she could be repaired and readied to fight another day. Though her run for the sea lasted barely 30 minutes, it was later claimed (rightfully or not) to have been witnessed, at least in part, by just about every serviceman present that Sunday at Pearl Harbor from numerous vantage points. It was photographed while it was happening and gave an immediate lift to the spirits of those resisting the Japanese onslaught. Because of the vast number of witnesses, the story of her dash to the sea began to spread, either by word of mouth or telephone, almost immediately after the attack. Yet her name is little known today by the general public, and the story of how she became the only ship that day to nearly escape the Japanese attack is even less known.

The USS *Nevada* was launched on July 11, 1914. As the lead ship of her class she boasted what were then three new features that later became standard among U.S. ships: three turrets with three guns each; oil fuel rather than coal; and heavy armor plating to protect her vital machinery spaces rather than lighter armor spread over the entire ship. In the parlance of the day she was known as a "super dreadnought."

At 583 feet long, she boasted 14-inch guns as main weaponry, achieved a speed of 20 knots, held a crew of 1,500 men, and displaced some 30,000 tons. Her World War I career was brief, mostly consisting of Atlantic convoy duty. After the war she served in the Atlantic Fleet until 1930, representing the United States at the Peruvian Centennial Exposition in July 1921.

In 1930, she was modernized with the replacement of her "basket" masts for tripod masts, a reduction in her secondary 5-inch armament, a new superstructure, new steam turbines, two new catapults for her three spotter aircraft, and eight new 5-inch antiaircraft guns. At the conclusion of this overhaul, she joined the Pacific Fleet where she remained for the next 11 years.

On December 7, 1941, the *Nevada* and her sister ships were spending their first weekend in port in more than five months. Vice Admiral William Halsey had been given the task of reinforcing Wake Island's Marine detachment with additional fighter aircraft. Halsey refused to take the slower battleships with him to try and keep up with his 30-knot fleet of aircraft carriers, and so they were resting at berth that Sunday morning instead of being out on patrol. *Nevada*'s position was on Battleship Row alongside Ford Island in the center of the harbor, immediately behind the USS *Arizona,* soon

All photos: Naval History & Heritage Command

to become famous in her own right. But, unlike other battleships moored nearby that day *Nevada* was not paired next to an adjacent battleship and so was free to maneuver when the attack began.

At 0600 hours Lieutenant Lawrence Ruff, *Nevada*'s senior communications officer, rose from his bunk. He had opted to turn in early following the ship's movie the previous evening. He had volunteered to escort the ship's chaplain, Father Drinnan, in a motor launch over to the hospital ship USS *Solace,* where Father Drinnan was scheduled to hear confessions and perform Sunday morning services. Upon his transfer to the *Nevada,* Lieutenant Ruff had had an opportunity to bring his wife and family over to live the idyllic lifestyle of the Hawaiian Islands, but both had decided that in the rising tensions of the day it was a potentially dangerous location to bring a family. They were soon to have their fears confirmed. Just before 0700 the *Nevada*'s launch pulled alongside the *Solace,* and Ruff enjoyed coffee and a light breakfast in the officer's lounge while Father Drinnan conducted the morning's services.

At 0600 the assistant quartermaster of the watch roused Ensign Joseph K. Taussig Jr., who had the forenoon watch. Taussig, 21, was the son of a rear admiral who had for the last two years publicly warned of the possibility of a Japanese attack in the Pacific, and so was perhaps better informed of the international situation than his fellow sailors of the same age. Taussig, a junior officer assigned to *Nevada*'s antiaircraft section, was doubtful of any battleship's ability to defend itself against attack from the air. He felt that though they were highly trained to man the guns, load, and fire "at a rate of speed which people not involved would not believe possible," the quality of the overall marksmanship was such that "I can testify with vim, vigor and conviction that we couldn't hit the broad side of a barn except at point-blank range."

Being officer of the deck, especially on a quiet Sunday spent in port, was usually a boring affair, with little happening to break up the monotony. Taussig spent the first part of his watch trying to think of something to do. It occurred to him that only one boiler had been carrying the burden of powering the ship during the entire four days the *Nevada* had been in port. He therefore ordered another one lit. This seeming innocent act would have enormous consequences later that morning.

The *Nevada*'s captain, Francis W. Scanland, and her executive officer had both gone ashore that morning, leaving the ship in the care of its junior-grade officers. Scanland was visiting his wife in nearby Honolulu and had promised to spend the day with her. After all, it was expected to be a leisurely tropical Sunday; some of the crew was organizing a tennis tournament against sailors from some of the nearby battleships, while others were looking forward to a swim at nearby Aiea Beach. The *Nevada,* the northernmost ship in Battleship Row, was also the oldest in harbor that day but stuck to a very rigid tradition of presenting colors every morning while in port at precisely 0800, to the accompaniment of the "Star Spangled Banner" as performed by the ship's band.

Ensign Taussig, as officer of the deck, was also in charge of the morning's proceedings. But this was the first time Taussig had ever stood watch for the morning colors, and he was uncertain as to what size flag to fly. He quietly sent a sailor over to the *Arizona* at 0750 to find out which size flag they were flying. While everyone waited in the morning sun, some of the bandsmen later recalled spotting specks of aircraft in the sky far to the southwest. Band leader Oden MacMillan later recalled seeing planes diving on the far side of Ford Island and a lot of dirt and sand thrown upward, but thought it was all part of some elaborately staged drill. The sailor soon returned with the welcome news that they had the correct flag after all. The ceremonial group, now assembled at the ship's fantail in splendid dress whites, was in the process of running the colors up on the flagstaff when the first Japanese planes began diving on Battleship Row.

ABOVE: Chief Boatswain Edwin Hill (left) and Lieutenant Donald Kirby were two of the heroic U.S. Navy personnel that fought the Japanese and struggled to get the *Nevada* underway during the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. BELOW: The main 14-inch guns of the *Nevada* and its array of secondary 5-inch turrets are clearly visible in this photograph taken from the deck of a vessel forward. The *Nevada* had undergone an extensive overhaul and modernization effort in 1930.

According to acclaimed author Gordon Prange, the first bomb dropped nearby was actually aimed at the *Arizona,* not the *Nevada.* As the first reports of an attack began filtering up the chain of command, Mrs. John Earle, a neighbor of Admiral Husband Kimmel, the naval commander at Pearl Harbor, recalled watching the opening moments of the attack on her front lawn overlooking the harbor along with Admiral Kimmel, who had stepped outside to see for himself. She described him as staring "in utter disbelief and completely stunned."

"I knew right away that something terrible was going on," Kimmel later recalled. "This was not a casual raid by just a few stray planes. The sky was full of the enemy."

"Gazing toward Battleship Row, they saw the *Arizona* lift out of the water, then sink back down—way down. Neither uttered a word; the scene was beyond speech," wrote Prange. "The strike that had transfixed both Admiral Kimmel and Mrs. Earle may have come from the torpedo plane which, having dropped its missile aimed at the *Arizona,* angled upward over the *Nevada*'s stern at the exact moment the battleship's 23-man band struck up the national anthem and the Marine color guard began to raise the flag. The Japanese rear gunner loosed a burst of machine-gun fire; by some freak of chance he missed a solid target of some 25 or 30 men, but ripped the flag as it slid along the pole. The bandsmen kept right on playing." It had never occurred to band leader Oden MacMillan that once he started playing the "Star Spangled Banner" he could possibly stop. Another strafing run kicked up bits of the wooden deck nearby; the entire band paused and then started again in unison as if they had practiced it that way. Not one man broke formation and ran. "Not until they finished the last note did they break for cover and sped to their battle stations."

Noted historian Walter Lord points out that the *Nevada* bandsmen calmly put their instruments away before reporting to their battle stations, "except one man who took along his cornet and excitedly threw it into a shell hoist along with some shells for the anti-aircraft guns above."

National Archives

This famous Japanese photo of Battleship Row under attack reveals the USS *Nevada* at lower left while the white wakes of Japanese torpedoes streak toward the battleships *West Virginia* and *Oklahoma,* moored outboard of *Tennessee* and *Maryland,* respectively. The battleship *Arizona* lies moored just forward of the *Nevada* with the repair ship *Vestal* outboard. *West Virginia* has already taken torpedo hits and is hemorrhaging oil and beginning to list. Note the rings on the water's surface generated by the concussions.

Shortly after 0802, the *Nevada* went to battle stations and swung into action under the command of her senior officer present, Lt. Cmdr. Francis J. Thomas, with Ensign Taussig as acting air defense officer. Taussig pulled the alarm bell for general quarters. As the ship's bugler began to blow the call, Taussig took the bugle and threw it overboard; instead he shouted over the ship's public address system, "All hands to general quarters, this is no drill!" In spite of Taussig's earlier doubts as to the ability of the *Nevada*'s antiaircraft gunners, the ship's log states that at this point : "Machine guns opened fire on torpedo planes approaching on port beam. Members of crew state one enemy plane brought down by *Nevada* machine gun fire at 100 yards on port quarter." This may well have been the first Japanese plane shot down that day. The *Nevada*'s gunners had quickly found the range.

Lieutenant Lawrence Ruff, still awaiting Mass aboard the *Solace,* heard the first bombs begin to explode nearby. He raced to the starboard side of the officer's lounge and witnessed the *Arizona* erupting in a huge cloud of smoke and flame. The blast from the *Arizona*'s magazines blew gunner Carey Garnett and dozens of other men off the *Nevada*'s decks and into the water. As he watched, horrified, a Japanese plane flashed by, its red meatballs clearly visible on its wings. Ruff then knew exactly what was going on.

