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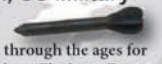

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The design concept was amazing and its impact could still be amazing in this day & age! Imagine a platoon of infantry Riflemen also each carrying 15 mortar shells and working as a fire and maneuver machine. Stalinist purges and a failure to develop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

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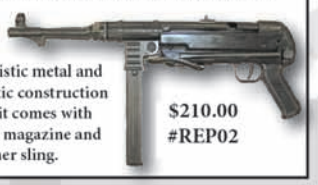

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German Balkenkreuz 'Vehicle Cross' Flag

All cotton, size 3 x 5 feet with loop and bottom draw cord.

$18.95 #FLAG21

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Cover: A German soldier, photographed during the Battle of the Bulge. This is one of a series of photographs recoved from a German camera by Americans during the battle. See story page 36 Photo: National Archives

WWII History (ISSN 1539-5456) is published six times yearly in February, April, June, August, October, and December by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite C-100, McLean, VA 22101. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History*, Volume 20, Number 2 ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to ***WWII History*** **Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $6.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $24.95; Canada and Overseas: $38.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII History*, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite C-100, McLean, VA 22101. *WWII History* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

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WWII HISTORY

Volume 20 ■ Number 2

Auction of Hitler Notes Sparks Controversy

A RECENT AUCTION OF HANDWRITTEN SPEECH NOTES SCRAWLED BY NONE other than Adolf Hitler, Führer of Nazi Germany, aroused the ire of Jewish groups, which find the commercial activity reprehensible since the Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of more than six million Jews during the 12 years of the Third Reich.

When the past goes under the hammer, it is likely to evoke emotion. Those who can afford to pay the price hold history in their hands. However, in the case of the Hitler speech notes, is there an ugly undercurrent of neo-Nazi fervor that may be stoked? The line between history and hate is blurred. Is there middle ground?

The speech notes were all written before World War II and meant for addresses to Nazi audiences. They do, in fact, mention the "Jewish Problem" and preparations for going to war. Bernard Pacher, managing director of the Hermann Historica auction house in Munich, offered them for sale in October 2020, with an estimated price of $3,000 to $8,800.

"These are handwritten notes from Adolf Hitler, where if you analyze what he wrote ... you can prove he was publicly speaking about going to war, about 'resolving the Jewish problem,'" Pacher told an Associated Press reporter via telephone. "If we destroy these things and they do not go into a museum for experts to work on them, you will leave the interpretation of what was happening to the right-wing Nazi apologists, who will say Hitler never said that. The man was preparing the Germans that there would be a war and those who didn't want to see that must have been totally blind—it's in there."

Well, the documents, nine pages in Hitler's scrawl meant to outline a 1939 speech to new military officers as well as remarks to citizens who had contributed financially to the Nazi Party, actually sold on October 23 to an anonymous group of bidders for the enormous $40,300, far exceeding the pre-auction estimates.

"I cannot get my head around the sheer irresponsibility and insensitivity, in such a febrile climate, of selling items such as the ramblings of the world's biggest killer of Jews to the highest bidder," Rabbi Menachem Margolin of the European Jewish Association, based in Brussels, Belgium, told the Associated Press.

Fears that the sale would spoke a wave of anti-Semitism were evidently discounted by the auction-house representatives, and the level of interest in all things Nazi seems never to have waned during the post-World War II era. Although auction-firm Hermann Historica representatives forcefully argued that the speech notes were of historical value and should be preserved in a museum, Margolin countered, "What auctions like this do is help legitimize Hitler enthusiasts who thrive on this sort of stuff?"

This isn't the first time that Nazi memorabilia or personal items belonging to the Führer have been offered for auction. In 2016, one of Hitler's uniforms sold for $375,000, along with a typewriter and other belongings. In October 2019, a Swiss real-estate mogul born in Lebanon purchased a silver-plated edition of Hitler's manifesto *Mein Kampf*, his top hat, and other items, and then promptly donated them to a Jewish advocacy group to prevent them from falling into the hands of neo-Nazis.

Still, along with the most recent auction, numerous questions reemerge and reiterate the simple fact that the world continues to wrestle with the historical interpretation of the Holocaust and its place in the pantheon of the darkest chapters in the legacy of humankind.

Indeed, the rise of neo-Nazi organizations and far-right hate groups in Germany and other parts of the world is troubling. Museum versus horrific memory, ideology versus interpretation, history balanced in an atmosphere of lingering hate—each of these must be considered in any such future high-profile events. May we never celebrate, and always curse, the cruelty of which men are capable.

— Michael E. Haskew

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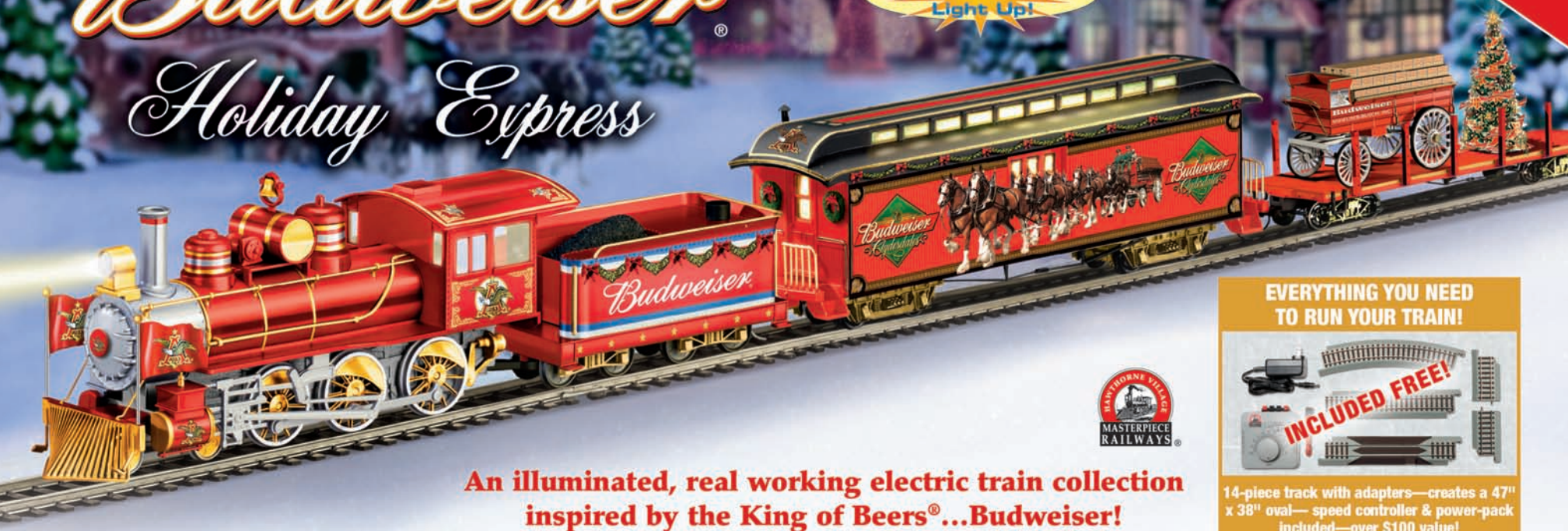

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By Allyn Vannoy

Zero Ace Over Guadalcanal

> Saburo Sakai was a veteran fighter pilot of the Imperial Japanese Navy when the fight for the Solomons began in the summer of 1942.

FLIGHT PETTY OFFICER SABURO SAKAI WAS ANXIOUS TO ENGAGE THE American carrier pilots for the first time, testing his skills against what he had been told were the best opponents he would come up against. The adversaries would meet in the skies above the island of Guadalcanal.

During the American landing operations on August 7-8, 1942, Japanese naval aircraft based at Rabaul attacked the amphibious forces several times, setting fire to the transport USS *George F. Elliott*, which sank two days later, and heavily damaging the destroyer USS *Jarvis*. In the air attacks over the two days, the Japanese lost 36 aircraft, while the U.S. lost 19, both in combat and to accidents. One of the Japanese aircraft was flown by Sakai, a veteran of combat operations over China, the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, and New Guinea. The spirit of the Samurai was in his blood, as the fighting over Guadalcanal would prove.

Saburo Sakai, flight petty officer, 1st class, of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), later promoted to lieutenant (j.g.), was an ace fighter pilot. Born in Saga Prefecture in the northwest of the island of Kyushu, the third of four sons (his given name means "third son"), Sakai was 11 when his father died. Adopted by his maternal uncle, he attended high school in Tokyo; however, Sakai failed to do well and was sent back to Saga.

In May 1933, at the age of 16, he enlisted in the IJN. After completing basic seaman training,

TOP: In artist Jack Fellows' painting, "Sakai-7 August 1942," Japanese fighter ace Saburo Sakai flies toward the scene of aerial combat in the skies above Guadalcanal in the Solomons Islands. ABOVE: Sakai in China when he was a petty-officer pilot.

Sakai served aboard the battleships *Kirishima* and *Haruna*. In 1937, he was accepted into pilot training. Though graduating as a carrier pilot, he was never assigned to aircraft-carrier

By Allyn Vannoy

Zero Ace Over Guadalcanal

> Saburo Sakai was a veteran fighter pilot of the Imperial Japanese Navy when the fight for the Solomons began in the summer of 1942.

FLIGHT PETTY OFFICER SABURO SAKAI WAS ANXIOUS TO ENGAGE THE American carrier pilots for the first time, testing his skills against what he had been told were the best opponents he would come up against. The adversaries would meet in the skies above the island of Guadalcanal.

During the American landing operations on August 7-8, 1942, Japanese naval aircraft based at Rabaul attacked the amphibious forces several times, setting fire to the transport USS *George F. Elliott*, which sank two days later, and heavily damaging the destroyer USS *Jarvis*. In the air attacks over the two days, the Japanese lost 36 aircraft, while the U.S. lost 19, both in combat and to accidents. One of the Japanese aircraft was flown by Sakai, a veteran of combat operations over China, the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, and New Guinea. The spirit of the Samurai was in his blood, as the fighting over Guadalcanal would prove.

Saburo Sakai, flight petty officer, 1st class, of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), later promoted to lieutenant (j.g.), was an ace fighter pilot. Born in Saga Prefecture in the northwest of the island of Kyushu, the third of four sons (his given name means "third son"), Sakai was 11 when his father died. Adopted by his maternal uncle, he attended high school in Tokyo; however, Sakai failed to do well and was sent back to Saga.

In May 1933, at the age of 16, he enlisted in the IJN. After completing basic seaman training,

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Sakai served aboard the battleships *Kirishima* and *Haruna*. In 1937, he was accepted into pilot training. Though graduating as a carrier pilot, he was never assigned to aircraft-carrier

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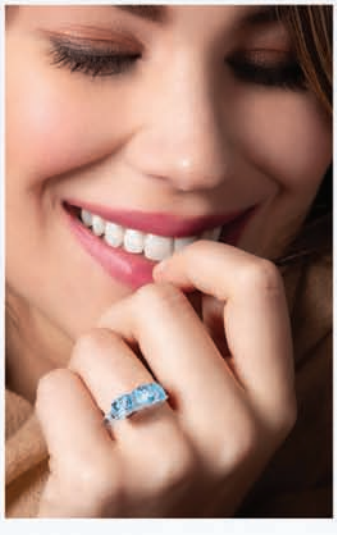

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The great Japanese base at Rabaul on the island of New Britain is a beehive of activity as Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters take off from their airstrip. Saburo Sakai left his base at Rabaul on the morning of August 7, 1942, as American Marines stormed ashore on Guadalcanal and nearly lost his life during vicious dogfights with American aircraft covering the landings.

duty, but to a shore-based naval-aviation unit. He flew combat missions piloting a Type 96 Mitsubishi A5M fighter during the Second Sino-Japanese War and was wounded in action. Later, Sakai was selected to fly the Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighter.

When war broke out in 1941, Sakai participated in the attack on U.S. installations in the Philippines as a member of the Tainan Air Group—a fighter-aircraft and airbase-garrison unit of the IJN. On December 8, 1941, as part of a flight of 45 Zeros, Sakai participated in an attack on Clark Field, north of Manila. In his first combat against the Americans, Sakai shot down a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighter and destroyed two Boeing B-17 bombers on the ground. On the third day of the fighting, Sakai claimed to have shot down a B-17 flown by the legendary Captain Colin P. Kelly, although he was not officially credited.

Early in 1942, Sakai was transferred to Tarakan Island in Borneo for operations in the Dutch East Indies. During the Borneo campaign, Sakai achieved 13 victories before he was grounded due to illness. In April, Sakai was transferred to Lae, New Guinea, where, over the next four months, he scored the majority of his victories flying against American and Australian pilots based at Port Moresby. By August, Sakai was a section leader, and his air group was transferred from Lae to Rabaul, New Britain.

On the morning of August 7, the men of Sakai's fighter group were informed that at 5:20 AM that morning, enemy forces had landed at Lunga, on the island of Guadalcanal, and had also attacked Tulagi, where 10 flying boats and 10 seaplane fighters, part of the Yokohama Air Corps, 25th Air Flotilla had been based. The entire flying-boat flotilla had been destroyed, and once a flight route had been plotted, the fighter pilots were to attack the enemy forces near Guadalcanal.

Sakai remembered, "This morning our usual mission of fighter patrol, attack against (Port) Moresby or air-to-air combat, was to be replaced with a special attack…. The pilots spoke with enthusiasm to each other. 'Maybe today we'll have a big fight,' one said. 'I'd like to get a kill,' another added. Our pilots were understandably eager to engage the enemy fighter planes in combat. The results obtained with our Zero fighters against enemy airplanes had been so amazing that often the enemy appeared openly to fear our arrival and, often times, had even refused to join combat."

As the pilots waited for details of the day's operation, Captain Masahisa Saito, the unit's commanding officer, Yasuna Kozono, the air officer, and Lieutenant Commander Nakajima gathered around a large map to plan the day's mission.

After the pilots had been ordered to fall-in, Captain Saito informed them that a powerful enemy invasion force under heavy cover had attacked Lunga Roads, Guadalcanal, at the southern end of the Solomon Island group, where Japanese engineers had been constructing an airstrip.

Sakai recalled Saito's words: "Our naval forces operating in the Rabaul area have been ordered to engage the enemy immediately, in full strength, and to drive back the American invasion forces at any cost. Our fighter-plane units have been ordered to escort the land-based medium bombers, which will attack enemy ships. Certain fighter groups will precede the bombers and their escorts into the battle area as challenging units, to draw off the American fighter planes. You will be taxing your airplanes to the utmost, and I want every pilot to take maximum precautions to conserve fuel."

At a distance of almost 560 nautical miles from Rabaul to Guadalcanal, it would be the longest mission they would be called upon to fly. There was disbelief among some of the pilots that they would have to fly such a distance, engage the enemy, and then fly back to Rabaul.

Before they climbed into their Zeros, Lieutenant Junichi Sasai, Sakai's immediate superior, made a final address to the pilots: "The American fighters over the Guadalcanal area are known to have come from aircraft carriers supporting the invasion. They are probably regular American navy fighters, not army planes, brought in especially for this attack. This is the first time we will be meeting American navy fighters." Then he added, "Be careful, and never lose sight of my plane." Lieutenant Sasai's brother-in-law, Lieutenant Commander Yoshio Tashiro, was a flying-boat officer stationed at Tulagi. His death was later confirmed.

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A formation of Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters flies above the Solomon Islands in 1942. The nimble Japanese fighter was superior in many respects to its primary American aerial opponent, the Grumman F4F Wildcat.

The realization that he would be flying against U.S. Navy pilots excited Sakai. "I had been anxious to meet American carrier pilots for a long time," he later said. "Now my chance had come! I had been flying fighters for six years and had more than three thousand hours in the air. I had participated in our attacks on the Chinese inland cities of Chungking (Chongqing), Chengtu (Chengdu), Lanchow (Lanzhou), and others in the Sino-Japanese Incident. Since the outbreak of the Pacific War, I had fought in the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. So far I had shot down fifty-six enemy planes, and was one of the leading aces of all Japanese naval fighter pilots. But I had never met any carrier planes."

Sakai instructed his two wingmen, Hatori and Yonekawa, to exercise caution and to never break away from him, no matter what.

At 8:00 AM, 17 Zeros took off, organizing themselves into three-plane formations as they climbed and headed south toward the Solomons. Some of the fighters moved into position above and behind the 27 Mitsubishi G4M1 bombers, nicknamed "Bettys" by the Allies, they were directed to escort. Others flew ahead of the bombers as part of the "challenge unit" intended to clear the way for the Bettys. The bombers rose to an altitude of 15,000 feet. Sakai was the flight leader of the second section of the second fighter squadron. He was disturbed by the fact that the bombers were carrying bombs rather than torpedoes, the usual armament for attacking shipping. He realized, given past experience, the problem of trying to hit moving targets from high altitude.

As they flew south over New Georgia, the Japanese aircraft crossed the Russell Islands at 20,000 feet. Just before noon, some 50 miles from Guadalcanal, they sighted Lunga Roads. Sakai recalled, "There were scattered clouds at about thirteen thousand feet, but above and below that level the sky was absolutely clear. We searched Lunga Roads carefully and gradually distinguished the shapes of the enemy ships in the area. The water seemed covered with vessels. I had never seen so large a convoy before, although I had flown on many occasions over Japanese troopship fleets during our invasion operations. I couldn't help admiring the men below me, even though they were enemies."

At that moment the fighters of the challenge unit, preceding the main body by several minutes, began tangling with American fighters. Sakai spotted signs of a dogfight, bright flashes and streaks of smoke trails as aircraft fell earthward. But in moments the sky was again clear of swirling aircraft, and the bombers started into shallow dives toward the American ships.

Then, without warning, six enemy fighter planes appeared, diving through the bomber formation. Sakai identified them as Grumman F4F Wildcats. Sakai started to go after them but then recalled his commander's instructions and climbed back to resume his position.

Sakai described the bombing effort: "The missiles hurtled down toward the enemy ships and the bomb spread successfully covered the enemy convoy, but only a few of the bombs appeared to hit any ships [none were actually hit]. We could see about eighty large ships in the enemy fleet; countless landing barges were heading for the beach, the brilliant white wakes on the water surface having the appearance of brush strokes of a giant but invisible artist. Although it had been only five or six hours since the enemy invasion forces had stormed in to land on Guadalcanal, what appeared to be enemy antiaircraft fire could be seen coming from guns on the island. I was amazed at the ability of the enemy to place his antiaircraft weapons on shore so rapidly. From what we had been told about mass invasions, it took about a week to complete the landing of thirty ships."

After the bombers had released their loads and turned for home, the Americans struck in strength.

Waiting for the Japanese were 18 F4F Wildcats and 16 Dauntless dive bombers operating from the aircraft carriers *Enterprise*, *Wasp*, and *Saratoga*, During the action, Lieutenant Sasai claimed the downing of five Wildcats. During a subsequent strike on Henderson Field, while leading eight Zeros in escort of a force of Betty bombers, Sasai was shot down by Marine Corps Major Marion E. Carl of squadron VMF-223. Sasai had previously run up a score of 27 aerial victories. Major Carl was the first Marine ace of World War II and ended the war with 18.5 confirmed kills.

Sakai recalled, "Without warning a group of enemy fighters jumped our formations from above. We could see the tracers spitting through our formations. With this first burst of fire, the fighter planes on both sides, about thirty in all, instantly broke formation. Planes scattered in all directions as our Zeros tried to break free of the attacking enemy…. As I pushed the stick hard over and rolled away, I noticed several aircraft plunging earthward, trailing streaks of black smoke … far below, I saw three Zeros pursued by a single enemy fighter. The Zeros were trying desperately to escape from the enemy plane, but the enemy pilot hung doggedly on their tails. The Zeros looked like my boys: Hatori, Yonekawa, and another pilot."

It was a wild dogfight, the aircraft flying tight spirals. Sakai noted, "The Zeros should have been able to take the lone Grumman without any trouble, but every time a Zero caught the Wildcat before its guns the enemy plane flipped away and came out again on the tail of a Zero. I had never seen such flying before."

Sakai took his plane into the melee and quickly found the Wildcat on his tail. But Sakai chopped his throttle and made an effort to maneuver his Zero into a firing position. He recalled, "Three times I rolled the Zero, then dropped in a spin, and came out in a left vertical spin. The Wildcat matched me turn for turn…. Neither of us could gain an advantage. We held to the spiral…. My heart pounded wildly, and my head felt as if it weighed a ton. A gray film seemed to be clouding over my eyes.


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In this photograph, taken from the window of a Japanese bomber, Zero fighters escort a formation during a raid against American forces in the Solomon Islands.

I gritted my teeth; if the enemy pilot could take the punishment, so could I. The man who failed first and turned in any other direction to ease the pressure would be finished."

Lieutenant James "Pug" Southerland was commanding a group of eight American Wildcats from the *Saratoga*, part of Fighter Squadron VF-5. Southerland and his flight had intercepted the Japanese bombers, and he claimed a Betty in the initial encounter. After shooting down a second bomber, Southerland was engaged in a dogfight with a Zero piloted by Japanese fighter ace Yamazaki Ichirobei. He lined up the Zero in his sights only to find his guns would not fire, probably due to damage from fire by the tail-gunner of the second bomber he had downed. Although defenseless, Southerland had to stay in the fight. Two more Zeros engaged him, flown by veteran pilots Kakimoto Enji and Uto Kazushi, but he was able to outmaneuver all three. This was the dogfight Sakai spotted.

"In desperation, I snapped out a burst," Sakai remembered. "At once the Grumman snapped away in a roll to the right, clawed around in a tight turn, and ended up in a climb straight at my own plane. Never before had I seen an enemy plane move so quickly or gracefully before, and every second his guns were moving closer to the belly of my fighter. I snap-rolled in an effort to throw him off. He would not be shaken. He was using my favorite tactics, coming up from under."

The Wildcat broke away, the aircraft going into a dive and then looping. Sakai cut inside the Wildcat's arc and got on his tail. The F4F made a series of loops, Sakai cutting inside each, reducing the distance between the two planes. When he had managed to cut it to just 50 yards, the Wildcat broke out of the loop and flew straight and level. Sakai pumped 200 machine gun rounds into him but was amazed when the Wildcat continued to fly on as if nothing had happened. In an effort to overtake the American fighter he increased speed, but then overshot and found himself in its path and possibly the guns of the Wildcat. But to Sakai's surprise there was no enemy fire. Dropping his speed, Sakai maneuvered alongside the American. For a few seconds the two adversaries eyed each other.

The pair maneuvered for several minutes until Sakai was able to put 20mm cannon shells into the F4F's left wing root.

Southerland later wrote, "My plane was in bad shape but still performing nicely in low blower, full throttle, and full low pitch. Flaps and radio had been put out of commission.... The after part of my fuselage was like a sieve. She was still smoking from incendiary but not on fire. All of the ammunition box covers on my left wing were gone and 20mm explosives had torn some gaping holes in its upper surface.... My instrument panel was badly shot up, goggles on my forehead had been shattered, my rear-view mirror was broken, my plexiglass windshield was riddled. The leak-proof tanks had apparently been punctured many times as some fuel had leaked down into the bottom of the cockpit even though there was no steady leakage. My oil tank had been punctured and oil was pouring down my right leg. At this time a Zero making a run from the port quarter put a burst in just under the left wing root and good old 5F-12 finally exploded. I think the explosion occurred from gasoline vapor. The flash was below and forward of my left foot."

Sakai remembered, "The Wildcat was a shambles. Bullet holes had cut the fuselage and wings up from one end to the other. The skin of the rudder was gone, and the metal ribs stuck out like a skeleton.... I raised my left hand and shook my fist at him.... The American looked startled; he raised his right hand weakly and waved."

Sakai maneuvered behind the Wildcat and put several cannon rounds into its engine, causing it to burst into flames. In the next moment, the F4F rolled and the pilot bailed out. Southerland was able to parachute to safety.

As Sakai returned to 7,000 feet, three other Zeros joined him. As they flew through broken clouds they were taken by surprise by an enemy aircraft. Sakai recalled, "For the first time in all my years of combat, an enemy plane caught me unawares." But in another surprise, Sakai realized that it was not a fighter, but a Dauntless dive bomber. Sakai took after the SBD and was able to shoot it down, claiming it as his 60th kill. The aircraft was piloted by Lieutenant Dudley Adams of Scouting Squadron 71 (VS-71) from the carrier *Wasp*. Adams scored a near miss, sending a bullet through Sakai's canopy, but Sakai quickly gained the upper hand and succeeded in downing Adams, who bailed out and survived. However, his gunner, Harry Elliot, was killed.

Climbing back to 13,000 feet, Sakai and the other Zeros turned toward Guadalcanal. Sakai noted, "A few minutes later, over the Guadalcanal coast, I spotted a cluster of planes several miles ahead of our own. I signaled the other fighters and gunned the engine. Soon I made out eight planes in all, flying a formation of two flights."

The enemy planes were in a tight formation. Sakai approached from behind and below. Closing the range rapidly, he was within less than 100 yards when he realized that the enemy aircraft were not fighters, but Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers — his first encounter with them. This was a flight from Bombing Squadrons Five and Six (VB-5 and VB-6). Unable to turn away without exposing his aircraft to enemy fire, Sakai fired first. Two of the Avengers fired in return with their ventral-mounted .30-cal. machine guns. In the next moment a violent explosion shook Sakai's aircraft. A .30-cal. machine-gun round destroyed the canopy of Sakai's Zero. His fellow pilots later reported that Sakai's attack brought down two of the Avengers, but American records indicated that no TBFs were lost.

Sakai lost consciousness for a few seconds, but a strong, cold wind blowing through his shattered windshield brought him to. However,

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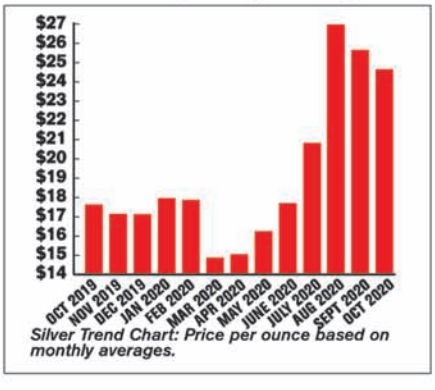

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his vision was blurred as he drifted in and out of consciousness. He wasn't feeling any pain, but thought he was dying. He gradually became aware of the world around him, his aircraft plunging earthward. Though groggy, he was able to pull his Zero out of the dive. He realized that he was blind in one eye with blurry vision in the other. He thought his chances of making it back to Rabaul were slim.

"I tried to move the engine throttle lever," the wounded pilot remembered. "My left hand was totally numb…. When I attempted to press on the rudder pedals to correct the Zero's awkward flight, I discovered that my left leg also was numb. Suddenly, I felt in my head a terrible, agonizing pain, which left me weak and breathless. I reached up and uneasily probed about my head with my right hand; it came away sticky with blood."

With his fuzzy vision Sakai was able to make out the shapes of his instruments but not able to actually read them. Then, large dark shapes flashed past his wing. "They had to be enemy ships," he later said. "That meant I was only about 300 feet over the water. Then sound came to me. First I heard the drone of the engine, then sharp, staccato cracks. The ships were firing at me! The Zero rocked with the blast waves of the bursting flak!"

Thinking that this was the end for him, Sakai considered making a suicide dive into one of the American ships. With this thought he was able to regain a measure of calmness and to assess the condition of his aircraft while also having mixed thoughts about the last few minutes. He had shot down several enemy planes and now was about to share the same fate. "I have finally met the American Navy planes which I have long been looking for," he thought. "There is nothing I have to regret. It was at this moment that I began to weigh the possibilities of life or death."

Sakai forced himself to stay awake. He did not want to go quietly but cried out for the Wildcats to come on and fight. In a few moments he came to his senses, realizing that he might survive despite the long flight back to Rabaul.

Sakai circled aimlessly, expecting to be attacked at any moment. As his head continued to clear and he was able to see better with his left eye, he checked his aircraft again and determined that he might be able to gain altitude, and with some luck reach Shortland Island, Buka, maybe even Rabaul.

Removing his gloves he examined his head wounds. He was still bleeding. A medical examination would later find two machine gun bullets lodged in his skull along with many small fragments. He had trouble making out his compass because of his blind right eye. Using the sun's position in the sky he set course for Shortland. "Throughout the growing hopelessness of my situation, the only consolation was the amazing fact that the airplane, somehow, managed to keep on flying, despite the great damage it had suffered," he recalled. "By all reasoning, the fighter should have crashed long ago."

