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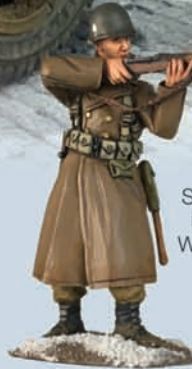


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Cover: GIs from the Third Armored Division ride on top of a Sherman tank as it approaches Stolberg, Germany in October, 1944.
See story page 8.
Photo: National Archives

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USS *West Virginia* survived Pearl Harbor to reach Tokyo Bay.

HER WOUNDS HAD BEEN GRIEVOUS THAT MORNING IN 1941, WHEN JAPANESE torpedo bombers swept low over the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor and unleashed their deadly cargoes at the easy targets moored along Battleship Row. The surface might of the U.S. Pacific Fleet was virtually helpless against the onslaught, and those ships moored outboard received the brunt of the devastating attack.

Oklahoma capsized, and *West Virginia* took seven torpedoes into her port side, gouging huge holes in the hull. Two modified artillery shells, configured as aerial bombs, struck aft. The ship's captain, Mervyn Bennion, was cut down by a steel fragment but remained in command, perishing with courage and later receiving a posthumous Medal of Honor. Dorie Miller, a black cook, manned a machine gun and received the Navy Cross for heroism.

Alert counterflooding kept *West Virginia* from capsizing like *Oklahoma*, and the heavily damaged battleship settled to the bottom of Pearl Harbor upright and on an even keel. A total of 106 *West Virginia* sailors were killed that fateful morning.

At first glance, it appeared that the battleship might be a total loss. However, salvage and recovery efforts were quickly begun. *West Virginia* was refloated and pumped dry. The bodies of sailors entombed for days were recovered. The torpedo holes were patched, and *West Virginia*, an old battleship of the Colorado-class launched in November 1921, sailed for the Puget Sound Navy Yard in Bremerton, Washington, for a substantial rebuild.

After two years of modernization, *West Virginia* was ready for combat duty. In October, the Pearl Harbor survivor joined the shore bombardment group off the Philippine island of Leyte. Her main 16-inch guns barked for the first time against the Japanese enemy. From there, she gained another measure of revenge in the night Battle of Surigao Strait. Along with the battleship *Mississippi* as well as other Pearl Harbor veterans *Tennessee*, *Maryland*, *California*, and *Pennsylvania*, the *West Virginia* pounded a Japanese surface squadron. The Battle of Surigao Strait was the last surface action between opposing capital ships in the history of naval warfare.

West Virginia, affectionately known to her crew as the "Big Weevie," later provided fire support for the amphibious landings at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, remaining on station to lend heavy naval artillery as the weeks-long operations progressed. She was struck by a Kamikaze suicide plane off Okinawa, which killed four sailors, but remained offshore until her mission was completed.

When news of the Japanese surrender reached the officers and crew of *West Virginia*, the battleship was at Okinawa. Ordered to sail for Tokyo Bay, she arrived there on August 31, her contingent of U.S. Marines going ashore to maintain order.

West Virginia was the largest ship of the U.S. Navy present at both Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the Japanese surrender ceremonies on September 2, 1945. The only other U.S. warship that could claim to have been present for both was the light cruiser USS *Detroit*.

After lending five musicians from her band to play during the surrender proceedings, *West Virginia* had one more task to complete: transporting 25,554 fighting men from Pearl Harbor to San Diego, California, during Operation Magic Carpet, the mammoth undertaking to bring American personnel home from the Pacific.

West Virginia was decommissioned in 1947 and placed in the Navy Pacific Reserve Fleet until 1959, when she was struck from the register and towed to New York harbor to be broken up for scrap after a storied career spanning four decades.

West Virginia's bell resides today in the state museum in the capital city of Charleston, while other relics of the battleship's service have also been preserved—her wheel and binnacle at the Hampton Roads Museum, her mast at West Virginia University, and an antiaircraft gun in a park in the city of Parkersburg.

—Michael E. Haskew

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American Tank Ace

Sergeant Lafayette Pool wrought havoc on Nazi armor from the commander's hatch of a Sherman tank.

A COLUMN OF AMERICAN M-4 SHERMAN MEDIUM TANKS MOVED THROUGH Dison, Belgium, in late summer 1944, near the city of Liege. The tankers belonged to Company I, 32nd Armored Regiment of the 3rd Armored Division, known by its moniker "Spearhead." Leading the column, Staff Sergeant Lafayette Pool acted as platoon leader despite his rank as a non-commissioned officer.

It didn't matter; Pool was trusted, and his leadership made him as good as any lieutenant in the regiment. His skill as a tanker was unquestioned by his peers; he and his crew were about to prove that again.

As the column advanced, they took fire from their left flank. Telling the column to continue, Pool ordered his own tank, the moniker "In the Mood" painted on the side of its hull, to turn and deal with the threat. Soon they located an enemy unit, no tanks but a number of other armored vehicles such as halftracks and armored cars. The Americans opened fire, destroying a half-dozen German vehicles. Their brief rampage was cut short when Pool learned a German PzKpfw V Panther medium tank had appeared ahead and fired on his column. He ordered his driver, Corporal Wilbert Richards of Cumberland, Maryland, to get back to the column. The M-4 roared ahead as the gunner, Corporal Willis Oller of Morrisonville, Illinois, prepared to engage the enemy tank.

Arriving at the scene, Pool scanned the distance for the Panther as his loader, Technician 5 Del Boggs from Lancaster, Ohio, pushed a 76mm armor-piercing round into the breech of the M-4's main gun. Pool spotted the enemy tank and gave his gunner a distance to target of 1,500 yards. This was

long range for a shot against the well-armored German vehicle, but a hit against its side armor could penetrate even at such a distance. Oller took careful aim and pressed the gun's firing pedal with his foot. With a flash and a supersonic crack, the 76mm shot soared straight into the Panther, destroying it. Pool calmly resumed his place at the head of the column, and the advance continued. Score another success for one of the U.S. Army's greatest tank aces.

"Tank Ace" is a term used to describe tankers who enjoy great success against enemy armored vehicles. For aviators, an ace is someone who downs five enemy planes in aerial combat; no set number exists for tank aces. It is more a matter of destroying many more enemy vehicles than are shot out from under them. Also, tank aces work as part of a crew, with the title usually going to the vehicle commander, though they all share in the achievement. For World War II, many think most often of "Panzer Aces." While many German tankers did attain impressive numbers of enemy tanks knocked out, there were also a number of tank aces on the Allied side during World War II, and Lafayette Pool was among the best.

Born in the small town of Odem, Texas, Lafayette G. Pool arrived five minutes after his twin brother John, on July 23, 1919. He graduated from Taft High School in 1937, and both brothers immediately tried to join the Navy.

All photos: National Archives



ABOVE: Lafayette Pool led his tank crew through combat in France and Belgium, destroying over 250 German armored vehicles. **TOP:** Smoke billows in the distance as M-4 Sherman tank crews fire on defending German infantry in Belgium.

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ABOVE: A 3rd Armored Division Sherman moves through a gap in a long line of "Dragon's Teeth" antitank obstacles in the Siegfried line, September 1944. Riflemen of the 39th Infantry Regiment ride on the tank's engine deck. **BELOW:** Infantrymen atop a 3rd Armored Division tank interact with a civilian during a brief halt in a Belgian town.



John was accepted but "Lafe," as Lafayette was nicknamed, got turned away due to an old eye injury. While a young boy, Lafe had decided to make a saddle for his dog out of an old inner tube. While working away with a rusty pair of scissors, his hand slipped, and the cutting tool went into his eye, damaging the iris. While John left for the Navy, Lafe spent a year attending a Catholic prep school in Corpus Christi, graduating in 1938. Afterward, he enrolled in the Texas College of Arts and Industries, now part of the Texas A&M University system, to study engineering. To pay for his education he

worked on his father's farm and fought as a Golden Gloves boxer.

Pool's desire to serve soon drew him away from his studies. When the United States instituted a draft in 1940, he volunteered for the Army, which took him despite the old eye injury. Pool reported to Fort Sam Houston in June 1941, and attended basic training at nearby Dodd Field before being transferred to the 40th Armored Regiment at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Soon afterward, he received another transfer to the 32nd Armored Regiment, part of the newly organized 3rd Armored Division. Ini-

tially trained as a mechanic, he became part of a tank crew and then a vehicle commander.

As the unit trained and prepared for combat, Pool's Golden Gloves background led him to join the division team, where he soon became regional champion in his weight class. He also developed a reputation as a disciplined leader and rigorous trainer. His crew was expected to do everything the right way, from gunnery to maintenance. Pool expected the best from his crew and got it. His focus on training was so intense that he turned down a chance to go to a national boxing meet in Chicago in the spring of 1942, because the division received a shipment of the new M-4 medium tanks. Pool wanted to start training right away; boxing wouldn't help kill Germans, so it had to wait.

During 1942 and 1943, the 3rd Armored Division went through training at the Desert Training Center near Victorville, California, and then to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. Shortly before the division embarked for England in September 1943, Pool received promotion to staff sergeant in Company I, Third Battalion, 32nd Armored Regiment. His leaders thought highly enough of Pool to offer him a chance to attend Officer Candidate School and receive a commission as a 2nd lieutenant, but he turned it down, just as later in Europe he refused a battlefield commission. His reason was simply stated: "I just want to have one of the best tank crews in the division."

Once in England, training continued as the division prepared for the cross-Channel D-Day invasion of Europe on June 6, 1944. There were occasional diversions, and one day Pool became one of them. Joe Louis, the famous champion heavyweight boxer, toured England putting on exhibitions for the troops. Few men wanted to get into the ring with Louis, until Pool said he would. Although it was meant to be a friendly publicity bout, Pool, always competitive and driven, went a bit too far and landed several good blows on the professional boxer.

Louis simply put his arm around Pool and said, "White man, I'm going to teach you a big lesson." Louis did everything but knock Pool out, and the young tanker later said Joe Louis turned him 'every which way but loose' during this "friendly" fight. Soon, however, it was time to go to war.

The division came ashore in Normandy shortly after the D-Day landings and quickly entered combat. This was the start of an 81-day combat tour, which ended in an amazing tally for Pool and his crew. Together they are credited with destroying 258 German armored vehicles, including PzKpfw III and IV Panzers, Sturmgeschutz self-propelled guns, various

types of Panzerjäger tank destroyers, and half-tracked personnel carriers. The crew was also credited with a number of towed anti-tank guns, including at least one 88mm cannon, killing over 1,000 German soldiers and taking 250 prisoners. Pool's tank led his task force in at least 21 major attacks. This record is even more astounding considering it was achieved in less than three months.

Third Battalion went into combat for the first time on June 29, 1944, northeast of St. Lo, near Villier-Fossard. For Pool, it ended in a close call. His tank, an M-4 toting a 75mm cannon and named "In the Mood" after the popular Glenn Miller song of the time, entered the village of Les Forges only to be struck by a panzerfaust, a shoulder-fired German antitank weapon. The blow knocked out the tank, but Pool and his crew all escaped, including Pfc. Bert Close of Portland, Oregon, the tank's assistant driver and bow machine-gun operator, along with the above-mentioned Wilbert Richards, Willis Oller and Del Boggs.

Pool considered Richards one of the best tank drivers in Europe and always called him "Baby" when issuing driving instructions over the tank's intercom. Richards was only five feet, four inches tall, but Pool bragged that Baby could "parallel park that big Sherman in down-



An M-4A3 Sherman with a high-velocity 76mm cannon moves past Schneeberg, Germany in 1945. Both of Pool's replacement tanks carried the longer-barreled weapon.

town New York in rush hour traffic." Bert was called "Schoolboy," since he was just 17 years old, "still with peach fuzz on his gentle face." Del was known as "Jailbird" since he was given the choice of the Army or prison after a manslaughter charge. Oller was known as "Groundhog" because of the stains on his face from constantly wearing tanker's goggles. Pool stated Oller could "shoot the eyebrows off a

gnat at 1500 yards." According to his own account, Pool was called "War Daddy," a name later used for Brad Pitt's character in the feature film *Fury*.

With his crew intact, Pool immediately set about acquiring a replacement tank, also named "In the Mood," so they could get back in the fight. The second tank was a new M-4 with a longer-barreled 76mm cannon. This gun



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This blurred image is believed to be Lafayette Pool's *In the Mood* II or III, which replaced his original tank when it was hit by a panzerfaust. Here, the tank commander and driver expose their heads to better negotiate rough terrain.

had better armor-piercing capability than the stubbier 75mm weapon, making it more effective against German armor, though it was still unreliable against the frontal armor of the heavier German models such as the PzKpfw VI Tiger and Panther, except at close range. It was much more effective against the thinner side and rear armor of these tanks: the 76mm could penetrate a Panther's side armor at 2,000 yards.

A smart tank commander would always attempt to maneuver his vehicle for a shot at the more vulnerable flanks of his opponent. The shorter 75mm gun fired a more effective high-explosive round, so American armored units usually mixed tanks with 75mm and 76mm guns, often placing one tank with a 76mm in a five-tank platoon, the remaining tanks having 75mm weapons. This made sense, as tankers spent more time supporting infantry and attacking enemy positions than fighting other tanks. When enemy armor did appear, it was nice to have the 76mm-armed tank, and Pool's tank was it for his platoon.

During the fighting near the Falaise Gap on August 7, 1944, Pool was at the front of Task Force Y of 3rd Armored Division's Combat Command A. The task force commander, Lt. Col. Walter Richardson, listened on the radio as Pool closed with a group of fleeing German troops. "Ain't got the heart to kill um," Pool reportedly said, but his statement was followed by the chatter of a .30-caliber bow machine gun as "Schoolboy" Close opened fire. Richardson next heard Pool say, "Watch the bastards run—give it to 'em, Close."

Later in the Falaise fighting, Pool was again in the lead near Fromental, France. Here the second "In the Mood" was destroyed. An arti-

cle in *Yank* magazine from September 1944 states the tank fell to German bombers, but another source states a flight of American Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter bombers mistook the Americans for the enemy and hit them by mistake. In any event, Pool and his entire crew again survived and soon manned a third "In the Mood," another M-4 with the 76mm cannon. Before long they were back in combat.

More close calls followed, many of them at night, when combat became more confused and close-range. After a penetration near Origny, France, nightfall came along with an order to "coil" (set up a defensive position). Pool positioned his tank and was just about to call out "Driver, halt!" over the intercom when he spotted a German cannon in the darkness directly ahead. Instead he cried out, "Gunner, fire!" Oller got off a quick shot, his round going right into the German weapon before the enemy gun crew could react.

Another night action occurred at Colombrier, France. While advancing, "In the Mood" almost collided with a German Panther tank in the darkness. The Panther's crew was quick but inaccurate, getting off two shots, which both missed. Oller's reply went true, a single round penetrating the turret and detonating ammunition inside. The Panther's turret blew completely off in a burst of flame and smoke. The luck of "In the Mood's" crew still held.

After France, the 3rd Armored entered Belgium, where more fighting awaited. At Namur, a small city on the Meuse River, Pool and his men destroyed 16 enemy vehicles in one day, including halftracks, assault guns, and several self-propelled anti-tank guns. Afterward, the advance continued eastward toward the Ger-

man border, approaching the city of Aachen. Pool was often in the lead, confident and alert, sitting atop "In the Mood." He rarely "buttoned up" inside his tank; Pool was actually claustrophobic and preferred to either sit on top of the tank or stick out of the commander's hatch. Most good tank commanders preferred to do this as it provided much better visibility despite the greater risk from enemy fire. "Baby" Richards also preferred to drive with his hatch open; he was once trapped in a tank by a jammed hatch.

Richards recalled Pool's preference to lead, as well. He once told a war correspondent, "The men would draw straws to see who would lead the spearhead the next day. Pool would just say 'Ah'm leading this time,' and stand there grinning while we cussed him out. But we'd go along just the same. By God, I think we were more scared of Pool than of Jerry!" Richards also told the reporter, "All Pool wanted was to get out ahead of the other tanks so he could kill more Jerries."

Eventually, Pool's luck ran out. On September 9, 1944, "In the Mood" acted as flank guard for an attack near Munsterbusch, south of Aachen. Lt. Col. Richardson deliberately placed them on the flank; the whole crew was due to rotate back to the United States for a war bond tour in a few days. Pool recalled his commanding officer's words: "No spearheading today, Pool. You guys are heroes and I want you going home to momma safe and sound. You take the flank." Pool remembered those words shortly afterwards as his tank moved along that flank. "Seems he forgot to tell the German troops with the 88 hidden behind the garage door."

Pool watched that garage door rise, revealing the deadly cannon behind it. Boggs was absent that day, sent to the rear for a hearing check. The replacement loader tried to shove a 76mm round in the breech and jammed it. Unable to fire on the gun, Pool yelled "Back up, Baby!" but it was too late. Richardson, in a tank nearby, saw the tracer of the German round slam into "In the Mood's" turret. Pool was blown out of the commander's hatch; he hit the ground trying to run, but his leg folded up under him. A splinter from the enemy round had practically torn off his leg. Pool grabbed a morphine syrette and injected himself before trying to cut off the ruined portion of his leg with his pocket knife.

The rest of the crew didn't know Pool was gone. Richards kept backing the tank when a second round crashed into the hull. The impact sounded like the gong of a massive bell; the stench of burnt powder and a shower of bright

sparks filled the tank. As nearby GIs watched, "In the Mood" reached a slope and slowly overturned, coming to a rest almost completely upside down. Oller realized he was wounded when he felt hot blood on his leg. The rest of the crew escaped injury, and all four crawled out of the tank.

Richardson ran up to Pool and gave him another shot of morphine. Moments later medics arrived, gave him yet another shot of morphine, and set about working on his badly bleeding leg. Others attended to Oller. As they put a disoriented Pool on a stretcher for evacuation, he said, "Somebody take care of my tank." Soon he and Oller were in a hospital. The rest of the crew were matched with a new gunner, and they became Lt. Col. Richardson's new tank crew.

Pool's war was over. Along the way he had been twice recommended for the Medal of Honor. In the first case the paperwork was reportedly lost; in the second, the determining authorities decided the act was a combined one of the crew, not just of Pool. His awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, Legion of Merit, Purple Heart, French Croix de Guerre, and the Belgian Fourragere. His shattered right leg was later amputated, and he received a discharge in June 1946.

With the war over, Pool made a go at business, including running a gas station, but in 1948 he received a call to return to active duty along with seven other amputees who possessed needed technical skills. He taught tank mechanics until promoted to warrant officer in 1952. His artificial leg prevented him from being sent outside the United States, so he worked as an ordnance inspector. Pool retired in September 1960, and soon became a preacher. He and his wife Evelyn had seven children, one of whom, Jerry, became a captain in the Special Forces. He was declared missing in action in Cambodia in 1970 but classified as dead in 1978.

As Pool aged, he settled into life in Texas as a teacher before retiring. One day, members of the 32nd Armored Regiment reached out to him, interested in their history. Pool was touched that they remembered him and visited the unit, speaking to the young soldiers about tank combat. When they deployed for Operation Desert Storm, he worried over them until they returned. Soon afterward, he passed away on May 30, 1991. □

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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As a Lend-Lease aircraft, the Douglas A-20 Havoc, also known as the Boston, proved an exceptionally effective weapon against Axis shipping while in the hands of Soviet aircrews.

Scourge of Axis Shipping

The Douglas A-20 Havoc bomber in the hands of Soviet pilots proved deadly to German shipping during World War II.

FOLLOWING THE APOCALYPTIC INITIAL PHASE OF OPERATION BARBAROSSA starting on June 22, 1941, the Germans inflicted crippling losses on the Red Army Air Forces (VVS) and the Soviet Naval Air Forces (VVS-VMF).

By the end of 1941, the Soviets had lost a staggering 9,173 aircraft, a number that could not possibly be replaced quickly. Desperate for replacement aircraft, the Soviets turned to the British and Americans under the Lend-Lease program. While the Russians did not get the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress or Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers they wanted, they got the dependable and capable Douglas A-20 Havoc, which turned out to be what was needed.

The Douglas A-20, known as the Boston to the Soviets, evolved from the Douglas 7A project, whose lead engineer was Ed Heinemann. The project manager was the legendary John K. “Jack” Northrop. A twin-engine, shoulder-wing, high-speed bomber with a payload of 1,764 pounds, the 7A was armed with three .30-caliber machine guns in the nose (fixed, forward firing), dorsal, and ventral positions and had a crew of three. In response to a U.S. Army Air Corps competition for a new attack bomber, a scaled-up version of the 7A, the 7B, was developed with a greater wingspan, tricycle landing gear, and more powerful engines to give a maximum speed of 325 miles per hour and a payload capacity of 2,400 pounds. Armament was increased to four fixed, forward-firing .30-caliber machine guns and three flexible .30-caliber machine guns in dorsal and ventral gunner positions.

When the Soviet Union entered the war and requested Lend-Lease aircraft, the British immediately sent 277 Bostons from one of their own orders to the Russian port of Murmansk. The VVS had priority requirements for the Bostons to help counter the ground invasion of the Nazis. The VVS would use the A-20 Boston in the roles of tactical day and night bomber, reconnaissance aircraft, night fighter, and intruder aircraft. The VVS-VMF would also use the A-20 as a high-level bomber and reconnaissance aircraft, but also in roles that no other nation had before: as a torpedo bomber and minelayer aircraft, as well as a low-level, anti-shiping strike aircraft.

The VVS-VMF received a total of 663 A-20 bombers of all types out of a total of 2,771 Lend-Lease aircraft received by the Soviet Union. The majority of A-20s received were the of A-20G variety, with six forward-firing .50-caliber machine guns, a pair of .50-caliber machine guns in a dorsal turret, and a single .50-caliber machine gun in the ventral tunnel gunner position. The VVS-VMF modified these aircraft by installing special external bomb racks so that they could carry not only Soviet FAB 100kg, 200kg, and 500kg bombs, but also FAB 1,000kg (2,200-pound) bombs. The VVS-VMF also installed special external racks to allow the dropping of torpedoes. While the A-

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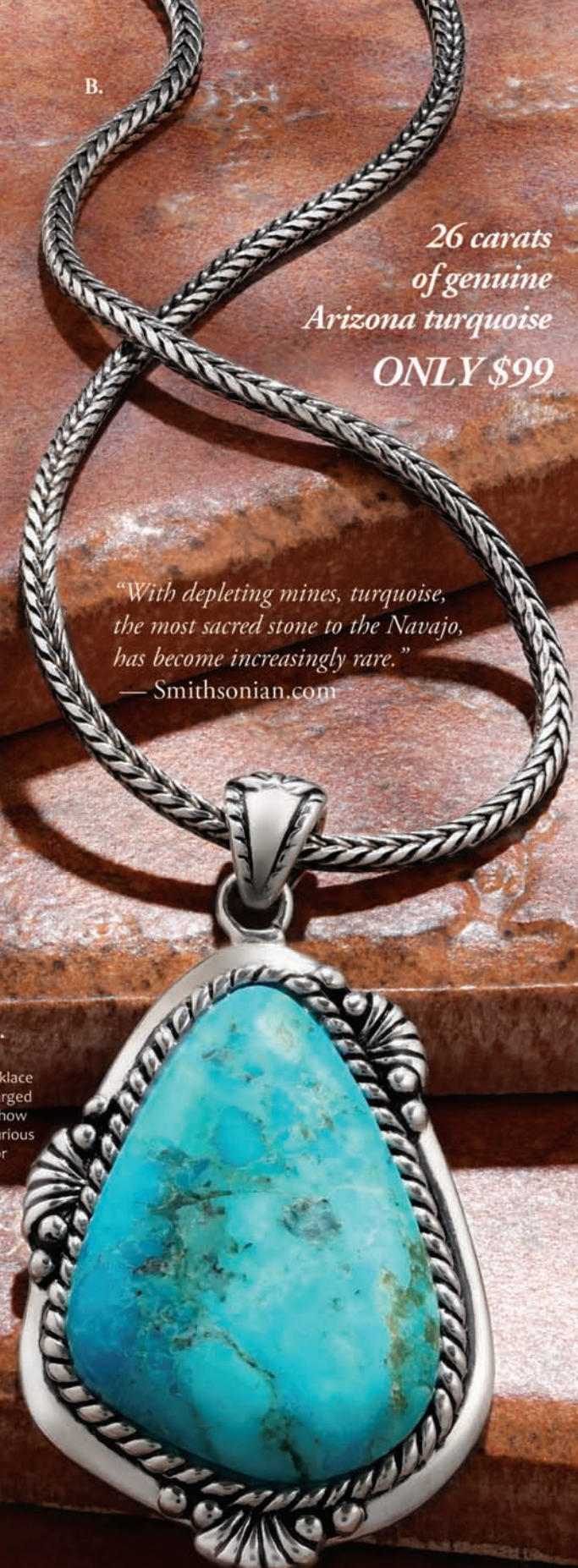
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ABOVE: Douglas A-20 bombers are shown partially constructed as they are loaded aboard a freighter for the long journey from the United States to a Russian port. The Lend-Lease program helped sustain the Soviet war effort against the Nazis. **BELOW:** Aircraft manufactured in the U.S. await their new owners, the Soviet Red Air Force, at an airfield in Iran. The U.S. supplied several types of aircraft to the Soviet Union through Lend-Lease, including the A-20, P-39, P-40, B-25, and AT-6.



National Archives

20 in theory could carry two airborne torpedoes externally, in practice the A-20 would only carry one torpedo to enable greater range.

The Soviet A-20s were also modified to drop air-delivered sea mines, such as the AMG-1, AMD 500kg, and AMD 1,000kg variants. Soviet A-20s were normally flown with three- or four-man crews. So important did the Soviets consider having a navigator as part of the crew that when they received A-20G models with a solid nose containing six .50-caliber machine

guns, they often replaced the solid nose with a clear nose compartment for a navigator, retaining just the two lower machine guns.

Soviet A-20 units were organized into nine-plane squadrons and were grouped into 30-plane regiments of three squadrons and a three-plane headquarters section. In the VVS-VMF, the A-20 units were called Mine Torpedo Aviation Polk (MTAP) (a Polk being a regiment).

The VVS-VMF concept of anti-shipping strike operations began with air maritime reconnais-

sance (sometimes with A-20 aircraft) locating Axis ships or convoys. A naval air strike would then be generated by VVS-VMF units assigned to their respective fleets. The strike would consist of one squadron or one regiment of Ilyushin IL-2 Sturmovik assault aircraft, whose job was to strafe the decks of the escort vessels to reduce the effectiveness of the anti-aircraft fire. This would be followed up by a dive-bomber attack by Petlyakov Pe-2 aircraft if available, then followed by either a torpedo attack or low-level bombing attack by A-20 Bostons. The whole formation would receive fighter escort by up to one regiment of VVS-VMF fighters, which might include Bell P-39, Curtiss P-40, Hawker Hurricane, or Yak fighters, depending on the area.

The Soviets had learned in 1943 about the “skip bombing” technique (in which an aircraft attacks a ship by skipping the bomb across the water like a stone) perfected by the Americans in the South Pacific. The Russians referred to it as “mast height bombing” instead of “skip bombing,” but the technique was the same.

When it came to aerial sea mining, the technique used by the Soviets was to have individual A-20s carrying mines fly out at night using dead reckoning or radio beacon homing to drop mines outside of harbors or fjords in shipping channels.

Each Red Banner fleet was assigned MTAP units, including the Black Sea Fleet (VVS-VMF-ChF), Northern Fleet (VVS-VMF-SF), Baltic Fleet (VVS-VMF-KBF), and Pacific Fleet (VVS-VMF-ToF). The combat activities of the A-20 MTAP units were as unique as the different theaters they operated in.

In support of the Red Banner Black Sea Fleet (VMF-ChF), A-20 aircraft gradually replaced IL-4 aircraft in various units starting in the spring of 1943. By this time, the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe had pushed the Soviets and Black Sea Fleet back to ports in the Caucasus on the Black Sea. The Black Sea Fleet surface units were mostly bottled up in Caucasus ports, and the main fight by the Black Sea Fleet against Axis naval forces and convoys was done by submarines and torpedo boats, with spotty success.

As additional IL-2, Pe-2 and A-20 aircraft became available, ever-increasing air attacks took place against Axis shipping and naval bases. The attacks by VVS-VMF-ChF aircraft against Axis shipping caused the German and Romanian naval commanders to conduct more operations at night or with air escort. This resulted in the Soviet naval air units, including the A-20-equipped 36 MTAP, 13 GMTAP, and 5 GMTAP, redoubling their attacks on the naval bases and ports of Kerch, Feodosiya, Ivan Baba, and Sevastopol in the Crimea. These

units also participated in nocturnal aerial-mining operations outside these ports.

As the Soviet armies pushed the Germans westward, they were able to bottle up over 170,000 Axis troops in the Crimea, and as the Germans retreated, the Black Sea Fleet got closer and closer to the Crimean ports and could launch larger and more destructive bombing raids. The Germans had a difficult time deterring these attacks, as many Luftwaffe units had been withdrawn to Germany to defend against Allied heavy bombing raids.

Romanian Navy units supported by Kriegsmarine E-boat and R-boat flotillas started to withdraw German and Romanian ground forces from pockets of resistance on the Crimean coast in April 1944. The Soviets stepped up the submarine and torpedo boat attacks against the troop convoys, but they especially increased the volume and ferocity of the air attacks by VVS-VMF aircraft. On April 18, the Romanian motor vessel *Alba Lulia* left Crimea escorted by the destroyer NMS *Marasti*, gunboat *Ghiculescu*, a subchaser, and an R-boat. After a Soviet submarine attack was repelled at 1220 hours, four Il-4s from 5th GMTAP dropped bombs from 1000 meters and missed.

At 1237, four A-20Gs of 36th MTAP attacked in a dive out of the sun, and bombs fell close to the *Alba Lulia*, blasting a large hole in the hull. Another bomb demolished a storage room and killed some 500 Soviet POWs. The *Alba Lulia* stayed afloat and was attacked again at 1320, first by three A-20s that dropped bombs killing soldiers swimming in the water, and then by five torpedo-carrying A-20s that missed their target. Two A-20s were shot down.

The *Alba Lulia* was towed to Constanta and never left port again.

Bad weather hindered Soviet air attacks for several days, but on April 22, a dozen A-20Gs from the 13th GDBAP under the command of Podpolkovnik Mikhail Kurochkin scored bomb hits on the tanker ship *Ossag*, which was badly damaged and eventually sank. German fighter escorts shot down two of the A-20s, while two Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters of 6/JG 52 were shot down by the A-20 gunners; a third A-20 crashed due to engine failure.

As the German and Romanian ground forces retreated back into Romania, the Black Sea Fleet Naval air forces attacked coastal naval traffic, and the A-20 MTAP units air-dropped mines off the ports of Sulina, Varna, and Constanta. These aerial-mining efforts paid off on June 18, when the subchaser UJ316 sank off Sulina, and on June 23, when the subchasers UJ307 and UJ2306 were sunk off Varna.