Father Drinnan immediately dismissed his flock; he and Ruff caught the launch to return to the *Nevada*. From their little boat afloat in the middle of the harbor they had an excellent vantage point from which to witness the attack. Ruff saw tracers arcing up toward the Japanese planes from all directions and found himself wondering, "What the hell is keeping those Jap planes up there?" He soon realized that the shells were exploding too far below the planes to do much damage; their fuses had all been set incorrectly in the haste to open fire. Alone and undefended in the middle of the attack, the *Nevada*'s launch was strafed only once, bracketed in the water by a passing fighter's machine guns before they reached the relative safety of their ship. Ruff ordered the helmsman to swing the launch under the *Nevada*'s stern as protection from further Japanese attack. As soon as both men climbed aboard the *Nevada,* the launch returned to the *Arizona* to assist in removing the wounded.

Ruff served as *Nevada*'s communication officer. As soon as he boarded the ship he discovered that most of the *Nevada*'s senior officers were absent and that those present would have to assume duties for which they had not been trained. Ruff made his way to his station in the *Nevada*'s conning tower, where he checked on those personnel present and tested the communication circuits. Lt. Cmdr. Thomas was the most senior officer present. However, Thomas was several decks below at his duty station, close to an interior ladder that ran through a tube 80 feet up the height of the ship. As soon as they were able to communicate, they quickly agreed that Thomas should remain in charge of the ship below decks while Ruff took care of topside duties.

Ensign Charles Merdinger was just getting dressed when the first bombs fell. As he pulled on his clothes, he heard someone outside his stateroom yell, "It's the real thing! It's the Japs!" In his haste to complete dressing he remembered putting his foot completely through his sock.

A group of planes from the Japanese carrier *Soryu* soon began a bombing run on Battleship Row, scoring hits on both the *Tennessee* and *West Virginia*. A second group of five aircraft followed shortly, dropping five near misses in perfect echelon alongside the *Nevada*. Japanese

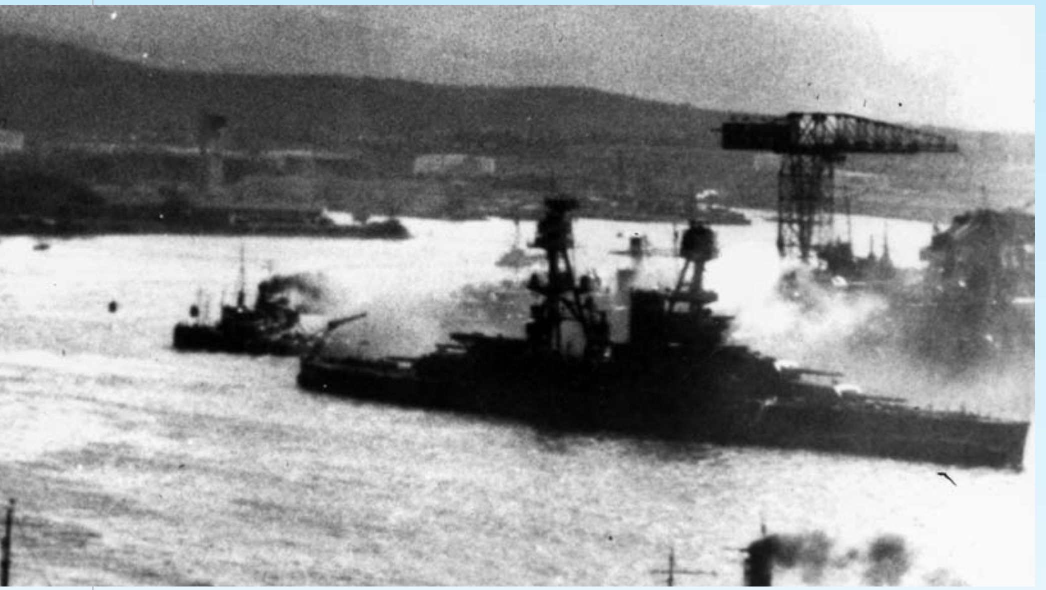
strike commander Mitsuo Fuchida still had a group of high-level bombers orbiting in a great circle over Honolulu. He now brought them in, ordering them to make another run over Battleship Row. This time heavy smoke obscured the *Nevada,* Fuchida's original target of choice, so the bombers shifted their attention to a ship alongside the inner row of battleships that appeared not to have been hit yet, the *Maryland,* scoring several hits in the process.

Below decks Warrant Machinist Donald Kirby Ross had just completed shaving when the attack began. It was the day before his 31st birthday. As a youngster he had spent his life moving among numerous foster homes. The Navy had given him a home, and he felt as if he had finally found his place in the world. At the first sounds of battle, Ross reported to his duty station at the forward dynamo room, which contained the controls for the large electrical generators that powered the battleship, fed power to the guns above, and illuminated the darkened passageways below. In an emergency, he reasoned, the *Nevada* might need power to get underway.

The difficulty in raising steam and getting underway that all capital ships of the day suffered from was also one of the chief causes of their destruction that December 7. It usually took a minimum of two hours to fire the huge boilers that powered a battleship, raise steam, and began turning the large screws that moved the fighting ships through the water. Such large ships then usually required the assistance of anywhere from two to four tugs to maneuver through the confines of a landlocked harbor, and the services of a civilian harbor pilot, an experienced and skilled captain, and a navigator.

Most battleships at port, sitting idle, usually kept no more than one of their four boilers lit, usually to power the generators that provided electricity needed for life aboard ship. Thanks to Ensign Taussig's foresight, two of the *Nevada*'s boilers were now fired up, the second having been online for nearly an hour. Two were normally insufficient to raise enough steam to move a ship out of harm's way, but on that Sunday morning that was enough to make the difference between life and death. While the nearby *Arizona* mushroomed in a fireball from a direct hit to her magazines and bombs rained down across Battleship Row, Chief Boatswain's Mate Edwin Hill led a hastily gathered crew to the wharf where *Nevada* was tethered. Below, thanks to Donald Ross's efforts in the forward dynamo room, the *Nevada* was quickly coming to life.

Japanese Zero fighters swooped down out of the bright morning skies to continually strafe the *Nevada*'s decks. Oblivious to the danger, Hill managed to reach the pier and cast off the mooring lines. Just as the first attack wave ebbed, the big vessel slowly began to move away from the dock. Hill jumped from the pier and swam to the slowly moving battleship to help direct its escape. Time was quickly running out; an ocean of burning oil from the *Arizona* was slowly moving toward the *Nevada*'s bow, threatening to engulf her in flames.



"ISN'T THIS A HELL OF A THING," he said to Owens. "The man in charge lying flat on his back while everyone else is doing something." Taussig survived his wounds, losing his leg in the process, but spent the rest of the war recovering in various hospitals.

Against all odds, Ruff began moving *Nevada* out of the harbor aided by excellent cooperation from the two engine rooms below and from helmsman Chief Quartermaster Robert Sedberry at the wheel. From his post high up in *Nevada*'s conning tower, Ruff selected two landmarks on Ford Island to help him navigate the 30,000-ton ship out into the main channel. He suddenly heard someone demanding to be let in and discovered that Francis Thomas had climbed the 80-foot ladder from below. Ruff and his men removed the floor gratings, opened the hatch, helped Thomas up, and briefed him on what Ruff was trying to do. Thomas quickly agreed with Ruff's plan of action, and at 0840 the *Nevada* was officially underway with Thomas at the conn and Ruff acting as navigator in the conning tower.

By this time the starboard antiaircraft conveyor was now out of action, so men began passing ammunition to the battery by hand. As the *Nevada* crept past the smoldering wreck of the *Arizona,* intense heat from the fires forced some men to turn their backs and hug shells with their bodies to keep them from exploding. Someone threw a line to three *Arizona* survivors in the nearby water; they were pulled aboard and helped man one of the *Nevada*'s guns. Seeing the *Arizona* totally destroyed came as a "terrible shock" to Ruff, and in spite of the ongoing attack he could not help but speculate about the fate of many of his Naval Academy classmates and friends aboard her. They passed so close to the *Arizona,* Thomas felt he could have lit a cigarette from the blazing wreck.

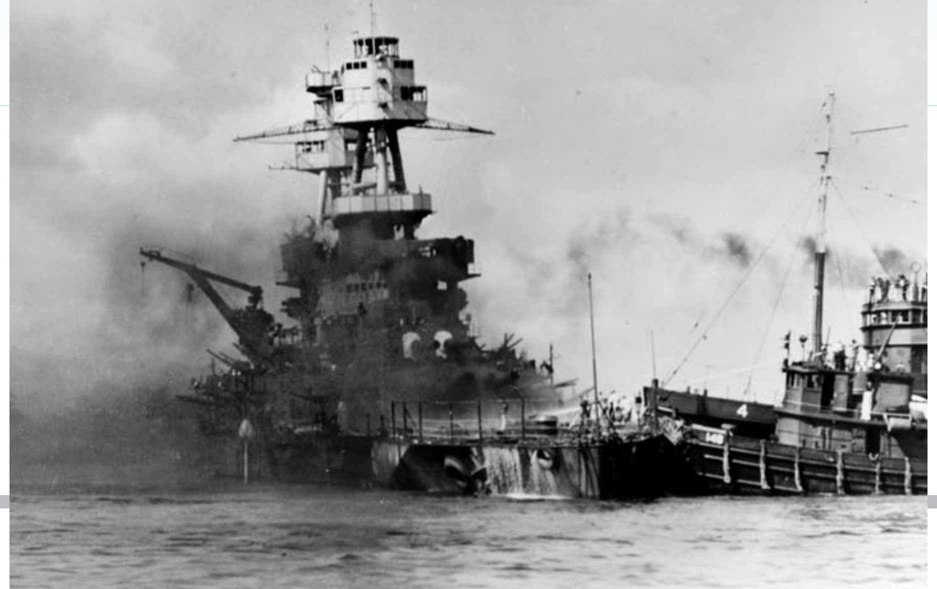
While Fuchida's second wave began its assault on the helpless ships below, incredibly, under the guidance of junior grade officers and without the assistance from a single harbor tug, the old dreadnought backed out of its berth, away from the blazing hulk of the *Arizona*, and began steaming away from Ford Island, heading toward the open sea just outside the harbor. The *Nevada* had taken less than 45 minutes to get underway, a procedure that would normally have taken two full hours. It was a totally unexpected event, and men on all sides began cheering and waving their caps as the *Nevada* slowly built up speed, knot after agonizing knot, and passed the carnage that was being inflicted on Battleship Row, its battered stars and stripes proudly fluttering from its flagstaff.