At times Sakai was ready to yield to the situation. He thought: "If I must die, at least I could go out as a Samurai. My death would take several of the enemy with me." Again he turned his aircraft back toward Guadalcanal with the thought of seeking out an enemy ship to crash into. But he was unable to make up his mind, changing direction at least 10 times. Finally, he decided to head for Rabaul, but he was uncertain of his present position. Relying on only his sense of direction he pointed his Zero north. Concerned about running out of fuel, he desperately sought landmarks for navigation assistance. Suddenly, he spotted the atoll at Green Island, just 60 miles east of Rabaul.

As he flew down the George Channel between New Britain and New Ireland, two warships, heavy cruisers, appeared ahead of

him. He considered ditching right there. His hope was ebbing. He circled once over the warships but could not bring himself to do it. He turned toward Rabaul. If he could not make the airfields there, he considered crash landing on the beach. But then his airfield came in sight.

Those pilots that had already returned from the mission were extremely surprised to see Sakai's Zero circle over the field. He turned away on his first landing attempt. He circled the field four times, his fuel running low, before making his final approach. He put his Zero down on the runway on his second attempt. After bringing his plane to a safe stop, he passed out. When he came to, he insisted on making his mission report to his commander before collapsing.

Sakai had flown his aircraft for nearly nine hours, engaged four enemy planes, and covered over 560 miles while he struggled to stay alive. His success (and survival) was due in no small part to the engineering quality of his aircraft, as well as his skill and will to live. Sakai was evacuated to Japan on August 12, where he underwent surgery. He was hospitalized for a year after the battle. He never regained sight in his right eye. In a way, he was lucky to have suffered his wounds on the first day of action over Guadalcanal, as many of his fellow pilots would not survive the campaign.

Yasuho Izawa via Henry Sakaida

Sakai survived the war and befriended many former American foes, dying of a heart attack in 2000 at the age of 84.

After his discharge from the hospital in January 1943, Sakai spent a year training new fighter pilots. When it became clear that Japan was losing the war, he prevailed upon his superiors to let him fly in combat again. In November 1943, Sakai was promoted to the rank of flying warrant officer. In April 1944, he was transferred to the Yokosuka Air Wing, which was deployed to Iwo Jima.

On June 24, 1944, Sakai approached a formation of 15 U.S. Navy Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters, which he mistakenly believed were Japanese aircraft. Four of the Hellcats went after the Zero, but Sakai, using his skill and experience, eluded the Hellcats and was able to return safely to his base.

In air combat over Iwo Jima, he reportedly shot down four American planes. When his aircraft was destroyed on the ground by a U.S. air strike, he was flown off the island in a courier plane.

After the war, Sakai became a Buddhist acolyte. Like many veterans, his feelings about war and his country's former enemies softened. He sent his daughter to college in the United States. Following a U.S. Navy formal dinner in 2000 at Atsugi Naval Air Station, where he had been an honored guest, Sakai died of a heart attack at the age of 84. □

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

By Patrick J. Chaisson

Naval History and Heritage Command

National Archives

ABOVE: Corporal Carlton Chapman of the U.S. 761st Tank Battalion peers through the hatch of an M4 Sherman tank in the vicinity of Nancy, France. His M3, popular with tankers, is visible at the top of this photo from November 5, 1944. LEFT: An American soldier of the 31st Infantry Division carries an M3 submachine gun, known as the Grease Gun, during landings on the island of Morotai in the Pacific in September 1944.

The Controversial Grease Gun

The M3 submachine gun was in service with the U.S. military for over 50 years.

NO ONE EVER USED THE WORDS "GRACEFUL" OR "ELEGANT" TO DESCRIBE THE M3 submachine gun.

Instead, those soldiers, sailors and Marines who carried it called the M3 a "plumber's nightmare" or "the cake decorator." Its passing resemblance to a mechanic's lubrication tool, however, led to the weapon's most common and enduring nickname: "grease gun."

Designed as an inexpensive replacement for the iconic Thompson submachine gun, this utilitarian firearm overcame early reliability problems to capably serve U.S. forces and their allies for over half a century. Most servicemen who used one in battle admitted the grease gun was an adequate, if not beloved, close-combat weapon, its cheap, ugly appearance notwithstanding.

As early as 1940, officials in the United States Army Ordnance Department began to prepare for the enormous rearmament program their nation would have to undertake if it was to win victory in the approaching world war. Mass production of individual weapons, then, became an industrial priority.

While Ordnance tended to focus its efforts on such shoulder arms as the semiautomatic M1 rifle, certain specialized troops such as paratroopers and vehicle crewmen often required something else: a compact, hard-hitting submachine gun for short-range work. The current-issue Thompson, designed during World War I, met this requirement but had its issues. Put plainly, the Tommy Gun required too much time, steel, and money to manufacture in large numbers. Even a simplified wartime version called the M1A1 cost taxpayers $45.00 per unit ($660.00 in 2021).

Sometime in late 1940, an Army committee recommended the U.S. military develop a more modern submachine gun. In response to that directive, Colonel René R. Studler, the Ordnance Department's Chief of Small Arms Research and Development, obtained for study a number of foreign weapons to include Nazi Germany's MP40 machine pistol, the Australian Owen carbine, and Great Britain's Sten Gun. All compared favorably against the Thompson, especially in terms of weight, size, price, and ease of production.

Inspired by these combat-proven firearms, Studler released a list of requirements for the new American sub-gun on February 6, 1941. Iit

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This M3 submachine gun, pictured with its sling and a 30-round stick magazine, was manufactured by Guide Lamp, a division of General Motors.

needed to be sturdy, able to be rapidly and inexpensively manufactured, quickly disassembled for cleaning, and it could not utilize critical wartime materials. The design would chamber and fire U.S. standard .45 -caliber ammunition at a cyclic rate not to exceed 500 rounds per minute. Furthermore, it had to hit a six-foot-square target 90 out of 100 times when fired from a standing position at 50 yards.

Original specifications also called for a weapon that functioned both in fully automatic and semiautomatic modes but this requirement was later deleted, as an automatic-only submachine gun proved easier to produce.

Studler arranged for firearms designer George J. Hyde to work on the project together with Frederick W. Sampson, Chief Engineer for the Inland Division of General Motors Corporation. Hyde, who already had several military small arms to his credit, was to devise the actual weapon while Sampson would apply his industrial experience to create a number of manufacturing "short cuts" that were intended to both speed and simplify production.

Hyde's first attempt, the T15, was of all-metal construction and featured a sliding wire stock. The engineer revamped his prototype, though, once he learned it no longer required a select-fire feature. This second model became known as the T20.

Five pre-production T20s were hastily fabricated and sent to Aberdeen Proving Grounds in November 1942 for service trials. Representatives from the Army's Infantry Board, Airborne Command, and Armored Forces Board all evaluated the new firearms, subjecting them to rigorous function testing under simulated combat conditions. Hyde's design performed exceptionally well, prompting the Ordnance Department on December 24, 1942, to formally recommend its adoption as the "U.S. Submachine Gun, Caliber .45, M3."

Official approval came on January 11, 1943, and shortly thereafter a manufacturing contract for 300,000 M3 submachine guns was awarded to the Guide Lamp Division of General Motors Corporation. Guide Lamp, based in Anderson, Indiana, normally made automobile headlight assemblies but was now fully involved in war-related production. Workers there had just completed a run of one million FP-45 "Liberator" pistols (another George Hyde invention) for use by resistance fighters.

An uncomplicated design, the M3 submachine gun consisted of only 73 separate parts. Just two major pieces (the bolt and barrel) required costly machining; almost everything else was either pressed or stamped from sheet metal. Extensive use was made of spot welding, a technique that hastened assembly but forever ruined the weapon's aesthetic appeal.

Hyde's gun measured 29.8 inches with the stock extended and 22.8 inches with the stock closed. It weighed 8.2 pounds empty, but a hefty 9.9 pounds when a fully loaded 30-round box magazine was inserted. Rate of fire was 450 rounds per minute. The M3's eight-inch barrel generated a muzzle velocity of 920 feet per second, while its rudimentary front post and rear peep sight permitted aimed fire out to 100 yards.

Shooting the M3 was a straightforward process. First, the operator pulled back on its retracting handle to cock the bolt. He next loaded a magazine and closed the dust cover to put his weapon on safe. Flipping open the cover made it ready to fire. A press of the trigger sent the bolt forward, stripping a round of ammunition from the magazine and into the chamber. A raised dimple on the bolt face, acting as a firing pin, struck the cartridge's primer and set it off. Force of recoil then pushed the bolt rearward against spring pressure, simultaneously extracting and ejecting the empty cartridge case. Although the M3 had no semiautomatic setting, a skilled shooter could "slap" the trigger to fire single shots.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), responsible for arming guerilla groups in enemy-held regions of Europe and Asia, ordered a "conversion kit" for Hyde's sub-gun that enabled it to utilize the 9mm Parabellum—a cartridge widely used by both Allied and Axis forces in World War II. The Rock Island Arsenal made about 500 of these sets, which consisted of a bolt, barrel, pair of recoil springs, and magazine well adapter that accepted the British Sten magazine. Reportedly, Guide Lamp Division manufactured an additional 1,000 M3s chambered for 9mm ammunition.

Finished M3 submachine guns began coming off the assembly line in May 1943. This represented an amazingly short development period, as the weapon was designed, tested, and put into production within seven short months. Given the rushed nature of this process, however, some "teething pains" were inevitable.

The program suffered a major setback when it was learned that inexperienced workers at Guide Lamp had applied too much heat while welding the right and left receiver sections together. Their poor technique led to a warped frame, which kept the M3 from functioning properly. Inspectors rejected nearly the entire first production lot of 20,000 sub-guns due to improperly aligned receivers.

In 1943, the first year of production, 85,130 M3s were made, while in 1944 Guide Lamp

delivered a total of 343,372 M3s. The figures for 1945 included 178,192 M3 and 15,469 improved M3A1 submachine guns, for a total of 622,163 pieces built during World War II.

At $20.94 per unit ($313.62 in today's money), the M3 submachine gun represented a triumph in low-cost mass production. In fact, it was initially categorized as "disposable" — meaning once the firearm became unserviceable its user would discard it and get a new one. While senior ordnance officers may have welcomed this throwaway concept, the idea did not appeal to those soldiers fighting deep inside enemy territory who could not readily exchange their broken grease guns.

The M3 was first carried into battle by paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions during the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. Their reaction was mixed. Some men liked it, noting how the handy grease gun did not need to be disassembled before a jump and could be put into action right after landing. Others despised the M3. The 101st Airborne's Don Burgett called it "a piece of junk," while in the 82nd most troopers (if given a choice) preferred to keep their trusty Tommy Guns.

The grease gun's already-dubious reputation suffered even more when reports began coming back from the field about its flimsy cocking lever and troublesome magazine. Dropping an M3 the wrong way, or even giving it a careless bump, could shear off the firearm's retracting handle and render it useless. Repair depots across Europe were kept busy modifying damaged M3s with cocking knobs to keep them firing. The idea of a "disposable" submachine gun, it would seem, did not survive contact with the enemy.

Soldiers also complained about the M3's magazine. It was difficult to load, they said, and jammed whenever even a small amount of dirt got inside. Later, Army Ordnance fielded a loading tool and plastic protective covers to help alleviate these problems.

Some deficiencies were corrected on the spot by resourceful GIs. Sergeant Mack Morriss, a correspondent for *Yank* Magazine, described how the men of one infantry company told him "the magazine release on the 'grease gun' (M3) is too loose, and that when slight pressure is exerted on it as the gun is carried slung on the shoulder the magazine will fall out. Consequently, the men take a ball hammer and bend the release slightly so as to make it more secure."

A "Battle Experiences" circular issued by HQ U.S. Army European Theater of Operations on March 16, 1945, suggested cutting an M1-rifle operating-rod spring into four equal sections, then using two of those sections to replace the guide-rod springs inside a grease gun. "By doing this," the author claimed, "we have increased the rate of fire of the M3 Submachine Gun." The report went on to declare that "this [modification] also makes the weapon steadier and improves its accuracy."

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Two American soldiers man their position in Normandy in this photo from June 1944. One soldier is ready for action with a Browning .30-caliber machine gun, while the other is armed with an M3. BELOW: Troops of the U.S. First Army grab some sleep during a lull in the fighting near the town of Schmidtheim, Germany. At least two of the soldiers are snoozing with their M3 Grease Guns at the ready, perhaps for the amusement of the photographer.

Starting in mid-1944, newly organized Army and Marine Corps formations began receiving the new submachine gun before heading overseas. Private Dee Eberhart of 3rd Platoon, Company I, 242nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry Division, trained on the grease gun at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, that summer. Eberhart said he and his fellow infantrymen "held it in mild contempt," considering the M3 a cheap knockoff of the German MP40.

Others, however, found the grease gun to be an accurate, reliable weapon that held up well under the rigors of battle. An Army Combat Observations Report dated February 5, 1945, detailed what small-unit leaders in the 99th Infantry Division thought of their new close-combat firearm: "The M3 Submachine Gun is the best weapon we use for patrolling. It can be put into action quickly, and at short ranges is accurate and powerful." Staff Sergeant J. W. Logan, serving with Co. D, 101st Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division, went on to suggest that each "machine-gun squad leader should carry a submachine gun rather than the M1 rifle."

The M3 soon found its way into the hands of such brave men as Medal of Honor recipient T/Sgt Charles F. Carey. An acting platoon

National Archives

Their hands behind their heads, two German prisoners of war are guarded by an American soldier keeping watch and armed with an M3 Grease Gun.

leader in the 397th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, Carey—armed with a grease gun—persuaded 30-40 German soldiers to surrender on January 8, 1945, at Rimling, France. Later that day, after swapping his M3 for a bazooka and M1 rifle, Carey disabled an enemy tank before shooting its crew one by one as they attempted to escape.

American vehicle crews also carried the stubby little "Greaser." Late-model Sherman tanks came fitted with as many as five sub-guns for personal protection and local security. Armorer Russell Spooner observed, "An M3, lifted above the hatch opening, could spray the countryside with a lot of bullets in a matter of seconds. "This," Spooner concluded, "would discourage a nearby enemy from any attempt to interfere with those who needed to abandon their tank."

Comparatively few grease guns, it seems, saw action in the Pacific Theater. Some were operated by U.S. Marine Corps tankmen on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, while a number of Navy vessels kept M3s in their small-arms lockers for use by shore parties. Evidence also exists that these weapons served with Chinese Army personnel and OSS-led guerillas in Burma.

While the grease gun fought its way across European and Pacific battlefields, back home a concerted effort was being made to correct the firearm's shortcomings. Beginning in April 1944, experts at the Ordnance Department and Guide Lamp Division worked to develop an improved version that offered increased reliability and ease of maintenance. It was type-classified the M3A1 that December.

One notable change eliminated the M3's fragile crank-type retracting handle. In its place was a deep cylindrical cut machined into the bolt. To charge his weapon, all an operator needed to do was put his finger into this cocking slot and pull the bolt back until it locked.

Much attention was given to the M3A1's detachable stock. It could now be used as a barrel wrench and came with a welded bracket to aid in loading magazines. The tip of one wire tube was also threaded for a bore brush, turning the grease gun's stock into a convenient cleaning rod.

In addition, the M3A1 featured a strengthened rear sight and redesigned dust cover/safety that lessened its tendency to "slam-fire" if dropped accidentally. These modifications, counting the deleted cocking lever, actually reduced the firearm's overall weight by about three ounces.

Guide Lamp Division built over 15,000 M3A1s before the war ended, although most original-issue M3s remaining in U.S. government stocks were upgraded to the A1 configuration at some point. The Ithaca Gun Co. manufactured a second run of 33,200 M3A1s during the Korean War; Ithaca also produced thousands of repair parts for these submachine guns then entering service with U.S. allies and client states across the globe.

Aside from World War II-era Lend-Lease customers like France and the Soviet Union, other users included United Nations (UN) contingents from such places as Turkey and the United Kingdom fighting in Korea. The United States also provided a number of M3/M3A1 sub-guns to various Latin American and Southeast Asian governments throughout the Cold War era.

China "cloned" the M3 in 1947, and this so-called Type 36 was occasionally seen in action against UN troops during the Korean Conflict. Also, in the 1950s, Argentina built a variant chambered in 9mm Parabellum known as the P.A.M. 1. This weapon was soon followed by a select-fire version, or P.A.M. 2.

Stateside, the M3A1 served as a testbed for any number of Ordnance Department research and development projects. One bizarre program involved the *Krummlauf*, or bent barrel, an accessory based on German designs that was intended to shoot around corners or (more likely) out a of tank periscope mount. Another failed enterprise mated the grease gun to an infrared night sight, or sniperscope. Neither scheme went beyond the evaluation phase.

A sound-suppressed version, originally intended for the OSS in World War II, experienced greater success. Technicians at Bell Laboratories developed a special drilled barrel and expansion sleeve to slow propellant gases, thus greatly minimizing the noise of gunfire. Only about 1,000 of these suppressed M3A1s were made, but they armed Army Green Berets in Southeast Asia as well as the elite counterterrorist group known as Delta Force.

The grease gun saw combat during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, as well as in countless smaller operations worldwide. It was withdrawn from general U.S. service starting in 1957, but continued to serve with mechanized and special operations outfits until well into the 1990s. The author, a former tank company commander, had two M3A1s in his unit arms room as late as 2001.

Meant to be fired and then discarded, George Hyde's M3 grease gun served the U.S. military for a remarkable half century. Scorned by those who first took it to war, this weapon later earned a reputation for utter reliability under the harshest of conditions. To this day it occasionally turns up in places like Afghanistan or the Philippines—anywhere a simply constructed, easy-to-maintain submachine gun might still be needed for short-range battle. □

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

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ABOVE: A phantom army group still required a distinctive insignia, and FUSAG was given this emblem. LEFT: General George S. Patton Jr., left, assigned command of the fictitious First U.S. Army Group, jokes with Omar Bradley and Bernard Montgomery. Montgomery would command the D-Day ground forces.

Operation Fortitude: The Great Deception

Prior to D-Day, the Allies deceived the Germans regarding their intended landing place on the European continent.

THE ALLIED INVASION OF NORMANDY IN FRANCE ON JUNE 6, 1944, KNOWN AS D-Day, was the largest amphibious operation in modern history. The invasion was the major turning point of the war, as it spelled the beginning of the end for Germany.

The success of D-Day not only belongs to the courage of the brave soldiers, sailors and airmen who made the assault on Fortress Europe that day, but also to a project called Operation Fortitude. Operation Fortitude was a campaign to mislead the Germans as to where and when the actual invasion of Europe would take place. As General Bernard Montgomery, the leader of the Allied invasion's ground forces, would later write, "The deception measures [of Operation Fortitude] played a vital part in our successes in Normandy."

Looking at a map of Europe, one can see that the shortest distance across the English Channel is from southeast England to the Pas de Calais in France. The second-shortest route was from southwest England to the beaches of Normandy. The Germans saw this as clearly as the Allies, of course, and knew the invasion was an eventual certainty. The question for the Germans was: which of the two places would the Allies select for their landings—Normandy or the Pas de Calais?

Deception would be vital if the the D-Day landings were to have any hope of succeeding. Defending the northern coastline of France was German Army Group B under Field Marshal Erwin Rommel—The 15th Army guarded the Pas de Calais, and the 7th Army was assigned to defend Normandy. Each of these armies were about 150,000 men strong. If the Germans knew where the invasion was landing, they could throw both their armies against the Allies. The invaders would be outnumbered two to one, the advantage would be with the Germans, and the Allies would have been defeated on the beaches.

Operation Fortitude was originally the brainchild of Noel Wild and his Ops (B) staff at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). In February 1944, the plan was revised and expanded by Colonel David Strangeways, the head of Montgomery's R Force deception staff.

Operation Fortitude consisted of two contradictory deceptions: Fortitude North would make it appear as though the Allies were invading Norway from Scotland; Fortitude South would make obvious preparations and maneuvers for an Allied seaborne assault from the

Weird Herb Shocks Doctors With Relief of Leg and Feet Pain, Burning, Tingling, Numbness

6 clinical studies show it is effective. Lost but now re-discovered. Thousands of new users report amazing relief from leg and feet problems in just 30 to 90 days – with no side effects. Available in all 50 states without a prescription.

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This weird herb comes from a 12-foot tall tree that grows in Greece and other countries in Europe. In the old days, people noticed that when their horses who had leg and feet problems ate this herb – it was almost like magic how quickly their problems got much better. They called it the "horse herb". Then somehow with Europe's ongoing wars, this herbal secret got lost in time.

"It works for people who've tried many other treatments before with little or no success. Other doctors and I are shocked at how effective it is. It has created a lot of excitement" says Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D.

Its active ingredient has been put into pill form and improved. It is being offered in the United States under the brand name Neuroflo.

WHY ALL THIS EXCITEMENT?

Researchers have found an herb originally from Greece that has been shown in six placebo-controlled medical studies (543 participants) to be effective and safe. This natural compound strengthens blood vessel walls and reduces swelling to stop the pain and suffering.

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Already popular in Europe, this natural herb is taking America by storm since it was announced last week.

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Katerina King from Murrieta, California says, "I had hands and feet tingling and snapping and burning feeling. It made my life very uncomfortable. I had a hard time walking, my legs felt like they each weighed 50 pounds. Once I got in my car and my feet felt so heavy I couldn't even drive the car. With Neuroflo I have no more tingling, cold or burning painful legs and feet. It went away."

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"Now I finally have a natural solution I can recommend to my patients who suffer from leg and feet problems and pain. I'm delighted because previous treatments were not effective, but Neuroflo has worked for every one of my patients with no side effects" says Dr. Eric Wood, N.D.

Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D. says "This is new and different. It works for people who've tried many other things before. It is natural with no side effects. Don't give up hope for your leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbing. This pill is working for countless people after other treatments have failed them. I highly recommend it."

"Neuroflo is a terrific choice for people with leg and feet issues. The clinical trials in support of this herb show it is very effective for safe and fast relief," said Dr. Wood, a Harvard trained doctor who has appeared on award winning TV shows.

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ABOVE: An American soldier stands guard beside a tank made entirely of rubber but bearing a strong resemblance to a U.S. M4 Sherman medium tank. BELOW: Real vehicles have made tracks in the dirt to simulate movement of the dummy tanks and trucks parked in this field. Attention to detail was a hallmark of Operation Fortitude, and it paid a dividend on D-Day and beyond.

ports of Dover and Folkestone against the Germans at the Pas de Calais.

Meanwhile, the real invasion of Normandy would be undertaken by the 21st Army Group led by General Montgomery. The 21st Army Group consisted of the United States First Army and the British Second Army and was encamped on the Salisbury Plain in southwest England. On D-Day, it would disembark from the ports of Weymouth, Portland, Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Southampton and sail across the English Channel to land on the beaches of Normandy.

As part of Operation Fortitude South, Strangeways created a second, imaginary army, called the First United States Army Group (or FUSAG), which would be "commanded" by none other than General George Patton. FUSAG consisted of 11 non-existent divisions—150,000 imaginary men, and it would be encamped on the fields of Kent and Essex in southeast England. The hope was that this vast deception would hold the German 15th Army in place long enough at the Pas de Calais so that the invasion at Normandy would have a chance at success.

Among other things, Operation Fortitude involved the creation of a sham army in order to fool any German reconnaissance planes that happened to fly over the Channel. In Folkestone harbor, the Allies built 255 dummy landing craft. They were made by lashing steel tubes to buoyant steel drums and covering them with canvas. They also built fake army encampments throughout southwest England. These camps included tanks, trucks, and jeeps that were realistic when seen from above but were actually made out of rubber. Soldiers were even given rolling equipment to make tire marks behind the tanks. Fake airfields were also built across southeast England, complete with aircraft made from sheets of plywood. In case there were any German spies watching, soldiers were instructed to walk into nearby towns and villages wearing different uniforms with various nonexistent unit insignia to make it look like there were lots of different units in the area.

Public displays of notable figures were also intended to fool the Germans. General Dwight Eisenhower, supreme commander of Allied forces, had chosen General Patton to lead the fictitious FUSAG. To keep up this pretense, Patton went on tour and gave speeches at public events and women's clubs around southeast England. When he met Brigadier General James Gavin in the lobby of a hotel in London, he stopped and chatted. As he left, he turned back and yelled, loud enough for any German spies present to hear, "See you in the Pas de Calais, Gavin."

The Allies also took some incredible gambles with Operation Fortitude. They even allowed a German general to see the actual invasion force that would attack on D-Day. General Hans Cramer, a leader of the Afrika Korps, was captured in May 1943. Due to poor health, it was agreed to exchange him back to the Nazis. In May 1944, he was invited to dinner with General Patton. Patton was introduced as the commander of FUSAG, and he repeatedly mentioned the Pas de Calais. Cramer was then driven through towns on his way to be deported, and he passed huge numbers of actual troops. Cramer believed he was in the southeast of England due to the road and town signs that he passed and the loose lips of his guards, and he was shaken by the show of manpower and preparation he saw. In fact, however, Cramer had been driven through south-*WEST* England—and what he was seeing was the real invasion preparation for Normandy. The road signs and town signs had been fakes to make it look like he was with FUSAG in southeast England.

On May 23, Cramer was shipped to neutral Sweden. The ruse had paid off. Cramer flew to visit Rommel in France to tell him about his dinner with Patton and the massive troop buildup he had seen directly across from the Pas de Calais.

The most important part of Operation Fortitude, however, was the part played by two double agents. These men were Allied agents who were trusted by the Germans and were

sent to Britain with the intended purpose of spying on Allied troop movements. Instead, these agents were actually working for the British, and they sent false information back to the Germans.

The first of the agents was Roman Czerniawski, a Polish fighter pilot who had set up a network of spies in France against the Nazis. When he was betrayed and captured by the Gestapo, he was given a choice: go to England and spy for the Nazis, or reprisals would be taken against his mother and brother. He chose to go to England. When he arrived, he was interrogated by both the Polish and British intelligence services. He confessed that he had been sent to England as a spy for the Nazis, but after meeting the Polish government-in-exile in London, he volunteered to be a double-agent for the British. The British gave him the codename Brutus, after the senator who betrayed Julius Caesar.

The second double agent, Juan Garcia Pujol, had been a chicken farmer in Spain when the war broke out. He would later write, "I must make my contribution towards the good of humanity." He believed that the Nazi ideology was dangerous and that Hitler was a psychopath. In January 1941, he approached the British embassy in Madrid with his offer to spy for them against the Nazis. The British politely told him that his services were not needed. Undeterred, he then went to the German embassy and offered to spy for them—with the intention of passing intelligence to the British. The Germans politely refused his services. Undeterred, Pujol bought some Nazi books and learned all he could about National Socialism. He kept badgering the Germans until, as McIntyre writes, "finally (mostly to get him to shut up), the Germans said that if he could get to Britain, he would be considered for intelligence work. This was enough for Pujol."

In July 1941, Pujol sent a message to German Intelligence, the Abwehr, in Madrid that he had arrived in England. He then started to send information—strange information—to the Germans. He said that men in Glasgow "would do anything for a liter of wine." He said he observed major naval maneuvers on Lake Windermere even though the lake is landlocked. Perhaps the strangest was that the people of Liverpool indulged in "drunken orgies…at amusement centers." It turned out that Pujol was still stuck in Portugal. He decided to send messages based on books, newsreels, and his wild imagination.

British agents at Bletchley Park began intercepting Pujol's messages to Madrid. They could not decide whether he was dangerous or completely mad. At the same time, Pujol kept pestering the British embassy in Lisbon. The British finally put two and two together and realized that the person feeding the Germans crazy messages was the same person badgering them in Lisbon. Pujol was smuggled out of Portugal on a steamer to Gibraltar and from there was flown to England. For two weeks, Pujol was interrogated by the MI5 branch of British Intelligence, and his intentions were deemed sincere despite his "inexhaustibly fertile imagination." MI5 decided to give him the codename "Garbo" after Greta Garbo. Since he had fooled the Germans with his ludicrous messages, MI5 believed that he should be named after the "best actor in the world."

In May the double agents started feeding the Germans false information. On May 1, Pujol reported that a retired Welsh seaman had seen the 28th U.S. Infantry Division arrive in Tenterden, about 30 kilometers from Folkestone. The following day re reported the 6th U.S. Armored Division in Ipswich. On May 9, Czerniawski reported that he noticed the 4th U.S. Armored Division and XX Corps in Bury St. Edmunds. On May 25, he reported that the 11th British Armored Division was in Dorking. On May 27, Pujol radioed that he saw trucks and vehicles belonging to the 83rd U.S. Infantry Division in a car park near Dover. As historian Joshua Levine wrote, "It was in this manner, piece by piece, that the Germans were handed the picture of an army group forming up in preparation for action" in the southeast of England across from the Pas de Calais.