The Soviets launched their final offensive to

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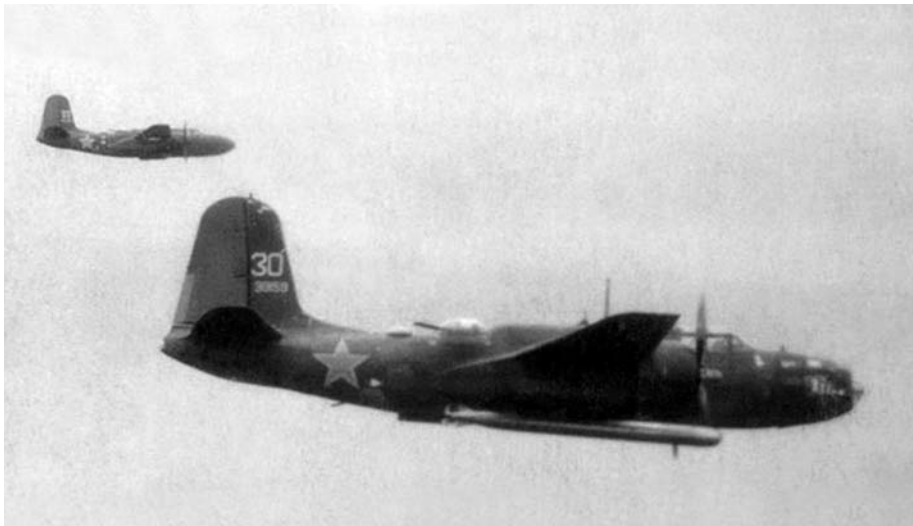
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With torpedoes slung beneath their fuselages, Douglas A-20 Boston bombers wing their way toward targets. Utilized extensively against Axis shipping, the A-20 was an effective weapon against the Nazis in the East.

knock Romania out of the war on August 20, 1944. On the same day, the VMF-ChF launched a massive air raid on the port of Constanta. The raid consisted of 62 Pe-2 and 14 A-20G bombers from the 40th BAP and 13th GDBAP plus 80 IL-2 and Yak-9 fighters. The attack went in waves, with smoke bombs dropped to help mask the aircraft from anti-aircraft gunners. The raid was devastating, with three German U-boats, eight S-boats, one R-boat, three Romanian mini-submarines, one MTB, and a tanker sunk. Two destroyers and numerous smaller ships were damaged or sunk. The raid effectively ended the threat from Axis naval forces in the Black Sea. Romania declared a cease-fire and armistice on August 23 and signed an unconditional surrender two weeks later.

The Soviet's VMF-SF (Northern Fleet) aviation began to incorporate A-20 units during the spring of 1943. The Northern Fleet's A-20s were with the 9th MTAP and the 118th ORAP Reconnaissance Regiment. The 36th MTAP moved up from the Black Sea Fleet and joined Northern Fleet Aviation in the summer of 1944. Northern Fleet Aviation was responsible for attacking Axis coastal shipping, naval forces, and bases along the Finnish and Norwegian coasts. The Northern Fleet A-20s were also required to provide air support to Northern Fleet naval-infantry units and to insert Northern Fleet naval scouts by parachute and then resupply them. A-20s were added to the fleet in 1944.

The Soviet Northern Fleet Commander Admiral Arseniy Golovko launched three coordinated anti-shipping campaigns, known as RV-1/2/3. These campaigns, from January-April 1944, only resulted in two ships sunk and two damaged by A-20s, while submarines and torpedo cutters sank several additional vessels. From

May 11-29, 1944, Operation RV-4 was launched, with even fiercer submarine, naval aviation, and torpedo boat attacks. After a German convoy was located by a Soviet Pe-2 reconnaissance aircraft on May 11, one attack by six IL-4 torpedo bombers with five fighters did not score. A second attack by five A-20 torpedo bombers and 10 fighters sank the escort ship V6113. From May 13-14, a total of 10 attacks and 217 sorties were flown against the convoy, resulting in the sinking and damaging of numerous ships by A-20s and other Soviet aircraft.

The Soviets were already planning for the Petsamo-Kirkenes Operation, an offensive to eject the Germans from parts of northern Russia, Finland, and Norway. The Soviet 14th Army, 7th VVS Air Army, and Northern Fleet warships, naval aviation, and naval-infantry units started their joint operation to expel the German XIX Mountain Corps and associated Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine units on October 7, 1944.

In support of the land offensive, the Northern Fleet conducted over a dozen submarine attacks, three major torpedo boat attacks, and multiple major airstrikes against German ships and arctic ports. Soviet A-20s were credited with sinking the repair ship *Sudmeer* (with aerial torpedoes), the minesweeper R301, patrol vessel V6111, and additional vessels in Kirkenes harbor. Soviet Naval aviation sank over a dozen vessels and also provided air support to Soviet naval infantry. A-20s also airdropped supplies to Soviet naval commandos.

The offensive totally unhinged the enemy defenses, and the Germans retreated, leaving behind over 90,000 tons of supplies. Major combat operations for the Northern Fleet ended on October 26, 1944.

In the Baltic, the VMF-KBF (Baltic Fleet) avi-

ation started incorporating A-20s in their MTAP units in early 1944. The units equipped with the A-20 included the 1st GMTAP, which converted from IL-4 bombers, and the newly created 51st MTAP, as well as the 15th ORAP Reconnaissance Regiment. The Baltic Fleet had been bottled up in the Gulf of Finland and their base at Kronshardt due to German control of the coasts and skies, as well as naval mines that kept their submarines and other ships trapped in the gulf.

In the spring of 1944, as the Red Army began its offensives to relieve Leningrad and drive Finland out of the war, the Baltic Fleet was eager to strike at Axis shipping with its submarines, torpedo boats, and especially naval aviation. The 51st MTAP and 1st GMTAP launched attacks against Axis minelayers and escort ships maintaining the minefield belts in the Gulf of Finland. Single A-20Gs armed with torpedoes prowled the Gulf of Finland looking for these Axis ships. On May 26, 1944, an A-20 from the 1st GMTAP torpedoed and sank the German ship *Ingeborg*. Air raids were then conducted against ports on the Finnish Gulf.

The Soviet offensive started on June 20, 1944, and the 1st GMTAP and 51st MTAP had a special target in mind on the Karelian Front. The main defense line separating Soviet and Finnish forces was the Svir River, where a hydroelectric dam named Svir-3 provided both power and flood control. The Soviets were worried that the Finns would open the floodgates to swamp the planned Soviet amphibious attack across the Svir, so the 1st GMTAP and 51st MTAP were tasked with destroying the dam.

During two days of operations, A-20s from the 51st MTAP and five IL-4s from the 1st GMTAP flew 24 sorties against the Svir-3 Dam. Four of the A-20 bombers were equipped with external racks for carrying two 1,000kg bombs, or one 1,000kg and one 500kg bomb. The rest of the aircraft would be carrying four 250kg bombs. All of the bombs were equipped with 22-second time-delay fuses to allow the aircraft to escape prior to the explosion. The tactic was to come in with 12-13 aircraft with fighter escort and drop the bombs near the rear face of the dam so that they would sink and then explode. The first sorties against the Svir-3 dam started on June 20. A total of 24 bombs were dropped, including four 1000 kg bombs, and 16 bombs stuck the dam. On June 21, the dam was effectively destroyed as a large hole was blown in the structure. The Soviet Army commenced its amphibious landings to start the Svir-Petrozavodsk Offensive that same day. This was all accomplished at the

Continued on page 72

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And then, on August 6 and 9, atomic bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. Modern warfare's first two ultimate weapons killed many thousands instantly and turned the two Japanese cities into smoking wastelands. The blinding explosions were to cast an ominous glow on the future of all mankind.

At 7 p.m. on August 15, 1945, reporters crowded into the Oval Office of the White House to hear America's new president, the peppery Harry S. Truman, announce in his flat Missouri twang, "I have just received a note from the Japanese government in reply to the message forwarded to that government by the secretary of state on August 11. I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, which specifies the unconditional surrender of Japan." Broadcasting at midnight on August 14, Prime Minister Churchill had already declared, "Japan has today surrendered. The last of our enemies is laid low."

After almost four years of humiliating setbacks, climactic naval battles, and bloody invasions from Pearl Harbor to Bataan, from Guadalcanal to Okinawa, the Pacific War—and World War II—had finally come to an end.

Surrender at Tokyo Bay

Ceremonies aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* ended an exhaustive campaign of death and destruction as World War II came to a close.

AFTER SIX YEARS OF GLOBAL DESTRUCTION, SUFFERING, AND DEATH, IT WAS almost over in the Spring of 1945.

Much of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy lay under rubble, dictators Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini were dead, and a sinister collection of top Axis henchmen were in custody, awaiting Allied justice as war criminals. After mourning the estimated 50 million dead of World War II, the liberating nations rejoiced.

Flags fluttered brightly from windows as multitudes sang and danced in the streets of great cities from Paris to Brussels to San Francisco. In London, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stood beside King George VI on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and told thousands of Allied servicemen and civilians, "This...is your victory." World War II had become history—in Europe.

But thousands of miles away, the conflict continued in the Far East. There, British forces mopped up Japanese resistance in Burma, the Americans secured the Philippines and Okinawa, and Allied planners were readying an invasion of the Japanese home islands. While the enemy war cabinet stubbornly resisted Allied demands for unconditional surrender, fleets of powerful U.S. Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers continued to pound Tokyo and other cities.



ABOVE: The somber Japanese delegation awaits instructions shortly after arriving. At left front, wearing a top hat, stands Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, while General Yoshijiro Umezu is to his immediate left. **LEFT:** During the ceremony aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, General Yoshijiro Umezu, chief of the Imperial General Staff of the Japanese Army, signs the instrument of surrender. General Douglas MacArthur stands behind a cluster of microphones.

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MacArthur signs the surrender document as Generals Jonathan Wainwright and Arthur Percival, taken prisoner in the Philippines and at Singapore respectively, look on. A host of Allied officers observes the proceedings from a few feet away.

On Guam, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the silver-haired commander of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, reacted quietly to the momentous news. He “didn’t get jubilant or jump up and down like I saw some other officers do,” reported an aide. “He merely smiled in his own calm way.”

Aboard his flagship, the battlewagon USS *Missouri*, off the coast of Japan, Admiral William F. Halsey, commander of the U.S. Third Fleet, responded differently. The jut-jawed, pugnacious “Bull” Halsey let out a loud “Yippee!” and slapped every shoulder within reach. After calming down, he ordered the hoisting of “well done” signals. Then, just to be on the safe side, and because of his legendary distrust of the Japanese, Halsey issued an order to his carrier pilots to “investigate and shoot down all snoopers—not vindictively, but in a friendly sort of way.”

On ships throughout Halsey’s fleet, whistles shrilled and crewmen hugged each other. “Every ship broke out its largest ensign,” said one officer, and the men vied with one another to see who could yell the loudest.”

A large force of U.S. bombers and fighters was approaching Tokyo when it was notified to jettison its bombs and return to base. But the shooting was not quite over.

Five Japanese aircraft attacked the Third Fleet that morning and were quickly shot down

by ships’ gunners. An additional 38 planes were downed on the last day of hostilities.

In the Japanese capital, the war cabinet resigned en masse after a broadcast by Emperor Hirohito, and General Douglas A. MacArthur, the supreme commander of Allied ground forces in the Pacific theater, radioed Tokyo that the Allied high command had accepted Japan’s surrender. A Japanese delegation was flown to Manila and informed that Allied forces were about to land in their homeland. The enemy officials were asked to provide details of their defenses, and they cooperated fully.

Forty-five C-47 transport planes touched down at the Atsugi air base shortly after dawn on August 28, and the Allied occupation of Japan began. The next day, the U.S. battleships *Missouri* and *South Dakota* and the Royal Navy battleship HMS *Duke of York* dropped anchor in Tokyo Bay along with hundreds of other warships of the Third Fleet and the British Pacific Fleet. The 35,000-ton *Duke of York*, a Home Fleet veteran of the invasion of North Africa and the pursuit of the German battlecruiser *Scharnhorst*, was wearing the flag of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, commander of the British Pacific Fleet. The display of naval might awed Japanese observers on shore.

Admiral Nimitz arrived by flying boat on the afternoon of August 29. The usually calm and dignified seadog from Texas was seething over

President Truman’s selection of the handsome, autocratic General MacArthur to conduct the planned surrender ceremony and oversee the occupation. Nimitz had no ambition to command the occupation, but he was annoyed at the Army taking the spotlight when he felt that the Navy and Marine Corps had borne the brunt of the Pacific War.

In Washington, Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal saved the day by proposing that the Japanese surrender be signed aboard the USS *Missouri*. Truman was delighted with the idea. The vessel had been named for his home state and christened by his daughter, Margaret, in January 1944. The fourth of the Iowa-class battleships, the 45,000-ton, 888-foot-long *Missouri* (BB-63) was laid down in the New York Navy Yard in January 1941, commissioned on June 11, 1944, and was the last battleship to enter service with the U.S. Navy. Mounting nine 16-inch guns, she screened Admiral Marc A. Mitscher’s Task Force 58, supported the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in February and April 1945, survived a kamikaze crash, and bombarded industrial centers in Japan.

The date set for the surrender ceremony was Sunday, September 2, 1945.

By August 30, more than 4,000 troops of Maj. Gen. Joseph M. Swing’s U.S. 11th Airborne Division had landed at Atsugi. They were there just in time to greet General MacArthur when his personal C-54 Douglas Skymaster transport, named *Bataan*, touched down at 2:19 PM that day. With a long corn cob pipe clenched jauntily between his teeth, MacArthur stood silently at the plane’s door, savoring the moment. He muttered, “This is the payoff.”

Then the smiling MacArthur strode down the landing ramp to shake hands with Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger, a decorated veteran of the 1918-19 Siberian campaign, capable commander of the U.S. Eighth Army, and liberator of New Guinea and the Philippine Islands. “Bob,” said MacArthur, “from Melbourne to Tokyo is a long way, but this seems to be the end of the road.”

September 2 dawned cool and gray in Tokyo Bay. Around 7:30 AM, an American destroyer lay to, and a host of correspondents and photographers from a score of countries clambered aboard the USS *Missouri* to take up assigned positions. The Russians were obstreperous, observed one of the ship’s officers, and roamed around the battleship “like wild men.”

The “Mighty Mo” was especially rigged for the occasion, and at morning colors the Stars and Stripes was hoisted on the mainmast. It was the flag that had flown above the U.S. Capitol on December 7, 1941. Mounted on a nearby

bulkhead was another American flag—a tattered one bearing 34 stars. This was the ensign that Commodore Matthew C. Perry had flown aboard his flagship, the USS *Powhatan*, when he sailed into Tokyo Bay in 1854 to open Japan to the West. Admiral Halsey had ordered Perry’s flag rushed from the U.S. Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis, Maryland, for the surrender ceremony.

The destroyer USS *Buchanan* pulled alongside the starboard side of the USS *Missouri* at 8:03 AM and discharged high-ranking Allied officers, including Admiral Halsey, General Eichelberger, Dutch Admiral C.E.L. Helfrich, Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, General Carl A. Spaatz, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, British Lt. Gen. Arthur E. Percival, and Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright. Percival and Wainwright had been interned in Manchuria since the surrender in 1942 of Singapore, Bataan and Corregidor. At 8:05 AM, Admiral Nimitz arrived in a motor barge and was piped aboard. A few minutes later, General MacArthur, pale and unsmiling, climbed aboard from the destroyer USS *Nichols* and walked to Admiral Halsey’s cabin.

He surveyed the officers aboard the battleship, shook hands with Nimitz and Halsey, and commented, “It’s grand to have so many of my



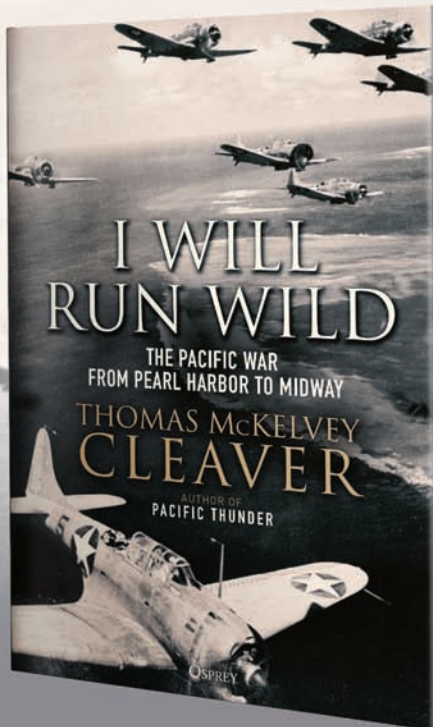
Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey (left) chats with Admiral John S. McCain after the formal Japanese surrender. McCain, suffering from a heart condition and exhaustion, died four days later.

colleagues from the shoestring days here at the end of the road.” Besides 43 high-ranking officers from eight Allied nations, MacArthur was heading an impressive U.S. delegation of 89

officers that included 39 generals and 34 admirals. Among them were Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle, whose famous B-25 bomber raid had first carried the war to Japan in April 1942, and Maj. Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, whose Twentieth Air Force had rained final devastation on the Japanese.

Another officer present was the short, slightly-built Vice Adm. John S. “Slew” McCain, a carrier task force commander who had distinguished himself by his vigor and audacity in the Marianas, Philippines, Okinawa, and China Sea campaigns. Worn out by the war and with his weight down to 100 pounds at the age of 61, he had requested home leave, but Admiral Halsey pressed him to stay for the surrender ceremonies. McCain died four days later at his home in Coronado, California.

Conspicuously absent from the gathering was the quiet, taciturn Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, victor of the Battle of Midway and commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet. He was stationed off Okinawa aboard his flagship, the battleship USS *New Jersey*, because Nimitz had wanted someone to take command in the Pacific in case Japanese fanatics attacked the *Missouri*. Fears had been expressed that kamikaze suicide planes might be launched against the Mighty Mo when she entered Tokyo Bay.



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Aircraft launched from carriers of the U.S. Navy fly over the assemblage of Allied warships in Tokyo Bay. The battleship USS *Missouri* is anchored in the left foreground.

Eleven Japanese delegates arrived at 8:56 AM aboard the destroyer USS *Lansdowne*, named for Lt. Cmdr. Zachary Lansdowne, who was killed in the tragic crash of the Navy dirigible, *Shenandoah*, on September 3, 1925. Following Colonel Sidney Mashbir, General MacArthur's chief translator, Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu made his way painfully up a gangway to the *Missouri*'s quarterdeck. His left leg had been blown off by an assassin's bomb in Shanghai years earlier, and his artificial leg caused him agony. The civilian Japanese representatives wore formal morning cutaway coats and top hats in contrast to the ill-fitting uniforms of the military delegates and to the khaki uniforms and open-necked shirts worn by General MacArthur and the U.S. Navy and Army officers. There was an eerie silence as the 11 Japanese delegates took their places on deck.

By now, the battleship was crammed with delegates and onlookers. More than 100 Allied generals and admirals were on the main deck, while reporters and the ship's complement of 3,000 officers and bluejackets watched from atop the big 16-inch gun turrets and wherever else they could find space. All knew they were witnessing a historic moment, and the tension was immense.

The Japanese military and civilian envoys walked in front of a battered mess table on which the surrender documents had been

strategically placed to cover coffee stains on the green felt. The Royal Navy had offered an elegant mahogany table used in one of Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe's dreadnoughts at the Battle of Jutland on May 31-June 1, 1916, but it was considered too small for the occasion. Accompanied by Admirals Nimitz and Halsey, General MacArthur walked briskly across the *Missouri* deck to the table. All eyes were on the Japanese.

"We waited a few minutes, standing in the public gaze like penitent schoolboys awaiting the dreaded schoolmaster," reported Toshikazu Kase, a Japanese delegate. "A million eyes seemed to beat on us like arrows barbed with fire. I felt them sink into my body with a sharp physical pain."

The ship's chaplain delivered an invocation, a recording of the Star-Spangled Banner was played over the public address system, and scrawny Generals Percival and Wainwright stepped to MacArthur's side behind the table, facing the Japanese. "We are gathered here," MacArthur intoned slowly, "representatives of the major warring powers, to conclude a solemn agreement whereby peace may be restored..."

His hands shaking, the presiding general continued, "It is my earnest hope, indeed the hope of all mankind, that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood

and carnage of the past, a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice." Almost as if on cue, the clouds parted, and the sun emerged for the first time that morning. In the distance, the snow-clad peak of Mount Fuji sparkled.

General MacArthur stepped back and motioned for Foreign Minister Shigemitsu to sign the surrender document. He limped forward and sat at the table. He removed his yellow gloves and silk top hat and placed them on the table. Shigemitsu stared at the paper for several moments, fumbling nervously with his cane and giving the impression of stalling. But MacArthur realized that the foreign minister was confused and said sharply to his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, "Sutherland, show him where to sign." Shigemitsu signed.

Next, General Yoshijiro Umezu, the Japanese Army chief of staff, marched forward, signed the document quickly, and walked back stiffly to his country's delegation. Then it was MacArthur's turn to sign for the Allies. Using three pens, he wrote his signature a few letters at a time. He handed the first pen to General Wainwright, whom he had left in charge of the doomed garrison at Corregidor in March 1942, and the second to General Percival, who had surrendered the bastion of Singapore to the Japanese in February 1942. MacArthur put the third pen into his pocket to take to his wife, Jean, and son, Arthur, in Manila.

Admiral Nimitz signed on behalf of the United States, and then the other Allied representatives signed for their respective countries: General Hsu Yung-chang for China, Admiral Fraser for Great Britain, Lt. Gen. K. Derevyanko for the Soviet Union, General Sir Thomas Blamey for Australia, Air Marshal Sir L.M. Isitt for New Zealand, Colonel L. Moore-Cosgrove for Canada, Admiral Helfrich for the Netherlands, and General Jacques Philippe Leclerc for France. His famed Free French 2nd Armored Division had liberated Paris in August 1944.

According to reporter Edgar A. Poe of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, "Halsey, known for his salty language as well as for his brilliant naval strategy, moved his lips constantly during the surrender ceremonies. He was apparently still cussin' the enemy."

After the signings were completed at 9:25 AM, General MacArthur said, "Let us pray that peace now be restored to the world, and that God will preserve it always. These proceedings are now closed." Accompanied by Generals Wainwright and Percival, he then

Continued on page 72

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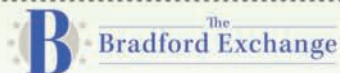
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High over Normandy, France, eight paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division charged out the rear door of their C-47 Skytrain aircraft. They whooped and shouted as antiaircraft explosions rattled the plane.

On the heels of the eighth paratrooper came Technical Sergeant Gerald Griffith. He didn't jump; strapping himself into the seat by the door, he pulled a T-shaped handle, releasing the cargo strapped under the plane's fuselage. His task complete, Griffith remained seated while the next eight-man group leaped out the door. From his perch, he had a perfect view of the D-Day airborne assault over Ste. Mère Église.

Griffith never forgot what he saw: "Some of the paratroopers jumping out of their planes were hit by the prop wash from the plane in front of them, shooting them into the planes behind them, into their propellers."

These were the opening hours of June 6, 1944, and the C-47s were dropping paratroopers inland from Utah Beach, where American soldiers were expected to land around sunrise—one of the first steps toward liberating France and invading Germany. Griffith had a front-line seat to the action as antiaircraft fire lit up the night with deadly tracers, punching jagged holes in the wings of the C-47.

"It just looked like somebody cut it with a knife," he recalled, "or like someone hit it with an axe." He saw other planes take

FROM D-DAY TO VE-DAY

vicious ground fire. "I saw them start down, but I never saw them hit the ground," he said. The paratroopers had told him earlier that they were glad they didn't have to ride back in the C-47. "I guess being in a plane made them feel kind of trapped."

Once the paratroopers had jumped, Griffith's pilot banked into a wide circle to prevent hitting other planes and flew back to England. "I don't know how many other planes were coming in behind us, but that was the drill." With their departure came a feeling of relief. The crew had survived and successfully completed their mission, but the day had just begun. In only a few hours they would soar over France again.

Drafted in April 1943 at the age of 18, Griffith, a native of Centuria, Illinois, trained with the U.S. Army Air Forces in Gulfport, Mississippi, before shipping out to the United Kingdom. He originally served as a top turret machine-gunner on a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber, where he encountered enemy fire for the first time. "I was a little scared," he explained. "Flak does not make a lot of noise. You just see pieces flying through the air, and it sounds like hail hitting the airplane. Soon you see holes in your plane."

In March 1944, Griffith transferred to the 305th Troop Carrier Squadron, 50th Troop Carrier Wing, 442nd Troop Carrier Group, U.S. Ninth Air Force. As the flight engineer on board a C-47, Grif-

Gerard Griffith Family



IN A C-47

Technical Sergeant Gerald Griffith survived two crash landings while delivering paratroopers in World War II's largest airborne operations.

KEVIN HYMEL

ABOVE: Gerard Griffith achieved the rank of Sergeant First Class in 1945. **OPPOSITE:** Paratroopers load up during a training jump as the C-47 flight crew wait in the doorway. Note that the door hinges have been taped over so parachutes and other loose ends will not catch on them.

U.S. Air Force





Airborne troops line the interior of a C-47 as they prepare to jump into Normandy. The man standing to the right might be the Flight Engineer since he is not wearing jump pants. The cable he is holding onto is the one Griffith used to balance himself over the drop zone.

fifth sat between the pilot and copilot and worked the plane's flaps and landing gear. "For two months all we did was practice paratrooper drops and towing gliders for D-Day," he recalled.

On June 4, Griffith and his crew painted black and white stripes on their wings for easy recognition. D-Day commanders did not want a repeat of the friendly-fire incident over Sicily, in which the Navy and ground troops shot down 23 transport planes, killing more than 100 paratroopers. Then the word came down that the English Channel was socked in with clouds; D-Day was being postponed. "We just figured it was the typical hurry-up-and-wait." The troops went back to their tents while most crews slept in their planes. The next night, they loaded up the men and took off for France.

The weather had not improved much. Cloud cover scattered plane formations and pathfinders, including specially trained airborne troops who jumped first to mark landing zones for other paratroopers. "Not very many of us dropped our paratroopers where they were supposed to," confessed Griffith. "There was nothing to show us where to drop our men. My only signal was the red and green lights [inside the plane that told the paratroopers when to jump]."

"My job was pretty simple," said Griffith. The door was only 20 feet from the cockpit, and the paratroopers' hookup line served as a handhold for the walk back. He then strapped himself into the seat next to the door. "I had to do this because they might pull me out with them as they went. I wish they did on occasion."

To give the paratroopers extra firepower once on the ground, large packs filled with guns, ammunition, and other fighting necessities were bolted under the C-47's fuselage in groups of six and covered with a canvas tarp. These "six-packs" were about eight feet long and two feet wide. When Griffith pulled the lever, he unzipped the canvas, allowing the six-packs to fall. In theory, the six-pack was released between the two lines, or "sticks," of departing paratroopers. Once on the ground, the first eight paratroopers would walk forward and the following eight would walk back, converging on the six-pack. In combat, unfortunately, the procedure did not work. "I don't know anyone who ever saw one of those packs," Griffith remembered.

Griffith's second D-Day flight was different: daylight provided better unit cohesion, and there was no flak. "We stayed pretty much in formation—loosely." The sun also brought a

spectacular view of the invasion fleet below: "It was pretty much like a bridge of ships, there were so many of them," recalled Griffith.

Over land, the view changed. "I saw parachutes and equipment lying around and a lot of water where [the Germans] flooded everything." Griffith's crew spent the rest of the historic day hauling cargo and dropping it to the men below.

In the weeks that followed, Griffith and his crewmates flew gasoline in and flew out the wounded, eventually supporting the breakout of General George Patton's Third Army and its drive across France. They hauled five-gallon gas cans to impromptu airports.

Often, German prisoners of war helped unload gas and load the wounded. "They were pretty nice," reminisced Griffith. "They knew the nicer they were, the more chocolate and cigarettes we would give them." The wounded were attended to by a flight nurse who did her best to keep the patients stable until they arrived in England. On a few occasions, Griffith saw General Patton. "I just saw him from a distance. He was always running around, and I never spoke to him. We were loading gas and his mind was on business."

In August, Griffith and his crew flew to Sicily

where they picked up more paratroopers for Operation Dragoon, a combat jump into southern France. The mission was relatively calm compared to Normandy, without too much flak over enemy territory. The training and experience were paying off. “There wasn’t much change from earlier operations,” said Griffith. “It was the same thing over and over.”

The flight back, though, was anything but routine. One of the engines coughed out, and the C-47 pilot could not feather the stalled propeller (i.e., turn the blades edge-forward to reduce friction). “The engine kept dragging the plane down,” said Griffith. The pilot managed to a crash landing in the Mediterranean Sea, where it stayed afloat long enough for the men to get out and inflate their life rafts. They ate K-rations and drank fresh water, waiting eight hours until a U.S. Navy ship rescued them and delivered them to North Africa.

“I was always confident we were going to be picked up,” Griffith smiled.

The next big drop came in the Netherlands: Operation Market Garden, British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery’s ambitious plan to drop three airborne divisions onto vital bridges, securing them and enabling armored troops to cross into Germany. From September 17–20, Griffith’s crew lifted 101st Airborne Division troops and gliders to drop zones around the town of Eindhoven. So many planes took off from England for the operation that witnesses thought the war was almost won. “Everybody had that feeling,” said Griffith.

The first flight was an anxious one. Weighed down with a full load of paratroopers, Griffith’s C-47 also hauled a glider. “The plane was so heavy we kept our flaps down to keep us from falling out of the sky.” The vista, void of flak, was impressive. “You could see planes for a mile in front of you.” Despite the view outside, he spent most of the flight looking at instruments.

“Towing a glider is just like towing a car,” he explained. “It was just a matter of the glider pilot hanging on.” During takeoff, the glider would often lift off before the C-47. When the tow plane reached the drop zone, the glider pilot would tell the tow pilot he was dropping the rope, and then pull a lever above his head. “The rope would stay with us,” Griffith said. “We would fly over a pre-designated spot and drop it.”

Glider landings were rarely smooth. “Very few of them landed intact,” he recalled. “We seldom ever saw those people again.” Once the paratroopers jumped and the glider was released, Griffith felt better as his plane picked up speed and headed back to base. “I really didn’t want

any part of the glider after it left the plane.”

The next day, Griffith and his crew towed two more gliders to the drop zone, one containing glider troops, and the other artillery. Weather conditions then worsened over England, preventing reinforcement on the 19th. On September 20, Griffith and his crew dropped their last load of paratroopers.

Reflecting on glider towing, Griffith admitted the bond with the glider crews was not like the one he had with his own crew. In training, C-47 crews lined up on the runway, and officers assigned them a different glider each time. “We

seldom hauled the same people twice.” Nor did Griffith associate much with the paratroopers. “We would just watch and make sure they loaded [into] our plane right.” Griffith did feel bad about the men killed on these missions, “but you didn’t spend a lot of time thinking about it.”