A few of the smaller ships, such as tugs and ferries, blew their horns beneath the din of battle to speed the *Nevada* on its way. Baker First Class Emil Johnson aboard the minesweeper *Tern* saw *Nevada* slipping down the main channel and remembered thinking, "Well, there's one that's going to get away." Many Pearl Harbor survivors later recalled the thrilling sight as an event that gave them not only pride but a renewed determination to resist the Japanese with whatever it took.

The *Nevada*'s effect on those watching could not be underestimated; it was immediate and electric. Photographer J.W. Burton watched from the Ford Island shore, snapping a series of historic photographs. Lt. Cmdr. Henry Wray stood transfixed, watching from 1010 dock. Quartermaster William Miller stood watching awestruck from the deck of the stores issue ship Castor in the Navy's sub base. To most men she was the finest thing they saw that day. Through the thick, black smoke Seaman Thomas Malmin caught sight of the flag on her fantail and recalled that the "Star Spangled Banner" had been composed under similar conditions.

Ten minutes before getting underway, the *Nevada* took her first torpedo hit near frame 40. "The plane came in very close, about midway down the channel, dropped its torpedo and turned right," recalled Ensign John L. Landreth, stationed in the antiaircraft directory. The torpedo jarred loose the director's synchronizer from the range finder, forcing it to temporarily switch to local manual control. Landreth did not witness the attacker being shot down but understood it had been hit and riddled by one of *Nevada* 's machine gunners, crashing just astern of the ship. This may have been a Mitsubishi B5N Kate from the Japanese carrier *Kaga,* the *Nevada* 's second reported kill of the morning. The pilot struggled to get clear and floated face up past the ship until he was dispatched by a well-aimed shot.

ABOVE: Smoke billows from the stern of the *Nevada* as the battleship gamely puts up a fight against marauding Japanese aircraft and heads down the channel at Pearl Harbor toward the open sea. BELOW: *Nevada* lies beached at Waipio Point after making its run for the open sea. The harbor tug *Hoga* and the minesweeper *Avocet* have come close to render assistance. OPPOSITE: The *Nevada* steams down the channel past the U.S. Navy Yard's 1010 dock at Pearl Harbor, and the battleship has already sustained damage from the attack.



Marine Private Payton McDaniel vividly recalled seeing the torpedo's silver streak heading toward the port bow, just below the two main turrets. From pictures in magazines of other torpedoed ships he fully expected the *Nevada* to erupt in flames and break in two. He was more than a little surprised when all he felt was a slight shudder followed by a brief list to port.

Then a bomb dropped from a Japanese Aichi Val dive bomber struck near the starboard antiaircraft director. Joe Taussig was at his station there, standing in the doorway, when it hit. He was thrown against the solid steel deck by the explosion and was amazed to find his left leg tucked under his arm. "That's a hell of a place for a foot to be," he thought, then was surprised to hear Bostwain's Mate Allen Owens, standing next to him, say the exact same thing. Either a bullet fragment or a piece of shrapnel had passed through his thigh and struck the ballistics computer in front of him. Dazed from shock, Taussig felt no pain; despite repeated attempts to remove him to a first aid casualty station, Taussig refused to leave and insisted on continuing his command of the antiaircraft station until the end of the attack.

"Isn't this a hell of a thing," he said to Owens. "The man in charge lying flat on his back while everyone else is doing something." Taussig survived his wounds, losing his leg in the process, but spent the rest of the war recovering in various hospitals. For him, at least, his contribution to World War II was over.

In the plotting room five decks down, Ensign Medringer felt like this was all part of a drill he had been though many times before. He realized things were different when he learned through the onboard phone circuits that his roommate Joe Taussig had been hit.

Down in the forward dynamo room, Chief Machinist Donald Ross finally was forced to order his men to leave when smoke, 140-degree heat, and escaping steam overwhelmed his position. He continued to perform their duties on his own a short while longer until he became virtually blind and fell unconscious, ensuring that the *Nevada* had the power necessary to enable her to continue the fight.

Nevada gradually passed *West Virginia,* which was slowly settling in the mud. Next came *Oklahoma,* now capsized, trapping

scores of men within. Farther away came the flagship *California,* fully afire and settling on an even keel. *Nevada* cleared Battleship Row shortly before 0900. The slowly moving battleship now attracted nearly every Japanese bomber over Pearl Harbor; she became too good a target to pass up. *Nevada* was hit repeatedly and shaken by near misses, opening her forecastle deck, adding more leaks in her hull, and starting numerous gasoline fires forward and around her superstructure.

Just ahead lay a harbor dredge, the *Turbine*, still attached to the mainland by its pipeline. Easing between 1010 dock and the floating dredge would have been a real challenge on a normal day. Chief Sedberry recalled doing some "real twisting and turning" to maneuver around the dredge and avoid Japanese attacks at the same time. The Navy always forced Captain August Persson of the *Turbine* to unhook the pipeline every time a battleship entered or left port, claiming there was not enough room to pass. Persson had always claimed they could do it if they wanted. Now he had seen it with his own eyes. Japanese aircraft, currently diving on the drydocked *Pennsylvania,* now shifted over to the *Nevada*; if they could sink her in the channel they could bottle up the harbor for months.

Every available Japanese plane now converged on the *Nevada*. She was soon wreathed in smoke from her own guns, from numerous bomb hits, and from fires that raged out of control on her forward decks. One bomb penetrated and exploded in *Nevada*'s stack, sending heat and acrid smoke throughout the ship's ventilation system. Sometimes she disappeared entirely from view when near misses threw huge columns of water into the air. Ensign Victor Delano, on the *West Virginia*'s bridge, witnessed a tremendous explosion from somewhere within the ship that threw flames and debris into the air above her masts. The whole ship seemed to rise up and shake violently in the water.

Bosun's Mate Howard C. French was in Ford Island's administration building where he had a perfect view of the action. He watched anxiously as "one dive bomber after another peeled off and went after the *Nevada*. She hesitated and shuddered," he recalled, "and I thought she was a goner, but she made it down channel." Admiral Patrick Bellinger happened to be on the telephone to General Frederick Martin when the *Nevada* drew opposite the administration building. Like French, Bellinger also thought the battleship was "a goner" and broke into the conversation to exclaim, "Just a minute! I think there is going to be a hell of an explosion here!"

Ensign Landreth later estimated that 10 or 15 bombs missed the *Nevada* before the Japanese found the range. Then several bombs struck the forecastle in quick succession and exploded below decks, one or two near the crew's galley, starting numerous fires both fore and amidships. "The bombs jolted all Hell out of the ship," Ruff recalled. "I could see the Japanese bombs—big black things—falling and exploding all around us." Ruff's legs were black and blue for days afterward from being knocked about by the explosions.

Shrapnel and bomb fragments decimated those on deck; one gun crew after another was cut down at its post, but still *Nevada* continued to put up a murderous barrage. The trio of officers in command of the ship— Ruff, Thomas, and Sedberry—were convinced that the *Nevada* could make it to the open ocean. But a signal from Vice Admiral William S. Pye, the battle force commander, ordered the *Nevada* not to try for the outer channel, fearing the threat of Japanese submarines lurking beyond.

Thomas and Ruff reluctantly decided to nose *Nevada* into the mud off Hospital Point to avoid her being sunk in the channel. *Nevada* was by now a battered ship. Shortly after 0900 the outgoing current caught the *Nevada*, wrenching control from her navigators and swinging her completely around. Chief Boatswain's Mate Edwin Hill rushed forward to drop the anchor and keep *Nevada* from being crushed against the rocks. Three Japanese bombs landed near the bow, and all trace of Hill vanished in the explosion.

Fires raged around the conning tower, threatening to cut the men off from the rest of the ship. Ruff relayed a plan to a sailor on the dangerously exposed fantail that he would wave a hat as a signal for the sailor to drop the stern anchor. Leaving the main channel between buoy No. 24 and floating drydock YFD-2, Ruff ordered the engines backed full, ran to the bridge wing, and gave the signal. With a clatter and a cloud of rust, the stern anchor plunged into the water and took hold on the bottom. It was 0910 hours on December 7, 1941. The *Nevada* was at rest at Hospital Point on an even keel.

Having accomplished the near impossible, Thomas now turned his attention to damage control. Ruff left the conning tower and made

ABOVE: The cleanup and salvage operations at Pearl Harbor stretched for months after the Japanese attack. In this February 1942 photo, the *Nevada* is readied for dry dock at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. BELOW: Repaired and modernized, the USS *Nevada* thunders off the coast of Iwo Jima in February 1945 in support of U.S. Marine landings on the island. OPPOSITE: The 14-inch main batteries of the *Nevada* bombard German strongpoints on the coast of Normandy, France, on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The battleship also participated in actions in the Aleutians and off Okinawa.

his way aft. There he briefed the skipper, Captain Francis Scanland, when he finally came aboard at 0915. Within five minutes two tugs were moored alongside, and all men who were not manning the guns keeping the Japanese at bay busied themselves fighting the numerous fires raging aboard. Casualties began to be transferred to the hospital ship *Solace* or the nearby naval hospital.

The beaching of the *Nevada* at Hospital Point imposed an additional burden on the already overloaded hospital; a number of *Nevada* 's men simply dived off her and swam toward the hospital. Between wounds received in combat and the fires spreading throughout the harbor, many of these men could not walk the short distance to the hospital and collapsed; they were among the worst burn cases treated that day.