One of the strangest events of World War II soon occurred. Pujol was ordered to betray the entire D-Day invasion. In order to be a good double agent, once in a while, you have to give actual information to the other side so they will still trust you. So, at 3:00 AM on June 6, with the invasion force on its way to Normandy, Pujol radioed his German contact in Madrid that he had been in contact with one of his subagents from Hiltingbury in southwest England. His contact said that cold rations and vomit bags had been distributed to troops from the 3rd Canadian Army a few days earlier. Then, during the night, the Canadians had left.

The implications were clear. Hiltingbury is only eight miles from Southampton, directly across the English Channel from Normandy. The Canadians must be on their way to Normandy. Pujol's German contact in Madrid, however, had gone to bed. He did not receive the message until 8:00 the following morning. By this time, Allied troops had been landing on the beaches of Normandy for the previous hour and a half.

Pujol pretended to be furious that his contact

ABOVE LEFT: Roman Czerniawski was an officer of the Polish Air Force and a double agent for Britain codenamed Brutus. ABOVE RIGHT: Juan Garcia Pujolin, photographed while in the Spanish Army in 1931, proved of immense value as a double agent once the Allies were convinced that he wasn't crazy. LEFT: Dummy landing craft queued up in an English waterway look quite real to aircraft or to prying eyes from a distance on shore.

had been sleeping while he passed on the biggest secret of the war. The next day he wired, "I … demand a clarification immediately as to what has occurred…. I cannot accept excuses or negligence…. This makes me question your seriousness and sense of responsibility…." His German superiors apologized and said it would not happen again.

Not only was the aim of Operation Fortitude to deceive the Germans about the time and place of the D-Day assault, but also to keep up the deception after the invasion to ensure its success. Before D-Day, Eisenhower had told MI5, "Just keep the Fifteenth Army out of my hair for two days. That's all I ask."

By June 8, two days after D-Day, the Germans were beginning to doubt that there was going to be a second invasion at the Pas de Calais. The German High Command ordered the powerful 1st SS Panzer Division and the Panzer Regiment Grossdeutschland of the 116th Panzer Division to start toward Normandy. The deceivers at MI5 were worried. This was their worst fear realized. Troops from the Pas de Calais were starting to move to reinforce German troops in Normandy. The Mulberry artificial harbors that the Allies needed to offload ships were still being erected on the beaches. The Allied beachheads were still vulnerable. Overlord's success was not guaranteed by any means.

Pujol sent a radio message to his handlers in Madrid that day. It was one of the most important messages of the war. He wrote, "From the reports mentioned it is perfectly clear that the present attack (on Normandy by the 21st Army Group) is a large-scale operation but diversionary in character for the purpose of establishing a strong bridgehead in order to draw the maximum of our reserves to the area of operation to retain them there so as to be able to strike a blow somewhere else with ensured success. I never like to give my opinion unless I have strong reasons to justify my assurances. Thus, the fact that these concentrations which are in the east and the southeast are now inactive means that they must be held in reserve to be employed in the other large-scale operations. The constant aerial bombardment which the area of the Pas de Calais has suffered and the strategic disposition of these forces give reason to suspect an attack in that region of France which at this time offers the shortest route for the final objective of their illusions, which is to say, Berlin…. I transmit with my opinion … my belief that the whole of the present attack is set as a trap by the enemy to make us move all of our reserves in a hurried strategical disposition which we would later regret."

The Germans believed Pujol's message. After all, he had warned them about the Normandy invasion before it happened. The Abwehr in Madrid summarized his report and sent it to Colonel Friedrich-Adolf Krummacher, the head of the OKW Intelligence Branch in Berlin. Krummacher wrote in red pen underneath the report: "Confirms the view already held by us that a further attack is to be expected in another place."

He passed it to Colonel General Alfred Jodl, chief of the OKW operations staff, who passed it on to Hitler. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, the OKW commander, telephoned the Commander-in-Chief West, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, at 7:30 in the morning on June 10. The order to move the 1st Panzer Division and the "Grossdeutschland" Regiment was cancelled. The division would remain in the Pas de Calais for another week, by which time the Allies were securely lodged in Normandy. By June 11, or D+5, the Allies had landed 326,000 men, 50,000 vehicles, and almost 100,000 tons of equipment on the beaches of Normandy. Pujol's message had not only bought the Allies time, but possibly saved the Allied armies from destruction. Like a chess master who gives up his pawn to capture the opponent's queen, Pujol had to betray the invasion so that he could save it later on.

Interestingly, the D-Day invasion was almost betrayed by a crossword puzzle. One of the answers in the London *Daily Telegraph* newspaper in February 1944 was "JUNO," the name of the beach where the Canadian army was scheduled to land on D-Day. The next month, one of the answers was "GOLD," and the following month one of the answers was "SWORD." These were the names of the beaches where the British army was due to land. On May 2, one of the answers was "UTAH," and on May 22 another answer was "OMAHA." These were the names of the beaches where the Americans would land. In the May 27 edition of the crossword, "OVERLORD" appeared, and on May 30 one of the answers was "MULBERRY." Overlord was the codename for the invasion; Mulberry was the name of the artificial harbors the Allies were constructing in British ports.

British intelligence decided that this could not be a coincidence and that possibly someone was trying to tip off the Germans to the invasion.

Agents discovered that the person responsible for the crossword section was a man named Leonard Sydney Dawe, headmaster of the Strand School in South London. During the Blitz, the school was moved to Effingham in Surrey in southeast England for the students' safety. It turned out that Dawe was not a German spy. Instead, he would occasionally let his students come into his study and write down answers to the crossword on a piece of paper, and then he would provide the clues. The students had inserted top secret code words that they had heard from American and Canadian soldiers stationed near Effingham. Dawe and the students were totally unaware that they were putting the D-Day invasion at risk.

Eleven months after the first Allied soldier set foot on French soil in Normandy, the Germans surrendered on May 8, 1945. After the war, in his Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Eisenhower gave credit to Operation Fortitude for the Allied success when he wrote, "Lack of infantry was the most important cause of the enemy's defeat on Normandy, and his failure to remedy this weakness was due primarily to the threat levelled against the Pas de Calais. This threat, which had proved of so much value in misleading the enemy as to the true objectives of our invasion preparations, was maintained after June 6, and it served most effectively to pin down the German Fifteenth Army east of the Seine, while we built up our strength in the lodgment area to the west. I cannot overemphasize the decisive value of this most successful threat, which paid enormous dividends, both at the time of the assault and during the operations of the two succeeding months. The German Fifteenth Army, which, if committed to battle in June or July, might possibly have defeated us by sheer weight of numbers, remained inoperative during the critical period of the campaign, and only when the breakthrough had been achieved were its infantry divisions brought west across the Seine—too late to have any effect upon the course of victory."

One of the greatest ironies of the war was that German intelligence so valued Pujol's information that on July 29, 1944, he was notified that he had been awarded the Iron Class Second Class for "extraordinary merit." Four months later, on November 25, King George VI awarded him the MBE (Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) for his efforts in deceiving the Germans. □

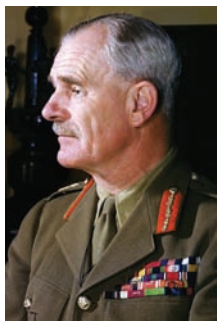
Brent Douglas Dyck is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He teaches history in Bradford, Ontario, Canada.*

By Jon Diamond

National Archives

Stilwell Versus Wavell in the CBI Theater

> Following different career paths to their posts in the China-Burma-India Theater, two generals collided over the conduct of an offensive against the Japanese.



TOP: In the autumn of 1944, Japanese soldiers and troops of the anti-British Indian Liberation Army launch an attack in Burma. Allied forces suffered stinging defeats in the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI) but eventually turned the tide despite disagreements between senior commanders General Joseph Stilwell (above, left) and Field Marshal Archibald Wavell (above, right).

THE INITIAL COMMAND STRUCTURE IN THE CHINA-BURMA-INDIA (CBI) THEATER of World War II produced a sharp contrast and clash of wills between two of the principal Allied leaders: British Field Marshal Archibald Wavell, and his American counterpart, Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell.

The political and diplomatic rift began to develop at an important, but now almost forgotten, strategy conference held in Delhi, India, October 17-19, 1942. Whereas Stilwell was an outspoken, somewhat profane, acerbic Anglophobe, Wavell's personality handicap was his taciturnity, which often produced conflict with his political masters, notably British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Wavell biographer Ronald Lewin commented on the relationship between the Field Marshal (affectionately called "the Chief") and Stilwell: "Wavell … never grasped the fiery inner quality of a man who was dedicated to carrying out a mission…. Amity was not increased when Wavell, for an appreciable period, withheld his forward plans from Stilwell—fearful, no doubt, of leaks in the Chinese camp.... In Stilwell's mind, Wavell's heart was not in the fight—or if it was, then some selfish interest of the Limeys must be involved ... there was a conflict between British realism and American euphoria from the start."

Wavell did not share Stilwell's strategic optimism for a counter-offensive in Burma after the Allied defeat and "Walkout" of 1942. At an

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ABOVE: American troops of the famed Marrill's Marauders cross a stream in the Hukawng Valley of Burma during the Allied offensive against Myitkyina. The Marauders became famous for their combat prowess, and also for their endurance during extensive periods campaigning in the deep jungle. RIGHT: Wavell stands at right along with Winston Churchill (left) and Sir Sikander Hyat Khan (center), an Indian military officer and political figure. Wavell was reassigned to the CBI after Churchill relieved him from command in North Africa.

Indian press conference after his escape from Burma in April 1942, Stilwell plainly stated, "I claim we got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it is humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back and retake it."

Born in 1883, General Joseph Stilwell was a 1904 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. By the time World War II erupted, he had gained extensive experience in the Pacific and Asia, including service in both the Philippines and China. From 1935 to 1939 he served as the American military attache and ranking colonel to the Chinese government. Stilwell was well acquainted with Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek and was a logical choice to lead American forces in the China-Burma-India Theater as U.S. military involvement on the Asian continent increased.

On December 7, 1941, the day Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Stilwell was the commander of III Corps, defending southern California. Late in December, Stilwell reported to Washington, suspecting that he was to be given the command to invade North Africa under a "Europe First" strategic program. However, General Marshall viewed the defense of the China Theater, later renamed the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater, to be more urgent in order to keep Chiang in the fight, as well as being "the most-impossible job of the war."

Ultimately, both Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Marshall knew that Stilwell was their man. Stilwell was invited to Stimson's home on January 10, 1942, where he was told, "The finger of destiny is pointing at you," and that its direction was China."

Stilwell was sent to the CBI Theater in February 1942, with many titles, including: Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, Commander of American Forces in the CBI, and administrator of Lend-Lease to improve the combat efficiency of the Chinese Army.

Born at Colchester in 1883, Field Marshal Archibald Wavell was a member of a family with long military ties. He attended the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst for only a year in 1900, since the curriculum was truncated to produce junior officers for the Boer War. He served with distinction during World War I and was seriously wounded at Ypres in Belgium in June 1915, losing his left eye. After commanding British and Commonwealth forces against the Axis in the Middle East and North Africa, he was relieved of command by Prime Minister Winston Churchill in June 1941 and subsequently transferred to the Far East.

On December 12, 1941, Churchill informed Wavell that with the outbreak of war with Japan he would be responsible for Burma. At Chungking in early 1942, Chiang Kai-shek offered Wavell two Chinese "armies" for use in Burma (a Chinese army was equivalent in size to a British or Indian Army division). Wavell accepted only one "army," and asked that the other, which was assembling around Kunming, remain there, best placed as a strategic reserve to move into Burma if needed or to defend Yunnan against a Japanese assault from Indochina aimed at cutting the Burma Road.

Nevertheless, his decision had the appearance of spurning the offer of Chinese help and inflicted a loss of "face" on Chiang. It seemed to imply that Wavell lacked confidence in the Chinese troops offered to him.

According to Churchill's war memoirs, as a result of a meeting with Wavell in Chungking, the Generalissimo "complained to President Roosevelt of the British commander's [Wavell's] apparent lack of enthusiasm about any contribution China could make." In a cable to Wavell on January 23, 1942, Churchill opined, "You

have, I understand, now accepted 49th and 93rd Chinese Divisions, but the Chinese Fifth Army and the rest of the Sixth Army are available just beyond the frontier…. I cannot understand why we do not welcome their aid…. The American Chiefs of Staff insisted upon Burma being in your command for the sole reason that they considered your giving your left hand to China and the opening of the Burma Road indispensable to world victory.... If I can epitomize in one word the lesson I learned in the United States, it was 'China.'"

Thus, Wavell had been notified that American senior commanders considered the maintenance of a land route through northern Burma to China of the highest importance. In Wavell's defense, he replied to Churchill's missive, "I did not refuse Chinese help. I accepted both these divisions when I was at Chungking on December 23rd, and any delay in moving them down has been purely Chinese. These two divisions constitute Fifth Chinese Army, I understand, except for one other division of very doubtful quality. All I asked was that Sixth Army should not be moved to Burmese frontier, as it would be difficult to feed…. I am aware of American sentiment about the Chinese, but democracies are apt to think with their hearts

rather than with their heads, and a general's business is, or should be, to use his head for planning…. I agree British prestige in China is low, and can hardly be otherwise till we have had some success. It will not be increased by admission that we cannot hold Burma without Chinese help." Churchill replied to Wavell that they were in agreement.

Wavell met with Chiang in early March 1942 to arrange for movement of the Chinese Fifth and Sixth Armies into Burma, which was now of vital military importance, despite earlier seeming to be indifferent to their use.

Stilwell's views on the use of Chinese infantry differed sharply from Wavell's. Unlike Wavell, Stilwell knew the Chinese well, having worked arduously for several months as an engineering adviser after being posted to Peking in 1920. This experience would serve Stilwell well, because 20 years in the future he would train new Chinese divisions in India for eventual combat to wrest the Hukawng and Mogaung valleys from the Japanese and supervise a vast construction project, the Ledo Road, throughout north Burma to reopen a land route to China.

In late March 1942, Stilwell had arrived from China to take command of the Fifth and Sixth Chinese Armies in Burma. However, disaster after disaster befell Wavell's defense against the Japanese juggernaut intent on capturing Rangoon and Mandalay as well as severing the Burma Road before wheeling westward toward the Chindwin River on the border with Assam, India.

By the end of April, part of these Chinese forces withdrew into China; the rest followed General Stilwell up the Irrawaddy River, but with Myitkyina about to fall they moved west across the Burmese jungles and mountain ranges to India to avoid capture. The Burma Road, the only land route between India and China, was now severed. It would remain Stilwell's burning mission to reoccupy northern Burma.

The British, however, were just not interested in fighting for northern Burma, especially if it compromised the defense of the eastern Indian states. The British strategy in Asia involved an eventual seaborne effort against Rangoon with a northward advance to open the Burma Road, enabling them to focus on the recapture of prewar British colonies.

Wavell respected Stilwell; however, he did not realize the manic goals that the American was trying to achieve. As summarized by Lewin, "To train and arm the two good Chinese divisions which had escaped into India (the 38th and 22nd), to create from scratch another 30 out of Chiang's raggle-taggle

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The long and winding Ledo Road linking India and China is shown in this aerial view snaking its way through rugged jungle and mountainous country. General Joseph Stilwell considered the Ledo Road vital to the success of Allied operations against the Japanese in the CBI. RIGHT: Stilwell meets with Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang. Stilwell knew the powerful Chinese ruling couple quite well.

swarms, to master-mind nothing less than a military revolution in the forces of a corrupt, apathetic and incompetent ally—such was the substance of Stilwell's reveries. It is not surprising, therefore, that when he and Wavell came together to concert their plans, in a series of meetings which started on 17 October [1942] each received a shock. The truth is that there was a mutual incomprehension."

Stilwell had been formulating a plan after the defeat in Burma as early as July 1942. He prepared a memorandum on operations utilizing his two Chinese divisions (the 38th and 22nd) proceeding from Ledo in India's northeastern mountain country along with three British divisions attacking eastward from Assam across the Chindwin River. He was optimistic that he would also get some American ground forces to participate. In addition, a dozen of Chiang's divisions would strike westward from Yunnan. These separate Allied drives would converge above Mandalay, then fan out across south Burma, capturing Rangoon and Thailand with a final move to the coast of Indochina.

The campaign that Stilwell proposed with Rangoon as the main Burmese objective was to incorporate a British seaborne effort as well to open that port to shipping. The entire operation was codenamed Anakim.

At a strategy conference in Delhi on October 17-19, 1942, the first two conference days were not satisfactory from Stilwell's point of view. Wavell shared with Stilwell both his pessimism about Anakim and his reluctance to increase the number of Chinese troops training in India. These contentious issues had been festering for months, and now a fissure had formed in the upper echelon of the Allied command in India that would spread to London and Washington.

Lewin noted, "Wavell was already convincing himself and the Chiefs of Staff that even the British plan for Anakim was premature and could not be set in motion until the autumn of 1943."

In fact, Wavell had warned the War Cabinet that in regard to Rangoon, he would not have built up the necessary forces, especially airpower, for the operation. In Delhi, Wavell described for Stilwell his initial plans for a campaign in Burma within the confines of his logistic and communication problems in Assam as well as high illness rates among his troops. He added that aircraft, troops, and equipment had been diverted to the Middle East and North Africa rather than their original destination, India.

Thus, Wavell only proposed moving south, down the Arakan coast, with the intent to seize Akyab. Rangoon could be the initial phase of later operations against the Burmese port city.

Wavell further objected to any increase in the number of Chinese trained and based in India, citing limited resources and transportation capabilities.

Maybe Wavell's fear of large numbers of Chinese troops was based on suspicions of Chiang's view toward the British Empire's claim to Burma. Historian and Stilwell biographer Barbara Tuchman claimed, "In July 1943, the Chinese Ministry of Information published a map which revived ancient claims to include all north Burma as Chinese territory."

On the third day of talks with Wavell, Stilwell found a remarkable change in the British field marshal's attitude. "They will give us a sector at Ledo. They will supply us…. Everything is lovely again, so obviously George [Marshall] has turned on the heat." Apparently, both Field Marshal Sir John Dill and General Marshall urged the British War Cabinet to order Wavell to increase the number of Chinese troops in India.

According to one account, Wavell "got religion" on October 19 and in an about-face recognized as a basis for planning the proposal by Stilwell and Chiang for retaking northern Burma as well as Rangoon in 1943 along with increasing Chinese troop training in India under Stilwell. A joint planning committee met for the first time on October 22, and Stilwell informed the group that it would be safe to work on the assumption that the Chinese Army in India would operate from Ledo.

Wavell designated the Hukawng Valley as Stilwell's sector, with the objective of capturing Myitkyina and making contact with Chinese troops advancing west from Yunnan. Myitkyina and its all-weather airfield was the ultimate prize in order to negate Japanese fighter interdiction of Allied transport aircraft flying the famous Hump. Finally, the Americans were to construct a road from Ledo over the Pangsau Pass, down the Hukawng and Mogaung valleys to Myitkyina following the advance of the 38th and 22nd Chinese divisions, and link with the Old Burma Road.

The British in Delhi had no confidence that Stilwell would be able to achieve this strategic goal. Furthermore, the British did not want the Ledo Road and viewed it as an expensive and labor-intensive project of President Franklin D.

Roosevelt's "Support China" policy. Looking at a broader imperial strategy, Tuchman contended that "Britain would have preferred to maintain the roadlessness of the frontier in the interests of the shipping monopoly, and even more because they wanted no access to India for the Chinese. They agreed to the road on paper because of Washington's insistence and because open refusal would have antagonized the Chinese more than ever, but they never ceased to oppose and obstruct it behind the scenes…. "

It is intriguing that the British Official History, *The War against Japan*, does not address the Stilwell-Wavell conferences in Delhi in October 1942 in any length. It simply states, "His [Stilwell's] object was to train and equip a Chinese corps of two divisions and corps troops, which would eventually be used to advance from Imphal to join hands with the Chinese from Yunnan. Wavell accepted this proposal in October 1942 but, considering that an advance from Imphal was impracticable, directed that one should be made from Ledo by the Hukawng Valley to Myitkyina. The necessary equipment, transport and training staff would be provided from American, and the accommodation and rations from British, sources. The transport of Chinese troops by air to bring the divisions up to strength began immediately."

Stilwell's mission had the President's and General Marshall's support, as indicated by a February 25, 1944, memorandum from Roosevelt to Churchill: "I have always advocated the development of China as a base for the support of our Pacific advances, and now that the war has taken a greater turn in our favour … it is mandatory therefore that we make every effort to increase the flow of supplies into China. This can only be done by increasing the air tonnage or by opening a road through Burma. Our occupation of Myitkyina will enable us immediately to increase the air-lift to China by providing an intermediate air-transport base as well as by increasing the protection of the air route. General Stilwell is confident that his Chinese-American Force can seize Myitkyina by the end of this dry season."

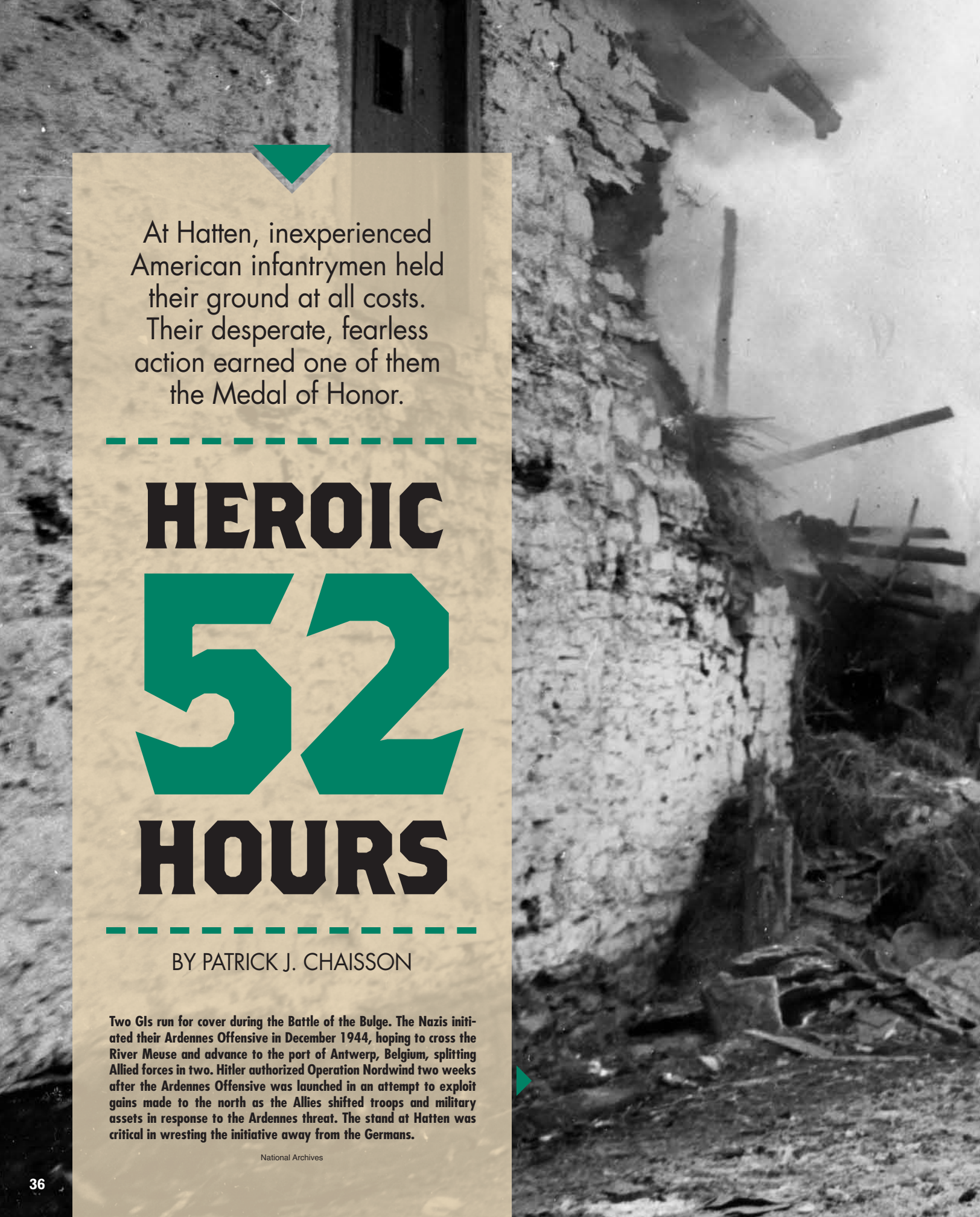
The wrangling between Wavell and Stilwell eventually contributed to a restructuring of the Allied command in the CBI. Soon enough, the long fight to defeat the Japanese was underway in earnest. □

Jon Diamond is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He has recently completed Osprey Command Series books on Orde Wingate and Archibald Wavell.*

At Hatten, inexperienced American infantrymen held their ground at all costs. Their desperate, fearless action earned one of them the Medal of Honor.

HEROIC 52 HOURS

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON



Two GIs run for cover during the Battle of the Bulge. The Nazis initiated their Ardennes Offensive in December 1944, hoping to cross the River Meuse and advance to the port of Antwerp, Belgium, splitting Allied forces in two. Hitler authorized Operation Nordwind two weeks after the Ardennes Offensive was launched in an attempt to exploit gains made to the north as the Allies shifted troops and military assets in response to the Ardennes threat. The stand at Hatten was critical in wresting the initiative away from the Germans.

National Archives

THE GIs DEFENDING PILLBOX NO. 9 watched in despair as a weak January sun set behind them. All day long they had beaten back repeated enemy infantry, tank, and flamethrower attacks, but with the coming of night their concrete fortification seemed more and more like a deathtrap.

Captain William Corson, the company commander, led Pillbox No. 9's garrison of 100 untried American riflemen. Their ammunition was almost gone, though, and communications with higher headquarters had been cut for hours. Worse, inside Corson's bunker were collected a dozen wounded men who urgently required medical care.

He had orders to hold at all costs, but Captain Corson knew the growing darkness would bring with it a renewed enemy assault that his exhausted troops simply did not have the means to resist. In a desperate attempt to contact HQ, the young officer moved to a sheltered observation platform where his low-powered "handie-talkie" radio might connect with the battalion command post.

Just then a German artillery shell exploded overhead, severely wounding Corson and killing a nearby private. Command of Pillbox No. 9 passed to T/Sgt. Al Cahoon, the senior NCO present. Cahoon remembered considering his options: "I thought we might try to withdraw, but we would have been cut down if we tried. So we held tight in the pillbox."

Later, the sound of men working outside forced Cahoon to make another decision. He recalled how "we could hear the Jerry engineers on top of the pillbox stuffing nitro-starch down the ventilating tubes." After a quick conference with the injured Corson, Cahoon yelled to an English-speaking German officer at the door that his soldiers were surrendering. The weary, dispirited GIs emerged from their underground shelter one by one with hands raised.

But the defenders of Pillbox No. 9 had held out for 19 precious hours. Their sacrifice bought time for U.S. commanders to rush reinforcements forward in an attempt to contain the enemy's advance. Over the next 11 days, Hatten—a once-tidy community of 350 houses—would draw fighting men from three American divisions into a titanic struggle against German *Panzergrenadiers* (armored infantry) and *Fallschirmjäger* (paratroops). At stake was the entire Allied right flank in Western Europe.

The maelstrom of Hatten occurred during Operation *Nordwind*, Nazi Germany's last counteroffensive in the West. Adolf Hitler and his generals initiated Nordwind two weeks after launching their Ardennes campaign, an operation known today as the Battle of the Bulge. Nordwind was designed to exploit perceived Allied weaknesses south of the Bulge penetration, a situation created when Allied armies stretched their lines to cover a sector

previously held by Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's command then counterattacking into Belgium and Luxembourg.

Nordwind was a sequential plan. First, four infantry corps were ordered to penetrate Seventh U.S. Army's defensive belt in the northern Alsace region of France on New Year's Night, 1944-45. Once those units breached the enemy's brittle front line, a powerful mechanized column would punch through to seize the strategic Saverne Gap, 25 miles behind the Americans' forward positions. This maneuver was designed to isolate Seventh Army, which could then be destroyed in detail.