Ultimately, Market Garden failed. Weather, poor terrain, destroyed bridges, and surprisingly stiff German resistance prevented Montgomery’s troops from crossing into Germany. Despite fighter protection, the 442nd Troop Carrier Group suffered 23 men killed or miss-

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ABOVE: Splashdown! A navy patrol boat comes to the rescue of a downed C-47. Tech. Sgt. Griffith’s plane met the same fate after delivering paratroopers to the invasion of southern France. **BELOW: German POWs help unload Jerry cans of gasoline from a C-47 for General George S. Patton’s Third Army. Tech. Sgt. Griffith said they were friendly.**



National Archives



ABOVE: A C-47 rests in the snow outside Bastogne. Griffith's plane made a belly landing in No Man's Land before being rescued by an American patrol. **BELOW:** Towed by a single Douglas C-47, two gliders soar side-by-side, as seen from the cockpit of another glider.



ing in action and six wounded. "Operation Market Garden saw our heaviest losses," lamented Griffith.

In October, the 442nd transferred to Bonnetable, France. During winter months, Griffith and his crew continued evacuating wounded and delivering supplies, but as the weather conditions worsened and the airstrips turned to mud, they moved to St. Andre de l'Eure, outside Paris. "Most local French could speak English, and it was only 50 miles from Paris." When it came to the GI pastime of bartering, Griffith had an ace up his sleeve: "I didn't smoke." Cigarette cartons were worth \$100, so he traded them for anything he wanted or

thought he needed.

On December 16, the Germans launched their last major offensive in the west—the Battle of the Bulge. Griffith first learned of the attack when he was awakened out of bed by the noise of war. "We heard all this rumbling," he recalled. "We looked out of our tents and all these [American] tanks went by." Next, all crews were called to their planes to stand guard against German saboteurs dressed as Americans. German spies had already been captured wearing American uniforms.

But no planes were flying. Fog blanketed the area. Griffith and his crew waited as the Germans pushed west and surrounded the town of

Bastogne. General Patton pushed north to Bastogne to relieve the 101st Airborne, which held the town's vital crossroads.

Finally, the skies cleared above Bastogne on December 24, the day before Christmas. Griffith's crew flew over the town and dropped supplies, but the Germans greeted them with ground fire. "Some bullets hit one of our engines and we could not remain airborne." For the second time, Griffith was going down, but this time he and his crew did not know if they would land behind friendly or enemy lines.

Griffith went to the back of the plane and got in the latrine. "It was a safe place to be instead of getting bounced around." The pilot managed to make a bumpy belly landing in the snow-covered no-man's-land outside Bastogne and skidded to a halt. The crew only had .45-cal. Colt pistols to defend themselves, and Griffith was wearing low-topped shoes. A handful of soldiers appeared almost immediately in the distance and headed toward them. When they got near, Griffith was relieved to discover they were Americans.

"They took us out of the plane and brought us into town." During the half-mile hike in the snow, Griffith's feet became frostbitten. He spent the rest of the siege in a building at the center of town, surviving on C and K rations—a bit different from the mess hall, but he didn't mind. "I was young, and everything tastes good when you're hungry." Christmas passed with no fanfare. The next day, the 4th Armored Division, spearheading Patton's attack, broke through.

Griffith returned to duty, flying dangerous resupply missions. On a flight back from Germany in early 1945, one of his engines stopped running. The pilot found an emergency runway in Brussels, Belgium, and Griffith fired a red flare from a special tube atop the plane to signal an emergency. But they soon encountered a group of shot-up B-17s also in need of emergency landings. As Griffith's plane circled, the B-17s landed one after the other, their crews rolling out of the planes as they sped down the runway. "A lot of guys were breaking arms and legs as they spilled out," explained Griffith. "Then a big 'boom' hit us. We thought it was one of our tires getting hit."

But the 'boom' was followed by another, and another. It was not until Griffith landed that he discovered the source of the noise. "They were Buzz Bombs exploding nearby." Officially called the V-1 pulse jet, German Buzz Bombs earned their name from the loud buzzing noise their engines made while flying to target. "It was one of scariest times in the war for me," said Griffith.

On March 24, 1945, Griffith participated in Operation Varsity, the airborne assault across the Rhine River—the last natural boundary into Germany. It was also the largest single-day airborne drop into one location, involving 16,000 paratroopers and several thousand aircraft. Griffith's plane pulled a glider. It was an uneventful mission. "Nothing happened," he said. "You seldom saw any enemy planes toward the end of the war." He flew only one mission that day; the Allies had a vast number of planes and had perfected the technique of towing two gliders behind one aircraft, so follow-up missions were unnecessary.

With the last airborne mission a success, Griffith and his crew were given a unique assignment. To expedite the evacuation of wounded from the battlefield, the Army Air

Gerard Griffith Family



didn't really notice it much," said Griffith. By the time the winch had finished picking up the slack, the glider was already airborne. Nine minutes later, the plane released the glider over a hospital 50 miles behind the front—a trip that would have taken hours on the ground. Ten gliders could transport the same number of patients as 1,500 ambulances. Although the procedure was new, the Army Air Forces had been working on the idea for a long time. "We started practicing it right after D-Day."

Griffith continued his duties until May 8, the last day of the war. On a supply run into Germany, his pilot got word over the radio of the Nazi surrender. "We were an hour out of Germany," he recalled. "We just turned around and went back to base." But Griffith decided to celebrate Germany's defeat by firing a green flare.

National Archives



LEFT: Tech. Sgt. Gerard Griffith wore fleece-lined outerwear to ward off the cold of high-altitude flying. He was 18 years-old in 1943. **RIGHT:** A C-47 swoops down to snatch a glider's tow rope. Panels were set up on the ground to help the plane's pilot locate the elevated tow rope.

Forces had developed a technique of snatching wounded-laden gliders off the ground using low-flying C-47s. With a massive volume of Allied road traffic heading east over the last few bridges across the Rhine and none heading west, this was the Army's best option for medical evacuation. "It was the first of its kind east of the Rhine," Griffith explained.

Each glider was loaded with 12 wounded men, a pilot and nurse. The tow rope was laid out in front of the glider and held up between two poles. Then a C-47 swooped in at 150 miles an hour with a special winch that hooked the rope and pulled the glider into the air.

"That was kind of scary," Griffith admitted. The winch would then gradually tighten up so the glider would not be heavily jerked. "You

"The pilot got mad at me," Griffith chuckled, "but I figured it was harmless."

Griffith's last major undertaking of the war involved delivering Holocaust survivors to Greece—the first leg of a journey to what would soon become the state of Israel. C-47s hauled groups of 30 survivors per trip. "They were nothing but skin and bones," he recalled. Many of the survivors were sick, and some defecated in the back of the plane.

Even Griffith's simplest attempts at compassion overwhelmed these suffering people: "There was an 18-year-old girl I took into the cockpit, and I gave her a candy bar," he recalled. "She ate it down and she threw it right back up." From May to June, the Army Air Forces transferred 45,525 survivors to

Greece. "They were all happy, but not in a talkative mood."

Griffith went on to serve 30 years in the U.S. Air Force. Looking back on World War II, he confessed that he had nightmares for years after the war. One of his most common nightmares involved a supply mission: "We were hauling gas to Patton, and where we landed, there was a side of a hill filled with dead people. In my dream, there is a German there, trying to shoot me." He also had nightmares of his C-47 taking off below electric wires, trying not to snag them.

On a cold day in 1982, while playing golf at a local club in Waxahachie, Texas, Griffith complained about his frostbitten feet to his playing partner, Bob Frederick. Griffith then told Frederick about his crash-landing outside Bastogne, and Frederick told him that he was part of a

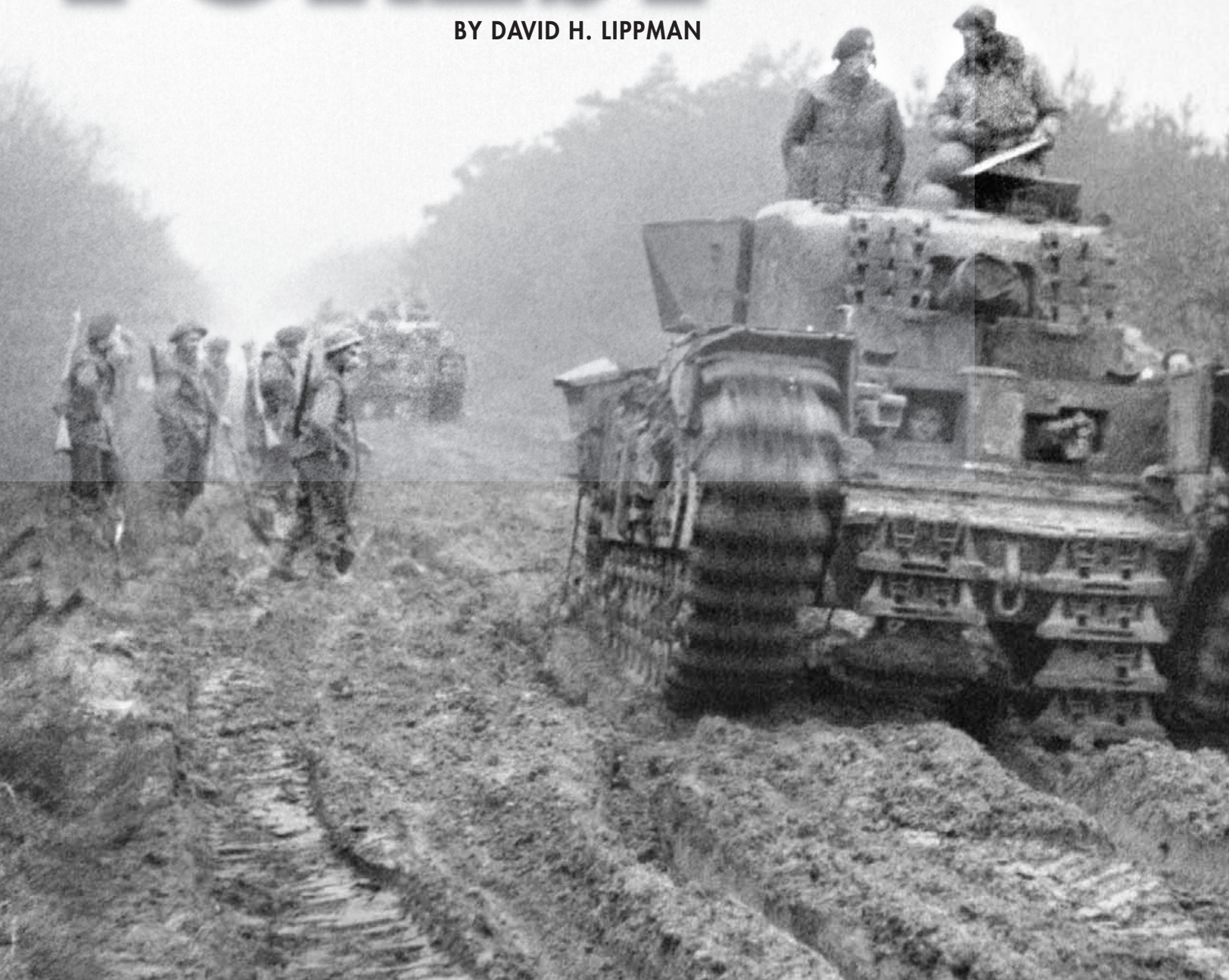
search party that had rescued the crew of a downed plane in that same area. Neither one of them knew for sure if they had met some 38 years before, so they rarely spoke about it to others. "It was something we had between just us."

Gerald Griffith passed away on December 20, 2017, and was buried in Section 55 of Arlington National Cemetery. Fittingly, his funeral took place on June 6, 2017, the 73rd anniversary of D-Day, Griffith's baptism of fire. □

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Into The **BITTER FOREST**

BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN



“IN the early hours of 8 February 1945, I climbed into my command post, which consisted of a small platform halfway up a tree,” Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks wrote in his memoirs, “from where I could see in front of me a peaceful-looking valley with small farms dotted here and there. On the far side lay the sinister Reichswald Forest. Over this valley, XXX Corps was about to attack.”

The offensive that was about to open was one of the largest battles the British and Canadians would fight in World War II, a major frontal assault designed to drive through the Reichswald Forest between the Maas and Rhine Rivers, crushing everything in its path. It was also to be the northern pincer of a grand encirclement that Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery had entrusted to the Canadian First Army under General Sir Harry Crerar, with Horrocks’ XXX Corps and its five British and two Canadian divisions, entitled Operation Veritable. The southern pincer, called Operation Grenade, would comprise 12 divisions of the U.S. Ninth Army under Lt. Gen. Bill Simpson, which would attack north across the Roer River and meet up with Horrocks’ troops. Under the plan, more than 150,000 Germans would be killed or trapped in a giant bag, and Allied troops would stand on the west bank of the Rhine River at the end of the operation. The next phase would be an equally massive crossing of the Rhine at Xanten, north of the Ruhr, Germany’s industrial heartland, the northern pincer of an even larger encirclement of that valley of coal mines, steel mills, and factories.

cement, the Westwall now consisted of more than 3,000 concrete pillboxes, bunkers, and observation posts strung two or three lines deep.

The pillboxes themselves were eight feet thick, with small rooms for fortress troops, ammunition storage, and gun emplacements, some camouflaged in houses and barns. Everywhere were concrete “dragon’s teeth”—anti-tank obstacles—and anti-tank ditches.

These impressive defenses, though, required troops. In the Reichswald, that meant the veteran paratrooper General Alfred Schlemm, who commanded the 1st Parachute Army. While it had parachute divisions on its ration strength, few of them were actually jump-trained. They were, however, highly skilled battlefield soldiers with high morale and expertise in last-ditch stands. The direct defender of the Reichswald was the 86th Infantry Corps under General Erich Straube, known behind his back as the *Uhrmacher*, the Watchmaker, for his obsession with detail. Despite that, Straube had fought well on the Eastern Front and was a master of the fighting withdrawal, something the Germans would need in the upcoming battle. Straube was competent and caustic.

Under his command on the Reichswald front line stood the 84th Infantry Division, consisting of 10,000 men in three regiments. This outfit had been formed in occupied Poland in March 1944 from various scrapings of units battered on the Eastern Front. Since then, it had been shredded at Falaise in August, then taken a pounding from

BRITISH AND CANADIAN FORCES FOUGHT A BLOODY OFFENSIVE IN THE FOREST OF THE REICHSWALD ON THE GERMAN FRONTIER.

But before any of that could be accomplished, Horrocks’ men had to clean out the Reichswald. That would not be easy. Despite the massive losses the Germans had suffered in the Battle of the Bulge, they remained a formidable foe. The Reichswald was a forest with valleys, hills, and two major towns, Cleve and Goch. There was only one gravel road from the Allied lines to Cleve.

In addition to those natural defenses, the Germans had begun creating a fortified line from the Reichswald to Alsace in 1938, called the Westwall by the Germans and the “Siegfried Line” by the Allies. Using one-third of Germany’s production of

American paratroopers in Holland that September, and now consisted of some veteran soldiers, naval personnel released from bases and immobile ships, and 17-year-old kids. It had the 276th Mogen or “Stomach” Battalion—men whose stomach issues required a special diet—under its command, and an Ohren or “Ear” Battalion, consisting of deaf men who were not put on the front lines. The 84th had 36 self-propelled antitank guns of the 655th Heavy Antitank Battalion and only 100 artillery pieces, most of them horse-drawn. The division’s boss was six-foot-tall Maj. Gen. Heinz Fiebig, described by other German officers as “striking

A British Churchill tank powers its way through thick mud along a forest road in the Reichswald at the start of Operation Veritable on February 8, 1945. Behind the tank, sappers of the 45th Division are attempting to strengthen the road, making it more passable for light vehicles.



ABOVE: Using logs and gravel, Royal Engineers work to improve the roads that British units will traverse during the upcoming Operation Veritable. BELOW: M4 Sherman medium tanks of the 15th Scottish Division, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders assemble at their jumping-off point for the beginning of Operation Veritable.



Imperial War Museum

and ... debonair” and “a charming fellow to have at a party [but] the last man to lead a division in the field.”

Part of the front was held by the 2nd Parachute Regiment. For reserves, Straube could call on the 7th Parachute Division, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 116th Panzer Division, then refitting after being mauled in the Battle of the Bulge. There was virtually no air cover. The Luftwaffe counted its aircraft in handfuls and lacked the fuel to show them to the enemy.

The Watchmaker had added to his defensive positions. A fortified line between the

flooded areas south of the Rhine and the Maas added a double series of trenches and antitank ditches. Behind that was the Westwall, which included defenses around Cleve and Goch. Behind that was yet another line, the Hochwald Layback, a backup with more trenches, wire belts, and mines.

The four-mile-wide Reichswald itself provided plenty of natural defenses: flooded land south of the Rhine; thick woods; narrow trails that went north to south, perpendicular to the planned advance; and most of all, soft soil, which would turn into mud under thaw and rain. Most of the woods consisted of young

pine four to seven feet apart. Along the northern flank and within its tree line, the Materborn Ridge ranged between 200 and 250 feet above sea level before pivoting in the northwest corner. There, it created a 300-foot hill called the Brandenburg, which provided artillery spotters with a perfect box seat for the whole area.

Now Horrocks and Crerar prepared their plans and supplies for the massive assault. A contingent of 470,000 British and Canadian troops would assault the German defenses, ranging from Tommies in battle-dress to Canadian psychiatrists to deal with shell-shock. This would be the largest single offensive since the Normandy landings and breakout, and the British were determined to avoid the embarrassment of the Market Garden fiasco in Holland in September.

To address the road issue, 50 companies of Royal Engineers, 20 more of pioneers, and three road-construction companies worked around the clock to shore up and rebuild 400 miles of roads and construct 100 miles of new ones. The engineers also built 100 new bridges, including five across the Maas, among them a 1,280-foot-long one named Quebec, and a rail bridge near Nijmegen.

The British could also turn to the specialized armor of the 79th Armored Division and its so-called “funnies.” These were highly unusual tanks: Churchill “Crocodile” flamethrowers, “Petard” tanks that fired immense shells at close range to blast open bunkers, Sherman Flails or “Crabs,” which had a rotating drum in front of their hulls with revolving flails designed to set off anti-personnel mines and thus create a path through hostile minefields. The division also had the world’s first armored personnel carrier, the Kangaroo, which was used by Canadian infantry, and amphibious Weasels, Buffaloes, and DUKWs that could carry troops through flooded terrain.

This attack would also rely on the major Allied trump card: overwhelming airpower.

With D-Day set for February 8, Crerar had a big question for Horrocks: “Do you want Cleve taken out?” For Horrocks, agreeing to do so would mean that Bomber Command’s Lancasters would pummel Cleve with their “cookies” and incendiary bombs, turning the ancient walled and historic city to a moonscape of rubble. It was a tough call for Horrocks, who knew that the city had a historic past and civilians living in it in the present. “Their fate depended on how I answered Crerar’s question, and I simply hated the thought of Cleve being ‘taken out.’ All the same, if we were going to break out of the bottleneck into the German plain, it was a race between the German reserves and the (15th

Scottish) Division for the Nutterden Feature (a fortified choke point through which the Nijmegen-Cleve road ran), and the German reserves would have to come through Cleve. If I could delay them by bombing it might make all the difference to the battle, and, after all, the lives of my own troops must come first. So I said 'Yes,' the most terrific decision I had ever had to take in my life, and I can assure you that I felt almost physically sick when, on the night before the attack, I saw the bombers overhead on their deadly mission."

With preparations accomplished, only two things remained to be done: select a date and brief the troops. The date was weather-dependent. Crerar and Horrocks decided to cut Bomber Command loose on the night of February 7 and then hurl the ground forces into action the following morning, February 8. On the evening of the 7th, battalion and company commanders were briefed on the pending attacks and given pep messages from Montgomery and Crerar. Monty called the upcoming battle a boxing match, finishing, "Into the ring, then, let us go. And do not let us relax till the knockout blow has been delivered. Good luck to you all and God bless you."

Bomber Command's 4, 6 Canadian, and 8 Group dispatched 292 Halifax, 156 Lancaster, and 16 Mosquito bombers to hammer Cleve and Goch. The two towns were blasted in a mere 20 minutes. Thirty German civilians and about 150 slave laborers, mostly Russians, Italians, and Dutchmen, quartered in two schools, were killed. The number of German troops killed is unknown.

Imperial War Museum

At the same time, low-hanging clouds threatening rain were gathering over the whole area. This was going to turn the ground to mud and inhibit armored forces.

While the bombers pounded away, British and Canadian troops filtered into their start lines, drank tea and ate sandwiches, wrote letters to their families, and checked their gear. The attacking British infantry were well-equipped themselves: reliable .303 Lee-Enfield rifles, Sten sub-machine guns that could withstand heavy mud, Bren machine guns that spewed out heavy rates of fire, and Personal Infantry Antitank (PIAT) launchers. Nearly every Tommy seemed to have a shovel on his back to quickly dig a foxhole in case of counterfire.

From right to left, the attackers would be the 51st Highland Division, the 53rd Welsh Division, the 15th Scottish in the center, the 2nd Canadians after that, and the 3rd Canadians on the extreme left. In immediate reserve were the 43rd Wessex Division and the Guards Armored Division. Directly supporting the assault troops were the three brigades of the 79th Armored Division.

Now, at 5 AM on February 8, Horrocks sat in his platform, connected by scout-car radio sets with the division and brigade command posts ahead of him. "From my viewpoint, I could follow the progress of the attacks by the lifts in the barrage," Horrocks wrote later. He stared eastward into the German lines and a fading drizzle.

So did thousands of British and Canadian troops, most intently 9,000 gunners who had

loaded their artillery pieces in the dark by flashlight. Among them was Canadian artillery Captain George Blackburn, observing his gun crews stacking piles of shells next to their guns, removing safety caps from them, and winching their guns into position. The 5,000 tons of high explosives they were about to hurl at the Germans would be the single heaviest British artillery barrage of the entire war.

At 5 AM, the order to fire was given up and down the Anglo-Canadian line, and every piece XXX Corps had opened up on the Germans. A Royal Dragoon guardsman, wireless operator A.E. Baker, recalled: "At one minute to five that morning, everything was peaceful. It was still dark and there was a slight mist. At 5:00, all hell broke loose! It was as bright as day, and the noise was like nothing on earth...At 5:30, as arranged, the tanks began to fire...The row was absolutely beyond belief, and long before it finished, I had a splitting headache. It wasn't only the concussion of the bigger guns but the ceaseless, sharp hammering of the Vickers just beside our tank."

Major Francis "Knobby" Clarke, B Company commander, and C Company's Major John Campbell promised each other to "have our rum together in the Wyler church" in the distance. Lieutenant Howard Powell, the battalion's intelligence officer, watched as rockets blasted a farm and grove of trees ahead of Wyler, their objective. "I never saw anything like that in my life. The ground just rocked...That place disintegrated, all in one smack," he said later.

From 5 AM until 7:30 AM, the British and



British Churchill tanks move forward in deep mud against German positions in the Reichswald. General Montgomery had hoped to begin the operation in December when the ground would be frozen, but the Battle of the Bulge upset those plans.



Canadians shelled the Germans. The 7.2-inch howitzers and 8-inch “super-heavy” guns hurled 200-pound shells on German bunkers 14 miles from the frontline. The 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns fired shells on flat trajectories, delivering 20-pound airburst shells over German trenches, scattering shrapnel everywhere. The noise was so great that artillery spotters could not converse by phone with their command posts, nor could gunners at their weapons.

The heavy bombardment woke up General Schlemm at his Xanten headquarters. He climbed to the top of one of the twin towers of the Romanesque St. Victor’s Cathedral and studied the sky to the west coming alight in flashes of vermilion and gold. He signaled his superior, Army Group H commander General Johannes Blaskowitz, “I smell the big offensive.” He summoned the 6th and 7th Parachute Divisions to firm up the 84th Division’s defenses and fired off a message to Berlin, where Adolf Hitler and his top aides held an emergency meeting to discuss the onslaught.

At 7:30 AM, the mighty British bombardment came to a halt. The noise was replaced by the crackle of burning forest and the cries of wounded Germans. Cleve still burned, glowing crimson. Twisted and shattered trees, wrecked farm buildings, and slaughtered farm animals provided an obscene decoration to the ground.

British artillery replaced the gunfire with a mighty smokescreen 13,500 yards long, and surviving German defenders naturally assumed that it was cover for an impending British assault. They jumped back into their trenches,

re-manned weapons, shouted orders, removed corpses, reconnected barbed wire and telephone lines, and opened fire on the Tommies they presumed were coming.

They presumed wrong. British and Canadian artillery spotters and sound locators homed in on the Germans and reported the targets back to their gunners. Once again, the British guns blazed away, this time at the new targets. The going was tougher for the artillerymen. One round left in an overheated breech exploded, splitting the barrel. The new gun layer had just slipped off his seat to stretch his legs, which saved his life.

The British and Canadian gunners continued to hammer the Germans into the morning, blasting away. While they did, tanks and armored vehicles clattered past the howitzers, headed for the XXX Corps start line, shuffling down roads and trails past the ghostly wreckage of crashed gliders of the 82nd Airborne Division from the September 1944 Market Garden assault that had been too shattered to salvage. Hot tank exhausts were covered by fluorescent panels to identify them to British and Canadian aircraft, and all were stripped for action, except one tank that still had a frying pan hanging from the back of its turret.

The shelling continued until 10:30 AM, H-Hour for the assault, as 60,000 troops, 500 regular tanks, and 500 specialized tanks stood on their start lines. At that time, the shelling stopped, and the heavy guns once again opened up with a barrage of smoke shells.

This time, the Germans did not retaliate, hav-

ing endured one barrage after a smokescreen already. They waited in their battered pits and in the mud.

The British attack opened on the right flank with the 51st Highland Division, the men of which marked their vehicles, routes, and successes by posting the division’s “HD” symbol everywhere. Scornful Tommies called them the “Highway Decorators.”

Now the Highway Decorators moved carefully into the southwest corner of the Reichswald on a 5,000-yard front, advancing eastward. Legendary battalions like the 1st Black Watch, the 5/7th Gordons, and the 5th Seaforths led the assault, many men wearing white snowsuits to blend in. Privates Stan Whitehouse and “Shorty” Shorthouse of the 1st Black Watch had been reluctant to accept sergeant’s stripes, but they sewed them on now, knowing that their platoon had been worn down by years of war from El Alamein to Germany, and many of the men were either replacements or exhausted veterans who had never learned or forgotten how to dig in, camouflage themselves, and recognize minefields and booby traps.

The 51st Division got down to business with the 72 Vickers machine guns of 1st/7th Middlesex, the “Die Hards,” firing off seven million rounds of ammunition. With that, the 1st and 7th Black Watch reached the start line, and the 1st Black Watch promptly became the first Highland Division men to enter Germany, screened by mortar smoke.

Major Thomas Landale Rollo, checking the

7th Black Watch start line, saw his old friend, D Company's commander, Major Allan Lowe come up. The two shook hands, and Rollo said, "I'll see you soon."

Lowe replied, "You'll never see me again. I'm going to be killed."

"Of course, I replied, 'Don't talk nonsense,'" Rollo said later. "But it shakes you. Two nights before, he had cleared out and gone away to Brussels, unknown to anybody. When I saw him later, he said it was 'the last chance I'll ever get.' It wasn't that he was depressed. He was completely in control of himself. Yet he had a feeling that that was it."

"Allan crossed the start line. He had his signaler with him carrying the wireless. It was a mad thing to do because the Boche picked up right away who the commander was. Within 200 yards, a bullet went right through him," Rollo recalled.

Nor did smoke interfere with Schu mines, as newly promoted Sergeant Stan Whitehouse watched in horror as Corporal Aitchison was blown up by one. "His Sten flew out of his hands and on landing set off another mine. 'Bastard things,' I thought." A "friendly" shell dropped on Company HQ, and Whitehouse was ordered back to collect a Bren and mortar from wounded men behind. "I was horrified to see Ken Ware, eyes glazing over, his face creased with pain and his limbs shattered. Blood, a strange, light brownish color was bubbling out of his legs. Larry Crowther, his best mate, lay nearby, in an equally hopeless condition. Ken and Larry, two of the most gentle, lovable things ever born, now lay in bits and pieces."

To make the day more difficult, some British shells fell as much as 300 yards short despite the gunners' best efforts. The bursts killed Highlanders and turned tree limbs into deadly shrapnel.

After advancing only a few hundred yards, B Company of the 5th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, Major Donald Callander commanding, came under Panzerfaust and machine-gun fire. Everyone hit the dirt, and Callander ordered his men to right-flank the Germans. The Scots moved, and someone yelled, "The company commander's hit!"

Callander leaped up and yelled, "I'm bloody well not!" What had been hit was his mess tin (a German bullet went through it), but three other Camerons were indeed killed. Callander led two platoons in a flanking bayonet charge across a 50-yard clearing. He jumped out of a ditch, looked back, and saw a German shooting at his men, his back to Callander. The major whirled, shot the German, and maintained the advance.

Lieutenant Ross Le Mesurier, a 21-year-old Canadian officer leading a platoon of B Company, spent only 24 hours in the Reichswald and advanced only one mile but fought with heroism and distinction. He had already been wounded three times: a sniper bullet through his tin hat to crease his head, a piece of shrapnel lodged in his back, a fragment puncturing his arm. "Just nicks," Le Mesurier told Callander.

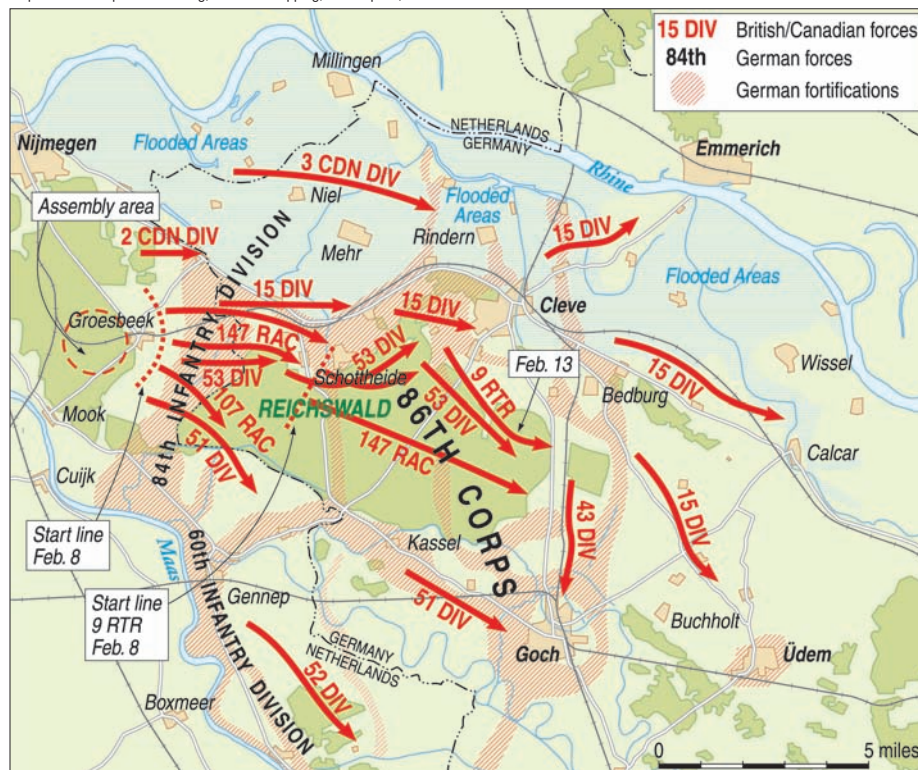
As the day wore on, the two lead Highland Brigades, the 153rd and 154th, were joined by their reserve brigade, the 152nd, but all three brigades found the rain was turning the trails into muddy quagmires that would support neither wheeled nor tracked vehicles. The

Christ's sake, Ross, you've got to do something!"