Ensign Landreth recalled looking around the now beached *Nevada*. "We couldn't get communication with the guns, and everything was apparently abandoned on the boat deck. We had great casualties. The signal bridge was ablaze and had gone up the navbridge and came out on top of our own platform. This fire continued for quite some time and practically destroyed most of the structure up there."

Despite her severe damage, the *Nevada* crew was never ordered to "Abandon Ship." Most officers who had missed her sortie were now coming aboard and organizing firefighting parties despite the handicap of having no ready water on the boat deck. Most of the firefighting came from two tugs while the *Nevada* 's water mains were either spliced or repaired. "We were trying to get all the ammunition out of the ready boxes to keep them from exploding," Landreth explained. "We got all the ammunition out of the port side, but on the starboard side one ready box did explode." By this time other officers had come aboard and taken charge of Landreth's antiaircraft battery.

Captain Scanland sent Ruff to Admiral Kimmel's headquarters to report on the *Nevada*'s condition. Kimmel remained calm but was obviously "in a state of shock," plying Ruff with questions as to when the battleship would be ready for sea again. But information arrived that the *Nevada* was in a far worse state than originally thought.

At least one torpedo and six bombs had hit *Nevada*, mostly forward, with additional damage from as many as a dozen near misses. In his report Scanland added, "It is possible as many as ten bomb hits were received, as certain damaged areas were of sufficient size to indicate that they were struck by more than one bomb." Everything below decks was wrecked and filled with seawater. Engineering was flooded, salting the boilers and steam piping.

And now another problem loomed. With no bow anchors to hold her fast, *Nevada* might still slide backward and block the South Channel. At 1035, with the damage control situation stabilized, Captain Scanland prepared to move *Nevada* to a safer location well clear of the shipping lanes. The two tugs pushed her stern sideways until her bow slid free, then escorted her across the main channel to Waipio Point, where she grounded herself, stern first, at 1045. Her journey had finally come to an end. There she remained until she was refloated for repairs more than two months later.

The *Nevada* 's fires were reported under control by 1530, and 20 minutes later efforts to remove her dead, totaling two officers and 60 men, and more than 109 wounded out of a complement of 1,500 (two more men were to lose their lives during salvage operations) began. Fires broke out again around 1830 and were not finally extinguished until 2300. Meanwhile, Ruff had found shelter for *Nevada* 's uninjured survivors in a nearby open-air theater.

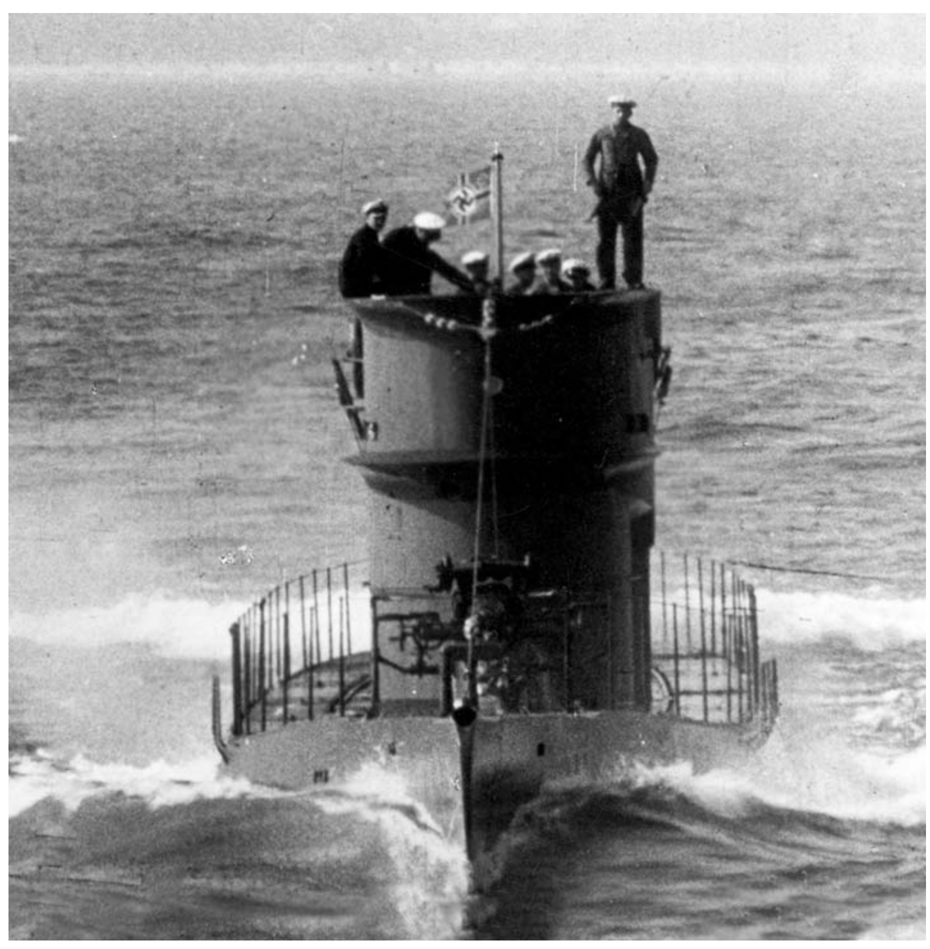
Thomas remained aboard, overseeing damage control. Captain Scanland's after-action report highly praised Thomas, a naval reservist, not only for his skillful handling of the ship during the attack but also for his determined repair efforts. A full two days after the attack Thomas was still on duty, on the verge of collapse from almost continuous work with no sleep. In the months following the attack, both Donald Ross and Edwin Hill would receive the Medal of Honor for their actions that day; Hill's was presented posthumously to his family.

As darkness fell over Pearl Harbor, rumors began to spread of Japanese landings at various points on Oahu. Almost everyone was certain the Japanese would return with the morning's light. The men on *Nevada* were told to be doubly alert for any movement among the sugar cane that ran down to the shore near where the ship lay beached. However, no one remembered to tell the trigger-happy sailors that the ship's own Marine detachment was patrolling the same area. As Private Payton McDaniel moved through the cane, a man aboard ship shouted that he saw movement. A spotlight was switched on, and Payton froze, hoping that it would not find him. Other Marines quickly understood the situation and passed the word not to open fire. But it was a terrifying moment, for McDaniel knew that this was a night when the men were inclined to shoot first and ask questions later.

Ruff admitted, "Actually I was more afraid of our jittery and trigger-happy American gunners that first night than I was of the Japanese during the morning attack." Unlike most of his shipmates, Ruff did not believe that the Japanese would return. After surveying the scene of destruction around him, he could see no reason why they should come back.

By the day after the Pearl Harbor attack the *Nevada* had settled to the bottom, still upright and in fairly shallow water, making later salvage and repair efforts that much easier. The *Nevada* was finally refloated on February 12, 1942, and underwent temporary repairs at Pearl Harbor that allowed her to steam to the Puget Sound Navy Yard in Washington State

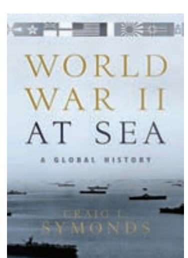
Continued on page 86



War at Sea

U-boat captain Gunther Prien's sinking of the HMS *Royal Oak* is just one of the key naval missions of World War II.

GUNTHER PRIEN GREW UP AT SEA, JOINING THE MERCHANT SERVICE AS A CABIN boy at 15. In October 1939, with World War II just a month old, the 31-year-old Prien stood in the conning tower of *U-47,* a German U-boat plying the North Sea toward the United Kingdom. Looking through his binoculars, he finally spotted a much-needed landmark: the Orkney Islands. Sheltered within them was Scapa Flow, the British Royal Navy's sprawling anchorage. Captain Prien told none of the crew of the submarine's mission. Now his first officer, Engelbert Endrass, dared to ask if they were going to move into the islands. Prien told him, "We are going into Scapa Flow."



After dark Prien called his crew together and told them of their mission. They assumed their stations, and *U-47* slowly slipped under the waves, her electric motors humming as the diesel engines shut down. They descended to the bottom and sat there, awaiting their chance the next evening. The crew slept through most of the next day, waking at 4 PM to eat a meal of veal cutlets and green cabbage. At 7 PM, *U-47* rose to periscope depth, and Prien checked the area through the lens, seeing nothing. He ordered the sub to surface, and he climbed to the conning tower with the first officer. They heard nothing, saw nothing, but it was brighter than expected. They realized the light was from the aurora borealis, the northern lights. Despite the risk, Prien went ahead.

Slowly the submarine made its way between the coastline and the blockships, hulks sunk in shallow water to block the approaches. *U-47* was briefly entangled in one of the blockship anchor chains. Minutes later it scraped bottom but did not get stuck. A car moving along the coastal road caught the conning tower in its headlights, but it moved on. Suddenly the channel opened, and they were within Scapa Flow. The lower part of the bay held several tankers that were normally a juicy target for a submarine. Prien ignored them; he had bigger ideas.

Moving northward, Prien spied a large, looming silhouette. It was a battleship, the HMS *Royal Oak*. She was an older ship, left over from World War I, but still powerful with eight 15-inch guns and a displacement of 30,000 tons. A thousand sailors called her home. The ship was only 4,000 yards away. Prien ordered a spread of four torpedoes readied, then listened as water flooded the tubes. When all was ready, the submarine captain gave the order to fire. The first torpedo launched, followed by the second and third at intervals of two seconds. The last torpedo misfired. It took three and a half minutes for the weapons to reach their target. Two missed completely, and the third only severed the anchor cable. The crew of the British ship noticed the explosion but did not know what it was. They searched for signs of an internal explosion but did not go to general quarters. Prien turned the sub around and fired his aft tube, but that shot missed as well. Undiscovered and determined to achieve success, he ordered the tubes reloaded and tried again an hour later.