It did not work out as planned. The Germans' initial assaults, which began after midnight on January 1, 1945, bent but failed to break Seventh Army's defenses. By January 6, the first phase of Operation Nordwind had sputtered out with little to show other than a long list of casualties.

Forty miles east, however, other German troops had managed to establish a bridgehead across the Rhine River at Gambsheim on the morning of January 5. This successful crossing presented a fresh opportunity to achieve Hitler's operational objectives. Beginning that evening, thousands of soldiers and hundreds of armored vehicles belonging to XXXIX Panzer Corps (Nordwind's exploitation force) made their way by ferryboat over the Rhine to Gambsheim. Their goal: smash a hole in Seventh Army's overextended line, then race for the all-important mountain pass at Saverne.

Ten miles northwest of the Gambsheim bridgehead stood the village of Hatten. This farming community of 1,500 residents was militarily significant due to its position astride the primary high-speed avenue of approach leading west toward Saverne. Together with such neighboring crossroads as Kilstett, Sessenheim, and Rittershoffen, Hatten represented an easily defended strongpoint which had to be captured before XXXIX Corps could start its envelopment of Seventh U.S. Army.

The terrain in which the two adversaries fought was, according to one American combatant, "as flat as a billiard table." Snow-covered farm fields predominated, although several large forests restricted both visibility and maneuver. A number of eastwardly flowing streams cut the landscape, but their shallow banks presented no obstacle to tactical movement. The region's road network supported both wheeled and tracked vehicle traffic.

A line of 10 pre-war Maginot Line blockhouses stood just outside Hatten to the east. These battlements, labeled Pillboxes 0 through 9 on U.S. maps, stretched from the Haguenau Forest south of town to the Seltzbach River along its northern edge. Another concrete emplacement in the village's west end provided shelter for those men not standing guard outside.

By January 8, XXXIX Panzer Corps was across the Rhine and poised to attack. At the tip of this armored spear was the 6,500-man 25th Panzergrenadier Division (PgD), heavily augmented by combat engineers, flamethrower tanks, and bunker-busting assault guns. Several batteries of 105mm and 150mm howitzers, along with mortars and rocket artillery, stood by to provide indirect fire support.

In preparation for its assault, the 25th PgD task-organized into flexible battle groups. *Kampfgruppe Proll*, a mostly-dismounted contingent named after the 35th Panzergrenadier Regiment's commanding officer, would take the Maginot Line fortifications east of town known to be held by American troops. Then, once Proll's men opened the way, a strong mechanized formation called *Kampfgruppe Huss* (named for the 119th Panzergrenadier Regiment's commander) was to head for Saverne.

Gathered in the woods west of Hatten were some 1,050 infantrymen, along with at least 16 PzKpfw. IV medium tanks and 20 SdKfz 251 half-tracked personnel carriers. A number of Hetzer 38(t) *Flammpanzers* (flamethrower tanks) and *Jagdpanzer* IV assault guns also awaited the order to advance. For many foot soldiers, recently transferred from the Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe, this would be their first battle. These former sailors and airmen were

TOP: Elements of the 79th Infantry Division move through the French village of Wissonburg on December 15, 1944, the eve of the Battle of the Bulge. Ravaged during the fighting in the Ardennes, the 79th Division joined elements of the 42nd Infantry Division in the town of Hatten by January. ABOVE: Reinforcing the roof of his foxhole and waiting for a German attack, a soldier of the U.S. 42nd Infantry Division maintains his position near the town of Hatten, where a German attack was expected.

Both: National Archives

German PzKpfw. V Panther medium tanks, mounting high-velocity 75 mm cannon, advance along a snow-covered road in the Hagenau Forest and the lower Vosges Mountains of France on January 31, 1945.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-1985-0104-500, Photo: Dr. Paul Wolff

sent forward without benefit of proper infantry training to bolster the panzergrenadiers' ranks just prior to Nordwind.

Set to exploit the attack was the rest of XXXIX Panzer Corps. Its primary maneuver element consisted of the 12,100-man 21st Panzer Division, equipped with an estimated 34 PzKpfw. IV and 38 PzKpfw. V Panther medium tanks. Another 1,200 tough, combat-tested paratroopers of the 20th Fallschirmjäger Regiment acted as XXXIX Corps' reserve.

Arrayed against this formidable enemy presence was a U.S. infantry battalion that had never before seen combat. Beginning on January 5, 1945, the 780 men of the 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment (1/242) began occupying Hatten. In command was Lt. Col. Edwin Rusteberg, 33, of Brownsville, Texas.

Rusteberg's battalion was part of an unorthodox solution to the Allies' theater-wide shortage of riflemen. Back in November, his parent division (the 42nd "Rainbow", so-named for the colorful shoulder patch its members wore) was directed to send its three infantry regiments overseas early. Those 9,800 men, organized into a task force (TF) designated TF Linden (named for its commander, Brig. Gen. Henning Linden), disembarked at Marseilles on December 8-9, 1944.

Christmas was spent on the front line, near Strasbourg in eastern France. On January 2, 1945, General Linden received orders attaching his command to the U.S. 79th Infantry Division. Known as the "Cross of Lorraine" Division for its distinctive unit insignia, the 79th was an extremely experienced formation. Its troops had been fighting almost without pause since they landed on Utah Beach one week after D-Day.

The 79th Infantry Division's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Ira T. Wyche, was glad to receive Linden's soldiers. Wyche needed every available rifle, as his organization was responsible for defending an impossibly long defensive sector. In early January its line, according the 79th's history, stretched "from Wissembourg east to the Rhine, a distance of 20 miles, in addition to 30 miles along the Rhine River."

Even as the first phase of Operation Nordwind raged well to the east, things remained quiet in the Cross of Lorraine Division's sector. This permitted Brig. Gen. Linden's troops to settle in and start gaining combat experience. Wisely, Maj. Gen. Wyche positioned these inexperienced regiments in between his own battle-tested organizations to help speed the adjustment process.

Supporting so many soldiers over such an extended distance proved difficult, however. The 79th Infantry Division simply did not possess a logistics backbone sufficient to keep TF Linden supplied with food, ammunition, and fuel while simultaneously meeting its own daily requirements.

Those sustainment assets so badly needed in France were back in New York harbor, being loaded onto cargo ships. Allied planners had taken a calculated risk by sending Linden's infantrymen forward early and without the remainder of their parent division. Thousands of young Americans would soon pay the price for this decision, which deprived them of proper supplies, signal equipment, and artillery support at a most critical time.

Meanwhile in Hatten, Lt. Col. Rusteberg faced a more immediate problem. His field manuals told him a battalion frontage should not exceed 800 yards in such terrain; now this West Point-trained officer was being ordered to "hold at all costs" along a line stretching 4,200 yards. And while those Maginot fortifications east of town looked inviting to cold, tired riflemen, they could be destroyed easily if left unprotected against surprise attack.

With three paltry 57 mm antitank guns in its AT platoon plus some Bazooka rocket launchers distributed across the battalion, 1/242 could do little to resist a determined panzer assault. Rusteberg's regimental commander, Colonel Norman C. Caum, understood this and forwarded nine additional 57mm guns from his AT company, as well as four tracked M10 tank destroyers (TDs)

belonging to the attached 813th TD Battalion. The 242's Cannon Company (boasting six 105mm howitzers) also deployed nearby.

To the south stood 3rd Battalion (3/242), while 2nd Battalion (2/242)—bloodied while resisting the German river crossing at Gambsheim—recuperated in Rittershoffen one mile to the west. The 79th Infantry Division's 3rd Battalion, 313th Infantry Regiment (3/313) held defensive positions on the northern flank. Another Cross of Lorraine rifle battalion (3/315), along with elements of the 14th Armored Division, acted as reserve. The 311th Field Artillery (FA) Battalion fired in direct support with its dozen 105 mm howitzers.

Rusteberg did his best to organize a suitable defense. In the north, Captain Bill Corson's Company A anchored its foxhole line on Pillbox No. 9 overlooking the narrow Seltzbach River. Farther south stood Company B, headed by Captain Benjamin F. Montague, its right flank resting inside the Haguenau Forest. Company C (1st Lt. James M. Long, commanding) remained in Hatten as battalion reserve. Captain William J. Rochelle's Company D (heavy weapons) emplaced its .30-cal. machine guns and 81 mm mortars to cover the entire two-mile-long main line of resistance (MLR).

With sound-powered field phones connecting him both to regiment and all sub-unit commanders, Lt. Col. Rusteberg next set about establishing an early warning network. Turning to T/Sgt. Merl H. Todd, one of his few combat veterans, Rusteberg directed that seasoned NCO to occupy a listening post in the Hatten Forest approximately 800 yards forward of 1/242's MLR. Todd, who had been wounded twice during a previous tour of duty with the 3rd Infantry Division in Italy, took 21 members of 1st Platoon, Company C, out with him starting at midafternoon on January 8.

"You could say that we were prepared for a big battle," recollected Sergeant David Willetts, who accompanied Todd on this hazardous mission. "Each soldier carried extra belts of 30-cal. ammunition and extra grenades." After settling in, according to Willetts, "the long, dark, cold night fell upon us, and the very tense waiting, watching, and listening began."

Todd's detachment did not have to wait long for their "big battle." Under cover of an intense artillery barrage, hundreds of German riflemen and combat engineers began to move forward shortly after midnight on January 9. These men belonged to *Kampfgruppe Proll*, the footmobile assault group charged with cracking 1/242's Maginot Line fortifications.

A 19-year-old panzergrenadier named Hans Weiss took part. "(Our) order to attack came at 0500," he later wrote of the battle. Weiss and his comrades "came out of the woods and were greeted by an intense artillery barrage. [We] were pinned down and…suffered [our] first casualties almost immediately." At dawn, the young private could see his objective, Pillbox No. 2, still 250 meters away.

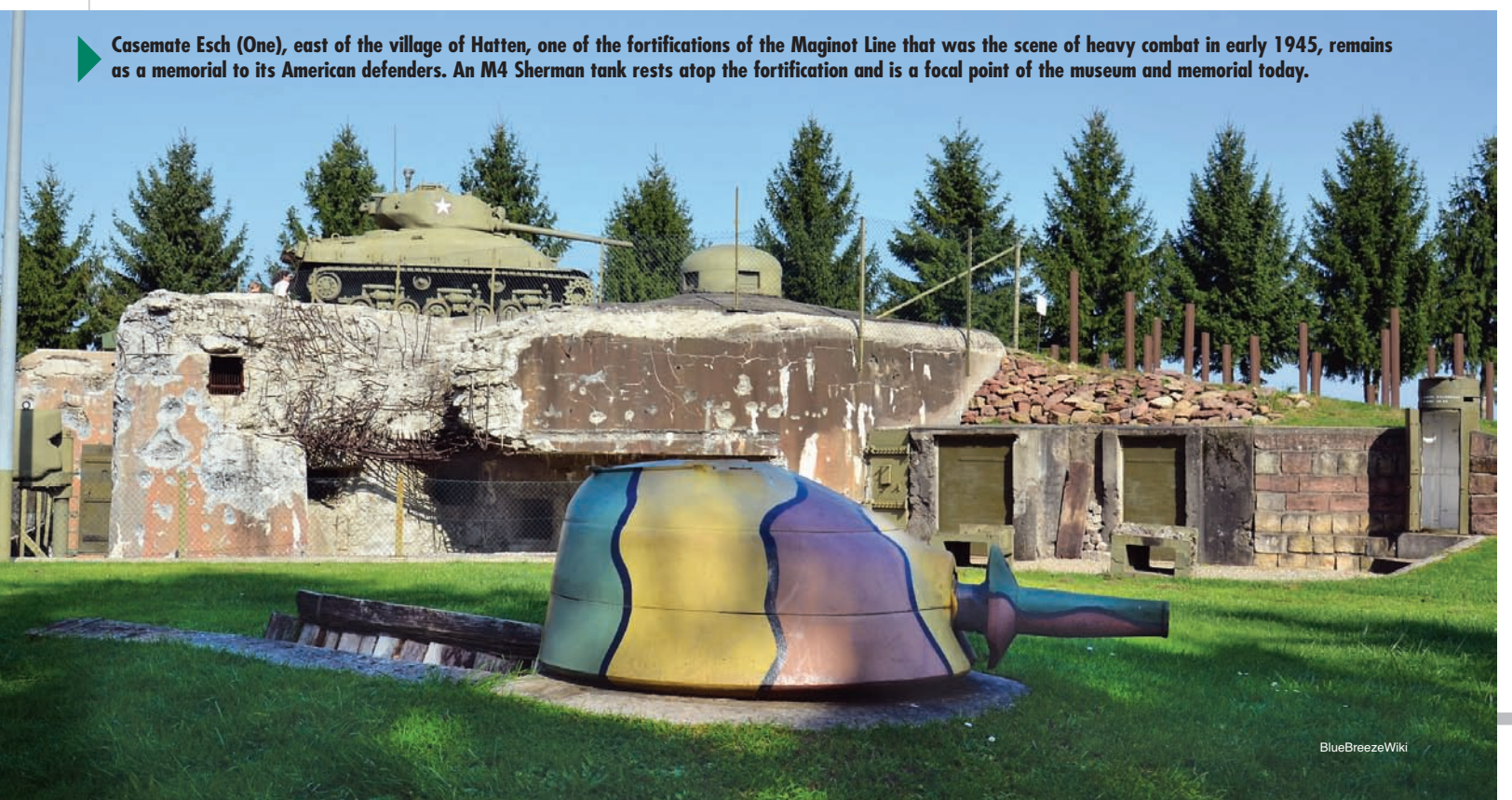
Along the MLR, meanwhile, 1/242 had gone to full alert. Staff Sergeant Raymond E. Hodde, a machine-gun section leader in Co. D, vividly recalled *Kampfgruppe Proll*'s pre-dawn attack. "At 5 o'clock it seemed that all hell broke loose. 'They're coming!' my gunner shouted. Crouched shapes moved toward us across the snow-covered field. Shells screamed overhead and burst to the rear of us. The roar of their guns was deafening."

The GIs fought back hard. Al Cahoon described the morning's encounter at Pillbox No. 9: "Directly to the front of my position, all we had to contend with was Infantry attacks and we turned them all back with heavy losses to them. We had excellent fields of fire and I thought at the time 'what a waste of manpower and how strange that they even attempt to attack over such wide openly exposed terrain.'"

Not far away, however, Captain Corson saw his supporting tank destroyers pull out of position behind him and scurry for safety. In the battalion's center sector, German infantry and flamethrower teams captured two bunkers that guarded the main road into town. Some panzergrenadiers, clad in white camouflage capes, even managed to work their way inside Hatten.

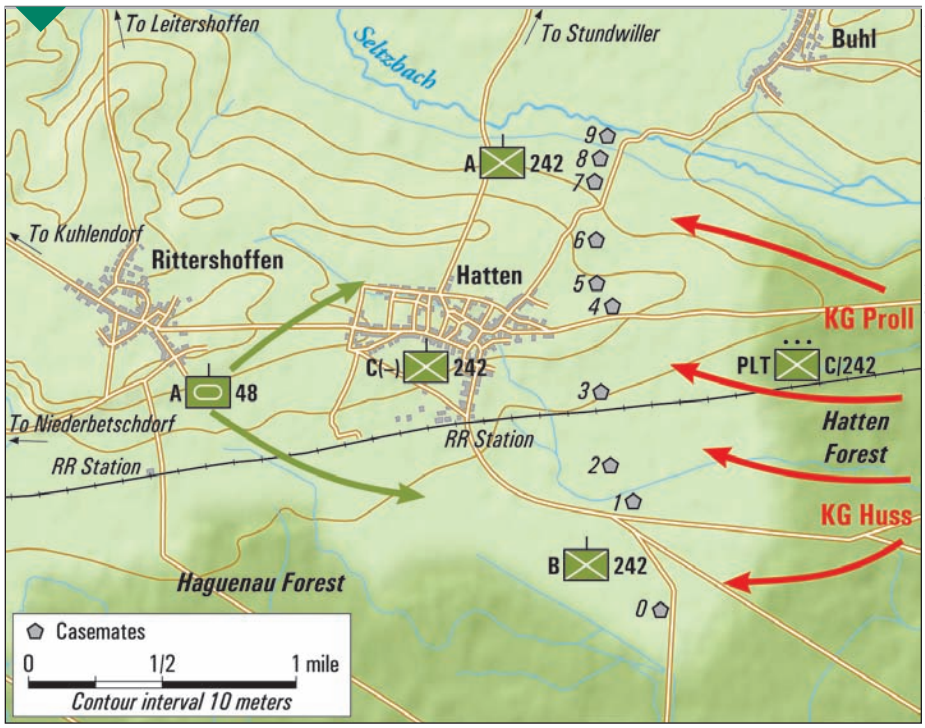
Rusteberg sent his reserve, Company C, forward to restore the MLR at 7:45 AM. By then, though, 1/242's 57 mm AT guns had all been destroyed. The battalion's antitank arsenal was now reduced to a few short-ranged bazookas and rifle grenades—weapons that would prove wholly inadequate against a dangerous new threat that came storming out of Hatten Forest at about 11:00 AM.

Casemate Esch (One), east of the village of Hatten, one of the fortifications of the Maginot Line that was the scene of heavy combat in early 1945, remains as a memorial to its American defenders. An M4 Sherman tank rests atop the fortification and is a focal point of the museum and memorial today.



National Archives

ABOVE: A 42nd Division soldier mans his foxhole while communicating on a field telephone. He holds an M3 submachine gun, nicknamed the grease gun. BELOW: The defenders of Hatten fought the German attackers with tenacity and resilience. American troops of the 42nd Division experiencing their first combat during German Operation Nordwind were ordered to hold their positions at all costs.



Map © 2021 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

This new threat was the *Kampfgruppe Huss*, the mechanized exploitation force set to begin its advance on Saverne. Also heading toward town were a number of *flammpanzers* (flame-throwing tanks) and heavy assault guns, vehicles purpose-built to defeat concrete emplacements.

In 1/242's command post (CP), Lt. Col. Rusteberg received a radio report at 11:18 from Company B that tanks and personnel carriers were approaching Pillbox No. 1 to the south. Messengers from Company A soon confirmed that a major attack was in progress. Rusteberg passed down orders to "hold positions, let tanks pass, and fire at the enemy foot troops."

Mortarman S/Sgt. Lloyd B. Oczkewicz, at Pillbox No. 4, said he "could see the Jerries were using flame-throwing tanks firing into the bunker to our right. We realized that now we were trapped in the pillbox." Oczkewicz never forgot the awful feeling that came over him when he realized he was about to become a prisoner of war. At noon, Pillbox No. 4's 20-man garrison gave up to a German NCO and was marched into captivity.

While elements of Kampfgruppe Huss worked to reduce these bunkers, other armored fighting vehicles bypassed Hatten to the north. Standing in their path was a platoon of 57 mm guns belonging to the 242nd Infantry Regiment's antitank company. Private Donald O. Johnson remembered his outfit's brief encounter with the marauding Panzers: "It was about 1500 that I saw a tank right by the Second Squad's gun," Johnson reported. "Our 57 mm was ready. We fired once; we fired twice. The third firing came the other way."

A volley of well-aimed high-explosive rounds obliterated Johnson's gun emplacement, leaving the 21-year-old GI stunned. He regained consciousness to find a young panzergrenadier standing over him. "The German was motioning for me to get my hands up," Johnson noted. "My right arm wouldn't work. Apparently, a log had fallen on my shoulder, so I used my left hand to hold my right hand up. I was a prisoner of war."

Visiting 1/242's CP when the second German attack struck was Captain Joel P. "Ace" Ory, commanding Company A, 48th Tank Battalion, 14th Armored Division. Ory raced back to his outfit (in reserve at Rittershoffen) and at 2:20 PM sent forward Lieutenant Edgar D. Woodard's platoon of five M4 Sherman medium tanks to counter this new threat. "Tanks on your right—German tanks— in the valley," Ory told the young officer. "Get' em … you can't miss, hurry!"

Taking up a hide position in the Haguenau Forest south of town, Woodard's tankers "waited for the attack we knew was coming. We didn't have to wait long. Six German tanks began moving along the railroad track from Hatten. They were on our left, and they apparently didn't see us, so we let them get within 600 yards. Then we let go. A Mark IV was leading the advance. One of our tanks opened fire, and before the Krauts knew what was coming off, had poured four rounds into the hull. The tank went up in flames.

"The other tanks in my platoon had opened up," Woodard continued, "and within five minutes, all six of the German tanks were knocked out. They were so damned surprised they didn't fire a shot back at us."

Back in Hatten, 1/242's situation was deteriorating rapidly. Enemy shellfire destroyed an observation post in the Catholic church's steeple, which drastically curtailed artillery support. German forces were also methodically demolishing the Americans' Maginot Line fortifications, compelling those stationed there to either surrender or flee back into town. No one had heard from Company A or Company B in hours, while Company C's first sergeant took temporary command after all that unit's officers had become casualties.

As dusk approached, the outpost detachment under T/Sgt. Merl Todd was still fighting from a position in the woods deep behind enemy lines. "We are giving them hell out here," he

reported before the phone line went dead, but with ammunition running low it was time to withdraw. Earlier, Todd had been shot in the leg; now he led his remaining soldiers out of Hatten Forest while "limping along leaving a bloody trail behind him," according to eyewitness Private Robert Christian.

Some men blundered into a patrol of panzergrenadiers and were made prisoner. Others, including Christian, managed to slip past German sentries. Unfortunately, Todd perished 200 yards from safety when a U.S. machine- gun team mistook him for the enemy. For his valor in combat, T/Sgt. Merl H. Todd received posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross (adding to the two Silver Stars he had earned in Italy).

Meanwhile, inside Hatten, veteran panzergrenadiers accompanied by Panther tanks and assault guns began advancing house to house against 1/242's remaining defenders. But army clerks, radiomen, and staff officers fought furiously to blunt the enemy's advance. One GI, a nearsighted cook named Pfc. Vito R. Bertoldo, became an unlikely hero when he almost singlehandedly held off an afternoon attack on the battalion CP.

Rusteberg recalled the incident: "I could see Vito Bertoldo and his MG [machine gun] mowing down a column of German infantry following a tank belching forth its solid shot and MG fire into our building at point blank range." At least 20 panzergrenadiers fell under Bertoldo's fire.

It was time to abandon the CP. With Bertoldo covering their withdrawal, the command post staff moved their HQ into a butcher shop toward the center of town. Colonel Caum, the regimental commander, made a brief visit there at 8:30 PM. Before departing, Caum told Rusteberg to hold on a bit longer as a dawn counterattack was in the works.

Indeed, 2/242's Company G had already come up to strengthen defenses in Hatten. Yet intense fighting continued well past midnight, even forcing Rusteberg to relocate his CP a second time. German officers also had plans for sunrise, as the Americans would shortly learn.

In the meantime, Hatten burned. Flamethrowers, phosphorus grenades, and incendiary ammunition set alight many of its wooden structures, forcing combatants and civilians alike to run for cover. Snipers, tank crews, and machine-gun teams slaughtered anyone caught out on the street. All night, small groups of bleary-eyed GIs peered anxiously from their hideouts in the western part of town and awaited reinforcements.

Help was on the way. At dawn on January 10, two rifle companies from the battle-tested 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment, 79th Infantry Division (Lt. Col. Earl F. Holton, commanding), fought their way into Hatten. Once inside town, though, Holton's men went to ground. A massive German counterattack had just commenced, one that threatened to crack the entire U.S. position wide open.

Several dozen enemy vehicles moving around Hatten to the north crashed into B and C Companies of the 48th Tank Battalion, assigned to support 2/315's assault. Both sides traded blows for a full hour before the panzers pulled back. "We knocked out plenty of German tanks," said Captain John D. Wilson of Company C, "but not without great loss to ourselves."

Battling alongside the 48th's veterans were 12 M18 Hellcats belonging to Company B, 827th TD Battalion. This unit comprised African-American gunners commanded mostly by white officers; heretofore labeled a "hard-luck" outfit, that day the 827th proved it could fight as well as anyone regardless of race.

Accompanying infantrymen "swore that Irving, standing up in his turret, turned and called to them, 'How do you want them? One, two, three, or three, two, one?' He then picked off the three Panzers 'one, two, three.'"

Both: National Archives

LEFT: American soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division patrol a heavily wooded area in France. The troops of the 42nd took heavy casualties in the defense of Hatten during Operation Nordwind. BELOW: Pfc. Vito Bertoldo of the 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment, held off a German attack on the battalion command post almost singlehandedly. A near-sighted cook, Bertoldo earned the Medal of Honor for his courageous defense.

Four M18s under 2nd Lt. Robert F. Jones made it inside Hatten, where they went into action immediately. A 79th Division historian picks up the story: "Three tanks of the German force swept close around the west end of the south main street of Hatten. One of Jones' tank destroyers, commanded by Sergeant Spencer Irving, was hidden by houses … at the southwestern corner; and Irving could see the unsuspecting Panzers coming. They crossed the Hatten-Rittershoffen road and Sergeant Irving brought his tank destroyer out of hiding and lined up his targets before the Panzers could swing about into firing position."

Accompanying infantrymen "swore that Irving, standing up in his turret, turned and called to them, 'How do you want them? One, two, three, or three, two, one?' He then picked off the three Panzers 'one, two, three.'"

From the top floor of a wooden dwelling, Pfc. Bertoldo continued to rage his one-man war against attacking panzergrenadiers and armored vehicles. Strapping his machine gun to a table, Bertoldo kept the foe pinned down until mid-afternoon, when an assault gun targeted his position with a high-explosive shell. Miraculously unhurt by the blast, he quickly returned to his perch in time to ward off another German thrust at sunset.

An official Army citation described what happened next: "The enemy began an intensive assault supported by fire from their tanks and heavy guns. Disregarding the devastating barrage, [Bertoldo] remained at his post and hurled white phosphorous grenades into the advancing enemy troops until they broke and retreated. A tank less than 50 yards away fired at his stronghold, destroyed the machine-gun and blew him across the room again; but once more he returned to the bitter fight and, with only a rifle, single-handedly covered the withdrawal of his fellow soldiers."

For his gallantry at Hatten, Pfc. Vito R. Bertoldo received the Medal of Honor.

After dark, Lt. Col. Rusteberg got the order to withdraw. This maneuver, difficult to accomplish even under ideal circumstances, was made infinitely more complicated by the tactical situation. Enemy forces had completely encircled Hatten and were even then fighting against U.S. infantry inside Rittershoffen. To reach safety, the men of 1/242 would have to infiltrate through German lines in small groups.

Technician 5th Grade Rudolph A. Wodgenske and two comrades set out under a "full moon and cloudless sky decorated with twinkling stars," as he wrote years later. Creeping for nearly one mile across a "flat and barren field," Wodgenske's group managed to sneak around the enemy's outposts. "Crawl about 50 yards," he remembered of the ordeal, "hear a flare go up, hear the guns roar and 'freeze.'" Finally, at sunup all three men made it to friendly positions, where they were given dry socks and a hot breakfast.

National Archives

This destroyed German PzKpfw. IV medium tank bears mute testimony to the ferocity of the fighting around the village of Hatten during Operation Nordwind. The Germans lost 63 precious tanks in the fighting and were eventually repulsed with heavy casualties as well.

Among the last members of 1/242 to evacuate Hatten was its commander, Ed Rusteberg. Together with Captain Bill Rochelle of Company D (his one company commander not wounded or captured), the weary colonel set out toward friendly lines just before dawn on January 11. Left behind to continue the fight were Lt. Col. Holton's battalion and Lieutenant Jones' doughty tank destroyer crews.

The battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen would go on for another nine terrible days. Together, these two small villages acted as a cauldron into which were poured men, matériel, and firepower in ever-increasing quantities. Nearly 10,000 men of the 79th Infantry Division, as well as the entire 11,000-soldier 14th Armored Division, struggled mightily against a similar number of German troops for possession of this key terrain. When combat ceased on January 20, the towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen had been flattened. Over 100 innocent civilians, unable to escape the destruction, perished in the ruins of their homes.

Later, a U.S. survey tallied 31 derelict M4 Shermans, nine M5A1 light tanks, and eight half-tracks found on the battlefield. They also counted 51 destroyed German panzers and assault guns, plus 12 soft-skin personnel carriers. No comprehensive accounting of the battle's human cost has ever surfaced.