Ross grabbed a phosphorous grenade, intending to hurl it at the Germans, but as he was about to throw the grenade a German bullet hit it and caused it to explode in Le Mesurier's face. A blob of phosphorous hit his glasses, which saved Le Mesurier's vision, but he had to scoop up handfuls of muddy snow to stop the burning sensation.

As the Germans advanced toward Le Mesurier's men, he ordered his own platoon to charge, dropping to one knee to fire his Sten gun. To his horror, the Sten gun jammed, a typical failing with the weapon. He threw it down, "grabbed his entrenching tool, and went roar-

Map © 2020 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: The British and Canadian thrusts of Operation Veritable constituted the northern arm of a giant pincer movement to trap thousands of German defenders. The southern pincer, an American affair, was dubbed Operation Grenade. **OPPOSITE:** British soldiers provide covering fire for advancing comrades during the opening phase of Veritable. The ground assault was preceded by a massive artillery barrage beginning at 5 AM and lasting well into the morning.

Scots had to leave them behind and plod on through the mud.

As night fell, the 5th Queen's Own Camerons' Company B kept attacking through a tremendous downpour. Each man held onto the bayonet scabbard of the Scot in front of him to avoid getting lost. Ahead lay B Company's objective, a track crossing the mud. On this track, German troops were laying mines when the Scots showed up. The Germans reacted with alacrity, opening fire with Panzerfausts, hitting Callander's signaler. Callander yelled at Le Mesurier, "For

ing off after the Germans," Callander said later. "He was a big man, Ross, and when he ran at them screaming like a madman and waving the shovel, the enemy took off!"

"I remember hitting one of them in the back of the neck," Le Mesurier said later. "He crumpled. I thought he was dead. I swung at another, just a glancing blow on the shoulder, but he kept going in the dark. I was getting too far in front of my boys by then, so I figured I'd better get back to my platoon."

Callander found Le Mesurier returning, with

phosphorous glowing from his uniform. Callander ordered Le Mesurier to go to the rear, but the platoon commander refused to do so, as the other two platoon commanders had been killed. "I'll see you through, Donald," Le Mesurier said. He would not be evacuated until the next day, his war finished.

"I put him up for a Military Cross," Callander said. "It should have been a Victoria Cross."

Another Canadian with the 51st, Captain Maurice Carter, who commanded a 2nd Seaforths company, was having a trying time. The Seaforths were used to open warfare, not forests, and they ran smack into heavy machine-gun fire on opposite sides of the line of advance and were stopped cold.

Major Martin Lindsay and his 1st Gordons climbed a ridge. "The wood was jungle, so many branches and trees having been felled by our shelling. We might have been in darkest Africa. Every hundred yards took us about 15 minutes, and the confusion was indescribable," he said.

To the left of the Highland Division, the Welshmen of the 53rd Division drew the actual drive into the Reichswald Forest. Fortunately, they were well trained in narrow-front assaults into forests, had tested the tactics in the Battle of the Bulge, and had outstanding support from their logistical and transport teams. The 1st East Lancashire Regiment's history reported: "An almost overpowering smell of spent explosive hung like a cloud in the forest. Trees lay smashed and shattered, their broken branches strewn about, leaving stumps standing like grotesque scarecrows to discourage invaders."

Terrain and mud held back the 79th Armored's specialized tanks, turning over the battle to the infantry. The 53rd Division's history reported, "It was Spandau versus Bren the whole way through."

North of the 53rd, six-foot-tall Maj. Gen. "Tiny" Barber's 15th Scottish Division charged into battle. The 227th and 46th Brigades moved in through the rain and initially gained successes, the Glasgow Highlanders alone taking 146 prisoners. The rain, unfortunately, turned the ground to mud, imprisoning the tanks of the Coldstream Guards. The Camerons took over, suffered casualties in a minefield, but captured 48 more Germans and a battery of 88mm antitank guns. Flame-throwing Crocodile tanks torched German-held houses in Frasselt.

On the left flank of the 15th Division's attack, the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and Highland Light Infantry led the assault. It was the first set-piece battle for the Argylls since Normandy, and their commander



Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: British soldiers advance through a stand of trees in the Reichswald on February 8. The dense forest and soggy terrain made the going rough for the foot soldiers. **BELOW:** In this aerial photograph, the destruction wrought on the village of Cleve by RAF bombers on February 7-8, 1945, is readily apparent. The town was devastated by the bombers after General Brian Horrocks, XXX Corps commander, decided reluctantly to bomb Cleve to delay German reinforcements.



was on leave, so Major Goodwyn commanded them. The Argylls ate breakfast, had a tot of rum, and then rode into battle on the backs of the 3rd Scots Guards' Churchill tanks. An old American minefield, a stream, and boggy ground slowed the armor. Company B lost

seven men to a thick minefield. Company A took heavy defensive fire that killed or wounded all the officers. Company Sergeant Major Green immediately took command, rallied the company, and was awarded an immediate Distinguished Conduct Medal. Canadian

land mattress rockets pounded Company A's objective, the Elsenhof, into rubble, and the Scots took 80 prisoners. Company C did the same. Both battalions cleared the town of Krakenburg and then consolidated to await a German counterattack. For once, it didn't come. The shell-shocked Germans could neither communicate orders nor muster men.

Despite heavy rain, mud, and appalling road conditions, the 15th Scottish had achieved its objectives. By 6:30 PM, though, the tracks were impassible.

Just north of the 15th Scottish, the 2nd Canadian Division attacked with its 5th Infantry Brigade on a two-battalion front, sending the Calgary Highlanders and the Francophone Le Régiment de Maisonneuve forward. The 2nd Division had taken a beating at Dieppe in 1942, and survivors and replacements alike had much to avenge. Backed by the flails of the British 13th/18th Hussars, the two battalions were to head past Wyler on the south, cut the road from behind it, and attack from the rear. This "fan-wise sweep with the left wheel movement" would be executed by the Highlanders' C and D Companies, while the "Maisies" would screen their assault and grab the town of Hochstrasse. The 5th Brigade's Brigadier Bill Megill knew that Wyler and its neighboring town of Den Heuvel would be well defended, not just because of the rain and mud, but because of its strongpoints and minefields.

At 10:30 PM, two Maisonneuve companies headed for Den Heuvel, close behind their artillery barrage. They found dugouts and fortified buildings, and a close-quarter firefight soon raged. Major Francois de Salle Robert's D Company entered the village and was hit by rifle fire from behind. Wireless signaler Joseph Lefebvre spotted the source of the shooting. He shoved his No. 18 wireless set into the hands of another signaler, grabbed a Sten gun and four grenades, and worked his way back to a dugout the company had missed while moving up. He threw a grenade into the building and demanded the Germans surrender. No response. Lefebvre threw two more grenades and charged into the building, firing his Sten gun. He emerged with four POWs and a number of Germans left behind, dead. Lefebvre received a Military Medal for the feat.

The Maisies found many Den Heuvel defenders dazed by the immense bombardment. A German officer stumbled out of a house, hands up, muttering, "It was terrible." A Maisonneuve officer found 45 German bodies strewn about in a small area. More lay inside bunkers and trenches. A Canadian found a letter that a German frontkämpfer (frontline troop) had

written just as the attack started, which read: "When Tommy began his attack, he started such a terrific artillery barrage that we took leave of our senses. I shall not forget my experience in the Reichswald for a long time."

The surviving German POWs shuffled in motley, mud-covered columns into Canadian lines, where the Toronto Scottish Machine Gun Regiment stood waiting by the fuming muzzles of their powerful Vickers machine guns. Their commander, Lt. Col. E.G. Johnson, wrote that many prisoners were "completely addled." He noted that their guards reported that many simply emerged "out of their trenches with...hands up and offering no resistance to our troops."

A less exalted Canadian gunner, J.P. Brady of the 4th Medium Regiment, wrote, "British

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Responding to the British and Canadian advance through the Reichswald, German panzergrenadiers move forward through a small town. German resistance to Operation Veritable proved tenacious.

corpses are being brought back lashed to the tops of ambulance jeeps...Later, long lines of prisoners come in. Some reel drunkenly, others stare vacantly. Some shamble along in tears, while others laugh hysterically. The prisoners who are articulate say they were overwhelmed by an annihilating fire and could not make a defensive stand in their front line." The Highlanders and intelligence officers searched their captives thoroughly for weapons, souvenirs, and information. One embarrassing moment came when a defending German soldier turned out to be female. The intelligence officer who discovered this walked around with a flushed expression.

At 11:23, the Maisies reported Den Heuvel secure and headed for the German border. Now

they took more casualties. Private Albert Lacoste was killed two weeks short of his 20th birthday. Sniper Private Hector Lefebvre and his pals came under heavy machine-gun fire. Lefebvre "worked his way to a vantage point. Still under fire, he coolly pinpointed the enemy machine-gun post and successfully silenced it, killing one and wounding two of the crew," as his Military Medal citation stated.

Lieutenant Louis Fontaine, weakened by his wounds, led one of his men to close with the German machine gun that was causing his men to hit the dirt and put it out of action. Fontaine refused to be evacuated for two hours. He earned a Military Cross.

The Calgary Highlanders had a harder time. They started off 12 minutes later, plodded

through the mud and German minefields, and came under mortar fire. The combination wiped out a leading section's leaders, except for Lance Cpl. Robert Allan McMahon. Seeing that the rest of his buddies were leaderless, McMahon picked past the mines and ran into the buildings from where the German fire was coming. Inside them, McMahon killed a number of Germans, wounded several others, and took one officer and 22 men prisoner. When McMahon took them out, he ordered them to carry the wounded. An infuriated German officer "attempted to stir up an insurrection." According to McMahon's Distinguish Conduct Medal citation, he "stopped [this] with his fists." Two of these German POWs stepped on their own mines and were killed.



Combat veterans of the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 15th Scottish Division take temporary shelter along an embankment in the Reichswald.

Meanwhile, McMahon's platoon leader, Sergeant Carol Edwin Anderson, ran across the battlefield, giving first aid to wounded men and warning medics coming up behind that they risked death from the German mines.

With that done, Anderson led his surviving men to Vossendaal, coming under more machine-gun fire. Canadian Bren gunners fired back, and Anderson rushed the German MG42, killing its four-man crew with Sten gun bursts and grenades. The platoon resumed the advance and came under more machine-gun fire. Anderson crawled forward and killed the German machine gunners, and then he led his platoon to their final objective. For these feats, he earned a Military Medal.

Another dedicated and decorated Highlander, Sergeant Emile Jean "Blackie" Laloge, led D Company's platoon into intense mortar fire. The commander of the platoon ahead was killed, and everybody hit the dirt. Knowing that hesitation could be fatal, he shouted at his platoon to keep moving. He led his men through the frozen platoon ahead and straight at the Germans, realizing it was impossible to outflank them. Laloge led by example, charg-

ing into the German machine gunners and gunning them down.

That accomplished, Laloge led a section up the road, coming under more Spandau fire. Laloge made himself the target so that his section could flank and overrun the gun, taking the crew prisoner. Incredibly, Laloge was uninjured, although his uniform was shredded. He added a Military Medal to adorn that battered uniform.

Major John Campbell's C Company headed down a small secondary road into Wyler from the southeast and faced the usual minefields, machine-gun fire, and mortar bombardment. The assault route was a German trap, and Campbell himself was killed by a sniper. Campbell would never have his rum with his pal "Knobby" Clarke. Lieutenant Ed Ford of 14 Platoon took over. Grabbing the wireless set, he received a call asking if he wanted artillery support. Fearing that such fire would fall "short" and on his men's heads, he said, "No, it's an infantry job." He wanted reinforcements.

While he waited for backup to arrive, Ford realized the Germans in the overlooking building had to be eliminated. He shouted at

Sergeant Michael Melnychenko, commanding 13 Platoon, to take over the company, while Ford and 13 Platoon made the attack as 14 Platoon gave covering fire.

Ford led a few men to the buildings, chasing the Germans out of them or killing them. Luckily, the Highlanders were sorting things out as 5th Field Regiment had a new fire plan for its 25-pound artillery pieces supporting the position. The Toronto Scottish's 4.2-inch mortars were ready to fire, and best of all, B Company was moving up to a start line to resume the attack in C Company's sector.

Melnychenko was told to take his remaining six men and secure that start line. The seven Highlanders crawled into a network of German trenches, killing or capturing all Germans in their path and silencing three Spandaus. They found a house filled with snipers, and Melnychenko ordered his PIAT team to fire a 2.5-pound round into the building. Melnychenko and three men raced around the house, into a door, killed two snipers, and captured the remaining 18 defenders. With that, B Company, aided by fire support, was able to get moving. Melnychenko received a Military Medal.

At 5:25 PM, Canadian artillery and mortars began to hammer Wyler, and D and B Companies started clearing it in a coordinated manner. By 5:45, the town was clear, even if the weather wasn't (a cold rain was falling). The Calgary Highlanders had lost two officers and 11 other ranks and suffered one officer and 60 other ranks wounded, 40 percent of the casualties to mines.

As the dusk gathered, the 7th Field Company of Royal Canadian Engineers began working to open the road from Wyler to Cleve, removing mines despite German sniper fire. They were done by 9 PM. The 2nd Canadian Division was finished with the opening phase of Veritable.

The last Canadian division to lead off the attack in Veritable was the 3rd Division, under Maj. Gen. Dan Spry, doing so at 6 PM. The 3rd Division was one of the five Allied divisions that had stormed Normandy's beaches on D-Day and had compiled a long battle record since then. Their front lay between the Nijmegen-Cleve road and the Rhine River. The bad news was that the Germans had flooded the area, and it was completely underwater. The good news was that so were the German minefields, anti-tank ditches, and wire barriers. The Canadians would ride into battle on 114 amphibious Buffaloes and 50 Weasels of the 79th Armored Division.

Spry had just turned 32 on February 4 and was the youngest general in the Allied forces.

He was also a Boy Scout fan and modeled his behavior on their best values, which included temperate speech and manner, as well as working to keep his men alive.

As with all the other assaults that day, the Canadians planned the attack in grand triangles. The 7th Brigade attacked with the Regina Rifles and Canadian Scottish on the right, with 8th Brigade's North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment and La Régiment de la Chaudière on the left.

The major 7th Brigade objective was the mile-long Quer Damm, which the Germans had fortified with strongpoints, including one that Allied intelligence officers named "Little Tobruk." The Canadian Scots were assigned this objective. The Germans had weakened the dam with all their construction, and on the morning of February 8, a section of it collapsed, sending water rushing into the villages of Zylflich and Leuth. The former was the Regina Rifles' objective beyond the dam.

The massive flooding forced 8th Brigade's commander, Brigadier Jim Roberts, to make an unpleasant decision: withdraw. He explained later that in "actual combat, it is wise to keep your plan simple. Too detailed a plan usually comes unstuck. And yet, in my plan for 8th Brigade, it was very difficult to be simple, given the flood conditions of the terrain. The flood waters were rising every hour."

Roberts decided to launch his attack at 6 PM, when it would be dark. His Buffaloes would have better concealment, but his drivers and officers could get lost in the dark and rain. Two North Shore companies would ride Buffaloes across the flooded terrain to a dike running north from the Quer Damm to the Rhine while the Chaudières would send an assault team in eight-man canoe-like "skiffs" and paddle to a flooded orchard. There they would wait until the North Shores signaled with a flashing light that they were in place. Once that was accomplished, the two battalions would form the juncture with the Quer Damm.

It was a complicated plan, which had required night movement amid heavy rain, flooding, and alert German forces. Roberts, though, saw it as "the great opportunity for the final breakthrough into Hitler's Germany."

Canadian artillery provided a pepper pot of "unbelievable power and noise on the German position," according to Roberts, and the brigade crossed its start lines. When the Buffaloes roared hard into the wet earth, though, they dug themselves into the embankment and were stuck. The British major in charge jumped out and began giving orders. Roberts jumped on his wireless and asked for the artillery fire to

continue, then dashed down to the major, urging him to try to reverse the Buffaloes and enter the water on a diagonal slope. It worked.

On their skiffs, the "Chauds" pushed off, with A and D Companies in the lead. As A Company's second-in-command, Captain Leo Larose, pushed off, a shell exploded in a nearby airburst, ripping shrapnel through the skiff. Nobody was hurt, but Larose ordered everyone to paddle to a half-submerged farmhouse nearby. They just got in through a window as the skiff sank.

Otherwise, the attack went as planned, with 8th Brigade reaching the dike by boat and Buffalo. The defenders turned out to be a hapless collection of locally recruited Volkssturm militia. "Most of them World War I veterans, with Mauser rifles of their generation, gray grizzled beards, and a look of dazed shock on their faces. No wonder, considering the terrific bombardment they had received for a full 20 min-

Imperial War Museum



After the Germans flooded lands over which 3rd Division troops were obliged to advance, amphibious vehicles proved invaluable in sustaining the momentum of the offensive.

utes! They came out of their dugout, not with their arms raised in surrender, but holding their ears with their hands, rolling their heads from side to side, and drooling at the mouth," Roberts wrote.

The first day of Operation Veritable was over. The British and Canadians had delivered more than 8,000 tons of shells on the Germans. Despite rain, fog, machine guns, and mortars, the British and Canadians had crushed six battalions of the 84th Infantry Division, suffered almost no casualties from "shorts," and taken 1,115 prisoners for a loss of 349 Canadians and

Britons. The total of German dead was difficult to count. The advancing troops found German telephone lines wrecked and gun positions mangled. Captured German officers told their interrogators that they could not give orders to their men. All the 84th could do was hold out in disjointed positions until their men died or surrendered. All the concrete works had been destroyed.

The victory was still far from complete, or the battle even won. Rain continued to pour down on the Reichswald. Tanks, trucks, and other vehicles were trapped in the mud. The water level north of the Nijmegen-Cleve road rose 18 inches after midnight on the 8th. The American side of the grand pincers, Operation Grenade, had yet to be launched.

The offensive still had to be maintained to achieve success. So Horrocks made what he would describe as one of his worst mistakes of the war. With the 15th Scottish Division closing

in on Cleve, Horrocks called for his reserve, the 43rd Wessex Division, to move up to pass through the 15th Scottish and burst out into the plain. It was a determined decision, but it meant that the horrific fighting in the "Sinister Valley" would only become worse for the British and Canadian infantrymen struggling in it. □

Author David Lippman resides in New Jersey and writes frequently on a variety of topics for WWII History. This is the first of a two-part article on the Battle of the Reichswald. Part two will appear in the October issue.

The campaign to reduce the importance of the major Japanese base at Rabaul on the island of New Britain—began more than a year earlier at Guadalcanal and Buna, New Guinea—was finally in its last stages by November 1943, as U.S. Marines fought the Japanese on the island of Bougainville.

In fact, the plan, known as Operation Cartwheel, changed from seizing the enemy base at Rabaul to bypassing it. The seizure of Bougainville in the northern Solomon Islands would complete the base's isolation.

Major General Roy S. Geiger's I Marine Amphibious Corps arrived off the Bougainville invasion beaches of Cape Torokina early on the morning of November 1, 1943, and soon began landing Major General Allen H. Turnage's 3rd Marine Division, reinforced with the 1st Marine Parachute Regiment and 2nd

Savage Fight for HILL 700

Action at Cape Torokina on the island of Bougainville tremendously strained the American troops of the XIV Corps.

BY NATHAN N. PREFER

Marine Raider Regiment. A beachhead was quickly established, and fighting continued as the Marines moved inland. The objective was to establish an airbase on the cape from which air superiority could be maintained over Rabaul, eventually neutralizing the enemy stronghold entirely.

Bougainville is the largest of the Solomon Islands at 125 miles long and 48 miles wide at its widest point. It has a mountainous spine consisting of two mountain ranges, as well as two active volcanoes. The mountains end at the southern part of the island, where the Japanese had built airfields at Buin, Kahili and Kara. The island also has several good harbors, mainly at Buka, Numa Numa, Tenekau and Tonolei. But the Americans chose instead to establish their base at Cape Torokina, where there were no enemy bases, even though the cape was considered a poor anchorage. Their choice completely fooled the Japanese, who believed that the Americans would land on the other side of the island. In 1943, there were no roads on Bougainville—only native trails along the coast and some that led into the mountainous interior.

The Japanese on Bougainville were from Lieutenant General Haruyoshi Hyakutake's Seventeenth Army and numbered at least 35,000 soldiers and sailors. This force included Lieutenant General Masatane Kanda's 6th Division, whose previous experiences included the infamous sacking of the Chinese city of Nanking. There was also the 4th South Seas Garrison Force of infantry and artillery. A combined arms combat team from the

17th Division was also on Bougainville, as well as the usual service and supply units.

For General Hyakutake, "The battle plan is to resist the enemy's material strength with perseverance, while at the same time displaying our spiritual strength and conducting raids and furious attacks against the enemy flanks and rear. On this basis we will secure the key to victory within the dead spaces produced in enemy strength, and, losing no opportunities, we will exploit successes and annihilate the enemy."

The Americans moved inland with great difficulty. Colonel Edward A. Craig, commanding the 9th Marine Regiment, recalled, "It was almost impossible to spot our troop movements on operations maps at times. The maps were very poor, and there were few identifying marks on the terrain until we got to the high ground. At one time, I had each company on the line put up weather balloons (small ones) above the treetops in the jungle and then had a plane photograph the area. The small white dots made by the balloons gave a true picture finally of just how my defensive lines ran in a particularly thick part of the jungle. It was the only time during the early part of the campaign that I got a really good idea as to exactly how my lines ran."

Nevertheless, the Marines pushed inland, fighting off a counterlanding at Koromokina on the left flank of the Marine beachhead by elements of the 17th Division. This was followed by battles for the Piva Trail, the coconut grove along the Numa Numa trail,



As evidenced in this image of American soldiers climbing a root-covered hillside, the terrain on Bougainville, including steep hills, was often a serious obstacle. Heavy Japanese resistance made the going even tougher on the island, and casualties were high on both sides.



Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: These battle-hardened veterans of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines emerge from the jungle after a long slog. These Marines were the first Americans ashore at Cape Torokina and fought tenacious Japanese defenders there. **OPPOSITE:** This distant view of the island of Bougainville depicts the fighter airfield at Torokina and the nearby beaches that were hotly contested during the fighting in the autumn of 1943.

Piva Forks, Grenade Hill, Hellzapoppin Ridge, and Hill 600A. By December 15, 1943, at a cost of 423 killed and 1,418 wounded, the 3rd Marine Division had established its beachhead securely. On that same date, the Marines began to be relieved by units of the U.S. Army, whose mission was to maintain the beachhead and protect the airfields that were beginning to appear behind the front lines.

First to follow the Marines ashore was the 37th Infantry Division, under the command of Major General Robert S. Beightler. An Ohio National Guard division, the 37th was inducted into Federal service at Columbus, Ohio, in October 1940. After training and maneuvers in Mississippi and Louisiana, the division departed the United States from San Francisco. Along the way it picked up a regiment (the 129th Infantry) of the Illinois National Guard. After further training in the Fiji Islands and Guadalcanal, it entered combat during the New Georgia campaign before arriving at Bougainville a week after the Marines landed.

Major General Robert Sprague Beightler was rare among U.S. Army division commanders during World War II. Born in Marysville, Ohio, in 1892, he was one of the very few National Guard officers to retain command of his division throughout the war. Never attending West Point, General Beightler served in World War I with the 42nd "Rainbow" Division before entering the National Guard. He graduated the Army's prestigious Command and General

Staff School in 1939 and was promoted to major general in 1940, when he assumed command of the 37th Infantry Division.

The first men of the Ohio division to reach Bougainville were an advance party commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Loren G. Windom, the division's intelligence officer. This group included some headquarters personnel, some reconnaissance troops, and some men from the division's 117th Engineer Combat Battalion. They arrived with the 21st Marine Regiment on November 6, and immediately began accumulating information on terrain, the division's assignment, and other essential information to prepare for the Ohio division's arrival.

The first major combat element of the 37th Infantry Division to sail for Bougainville was the 148th Infantry Regiment. The men boarded four transports and two freighters and sailed lightly burdened, carrying only shelter halves, two canteens, a raincoat or poncho, an extra pair of socks, a spare fatigue uniform, and enough underwear and toilet articles to last 30 days. The soldiers quickly began to enjoy the iced drinking water, canvas berths, and hot showers available to them aboard ship. This idyllic lull lasted until the morning of November 8, when the convoy entered Empress Augusta Bay.

By mid-morning, most of the regiment was on the beach, with only supply details still aboard ship unloading. Suddenly, out of the sun, Japanese bombers and fighter aircraft

came screaming down, attacking the transports and freighters that the 148th Infantry had so recently left behind. The ships pulled anchor and headed for the Solomon Sea, while Marine Corps defense battalions opened fire on the enemy with 90mm guns and machine-gun fire. Even riflemen took shots at the low-flying enemy planes.

First Lieutenant Allan W. Hawkins of the 140th Field Artillery Battalion was still aboard the transport *Fuller* when it was hit by a 500-pound bomb. He remembered, "I could see a portion of the action-filled sky through the hatch and witnessed two Jap planes which were hit by antiaircraft shells and fell twisting and burning into the sea. The Navy chaplain was on the intercom giving a play-by-play account. A plane released its bomb and it had us dead center. As it fell lazily toward us, I saw it pass the No. 6 hatch. The ship suddenly lurched, threw everyone off his feet and gave the impression that the whole rear end of the *Fuller* rose out of the water. I stood up and felt myself all over to see if I were all there, all this time expecting the ship to start sinking."

The transport didn't sink, but the Ohio Division suffered its first casualties at Bougainville when two men were killed and eight others wounded.

General Geiger's I Marine Amphibious Corps was needed elsewhere, and so the Army had been tasked to relieve them and hold the Bougainville enclave. To do this, the I Marine

Amphibious Corps was relieved by Major General John R. Hodges' XIV Corps, which included the Ohio Division and Major General Robert B. McClure's Americal Division. The beachhead was divided between General Beightler's division on the left (west) and the Americal Division on the right (east).

The Ohio Division men had fought in the jungles before, at New Georgia, and had trained on Guadalcanal, but Bougainville was as bad as anything they had experienced. Everywhere was mud, swamps and jungle. The 117th Engineer Combat Battalion went to work immediately, hacking jeep trails through the thick jungle. It took the 140th Field Artillery Battalion eight hours to move its guns 300 yards to an area where they could set up for firing. Lieutenant Colonel Chet Wolfe's men had to build their dugouts and firing pits above ground due to the constant high water. Jungle had to be cleared to obtain fields of fire. Snipers were a constant hazard. So were mosquitos. Enemy air raids constantly halted operations along the beach and slowed the development of administrative and supply facilities.

First to move inland was Lieutenant Colonel "Dutch" Shultz's 3rd Battalion, 148th Infantry. They encountered only stragglers and shell-shocked enemy soldiers who refused to surrender and were eliminated. Meanwhile, the rest of the Ohio Division was en route to the island, all the while under continuous enemy air attack. On November 15, after most of the division was ashore, the men were visited by the area commander, Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey.

On November 21, the division occupied Defense Line E as a part of the I Marine

Amphibious Corps' beachhead line, relieving Marine units. The 129th and 148th Infantry Regiments occupied the line, while the 145th Infantry was held in reserve. A few days later, the division advanced to Defense Line H with no opposition other than sniper fire and random rounds of artillery. Behind them, the airfields were operational, and American aircraft began to reduce the number of enemy air raids on the beachhead. Army artillery battalions were often called upon to assist the Marines as they expanded their sector of the beachhead.

Thanksgiving passed quietly in the 37th Infantry Division's sector. Two freighters loaded with turkeys and all the treats had arrived a few days earlier and, despite constant rain and the smell of battle all around them, the infantrymen managed to enjoy their turkey, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, hot rolls, butter, creamed cauliflower, coffee and candy.

Things remained quiet until the end of November, when patrols clashed with the enemy at Cannon Hill, resulting in the first casualties in the 129th Infantry since World War I. During this period, patrols were the main producer of combat actions. In one instance, a patrol of the 129th Infantry engaged in what came to be known as the "Battle of the Caves." The Japanese had established themselves on a steep, sloping hillside, with an almost perpendicular bluff protruding from the side. A narrow ledge had a pathway in the hillside past several natural caves in the bluff. Deep jungle growth provided excellent concealment for the enemy.

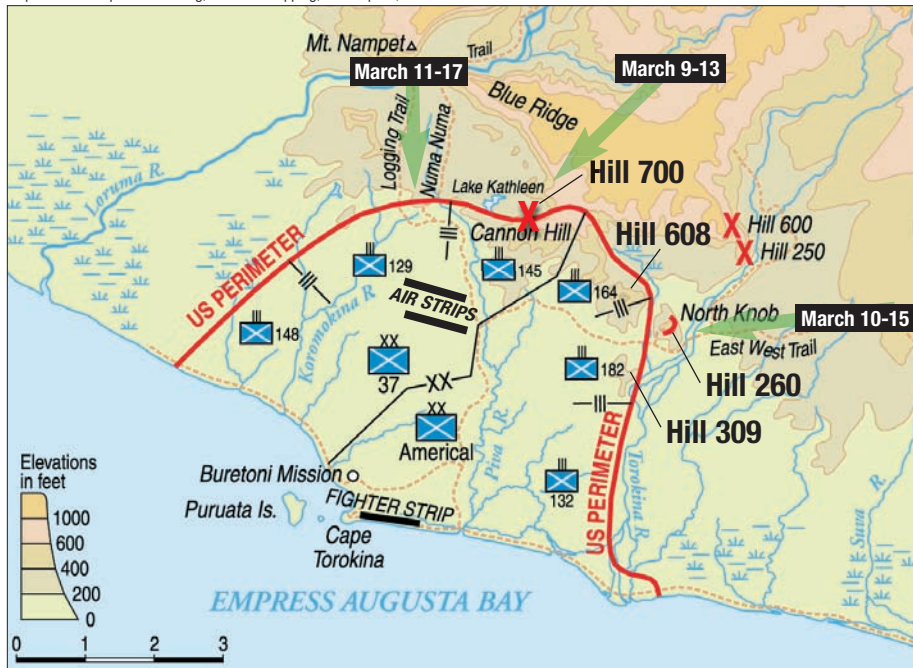
A patrol from Company A split into two sections to scout the enemy position. One was to

circle the hill and see if the other side offered better access. The second was to climb the hill and clear the caves on their side. As the second patrol advanced up the hill, it was fired upon, and two men were wounded, the rest taking cover under the bluff. They were now trapped, and the Japanese moved out to fire at them. Reinforcements were requested, and when they arrived they moved to ensure that the Japanese could not escape. A battle of rifles, grenades, snipers and machine guns ensued. The wounded were evacuated, but little progress could be made against the enemy-held caves.

Captain Joseph Oleair of Company D made repeated efforts to climb the hill and toss grenades into the caves, but his luck ran out and he was killed by enemy fire. First Lieutenant Robert W. McClellan, the battalion intelligence officer, made similar attempts and suffered the same fate. Captain Oleair received a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross, and Lieutenant McClellan a posthumous Silver Star. First Lieutenant Wilmer W. Stover, who leaped into one of the caves to recover wounded men and carry them to safety under fire, earned another Distinguished Service Cross. By the next morning, the Japanese had gone, leaving several of their dead behind.