This time, all three torpedoes struck with massive explosions. Within minutes, *Royal Oak* was sinking, rolling onto her side, her gun turrets falling off. More than 800 men died that night. Prien, elated at his success, turned his boat for home, threading it through the channel with a ship giving chase. *U-47* reached open sea, and despite a depth charge attack by patrol ships, Prien took his crew back to Germany, where they were treated as heroes. It was one of the first significant naval actions of the war, which is covered in great detail in *World War II at Sea: A Global History*

A month after the start of World War II U-boat captain Gunther Prien led *U-47,* above, in a daring attack on Scapa Flow, the Royal Navy's most important home port.

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ARKADY FIEDLER

Excerpted in Smithsonian's *Air & Space Magazine*

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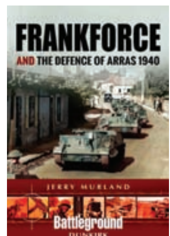
(Craig L. Symonds, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2018, 770 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover).

This book is a sweeping history of the war at sea by one of the world's preeminent naval historians. It shows how the Allies used their growing naval superiority to win the war despite their relative deficiencies at the beginning of the conflict. The author successfully ties together the various efforts across different theaters of war to show how victory was achieved and how millions of people, from national leaders to ordinary seamen, made it possible. Most works concentrate on a particular area, campaign, or battle; this book's strength is in how it shows all of that coming together to achieve a singular goal.

Coffin Corner Boys: One Bomber, Ten Men, and Their Harrowing Escape from Nazi-Occupied France (Carole Engle Avrett with Captain George W. Starks, Regnery History, Washington, D.C., 2018, 266 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $28.99, hardcover)

A "coffin corner" was the most exposed position in an American bomber formation during World War II: the low squadron, low group, number 6 position in the box. On March 16, 1944, the B-17 Flying Fortress flown by Lieutenant George Starks and his nine flight crewmen was in this vulnerable position en route to its target, the city of Augsberg inside Nazi Germany. More than 100 B-17s crossed the English Channel and within minutes were over France with little antiaircraft fire rising against them. Suddenly German Focke Wulf FW-190 fighters appeared, and one raked Starks' bomber, shattering the left wing. The B-17 quickly caught fire, and the engines began shutting down. Rather than wait for the bomber's ordnance to explode in the formation, Starks took his plane out of it and told the crew to bail out. As he headed for the door, he saw a crewman frozen in fear, unable to dive to safety. Starks tackled the man, and they both toppled out the hatch into the cold air and an unknown future.

The author's uncle was a mechanic for the famed Flying Tigers, and he often told her "Ain't no fake stories ever gonna outdo the real ones." In this book she found one of those stories and brought it to vivid life for the reader. It is an engaging story of how the crew endured their ordeal and the miracle of how they all survived the war.



Battleground Europe: Frankforce and the Defence of Arras 1940 (Jerry Murland, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2017, maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $19.95, softcover)

The 1940 Battle of France is commonly seen as going the way of Nazi Germany, but the fledgling Allies had a few small victories to assuage the overall defeat. As the German armies advanced in the area of Arras, France, the British launched an armored counterattack into their flank. This attack went straight into the teeth of General Erwin Rommel and his troops, yet it achieved moderate success, penetrating some six miles into the Nazi positions before the attack lost momentum. Rommel personally intervened to stop the attack, directing his troops from the front, placing guns, and directing fire. The battle ended only at nightfall, when the temporarily successful Allies withdrew to avoid encirclement. Arras was a valiant effort that ultimately proved all too temporary.

This new work is part of the publisher's series of battlefield guidebooks, allowing the reader to explore the ground on which the famous battles of history were fought. The first part of the book is an overview of the battle itself, covering the units, tactics, and soldiers involved. It also analyzes the results of the action and the decisions made. The second part goes over the terrain, noting where significant actions occurred and giving the reader all the best routes to travel and locations to visit to help understand the Battle of Arras.

Strafbattalion: Hitler's Penal Battalions (Walter S. Zapotocnzy Jr. Fonthill Media Limited UK, 2018, 224 pp., photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, $36.95, hardcover)

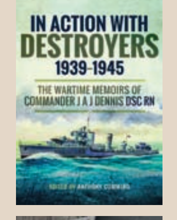
Even the Third Reich had troops who committed crimes, disobeyed orders, or failed in their duties. For them, the Penal Battalion was the result. Beginning in April 1941, soldiers were sent there as a punishment but with a chance at redemption and rehabilitation. These punishments involved being sent on the riskiest missions, including acting as shock troops or laying mines while under enemy fire. If the convicted soldiers performed bravely and honorably, they could be returned to their original units with their honor restored. It also provided the Nazis with addi-

tional manpower, sorely needed as the war continued and the battlefield situation deteriorated. Striving for efficiency, they even made use of their criminals.

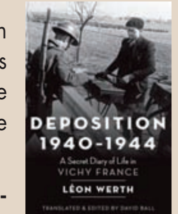
This book shows how Nazi Germany organized its penal battalions, inserted them into their order of battle, and used them to achieve their most dangerous tasks. Their combat history is also covered in detail. The author also shows how the members of these units were a mixed group. Some of them did indeed acquit themselves honorably and achieved redemp-

New and Noteworthy

How Hitler Was Made: Germany and the Rise of the Perfect Nazi (Cory Taylor, Prometheus Books, 2018, $25.00, hardcover) This is a study of how the political and social environment of post-World War I Germany influenced the attitudes and subsequent behavior of Adolf Hitler.



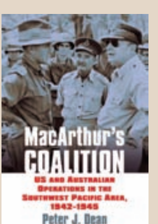
In Action with Destroyers: The Wartime Memoirs of Commander J.A.J. Dennis DSC RN (Edited by Anthony Cumming, Pen and Sword Books, 2018, $34.95, hardcover) This is an eyewitness account of life aboard a destroyer during the war. It is a readable and interesting tale.



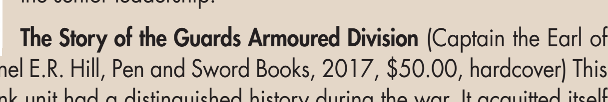
Deposition 1940-1944: A Secret Diary of Life in Vichy France (Leon Werth, Oxford University Press, 2018, $34.95, hardcover) This contemporary diary highlights the brutality and resistance to the Nazis found in the French countryside during the war. It tracks the progress of the war day by day.

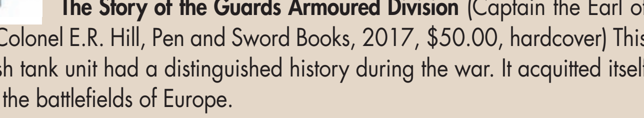
Prisoner of the Samurai: Surviving the Sinking of the U.S.S. Houston and the Death Railway (James Gee, and Rosalie Smith, Casemate Publishers, 2018, $32.95, hardcover) James Gee survived the sinking of his cruiser in 1942 only to become a prisoner of the Japanese. He eventually wound up working railroad construction in Burma.

The Women Who Flew for Hitler (Clare Mulley, St. Martin's Press, 2018, $27.99, Hardcover) This is a biography of Hanna Reitsch and Melitta von Stauffenburg, two women who worked as test pilots for Nazi Germany. Each followed a different path.



MacArthur's Coalition: US and Australian Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, 1942-45 (Peter J. Dean, University Press of Kansas, 2018, $39.95, hardcover) The war in the Southwest Pacific was essentially a coalition struggle for Australia and the United States. This volume delves into the high-level interactions of the senior leadership.





The Story of the Guards Armoured Division (Captain the Earl of Rosse and Colonel E.R. Hill, Pen and Sword Books, 2017, $50.00, hardcover) This famed British tank unit had a distinguished history during the war. It acquitted itself well across the battlefields of Europe.

Jagdgeschwader 1 "Oesau" Aces 1939-45 (Robert Forsyth, Osprey Publishing, 2018, $23.00, softcover) Formed shortly after the war began, this fighter squadron guarded the North Sea coast and fought against the U.S. bomber offensive.

Bomber Command: Battle of Berlin, Failed to Return (Steve Bond et al., Fighting High Publishing, 2017, $39.95, hardcover) Thousands of British airmen never returned from their missions over Berlin. This book tells some of their stories.

Danish Volunteers of the Waffen-SS: Freikorps Danmark 1941-43 (Jens Pank Bjerregaard and Lars Larsen, Hellion Books, 2018, $89.95, hardcover) This well-illustrated volume tells the story of those Danes who chose to fight for the Nazis during World War II.

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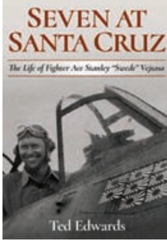
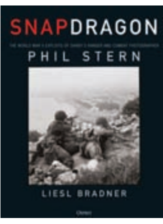
tion, at least within the Wehrmacht. Others retained their criminal nature and eventually either went to prison or were executed. Some committed atrocities against civilians. The book is an interesting look at the intersection of the German military and the Nazi system of justice.



Seven at Santa Cruz: The Life of Fighter Ace Stanley "Swede" Vejtasa (Ted Edwards, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2018, 304 pp., photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover)

"Swede" Vejtasa fit the ideal mold of a naval aviator. During the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, he helped sink the Japanese carrier Shoho while flying an SBD Dauntless dive bomber. The next day, flying the same plane, he shot down three Japanese fighters and earned a Navy Cross for his two days of action. Later, at the Battle of Santa Cruz Swede was flying an F4F Wildcat from the USS Enterprise. He flew against a Japanese attack on his carrier and downed a pair of dive bombers and five torpedo bombers. His squadron leader, Jimmy Flatley, thought Swede saved the ship with his efforts and recommended him for the Medal of Honor, though an admiral later downgraded it to a Distinguished Flying Cross, likely because Swede tended to buck authority. However, there is no doubt he was a skilled pilot and aggressive fighter.