It took weeks for the men of TF Linden to rebuild from the losses they had suffered at Hatten-Rittershoffen. Yet these untested American riflemen—in their first fight against terrifying Panther tanks and elite panzergrenadiers—had performed magnificently. Ordered to defend an extended line against overwhelming odds, they had done just that for 52 crucial hours. The 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment entered Hatten with 33 officers and 748 enlisted men; after two days of bitter fighting only 264 GIs remained in its ranks. The rest were recovering in the hospital, dead on the field, or on their way to a German prison camp.

Lieutenant Colonel Rusteberg later complimented his troops, saying they achieved their mission "even though surrounded and cut to pieces by an enemy superior in number and supported by armor." Through it all, he noted, "Not one man shirked his duty—not one man left Hatten until relieved."

The U.S. Army awarded its Presidential Unit Citation to many of Hatten's defenders. Rusteberg's 1/242 and Holton's 2/315 were both so recognized, along with the 242nd Anti-Tank Company, Lieutenant Woodard's 1st Platoon, Co. A, 48th Tank Battalion, and several other organizations that had also fought there. This honor stands as a fitting tribute to those grimly determined servicemen who in January 1945 held Hatten "at all costs." □

Frequent contributor Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer and historian for the Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation (www.rainbowvets.org).

ITALY'S SHORT-LIVED SUCCESS IN

Somaliland

THE ITALIAN INVASION OF BRITISH SOMALILAND ENDED IN VICTORY, BUT MONTHS LATER BRITISH TROOPS RECAPTURED THE COLONY.

BY JOHN W. OSBORN, JR.

ONE of World War II's least known campaigns was fought over one of the most desolate places on earth. For a few August days it was Britain's only battlefield, apart from the very sky above it. Yet it produced one of the war's most unique victories, and its only land victory for Fascist Italy.

"Six feet up the Empire's geographical orifice," a colonial official unlucky to find himself there called those 68,000 square miles dismally, drearily dumped on the southern entrance to the Red Sea, 200 miles across the Gulf of Aden. But it was precisely that strategic location along the route to India that led the British to bother signing treaties of protection with the tribes there between 1884 and 1886.

Even for them the area "is hard to love," the only author to bother writing about the British presence there commented. "Six inches of rain makes an abundant year, and as little as two paltry inches are possible." It had absolutely no natural resources or industry of any kind, and on the outbreak of war in 1939 the European population of the capital and port, Berbera, stood at only 100.

The British in Somaliland at the outbreak of World War II faced Fascist Italy along a 750-mile border with Italian Somaliland, Eritrea, and recently conquered Ethiopia, with no more to defend themselves than the Somali Camel Corps under Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Chater, Captain Eric Charles Twelves Wilson, a dozen other British officers, 400 men, and 150 reservists. The persistent, petty, pence-pinching of peacetime for the protectorate perilously persisted when Chater's appeal for 12,000 to 15,000 pounds to improve defenses at first got him only 900 pounds.

In December 1939, the Imperial Chiefs of Staff began gradually sending reinforcements, including the 1st Battalion, Northern Rhodesia Regiment; 2nd Battalion, King's African Rifles; 1st East African Light Battery; 1st Battalion, 2nd Punjab Regiment from across the Gulf in Aden, and finally the 2nd Battalion, Black Watch. A defensive line was constructed along the Tug Argan Gap, the gateway into British Somaliland, 50 miles south from Berbera.

But the multi-racial force was a nightmare to supply, was short on artillery, transport, and signal equipment, lacked a proper headquarters, and was desperately dependent on air cover from 200 miles across the Gulf in Aden. Authorities there also had their own priorities. Berbera completely lacked facilities as a port, and even in peacetime a ship usually needed 10 days to unload.

In January 1940, British Somaliland came under Middle East Command led by General Sir Archibald Wavell. He visited the area, inspected the defenses, conferred with the

Italian tanks advance through Karrin Pass in British Somaliland during their offensive of 1940. Although the Italians were initially victorious, their occupation collapsed following a British counteroffensive launched later in the year.

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Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Soldiers of the King's African Rifles (KAR) during the British advance into Italian Somaliland in February 1941. The unit, a British Colonial Regiment, was raised in East Africa in 1902, and served until independence in the 1960s. RIGHT: Captain Eric Charles Twelves Wilson received the Victoria Cross for his defense against the Italian invasion of British Somaliland.

French in their sad slice of Somaliland (present-day Djibouti) about common defense, and decided, in the event of an invasion, to put the British under joint command of the French.

Wavell's 7,500 personnel were outnumbered by the Italians, who were massing five times their number in Blackshirt battalions and Shoan, Amharan, and Eritrean conscripted collaborators. The situation worsened just two months later with the fall of France.

The French withdrew their forces from their border positions, and Wavell lamented, "The collapse of French resistance released the whole of the Italian Eastern Army for operations against British Somaliland…. I had to decide whether to evacuate British Somaliland forthwith or to continue to hold it."

After conferring by cable with Chater, he came to his decision. "I decided," Wavell wrote, "to continue to defend the approaches to Berbera for as long as possible. Brigadier Chater reported that if the force was increased to five battalions he considered that there was a good prospect of holding his positions; also withdrawal without fighting at all would, I considered, be more damaging to our prestige than withdrawal after attack."

Another high-ranking officer was quite pessimistic, noting, "The overrunning of Somaliland seems assured…. Poor Reggie Chater, he deserves a better show but he's a fine soldier and will hold them up for a time. I only hope there isn't a second Dunkirk in the Red Sea."

British air reconnaissance reported the first Italians to cross the frontier in a three-pronged invasion on August 4, 1940, under Lieutenant General Carlo de Simone, who led the central and primary force, driving north for Berbera.

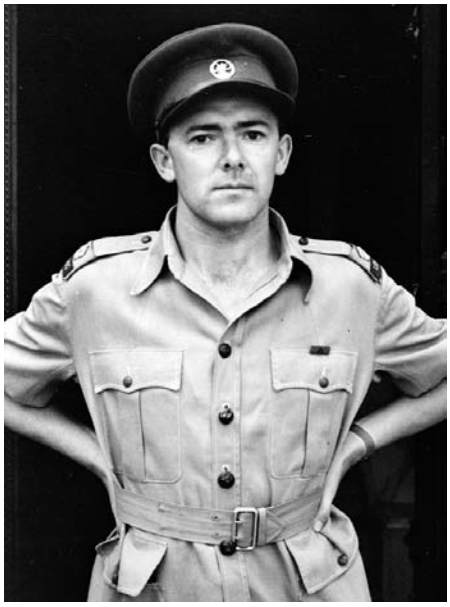
Resistance by the Camel Corps and the Rhodesians as well as an unexpected rain stopped the Italians. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was thoroughly irritated: "Mussolini is very resentful toward the Duke of Aosta (Viceroy of Italian East Africa) because of the delay in operations in Somaliland," the dictator's son-in-law and Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano confided in his diary. "He repeats the formula, 'Princes ought to be enlisted as civilians.'"

Mussolini soon ordered his forces to "pour all available reserves into Somaliland to stimulate the operation." However, there would be no need as de Simone, after two days' delay, resumed his advance straight to the campaign's main event, the Battle of the Tug Argan Gap, August 11-15, 1940.

"Tug Argan Gap, through which runs the main Hargeisa-Berbera Road, is some 8,000 yards in width," Wavell wrote. "It is flanked on the north-west by a succession of flat-top hills with numerous sandy 'tugs' ('tug' is the local name for wadi or ravine) separating them; and on the south-east by a range of hills varying from 600 to 1,500 feet above the floor of the gap. The country in the gap itself is fairly flat, sparsely covered with thorn bush and invested with fairly numerous tugs of all sizes running in a south to north direction. The Tug Argan itself is a large sandy riverbed some 150 yards in width and running south to north; it was on the southwest or enemy side of all our defended localities."

Among the defenses, Observation Hill, to the left of the road for Berbera, was the strongest position. The weakest, its defenses unfinished, was Mill Hill on the right. Knobbly Hill sat a mile west of the gap, Black Hill one and one-half miles further south covering the right flank, and two others, Castle and King, to the gap's rear. The hills, however, were too far apart to provide mutual support, and they were woefully undermanned. The Italians would, therefore, have little trouble infiltrating between the positions.

Imperial War Museum



The British were alerted to the Italian advance by the headlights of the invaders' vehicles in the distance and by Somali refugees. The battle opened with a 7:30 AM air attack followed by an artillery barrage until noon, and then finally the first ground assault at 12:30 PM. The fighting ebbed and flowed for four days, at times hand to hand.

Twenty-seven year old Captain Eric Charles Twelves Wilson was in the thick of the fighting. Graduating from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst in 1933, Wilson sought service in Somalia, transferring from the famed King's African Rifles to the Somali Camel Corps in

1939. He was tasked to organize a 75-man machine-gun company, which he now commanded on Observation Hill.

"The enemy attacked Observation Hill on August 11, 1940," an official report related. "Captain Wilson and Somali gunners under his command beat off the attack and opened fire on the enemy troops attacking Mill Hill, another post within his range. He inflicted such casualties that the enemy, determined to put his guns out of action, brought up a pack battery to within several hundred yards, and scored two direct hits through the loopholes of his defenses, which, bursting within the post, wounded Captain Wilson severely in the right shoulder and in the left eye, several of his team also being wounded. His guns were blown off their stands, but he repaired and replaced them and regardless of his wounds carried on whilst his Somali Sergeant was killed beside him."

Wavell related, "On 12th August the enemy's attack developed in full force, each defended locality was attacked by large forces of infantry, supported by artillery…. The enemy came on with great determination and undoubtedly suffered extremely heavy losses." Holding the weakest position, Mill Hill, the East African Light Artillery fired 1,000 shells from their 37 mm howitzers straight down over open sights. They were down to their last seven shells when Mill Hill was overrun at 4:00 PM, and the East Africans escaped.

"On August 12 and 14," the official report continued, "the enemy again concentrated artillery fire on Captain Wilson's guns, but he continued, with his wounds untended, to man them."

Meanwhile, the battle in the air was no less intense. "The oil barrels catch fire like matches, sending dense columns of smoke up. What a brutal joy one finds in destruction!" an Italian airman declared. Royal Air Force pilots flew 184 sorties across the Gulf from Aden in outdated Gloster Gladiators, Bristol Blenheims, and Fairey Battles, dropping 60 tons of bombs, losing seven aircraft with 10 others damaged, a dozen crew killed, and three wounded. The Italians lost three aircraft.

A badly needed supply column from Berbera with ammunition and water was ambushed by the Italians. Mirgo Pass, east of the Gap, fell, opening the road to Berbera for the Italians. On the 14th, 500 Italian shells slammed into Castle Hill. Italian air attacks were constant. Then the Italians launched their all-out assault at the key to the defense line, Observation Hill, and Captain Eric Charles Twelves Wilson.

"On August 15th, two of his machine-guns were blown to pieces, yet Captain Wilson, now

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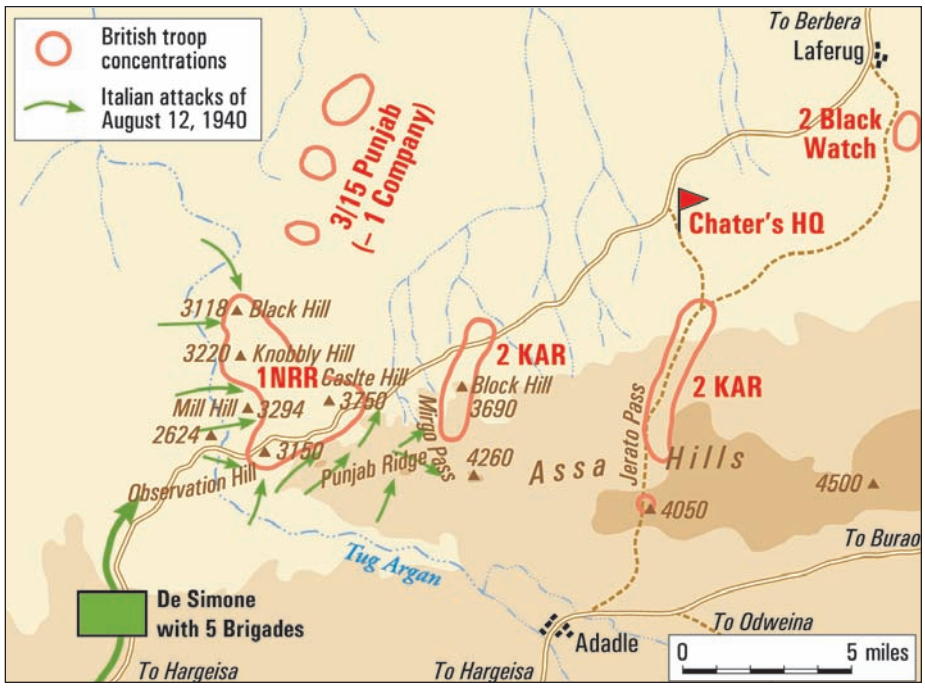

TOP: Italian infantrymen cross the frontier into British Somaliland during their 1940 invasion. ABOVE: The Italian invasion of British Somaliland was opposed not only by tough Commonwealth military units, but also logistical and command-and-control challenges.

suffering from malaria still kept his own post in action," the report related. "The enemy finally over-ran the post at 5:00 PM on the 15th of August when Captain Wilson, fighting to the last, was killed."

For his extraordinary heroism, Wilson received a posthumous Victoria Cross, announced on October 11, 1940. His stand was likened in Great Britain to Rourke's Drift against the Zulus in 1879. But an East African had his own, grimmer, assessment of the action at Tug Argan Gap: "All finished, no good."

Major General Alfred Reade Godwin-Austen, rushed from Palestine to assume command the day of the Battle of Tug Argan Gap started, regarded the situation as no poor reflection on Reginald Chater, believing that Chater was too junior for such a suddenly expanded command.

Godwin-Austen's orders to hold British Somaliland allowed him to "take the necessary steps for withdrawal," and he did.

The Black Watch had landed in British Somaliland just two weeks before, and a company sent up as reinforcements was ambushed in the night of August 14 and scattered in confusion. With Mirgo Pass in Italian hands and in position to cut the road to Berbera and isolate the remaining British in Tug Argan Gap, Godwin-Austen cabled Middle East Command in Cairo in the early hours of August 15 to request evacuation from British Somaliland as "the only course to save us from disastrous defeat and annihilation."

The invasion had caught Wavell in London for meetings with Churchill and the chiefs of staff, and it fell to his deputy, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, to decide.

Wilson promptly replied, "Permission granted." He cabled Wavell in London, "Enemy broken through Tug Argan Pass with hopelessly superior forces and firepower. Restoration of situation impossible. Have sanctioned evacuation. Hope to save 70 percent of force."

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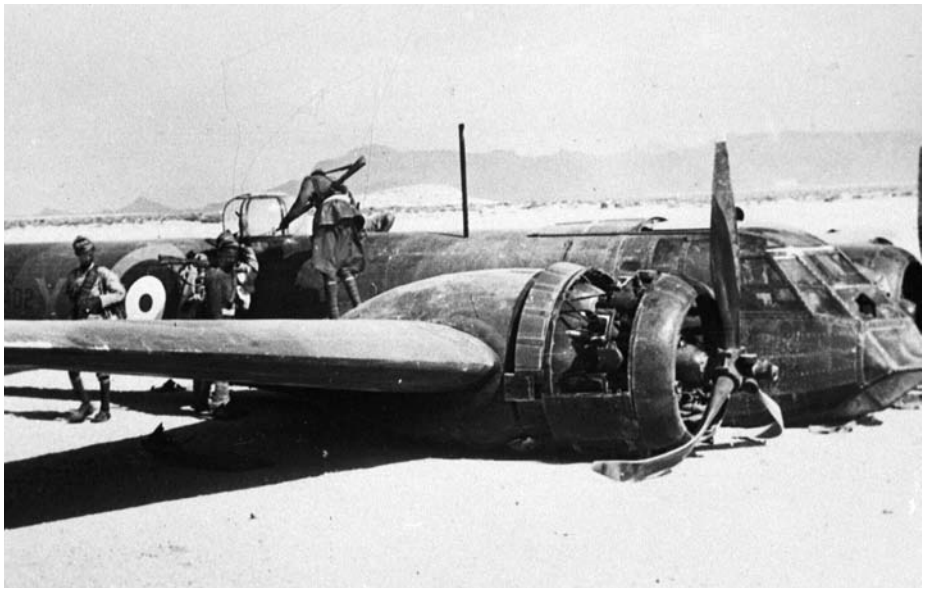


ABOVE: Damaged and inoperable, a Royal Air Force Bristol Blenheim light bomber lies at an airfield at Berbera, Somaliland, in August 1940. OPPOSITE: Raising their banner atop a captured British fortification at Jirreh in British Somaliland, Italian soldiers celebrate their victory on August 22, 1940. British offensive operations launched in late 1940 ejected the Italians from their gains in British Somaliland.

Wavell answered two hours later, "Evacuation of Somaliland is accepted and there is no recrimination as to events there." Consequences were to come later and rock Whitehall. "When I brought (Churchill) the news of the evacuation," Wavell recalled, "I rather expected an outburst. But he took it very well." Unfortunately for Wavell and Godwin-Austen, the prime minister's perspective later changed.

The British booby trapped their positions around Tug Argan Gap and pulled out that night. Given a chance to redeem itself, the Black Watch fought all the next day at Barkasan Hill, just 15 miles from Berbera, to cover the evacuation from there to the Red Sea. With only a Bofors gun and a captured Breda gun and just five rounds between them, a Black Watch sergeant knocked out three Italian armored vehicles. Italian officers used whistles to direct their Eritreans until the Black Watch's official historian would later write, "The whole countryside was an elaborate whistle symphony."

Fifty Black Watchers counter-charged with bayonets, yelling across 600 yards to send the Eritreans, in their official historian's words, "like hares in their hundreds." Soon the Black Watch received the order to fall back on Berbera, where the Royal Navy had constructed an improvised jetty. The evacuation of civilians and soldiers took place like clockwork despite Italian air raids. The last British troops departed at 2:00 PM, August 18, 1940.

"The local Somalis of the Camel Corps were given the option of evacuation to Aden or disbandment. The great majority preferred to remain in the country. They were allowed to retain their arms," wrote Wavell.

When Oscar Brooke, a captain in the Corps, told his Somali sergeant that the company was to be disbanded, the Somali asked anxiously, "And England? What was to happen to England?" Brook assured him that everything was all right there. "Oh well," the sergeant replied, relieved, "if England is all right, everything will be all right."

The slow-moving Italians entered Berbera two days later. Still Fascists, they exalted in what would be their only victorious campaign of World War II, one proclaiming, "Victory is our cry! We set off like arrows from the bow." Beside the perverse Fascist pride, the victory promised, as well, the practical use of British Somaliland to attack shipping in the Red Sea and threaten the line of communication through the Suez Canal to India and the Far East.

Publicly Churchill dismissed the loss of British Somaliland as "a small but vexatious military episode." Privately, though, he asserted, "I was far from satisfied with the tactical conduct of this affair which remains our only defeat at Italian hands. At this particular moment, when formidable events impended in Egypt and when so much depended on our prestige, the rebuff caused injury far beyond its strategic scale."

Churchill particularly pointedly questioned whether the British losses, 39 killed, 120 wounded, and 120 missing, had demonstrated much effort. He would have had a better idea had he known of the Italian losses: 465 killed, 1,530 wounded, and 34 missing. Instead, Churchill sent off a cable that was "red hot," as an aide described it. Wavell was its recipient in Cairo, and Churchill demanded an inquiry and Godwin-Austen's suspension.

Wavell blamed the defeat squarely on "our insistence on running our Colonies on the cheap, especially in matters of defense." He criticized the government's delay in deciding to defend British Somaliland, denounced the French, and finally dismissed Churchill's demands. "A big butcher's bill is not necessarily evidence of good tactics," Wavell followed. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir John Dill, recalled that the observation had "raised Winston to greater anger than I had ever seen in him before," and a confidante commented, "Winston raged, but could think of nothing to say."

For Wavell, it was the start of the steady slide in their relationship that ended with Wavell militarily marooned from the war in the prestigious position of Viceroy of India. Godwin-Austen joined Wavell in operational exile as Quartermaster of India. There was a feeling of injustice surrounding Churchill's treatment of Godwin-Austen, and he was retired as a full general in 1947. Reginald Chater alone came out without blame; promoted to major general, he later served as Director of Combined Operations for India and South Asia.

The Italians would have little time to enjoy their success. On March 16, 1941, as part of the general British offensive against the Italians

Associated Press

across East Africa, a quartet of Royal Navy ships appeared off Berbera, shelled it, then landed a pair of Sikh battalions.

They met no opposition. "The enemy garrison of a brigade had melted away. All of British Somaliland was now quickly regained," Churchill wrote with satisfaction. In two months, Italy's Somaliland slice, Eritrea, and Ethiopia had also fallen to Commonwealth forces. in Washington, President Franklin D. Roosevelt could now proclaim the Red Sea as a non-belligerent area, so Lend-Lease aid could transit it to the Middle East.

The British later discovered that they would have to remarkably re-calculate their list of casualties during the fall of British Somaliland: Captain Eric Charles Twelves Wilson was discovered alive!

Somali survivors from Observation Hill, fleeing ahead of the oncoming Italians, had reported seeing Wilson dead at his machine-gun post after an explosion. He had only been knocked unconscious, however, later coming to and finding corpses all around. He stumbled down the hill the wrong way, straight into Italian hands, to be treated for his wounds and then consigned to a POW camp in Eritrea. Four months later a downed RAF pilot, arriving in the camp and surprised to find Wilson alive, informed the officer that he had been awarded the Victoria Cross. Wilson and other prisoners had been tunneling for weeks in preparation for a mass breakout when they awoke one morning to find the camp garrison had vanished except for the commandant, waiting to surrender to approaching British forces.

Charles Eric Twelves Wilson was the only "posthumous" Victoria Cross recipient ever to return alive. He went on to fight in Burma, serve in the Colonial Service in East Africa until 1961, and return to Somalia in 1975 to aid famine relief. Before he died at 96 in 2008, this "posthumous" Victoria Cross recipient was one of the last five living from World War II. He told the most recent Victoria Cross recipient, from Iraq, “It will not make a great difference in your life. You might get a few drinks, though.”

Captain Oscar Brooke reassembled his old Camel Corps company. All but two men, including one who had died, dutifully returned in a single day. Brooke’s devoted servant returned the next morning, having walked miles through the night to retrieve Brooke's possessions, hidden from the Italians.

In 1960, having risen to brigadier and commander of the Somali Camel Corps, Brooke returned as an official representative when British Somaliland and the Italian portion (administered after the war by the United Nations) were to become jointly independent.

"While attending numerous functions and listening to a number of speeches by Somali politicians to Somali crowds," Brooke recalled. "I was immensely struck by the fact that at no time was there a sour note, a snide remark, a cheap jibe or bitter comment—only a feeling of 'good-bye to friends.' And this despite the fact that the British record in Somaliland was nothing to boast about! On the final evening, as the Union flag came down for the last time, before the Somali flag was hoisted before the huge crowd a small group broke the silence by jeering and sneering. They were immediately and emphatically silenced, not by the police or soldiers, but by their own countrymen.

So, dignity was preserved to the last."

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has written for WWII History *on a variety of topics.*

The Flying Tiger and the Demon

BY BOB BERGIN

ERIK SHILLING, a pilot of the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers, faced the angry mob. There were about 30 of them, all in loincloths and leather vests with no buttons. Behind him was his airplane, or what was left of it. He had mushed into the trees, which had saved him but turned the craft into a heap of twisted metal. He had spent the night in the mangled cockpit, listening to strange sounds in the dark forest. With the dawn came the hill-tribe people.

The leader, an "exceptionally robust individual," was hostile and seemed to be trying to incite the mob. He shouted to make sure Erik understood him, but it was not a language Erik had ever heard. The famous AVG blood chits had not yet been issued, and it struck Erik that although he was blond, these hill-tribe people thought he was a Japanese pilot, the only ones who flew in this sky. The thought terrified him. "Now I knew how the victims of a lynch mob must have felt," he wrote later. But things eventually calmed down, and the tribal people busied themselves cutting limbs from trees to build a stockade around Erik and his airplane.

Left to himself, Erik poked through the wreckage. He found his windup Victrola and a stack of records, still miraculously intact. He played a few. The tribal people had never encountered anything like that. They gathered around the Victrola in wonder, sticking their hands into the horn to feel where the sound was coming from. The day wore on, and other tribal people appeared. Erik was expected to play something for each newcomer. Finally, he taught one of the tribal guys to do it.

For the rest of that day the sound of music rose above a small clearing in the rugged mountains of China's Yunnan Province, just a few minutes by airplane from AVG headquarters in Kunming. A favorite tune was "High On A Windy Hill," although none of the listeners understood a word. It was Christmas Eve, 1941. Erik spent Christmas night with the wrecked aircraft, nicknamed the "Demon," behind the stockade that the tribal people had built.

The beginnings of Erik Shilling's improbable mountain adventure can be traced back some months earlier, when he first saw "a beautiful little fighter plane … the most beautiful airplane" he had ever seen. It was in Rangoon,

The most beautiful airplane that American Volunteer Group (AVG) pilot Erik Shilling ever saw was a Demon, and it almost killed him.

R.T. Smith, courtesy Brad Smith

TOP: This painting by Jack Fellows depicts Flying Tiger pilot R.T. Smith's Curtiss P-40 #77. The P-40 B and C variants made tough, reliable fighter planes. The engine was underpowered at high altitudes, lacking a supercharger, but at lower altitudes the P-40 was a fine pursuit plane. INSET: Flying Tiger Erik Shilling was an early advocate of another fighter plane, nicknamed the Demon.

Burma; Erik was visiting from the AVG's training base at Toungoo in Central Burma. The beautiful little fighter was a Curtiss Wright CW-21. It was called the Demon. It had a 1,000-horsepower radial engine and a two-stage supercharger, and it was less than half the weight of an AVG P-40 Tomahawk. Its rate of climb was phenomenal, somewhere around 5,000 feet a minute—twice that of a P-40.

There were actually three Demons at Rangoon. They belonged to CAMCO, The Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company, which had a factory that assembled American aircraft for China. It also was used as the cover for the AVG as the ostensible employer of the AVG pilots and other AVG personnel. The three Demons had been sent to Burma intact and were to serve as prototypes when the CAMCO factory assembled 33 Demons for the Chinese government. Erik immediately contacted one of the CAMCO people he knew to see if he could fly the CW-21. That could be arranged, he was told.

The CW-21 "handled like a dream," Erik recalled, "The most impressive airplane I had ever been in." He couldn't wait to get back to Toungoo to speak to AVG commander General Claire Chennault. The AVG needed those airplanes, Eric told him, and Chennault should get the Chinese government to buy them for the AVG. They would be able to intercept the high-flying Japanese reconnaissance airplanes that flew their missions above 25,000 feet and easily evaded interception by

the AVG's Tomahawks. The P-40 took 35 minutes to get that high; the Demon could do it in a little over six minutes. Chennault didn't seem to share Erik's enthusiasm.

The AVG had recruited a mixed bag of pilots with varying degrees of skill. There were bomber pilots and flying-boat pilots among them, and fewer than 20 of the AVG pilots had ever flown a P-40. Most had seen the P-40 only in photos. The AVG's accident rate on training flights at Toungoo was high; three pilots had already been killed.