Other than patrol actions, little enemy resistance was encountered into 1944. But in February, natives began bringing in rumors of a Japanese force building up outside the American perimeter. General Hyakutake had decided that he had no option but to strike against the American beachhead and destroy it before its aircraft sealed off all avenues of supply and reinforcement to his army on Bougainville. He under-





stood he could only depend upon his own infantry to accomplish this task, knowing that Japanese naval and air forces had been all but driven out of the Solomon Islands. But his inaccurate intelligence assured him that the Americans numbered only 30,000, and that 10,000 of these were aircraft ground crews with no combat value.

General Hyakutake had targeted as a main objective Hill 700, which was on the right flank of the American perimeter at nearly the center of that line. He assigned Lieutenant General Masatane Kanda of the 6th Division three task forces to make the assault.

Each task force was named for its commander. Major General Shun Iwasa would take his 23rd Infantry Regiment and a battalion of the 13th Infantry Regiment along with attached artillery, engineers and mortars, some 4,500 men, and strike the 37th Infantry Division's right along Hill 700. His ultimate objective was the American airfields at Piva, which he was expected to capture on or before March 10.

Colonel Isashi Magata's 45th Infantry Regiment composed the second task force, with the usual artillery, mortars, and engineers attached. His 4,300 men were to seize the low ground in front of Hill 700 held by the 129th Infantry Regiment. He, too, was directed to join the Iwasa Unit in taking the Piva airfields.

The third, and smallest, task force was commanded by Colonel Toyohorei Muda, and consisted of 1,350 men of two battalions of the 13th Infantry Regiment and an attached company of engineers. The Muda Unit was to capture Hills 260 and 309 in the American line and



The stubborn Japanese defenders on Bougainville mounted several counterattacks against the American perimeter during the bitter fighting on the island in March 1944.

then, with support from the Iwasa Unit, capture Hill 608 from the Americal Division's 182nd Infantry Regiment. This would protect the flank of the Japanese thrust to the Piva airfields. Supporting all this was Colonel Saito, with four 150mm howitzers, two 105mm howitzers, and several smaller artillery guns. Small elements of the 17th Division's 53rd Infantry

and 81st Infantry Regiments would also take part in the attack.

The Japanese had been preparing their plan for months. Work on the native trails to improve them for troop movement had been completed, and the troops supplied with rations for two weeks after which, according to their officers, they would be able to raid captured American stocks. There were between 15,400 and 19,000 Japanese soldiers and sailors gathering in front of the American perimeter, despite the difficulties of organizing, feeding, arming and moving the supporting artillery over native trails. Rains washed away bridges over swollen streams, trails turned to mud, but still the Japanese persevered, and, after a two-day postponement to allow the last units to get into place, the attack was set for March 8, 1944.

Before the attack, General Hyakutake offered his men his own encouragement. His message to his troops read: "The time has come to manifest our knighthood with the pure brilliance of the sword. It is our duty to erase the mortification of our brothers at Guadalcanal. Attack! Assault! Destroy everything! Cut, slash and mow them down. May the color of the red emblem of our arms be deepened with the blood of the American rascals. Our cry of victory at Torokina Bay will be shouted resoundingly to our native land. We are invincible! Always attack. Security is the greatest enemy. Always be alert. Execute silently. Always be clear."

The Americans knew an attack was coming. In addition to the reports from friendly natives, Australian coastwatchers, radio intercepts, short-range patrols, and prisoner interrogations all indicated a major offensive by the Japanese. An advanced outpost manned by a detachment from the Fiji Infantry Regiment was driven back into the perimeter in February, further evidence of increased Japanese presence near the perimeter.

As March began, the XIV Corps was holding a perimeter that ran in a horseshoe shape through some 23,000 yards of low hills and jungle. The deepest part was near the center, where it was 8,000 yards from the beach and less from the airfields. Defending

this horseshoe were the 37th and Americal Infantry Divisions plus the usual support troops; altogether a total of 62,000 American personnel, along with the 1st Fijian Regiment and some native auxiliaries. Each infantry regiment had two battalions on the front lines and one in reserve, for a total of 12 infantry battalions holding the perimeter. These were supported by the

754th Tank Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry, a part of the all-black 93rd Infantry Division that was just arriving on the island.

Behind the front, the 3rd Marine Defense Battalion, the 82nd Chemical Mortar Battalion, and numerous engineer and construction units were available. Most of the combat units had received extra weapons, particularly machine guns and Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR), as well as extra grenades. Oil drums were set up as booby traps, flares were put out with trip wires, and fields of fire were cleared. Eighteen battalions of division and corps artillery were coordinated for defense under Brigadier General Leo N. Kreber, the 37th Infantry Division and acting XIV Corps artillery commander. The XIV Corps was as ready as it could be for the coming attack.

Not everything was perfect, however. Despite their overwhelming strength, the XIV Corps could not man every inch of the front lines with the infantry available. In addition, some key positions, including Hills 700 and 608, were dominated by higher hills that were in Japanese possession. These hills—Blue Ridge, Hill 1000, and Hill 1111—gave the Japanese excellent observation over the American defenses, although they could not see the reverse slopes of the American hills. Despite this, General Griswold believed “The perimeter was as well-organized as the personnel and the terrain would permit.”

Despite being outnumbered and outgunned,

General Hyakutake launched his attack at daybreak on March 8 with an artillery bombardment covering the perimeter and the airfields it protected. American artillery observers and Naval gunfire officers were prepared, and soon identified the locations of the Japanese artillery. Counterbattery fire from land and sea began swiftly, as did the attacks of the 1st Marine Air Wing dive bombers. Colonel Saito did manage to destroy four American aircraft on the airfields and damage another fourteen. The bombardment also drove all but a few of the fighters from the fields to safety at New Georgia. Few shells fell on the front lines except in the zone of Colonel Cecil B. Whitcomb’s 145th Infantry, which suffered several casualties.

Hill 700 provided observation over the entire beachhead area, and as such it was vital to the defense. It was held by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 145th Infantry Regiment. The hill had steep slopes, which in places were at a 75-degree angle to the ground. Because of this, the Americans had believed that the Japanese would not attack the hill directly. Indeed, the forward slope dropped so steeply that the front of the hill could not be covered by fire. Nevertheless, additional machine guns had been set up, and the Ohio Division’s bunkers contained 37mm guns, machine guns, antitank guns, BARs and riflemen prepared to repulse any such attempt. In support were the 105mm howitzers of the 135th Field Artillery Battalion and the 4.2-inch mortars of Company D, 82nd

Chemical Mortar Battalion. Each bunker had been stocked with extra ammunition and C-rations, as well as five-gallon cans of water.

The Japanese sent out wire-cutting parties on March 7, and the following day patrols from the 129th Infantry found aggressive Japanese opposing their advance. At three minutes after seven on the morning of March 8, the first rounds of small-arms fire hit the 2nd Battalion, 145th Infantry atop Hill 700. Artillery rounds continued to fall on the perimeter and against the interior of the beachhead, striking the 6th Field Artillery Battalion, the 54th Coast Artillery Battalion, and the 77th and 36th Naval Construction “Seabees” Battalions behind the Ohio Division. But the American reply was overwhelming, as one prisoner later testified when he remarked, “Each time we fired one round, you send back a hundred in return.”

The American artillery waited until all the infantry patrols had returned to the perimeter before really flexing their might. All four artillery battalions of the Ohio Division—the 6th, 135th, 136th and 140th Field Artillery Battalions—opened fire on Japanese assembly areas without a break. Supported by two battalions from the Americal Division, the barges were devastating. One surviving Japanese prisoner reported that the 3rd Battalion, 23rd Infantry, was “practically annihilated” by this bombardment. The Japanese survived by pushing close to the American lines to avoid destruction.

Naval History and Heritage Command



ABOVE: Australian coast watchers on the island of Bougainville pose with native associates. These men are armed with the British-made bolt-action Lee Enfield rifle and the American-produced carbine. **RIGHT:** Marines, several of them stripped to the waist in the tropical heat, service their 105mm howitzer as it fires on Japanese positions on Bougainville. Marine artillery performed brilliantly throughout the Pacific War.

Naval History and Heritage Command



The Japanese pushing close to Hill 700 discovered an advantage: once at the base of the hill, they could not be reached by either enemy artillery or small-arms fire. Mortars tried to reach them, but again the steepness of the hill prevented observation of results. Soon the artillery forward observers reported that the Japanese were climbing the hill. Within minutes, Companies E and G, 145th Infantry, began reporting that several booby traps and other warning devices were exploding to their front. The infantry replied with small-arms fire and mortars. Back came Japanese small-arms fire and grenades. Fog and rain made visibility extremely difficult.

Staff Sergeant Otis Hawkins figured out a way to improve his platoon's visibility. He ordered mortar flares fired. Then, seeing movement in front of his bunker, he pulled wires which set off gallon buckets of oil ignited by phosphorus grenades. With this lighting up his

Americans refused to withdraw and fought where they stood. In one instance, the Japanese attacked an isolated mortar observation post of Company E that was on a knoll at the outer perimeter, known as "Company E nose." After cutting through three of the four rows of wire protecting the outpost, the Japanese were discovered by a Sergeant Thompson, who opened fire with his BAR. After holding off the enemy for 15 minutes, Sergeant Thompson and his squad withdrew into their bunker and called down mortar fire on their own position, eliminating the attacking force and surviving being shelled by their own mortars.

Not all bunkers held out. In one case, four men from Company G refused to withdraw despite being attacked by a far superior force. They fought with rifles, grenades, and knives before they were overwhelmed. More than a dozen enemy dead were found around their position the next morning.

the vacated reserve positions. At noon, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 145th Infantry, counterattacked the Japanese on Hill 700. Some positions were recovered, but enemy artillery, mortar, and sniper fire prevented a complete restoration of the original perimeter. Soon the reverse slope was covered with Japanese foxholes, and Japanese reinforcements kept arriving from the foot of the hill.

With darkness the battle subsided, but the Americans could hear the Japanese in the dark filling sandbags and strengthening the American foxholes and bunkers they had captured during the day. Thousands of rounds of American artillery fire seemed to have no effect on the enemy. Two light tanks from the 754th Tank Battalion tried but failed to knock out some of the enemy positions around Hill 700. The Americans suffered 29 killed and 139 men wounded and estimated that 511 Japanese had died on and around Hill 700 on March 9.

The night remained quiet, but with morning came the realization that the Japanese had heavily reinforced their toehold on Hill 700, despite the constant bombardment. To address this problem, a provisional battery from the 251st Automatic Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion moved up and fired their 90mm antiaircraft guns at the Japanese positions from point-blank range. Marine dive bombers pounded the Japanese positions. Artillery battalions continued with an uninterrupted barrage, while the 145th Infantry's Cannon Company added their guns to the deluge of steel. Japanese reinforcements were spotted moving forward along the Laruma River, and the artillery shifted targets, halting the enemy's advance.

Assuming the enemy had been sufficiently weakened by this massive display of power, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 145th Infantry, attacked again in the late afternoon. Using Bangalore torpedoes, bazookas, and pole charges with dynamite, the infantrymen pushed forward against fierce resistance, despite the hour's long bombardment. Soon the former perimeter was restored except for a 40-yard gap in the line that was still held by four Japanese-occupied bunkers. The fierce fight had left the Americans out of grenades, and Japanese artillery and mortars continued to cause American losses. The division's 37th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was sent forward by General Beightler to take over some of the recovered Company G positions.

During the night of March 10-11, Lieutenant Colonel Russell A. Ramsey's 3rd Battalion, 145th Infantry, began to hear increased Japanese activity on Cannon Hill, an offshoot of Hill 700. These Japanese were using firecrackers to

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ABOVE: During the fight for the crest of Hill 700 on Bougainville, smoke billows from a pillbox that has just been hit by a U.S. Army flamethrower. The Japanese defenders of Bougainville fought tenaciously. **OPPOSITE:** Advancing warily behind the cover of an M4 Sherman medium tank, American infantrymen seek Japanese holdouts deep in the jungle of Bougainville. The successful campaign was a key element in the isolation of the Japanese base at Rabaul.

area, Staff Sergeant Hawkins directed 600 rounds of mortar fire on the attackers while his infantry companions' small-arms fire stopped any attempts at flanking the bunker.

Early the next morning, several Japanese who had infiltrated between Companies E and G were discovered. It was then determined that, under cover of heavy rain and darkness, a battalion of Japanese had used Bangalore torpedoes and dynamite to blast holes in the American barbed wire and were now attacking the forward bunkers of the 145th Infantry. The

By dawn, elements of the Japanese 23rd Infantry, 6th Division, held a position on the north slope of Hill 700. To keep them bottled up, the 135th Field Artillery Battalion shelled the enemy while elements of the 145th Infantry extended their perimeter around and behind the Japanese on Hill 700.

Determined to prevent a breakthrough, General Beightler sent forward his only reserve battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Crooks' 1st Battalion, 145th Infantry, and ordered his 117th Engineer Combat Battalion to move into



National Archives

draw American return fire. The day's fighting had cost the Ohio Division another seven killed and 131 wounded. Japanese casualties were put at 363 killed. The sectors of the 129th and 148th Infantry Regiments remained quiet, other than several patrol actions.

Late on March 10, the assistant division commander, Brigadier General Charles F. Craig, and the division operations officer, Lieutenant Colonel Windom, visited the frontline battalion headquarters to get a situation report. While they were visiting, Staff Sergeant William A. Orick and two men at the top of Hill 700 were attacked by enemy troops. The two men were bayoneted, and Staff Sergeant Orick evacuated them to the aid station. When he returned, he discovered that one of the enemy dead was an officer with the complete plans for the enemy attack on the Ohio division. The maps and plans were rushed to the division's intelligence staff for translation and evaluation.

Morning brought a renewed attack on Hill 700. Hundreds of men from the 23rd Infantry, 6th Division attacked in waves shouting "Chusuto" (Damn them!). They occupied an empty bunker atop Hill 700, led by officers brandishing sabers and shouting orders and "Yaruzo" (Let's do it!) or "Yarimosu" (We'll do it!). They stormed forward into a heavy fire from the dug-in American infantry, who said little but fought back hard. Yelling "San Nen Kire" (Cut a thousand men!) the Japanese pushed over the bodies of their own dead until the battle was so close that only infantry weapons could be used against the enemy. Both Hill 700 and Cannon Hill were attacked steadily, but the attacks were repulsed with tremendous losses to the Japanese.

Company G's commander, 1st Lieutenant

Clinton S. McLaughlin, was in the center of the battle on his front. He rushed from bunker to bunker to encourage his men, coaching them to fire low and conserve ammunition, stopping only to study the Japanese fire and advance to determine where the most dangerous places were on his line. His clothing was torn by bullets and shrapnel, his canteen shattered, and he was wounded twice. Still in command, when the Japanese approached his most forward position, he jumped into the bunker, already outflanked by the Japanese, and together with Staff Sergeant John H. Kunkel fired point blank at the attackers. The two men killed enough of the enemy to drive the others back. Later, over 185 enemy dead were counted around the position. Both men received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Atop Hill 700, the story was the same as the day before. The Japanese held onto their small breach in the line and continued to attack. Fresh troops kept pouring into the battle, while the Americans were becoming increasingly exhausted and low on ammunition, water, and food. General Beightler ordered Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Radcliffe's 2nd Battalion, 148th Infantry, forward to assist the exhausted men of the 145th Infantry.

The key to the battle remained the small enemy-held group of bunkers taken on the first day of the battle. To retake these positions, the Americans had to crawl up a precipitous slope with few footholds. This had to be done in the face of withering enemy machine-gun fire, supported with rifle fire and grenades showering down on the attacking American infantry.

Casualties could only be safely evacuated by using the tanks and armored cars of the 37th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop. That was also

the only way supplies could be brought forward. Companies from the 112th Medical Battalion risked their ambulances to speed the recovery of the wounded, and fortunately this succeeded, despite several drivers being wounded in the attempt. But the only sure way to evacuate casualties was by the armored half-tracks, and even they suffered from Japanese mortars and snipers.

Lieutenant Colonel Radcliffe's battalion decided to surround Hill 700 using Companies E and F in the assault. Company E led off, and 1st Lieutenant Broadus McGinnis and his squad went over the crest together, only to be cut down by Japanese guns. Eight men were instantly killed. Lieutenant McGinnis and three others managed to survive by diving into a nearby trench, capturing a pillbox to which it led. From the captured pillbox, Lieutenant McGinnis shouted back instructions to his men until he was killed by a burst of machine-gun fire. Finally, late in the afternoon, Company E was ordered to stop its attack. Heavy machine guns from Company H were brought up to sustain the Company E gains.

The next morning, Companies E and F attacked again, with Company G in reserve. Using what little cover remained near the hill, both companies moved slowly around it, avoiding enemy machine-gun fire that covered the areas they moved through. Once in assault position, the two companies attacked the hill using smoke grenades, fragmentation grenades, flamethrowers, rocket launchers, and dynamite to clear the way. In one case two soldiers new to combat and barely 21 years of age manned a flamethrower. The team, Pfc. Robert L. E. Cope and Pfc. Herbert Born of Headquarters

Continued on page 74

Deep snow blanketed the steppes surrounding the northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkov on February 6, 1943. The soldiers of Major Kurt Meyer's reconnaissance battalion of SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler shivered from the cold. The half-tracks and assault guns were concealed in a belt of woods outside the village of Malinovka on the east bank of the Donets River not far from the railroad depot at Chuguyev. Outside the wind howled.

Hardly a word was spoken by the men as they watched tanks and infantry at the head of a Russian column work their way slowly toward them.

Meyer had instructed the crews of the dispersed vehicles not to fire until he gave the order. Meyer had been sent across the Donets to cover the retreat of the remnants of the German 298th and 320th Infantry Divisions, which had been shredded by the spearheads of Soviet armies participating in a major

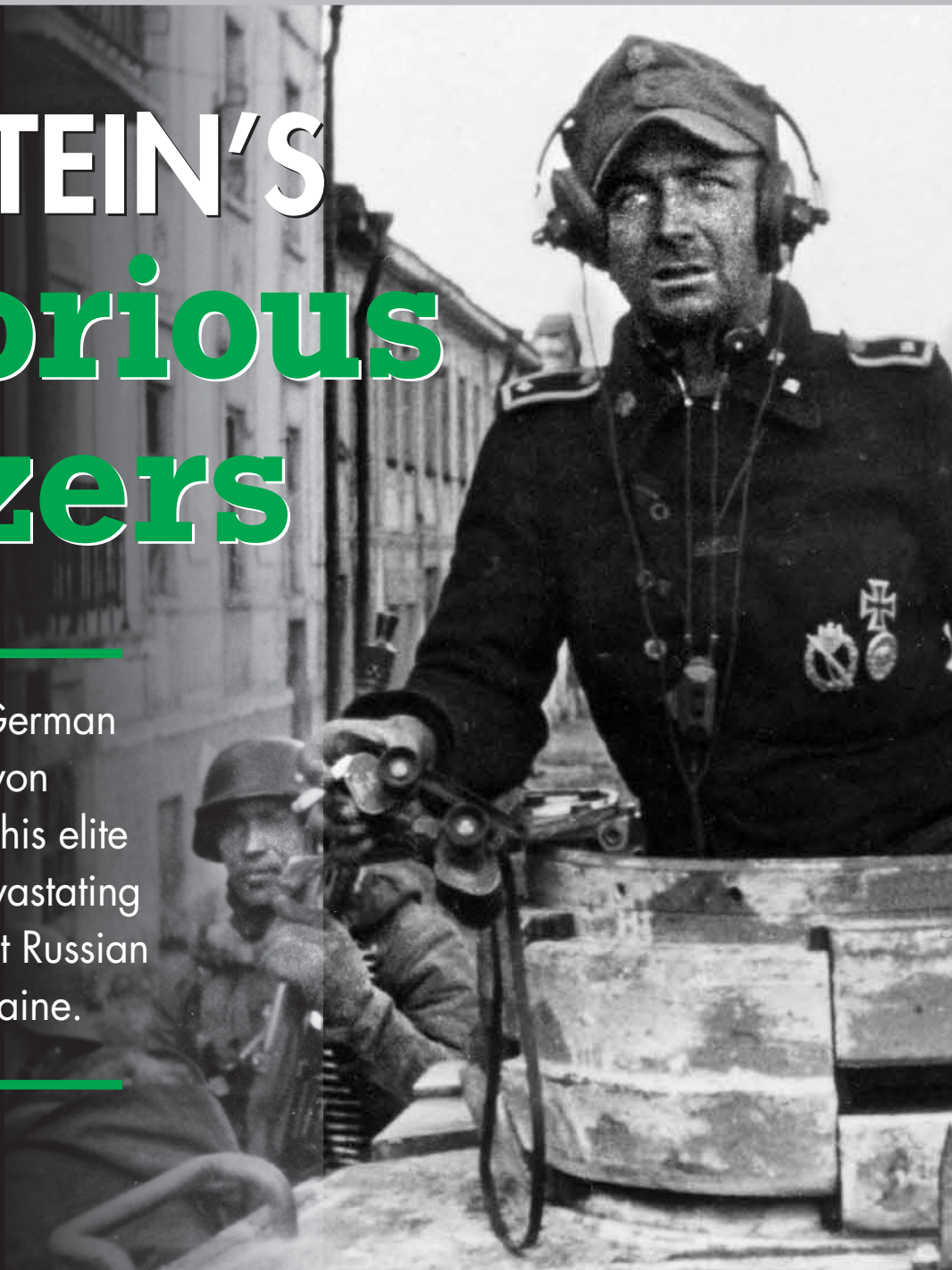
attack along the entire southern sector of the Eastern Front.

That morning as many as 1,400 survivors of the two decimated German divisions had marched through Malinovka on their way to the safety of the main German line at Chuguyev. The survivors were a pitiful sight. Many had fingers and toes black from frostbite. Swaddled in blankets and rags in an effort to protect themselves from snow squalls and subfreezing temperatures, the half dead soldiers

MANSTEIN'S Victorious Panzers

In February 1943, German Field Marshal Erich von Manstein unleashed his elite panzer units in a devastating counterattack against Russian forces in eastern Ukraine.

BY WILLIAM E. WELSH



bore little resemblance to Meyer's panzer-grenadiers, who had arrived at the front by train less than a week earlier.

The ground sloped uphill toward the advancing Russian column, giving the German gunners clear targets silhouetted against the sky. Russian T-34 and KV-2 tanks clanked slowly forward and brown-uniformed infantry followed cautiously, letting the steel monsters lead the way.

"We observed the shadows of the Russian

tanks slowly working their way west to the right and left of the road," wrote Meyer. "The tanks avoided the road, snaking across the deeply furrowed landscape, obviously trying to take our bridgehead in a pincer movement and crush it in their armored jaws."

Meyer's battalion of armored vehicles was supported by 88mm guns on the west bank of the Donets at Chuguyev. Between his vehicles and the artillery beyond the frozen river, there would be more than enough firepower to

severely damage the Russian tank column.

The radio silence was broken periodically as officers stationed at other points reported the Russian column's progress. "The Red Army soldiers—drunk with victory—were going to deliver their own death sentence," wrote Meyer. "I was in contact with all the units, either by radio or telephone. The units could respond in a fraction of a second and were convinced of their power. They had not been gripped by fear of the Russians."



Meyer waited until the attackers were on top of the German position. At 150 meters, he gave the order to fire. Shells from German antitank guns and armored vehicles streaked toward their targets. Meyer's ambush caught the Russians completely by surprise. Smoke and flames rose from Russian tanks that ground to a halt in the snow. The white landscape was littered with the corpses of Russian soldiers. "The harvest of death was grisly," Meyer wrote.

Meyer's battalion suffered only 17 casualties in the firefight, while the Russians lost 250 men and several tanks. The skirmish was a delaying action in the face of the overwhelming advantage enjoyed by the southern wing of Col. Gen. Filipp Golikov's Voronezh Front, one of three Soviet fronts that attacked German forces in southern Russia the first week of February 1943. That same week, the last remnants of the German Sixth Army trapped in Stalingrad surrendered. The Voronezh Front had been involved in one offensive after another since December 21, 1942, and when its northern and southern wings were ordered to strike toward Kursk and Kharkov, respectively, as part of Operation Star, its armies had not been able to rest and reorganize.

Believing that the Germans in southern Russia were deeply demoralized after the destruction of the Sixth Army, STAVKA, the Soviet high command, ordered Golikov's Voronezh Front, Col. Gen. Nikolai F. Vatutin's Southwestern Front, and Col. Gen. Andrei Yermenko's Southern Front to advance together against the German southern wing in the Ukraine. As envisioned by STAVKA, Golikov and Vatutin would outflank the Germans in northeastern Ukraine and then turn south to cut the Nazi invaders off from the bridges over the Dnieper River. If everything went as planned, STAVKA believed that it might achieve a grand encirclement of the German forces operating in the Ukraine. It was a highly ambitious undertaking, and one in which the Soviet planners neglected just about every logistical consideration that needed to be addressed if it was to be achieved.

Golikov received orders on January 23 instructing him to capture Kharkov. The Soviets had tried to retake the city in May 1942, but failed. Three days later the orders were revised to include the capture of Kursk, which lay 200 kilometers north of Kharkov.

Kharkov, a major railroad hub and industrial center, was the second largest city in the Ukraine and the fourth largest in the Soviet Union. In the wake of the collapse of the Hungarian Second Army, the German high command began to send reinforcements to bolster

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ABOVE: Field Marshal Erich von Manstein (left) and Lt. Gen. Paul Hausser. BELOW: 3rd Tank Army's Lt. Gen. Pavel Rybalko (right). BOTTOM: Major Kurt Meyer (right) of the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and Captain Erwin Meierdress of the 3rd SS Panzer Division Totenkopf consult a map during Manstein's counterattack.



Army Detachment Lanz, which was part of Army Group B. Army Detachment Lanz was responsible for a section of the Eastern Front running from Belgorod to Izium, and thus covered all approaches to Kharkov.

Colonel General Maximilian Weichs led Army Group B. General Hubert Lanz, who commanded the army detachment that bore his name, reported to Weichs.

The first of the fresh troops to arrive belonged to Maj. Gen. Walter Hornlein's

motorized Grossdeutschland Division, which after earning a much-needed rest and undergoing a major reorganization began arriving in the sector in mid-January. Also dispatched to the sector was the newly created SS Panzer Corps under Lt. Gen. Paul Hausser, which comprised the Das Reich, Leibstandarte, and Totenkopf panzergrenadier divisions.

In addition to the Grossdeutschland Division and the SS Panzer Corps, Lanz had several infantry divisions, including the 168th, 298th, and 320th. Unlike the German infantry divisions, which had horse-drawn artillery and no vehicles to transport their foot soldiers, the Grossdeutschland Division had half-tracks and trucks that could shuttle its battalions back and forth to respond to emergencies as they developed.

Golikov tasked three of his five armies with the drive on Kharkov. Lt. Gen. Kirill Moskalenko's 40th Army would advance toward Belgorod and, once it captured that city, continue in a southwesterly direction so that it encircled Kharkov from the north. In the center, Lt. Gen. M.I. Kazakov's newly formed 69th Army was to advance toward Kharkov, establish bridgeheads across the Donets, and then push into the city from the east. The strongest of the three armies, Lt. Gen. Pavel Rybalko's 3rd Tank Army, was to cross the Donets south of Kharkov and encircle the city from the south.

Moskalenko's northern pincer and Rybalko's southern pincer were to meet at the railroad town of Lyubotin, a short distance southwest of Kharkov. The distance from the starting point of the Soviet attack to Kharkov was about 120 kilometers.

Golikov had 200,000 men to Lanz's 50,000 men. The Soviet rifle divisions were greatly reduced from continual operations, and they averaged 4,000 to 6,000 men. The three Soviet armies advancing on Kharkov had about 315 tanks, and the front as a whole had another 300 in reserve. The Germans had about 200 tanks, most of which were with the SS panzergrenadier divisions. The Grossdeutschland Division was seriously deficient in armor. When the Soviet attack began, the division had only 31 tanks, more than half of which needed repairs before they could return to action. The one major advantage the Germans had in the approaching campaign was that they retained control of the skies and could launch tactical air strikes with their Stuka dive-bombers against Soviet tank columns.

Army Detachment Lanz was just being established as Operation Star began. Corps Cramer, comprising the 168th and Grossdeutschland Divisions under the command of Lt. Gen. Hans

Cramer, shielded Kharkov from the north. Two divisions of the SS Panzer Corps, both of which arrived just as the Soviet attack got underway, protected Kharkov from the east and south. The Das Reich and Leibstandarte Divisions detoured at Kharkov just in time to prevent the Soviets from pushing unopposed into Kharkov from the east. Lanz immediately fed the two divisions into the battle. They would remain in supporting distance of each other throughout the battle and frequently shared infantry and armor. The Totenkopf Division did not begin arriving in the vicinity of Kharkov until about 10 days after the battle had begun. Southeast of Kharkov, Colonel Herbert Michaelis's 298th Infantry Division was posted behind the Oskol River from Kupyansk to Ssenkovo, and Lt. Gen. Georg Postel's 320th Infantry Division was deployed from Ssenkovo to Izium.

Golikov's timetable called for the 69th Army to secure river crossings over the Donets River at and above Volchansk by February 5. The Soviet 161st and 219th Rifle Divisions, which formed the right wing of the 69th Army, ran into considerable opposition on the second day of the attack. At Veliko-Mikhailovka, German soldiers had transformed the village into a strongpoint. The fighting would rage for three days at Veliko-Mikhailovka against Germans who were determined to buy as much time as possible before falling back. On February 6, the elements of the Grossdeutschland Division defending the village retreated to the southwest through a narrow corridor that remained open.

The left wing of Kazakov's army, which comprised the 180th and 270th Rifle Divisions, attacked toward Volchansk. The two Soviet divisions encountered light resistance until 48 hours into the offensive when they ran headlong into stubborn opposition from Colonel Heinz Harmel's Deutschland Regiment of Maj. Gen. Georg Keppler's Das Reich Division, which held a 30-kilometer front east of the Donets River. The fighting intensified when Colonel Otto Kumm's Der Führer Regiment of the Das Reich Division went into action on February 5 on Harmel's left flank. Kumm launched a bold counterattack against Maj. Gen. I.Y. Maloshitsky's 180th Rifle Division on February 6 that drove the startled Russians back eight kilometers and forced them to spend precious time the following day regaining ground previously occupied.

After his forces captured Veliko-Mikhailovka, Kazakov was able to shift the bulk of the troops from his right flank to the drive on Volchansk. The 69th Army finally captured the town on February 9, four days behind schedule. The capture of Volchansk was made

possible in part because Lanz had ordered the two regiments of the Das Reich Division to pull back across the Donets when Moskalenko's 40th Army captured Belgorod on February 9, outflanking Keppler's grenadiers.