The subject of this new biography has not received the attention he deserves until now. Swede was a man of unusual drive and dedication, and this book reveals his accomplishments in all their amazing wonder. This work shows how one person can have far-reaching effects on the outcome of a battle through supreme effort and will. The book also includes a number of interesting photographs from Swede's personal collection.



Snapdragon: The World War II Exploits of Darby's Ranger and Combat Photographer Phil Stern (Liesl Bradner, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2018, 312 pp., photographs, index, $40.00, hardcover)

Growing up on the streets of New York City, Phil Stern decided at a young age he would never become a salesman. At 12 years old he acquired his first Kodak camera and from then on was fascinated by photography. Before the war he took pictures for magazines, one of which sent him to California in 1941. He was taking photos of a civil defense group on December 7, 1941, when he heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor. He immediately enlisted and was assigned to the Signal Corps. Soon after, he was in England and saw an article in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper : "Men Wanted for Tough Job." He applied and soon joined the ranks of the Rangers. From there he went to North Africa and Italy, taking snapshots all the way. He documented the Rangers' training and deployment into action, showing a human side to the unit and its young fighting men.

After the war Phil Stern became famous for his photographs of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. But few knew of his experiences during the war, which he both fought in and photographed. This interesting new volume collects many of his wartime photos and a few postwar ones into one place. It also includes Phil's personal writings and descriptions of his wartime memories.

Hermann Goering: Blumenkrieg, From Vienna to Prague 1938-39 The Personal Photograph Albums of Hermann Goering Volume 4 (Blaine Taylor, Fonthill Media Limited UK, 2018, 272 pp., photographs, bibliography, $40.00, hardcover)

The photographs show all the pomp and ceremony of the Nazi regime while simultaneously revealing how normal and day to day the functioning of the hierarchy really was much of the time. One image shows Goering among ranks of troops with crowds of adoring Germans paying homage to him, while another shows his wife holding up their infant daughter to a smiling Hitler, who seems very taken by the little girl. Other photos show Goering fawning over his daughter while festooned in all the regalia of his Luftwaffe uniform. Later the reader sees him marching alongside Hitler in Munich during a Nazi commemoration.

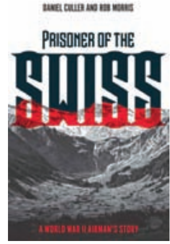
The author has painstakingly assembled the vast photo albums of Hermann Goering, and this is the fourth volume in his series. The book contains some 280 images, each accompanied by lengthy captions that provide full background information for the reader. They reveal an unknown side of the Third Reich that belies their brutality and vile plans for the future. While Goering and his compatriots went about preparing to plunge the world into

war, torment, and death, they also spent time at leisure, posing for snapshots and carrying out publicity. The book is an interesting look at the daily lives of these evil men, revealed as almost eerily normal.

American Tanks and AFVs of World War II (Michael Green, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2018, 376 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $25.00, softcover)

Second Lieutenant Frank Seydel was a tank platoon leader in the 2nd Armored Division. On March 3, 1945, he was at the German town of Bosinghoven when he spotted a pair of enemy tanks about 600 yards away. They were deadly Mark V Panthers, very dangerous to Seydel in his M4 Sherman. His gunner loaded an armor-piercing capped (APC) round and took careful aim. With a roar and blast, the 76mm projectile shot from the gun's muzzle and directly struck one of the Panthers only to bounce off, ricocheting into the sky. Seydel quickly moved his tank forward 100 yards and fired again. This time the APC round struck home and the lieutenant ordered the crew to keep firing; they had to make sure this target was destroyed. They shot 10 more rounds, a mix of APC and high explosive, leaving the Panther a burning wreck.

Armored vehicles are a favorite subject among many military history enthusiasts, and this book is intended for them. It is a handy and thorough reference to American-built tanks, armored cars, half-tracks and self-propelled artillery. Design, development, production, and employment are all covered in detail along with extra information about ammunition and use by Allied nations. The book is also lavishly illustrated with line drawings, period photographs, and images of restored vehicles and museum pieces, many in color.



Prisoner of the Swiss: A World War II Airman's Story (Daniel Culler and Rob Morris, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2018, 144 pp., photographs, bibliography, $27.95, hardcover)

The morning of March 18, 1944, was cold. Dan Culler and a friend rode bicycles through the frigid air to the chow hall of their English airfield to have breakfast. Soon after, they boarded their B-24 bomber and took off for a mission over Germany. That mission ended with a flaming engine and a forced landing in

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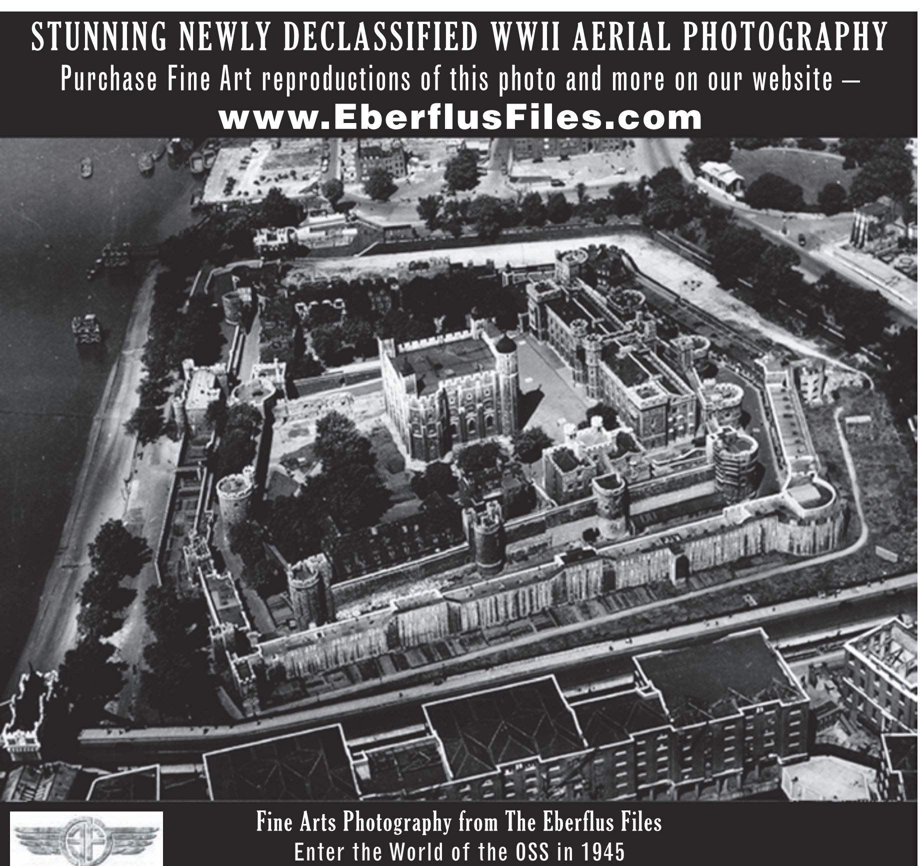

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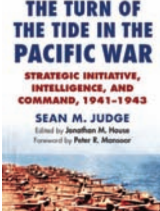
neutral Switzerland. Dan and his comrades were interned, and Dan was sent to Wauwilermoos, a prison camp run by a dedicated Swiss Nazi. There was no access to medical care, hygiene facilities were poor or nonexistent, and the food left the prisoners malnourished and weak. The straw they slept on was infested with lice and vermin. Many of the prisoners were criminals, and Dan's first night in his new barracks was spent as the victim of rape and torture. This brutality went on for months until finally a British officer helped the young Indiana farm boy.

After the war both the American and Swiss governments buried the entire camp and the events that occurred there. Dan was denied any POW benefits or treatment and had to deal with his trauma on his own. Finally, he wrote a book telling his story to the world. This new edition includes added information, providing historical context to accompany the heart-wrenching tale of misery and survival.



The Turn of the Tide in the Pacific War: Strategic Initiative, Intelligence, and Command, 1941-1943 (Sean M. Judge, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 2018, 296 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

By mid-1942, Japan and the Allies were fighting on two fronts in the Pacific Theater: the Solomon Islands, home to Guadalcanal, and in New Guinea. The fighting in both places changed the course of the war over the next eight months, shifting the initiative irrevocably to the Allies. This was the result of a number of factors, including the growing resources of the Allies, strong leadership, and fighting skills that improved with operational experience. Triumph on these two fronts was the first step down the long road to victory.

Rather than a simple history of the events, this book is an analysis of how the Allies wrested the initiative from the Japanese and retained it moving forward. The author identifies five factors that were critical to this success: resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, and simple chance. All of these factors are further affected by political willpower and the choices that are necessary to promote the effort. Each of these facets is analyzed in detail with the author providing effective arguments and examples. It deftly explains how the Allies took control of the fighting from the Japanese and kept them on the defensive for the rest of the war. ☐

USS Nevada

Continued from page 79

for major repairs and modernization, which lasted until October 1942. *Nevada* then sailed for the island of Attu in the Aleutians to provide fire support for the recapture of that island in May 1943. She then steamed for Norfolk for further work, which changed the old battleship's appearance so that she more closely resembled those of the South Dakota class.

Nevada sailed on several convoy runs in the Atlantic until she headed for England in April 1944 to prepare for the Normandy invasion. June 6, 1944, found her off the beaches of France as flagship for the operation, providing close fire support for the troops struggling to gain a beachhead on the coast of Normandy. Her crew was praised for "incredibly accurate" fire in support of troops ashore, sometimes just 600 yards in front of the advancing Allied forces. She then headed to the Mediterranean to assist in the invasion of southern France from August to September 1944. She sailed to New York to have her gun barrels replaced and next saw action against the Japanese off both Iwo Jima and Okinawa in early 1945. She was hit by a kamikaze off Okinawa, which killed a further 11 men and wounded 49, while also knocking out both guns of her No. 3 turret.