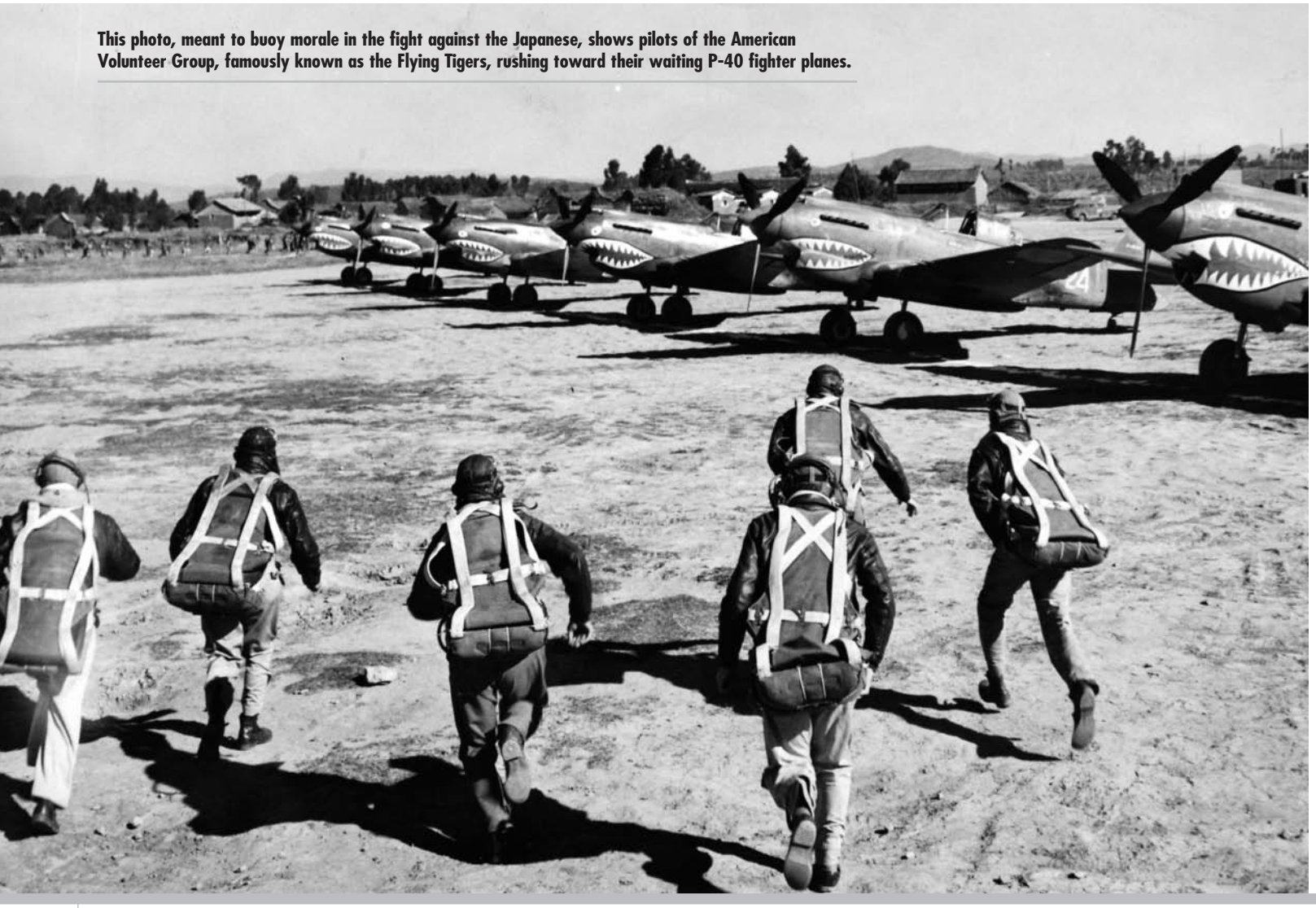
Erik had come to the AVG from the Army Air Corps. During World War I, his father had joined the aviation branch of the Signal Corps, entered flight training, and continued flying in the reserve after the war. He was a barnstormer in his free time, and young Erik nailed signs to trees, hawked soda pop, and kept dad's Waco biplane clean. In 1937, Erik joined the Flying Cadet Detachment at Randolph Field, Texas. His assignments after graduation as a pursuit pilot were varied. He flew everything from the Boeing P-12 pursuit plane to the strange Bell YFM-1 Airacuda and the Douglas B-18 bomber, virtually "every airplane in the Army Air Corps inventory," he remembered. Significantly for Chennault and the AVG, Erik had considerable hours in the Curtiss P-36 and P-37, forerunners to the P-40, and had served in the 41st Long Range Reconnaissance, a photo recon outfit. But Erik had never met the P-40 before.

When time for his first P-40 flight came, everybody was watching, including Chennault. It all went smoothly until Erik leveled off at 10,000 feet, when all hell broke loose. Smoke poured from underneath the cowling, and the engine started to shake itself apart. Erik learned later that the engine had thrown a connecting rod—right out the side of the crankcase. He shut down the engine and made a diving, 180-degree turn for the field. His touchdown was smooth, and he had enough momentum to turn down a taxiway and coast up to the door of the maintenance hangar. The mechanics loved

The pilots "muttered darkly," Chennault wrote, "that 'it was a hellava note' that the Americans had to fight in second-rate planes because all the best were going to the British and Dutch under lend-lease.'" Chennault believed that the "Buffalo was inferior to the P-40 in every respect," and history would show how right he was.

National Archives

This photo, meant to buoy morale in the fight against the Japanese, shows pilots of the American Volunteer Group, famously known as the Flying Tigers, rushing toward their waiting P-40 fighter planes.



it. Erik had to be "the hottest pilot in the outfit," they said. Chennault didn't say anything, but it was Erik he chose not long afterward to dogfight a Brewster Buffalo. Erik was certain that he was chosen because Chennault had watched his first P-40 flight.

Held on November 20, 1941, the P-40 versus Buffalo fly-off turned into a festive occasion at Toungoo. A British Royal Air Force (RAF) Battle of Britain ace was selected to fly the Buffalo, and several high-ranking British officers, including an air vice marshal, came up to witness the contest. The AVG performed an aerial review in their honor.

The fly-off came about because the AVG pilots had arrived in Burma with little regard for the P-40 airplane that they would soon fly in combat. In his memoir, *Way of a Fighter,* Chennault writes, "The P-40 had acquired a reputation as a killer in the hands of relatively inexperienced pilots." What the AVG pilots knew about the P-40 before they ever flew one, he continued, "was based almost entirely on the crop of rumors then sprouting at military flying fields [back in the U.S.] on the erratic flying qualities, hot landing speeds, and inferior power plant of the P-40." On their way to Burma, the ships transporting AVG personnel called at Surabaya, Singapore, and Rangoon, where the pilots saw that both the Dutch and the British were flying the American-made Brewster Buffalo.

The pilots "muttered darkly," Chennault wrote, "that 'it was a hellava note' that the Americans had to fight in second-rate planes because all the best were going to the British and Dutch under lend-lease.'" Chennault believed that the "Buffalo was inferior to the P-40 in every respect," and history would show how right he was. But at the time, even Erik Shilling thought that Chennault was taking a wild gamble by staging this exhibition.

In the end, as fellow AVG pilot Charlie Bond said: "Shilling whipped him soundly." The two pilots met at 10,000 feet over the AVG's Kyedaw airfield. They started with a series of turns, and Shilling quickly locked on the Buffalo's tail. In desperation, the RAF pilot dropped his gear and flaps, hoping the P-40 would overrun him. Shilling saw the flaps starting down and pulled back on his stick instead of cutting power. That kept him above and behind the Buffalo, in position to counter any move the RAF pilot could make. There was nothing more the RAF ace pilot could do. "Much to everybody's astonishment," Chennault wrote, "Shilling flew rings around his opponent." And "P-40 stock rose."

R.T. Smith, courtesy Brad Smith

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber takes off from an airfield in China while Curtiss P-40 fighters of the American Volunteer Group sit armed and ready for action. LEFT: General Claire Chennault was the commander of the American Volunteer Group and later US air forces in China. He was a superb aerial tactician and developed effective methods for AVG pilots to nullify the Japanese Zero's advantages. RIGHT: AVG pilot Charlie Bond scored 8.77 victories against the Japanese. Bond also claimed to be the first pilot to have the distinctive shark mouth drawn on the engine cowling of an AVG P-40, although Shilling was convinced he was the first to do so.

Shilling had already made himself quite useful to the AVG in other ways. As the Group's photo officer, he was in charge of converting one of the P-40s into a photoreconnaissance airplane. Erik chose P-40 Number 53, an aircraft he had flown and knew well. To lighten Number 53 and improve its performance, he removed the four 30-caliber wing guns, leaving the two 50-caliber guns in the nose. All the gaps on the exterior metalwork were sealed with fabric and covered with a dozen coats of dope. He also installed a small air scoop over a fuel vent to prevent the vapor lock at high altitudes that the P-40 was prone to (later adopted by Curtiss as a permanent fix in P-40 E-model). An aerial camera acquired from the RAF was installed in the baggage compartment and linked to a panel in the cockpit where it could be controlled remotely. Pictures were taken through an eight-inch hole cut in the belly. By Chennault's reckoning, cleaning up Number 53 and reducing its weight had made it 18 miles per hour faster than the other AVG P-40s and let it climb 3,000 feet higher.

P-40 Number 53 had another claim to fame: It apparently was the first AVG P-40 to be given its teeth. At about the same time that AVG pilot Charlie Bond found a photo of a British P-40 with shark teeth painted on it, Shilling found a copy of the rotogravure section of *The Statesman*, a Rangoon newspaper. It had a photo of a German Messerschmitt Me-110 with a shark's mouth painted on its nose. The next morning Shilling used chalk to sketch a shark's mouth on the nose of Number 53, the aircraft assigned to him at that time. Chennault walked out to the flight line to look at it. Shilling wanted to use the shark mouth as the AVG Second Squadron insignia, but Chennault said he would rather use it as a group insignia on all the AVG aircraft. It wasn't long before all the AVG P-40s had teeth.

Shilling was in Rangoon when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He flew to Toungoo as soon as he heard, "using max allowable power all the way." Soon after Shilling landed, Chennault summoned him, Ed Rector and Bert Christman. He told them that the Japanese would attempt to neutralize the RAF at Rangoon and the AVG at Toungoo. He said, "We

During a refueling stop at an airfield in Yunnan-Yi, China, Erik Shilling stands at left, next to Arvid Olsen, pilot of plane sitting in the background. Seated, left to right, are other members of the AVG: R.T. Smith, Ken Jernstedt, Bob Prescott, Link Laughlin, and Bill Reed.

AKG Images

have to know what we will be up against." Photographs of Bangkok and nearby Don Muang airfield were urgently needed. Shilling would fly the photo ship; Rector and Christman would fly escort.

The three pilots planned their mission. The 850-mile round trip from Rangoon to Bangkok was beyond the range of their P-40s. They decided to refuel on the way to Bangkok at Tavoy, an RAF airfield south of Rangoon and just 160 miles from Bangkok. On their way back, the Japanese might be waiting for them. The decision was the right one: Tavoy was bombed and strafed 20 minutes after Shilling and his escorts took off. This would be the first AVG mission against the Japanese and was probably the first American photo mission of the war over Japanese-held territory.

On the morning of December 10, 1941, Shilling and his escorts flew to Rangoon, and from there on to Tavoy. With Bangkok only 160 miles away, they had to start their climb immediately after takeoff to get to their mission altitude of 26,000 feet while still 50 miles from Bangkok. Rector led the first leg. When they reached 26,000 feet, Erik took the lead. They made their pass over Bangkok and Don Muang without incident, and Erik set a direct course for Rangoon over the Gulf of Martaban. Because of the "cleanliness" of Number 53, he had to throttle back to let the two P-40 escorts keep up.

The photographs Shilling brought back were telling. Chennault looked at them and exploded. He had been denied bombers by the U.S. War Department and could do nothing about what he was seeing, as he explained, "Docks along the Menam river were jammed with enemy transports disgorging troops and supplies. Don Maung [sic] airdrome outside the city was packed with Japanese aircraft, parked wingtip to wingtip…. A dozen bombers could have wrecked the Japanese air offensive in twenty minutes. This was but one of many times during the war when a kingdom was lost for want of a few planes."

On December 12, Chennault sent the AVG Third Squadron to Rangoon to support the RAF defense there. Shilling went with them. Over the next few days there were frequent alerts, which Shilling flew without meeting the enemy. Those may have been false alarms, but it was evident that Japanese attacks on the city were imminent. On December 22, a radio message from Chennault ordered the three CW-21 Demons be flown from Rangoon to Kunming as soon as possible.

Orders were cut directing Shilling, Kenneth T. Merrit, and Lacy H. Mangleburg to proceed to Kunming with a stop at Toungoo for minor maintenance. In fact, the CW-21s were just as they had come from their shipping crates. At Toungoo, long-range ferry tanks were to be fitted to their wings and radios installed. The three CW-21s departed Rangoon late that day, arriving at Toungoo before dark. Shilling's two wingmen, Merrit and Mangleburg, had come to Burma on the ship with Shilling, and the three had become close friends. Shilling's enthusiasm for the CW-21 Demon had spilled over to them.

Before landing at Toungoo, the three Demons put on an air show to the delight of the ground crew, who had never seen the CW-21s before. The mechanics went to work on the Demons, and the three pilots went to their barracks, where they had lived since arriving in Burma. Because their move to Kunming was likely to be a permanent one, they collected their personal belongings. Shilling couldn't resist taking his

Victrola and record collection. The next day, as the three pilots walked toward their aircraft, someone shouted: "The Japs are bombing Rangoon!" It was the beginning of the Japanese Christmas offensive. It was also likely that the Japanese would hit AVG targets, and Toungoo was a prime choice.

The Demons took off immediately for Lashio, closer to the Burma border with China. They would refuel there and get some maps they couldn't find in Toungoo. There were no radios for the Demons at Toungoo, but perhaps there would be at Lashio. Shilling had flown to Kunming before, but because of cloud cover saw little of the terrain they passed over. Neither Merrit nor Mangleburg had ever flown the Kunming route; they had no idea of the course or the terrain they would fly over.

Shilling's Demon started backfiring, but the problem seemed intermittent. The fuel taken on in Toungoo was 100/130 octane—all that was available—but the CW-21 manual specified 80/87 octane. After landing at Lashio, Shilling found a CAMCO representative, who said that the wrong octane could be the problem. Shilling defueled the three airplanes and fueled them with proper octane gasoline.

Shilling's next stop was at Operations Control, to get the proper charts that covered the route from Lashio to Kunming. What he was given were mimeographed pencil drawings showing the course—60 degrees—and the distance—330 miles—as well as squiggly lines representing rivers and a wavy line representing the Burma Road. That's the only map there was. There were also no radios available for the Demons.

While Shilling waited for his aircraft to be fueled, Lacy took off and started performing aerobatics over the field. He was obviously having a good time, but with drop tanks full of fuel it was not a good idea. And then the air raid sirens started to wail. With no radios, there was no way to warn Lacy. Shilling's only option was to get in the air and lead him away. If there were incoming Japanese, the Demons could outrun them. As Shilling and Merrit took off, Lacy dove down to join them. Erik set the course for Kunming.

The weather was perfect—for a time. Then the ceiling lowered, and it started to drizzle. An hour into the flight, Shilling's engine started to backfire again and lose power. He had started looking for a place to set down among Yunnan's steep hills and deep valleys when he spotted a China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) transport climbing out, about a quarter of a mile away. The only airfield in that vast mountainous area was at Kunming, their destination. They had to be very near. If he could get Merrit and Mangleburg to see the CNAC transport, they would know their position and be able to find Kunming.

Shilling made a 180-degree turn to get on the transport's tail, but his sick engine would not let him catch up. He rocked his wings to try to get his wingmen's attention. If they saw the transport, they would understand the message: "Fly the reciprocal of the CNAC plane's course and you will be at Kunming." Mangleburg nodded, so perhaps he understood.

Shilling turned back on the course for Kunming, but his engine was running really rough, and he was losing altitude quickly. He would have to bail out or crash-land. He spotted a small clearing on the side of a mountain and decided to try for it.

His descent was too steep; he was at well over 150 miles per hour when he reached the clearing. But the speed saved him. He was able to pull the Demon's nose up and mush into the trees. As he hit the first tree, he got a glimpse of the airspeed indicator. "The needle was sitting exactly on one hundred mph," he noted. Erik didn't think he ever lost consciousness as he was tossed violently around the cockpit.

Later, he surveyed the path the Demon had cut through the forest and understood what had happened. The Demon's left wing had been sheared off at the root by the first tree it hit,

ABOVE: AVG pilot Erik Shilling wrote that the Demon was the most beautiful fighter plane he had ever seen, "small, sleek, and with a large radial engine that gave the impression of lots of performance." BELOW: The Curtiss P-40 was a rugged, dependable fighter plane that slugged it out with the Japanese Zero in the skies over China. However, when General Claire Chennault became aware that some AVG pilots were dissatisfied with its performance, he arranged a fly off-between AVG pilot Erik Shilling and a British RAF ace flying a Brewster Buffalo fighter. Shilling bested the Brit easily.

Both: National Archives

and the airplane was slewed sideways. The next tree hit the Demon's side behind the cockpit, and the impact all but tore the plane in two. It broke the battery cables, which reduced the possibility of a fire. The fuel tanks had ruptured; the ground around the airplane was drenched with aviation fuel.

The thought of fire made Erik scramble from the cockpit and run. Without thinking, he half-ran, half-slid down the mountainside until he reached the clearing where he had wanted to land. He saw Mangleburg circling just above the trees and waved at him. On his next pass, Mangleburg rolled back his canopy and dropped his pistol. Shilling heard it hit in the bushes but couldn't find it. At Lashio, concerned about his engine problems, Shilling had told Mangleburg that he had no side arm. If he went down, he'd asked Lacy to throw him his pistol. Lacy remembered and obliged.

Shilling spent that first night in the Demon's twisted cockpit. He didn't want to do that—the ground around the airplane was saturated with gasoline—but it was either that or sitting in the open and listening to the strange sounds among the trees. He rose with the dawn and was lapping up moisture that had collected overnight in crevasses in the Demon's now-wrinkled skin when the first of the hill-tribe people arrived. That second night he spent with the Demon inside the newly built stockade. The tribal people hunkered down nearby and started a bonfire. Later, Shilling learned there were dangerous animals in the mountains that surrounded them, the reason the bonfire was kept going all night.

Shilling awoke on Christmas Day wondering how he was going to get off the mountain. The tribal people were busy chopping at trees again, but now they were friendly. They picked up the personal things he had pulled from the wreckage and packed them in pieces of cloth cut from his parachute. Then they build a chair from tree branches lashed together with parachute lines. They insisted Erik sit, and argued over who would be the first to carry him. The mountain was steep and the trail narrow. From his perch, Erik looked down into deep gorges and hoped his porters didn't stumble. At dusk they arrived at a village far down the mountain. Erik was led to the dwelling, where a Chinese radio operator lived. The radioman didn't speak English, but he had a Chinese-English dictionary. With that, Erik was able to piece together what had happened.

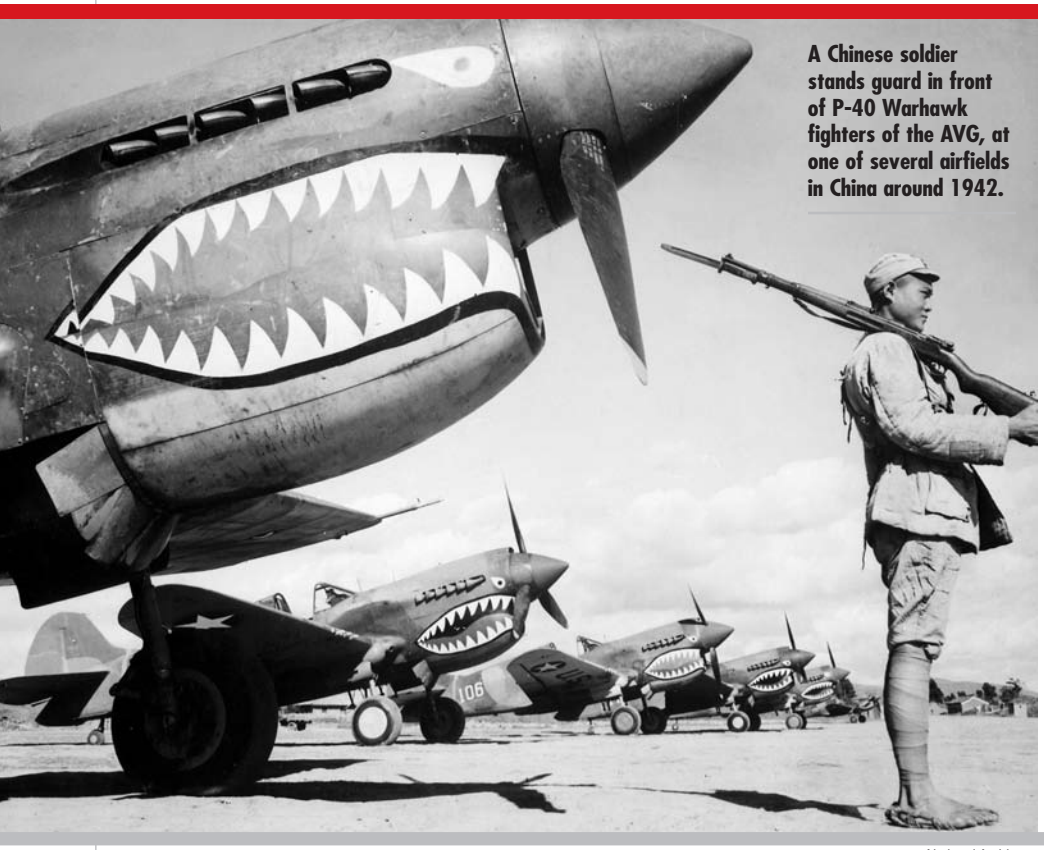
Erik had been saved by Chennault's air warning net, which stretched out from Kunming in concentric circles like a spider web to little villages where men with radios watched the skies for incoming Japanese aircraft. The net proved helpful in other ways: guiding lost pilots and search and rescue. The people who found Erik initially thought he was a downed Japanese pilot, who were often killed where they were found. The village radio operator heard the Demons fly over and reported it to Kunming. When the three Demons did not arrive at Kunming, the warning net was alerted to be on the lookout for a downed AVG pilots. The group that found Erik eventually got the word. Erik also learned that the other two Demons had crashed. One pilot was killed, but he did not know which one.

On the afternoon of the next day, and much further down the mountain, Erik was met by a group of Americans, among them the AVG's Doc Rich and Ken Merrit. So, it was Mangleburg who was killed. He had tried landing in a streambed but hit a hill, and the Demon immediately burst into flames. Merrit had made a belly landing on flatter ground and walked away from it. After Shilling went down, the two pilots were hopelessly lost and flew around aimlessly. Neither had seen the CNAC transport. One village on the warning net reported that the two aircraft flew over it more than 20 times. But with no radios in the Demons, the situation was hopeless.

Shilling learned almost all of that later. He and Merrit were given little opportunity to talk. Shilling was taken to a small grass airstrip where a two-seat trainer was waiting to fly him to Kunming as soon as he arrived. Shilling did not realize it until the next day, but he was under investigation by AVG management. Chennault was in Chungking, and in his absence AVG Executive Officer Harvey Greenlaw was in charge. A martinet among the easy-going AVG pilots, Greenlaw decided to immediately convene an accident investigation board composed of the AVG doctor, two pilots, and a mechanic. Greenlaw sent Merrit to Rangoon before Shilling had a chance to talk with him and drew up the charges against Shilling.

The findings were ready for Chennault's signature when Shilling returned from Chunking: full responsibility for the crash of three airplanes fell on him. He had allowed Mangleburg to perform aerobatics over Lashio, and those aerobatics were the direct cause of the three aircraft crashing. In addition, Shilling had not provided his wingmen adequate maps and had not adequately briefed them. The board recommended that Shilling be reduced in rank from flight leader to wingman and fined $300. When Chennault returned from Chungking, he signed the findings. Shilling officially appealed and presented his written objections. Chennault ordered a complete review of the accident and rescinded Shilling's fine and reduction in rank.

Shilling had many more adventures with the AVG. When the group was disbanded, he joined 16 other AVG pilots at CNAC and



A Chinese soldier stands guard in front of P-40 Warhawk fighters of the AVG, at one of several airfields in China around 1942.

National Archives

A squadron of Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk fighters of the American Volunteer Group flies in formation near the Salween River Gorge on the border between China and Burma May 28,1942.

R.T. Smith, courtesy Brad Smith

The thought of fire made Erik scramble from the cockpit and run. Without thinking, he half-ran, half-slid down the mountainside until he reached the clearing where he had wanted to land.

made 350 highly dangerous flights over the Hump. After the war he joined Chennault's new airline, Civil Air Transport (CAT), which was also used to support the Nationalist Chinese in their war against the Chinese Communists. During the Korean War, he made clandestine flights over China, and later in Vietnam he dropped supplies to the French at Dien Bien Phu. Shilling remained an active pilot long after his retirement, particularly as a flight instructor specializing in aerobatics. He wrote an autobiography, *Destiny: A Flying Tiger Remembers*. He died in 2002.

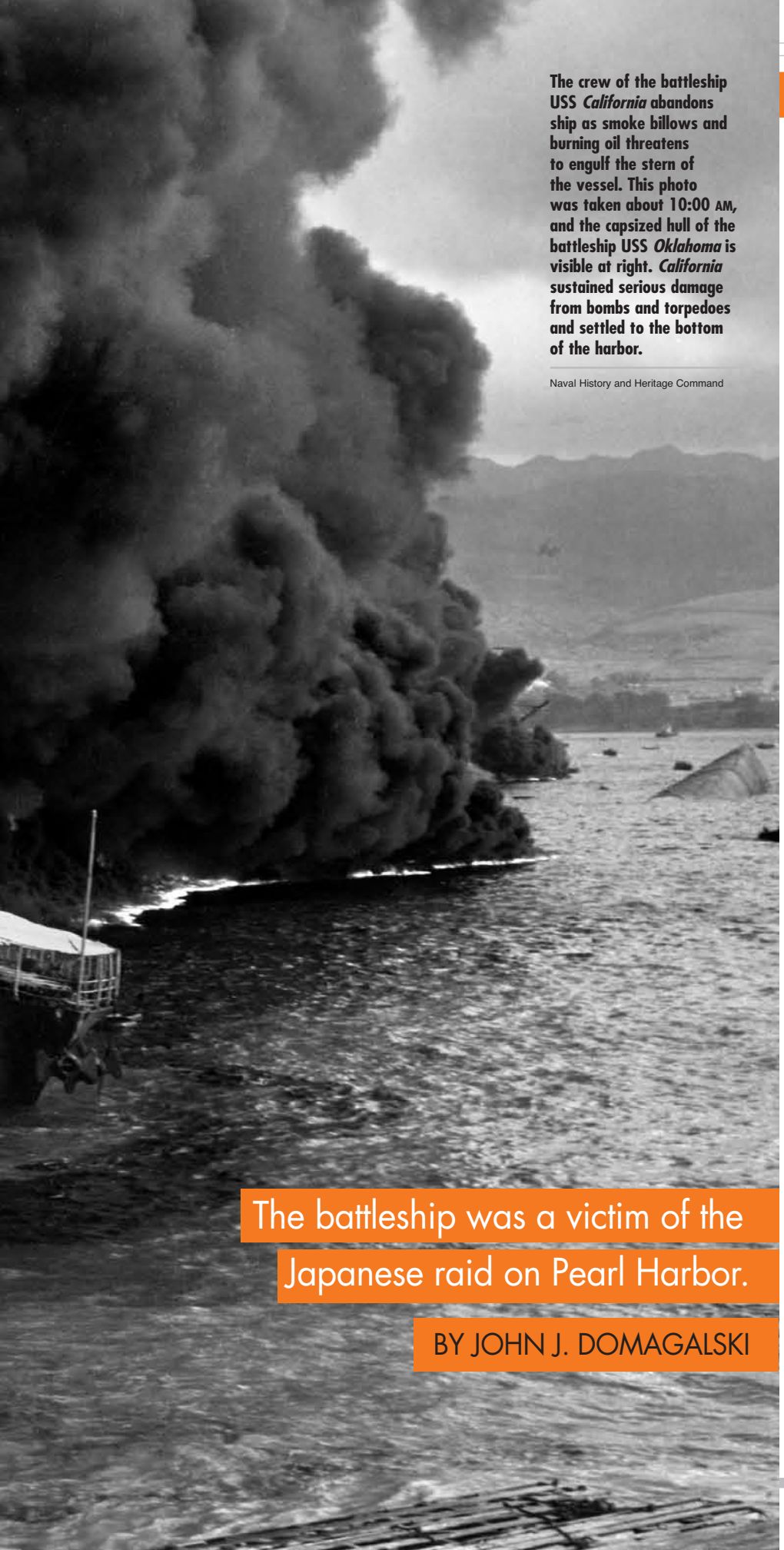
The saga of the Curtiss Wright CW-21 Demon was over. Most, if not all, of the 30 assembled for the Chinese government at CAMCO's Loi Wing plant were apparently destroyed by Japanese bombers. The only other customer for the Demon, the Dutch government, purchased 24 CW-21B model Demons, which were sent to the Dutch East Indies in 1941 and assembled at Bandung, Java. Several victories against Japanese aircraft were claimed by Dutch CW-21B pilots early in their encounters with the Japanese, but most of the East Indies Demons were very quickly lost in combat or destroyed on the ground.