Rybalko was a talented commander of armored forces, and his army had three tank corps: Maj. Gen. M.I. Zenkovich's 12th Tank Corps, Maj. Gen. V.A. Koptsov's 15th Tank Corps, and Maj. Gen. S.V. Sokolov's 6th Guards Cavalry Corps. The 12th and 15th Tank Corps each comprised three tank brigades, and both were considerably stronger than Sokolov's corps. Rybalko also had four standard rifle divisions and reserve armor in the

while, the 6th Guards Cavalry and 12th Tank Corps continued their advance toward the wide bend in the Donets south of Kharkov.

On the same day Rybalko's army launched its attack, Lt. Gen. Josef "Sepp" Dietrich's Leibstandarte Division detoured at Chuguyev. Dietrich sent a portion of his division, including Meyer's reconnaissance battalion and part of Colonel Fritz Witt's 1st Regiment of the division, across the Donets to assist the withdrawal of the retreating 298th and 320th Infantry Divisions.

Rybalko's tank units had secured some stretches of the east bank of the Donets on February 4, but they would not be ready to attack across the river until the infantry and heavy

akg-images / RIA Nowosti



A Soviet tank rolls into Kharkov on February 16. Because of the tenacious defense of the city by Hausser's SS Panzer Corps, Rybalko was forced to commit the bulk of his armor to pry the Germans from the city. As a result, there was not enough Soviet armor available to encircle the city from the south, allowing the SS units inside the city to avoid being trapped in a pocket.

form of the 179th Tank Brigade and 201st Tank Regiment.

The right wing of Rybalko's army became engaged with Harmel's grenadiers at the outset of the attack in a heated battle for the village of Veliky Burluk. When Kumm's regiment went into action alongside Harmel's regiment, it allowed Harmel to counterattack Maj. Gen. M.N. Mokovchuk's 48th Guards Rifle Division. Incensed by the audacity of the Germans, Rybalko sent Koptsov's 15th Tank Corps against Harmel's tenacious grenadiers. Mean-

while, the 6th Guards Cavalry and 12th Tank Corps continued their advance toward the wide bend in the Donets south of Kharkov. By February 9, Koptsov's 15th Tank Corps was preparing to cross at Pechenegi, and Zenkovich's 12th Tank Corps was ready to do the same at Chuguyev. In the meantime, Rybalko ordered Sokolov to shift his forces farther downstream and attempt to cross the Donets at Zmiev, which was unoccupied.

Because his forces were busy mopping up the Hungarian Second Army, Moskalenko did not begin his advance southwest toward Belgorod until February 3. After Operation Star had been



ABOVE: Three Soviet fronts lunged across the Donets River beginning on February 1 with the goal of achieving an encirclement of the German forces operating in eastern Ukraine. STAVKA had no idea that the Germans were strong enough to launch a devastating counterattack that would push them back to their starting points. **OPPOSITE:** An artillery unit of the Grossdeutschland Division mans a position in mid-February. The division was forced to fight virtually alone during the initial Soviet attack against the full weight of Lt. Gen. Kirill Moskalenko's 40th Army.

underway for several days, Golikov ordered Moskalenko to speed up his attack on Belgorod to compensate for the slow progress of Kazakov's 69th Army and Rybalko's 3rd Tank Army. In response to the request, Moskalenko paired two independent tank brigades assigned to his army with two of the rifle divisions advancing on Belgorod. As a result, Moskalenko's army had two mobile groups that could reach their objective faster and hit the defenders harder than if attacking without armor support.

The defense of Belgorod initially was the responsibility of the German 168th Infantry Division. However, it quickly became appar-

ent to Lanz that it could not contend with the vastly superior Soviet forces arrayed against it. Lanz therefore ordered the 168th Division to deploy west of Kharkov to the village of Tomarovka in an effort to block Moskalenko's right wing. To compensate for the removal of the 168th from the fighting at Belgorod, Lanz shifted the Grossdeutschland Division's two regiments west. This left the division's grenadier regiment on the left flank covering the northern approaches to Kharkov, and the division's fusilier regiment on the right flank covering Belgorod.

By February 7, the two mobile groups established by Moskalenko had reached the outskirts

of Belgorod. Fighting raged around the clock for two days until the Germans were finally forced to pull out on February 9.

The cumulative effect of having three Soviet fronts attacking toward the Dnieper River created an ominous situation that fell squarely, not on the shoulders of Army Group B commander Weichs, but instead on the shoulders of Army Group Don commander Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, who was responsible for the German forces under attack by Vatutin and Yeremenko. Manstein received Hitler's permission to pull back some of his forces and deploy his armored assets as he saw fit without interference from the high command. Manstein subsequently shifted Col. Gen. Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army from the right flank of Army Group Don to its left flank to better resist the Soviet onslaught.

The most significant outcome of the meeting was Hitler's approval of Manstein's request that he be given control of Army Detachment Lanz so that one commander could coordinate the movements of all German forces in southern Russia. Five days later, on February 12, Manstein became commander of the newly established Army Group South. Army Group B, which ceased to serve a real function following the Battle of Stalingrad, was eliminated. Thus, midway through the Soviet 1943 winter offensive in southern Russia, Hitler gave Manstein control of 32 German divisions manning a 700-kilometer front.

The progress of the Soviet attack on Kharkov accelerated rapidly before Manstein had actual control of Army Detachment Lanz. On February 7, Sokolov's 6th Guards Corps was across the Donets at Zmiev. From there, Sokolov's forces advanced northwest through the Mzha Valley toward Merefa. Three days later, despite stubborn resistance from elements of Dietrich's grenadiers, both the Soviet 12th and 15th Tank Corps had also crossed the Donets.

The situation at Kharkov for Army Detachment Lanz had grown critical once Rybalko's 3rd Tank Army had crossed the Donets. In the north, it fell to Corps Cramer to hold back Moskalenko's 40th Army. It became clear that the 168th Infantry Division was no longer an effective fighting force, leaving General Walter Hornlein's Grossdeutschland Division to fight alone against Moskalenko's 40th Army. Hornlein stretched his line as much as possible, but Moskalenko's line overlapped it, extending as far as 40 kilometers west of Kharkov.

By February 11, Hornlein's reconnaissance battalion on the division's right flank had been driven back to the northeastern corner of Kharkov. Fortunately for Hornlein, the Das

Reich Division had fought Kazakov's 69th Army to a standstill. Kumm's Der Führer Regiment of the Das Reich Division subsequently redeployed south of Kharkov to fight the 6th Guards Cavalry Corps, while Harmel's Deutschland Regiment remained behind to slow the advance of Kazakov's 69th Army.

On February 12, Rybalko attacked along his entire front. While the 15th Tank Corps and two rifle divisions attacked east from their bridgehead at Pechenegi toward Kharkov, the 12th Tank Corps and one rifle division advanced from their bridgehead at Chuguyev toward the city from the southeast. At the same time, Sokolov's 6th Guards Cavalry Corps continued its advance in a wide arc south of Kharkov toward Lyubotin.

Sokolov's troops needed to control two towns en route to Lyubotin to keep a supply corridor open for fuel and ammunition. On the north side of their advance was the key town of Meref, and on the south side was the town of Novaja Vodolaga.

During the night of February 11-12, Das Reich's motorcycle battalion, led by Colonel Jakob Fick, arrived on the outskirts of Novaja Vodolaga. Backed by a handful of Panzer IVs to cover his flanks, Fick led his dismounted grenadiers in an attack on the town the morning of February 12. Fick's grenadiers drove the Russians out, but a counterattack retook the town. The following day Fick's grenadiers, backed by additional tanks from both the Das Reich and Leibstandarte Divisions, captured the town, forcing the Russians to retire south.

Just to the north, fighting raged in the town of Rogan southeast of Kharkov as Zenkovich's 12th Tank Corps sought to overwhelm the defenses of two battalions of Witt's 1st Regiment of the Leibstandarte Division. The Soviets fired Katyusha rockets and 120mm mortars, followed by Soviet infantry attacks supported by T-34s. The Germans eventually were forced to abandon the town to the Russians.

On February 13, the lead elements of the last division of Hausser's SS Panzer Corps, Lt. Gen. Theodor Eicke's Totenkopf Division, detrained at Poltava. Since Poltava was 140 kilometers southwest of Kharkov, the badly needed reinforcements would not have an immediate effect on the battle. The following day, Koptsov's 15th Tank Corps reached the factory district located in eastern Kharkov and fought building to building against Dietrich's grenadiers, but Zenkovich's 12th Tank Corps, on Koptsov's left flank, was still 10 kilometers from the city's edge.

Although Hitler had ordered that Kharkov

be held to the last man, Hausser had no intention of seeing his elite corps destroyed for no good reason. That day Hausser ordered Dietrich to demolish the key bridges inside the city to slow the advance of Rybalko's units, which already were moving slowly into the eastern part of the city.

Manstein sent orders to Lanz at daybreak on February 14 that Kharkov was to be held in compliance with Hitler's orders. After receiving the orders, Lanz forwarded them to Hausser, instructing Hausser to cancel his orders to begin blowing up the bridges inside Kharkov.

That same day, Manstein also appointed Col. Gen. Erhard Raus as the new commander of Corps Cramer, which thereafter became known as Corps Raus. Raus had the unenviable job of

Bundesarchiv Bild 1011-732-0131-32; Photo: Göttert



commanding the badly mauled Grossdeutschland Division and the demoralized 168th Infantry Division. Raus shared with Hausser the responsibility for keeping a corridor open to the southwest should Hitler change his mind and allow those parts of Army Detachment Lanz inside the city to retreat to safety.

On February 14, the SS Panzer Corps continued its attacks on Surzhikov's 11th Cavalry Division. After the fighting at Novaja Vodolaga, the Russians had fallen back to the

village of Ochotschaje. Two battalions of Kumm's Der Führer Regiment backed by tanks and assault guns were able to secure the city, and Surzhikov's troops withdrew southeast to Bereka. The capture of Ochotschaje by the Germans ensured once and for all that Sokolov's 6th Guards Cavalry Corps would not complete its objective of linking up with Moskalenko's 40th Army.

On the afternoon of February 14, Hausser received an urgent message from Das Reich Division commander Brig. Gen. Herbert Vahl, who had replaced the seriously ill Keppler on February 10, informing Hausser that the division had no more reserves to commit to the multiple breaches in its battle lines that occurred that day. Despite admonitions by Manstein and Lanz that the Das Reich Divi-

sion, namely Harmel's Deutschland Regiment, should continue to defend Kharkov even if faced with annihilation, Hausser ordered Vahl to begin an orderly retreat toward the southwest corridor that evening.

When Lanz learned of Hausser's orders to Vahl to begin disengaging, Lanz reiterated that the Das Reich Division was to continue to defend the city. Hausser rescinded his order, but he knew full well that Harmel's Deutschland Regiment had already begun to disengage.

On February 15, the Soviet forces around Kharkov redoubled their attacks on German forces defending the city. Zenkovich's 12th Tank Corps and Maj. Gen. G.M. Zaitsev's 62nd Guards Rifle Division finally broke into Kharkov's southeast quadrant where they battled elements of the Leibstandarte Division. To the immediate north, other parts of the Leibstandarte Division battled Koptsov's 15th Tank Corps in the factory district. Further north, Harmel's Deutschland Regiment of Das Reich found its lines assailed by units from three rifle divisions belonging to Kazakov's 69th Army.

By that time, the left wing of Moskalenko's 40th Army, engaged with Hornlein's Grossdeutschland Division, had already entered the northern edge of the city, where Kharkov's enormous Red Square was located. Simultaneously, Kravchenko's 5th Guards Tank Corps on Moskalenko's right wing was approaching Lyubotin, threatening to cut off the two-kilometer-wide corridor through which Hausser hoped to withdraw Harmel's Deutschland Regiment.

At 11 AM on February 15, Lanz wired Manstein informing him that the situation was dire and requesting permission to withdraw the troops that were still inside Kharkov. Although Manstein sympathized wholeheartedly, he was reluctant to go against Hitler's orders. However, Manstein wired orders to Lammerding to move the Thule Regiment of the Totenkopf Division as fast as possible to Lyubotin to reinforce Corps Raus.

With Soviet troops pushing toward the center of Kharkov from the north and east, Hausser instructed Harmel at noon on February 15 to lead his regiment out of the city through the southwest corridor. When Soviet T-34s started to pursue them, they were ambushed by German tanks and assault guns left behind to slow the enemy's pursuit. The German crews were able to knock out 15 Russian tanks. The last German unit to leave the city was the Grossdeutschland's grenadier regiment. It was the regiment's assault gun battalion that kept the Russians at bay while the grenadiers withdrew safely in their half-tracks and trucks.

Meanwhile, a battle raged on February 15 around Bereka as parts of Kumm's Der Führer Regiment of the Deutschland Division and a battle group consisting of elements of the Leibstandarte Division that had left the city a number of days earlier continued to hound Sokolov's 6th Guards Cavalry Corps.

When Hitler learned that Hausser had withdrawn his troops from Kharkov against orders, he directed his wrath not at Hausser, but

toward Lanz. Hitler was not inclined to sack a high-ranking SS field officer, but he had no qualms about removing a German Army officer. In Lanz's place, Hitler on February 16 appointed General Werner Kempf as the new leader of the army detachment, which was known thereafter as Army Detachment Kempf.

That same day, while the Russians secured Kharkov, Army Detachment Kempf reformed facing northeast on a new battlefield that stretched west to east from Okhtyrka to Borova to prevent a southwest push by the Voronezh Front toward the Dnieper River crossings over which supplies flowed to Manstein's Army Group South.

What Manstein knew because of his keen intuition, but which STAVKA chose to ignore, was that the forces of both the Voronezh Front and Southwestern Front were so depleted of armor, manpower, and fuel that they were greatly overextended. Even if they cut the two railroads supplying Army Group South, it was unlikely that they could capture and hold the Dnieper River crossings. In blind pursuit of those very objectives, though, STAVKA ordered Golikov's 40th and 69th Armies to push toward Poltava and Rybalko 3rd Tank Army to cover Kharitonov's right flank.

On February 17, Hitler and his top aides arrived by plane at Manstein's headquarters at Zaporozhye on the Dnieper to discuss strategy. The German leader, furious that Kharkov had been abandoned despite his explicit orders that it be held to the last man, stayed for three days. Even before Hitler had departed, Manstein had reorganized his forces for a bold counterstroke designed to catch the Russians off balance.

The spearhead of Vatutin's Southwestern Front during the late winter offensive of 1943 had been Mobile Group Popov, an armored strike force comprising four Soviet tank corps under the command of Lt. Gen. Markian Popov. Manstein's first objective was to crush Vatutin's Southwestern Front and drive it back to its starting point east of the Donets. To do this, Manstein intended to use Col. Gen. Eberhard Mackensen's 1st Panzer Army, Col. Gen. Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army, and Hausser's SS Panzer Corps.

On February 19, Hausser's SS Panzer Corps assembled for the attack near Krasnograd, while General Otto von Knobelsdorff's 48th Panzer Corps and General Friedrich Kirchner's 57th Panzer Corps went into position northwest of Krasnoarmeiskoye. The 40th Panzer Corps of Mackensen's 1st Panzer Army formed up south of Krasnoarmeiskoye.

Stuka dive bombers from Field Marshal Wolfram Richthofen's Fourth Air Fleet screamed

down on Popov's and Kharitonov's columns, softening them up for the German armor. When attacked, the Soviet spearheads were within 25 kilometers of the Dnieper and close enough to force Manstein's headquarters staff at Zaporozhye to prepare for battle in case the Russians reached them that day.

Popov's battle group could only muster about 50 working tanks, and it was heavily outgunned by the German forces arrayed against it. While Mackensen isolated Popov's battle group, Hoth's two panzer corps carved up Kharitonov's 6th Army over a period of five days. Hausser's SS Panzer Corps, which had been pulled back from the front line to rest and refit after the fall of Kharkov, returned to battle on February 23. The three SS divisions swept southeast and added to the mauling of the beleaguered Soviet 6th Army.

Although too late to mitigate the destruction of Kharitonov's 6th Army, STAVKA on February 22 ordered Golikov to redirect the 69th Army and 3rd Tank Army toward Poltava and Krasnograd, respectively. This meant that Moskalenko's 40th Army would be responsible for most of the territory around Kharkov and would have to fight Corps Raus alone. The decrease in pressure against his corps enabled Raus to order the Grossdeutschland Division to pull out of action on February 23 and refit at Poltava.

Vatutin's Southwestern Front was in full retreat by February 28. To relieve the pressure on Vatutin, STAVKA transferred Rybalko's 3rd Tank Army from the Voronezh Front to the Southwestern Front. Vatutin ordered Rybalko to advance south and attempt to open a corridor to part of Kharitonov's 6th Army, encircled by the Germans at Kegichevka, a town east of Krasnograd. Rather than rescuing the 6th Army, Rybalko's troops were only marching to their own doom. The Das Reich and Totenkopf Divisions immediately attacked Rybalko's 3rd Army. While Koptsov's corps was encircled and annihilated, Zenkovich successfully led his corps in a fighting withdrawal northwest.

Hausser's SS Panzer Corps had hit Rybalko's corps hard from two directions and in 48 hours of desperate fighting had mauled the two tank corps and three rifle divisions. By March 5, Rybalko's 3rd Tank Army had switched over to the defensive and formed a new line facing southwest from Novaya Vodolaga to Ochotschaje. The same day the armies of Kazakov and Moskalenko also halted offensive operations.

After the destruction of the Southwestern Front, Manstein ordered the 48th Panzer Corps north to reinforce Army Detachment Kempf in



Bundesarchiv Bild 10 III-Cantzier-067-14; Photo: Cantzier

A battle group from Lt. Gen. Josef “Sepp” Dietrich’s 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler fights its way into northern Kharkov. When the Soviet forces inside the city shifted north to block Dietrich’s advance, they unwittingly allowed the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich to enter unopposed from the west. The Soviets withdrew on March 13.

preparation for an attack on Golikov’s forces. No sooner had the Voronezh Front gone over to the defensive than the Germans attacked it.

Manstein began the second phase of his attack with an assault by the SS Panzer Corps and 4th Panzer Army against the left flank of the Voronezh Front south of Kharkov. His plan was to annihilate once and for all Rybalko’s 3rd Tank Army, which would enable the Germans to gain the rear of Golikov’s other two armies east of Kharkov and cut off their retreat. From west to east, the German forces included Army Detachment Kempf, SS Panzer Corps, and 48th Panzer Corps. The attack began on March 5 when three German panzer divisions—Das Reich, Leibstandarte, and Lt. Gen. Walther Hunersdorff’s 6th Panzer Division of the 48th Panzer Corps—slammed into Rybalko’s forces while they were still reforming south of Kharkov.

The following day, the refitted Grossdeutschland Division joined Corps Raus, part of Kempf’s forces deployed west of Kharkov. The same day, the Totenkopf Division, which had been busy mopping up the encircled Soviet 15th Tank Corps, took up a position on the left flank of Hausser’s battle line. In the fighting on March 6, the Das Reich Division retook

Novaya Vodolaga.

By March 8, the SS Panzer Corps and 4th Panzer Army had captured the key railroad towns of Novaya Vodolaga and Taranovka, forcing the remnants of Rybalko’s 3rd Tank Army to fall back toward Lyubotin and Merefá. By that time, Rybalko had used up nearly all his tanks and had to rely on artillery to hold back the German armored divisions that were butchering his forces. At Merefá, Rybalko massed nine artillery batteries to contest the German advance north. By that time, Manstein had sent the 11th Panzer Division from the 1st Panzer Army north to reinforce the two divisions of Knobelsdorff’s 48th Panzer Corps.

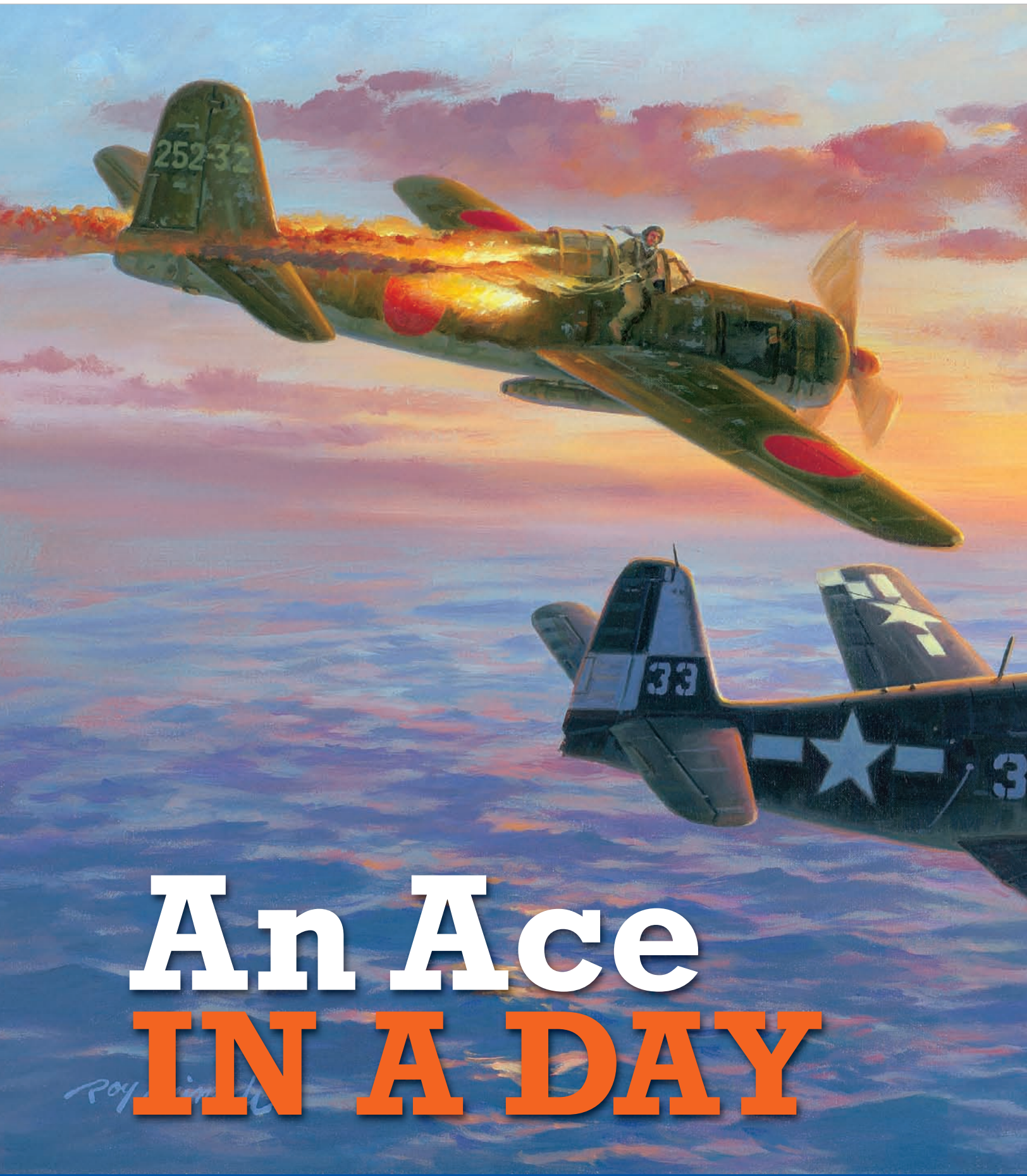
The following day, the SS Panzer Corps captured Lyubotin when the Leibstandarte Division surrounded it from the north and the Das Reich Division pushed into it from the south. The capture of Lyubotin drove a 20-kilometer wedge between Kazakov’s 69th Army and the remnants of Rybalko’s 3rd Tank Army. While Knobelsdorff’s panzer forces mopped up the remnants of Rybalko’s army at Merefá, Hausser ordered his SS divisions to join Corps Raus in an assault to recapture Kharkov.

On March 10, the Grossdeutschland Division, spearheading an all-out attack by Corps

Raus against Moskalenko’s overextended 40th Army, swept north to retake Belgorod. That same day, Hausser’s SS Panzer Corps shifted west to support Corps Raus, and Dietrich’s Leibstandarte Division captured Dergachi.

Resistance from Moskalenko’s 40th Army had melted away, and Hausser’s SS Panzer Corps was able to swing west around Kharkov. Dietrich’s Leibstandarte Division entered Kharkov from the north on March 11, while Vahl’s Das Reich Division pushed into the city from the west. When Maj. Gen. E.E. Belov, the Soviet commandant of the city, shifted his forces north the following day to battle the Leibstandarte Division, he uncovered the west side of the city, allowing the Das Reich Division to advance unopposed toward its center. On March 13, Belov ordered a fighting withdrawal to the east.

Manstein, through the clever shifting of his forces, had managed in less than a month to drive the Soviet forces in southern Russia back to the starting points of their late winter offensives. In the process, he had destroyed upwards of five armies and crippled several others. The successful counterattack gave the troops of Army Group South a significant boost, which they would need for the titanic clash at Kursk in the summer of 1943. □



An Ace IN A DAY

DURING FURIOUS FIGHTS OVER THE PACIFIC, NAVAL AVIATOR TED CROSBY SHOT DOWN FIVE JAPANESE PLANES IN ONE DAY.

BY ERIC NIDEROST



Lieutenant (j.g.) John “Ted” Crosby banked his Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat around, observing the life-and-death drama that was unfolding below him. The *Yamato*, then the world’s largest battleship and the pride of Japan, was entering its death throes. It was a few minutes after 2 o’clock on the afternoon of April 7, 1945, and aircraft from the Task Group 58.4 carriers Yorktown (CV-10), Intrepid (CV-11), and Langley (CVL-27) were moving in for the kill.

Crosby had seen his share of action and would soon become a fighter ace, but today his mission was more pacific. He was piloting a photo plane,

Ted Crosby



ABOVE: Ensign John T. Crosby, shortly after being commissioned in May 1943. **LEFT:** In a dramatic painting by Roy Grinnell, Lieutenant (j.g.) Willis Hardy, a member of Ted Crosby’s VF-17 Squadron from the carrier USS *Hornet*, flames a Japanese kamikaze plane that was on its way to attack the American naval task force off Okinawa, April 6, 1945. The Hellcat’s distinctive “white checkerboard” markings show it belongs to the USS *Hornet* (CV-12).

there to document the unfolding drama. As an observer, he had a ringside seat to the last major sortie of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

By this time *Yamato* was a floating, flaming wreck, her antiaircraft crews decimated by Hellcat strafing runs, her upper works torn into twisted pieces of metal by 1,000-pound bomb hits. Three bombs hit *Yamato* amidships, followed by several torpedoes. The ship began to list heavily to port, the movement becoming a pronounced roll.

As Ted Crosby watched, *Yamato*’s giant, 18-inch



Ted Crosby

guns hit the water, their enormous weight probably helping the battleship capsize. Suddenly, *Yamato's* No. 1 magazine exploded, sending up a huge coil of smoke and flame that could be seen for over 100 miles. It was a strange foretaste of the atomic mushroom clouds that would envelope Hiroshima and Nagasaki a few months later.

Watching from above, Crosby had no feeling of elation. "I was thinking of the Japanese crew," he said in a 2011 interview. "Three thousand lives lost." As a former fighter pilot and Navy man, he could appreciate what it meant to go down fighting with his comrades.

During his World War II career, Ted Crosby served aboard two Essex-class carriers, *Bunker Hill* (CV-17) and *Hornet* (CV-12). There were 24 Essex-class carriers built during the war, and they soon became the backbone of America's naval offensive in the Pacific. The efforts of pilots like Crosby not only turned defeat into victory, but also changed the course of naval warfare forever.

In the 1930s, battleships were considered to be the most important vessels in any fleet. Essentially huge gun platforms, they were supposed to trade salvos with the enemy until the foe was battered into submission. It was a long tradition, dating back to the age of sail and men such as Nelson and Drake. Pearl Harbor changed all that. It is ironic that the Japanese, having blazed

a trail with airplanes against capital ships, turned back and followed the traditional road by commissioning vessels like *Yamato*.

By June 1942, most of Japan's strategic objectives had been realized. The U.S. Pacific Fleet had been neutralized, at least temporarily, and the Philippines and much of resource-rich Southeast Asia overrun. Japan seized a number of far-flung islands, establishing them as a defensive barrier to protect the home islands. Flush with success, the Japanese began believing their own propaganda that America was a weak-willed, "soft" nation.

The Battle of Midway was the high-water mark of Japanese conquest in the Pacific. Japan lost four carriers, the Americans one. Thereafter, the Japanese would be largely on the defensive. By 1943, new American carriers were being commissioned, including the *Bunker Hill* and *Hornet*. It is here that John Theodore Crosby, known to his friends as "Ted," enters the story.

Ted Crosby was born in Eureka, California, on July 30, 1920. When his family moved to the San Francisco Bay area, Ted would visit ships when the fleet came into port. But as he matured, his initial goal was to be a pilot in commercial aviation. He had an older brother who got priority, at least when it came to a college education.

"My mother could only afford to send one of

us to college," Ted explained. "My brother was much better in math than I was—in high school, he was even doing great in calculus. There was a family meeting about it, and he ended up in the University of California, Berkeley."

Undaunted, Ted worked at the Golden Gate International Exposition (World's Fair) on Treasure Island and managed to save enough money to attend Marin College, just north of San Francisco. War interrupted his studies, though, and on the spur of the moment he and some friends went to Hamilton Field (later Hamilton Air Force Base) to see about joining the Army Air Forces.

Crosby passed the physical and was considered a prime candidate for flight school, but the 22-year-old started having second thoughts. "I said no, because I wanted to go Navy. I understood Navy, and felt it gave you the best training."

Without any further ado, Crosby went down to San Francisco's Embarcadero waterfront and enlisted in the U.S. Navy. It was a long and painstaking process to create a carrier pilot, and Ted recalled that the Navy was in no hurry. "When I did sign up they told me to go back to Marin College, finish the semester, and they'd send me orders. I finally was told to report to [preflight school] at St. Mary's College, Moraga, California."

These initial stages were pretty easy since "I

was in good shape. At St. Mary's we were building muscles, running along railroad tracks, and taking ground school. After about a month and a half, I went to Livermore Naval Air Station." Places like Livermore were sometimes called "E bases," short for elimination bases. The failure or "wash-out" rate could be as high as 30 percent in some places.

Crosby was now an AvCad, or naval air cadet. If he passed, he would become an officer and bear the prestigious title of naval aviator trained on Stearman N2-S "Yellow Peril" biplanes before being transferred to Corpus Christi, Texas, to earn his wings.

The newly minted aviator traveled to Opa-Locka, Florida (near Miami) for carrier landing practice. After that, it was on to the freshwater carriers on the Great Lakes. "They had two old coal oilers that they had converted into small flattops," Crosby recalled. "I practiced on the USS *Wolverine*."

After his training, Crosby went on leave, then headed to San Diego four days before his liberty was to expire. Ted was anxious to be assigned to a large carrier. "That's where the action was," he explained. The assignment officer had other ideas, though, and assigned Crosby to an escort carrier. About one-half the length and one-third the displacement of their bigger sisters, escort carriers were sometimes called "baby flattops" or "jeep carriers."

The assignment officer told Crosby in no uncertain terms that he was going to an escort carrier. "No," Ted replied, "I'm not. I'll be back tomorrow. I don't want a jeep carrier. If I go in, I'm going to go in on one of the big guys." It was a stubborn contest of wills—each day Crosby would return, and each day the assignment officer would offer an escort carrier.