She did a brief stint of occupation duty in Tokyo Bay at the conclusion of the war and then returned again to Pearl Harbor. At over 32 years old she was deemed too old to be kept in the postwar fleet and thus ended her life as a target ship for the first Bikini atomic bomb test of July 1946, in which she was painted an "ugly reddish-orange" to help the bombardier's aim.

Tough old *Nevada*, which the Japanese tried so hard to sink, not only survived this nuclear test but a second as well. But by this point she was heavily damaged and found to be extremely radioactive. *Nevada* was towed back to Pearl Harbor one last time where she was formally decommissioned on August 29, 1946. After being thoroughly examined, her final sortie came on July 31, 1948, when the USS *Iowa* and two other warships used *Nevada* as a target for gunnery practice.

Still these three ships failed to send *Nevada* to the bottom; she was given a coup de grace with an aerial torpedo hit amidships, finally sinking about 65 miles southwest of Pearl Harbor. She proved in the end to be a lady as tough as the men who served aboard her.

Author and researcher Joseph M. Horodyski resides in Brook Park, Ohio.

Continued from page 63

reef to the whaleboat.

Once everyone was aboard, the whaleboats headed to the *Barton,* where the ship's crew had dropped a net over the side. Sailors assisted the men onto the deck. Fox put McCall in his cabin, where he listened to the Marine tell his saga of the last nine days. The *Barton* steamed to the other PBYs, which by now had drifted some 75 miles to the west.

By the time the *Barton* reached the PBYs, the sun was setting. The commander of one PBY offered to take off the next morning if the *Barton* would stand by, adding that he had enough gas to travel 300 miles. When Fox explained the next fueling station was more than 300 miles away, the commander and everyone else aboard abandoned the PBY. Despite the surging seas, everyone transferred out of the PBY without incident.

The last PBY's commander did not argue to take off. His plane had popped too many rivets, so the *Barton*'s crew threw a line to the plane's crew and pulled it alongside the quarterdeck. One man climbed aboard before rough seas pushed the plane toward the ship's stern. The last 10 survivors, including Petty, left the PBY and piled onto an upside down, five-man raft. To signal the ship in the darkness, a PBY crewman climbed back into his aircraft to retrieve a flashlight. Just then a wave smashed the PBY into the ship, ripping a hole in the PBY's nose and tearing the line. The men clinging to the raft looked on in horror as the plane drifted away and sank nose first into the dark sea.

Fox churned the *Barton* to circle but could not turn on its searchlights, lest it attract Japanese submarines. As the ship closed the loop, a small light pierced the underwater darkness. Then the PBY crewman broke the surface right next to the upturned raft, holding the retrieved flashlight. When the PBY went down, he had swum down 15 feet to the hole in the craft's nose, popped through, and surfaced underneath the life raft. Holding his breath again, he had pushed himself down and surfaced in the open air.

The *Barton* came around too far from the survivors, so Fox had it try again, but this time it was too fast. On the third pass, the ship came in dead slow, and a crewman tossed a line to the men on the raft. Once they caught it, the crewmen walked it back to the cargo net. "We got drenched as the swells came in," reported Petty, "but we all made it up the side of the ship."

Fox cut his engines to pick up all the men he could. After about a half hour, all but one of the men were accounted for, but with the Japanese lurking anywhere and everywhere, he knew he was a perfect target dead in the water. One of the floating PBY crewmen had been broadcasting his location on an open channel before Fox came to the rescue. "There is no doubt in the writer's mind," Fox later wrote, "that their position was known to the enemy."

After conferring with McCall, who agreed with his decision, Fox started his engines and sailed away. Fortunately, the next morning's head count came up complete. The missing man had mixed in with the *Hornet* survivors.

Before the *Barton* steamed into Nouméa's harbor, Fox ordered a broom taped to its mast, signaling a clean sweep—they had rescued everyone. The wounded were loaded onto the SS *Lurline,* the ship that had first heard the *Lana Turner*'s distress signal. Some of the psychoneurotic cases actually seemed better after their ordeal. Eight days of peaceful recovery after the shock of their crash had calmed them. By the time they reached Nouméa, according to Petty, "You couldn't tell the difference between them and the rest of us."

The *Lana Turner*'s crew got one last surprise as they headed down the *Barton*'s gangplank: some of the 13th Troop Carrier Squadron's men were waiting on the dock to greet their lost friends. Both Petty and Ecklund returned to the squadron and continued flying. The crew of the *Barton* was not as fortunate. Only 14 days after the rescue, she was sunk by two enemy torpedoes during the First Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. Only 42 men survived. Fox was not among them.

Eight months after their ordeal, Petty and Ecklund earned the right to head back to the United States on July 4, 1943. They had completed their mission. They had flown supplies into Guadalcanal and flown the wounded out. More importantly, they survived a rare ditching in the Coral Sea, lived to tell about it, and had not lost a single man during the ordeal.

Cecil Petty went on to fly C-47s in the European Theater and survived the war. He never forgot Marjorie Hartenblower's voice singing the Lord's Prayer during his ordeal. After the war, he married her. Also, when he got home, his mother could call her son a hero.

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is a historian for the U.S. Air Force Medical Service History Office and a historian/tour guide for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours. This article was written from firsthand accounts and interviews in the book The Thirsty 13th: The U.S. Army Air Forces 13th Troop Carrier Squadron 1940-1945 *by Seth P. Washburne.*

Simulation Gaming BY JOSEPH LUSTER

WORLD WAR II GAMES AIM FOR EVEN MORE HISTORICALLY ACCURATE AND IMMERSIVE HEIGHTS IN *STEEL DIVISION 2* AND *POST-SCRIPTUM.*

STEEL DIVISION 2
PUBLISHER EUGEN SYSTEMS • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **PLATFORM** PC • **AVAILABLE** 2019

The original *Steel Division* first brought its real-time strategizing to PCs back in May of 2017, putting players in intense battles throughout Normandy, France, during World War II. Now a sequel is on the way, this time moving your squad to the Soviet offensive against Nazi armies in Belorussia, more commonly referred to as Operation Bagration. *Steel Division 2* is currently set to make its PC debut in 2019, so let's take a look at some of the updated features strategy fans can look forward to in the followup.

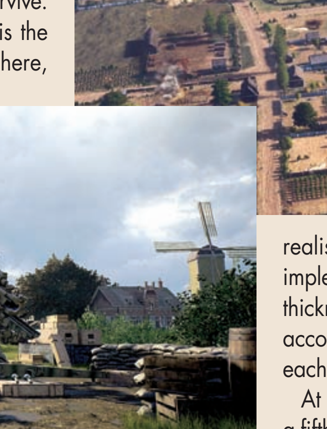
Steel Division 2 aims to give players the opportunity to flex their skills across unique roles, from acting as a colonel in real-time battles to assuming command as a general in 1:1-scale turn-based campaigns and taking on Weapon Expert duties with the new deck building system. The campaigns take place on maps that are up to 150 x 100 kilometers in scale, with every battalion mirroring its Operation Bagration equivalent. These historically accurate, week-long affairs consist of planning out movements, managing the supply chain, and executing the perfect strategy to put your side on top.

Speaking of sides, you can choose one to either relive the events of the operation as accurately as possible, or blaze your own trail to rewrite history. Developer Eugen Systems calls these Dynamic Strategic Campaigns for a reason; they make up an entirely new game within the wider game of *Steel Division 2*. As for the real-time battles, Eugen is continuing the tradition of implementing a wide array of historical units, from the IL-2 ground attack aircraft to the classic T-34 tank. The sequel boasts over 600 units in total, all of which have been revamped thanks to an even more realistic style of design. The deck system comes into play when you choose your units for battle, and the war itself will be waged across a total of 25 battlefields.

For this one to succeed like the last, Eugen will have to make good on these promises and their plans for a variety of game modes, including online cooperative play and huge 10-on-10 multiplayer battles. Early impressions from this past summer's Gamescom in Cologne, Germany, have been positive, so we're eager to get our hands on the next big tactical entry to see what else is new.

POST-SCRIPTUM: THE BLOODY SEVENTH
PUBLISHER OFFWORLD INDUSTRIES • **GENRE** SIMULATION • **PLATFORM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

The theme of this issue's games section appears to be historical accuracy, which, believe it or not, isn't always a given with World War II video games. It's definitely the focus of Periscope Games' latest title, *Post-Scriptum: The Bloody Seventh,* which is about to launch in full on Steam at the time of this writing. Billed as a simulation game, *Post-Scriptum* puts players together and forces them to really work hard to communicate and work as a legitimate team to survive. Proper coordination is the name of the game here, making *Post-Scriptum* something worth looking into for those who favor harsh learning curves and the sense of accomplishment that comes along with persevering.



The central conflict here is Operation Market Garden, a British-led operation that took place from September 17 to September 25, 1944. A series of bridges that promised an optimal invasion route to Germany for the Allies were the primary objective, and the attack ended up being, at that point, World War II's largest airborne operation. *Post-Scriptum* drops players in the fields and towns of Holland as they attempt to pull off what was ultimately an unsuccessful coordinated effort between the British and American Airborne. The developers wanted to capture the intense struggle the British paratroopers had to endure during the final stand at the Battle of Arnhem.

That doesn't mean you only have the option to play as one side of the conflict, though. Beyond the option of fighting alongside the British Airborne Division, players can choose between the British XXX Corps or branches of the German Army, including the Waffen SS and the Wehrmacht. The locales that set the stage for the Battle of Arnhem have been faithfully recreated with the help of both aerial and street-level archival images, and even the troops themselves all have photo-scanned 3D uniforms. Other areas in which realism is paramount are vehicle and weapon implementation. The devs took turret speed, the thickness of armor, and other realistic values into account when putting together the parameters for each skirmish.