The Japanese apparently captured one Demon intact. No Demons seem to have survived the war, and none are known to exist today. The Demon had an impressive performance that came at the cost of lightweight but flimsy construction. Also, to save weight and improve performance, the CW-21 was given no armor for pilot protection and had no self-sealing fuel tanks. It had been designed as a high-performance interceptor of bombers that was not intended to dogfight, but to use its superior speed to escape opposing fighters.

In the end, that and a lot of bad luck spelled the end of Erik Shilling's "beautiful little fighter plane." □

Author Bob Bergin, a former U.S. Foreign Service officer, writes on the history of aviation in Southeast Asia and China and on intelligence and military operations in the World War II China-Burma-India Theater.

THE VALIANT FIGHT OF USS *CALIFORNIA*



The crew of the battleship USS *California* abandons ship as smoke billows and burning oil threatens to engulf the stern of the vessel. This photo was taken about 10:00 AM, and the capsized hull of the battleship USS *Oklahoma* is visible at right. *California* sustained serious damage from bombs and torpedoes and settled to the bottom of the harbor.

Naval History and Heritage Command

The battleship was a victim of the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor.

BY JOHN J. DOMAGALSKI

The first rays of sunlight on December 7, 1941, marked a typical Sunday morning for the sailors aboard the battleship USS *California* at Pearl Harbor. Weather conditions were mostly clear. Although usually a day of rest, the early hours were normally full of activity. Men on the morning watch concluded their duties in preparation for the arrival of their relief at 8:00 AM. Sailors slowly awoke in the crew compartments below deck as cooks and mess hall attendants prepared to feed a hungry breakfast crowd.

Two church services—Catholic and Protestant—were to be held one after the other starting at 9:00 AM under a sprawling canvas awning set up near the front of the ship. Small boats made ready to ferry sailors to shore for liberty. The men aboard *California* had no way of knowing that they would soon be in the epicenter of action as the United States was thrust into World War II by a surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The warship had served with distinction for almost two decades. Built at the Mare Island Navy Yard in California, the battleship was commissioned on August 10, 1921, and underwent modernization in 1929-30. Displacing just over 33,000 tons fully loaded, the battleship was 624 feet long. More than 1,000 officers and enlisted men served as her crew. *California* had recently completed a long stretch serving as the flagship of the Pacific Fleet.

The home of the United States Pacific Fleet for about a year, Pearl Harbor was full of ships and activity by late 1941. On that early December Sunday, *California* occupied one of the southernmost berths along Ford Island. She was securely tied to mooring posts with her bow pointing south. The seaplane tender *Avocet* was in close proximity. The fleet oiler *Neosho* was docked about 500 yards away at the gasoline wharf. Beyond her lay the remaining battleships of the Pacific Fleet, moored along Ford Island's Battleship Row.

Many key officers, including Captain Joel W. Bunkley and Executive Officer Commander E.E. Stone, were still ashore from the day before. Also absent was Vice Admiral William S. Pye, who was using *California* as the flagship for his task force of battleships.

The morning found *California*'s crew in a condition of readiness common for peacetime. None of her 14-inch main battery guns were manned. Fifty shells for each of the battleship's open-mounted five-inch guns were positioned in nearby ready boxes. The only weapons manned were two .50-cal. machine guns, each equipped with 400 rounds of ammunition. "All

other ammunition was in the magazines," Captain Bunkley later wrote. The battleship was fueled to 95 percent capacity, and one boiler was in use to provide auxiliary power.

Japanese planes arrived over Pearl Harbor just before 8:00 AM, simultaneously attacking the area's air facilities and warships throughout the harbor. The explosion of the first bombs on Ford Island attracted the attention of the sailors aboard *California*, and General Quarters were ordered at about 7:50 AM.

The ringing klaxon jolted the startled crewmen into action. All key fittings were closed and sealed to provide the greatest watertight integrity possible. Sailors rushed to their battle stations all across the ship while others worked to seal the hatches and doors. A voice on the ship's PA system warned that this was no drill.

Although it may not have been recognized by many of her crew at the time, *California* was perhaps in the most vulnerable condition of any battleship in the harbor. She was due for an inspection on Monday, a frequent event for warships with an admiral aboard, resulting in a compromised state of watertight integrity. Preparations had been made for the examination of various tanks and cavities. Six manhole covers leading to the vessel's double bottom were completely removed, and the screws on a dozen more had been loosened . This arrangement would prove disastrous as the attack unfolded.

Lieutenant Commander M.N. Little was the senior officer aboard *California* at the time of the attack. He immediately ordered all guns manned and preparations made for getting underway. Lieutenant Commander F. J. Eckhoff, the ship's navigator, relieved the officer of the deck and began assisting Little. At about the same time, *California*'s communication officer, Lieutenant Commander H.E. Bernstein, rushed to ensure the keys for the magazines were accessible so that a supply of ammunition could be made available to the guns.

Communication links were established between all key stations, including conn (steering), fire control, and central station. Repair parties and medical teams assembled at their designated posts. By 8:00 AM, the main steam lines were warmed in preparation for getting the boat moving.

The battleship immediately came under attack by one or more strafing planes, possibly the same ones that unleashed the first bombs on Ford Island. A group of 24 Nakajima Kate torpedo bombers sped over the harbor's Southwest Loch heading directly toward Ford Island. Each plane carried a Type 91 aerial torpedo with a 452-pound explosive charge. *California*'s port side lay fully exposed.

Yeoman Durrell Connor watched helplessly from his position in the flag communications office as an approaching plane dropped a torpedo. He slammed shut the porthole just as the underwater missile struck the ship. The torpedo slammed into the port side of *California* just forward of the bridge. A second torpedo then crashed further aft, almost even with turret number three, sending up a geyser of water. The battleship shuddered as if her main guns had just fired a full broadside. It was now 8:05 AM.

The two ready machine-gun posts were the first weapons aboard the ship to open fire. Two five-inch guns soon joined the action. "The shortage of ammunition immediately available at the guns [was] acute, and orders were issued to ammunition parties to expedite the service of it to the guns," Bunkley reported. But the ship had been struck by the torpedoes before much effective action could be taken.

Both torpedoes had struck the battleship low, striking below the side armor belt and before full watertight integrity could be obtained. Bunkley noted the effects of the hits were "far reaching and disastrous." Water rushed into *California* through the gaping holes and open manhole covers. The ship began listing to port. Quick counterflooding directed by Ensign Edgar Fain kept the battleship from capsizing, but the list reached nearly 16 degrees before subsiding.

The torpedo hits had pierced fuel tanks, sending oil spilling onto the third deck. "The strength of the fumes were such as to over-

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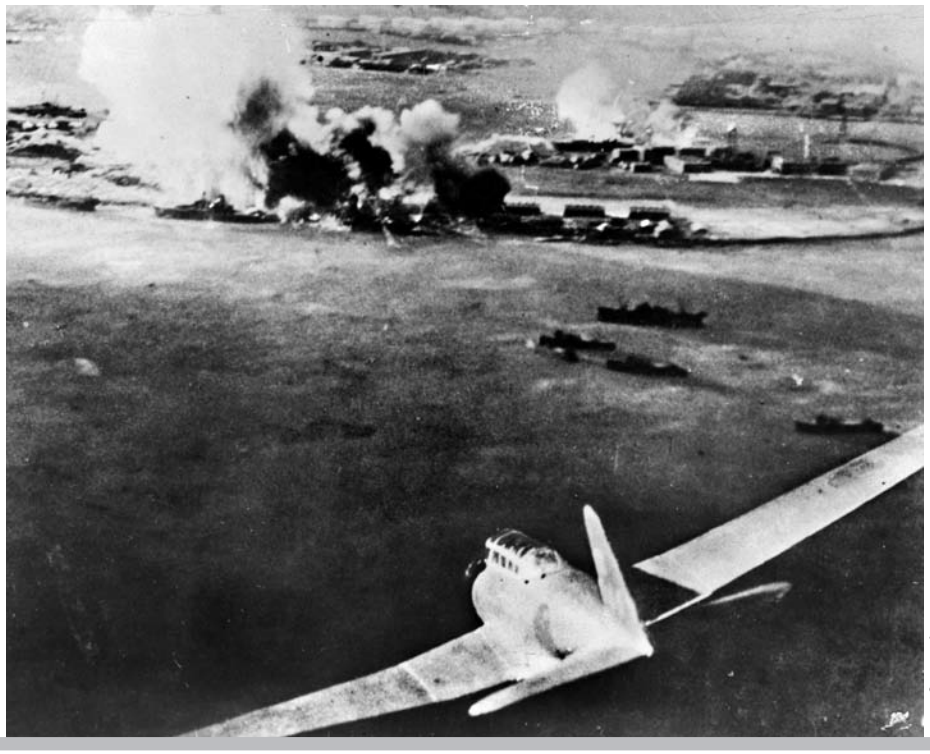
ABOVE: *California,* down by the bow, slowly sinks at its mooring adjacent to Ford Island. In the distance, the destroyer USS *Shaw* has exploded and burns in dry dock at far left, while the battleship *Nevada,* the only capital ship of the Pacific Fleet to get underway during the attack, lies beached after sustaining severe damage. BELOW: This photograph was taken by a Japanese naval aviator during the attack on Pearl Harbor. A Japanese bomber dives ahead of the plane the photographer is flying, and damage from earlier strikes is visible in the distance as heavy smoke pours from stricken facilities on the island of Oahu.



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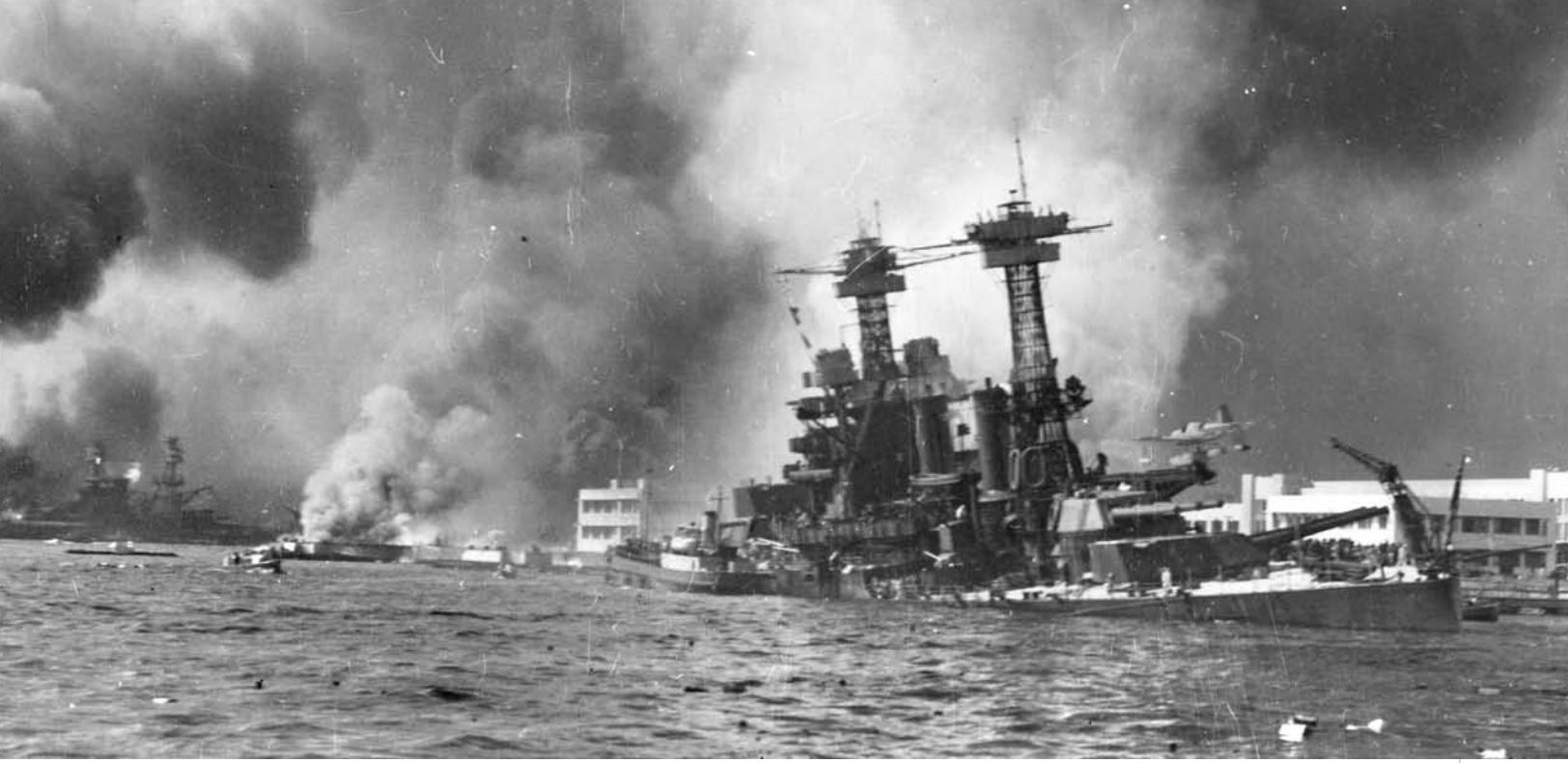


A BOMB SCORED A DIRECT HIT ON A STARBOARD SIDE CASEMATE JUST BEHIND TURRET TWO. IT PENETRATED THE FIRST DECK AND EXPLODED AFTER HITTING THE ARMORED SECOND DECK. THE BLAST KILLED ABOUT 50 MEN AND STARTED A LARGE FIRE AMIDSHIPS.

come the ammunition party attempting to expedite the delivery of ammunition," Bunkley wrote describing the situation. "The rupture of fuel oil tanks forward introduced water in the fuel system and before it was cleared, light and power was lost on the ship at a critical time. The flooding of compartments in close proximity to the torpedo hits prevented the necessary access to make possible some control of damage."

Fire Control issued orders starting at 8:10 AM for all available gunnery personnel from the main battery turrets and five-inch guns to help maintain the ammunition supply to the anti-aircraft guns that were in action. With all power out, the work continued by hand.

As soon as the torpedo attacks subsided, dive bombers began assailing *California*. Three separate attacks were made on the ship in an hour's time, starting at 8:15. Just five minutes later, the vessel was rocked by a near miss off the port bow. The bomb blast caused several compartments to flood in the forward area. Several near misses on the starboard side caused minor damage.

At 8:25 AM, another barrage of four bombs fell harmlessly between *California*'s bow and the mooring quay, causing no damage to the ship. About five minutes later, though, a bomb scored a direct hit on a starboard side casemate just behind turret two. It penetrated the first deck and exploded after hitting the armored second deck. The blast killed about 50 men and started a large fire amidships. "This fire remained largely uncontrolled due to the loss of pressure on the fire main and the lack of sufficient fire extinguishers to cope with it," Bunkley recorded.

Executive Officer Stone took command after arriving back aboard ship at 8:45 AM. Vice Admiral Pye arrived about the same time with several officers of the flag staff. He initially went to the flag bridge. The vantage provided a dramatic view of the destruction that had befallen the entire Pacific Feet. The oiler *Neosho* had left her precarious position at the gasoline wharf. The battleship *Oklahoma* had capsized. Battleship Row billowed smoke and flames.

Pye quickly moved to the conning tower for better protection. He soon departed *California* in a motor launch, believing his flagship would not be able to get underway. Captain Bunkley returned to *California* with several senior officers at 9:00 AM. He immediately took command of the vessel.

But hope was not lost. Heroic work by determined crewmen operating under difficult conditions soon began to yield results. Engineers were able to ignite the four after boilers using cold oil, allowing light, power, and water pressure to be restored at about 8:45. Although damaged and listing, *California* was amazingly in a position to get underway by about 9:10. However, it was not to be.

Before the captain could issue the order to get the ship moving, a large patch of burning fuel oil floated down from Battleship Row. *California*'s stern was soon engulfed in flames. The after engineering plant had to be secured again, cutting off power. Bunkley gave the order to abandon ship at 10:02 AM. Sailors scrambled to get off the ship, many swimming to nearby Ford Island.

The flaming oil, however, soon moved away from the ship. Bunkley belayed the abandon ship order at 10:15 and directed crewmen to return. With the Japanese planes gone and sailors slowly returning, the struggle to save *California* continued in earnest. "The fire aboard ship was fought with all available fire

This aerial view of Battleship Row and Ford Island was taken three days after the attack, and the heavy damage sustained during the Japanese attack is readily apparent. The sunken battleship *California* (1) lies at upper left while being attended by numerous smaller vessels. From left to lower right along Battleship Row are the battleship *Maryland* (2), which sustained slight damage, with the capsized *Oklahoma* (3) outboard, followed by the damaged *Tennessee* (4) with the sunken *West Virginia* (5) outboard, and the sunken *Arizona* (6), which was devastated by an aerial bomb that detonated powder magazines aboard the battleship. Slicks of dark oil on the surface of the water billowed and poured from ruptured fuel bunkers aboard the ships.

equipment on board and such that was obtained from Ford Island — and extensive salvage operations of moveable gear was started." Bunkley wrote.

Ensign E.R. Blair, Jr., was in his quarters when the general alarm sounded. "The first torpedo struck as I left the bunkroom, quickly followed by the second," he wrote. "[Watertight integrity] was already set on the main deck hatches so that in order to get topside I opened the escape hatch." Finding two officers already in control of the five-inch batteries, Blair rushed to the gun directors only to find both were inoperative.

"On the way to sky control I had noticed that machine guns number one and number two were firing but were short of ammunition." He quickly gathered a group of 10 sailors to bring ammunition to the machine guns from the magazine and ventured below deck. "We opened the amidships forecastle hatch, which led to the shaft leading to the forward torpedo hold. We were under attack at the time but the men paid no heed to the enemy planes and worked quickly and eagerly." The sailors had to open five sealed hatches to get to the ammunition. Blair realized it was dangerous but later commented, "I believed that the need for the ammunition warranted the risk involved."

Blair knew it would be difficult to get the bullets topside due to the damage and flooding. "I broke out the belted ammunition, about 1,600 rounds, distributed it among eight men, 200 rounds to a ready box, one ready box to a man," he continued. "To each man I designated a station to which he was to take his ammuni-

TOP: Sailors aboard tug boats and other small craft work to control fires and minimize damage aboard the *California* as they attempt to keep the battleship afloat. BELOW: A survivor appears to look for Japanese aircraft beyond the defiant American flag on Ford Island as *California* lists to port after taking bomb and torpedo hits from marauding Japanese aircraft.

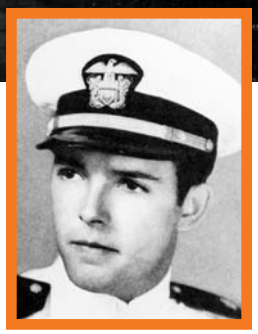
All: Naval History and Heritage Command

tion." The runners proceeded with great difficulty, climbing up ladders in narrow shafts as the battleship began to list. Each, however, was able to make it topside.

Blair remained below deck with the other men. The small group began to belt up more ammunition, but the area was suddenly rocked by a bomb hit. "Two glass gauges broke and diesel oil ran out on the deck," he said. Blair closed the valves and momentarily thought it would be a good idea to remove all glass gauges from battleships. "There was a leak forward and we could hear water running close at hand. I was determined to get as much ammunition out as was possible and belt it above decks." The young officer directed several nearby sailors to go topside with whatever ammunition could be carried and ordered another to try to remove the clipping machine before leaving the area himself. "He had it half unfastened when I left," Blair noted of the apparatus. The machine, however, never made it out of the compartment.

Blair arrived topside to a scene of utter destruction. He saw dazed men crawling out of a hatch on the starboard side. Some were badly burned. Smoke trickled out of a bomb hole near a five-inch gun. "On the main deck near the forecastle hatch amidst smoke and debris was the [machine gun] ammunition scattered over the deck with a dead man beside each ready box." Two full ready boxes were found nearby and immediately dispatched by runner to the gun mounts. "I returned to the maintop hoping to find the clipping machine and the boxes of loose ammunition brought out last

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command



BY HIS INSPIRING LEADERSHIP, HIS VALIANT EFFORTS AND HIS EXTREME LOYALTY TO HIS SHIP AND HER CREW, HE SAVED MANY OF HIS SHIPMATES FROM DEATH AND WAS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THE CALIFORNIA IN ACTION DURING THE ATTACK."

from the magazine," Blair wrote. However, he only found two boxes that had been brought up by exhausted seamen. "We turned to belting the ammunition by hand."

The abandon-ship order was given before much work could be completed. Blair reluctantly left the warship in company with Ensign B. C. Hall.

Gunners aboard *California* were able to extract a small amount of revenge against the enemy. Her five-inch batteries and .50-cal. machine guns fired away at attacking planes throughout the morning. A dive bomber was seen to go down in flames at about 8:30 after taking machine-gun fire. A few minutes later, heavy fire from *California* and several nearby ships combined to shoot down a plane over Ford Island.

Selfless acts of unparalleled heroism and bravery undoubtedly took place all across the warship as the morning attack unfolded. Sadly, many are destined to remain undocumented forever. The actions of a trio of brave sailors, however, have been preserved. All three were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions, but only one survived the attack.

Machinist's Mate First Class Robert R. Scott's battle station was the forward air compressor station. The position provided air pressure for the five-inch guns. Scott refused to leave his station when the compartment began to fill with oil and water immediately after the forward torpedo hit. He reportedly told his comrades, "This is my station and I will stay and give them air as long as the guns are going." Scott died at his post.

Ensign Herbert C. Jones jumped into action as soon as the attack began. He rescued a sailor

ABOVE: *California* lies listing at left in this photo after taking two torpedo hits during the Pearl Harbor attack. Beyond *California* lies the damaged battleship *Maryland* with the capsized hull of the *Oklahoma* to the right. The fleet oiler *Neosho*, in the distance at right, backs away from the devastation to remain clear of leaking oil and debris. INSET: Ensign Herbert Charpiot Jones received a posthumous Medal of Honor for gallantry aboard the *California*.

from a smoke-filled compartment before directing fire from an antiaircraft gun. When the loss of power stopped the ammunition hoists, Jones organized a group of sailors to pass shells by hand. Fatally wounded by a bomb hit, he refused evacuation and instead directed his would-be rescuers to leave the area before a nearby magazine exploded.

Gunner Jackson C. Pharris was in charge of an ordnance repair party on the third deck. The first torpedo exploded directly under his position. The force of the blast hurled him into the overhead of the compartment. Pharris was stunned and injured, but quickly sprang into action and set up a human chain to pass antiaircraft ammunition. He later directed sailors to begin counterflooding shortly after *California* began to list.

His award citation describes what happened next. "Twice rendered unconscious by the nauseous fumes and handicapped by his painful injuries, he persisted in his desperate efforts to speed up the supply of ammunition and at the same time repeatedly risked his life to enter flooding compartments and drag to safety unconscious shipmates who were gradually being submerged in oil. By his inspiring leadership, his valiant efforts and his extreme loyalty to his ship and her crew, he saved many of his shipmates from death and was largely responsible for keeping the *California* in action during the attack." Pharris survived the attack and the war. Initially awarded the Navy Cross for his actions at Pearl Harbor, it was upgraded to the Medal of Honor in 1948.

Throughout the day, medical men and volunteer sailors aided the wounded, working to move the injured and providing first aid. The more serious cases were eventually transported to hospital facilities ashore. A total of 98 crewmen died in the attack, and 61 were wounded.

The minesweepers *Vireo* and *Bobolink* closed on *California* late in the day to render additional assistance. The small ships poured water on the fires and transferred much-needed emergency equipment. A combination of battle damage, open watertight fittings, and ruptured ventilation ducts made stopping the inflow of water a difficult undertaking. Fading daylight found crewmen working heroically to prevent *California* from sinking.

The struggle to keep *California* afloat continued in the days following the attack. The valiant effort, however, came to an end late on December 10, when the battleship came to rest on the harbor floor. Her decks lay awash, with only her superstructure remaining above water.

The battleship was raised on March 25, 1942. After initial repairs at Pearl Harbor, she sailed under her own power for Bremerton, Washington. On the last day of January 1944, the reconstructed *California* set sail on a shakedown voyage. She eventually returned to the Pacific War and supported operations at Saipan, Guam, Tinian, the Philippines, and Okinawa. She participated in the Battle of Surigao Strait in October 1944, and she was hit by a Japanese Kamikaze plane in early 1945. The best-known aspect of her long career of service, however, will always be her desperate fight for survival at Pearl Harbor.

California was taken out of service in 1947 and sold for scrap in 1959.

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ABOVE: Torpedo damage to the hull of *California,* photographed at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard in April 1942, after the ship had been dry-docked for repairs. Visible is the forward torpedo hole, showing the armor belt above the hole and bilge keel below it. BELOW: Painted in camouflage pattern Measure 32, Design 16-D, the repaired and modernized *California* steams at eight knots off the coast of Washington state on January 25, 1944. After returning to service, the battleship bombarded Japanese positions on several Pacific islands in support of amphibious landings.

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command

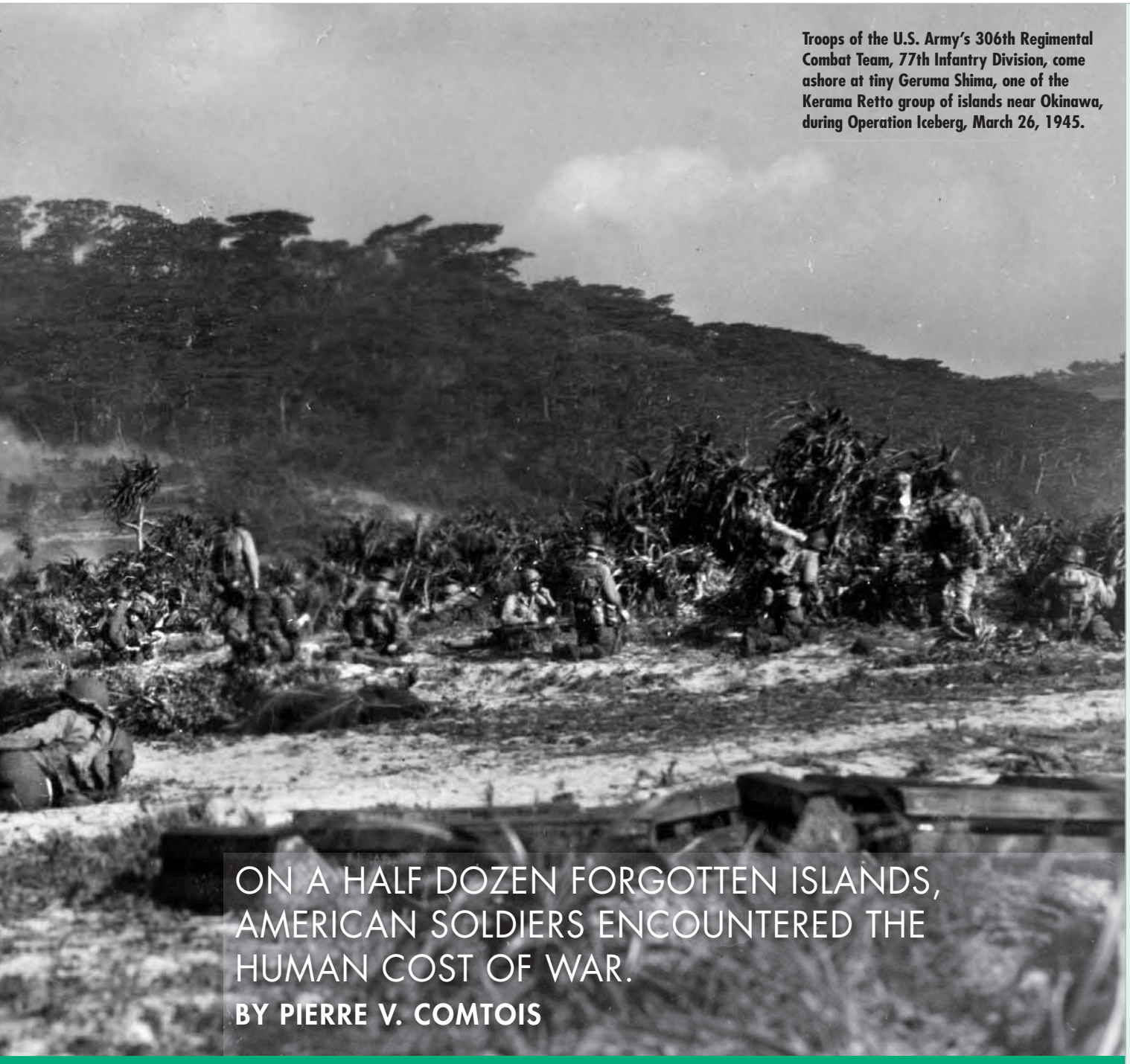
KERAMA RETTO

KEY TO VICTORY AT OKINAWA

CLOSE TO THE northern end of the island of Tokashiki, the largest member of a tiny group of islands called Kerama Retto, located 15 miles west of Okinawa and hardly 400 miles from the Japanese home islands, Corporal Alexander Roberts and the rest of the 306th Regimental Combat Team rested for the night beneath the starry skies of the northern Pacific. It was a welcome respite from the previous three days of tension-filled landings and clashes with resisting Japanese troops.