Crosby received help from an unexpected quarter. Lieutenant James Bellows, a veteran of the Battle of Midway, was sitting at another desk and overheard the arguments. Bellows was in San Diego to form VF-18, a new fighter squadron of Hellcats. "He's coming with the VF-18," Bellows declared, whereupon the assignment officer had a fit. "He's mine!" the assignment officer insisted, stating he had other plans for Crosby.

Bellows was undeterred. "I think I've changed those plans," he said flatly. And so it was that Ted Crosby was assigned to VF-18 on the carrier *Bunker Hill*. In a sense, Crosby and *Bunker Hill* were both novices in the art of naval warfare. *Bunker Hill* was a new ship, commissioned in May 1943. By coincidence, Ted had also been commissioned that same month and year.

Bunker Hill reported to the Pacific in the fall

of 1943. By this time Allied offensives on New Guinea were prospering, and Guadalcanal in the Solomons had been taken after a bloody six-month fight. As the Americans pushed forward in the South Pacific, the major Japanese base at Rabaul was a prime target.

Rabaul, located on the island of New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago, featured five airfields, a harbor full of shipping, and formidable antiaircraft defenses. When U.S. Marines landed on Bougainville, well within striking distance of the Japanese base at Rabaul, it was essential that the facility be neutralized.

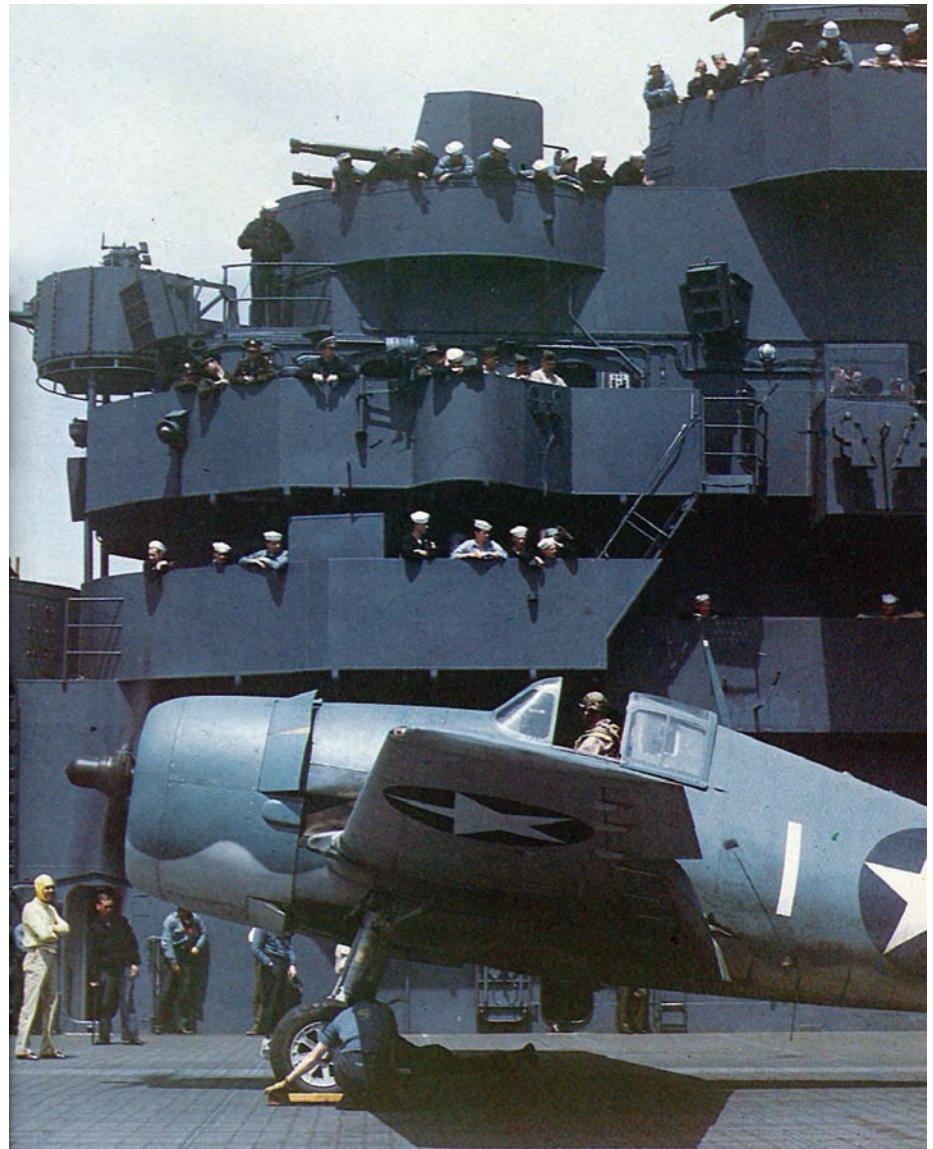
An autumn raid on Rabaul was a major effort involving several American carriers. It was also Ted Crosby's first taste of battle. The raid of November 11, 1943, involved dogfights

U.S. Navy

on a massive scale. It was an aerial free-for-all, with the new F6F Hellcat generally gaining the upper hand over the vaunted Mitsubishi A6M Zero or "Zeke."

One incident stuck in Ted's mind after the passage of more than 65 years. As they flew over Rabaul, greenhorn Ted stuck close behind his division leader, Lieutenant Bellows. Suddenly, there was a blast of gunfire and Crosby was shocked to see the blazing fuselage of a Zero streak by just overhead, its fiery trail marked by an arc of dark smoke.

Bellows had seen the Zero and shot it down before Crosby was even aware of its presence. "At that moment," Ted confessed, "I wondered if I could do this. But later, back at the *Bunker Hill*, Jim [Bellows] told me that I was follow-



ABOVE: A crewman from the USS *Yorktown* prepares to remove the wheel chocks of a F6F-3 Hellcat, of the type flown by Crosby, prior to take-off, May 1943. **OPPOSITE:** The pilots of Crosby's Squadron VF-18 photographed with a U.S. Navy Grumman Hellcat on the flight deck of the USS *Bunker Hill* (CV-17).

ing him too closely; I should drop back a bit, so I could better be able to look around for myself. I followed that advice.”

On November 26, 1943, Ted got his first kill—a piece of a Mitsubishi G4M Betty bomber. Bellows was leading his division—which included Ted—back to the *Bunker Hill* after a routine CAP (combat air patrol) when the carrier radioed them in flight. Ted said, “The CIC [Combat Information Center] called us and said, ‘Can you take another assignment?’ Jim Bellows said, ‘Yes, but remember—we only have between 20 minutes to a half hour of fuel left.’ The CIC guys said, ‘OK. Here’s the heading...’”

It seems that there were some Japanese bombers in the area—as Ted put it, “snooping around.” Bellows and his four Hellcat pilots finally caught up with a “Betty,” probably originating from Rabaul. The Betty was a twin-engine bomber, effective but very vulnerable due to its lack of armor and self-sealing gas tanks. “The tail gunner was giving us a fit,” Ted recalled, “so I felt he had to go.”

A steady stream of .50-caliber slugs from Ted’s six machine guns peppered and shattered the Betty’s tail and rear-gun position. Other Hellcats joined in, adding to Crosby’s symphony of destruction until the stricken bomber crashed. When he got back to *Bunker Hill*, Crosby claimed the Betty, but it was determined that other pilots had a share in its downing. As a result, Crosby’s official score stood at one-quarter of a Japanese bomber.

There was a harrowing postscript to the Betty episode. “We were running low on fuel,” Crosby remembered, “and it was getting dark. When a ship goes by, it can leave a kind of fluorescent wake behind it. We detected just such a wake, probably a carrier. So, it was simply a matter of ‘Which way did he go?’”

It turned out the ship in question was *Bel-leau Wood* (CVL 24), a light carrier. “Since it was getting dark, the last thing they wanted to do was to turn on the ship’s lights. They did turn on a row of red lights in the center of the deck, so we could see something as we landed. But, you see, none of us had been trained for night landings, so this was definitely something different.

“I went in first, because I had used my fuel injector to get an extra push to get that Betty. In fact, I thought that I had less fuel than the other guys in the flight. Yet, when one of the other guys landed, his plane died on the spot—no more gas!” Ted brought his Hellcat in without incident.

As the months passed, Crosby and his squadron honed their skills. VF-18 and its torpedo-bomber and dive-bomber counterparts



“They were good young people,” he recalled with a smile, “and you got to know them each time you saw them. Every time you’d mount a Hellcat you’d greet them just like meeting them on the street—‘How ya doing? Got any problems?’ And sometimes you’d find a kid who had a real family problem, and maybe you’d write a note to his parents telling them what a great job he was doing. I did that a couple of times.”

raided Japanese strongpoints and provided ground support for Marines and soldiers landing on fortified islands. Notable raids included Truk in the Carolines, the Marianas, and Kavieng. Ted said these raids followed the same pattern. “We did most of these island raids early in the morning. We’d hit them at sunrise, so it would be a while before we’d encounter any flak. Once we roused them out, of course we’d get antiaircraft fire. Sometimes you could even see Japanese troops running to their battle stations.

“When they started their antiaircraft fire, we fighters would be trying to protect our dive bombers and torpedo bombers. That meant

strafing to knock the antiaircraft batteries out—and that we could do. You have no idea what six .50-caliber machine guns can do. In fact, they can tear up anything in their path.”

In dogfights and strafing runs, Ted had only one rule: “Don’t be in any one spot for more than 10 seconds! When I looked in my rear view mirror, I’d often see flak bursts where my plane had just been.”

Crosby remembered the plane captains with particular affection. A plane captain is not to be confused with a mechanic. “A plane captain,” Crosby explained, “was required to stay with a particular airplane, tie it down when they moved it to a new position, etc. Each plane had

a captain. If they moved a plane, a captain would untie it [from the deck], take all the cables and tie-downs with him, and secure the aircraft again. But when it would be raining like the devil, you might see the plane captain in the cockpit, canopy closed, sleeping!

"They were good young people," he recalled with a smile, "and you got to know them each time you saw them. Every time you'd mount a Hellcat you'd greet them just like meeting them on the street—'How ya doing? Got any problems?' And sometimes you'd find a kid who had a real family problem, and maybe you'd write a note to his parents telling them what a great job he was doing. I did that a couple of times."

Crosby once had a major problem with a particular Hellcat. "Whenever we'd have a break in flight operations," he remembered, "I would get with the plane captain and ask him what problems we were having with No. 14; this plane had an oil leak in the cooler system. No matter what you did, you'd come back with oil all over the belly. He and I spent a good deal of time trying to find the oil leak on that thing."

Crosby's discussion of Hellcat No. 14 brought up another revelation: carrier pilots did not have their own "personal" planes. Crosby might have flown No. 14 several times, but it was strictly the luck of the draw. It was not his personal plane, nor did he have his name and/or kills painted on the fuselage. Land-based Army Air Force pilots could and did fly the same planes consistently, but not Navy aviators.

The topic came up when Ted discussed a typical daily routine: "Each squadron had its own ready room. The torpedo planes and dive bombers all had a ready room of their own. You'd find storage for your May West life jacket and other gear, and hangers on the wall for your flight suits. You'd go to the ready room to get briefings on what was going to happen that day.

"There was also a blackboard where your plane assignment would be chalked. Of course, you had your own group, and you went to your plane as part of that group, but you had no idea of what the flight deck looked like that day, or what plane you'd end up with." This was why Navy pilots almost never had their kills painted on particular planes; there was no guarantee that they would get the same plane again. According to Ted, it seems that photos of Navy aces with their kills emblazoned on the side are mostly "photo ops" and not much more.

Ted Crosby had high praise for the Grumman Hellcat, particularly the F6F-5, which was an improvement over the earlier F6F-3 version. "Excellent plane!" Crosby enthused. "For example, on the F6F-5 there were self-starters to start the engine. I was just a new, young kid,

but I knew once we had the F6F, we had it made. It was a great airplane from the start, thought it did have flaws. Those flaws were corrected."

An earlier carrier plane, the Grumman F4F Wildcat, was found to be outclassed by the Japanese Zero. For one thing, the Zero was faster and could outclimb the Wildcat. Zeros would climb steeply, hoping that inexperienced Wildcat pilots would follow in pursuit. Usually they did, only to have their engines stall out. Powerless and in a corkscrew dive, the Wildcats would be easily picked off by the enemy.

But the Hellcats had a supercharger that enabled the fighter to climb sharply with ease. Ted noted that many Zero pilots discovered that the Hellcat was not a Wildcat—usually the last lesson they ever learned.

U.S. Navy



ABOVE: A pair of Hellcats prowls the sky. The Hellcat was the aircraft Crosby flew the day he downed five enemy planes. OPPOSITE: A carrier's flight-deck crew watches carefully as an officer guides a Hellcat toward the elevator, which is being raised into position, November 1943. Each plane was assigned a captain who was responsible for staying with that particular plane. Pilots, however, did not fly the same plane.

The Navy also used Chance Vought F4U Corsairs, the iconic gull-wing fighters that many associate with the Marines. The early Corsairs had teething problems, and it was thought that the airplane's hose-nose configuration made it less than ideal for carrier landings.

The Corsairs could land on flight decks well enough, but the main problem was logistics. It would be hard to supply single squadrons of Corsairs when most carrier planes were Hellcats or Wildcats.

"When I first got on the *Bunker Hill*," Crosby remembered, "there was a squadron of Corsairs aboard. But they were transferred to Espiritu Santo, an island in the Solomons. The

pilots were pretty disgusted."

The Corsair squadron Ted referred to was VF-17, nicknamed the "Jolly Rogers." The Corsairs had a brief reunion on *Bunker Hill* when they came down for refueling. "Those guys looked pretty disheveled," Ted said. "Kind of dirty, with beards..." They managed to get some good Navy chow before taking off again.

By the end of 1944 and early 1945, it was clear that Japan was on its last legs. The Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944 and the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October virtually destroyed what was left of Japanese naval aviation. Even earlier, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's ill-advised I-GO offensive in the Solomons managed to decimate the cream of Japan's trained pilots, with no real advantage gained.

In January 1945, Ted joined a newly

reformed VF-17 aboard the USS *Hornet*. The new VF-17 appropriated the old formation's skull and crossbones logo, but this time the men would be exclusively flying Hellcats, not Corsairs. The commander of the new VF-17 was Lt. Cmdr. Marshall U. "Marsh" Beebe.

By this time American forces were well within striking distance of the Japanese home islands, and preparations were underway to take Okinawa, only 350 miles from Kyushu, the southernmost Japanese home island. For their part, the Japanese were preparing a warm welcome with Operation Ten-Ichigo, a concerted kamikaze effort. Hundreds of young pilots, often with minimal training, were going



The USS *Hornet*, home to Crosby's next squadron, VF-17, as shown in March 1945. After the first carrier *Hornet* (CV-8) was sunk in October 1942, a second flattop was named *Hornet* (CV-12) to carry on the heritage.

to deliberately crash themselves into American warships.

There were still a few trained Japanese pilots around, at least enough to make life uncomfortable. At one point, *Hornet* found itself under attack by Japanese dive bombers.

"There were Japanese dive bombers coming in on us," Crosby remembered, "and our anti-aircraft wasn't getting them. We pilots wanted to take off because we were much more effective than anti-aircraft; when anti-aircraft hit something, they were lucky."

Crosby and other Hellcat pilots raced to their planes, but after he scrambled into the cockpit Crosby found he couldn't get the engine started. "It was in an older model, a Hellcat F6F-3," he explained, adding, "I was blocking Billy Watts [Lt. (j.g.) Charles Watts], who was right behind me in a F6F-5. The deck people moved me out of the way onto elevator No. 2, which was on the port side of the ship.

"When they got me out of the way, they launched Billy by catapult. I have to congratulate him. I don't know if I could have been as sharp as he was. He launched and knocked a Japanese dive bomber right out of the sky right out of the catapult! Just moments after Billy launched, a bomb was coming right for us. The captain ordered a hard starboard turn to avoid it."

The *Hornet* executed a violent turn, so steep that the flight deck tilted to one side. It was even possible that Ted and his Hellcat, perched precariously over the water on No. 2 hangar, might have been tossed overboard. "God bless my plane captain," Ted declared. "He had already secured my plane with a couple of cable anchors and tie downs. But I got sopping wet

as I climbed out of the cockpit. It was from a waterspout created by a bomb that hit right next to us."

On April 16, 1945, Ted Crosby became an ace in a day, shooting down five Japanese planes on a single mission. The Marines had landed on Okinawa on April 1 and, as time went on, the battle for the island intensified. Swarms of kamikazes flew out of Kyushu on suicide missions, crashing into any Allied ship they could find in the area. Ted and his fellow aviators called them "kamikrazies." They seemed to conform to the wartime stereotype of fanatics who would rather commit suicide than surrender.

In truth, a cultural gulf that was wider than the Pacific they fought over separated the Americans from the Japanese. Fed on ultra-nationalistic propaganda that glorified the bushido code and samurai spirit, the impressionable young Japanese pilots did not think of themselves as committing suicide. Suicide per se might be dishonorable, but the kamikaze felt he was giving his life to protect the homeland. It was a moot point, and a tragic loss of life, for by 1945 such sacrifices were in vain.

Crosby began April 16 on a target combat air patrol with Lt. Cmdr. Beebe. Crosby's division (four Hellcats) was led by Lieutenant Milliard "Fuzz" Wooley; Ensigns J. Garrett and W.L. Osborn completed the quartet. As VF-17's war diary put it, "Wooley's division 'tallyhoed' [engaged] 12 Jacks and Zekes at 24,000 feet and started working them over."

Actually, there were two groups of Japanese planes, a dozen or so at around 24,000 feet and a second group that was flying about 9,000 feet lower. Their main target was a destroyer, possi-

bly a Fletcher-class vessel, that was cruising north of Okinawa. Ted could not recall the name of the ship, but its call sign was "Whiskey Base."

The fighter director aboard the destroyer was happy to see Hellcats above him but dismayed when it appeared that they were leaving. "The fighter director said, 'I see what you guys are doing—don't leave us!' Wooley replied, 'Don't worry. We'll be back. We want to meet these guys halfway before they can get to you!'"

In the process, Wooley and Crosby became separated from the other pilots. Squadron Commander Beebe called them, asking for their position. Crosby said, "Fuzz" replied, "Never mind, skipper, we got them [the Japanese] cornered!"

"It was a mixed group," continued Crosby, "of some trained pilots escorting some kamikazes."

The first plane Crosby encountered was a Mitsubishi J2M "Jack" fighter that was coming head on. Crosby and his adversary were seemingly on a collision course, like two medieval knights jousting in a tournament.

"On the right-hand side of the cockpit there's a service counter that controls the Hellcat's six machine guns," Crosby explained. "There were levers that permitted us to control the guns—fire two at a time, four at a time, and so on. When you first enter a fight, you have all six going at the same time.

"Well, I met that Japanese plane head-on with my six .50-caliber guns, and the impact of the bullets blew him apart. Part of his engine and propeller, with the prop still turning, flew right over my head. I picked out another [Japanese plane], executed a turn, and went right after him."



Jacks, a Zeke, and a Val dive bomber. His skill and valor won him the coveted Navy Cross.

Ted says he did not feel too good about downing those kamikazes at first. He realized that most of the suicide pilots had little training and were for the most part sitting ducks to experienced Navy airmen. However, Ted felt better “when I was told the extent of the damage they did on ships, and by shooting them down I was saving American lives.”

Even late in the war the skies over Japan could be decidedly dangerous. Crosby participated in the raid on Kure, a major Japanese naval base near Hiroshima, and several surrounding airfields. *Hornet’s* war diary states that on March 19, 1945, its Hellcats encountered a large formation of Georges while flying over the northwestern coast of Shikoku en

off the air—I’m the leader—get out of here!’ he said. Well, Wooley and I dropped back and climbed up. As we popped up over the overcast, we saw them—four Georges tracking and watching the rest of the squadron, who were ahead of me and Wooley.”

As soon as they saw Crosby and Wooley, and knew their cover was blown, the Georges plunged down on the main body of Hellcats without hesitation. The result was a massive dogfight that cost the lives of six Americans.

Crosby also had a close call on a photo-recon mission near Shokaku, after American carrier planes had attacked Japanese shipping in the area. “I had my plot board out and I’m putting down the time of day, the slant of the sun, and all that had to do with photography. Suddenly, I saw stuff [bullets] bouncing off my wing. I

The second was a Zeke, a kamikaze, not a fighter, so Ted proceeded with caution. “We all realized you had to watch out what you did because the kamikazes were loaded with TNT to do us maximum damage. When you hit one, they would really explode. Once they exploded, you’d find yourself flying through lots of garbage and debris.”

After he downed the Zeke, Crosby attempted to find his division leader, only to notice tracer bullets zipping past his Hellcat. Ironically, Ted had found his leader, but not in the way he wanted. The bullets were from Wooley, who, in the excitement, had mistaken Crosby for the enemy. Realizing his error, Wooley sheepishly radioed, “Did I get you, Ted?”

“Noooo...” Ted replied, “but let’s settle down and get more of these guys!”

Wooley readily complied, going after another Japanese plane, but found he was out of ammunition. Ironically, his last few bursts had been expended when he mistakenly fired on Ted. Wooley dove down, making himself a decoy by luring enemy planes into Crosby’s guns. The ruse was successful, enabling Ted to down two more Japanese planes.

They decided to call it a day, but as they started back to the carrier Crosby spotted a kamikaze heading toward the same destroyer they had helped protect earlier. Ted gave chase, tattooing the Japanese plane with a spray of .50-caliber lead. He broke off his attack because they were nearing the destroyer and he knew that the ship’s radar could not distinguish friend from foe.

Sure enough, the destroyer opened fire, and the kamikaze, already disabled by Ted’s guns, angled down and crashed onto a nearby island. Crosby became that day, credited with three

National Archives



LEFT: A bomb-laden kamikaze, scourge of the U.S. Navy, dives toward an American carrier. Crosby learned to keep his distance when firing on a kamikaze to avoid being caught in the explosion from the kamikaze’s load of TNT. RIGHT: Ted Crosby in a photo taken in 2011 on the *Hornet* (CV 12), which is now a museum ship docked at Alameda, California.

Ted Crosby



route to Kure.

“George” is the Allied name for the Kawanishi N1K2-J Shiden-kai fighter, a plane many considered superior to the Zero—and equal to the Hellcat. Captain Minoru Genda of Pearl Harbor fame swore by them and urged that Japan build up squadrons of Georges instead of squandering lives in kamikaze attacks.

The *Hornet* diary states that though the Hellcats managed to splash 20 Japanese planes, six Hellcats were lost. “Yes,” Crosby sadly admitted, “I lost friends that day—we lost six guys. And it was due in part because we had a stupid leader.” Ted doesn’t name the officer but described the events as he remembered them. “We were flying along under a thin overcast. Wooley and I were trying to get this guy [the leader] to fly over it, but he wouldn’t do it. ‘Stay

look back, and there’s this guy on my tail—probably a George. Only time I ever had a guy on my tail.”

After one pass the George broke off the attack and seemed to head back to his base. Crosby was not inclined to follow him. At the moment he was alone, and following an enemy plane over enemy territory did not seem like a wise thing to do. After he got back to *Hornet*, Ted found an unexploded 30mm shell in his cockpit armor, mute testimony to his luck and the fact that American aircraft designs protected their pilots.

Ted Crosby remained in the Navy after the war and retired with the rank of commander. Although he had a long and distinguished naval career, the memories of his days aboard *Bunker Hill* and *Hornet* always remained fresh. □



by the civilians trapped between the opposing sides. One day a man took Shaw to what appeared to be a cave but turned out to be a burial crypt for the locals, five of whom lay dead on the stone floor, their throats cut by the Japanese.

At first the fighting wasn't bad, though mines and tank traps slowed the advance. Soon, though, it intensified, and Shaw's guns stayed close behind the front lines, softening targets for the infantry as best they could. The Japanese were well dug in; sometimes the artillery had an effect, sometimes not. It was clear the enemy was prepared to fight it out until the end, however, and Shaw warned his men they were in for the long haul. Victory was the only way off the island, short of death or a serious wound. They shelled the Japanese all day and posted sentries at night to watch for infiltrators, men with swords and satchel charges looking to take out vital targets like an artillery piece or headquarters tent. The battle was on, and would remain so for 82 days.

Over 150,000 soldiers, Japanese and American, died during the fighting on Okinawa, and Shaw writes that everyone who survived knew they were lucky to be alive afterward. His book *82 Days on Okinawa: One American's Unforgettable Firsthand Account of the Pacific War's Greatest Battle* (Col. Art Shaw (Ret.) with Robert Wise, William Morrow Publishers, New York, NY, 2020, 368 pp., maps, photographs, index, \$28.99, hardcover) is a gripping narrative of that experience.

Shaw relates the actions of his men and the infantrymen they supported in simple, readable prose, allowing the reader a close understanding of what the troops on the front lines endured. His detailed accounts lay out the bravery and suffering of the American soldiers slogging their way across Okinawa during three months of brutal combat. The intense fighting hinted at what was to come in the months ahead, when the Japanese home islands were to be invaded. The idea seemed almost a death sentence, and when the American troops learned of the Japanese surrender after the dropping of the atomic bombs, they were ecstatic, cheering and firing their rifles into the air. It was as though they had

received a last-minute reprieve from the gallows.

Colonel Art Shaw was there for all of it. As time goes on, few veterans of World War II remain to tell their stories. As new, unpublished veteran accounts become ever scarcer, this new book provides a fresh retelling of

Witness to Okinawa

| A veteran of the savage, climactic land battle of the Pacific War tells his harrowing story.

ON APRIL 1, 1945, MAJOR ARTHUR SHAW LEANED AGAINST THE RAILING OF AN attack transport ship and stared into the distance at the island of Okinawa. The place was Japanese territory, with thousands of Japanese troops prepared to defend it to the death. Most of them would do just that. Shaw's unit, the 361st Field Artillery Battalion, was part of the American 96th Infantry Division, bloodied in the Philippines and now prepared to fight the last great battle of the Pacific War. The unit's 105mm howitzers would stay close behind the infantry, able to fire so fast "the Japanese thought we had automatic weapons."

The battalion was scheduled to land just north of Naha, a coastal town near the section of high ground that stretched across the center of the island. Most of the troops were on a nearby Landing Ship, Tank (LST); if the tide was high enough, the ship would carry them right onto the beach. If not, the men would board amphibious trucks, nicknamed "ducks," for the journey in. Shaw wound up catching a ride ashore with a tank unit commander aboard one of the ducks. He was the first man from the battalion to set foot on the beach that day.

The beachhead was not defended, and the unit got ashore without incident. They emplaced their guns and prepared for the fight ahead. Soon the howitzer crews went into action, supporting the infantry as they advanced. It was bloody work, made worse

Two soldiers from the 96th Infantry Division fire at Japanese targets during the advance on Okinawa. Major Shaw's Field Artillery Battalion operated close behind the infantry during three months of combat.



Breakthrough Joint Pain Discovery

Doctor's Formula Eases Joint Issues



By S.A. Nickerson, Health Correspondent

If you're over 40 or 50, odds are you suffer pain or stiffness in at least one of your body's 230 joints.

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- Joint pain or stiffness
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"LIMBEX has reduced the joint pain I was experiencing, especially in my hands."

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"I am 77 years old. My knee pain is completely gone, allowing me to be very active again. I love LIMBEX!"

Gena S. — CA

"I have only used it for a week and my hands stopped aching. I am thrilled. Thanks!"

Andrew P. — CT

"This has made me virtually free of joint pain. My husband has a severe neck issue and notices improvement as well."

Doris W. — SC

"Wonderful! When I don't take it, my knees kill me. I absolutely love LIMBEX!"

Caridad W. — MD

"LIMBEX has reduced pain in my aching knees, elbow, hips to almost nothing."

Diane H. — TX

Top Doc Says Don't Settle for Constant Joint Symptoms

Renowned holistic doctor David Brownstein, M.D., decided to search for new natural strategies to help soothe and comfort aching joints.

After seeing so many patients take handfuls of expensive but low-quality joint supplements, Dr. Brownstein formulated LIMBEX®.

This advanced joint support formula contains 11 premium ingredients to improve and maintain healthy joints, cartilage, and connective tissue.

AprèsFlex® Starts Helping Joints in as Little as 5 Days!

Boswellia has been used for 2,000 years to help aching joints. However, traditional boswellia is poorly absorbed.

Fortunately, scientists developed a new next-generation boswellia extract — AprèsFlex® — that improves upon the bioavailability of traditional boswellia.

Here's why Dr. Brownstein made it the flagship ingredient in LIMBEX: AprèsFlex starts balancing the inflammatory response in your joints in as little as five days!

And as good as AprèsFlex is for your joints, Dr. Brownstein didn't stop there. He went on to create an all-natural joint health "multi-tasker."

11 Powerful, Hand-Picked Ingredients

In addition to AprèsFlex, LIMBEX contains 10 more hard-working ingredients:

- » **Glucosamine** — keeps joints lubricated and promotes healthy cartilage
- » **Chondroitin** — provides building blocks for new cartilage and supports joint mobility
- » **Bromelain** — improves blood flow to speed up healing in damaged joints
- » **Holy Basil** — inhibits COX enzymes that cause joint irritation
- » **Turmeric** — contains curcumin to help reduce pain, swelling, and stiffness
- » **Green Tea Leaf Extract** — puts the brakes on pain-producing compounds that irritate joints
- » **Pomegranate Fruit Extract** — blocks a specific protein that causes cartilage breakdown
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- » **Vitamin C and Vitamin E** — both guard against joint-damaging free radicals

The Simple Solution for Joint Health Support

LIMBEX now makes it easy to help support and soothe your joints. Get back to living your life again with less pain and stiffness. Try LIMBEX today!



DR. BROWNSTEIN

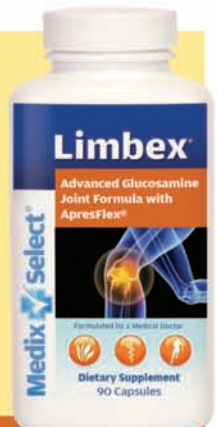
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a famous battle in great detail. Shaw fought this battle at 25 years old; at 99, he is now telling his remarkable part of it.



Flying Tiger Ace: The Story of Bill Reed, China's Shining Mark (Carl Molesworth, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2020, 335 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes, index, \$35.00, hardcover)

Bill Reed grew up in Iowa during the Great Depression; it was a hard time, which forged hard young men. He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps, but the call for action drew him to resign his commission when World War II broke out.

Bill chose to sign on with the American Volunteer Group, an organization that would quickly earn that immortal sobriquet, "The Flying Tigers." He flew 75 missions against the Japanese before returning home after the United States entered the war.

Reed spent some time there selling war bonds before returning to China to continue the fight, this time with the Chinese-American Composite Wing. This joint unit fought during the final two years of the war. Tragically, Bill Reed died during a parachute jump on December 19, 1944. At the time, he had nine confirmed aerial victories to his credit. His obituary covered the front pages of newspapers across Iowa.