At launch, *Post-Scriptum* offers four maps, with a fifth on the way to bring the total playable area thus far to an impressive 140 square kilometers. While 50-versus-50 multiplayer is the ultimate goal, the starting list of features has players parachuting onto the battlefield to take part in 40-on-40 engagements with in-game voices and proximity fading that makes careful communication key. Offensive is the main game mode for those hopping in on day one, but the team at Periscope Games hopes to add additional modes such as Armored and Sandbox shortly after the official launch. From what we've sampled, you're definitely going to need to spend time and have plenty of patience to persevere in this battle, but *Post-Scriptum* is worth checking out for those who have access to a reliable squad of like-minded buffs. □

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE

D-DAY

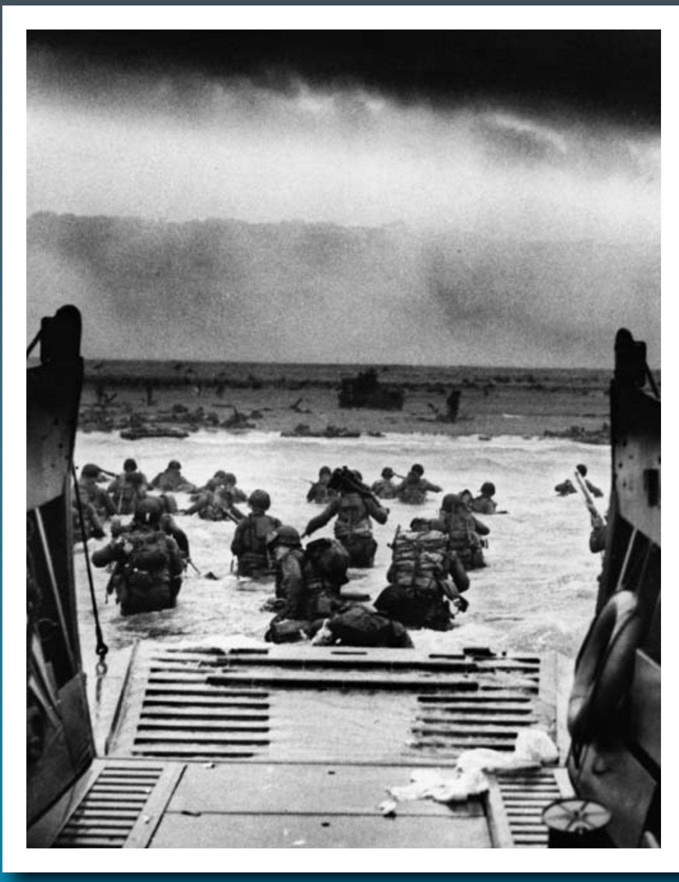
Through A Soldier's Eyes... *Limited Edition Print*

The storm was violent, the waves were huge and the noise was deafening for soldiers in their landing craft on D-Day, June 6, 1944. As they neared the beach, the door dropped open... and this photo lets you see exactly what they saw: withering machine gun fire, treacherous breakers, a long beach, high cliffs, and near-certain death.

None hesitated. These brave men jumped into the cold Atlantic waters. Two thirds of them died soon after, so that we could live in freedom.

This historic photograph shows American soldiers from Company E, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division exiting their LCVP landing craft under heavy German machine gun fire on Omaha Beach. The photo was taken by Coast Guard Chief Photographer's Mate Robert F. Sergeant.

Company E landed on Easy Red Beach at 0645 in the face of murderous fire. Those few who survived kept wading into everything the enemy had, taking their objective and providing the only exit off the beach for the entire Fifth Corps. Company "E," perhaps by strength of will and courage alone, helped keep the entire landing force from being thrown back into the sea. For a month afterwards, those who survived remained almost in a daze.



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Top Secret

Continued from page 37

there, being briefed for a mission to Indochina, when the European war ended.

For his "extraordinary heroism, outstanding loyalty, and self-sacrificing devotion to duty" which "contributed materially to the success of operations against a relentless enemy," Ortiz, who reached the rank of colonel, was honored by three nations. The French cited him as the "hero of the Haute-Savoie" and awarded him the Legion of Honor; the Croix de Guerre with two palms, gold and silver stars, and five citations; the Croix de Combattants; the Ouissam Alouite; and the Medaille Coloniale. Great Britain made him an officer of the Order of the British Empire, and his own country gave him the Navy Cross with gold star, the Legion of Merit, and two Purple Hearts.

Ortiz left the service in 1946, but stayed active in the Marine Corps Reserve. He made a new career as a technical and dialogue consultant in the California film industry and worked often with director John Ford, who also had served in the OSS. The two became good friends. Ortiz married his sweetheart, Jean Morlan, in 1948, and they had a son, Peter J. Jr., who became a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps. The couple eventually settled in Arizona, where Ortiz pursued many interests, including art, history, religion, and film-making.

The World War II hero found work, meanwhile, as an actor. He had small parts with John Wayne in Ford's *Rio Grande* in 1950 and *The Wings of Eagles* in 1957. He also was cast in the 1949 Henry King classic *Twelve O'Clock High* and in *Spy Hunt* (1950), *When Willie Comes Marching Home* (1950), *Sirocco* (1951), *Retreat Hell!* (1952), *Jubilee Train* (1954), *King Richard and the Crusaders* (1954), *Son of Sinbad* (1955), and *Seventh Cavalry* (1956).

Ortiz died in 1988 and was buried with full honors in Arlington National Cemetery. Representatives of the British and French governments attended. He was honored in Centron on August 1, 1992. Former Sergeants Bodnar and Risler were present when the town center was named Place Peter Ortiz.

The Marine officer's World War II exploits inspired two Hollywood films. The first was Henry Hathaway's semi-documentary *13 Rue Madeleine* (1947), starring James Cagney, and Lewis Seiler's *Operation Secret* (1952), with Cornel Wilde, Steve Cochran, and Karl Malden.

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

Bridges at Nijmegen

Continued from page 51

troopers even fired at enemy soldiers leaping from the bridge, trying to hit them in midair. Kappel finally ordered them to stop, as it was a waste of ammunition.

A total of 267 bodies were recovered from the bridge with many more lost below. Staff Sgt. David Rosencrantz recalled that while the fighting was shorter than Sicily, Salerno, and Anzio, "it was tougher and bloodier while it lasted." The rail bridge was now firmly in Allied hands. LaRiviere left Sims to oversee the rail bridge while he and Captain Burriss set out toward the Waalbrug road bridge, clearing houses as they went. They were soon joined by Lieutenant Magellas and his men. All of them came under fire from troops on the bridge itself, but they battered their way onto the northern end despite being almost out of ammunition.

On the south end of the Waalbrug the Grenadier Guards and paratroopers saw the Americans on the other side and launched a concerted attack at 5:30 PM. They soon overran the last of the SS troops in the Hunnerpark and Valkhof, and a small force was dispatched to fight its way across the bridge and link up with the 504th men. No. 1 Troop of No.1 Squadron, 2nd Grenadier Guards set out led by Sergeant Peter Robinson. The squadron commander, Captain Lord Peter Harrington, would follow in his own tank along with a scout car carrying an engineer, Lieutenant A.C.G. Jones, who would check the bridge for explosives.

As they moved onto the bridge's ramp, the crack of an 88mm gun sounded, and a round struck the pavement in front of the lead Sherman. It ricocheted into the tank, damaging it and knocking out the radio. As Robinson quickly reversed, two other Shermans spotted the muzzle flash and silenced the gun before it could do any more damage. Sergeant Robinson changed tanks, and the troops raced onto the bridge. The Germans opened fire with all they had, including panzerfaust antitank weapons fired by soldiers hiding among the bridge's upper girders. The tankers elevated their coaxial machine guns and watched dead and wounded Germans tumble from their hiding places onto the pavement below.

At least five antitank guns on the north bank also opened fire. The British pushed ahead anyway and soon arrived at a concrete roadblock covered by another antitank gun. Robinson's tank charged through, and his gunner, Guardsman Leslie Johnson, wrecked the enemy gun with three well-placed rounds. Some infantry broke cover and ran, only to be cut down by the tank's machine guns. The British tanks were now across the bridge and roaring down the opposite ramp.

As Robinson advanced down the street, a German self-propelled gun appeared and opened fire. One of the rounds exploded nearby and blew off Robinson's helmet, but gunner Johnson fired several rounds of his own, leaving the enemy vehicle burning. They went another three quarters of a mile, blasting German infantry fighting from a church and forcing them to retreat. Soon afterward, grenades from a nearby ditch hit Robinson's tank, and he responded with his machine gun, firing a few rounds before realizing the men wore American helmets. He stopped shooting, and they linked up. Fortunately, no harm was done in the incident. Only his tank and one other made it this far; the other two were knocked out on the bridge, though one later rejoined the troop.

On the bridge, Lieutenant Jones dashed around cutting wires and removing detonators despite enemy sniper fire. Some of his men arrived, and they continued the search, discovering 81 Germans hiding in compartments in the bridge piers. All of them were fortunate that day. The commander of 10th SS Panzer Division, General Heinz Harmel, watched the attack go in from a bunker upstream from the road bridge. That bunker held the demolition switchboard, and as he watched the British tanks race across the bridge in the waning daylight he ordered the Waalbrug blown just as the British reached the center span. Nothing happened, even when they tried again with the reserve circuits. No one is sure why, but many believe the wires were cut by a Dutch resistance fighter who died during the battle. Whatever the cause, two more bridges now belonged to the Allies.

Tragically, the effort made to seize the Nijmegen bridges came to nothing. The British paratroopers trapped near Arnhem were not rescued. The defenders were resisting too skillfully, and the attackers were hard pressed to maintain the required pace on the single narrow road. Arnhem proved to be the bridge too far, memorialized in books and film. The Nijmegen bridges, however, did prove within Allied grasp, but only through the extreme courage and sacrifice of a combined force of American paratroopers and British Guardsmen who were willing to risk everything to save fellow soldiers they had never met.

Author Christopher Miskimon is a regular contributor to WWII History. *He writes the regular books column and is an officer in the Colorado National Guard's 157th Regiment.*

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