This new biography began with information gathered from veteran's reunions of the Chinese and American pilots and was expanded into a thorough retelling of Bill Reed's life. The author was impressed by the respect and affection Bill's comrades held for him even decades later and wrote this book in response. Reed's family also donated records, and the book is well-illustrated with rarely seen photographs.



The Pacific War Remembered: An Oral History Collection (John T. Mason Jr., Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2020, 373 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, bibliography, \$34.95, hardcover)

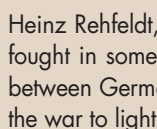
Donald B. Duncan helped plan the Doolittle Raid, using Army bombers to take off from a Navy aircraft carrier. Henry L. Miller helped train the Army pilots to take off from a carrier's pitching, swaying deck. Joseph Worthington commanded the destroyer *Benham* during operations at Guadalcanal and Midway. Meanwhile, William A. Read took part in the operation to shoot down Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. The submarine service saw Lawson Ramage on war patrols in several subs. At

New and Noteworthy

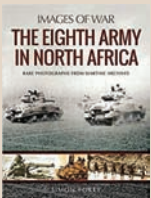
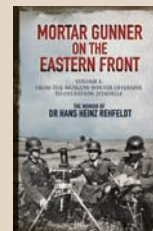
Operation Chastise: The RAF's Most Brilliant Attack of World War II (Max Hastings, Harper Collins, 2019, \$35.00, hardcover) The attacks on German dams by Great Britain's No. 617 Squadron were among the most daring acts of the war. This book reveals the efforts and bravery of the aircrew and the effects of their actions.



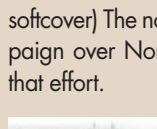
Check Six! A Thunderbolt Pilot's War Across the Pacific (James C. Curran and Terrence G. Popravak, Jr., Casemate Publishers, 2019, \$32.95, hardcover) James "Jug" Curran flew the P-47 fighter in over 200 combat missions. His personal memories are combined with unit records to provide a detailed and authentic work.



Mortar Gunner on the Eastern Front Volume I: From the Moscow Winter Offensive to Operation Zitadelle (Dr. Hans Heinz Rehfeldt, Greenhill Books, 2019, \$32.95, hardcover) Dr. Rehfeldt fought in some of the most difficult conditions possible in the brutal war between Germany and the Soviet Union. His memoir brings the horror of the war to light.



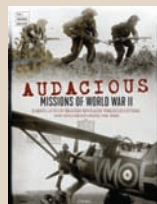
The Eighth Army in North Africa (Simon Forty, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, \$29.95, softcover) This new volume in the Images of War Series contains numerous photographs of the Eighth Army during the desert war. This force was instrumental in defeating the Afrika Korps.



Air War Over North Africa: USAAF Ascendant (David Mitchelhill-Green, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, \$24.95, softcover) The novice U.S. Army Air Forces played a major part in the air campaign over North Africa in 1942-43. This work photographically displays that effort.



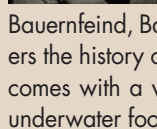
World War II Fast Carrier Task Force Tactics 1943-45 (Brian Lane Herder, Osprey Publishing, 2020, \$20.00, softcover) The aircraft carrier quickly eclipsed the battleship as the primary weapon of naval warfare. The author recounts the tactics developed and used by this new sea arm.



Battle of Midway: America's Decisive Strike in the Pacific in WWII (John Grehan, Frontline Books, 2019, \$28.95, softcover) Midway was one of the most decisive battles of the war. This book compiles many images of the battle and ships involved.



Audacious Missions of World War II: Daring Acts of Bravery Revealed Through Letters and Documents from the Time (The National Archives, Osprey Publishing, 2020, \$35.00, hardcover) This work reveals many intelligence and Special Forces missions undertaken during the war. It is well-illustrated.



USS Arizona: The Enduring Legacy of a Battleship (Ingo Bauernfeind, Bauerfeind Press, 2019, \$29.95, hardcover) This volume covers the history of *Arizona*, from her launching to her loss at Pearl Harbor. It comes with a video download of oral histories by survivors, along with underwater footage of the ship.



Saipan, Draper Kaufman commanded the Underwater Demolition Team that helped pave the way for the amphibious assault. Finally, at the war's end, Stuart S. Murray commanded the

battleship USS *Missouri* when she sailed into Tokyo Bay for the surrender ceremony that ended World War II. Each of these men made a small contribution, each just one among many,

that together with the efforts of millions of other Americans resulted in victory in the Pacific.

The author gathered the statements of 33 participants of the Pacific War and compiled them into this fascinating book. All of them eventually rose to flag rank in the naval service, but as more junior officers they took part in history's greatest conflict. They represent a wide variety of experiences both on and under the sea, as well as in the air. Some are combat stories, while others delve into the staff work and logistical efforts that make modern warfare possible. This book provides valuable insight into the conduct of the war in the words of those who were there.



Sighted Sub, Sank Same: The United States Navy's Air Campaign Against the U-Boat (Alan C. Carey, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2020, 240 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, \$34.95, hardcover)

The Battle of the Atlantic pitted the Allied navies against the might of Nazi Germany's U-Boat arm. It was an economic war, aimed at denying the United Kingdom needed supplies and hindering Allied efforts to build up a force able to carry the war onto the European mainland. The U.S. Navy did its part in this campaign. Of the 783 submarines lost by Germany, American aircraft sank 159 of them. Of that number, 83 were lost to carrier-based planes.

The author has pulled together a wide variety of sources to create this book, resulting in a detailed and thorough retelling. It is richly illustrated and tells the stories of action in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Mediterranean. There is even a story of a Japanese submarine sunk during a transport mission to its Axis partner.



The Stuff of Soldiers: A History of the Red Army in World War II Through Objects (Brandon M. Schechter, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2019, 315 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$36.95, hardcover)

"All of our things are government issue, we put our own stuff into storage." Nikolai Chekhovich wrote this line in a letter to his mother on June 27, 1941. He wanted her to know the Army would ship his things home to her soon and didn't want her thinking he was dead. Nikolai would continue writing to his family until he died liberating an unnamed village in 1944. Like all soldiers, he carried a weapon, but that was not all. He had an



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GERMAN WW2 ALUMINUM SS EM/NCO BUCKLE AND BELT MARKED RZM 36/40 SS	HITLER YOUTH LUFTWAFFE FLAK HELPERS M43 FIELD CAP	GERMAN WWII WAFFEN SS WOODEN HAND INK STAMP	GERMAN NAZI PARTY FLAG COTTON (3X5)
			
WW2 GERMAN WAFFEN SS MOTORCYCLE LICENCE PLATE SET	GERMAN WW2 PARATROOPER STEEL M38 HELMET AND LINER	M-1938 TANKER HELMET AMERICAN WWII	WW2 GERMAN M43 OBERGEFREITER COMBAT TUNIC ORIGINAL

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entrenching tool to dig, a knapsack to carry his meager possessions, a spoon, an ammunition pouch, and a coat which often served as his blanket. If he was lucky, he might also have some rations and maybe a little alcohol tucked away for the right moment. These, and a few other issued items, were all he had to help him through daily life, alongside whatever he could scrounge.

The things Soviet soldiers carried during the war are laid out in detail in this new book. It also delves into how the ethnic diversity of the troops contributed to their circumstances, the ways women dealt with life at the front and how looting formed a part of the soldier's existence. The author argues even mundane items were important to the war effort.



Women of the Third Reich: From Camp Guards to Combatants (Tim Heath, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, photographs, bibliography, \$32.95, hardcover)

Women were assigned many roles within Nazi Germany. In the beginning of the regime those roles might generally fit neatly within the social norms and biases of the era. They were expected to be good wives and mothers, providing for the future of the Third Reich through the raising of large families and support of their husbands. Girls were indoctrinated through various programs similar to the Hitler Youth organization. Once the war started, though, and especially as it turned against Germany, women's roles expanded, much as they did in other nations. They were trained to operate telephone networks, use radar systems, and drive trucks. Some fought fires as their cities became the targets of bombing raids. Others operated anti-aircraft guns. Infamously, a few worked in the concentration and death camps, where they became notorious for their cruelty. In the end, they were often pressed into service as militia when the Allied armies arrived in the Fatherland.

Full of testimonials from women who were there, this new work delves into the various roles and experiences of women in Nazi Germany. The author gathered the statements of women who were but tiny cogs in the state's apparatus, as well as more famous figures such as Traudl Junge, Hitler's secretary. He does not shy away from the brutality of the period nor make excuses, seeking to reveal how his subjects viewed their world at the time and how they came to see things as that world changed and eventually crashed down around them.

Simulation Gaming BY JOSEPH LUSTER

A REVERED STRATEGY SERIES GETS THE SEQUEL IT DESERVES WITH THE ARRIVAL OF PANZER CORPS 2

PANZER CORPS 2

PUBLISHER SLITHERINE • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

We've previously covered the original *Panzer Corps*, which is a fantastic and, at this point, classic entry in the realm of PC strategy games. The additional content has really piled up since its initial release, so any longtime fans of tactical warfare—or even relative newcomers to the genre—have plenty to sift through and keep them occupied for the foreseeable future. And now, nearly a decade later, Slitherine is hoping to recapture that magic with the release of the long-awaited *Panzer Corps 2*.

While it takes a while to slide into a nice and familiar groove, albeit one with some welcome enhancements and changes, when it does, *Panzer Corps 2* really reveals how far the series has come since 2011. As is the case with its predecessor, this entry is relatively easy to pick up, making it a good starting point for those new to the genre. Once you get past some simplistic opening battles, though, you'll begin to see the more complex side of the campaign unfold. Maps in *Panzer Corps 2* are as much puzzles as they are strategic battlefields, and this comes into crystal clear view after you take some time to learn the ropes. For veterans, these opening hours will feel a little underwhelming, but it's absolutely worth it to tough it out to get to the meat of what makes this one special.

One of the big boons this time around is the sheer variety of units at your disposal. The team at Flashback Games clearly put a lot of work into differentiating them all, ensuring that there are plenty of strategic options at the ready no matter how you want to approach a given mission. Succeeding in some of the mid- to late-game missions will require some level of trial and error, especially when it comes to figuring out which units work best against the enemy forces in each situation. Finally nailing the right tactical approach is really satisfying, though, so it's worth the time and effort you invest along the way.

There's a certain point in *Panzer Corps 2* where

the computer decides to forego thoughtful strategy in favor of brute force, overwhelming players with ambushes and insanely powerful units that really take you by surprise. It will inevitably force you to change up the way you've learned to play over the entirety of the game, which is disappointing but far from a deal breaker. The real treat is yet to come, because there's no doubt we're in store for plenty of additional content as this sequel ages in the coming months and years. We'll be able to judge the final product once more at that time, but for now there's no reason not to jump in if you love classic strategy. Just prepare to get hooked for the long haul with this one.

WORLD OF TANKS BLITZ: OPERATION ONSLAUGHT

PUBLISHER WARGAMING • **GENRE** ACTION • **SYSTEM** PC, iOS, Android, macOS • **AVAILABLE** NOW

Folks keeping up with *World of Tanks Blitz* are given something new to sink their teeth into pretty regularly. One of the latest was Operation Onslaught, a new Battle Pass comprising 40 different stages. This one ran from May 1 to May 29, available in both free and premium versions with their own unique contributions. Those who opted for the free version were rewarded with in-

game items depending on which milestones they hit, from access to a premium account to credits, gold, experience, avatars, camo, and vehicle research certificates.

On the premium end, every stage completed offered players rewards, including the British Tier IV light tank, *Covenanter*, and the Soviet Tier VI heavy known as *Thunder*. Taking part in the pre-

mium version was just a five-dollar investment, which isn't much to ask from a title that's already free-to-play. *World of Tanks Blitz* also recently collaborated with the anime series *Girls und Panzer*—which is all about girls taking on rival schools in tank skirmishes—so there's usually something fun going on for fans with varied interests. □

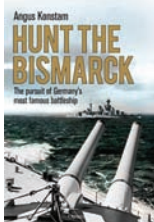




Dogfight over Tokyo: The Final Air Battle of the Pacific and the Last Four Men to Die in World War II (John Wukovits, Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2019, 322 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$28.00, hardcover)

In the early morning of August 15, 1945, a group of American fighter pilots of Air Group 88 rose from the wooden flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* (CV-10) and flew toward the island nation of Japan. Their mission, though they could not know it, would be the last of World War II. Two hours into the attack, word arrived of the Japanese surrender, along with an order to cease all offensive operations. As the American flyers turned back for their ship, a flight of 20 Japanese planes jumped them from above, the beginning of a fierce dogfight. When it was over, four U.S. pilots were lost, having started their day at war but ending it technically at peace. They lost their lives despite this fact, in the last action of a war already over. Some of the men blamed Admiral William F. Halsey for the situation. Despite this, Halsey urged that the memory of these last four casualties of the war be remembered.

The author of this book is an acknowledged expert on the Pacific War and specializes in telling the stories of fighting men caught up in the terrible combat action that characterized that conflict. This work continues his tradition of dramatic action, detailed backstory, and thorough research. Gathering information from numerous sources, including the descendants of the pilots of Air Group 88, he creates a page-turning narrative that grips the reader page after page.



Hunt the Bismarck: The Pursuit of Germany's Most Famous Battleship (Angus Konstam, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2019, 336 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$30.00, Hardcover)

The *Bismarck* presented a great threat to Allied shipping and naval power in 1940-41. The battleship was Nazi Germany's showpiece weapon, armed with 15-inch guns and protected with heavy armor. Even if the ship just sat in port, it represented a potential threat the Allies simply could not ignore. When the vessel eventually went to sea in May 1941, the British Royal Navy went to great efforts to find

and destroy her, mobilizing ships and aircraft in concert. The British and Germans met at the Battle of the Denmark Strait, where the famous battlecruiser HMS *Hood* was destroyed in a massive explosion. This left *Bismarck* roaming free in the Atlantic, but the ship had suffered damage in the fight that limited her maneuverability. This led to a massive hunt for the *Bismarck*, which ended in a long-running battle, one of the largest naval engagements in the Atlantic during the war.

The story of the *Bismarck* is presented here in a fast-paced narrative that utilizes extensive research and numerous firsthand accounts from the participants. The author is a former naval officer and long-acknowledged expert on naval history, with over 80 books to his credit. This vast experience results in a book that is polished, with useful maps linked to the text and clear, easy-to-follow prose.



A Letter to Jo (Joseph Sieracki, art by Kelly Williams, Top Shelf Productions, San Diego, CA, 2020, 136 pp., illustrations, appendices, \$19.99, softcover)

Like so many Americans, Leonard Sieracki went to war for his country against Nazi Germany. When he departed, his girlfriend Josephine was left behind to worry and wait. Initially assigned to the Pennsylvania National Guard's 28th Infantry Division, shortly before the Normandy landings he was transferred to the Regular Army's 2nd Infantry Division. Leonard was skilled with the machine gun, so his unit assigned one to him: a heavy, .30-caliber Browning he soon nicknamed "Death." His division moved across Europe, fighting one battle after another. As Leonard saw his friends and comrades killed or wounded, it took a terrible toll upon him, affecting his health and driving him to drink. Eventually, he was wounded in a particularly difficult battle involving enemy tanks and was evacuated to a hospital.

Leonard summarized his war experiences in a letter to Josephine written just after the war ended, containing all the horrors of war, which he had held back from her until then. His grandson Joseph eventually received the letter, and this new graphic novel was born. The artwork focuses on the human drama of Leonard's descriptions and reveals the stress of combat and the fear and suffering it creates. The last few years have seen a surge in graphic novels dealing with military history. This one is innovative in dealing with its subject and is suitable for young adult readers who are mature enough to read and see depictions of warfare. □

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Ordnance

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cost of one IL-4 shot down.

The 51st MTAP and 1st GMTAP A-20s returned to attacking Axis shipping in the Baltic, and numerous German minesweepers and landing barges and Finnish gunboats were damaged or sunk. On June 23, the German destroyer Z-29 was seriously damaged by A-20s and put out of action for 8 months.

In July 1944, a Soviet reconnaissance flight photographed the Kriegsmarine flak ship *Niobe* in the Finnish port of Kotka. *Niobe*, the former Dutch armored cruiser *Gelderland*, carried four 105mm, four 40mm, and four quad-barreled 20mm anti-aircraft guns, plus Würzburg radar. *Niobe* had been sent to defend Kotka harbor against Soviet air raids. The port itself was also heavily defended by an assortment of anti-aircraft guns.

The Soviets executed a large raid to destroy the warship. IL-2s bombed the shore-based anti-aircraft guns, and Pe-2s bombed *Niobe* in three waves, scoring four direct hits and six near-misses. Four A-20s from the 51st MTAP then came in at mast height and sank *Niobe* with two 1,000kg bombs. The Soviets lost six Pe-2s, two A-20Gs and one IL-2 shot down. The Germans lost 70 killed and 83 wounded from the ship's complement of 370.

The Soviets soon resumed their attacks on Baltic shipping, with A-20s sinking the merchant ship *Hochsee*. The Finnish minelayers *Vippula* and *Mercurius* were sunk with one A-20 torpedo as they were docked together. A total of 21 German minesweepers, barges, and patrol ships were sunk or damaged in the Baltic by the VMF-KBF. The Finns signed an armistice on September 15, 1944, but the Soviet A-20 MTAP units continued their attacks on German shipping.

On September 18, the 51st MTAP sank the torpedo boat T-18, which had the same relative size and firepower as an Allied destroyer. On September 22, the merchant ship *Moero* was sunk off Riga, Latvia, by an aerial torpedo from a 51st MTAP A-20, with a loss of 655 German soldiers. That same day, 51st MTAP A-20s damaged the merchant ships *Sumatra* and *Malaga*. During the month of September, the 51st MTAP claimed a dozen ships sunk or damaged. In October, A-20 torpedo bombers were credited with 19 merchant or small warships sunk. Poor weather in the months of November and December limited the number of aerial attacks by the Soviets, but from October 1944 to January 1945, the A-20s dropped several hundred mines in the Baltic ports in

Latvia and Estonia to hinder German shipping.

On October 31, 1944, five Soviet A-20Gs attacked the SS *Bremerhaven* and sank her with one aerial torpedo and two bomb hits, killing 410 passengers and crew. Additional major air raids were launched on the port of Liepaja on December 14 and 22, while A-20s sank a total of five merchant ships on those days.

In January 1945, the Kriegsmarine initiated Operation Hannibal, using merchant ships and warships to evacuate refugees and wounded soldiers from Baltic Sea ports to Germany. Soviet submarines, torpedo boats, and naval aviation, including A-20s, attacked this shipping whenever possible. On January 14, 1945, the SS *Mimi Horn* was sunk by an A-20 aerial torpedo from the 51st MTAP, and the 1st GMTAP sank the SS *Emsstorm*. During the succeeding months, the 1st GMTAP and 51st MTAP attacked and damaged or sank dozens of vessels as the Germans continued their maritime evacuation.

As the final collapse of Nazi Germany was at hand in May 1945, the A-20 MTAP units continued their relentless attacks. On May 4, 1945, the German merchant ship SS *Orion*, a former merchant raider/auxiliary cruiser, was sunk by A-20s from the 51st MTAP with the loss of 150 passengers. On the same day, the German training battleship KMS *Schlesien* struck a British mine while evading an air-launched torpedo from a Soviet A-20 and was deliberately run aground to save the passengers. The next day, a force of A-20s armed with 1,000kg bombs and IL-2s bombed the *Schlesien* and rendered it a total loss.

The Soviet A-20s provided important firepower in the Black Sea, Arctic, Baltic and Pacific. They executed over 200 attacks against major Axis warships and merchant ships, using either torpedoes, bombs, or mines, and post-war records confirmed the loss of over 40 ships and damage to 15 others. The sinkings resulted in the loss of over 100,000 tons of shipping sunk or damaged, and thousands of German and Axis sailors and soldiers killed.

In recognition of their achievements, several Soviet A-20 regiments were designated Guard Regiments, and at least six Soviet Naval Aviation A-20 pilots and navigators were named Heroes of the Soviet Union, reinforcing the reputation of the A-20 as a formidable torpedo bomber. □

Robert F. McEniry is a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel with over 22 years' experience. He currently works as a civilian analyst for USSTRATCOM at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. He is also a private pilot.

Insight

Continued from page 24

walked toward Admiral Halsey's cabin without casting a glance at the Japanese delegates. MacArthur put his arm around Halsey's shoulders and asked, "Bill, where in the hell are those airplanes?" There was a roar in the distance, and then 1,900 Allied bombers and carrier fighters swept over the *Missouri* in a thunderous salute.

Verne F. Harrington of Adams, Massachusetts, a 20-year-old seaman first class, noticed the reaction of one of the Japanese delegates when the planes flew overhead. "You could see him looking up at them and smiling," he said. "I guess he knew they meant business."

Graham Stanford of the *London Daily Mail* was also watching the Japanese representatives as they were led away. "They looked up at the sky, whispered among themselves, and then they were gone, the destroyer rushing them back to their ruined city," he reported. "The war was over, and now all the world was at peace. But there was no cheering or laughing, and little talking, for every man felt the gravity of this occasion."

After the surrender ceremony, MacArthur left the deck for another microphone to broadcast an eloquent message of both hope and warning to the American people. "Today, the guns are silent," he said. "A great tragedy has ended. A great victory has been won. The skies no longer rain death, the seas bear only commerce, men everywhere walk upright in the sunlight. The entire world is quietly at peace. The holy mission has been completed...A new era is upon us...We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door..."

Six days after the surrender ceremonies, General MacArthur went to Tokyo. MacArthur, who had gallantly led the 42nd Infantry (Rainbow) Division in World War I, served as West Point superintendent, acted as military adviser to Philippine President Manuel Quezon, risen to Army chief of staff, and commanded Allied ground forces in the Pacific theater in 1941-45, now became the civil administrator of Japan. During his tenure from 1945 to 1951, he earned high praise for his enlightened reforms of the defeated nation's political, economic, social, and cultural life. □

Author Michael D. Hull, a frequent contributor to WWII History on a variety of topics, passed away recently. He lived and wrote in Enfield, Connecticut.

New Bladder Control Pill Sales May Surpass Adult Diapers By 2021

Drug-free discovery works, say doctors. Many adults ditching diapers and pads for clinical strength pill that triggers day and night bladder support.

By T.J. Roberts

Interactive News Media

INM — Over 150,000 doses have shipped to bladder sufferers so far, and sales continue to climb every day for the 'diaper replacing' new pill called BladderMax.

"We knew we had a great product, but it's even exceeded our expectations," said Keith Graham, Manager of Call Center Operations for BladderMax.

"People just keep placing orders, it's pretty amazing," he said.

But a closer look at this new bladder control sensation suggests that maybe the company shouldn't have been caught off guard by its success.

There are very good reasons for BladderMax's surging popularity.

To begin with, clinical studies show BladderMax not only reduces embarrassing bladder leakages quickly, but also works to strengthen and calm the bladder for lasting relief.

Plus, at just \$2 per daily dose, it's very affordable.

This may be another reason why American diaper companies are starting to panic over its' release.

"With daily use, BladderMax offers day and night bladder control relief without side effects," says Diane Lewis, Chief Researcher for BladderMax.

"And seniors in clinical studies reported a higher quality of life in just days as a result of needing less diapers. That's why so many doctors nationwide are now recommending it to patients," added Lewis.

WHAT SCIENTISTS DISCOVERED

BladderMax contains a proprietary compound with a known ability to reduce stress, urgency, and overflow leakages in seniors suffering from overactive bladder.

This compound is not a drug. It is the active ingredient in BladderMax.

Studies show it naturally strengthens the bladder's muscle tone while relaxing the urination muscles resulting in a decrease in sudden urgency.

Many sufferers enjoy a reduction in bathroom trips both day and night. Others are able to get back to doing the things they love without worrying about embarrassing leakages.

"I couldn't sit through a movie without having to go to the bathroom 3-4 times," says Theresa Johnson of Deluth, GA. "but since using BladderMax I can not only sit through a movie, but I can drive on the freeway to another city without having to immediately go to the bathroom."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why sales for this newly approved bladder pill continue to climb every day.

SLASHES EMBARRASSING LEAKAGES BY 79%

The 6 week clinical study was carried out by scientists in Japan. The results were published in the *Journal of Medicine and Pharmaceutical Science* in 2001.

The study involved seniors who suffered from frequent and embarrassing bladder leakages. They were not instructed to change their daily routines. They were only told to take BladderMax's active ingredient every day.

The results were incredible.

Taking BladderMax's active ingredient significantly reduced both sudden urges to go and embarrassing urine leakages compared to the placebo.

In fact, many experienced a 79% reduction in embarrassing accidents when coughing, sneezing, laughing or physical activity at 6 weeks.

They also enjoyed a 39% decrease in daytime trips to the bathroom, and a 68% decrease in nighttime trips.

With these studies medical doctors and researchers have now proven BladderMax to be a clinically effective treatment for reducing embarrassing bladder leakages and incontinence.

The findings are impressive, no doubt, but results will vary.

But with results like these it's easy to see why thousands of callers are jamming the phone lines trying to get their hands on BladderMax.

HOW IT WORKS IS INCREDIBLE

Studies show that as many as one in six adults over age 40 suffers from an overactive bladder and embarrassing leakages.

"Losing control of when and how we go to the bathroom is just an indication of a weakening of the pelvic muscles caused by age-related hormonal changes," says Lewis.

"It happens in both men and women, and it is actually quite common."

The natural compound found in BladderMax contains the necessary ingredients needed to help strengthen bladder muscles to relieve urgency, while reducing frequency.

Plus, it helps relax bladder muscles allowing for complete emptying of the bladder.

This proprietary compound is known as 'EFLA940'®.

And with over 17 years of medical use there have been no adverse side effects reported.

This is a bonus for incontinence sufferers who have been taking prescription and over the counter medications that can cause dry mouth and constipation.

This seems to be another reason why BladderMax's release has triggered such a frenzy of sales.



As new pill gains popularity, products like these will become unnecessary.

RECOMMENDED BY U.S. MEDICAL DOCTORS

"Many of my patients used to complain that coughing, sneezing or even getting up quickly from a chair results in wetting themselves and they fear becoming a social outcast," reports Dr. Clifford James M.D. "But BladderMax changes all that."

"BladderMax effectively treats urinary disorders, specifically overactive bladder," said Dr. Christie Wilkins, board certified doctor of natural medicine.

"I use BladderMax everyday for my overactive bladder. I also have my sister and mother taking it regularly as well," said Dr. Jennifer Freeman, G.P. from NY.

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Users of BladderMax report incredible results. That's why it comes with an equally incredible guarantee.

"There's only one reason why we can offer such a guarantee," said Kyle Harris, Founder of BladderMax. "It works for those who use it. It's as simple as that," he added.

Here's how it works: Take the pill exactly as directed. Then follow the simple instructions. You must be thrilled and amazed as your bladder control greatly improves.

Otherwise, return the product as directed and you'll receive double your money back!

READERS GET SPECIAL DISCOUNT SUPPLY

This is the official release of BladderMax and so for a limited time, the company is offering a special discount supply to our readers. An Order Hotline has been set up for our readers to call, but don't wait. The special offer will not last forever. All you have to do is call TOLL FREE 1-800-452-3489. The company will do the rest.

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Hill 700

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Company, attacked a pillbox with Japanese troops firing a machine gun and holding up the advance of the 2nd Battalion, 148th Infantry.

Crawling forward and dragging heavy equipment behind them, all the while exposed to the enemy pillbox, they reached a point from which they rose and fired into the enemy position. Once it was destroyed, the team crawled back, recharged their weapon, and repeated the act at a second enemy-held pillbox. They did these four times altogether. Their actions were one of the reasons Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 148th Infantry, received a Distinguished Unit Citation for its work on Bougainville.

Others used different weapons to achieve the same results. Staff Sergeants Jim L. Spencer and Lattie L. Graves volunteered to use a rocket launcher, or “bazooka,” to remove the enemy from Hill 700. Using a trench for cover, the two non-commissioned officers fired the first round. It missed. Excited by the power of the weapon, they immediately reloaded and tried again. This round demolished the pillbox. Thrilled at their success, the two men went on to other targets, with Staff Sergeant Graves yelling, “Make way for the artillery!” as they moved. After three hours, Sergeant Spencer announced that the work was “more fun than a barrel of monkeys.”

Private First Class Jennings W. Crouch and Pfc. William R. Andrick preferred BARs. Both men charged enemy pillboxes with guns blazing from their hips until they had eliminated the occupants of the pillboxes, despite both being seriously wounded. Pfc. John E. Bussard was old for combat, age 36, and the father of three children. But a younger brother had been killed in New Guinea, and he was out for vengeance.

First, despite 12 others being killed or wounded before him, he crawled to an observation position under constant Japanese fire and spent the night there, before returning to report his observations.

The next morning, Bussard knocked out a key Japanese position with anti-tank grenades. Then he volunteered to drag a bazooka up the same hill he had been pinned down on earlier. Carrying the bazooka and his rifle, he again reached his hideout and fired six rounds at the enemy before he was told to return. He then occupied his time by killing several enemy snipers in his company area. He was eventually killed by enemy fire. Later, after the area had been recovered, Pfc. Bussard was credited with the deaths of 250 enemy soldiers.

The battle continued. Pfc. Vernon D. Wilks used his BAR until it burned out, then burned

out two more by popping up from a shallow trench and firing before the Japanese could return fire. Captain Richard J. Keller of Company E and 1st Lieutenant Sidney S. Goodkin of Company F led their men over the top of Hill 700. Captain Keller fell to enemy fire, but Lieutenant Goodkin led the two companies over the hill despite painful burns. He tossed grenades and directed his men to clear the Japanese off the top of Hill 700. Staff Sergeant Jack Foust of Company E used a recovered machine gun to clear the treetops of enemy snipers.

Finally, only two pillboxes remained. Sergeant Harold W. Lintemoot and Pfc. Gerald E. Shaner of the battalion’s Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon used six half-pound blocks of TNT on a four-foot board with a slow-burning fuse to destroy the pillboxes. The battle for Hill 700 was over. A final desperate “banzai” charge against Cannon Hill during the night of March 12-13 was well lit by the huge searchlights of the 251st Coast Artillery Battalion, and dawn added 107 more enemy dead to the count. The battles for Hill 260 and others in the Americal Division zone also added hundreds more to the total.

The battle was the costliest the Ohio division had yet fought. Over 1,500 enemy dead were buried after the fighting ended, and others lay uncounted in caves and deep jungles. It was only on March 28 that General Hyakutake acknowledged defeat and ordered a withdrawal. The XIV Corps pursued, leading to more battles and pushing the Japanese well away from Cape Torokina. During the pursuit, elements of the 93rd Infantry Division received their first combat experience.

Like the Marines before them, XIV Corps was needed elsewhere, specifically to retake the Philippines, and beginning in December 1944, the 37th Infantry and Americal Divisions were on their way to the Sixth and Eighth Armies, respectively. They were replaced by the 3rd Australian Infantry Division, a part of Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Savige’s II Australian Corps. The Australians would spend the rest of the war in the deadly, unglamorous, and frustrating job of mopping up strong Japanese forces remaining on Bougainville. Except by those who fought there, Hill 700 was forgotten. □

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



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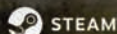
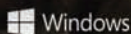
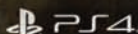
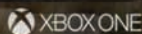
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