Suddenly, the eerie silence of the night was interrupted by a series of dull explosions and the subsequent screams and wails of the injured from farther inland. The next morning, Roberts and his fellows, in seeking out the source of the sounds, discovered a small valley filled with over 150 dead and dying Japanese civilians. As a result of official warnings of the barbarous practices of the invading Americans, fathers had throttled their families before disembowling themselves. In some places, three generations lay mangled together beside the bodies of their patriarchs who themselves had been torn apart by the self-inflicted blasts of hand grenades. As the American soldiers did what they could dispensing food and medical care, survivors who had killed their loved ones only hours before wept with the realization of the enormity of their error.

Such a scene was only the beginning of the tragedies to be visited upon the Japanese people already overburdened with the human cost of years of war. The toll in human lives would only escalate as the titanic struggle for the Pacific entered its final phase and the desperation of



Troops of the U.S. Army's 306th Regimental Combat Team, 77th Infantry Division, come ashore at tiny Geruma Shima, one of the Kerama Retto group of islands near Okinawa, during Operation Iceberg, March 26, 1945.

ON A HALF DOZEN FORGOTTEN ISLANDS, AMERICAN SOLDIERS ENCOUNTERED THE HUMAN COST OF WAR.

BY PIERRE V. COMTOIS

Japan's military leaders led them to envision a final stand involving every last member of their beleaguered nation.

By late 1944, the ring of steel thrown up around the crumbling Empire of Japan had begun to tighten to the point where regular bombing of the home islands and territories long held by the Japanese became the norm and future amphibious operations by the United States moved to targets considered by the enemy as its native soil.

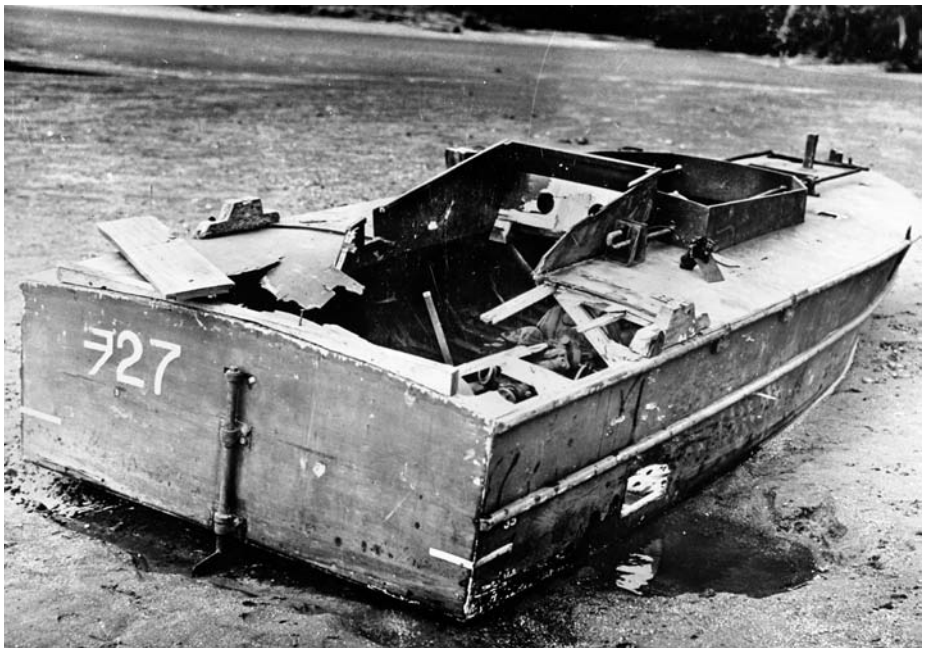
Events began to move faster with the fall of the Philippines at the end of February 1945, and with the invasion and conquest of Iwo Jima by mid-March. Vast naval task forces roamed the waters off China and Japan while American warplanes ruled the skies and its submarines prowled beneath the seas.

As early as October 10, 1944, warplanes made the first fast-carrier raid on Okinawa, destroying Naha, its most important city. When the Philippines were invaded on January 8, 1945, Vice Admiral John S. McCain's Task Force 38 moved north to cover the operation, ranging far afield in the performance of its duties. During that time, TF 38 savaged the Ryukyus, struck Formosa, and laid waste the ports of the South China coast.

Finally, with the Philippines declared secure by an overly optimistic General Douglas MacArthur, McCain turned his ships back to Ulithi Atoll in the Palaus, where he and Admiral William H. Halsey turned over the Pacific Fleet's command to Admirals Raymond Spruance and Marc A. Mitscher. With the transfer of command, the Third Fleet became the Fifth,

with Task Force 38 metamorphosing into the new Task Force 58 whose mission would now be to mount, launch, and support the coming strikes at the Ryukyu islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Operation Iceberg would be the culmination of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's island-hopping campaign that had taken the United States Navy and Marine Corps, in three years, all the way across the Central Pacific. Now, with Nimitz himself headquartered at Guam and the elements of what would become the greatest naval armada ever assembled being outfitted at their various staging areas from California to Australia, the Americans were poised to enter their end game with Japan.



ABOVE: A Japanese "Shinyo"explosive suicide motorboat, destroyed by Navy PT boats during the Philippines campaign in January 1945. OPPOSITE: Amphibious tractors carrying the 1st Battalion, 305th Infantry, 77th Division, head for the beaches of Zamami Shima, March 26, 1945.

After the reduction of Iwo Jima on March 14, 1945, square in the sights of this American juggernaut was the tiny island of Okinawa, the anchor at the end of a long chain of outer islands that led 400 miles back to Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands.

Not unaware of Okinawa's exposed and strategic position, Tokyo had arranged for 100,000 men of the 32nd Japanese Imperial Army to welcome the advancing Americans with lead, steel, and fire. By this point in the war, the Japanese high command knew they had everything to lose; they knew with what implacability their enemy was coming for them.

The one straw to which they might grasp was the hope that by making each further step closer to the home islands as costly as possible, they might be able to negotiate an end to the war that would involve something less than unconditional surrender.

For their part, the Americans also realized the strategic importance of Okinawa as a base from which to launch air strikes at Japan and to prepare for its inevitable invasion. With their recent experience on Iwo Jima, the American commanders knew what kind of reception awaited them on Okinawa and planned accordingly. A landing force of 157,000 Marines would challenge the Japanese ashore while an awesome fleet composed of over 1,500 warships would lie off shore and range the wide western Pacific in their support. But, before this force was brought to bear upon its target, a small but necessary side show would first have to be performed.

As the battle for Iwo Jima progressed, the difficulties in resupply and reenforcement of the troops ashore became more and more acute. With the growing threat of kamikazes possibly forcing any naval covering force out to sea and away from direct support of the landward fighting, the advantages of establishing some kind of permanent supply base close to the invasion beaches in any future operation were evident.

As L-day for Operation Iceberg approached, Vice Admiral Kelly Turner, commander of the Joint Expeditionary Force designated TF 51, suggested the seizure of a tiny group of islands 15 miles west of Okinawa called Kerama Retto, the largest and most easterly of which could host a two-mile-long runway for seaplanes and a sheltered, deep water anchorage that could hold as many as 75 ships.

At first, Turner's suggestion was dismissed as unfeasible due to the islands' vulnerability to enemy air attack from at least five nearby air bases, but as time went on Turner won support for his idea. Planned to take place just six days prior to the invasion of Okinawa itself, Turner hoped that the fleet's covering fire throughout the Ryukyus would divert Japanese attention from Kerama Retto, enabling him to seize the islands with a relative handful of troops.

Chosen for that job was XXIV Corps' 77th Infantry Division. Veterans of the Philippines fighting, they were involved with the conquest of Leyte and were ramrodded by Major General Andrew D. Bruce. As the operation unfolded, the 77th would break up into four Battalion Landing Teams (BLTs) and assault each island in the Kerama group simultaneously. In addition, the 420th Artillery Group would land on tiny Keise Shima, about halfway between Kerama and Okinawa, where their guns would be within range to support the coming landings on the Hagushi beaches.

Of course, much of the plan relied upon the Japanese not expecting an attack from such an unlikely quarter and, in that expectation, the American planners were not disappointed. Lt. Gen. Mitsuru Ushijima, the commanding officer of the Japanese on Okinawa, was convinced that the Americans would not waste their strength or allow themselves to be distracted in taking Kerama Retto. So, in dire need of every fighting man he could get, Ushijima ordered the islands stripped of the 2,335 soldiers stationed there. That left behind a gaggle of 975 men from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sea Raiding Squadrons and Base Battalions, as well as Korean slave laborers of the 103rd Sea Duty Company.

Despite the weakness of the remaining force, Ushijima still had plans for the Kerama Islands, intending to use them as a base for 350 explosive-laden suicide boats that would be launched against the ships of the American landing force.

While the 77th Division assembled on Leyte in mid-March to begin practicing for the operation, its commanders were meeting to hammer out the final details of the plan, including study of last-minute air reconnaissance photos taken by Army planes from nearby Luzon, which showed a number of inviting beaches for the landing craft. The pictures also revealed the rather bleak terrain of the islands of Kerama Retto, which covered no more than an area of about 16 square sea miles. Rocky and uneven, the islands comprised narrow defiles and craggy cliffs covered in a desultory layer of scrub brush

and gnarled trees. The narrow beaches of coral rock were squeezed at the end of steep valleys with low sea walls to protect them from the tide. The population of just over 6,000 people existed with a few pack-animal trails and no roads, making a living from the sea rather than from their steeply sloped plots of sweet potatoes on the islands' rocky hillsides.

From March 18-20, the 77th completed loading duties and embarked into its various landing craft. Slowly, inexorably, all the elements of TG 51.1 began coming together as Rear Admiral Ingolf N. Kiland took the Western Island Attack Group out to sea on March 21. From there, aboard his flagship *Mount McKinley,* Kiland could observe his entire command: a 19-ship transport squadron with their attendant destroyers and destroyer escorts, a tractor flotilla of 29 large landing craft, gunboats and patrol ships, a hospital ship, two repair ships, two Victory ships filled with ammunition, an antimine group with their nets and buoys, tankers, and a whole range of miscellaneous surface craft that included two tug boats. In short, Kiland had everything he needed to make a proper, self-contained island assault.

Protecting Kiland's group in the wider seas around him ranged the escort carriers and minesweepers of Rear Admiral William "Spike" Blandy's Task Force 52, which also included underwater demolitions teams. And beyond Blandy were the rest of Turner's Joint Expeditionary Force and Mitscher's Task Force 58.

In the meantime, offensive activity against the enemy had intensified all over the northern Pacific in preparation for the coming enterprise. American expectations were sanguine about the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. As a result, extensive softening-up operations were planned for.

As the new year began, Fast Carrier Task Forces swept the seas looking for targets of opportunity and brushed every enemy plane from the skies. One such group made an early raid on Okinawa, prompting an unnamed Japanese signalman there to write, "The ferocity of the bombing is terrific. It really makes me furious.... What the hell kind of bastards are they.... Bomb(ing) from 6 AM to 6 PM!"

It was only the beginning. The air strikes became heavier and more frequent. When the carrier planes retired, they were replaced by waves of B-29s that pounded the island with such constancy that the hapless Japanese referred to them as the "regular run." The relentless bombing of Okinawa was still going on in March when Marine flight leader Major D.C. Andre, flying over the island on a reconnaissance mission, marveled at the destruction. "I'd never seen so many planes over one target at the same time," he said.

Beneath the seas and above the waves, enemy shipping was nowhere safe. Taking a cue from German tactics in the Atlantic, American submarines formed their own wolf packs and hunted down Japanese naval units wherever they could while aircraft did the same above the surface. In the first three months of 1945, Americans sank more enemy craft than any other naval force in history. Desperately needed reinforcements and supplies bound for the Ryukyus found only watery graves along the sea lanes between the home islands and the war zone.

In addition, the air war intensified to levels undreamed of only four years before. Even as thousands of warplanes continued to arrive from the United States on outlying islands, thousands more dominated the skies over Japan. Carrier-based fighters shot down every plane that dared rise to challenge them and destroyed hundreds more on the ground.

From bases all around Japan, in China and India, the Philippines, and Palaus and the Marianas, endless waves of American heavy bombers sought out industrial targets throughout the enemy homeland. B-29 raids, numbering in the hundreds of planes, ruined the great

cities of Japan. But the worst was yet to come. Dissatisfied with the performance of his bombers, General Curtis LeMay, commander of the 20th Bombardment Group, ordered 300 Superfortresses loaded with 2,000 tons of incendiary bombs and sent them over Tokyo on March 9. The resultant devastation could not be more complete, with over 16 square miles of the city reduced to ashes and almost 100,000 people killed.

As Kiland's attack group continued to make its way through heavy seas and its inexperienced landing-craft crews poured over illustrated copies of *The Coxswain's Guide to the Beaches,* elements of TF 58 kept the enemy at a distance. On March 23, the destroyer *Haggard* found a prowling Japanese submarine that Lt. Cmdr. V.J. Soballe immediately ordered depth charged. Forced to the surface by the sub-sea explosions, *RO-41* breached just in time to be rammed by *Haggard* and sent to the bottom again in pieces.

The next day, Admiral Mitscher sent 112 planes on a strike against a Japanese convoy 150 miles northwest of Okinawa, sinking all eight ships.

In expectation of the imminent arrival of TG 51.1, the ships of Blandy's Amphibious Support Force were already hard at work. By March 25, the 122-ship flotilla of destroyer minesweepers, motor mine-sweepers, tenders, and patrol boats had cleared a seven-mile-long corridor to Kerama from the south and another from the southwest. Although the Japanese never practiced extensive use of underwater mining except in Philippine waters, and what mines they did use were antiquated and inefficient, there were still plenty to give the U.S. Navy headaches.

Aboard his flagship *Terror,* Rear Admiral Alexander Sharp coordinated his fleet of minesweepers as they searched the approaches to the Kerama beaches for their dangerous prey, fighting off sniper fire from shore and the harassing kamikazes from the air. On the day of the Kerama landings, the destroyer *Halligan* struck a mine in unswept waters and had its entire bow blown off.

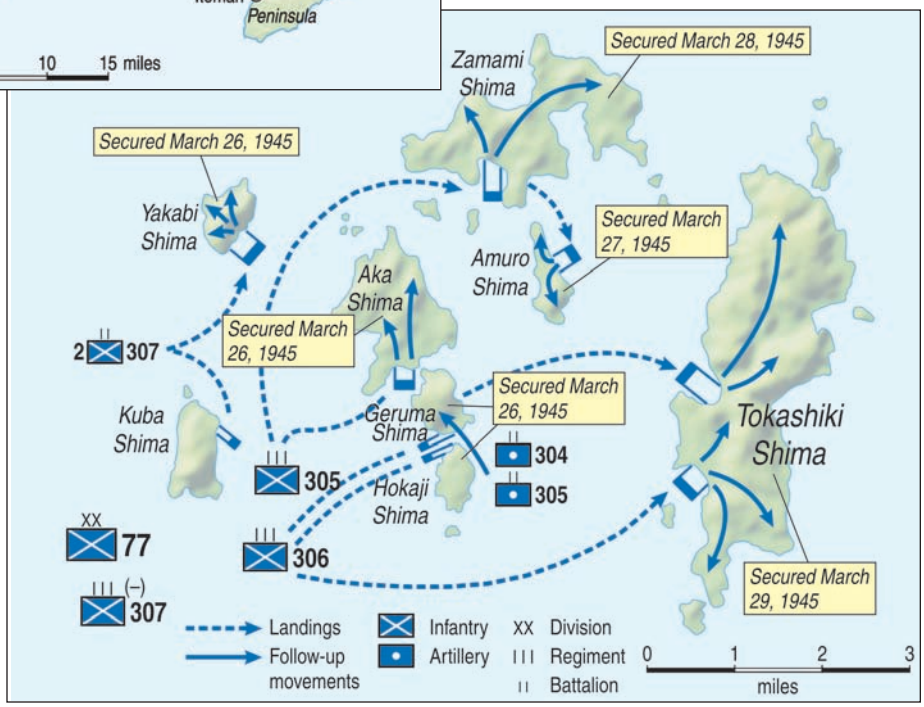
Early on the morning of March 25, after the surrounding waters had been cleared of mines, Rear Admiral C. Turner Joy left TF 54, the Gunfire and Covering Force, headed for Okinawa with two cruisers and three destroyers, and arrived off Kerama at 5:30 AM. Immediately, Joy's ships began a preliminary fire on the various islands, concentrating on the designated landing beaches and what strongpoints were judged to be of possible danger to the landing force. Joining him were other destroyers taking up positions around the islands for radar picket duty against the threat of enemy air strikes.

At 6:00 AM, the first Americans waded ashore at various beaches of the target islands, but they were not infantrymen—they were frogmen of Blandy's Amphibious Support Force. The underwater demolitions teams (UDTs) broke up into three units, each delivered to its proper beach by an LCVP that churned its way to the islands' outlying reefs, deposited its load of frogmen, and then turned back out to open water.

Dropped every 50 yards, the divers wore nothing but a pair of trunks, goggles, and flippers and carried only measuring lines and waterproof writing gear. In the gloom of early morning, they worked under an umbrella of gunfire from the destroyers offshore that helped keep enemy sniper fire to a minimum. Methodically working their way along the reefs, which sometimes came within inches of the surface of the water, the frogmen inspected the approaches to the beaches for underwater obstacles. At last, their inspection finished, they grabbed lines trailing from the stern of the returning LCVPs and were hauled aboard for the fast trip back to their command APDs and an analysis of their findings.

In the case of the Kerama operation, the news was not good, but hardly devastating to the operation. With the report from the UDTs of the impossibility of using LCVP landing boats on two of the target islands due to the unusually high coral formations, Kiland was forced to make a change in his invasion plans. Using LVTs, the islands of Zamami, Aka, Hokaji, and Geruma Shima would be assaulted by four battalions of the 77th as originally planned, but the attack on Yakabi and Kuba Shima would be delayed until the tractors used in the Aka landings could return to the flotilla. There, they would be reloaded with troops and diverted to the Yakabi and Kuba beaches.

As the day dawned bright and clear on March 26, Kiland confirmed 8:00 AM as M-hour for the invasion of Kerama Retto to begin. Already, two groups of LSTs had broken away from the main portion of TG 51.1, with the smaller group of four making its way two miles north of Yakabi Shima, the western most of the Kerama group, and the other group of 14 ships two miles south of Kuba Shima. By 6:40 AM, as a curtain of support fire from cruisers off shore and carrier planes overhead bombarded the tiny islands, amphtracs with their payload of anxious troops and amphibious tanks began their run for the beaches. With Navy guide boats in the lead, the amphtracs and amphibious tanks divided into their separate battalions and



LEFT: The Kerama Retto island group lies 15 miles west of Okinawa. BELOW: Within three days, the 77th Division had secured the major islands of Kerama Retto.

An advance patrol of the 77th Infantry Division moves cautiously up a trail on Takashiki Shima, scouting an advance route for the main body that later overran the island.

headed for their designated landing areas.

Their approach was made more difficult than beach landings usually were by their having to invade so many closely situated islands at once. The northern group of LSTs had to make two dog-legs before hitting their beach on Zamami; the southern group, after splitting up into three groups, needed to wind their way past tiny, reef-guarded islets to reach their assigned objectives. But the fact that all groups hit their proper beaches on schedule was proof of the landing crafts' fast-learning crewmen.

As each assault wave neared its target, its accompanying support craft added their own firepower to that of the cruisers and strafing planes, with mortars coughing at 3,200 yards, rockets roaring at 1,100 yards, and automatic gunfire filling in the gaps. Gradually, as the troops neared shore, cruiser fire shifted away from their front to the flanks. At last, the support craft halted their approach to allow the landing craft through. At that point, they ceased their fire and retreated as the amphibious tanks took the lead and spearheaded the final dash to the beaches.

As it turned out, the operation took the enemy completely by surprise, with most of the landings being unopposed and the few Japanese defenders retreating inland to caves and tunnels, bringing the islands' terrorized native inhabitants with them. The soldiers, who had been ordered by Ushijima to offer minimum resistance to any enemy attack, had regaled the civilian population with stories of the horrible fate that awaited them at the hands of the barbaric Americans.

Just four minutes after M-hour, the 3rd BLT of the 305th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) were the first Americans ashore on Kerama as their LVTs ran up onto Beach Gold at Aka Shima to a reception of mortar and machine-gun fire delivered by the 200 Korean laborers and Japanese suicide boat operators defending the shore.

Situated in the center of the Kerama group, Aka, or "Happy Corner Island," was hardly 3,000 yards long and rose to about 600 feet at the summits of two small peaks, affording few hiding places for its defenders when they retreated without inflicting any harm on the Americans. Moving quickly, the GIs overran the tiny village of Aka and pressed inland where resistance increased. As the landscape rose higher, the Japanese offered greater and greater opposition. At one point, naval gunfire had to be called in to blast a platoon of enemy soldiers from the path of the advance.

In the afternoon, a total of 58 more Japanese were killed in a host of small-unit encounters, with every enemy soldier needing to be rousted from caves and prepared positions almost man to man. By early evening, however, most of the island had been secured. Yet nearly 300 Japanese combatants and 400 civilians were still holed up in what remained.

South of Aka, the smaller island of Geruma Shima was invaded by elements of the 306th's 1st BLT coming ashore on Beach Yellow nearly a half hour after the 3rd landed on Aka. In contrast with Aka, however, this island was secured in a few hours, with the 304th and 305th Field Artillery Battalions' 105mm howitzers soon being unloaded for use in the next day's operations against Tokashiki.

The troops met some light sniper fire and found some abandoned pillboxes, but the handful of the island's defenders were lying dead by the end of the day—a situation that was not regretted by some of its surviving civilians who were found after they had strangled members of their own families out of fear of what they had been told about the Americans and discovered afterward to be lies. Fortunately, however, not all of the natives panicked. A great many—in company with Korean forced laborers who'd escaped their masters—gave themselves up.

After the third island, Hokaji, had been seized without opposition by the 306th's 2nd BLT, the balance of the 1st came ashore at Beach Blue on Zamami Shima at 9:00 AM. The troopers landed against light resistance and, held up only long enough to find out that their supporting amphtracs could not negotiate the sea wall that bor-

dered the beach, moved in quickly against some desultory mortar fire and seized Zamami town. At that point, the island's company of soldiers and 300 Korean laborers faded back into the low hills to the south, retreating so fast that the pursuing Americans were unable to come into contact with them.

In spite of the massive offensive, the enemy was still willing to fight. After nightfall, many of the defenders attacked the 2nd BLT's beach positions in an effort to break through their perimeter. It was a close-in duel using any weapon at hand—from pistols to swords—with the fanatical Japanese attacking again and again from different points, seeking out the Americans' weak spot. After a storm of mortar and machine-gun fire and a loss of over 100 men, the Japanese finally stopped looking for it and fell back into the hills, leaving only seven Americans killed in the protracted fighting.

With the multiple invasions going so smoothly, General Bruce decided to add another prize to the 77th's collection by ordering the 307th RCT's 2nd BLT's reserves to load up on the LVTs returned from Aka and hit Yakabi Shima a day ahead of schedule. The strike was duly carried out that afternoon and the island taken against light resistance.

By the end of March 26, the entire western portion of the Kerama group was securely in Kiland's hands, and the importance of its seizure had already become apparent. In their sweep of the islands, soldiers of the 77th discovered the shallow-draft "suicide boats" the Japanese intended to use to "attack ... transports, loaded with essential supplies and material and personnel ... [to be] carried out by concentrating maximum strength immediately upon the enemy's landing."

Made of plywood and powered by an 85 horsepower Chevrolet engine, the 18-foot-long boats were intended to emerge from their camouflaged hideouts carrying two depth charges each and guided by a Japanese officer right up to an unsuspecting American vessel to unload its deadly cargo. Presumably, the boat's pilot would have a chance of getting away as the depth charges had a five-second delayed fuse.

A couple of days after the islands had been declared secure, a Japanese boat battalion commander was captured after an abortive attempt to sink an LCVA. He produced a chart showing Ushijima's plan for the Sea Raiding Units' area of operation, which greatly facilitated defensive measures.

Unfortunately for Ushijima, the attack against Kerama Retto ruined his plans for the suiciders, prompting General Bruce to declare that their interdiction alone made the whole operation worth it.

In addition to the suicide boats, there were suicide planes overhead as well. A total of nine kamikazes tried to breach the radar screen around Kerama on the day of the initial landings but none made it. The next day, a few more Aichi "Val" dive-bombers swooped in with one managing to slam itself into the galley of the *Gilmer.* Another, through a series of impressive evasive maneuvers, crashed into a 44mm stern mount on the destroyer *Kimberly*, killing four men.

On March 27, the last islands in the Kerama group were invaded, with the garrisons on Amuro and Kuba Shima offering no resistance. At midmorning, units of the 1st BLT that had taken Geruma the day before landed at Beach Purple, just north of Hitachi Point on the west coast of Tokashiki, the largest of the Kerama islands. One sailor was killed when his LCI gunboat was hit by an enemy shore battery which was, in turn, quickly silenced as the charging troops steamrolled the light opposition gathered at the tree line.

The 2nd BLT came ashore at Aware on Beach Orange to the south in support of the 1st. Tokashiki is six miles long with its western side, called the Roadstead, offering the anchorages Kiland sought for the fleet; otherwise, its topography was much like its sister islands: rocky and scrubby with a few rough hills.

After meeting up with no more resistance than some scattered sniper fire, the two battalions linked up and began a sweep northward over the island's goat trails. At its southern tip, the 306th's reserve BLT, the 3rd, came ashore to secure the rear. That night, the 1st and 2nd rested just outside the town of Tokashiki in the extreme northeast, where they and Corporal Roberts later discovered the remnants of the island's civilian inhabitants.

Earlier in the day, the 3rd BLT had kept busy on Aka when they ran into stiff resistance on one of the island's many craggy ridges, where the Japanese defenders had holed up in prepared positions. Well supplied with mortars and

machine guns, the 75 or so Japanese held the Americans at bay until air support was called in and they were bombed, strafed, and rocketed to pieces and driven from the ridge.

On Zamami, extensive patrolling unearthed small pockets of enemy troops hidden in caves. While the 3rd solved their resistance problem from the air, the 1st ended theirs on the ground with help from the unit's amphtracks, which blasted the Japanese from their holes with some direct fire.

On the third and final day of the operation, troops on Tokashiki waited as 500 rounds of artillery pounded the already-shattered remains of Tokashiki town and then moved in. Even though there were an estimated 300 Japanese soldiers still hiding out in the hills who would not surrender until the end of the war, the island was declared secure. Later, an uneasy truce developed as the island's enemy commander, recognizing the futility of further opposition, allowed the Americans undisturbed bathing privileges in the waters just below his gun emplacements. A hidden shore gun there was aimed straight at the scores of unsuspecting Navy ships lying in the Roadstead but was never used.

In the course of the three-day operation, the Americans lost 155 soldiers and sailors killed in 15 separate landings while the cost to the Japanese defenders was 530 killed. By March 29, the purpose for which Kerama Retto was seized in the first place was already being fulfilled. On that day, 30 planes flew in to establish antisubmarine patrols, and combat-ship refueling operations had begun in the Roadstead, a boat pool and ammunition dump set up and nets raised and tended. All was in readiness for the invasion of Okinawa two days later.

In preparation for the invasion, the waters off Okinawa were to be covered by minesweepers protected by a fleet of destroyers, among them the USS *Newcomb,* which attracted the attention of swarms of kamikaze planes that filled the skies on the afternoon of April 6. That day, the ship was struck five times by suicidal flyers and forced out of action. Towed to an anchorage off Kerama Retto, its 75 remaining crewmen spent 10 harrowing days and nights protecting the floating hulk not only from continued kamikaze attacks, but also from the remnants of Japanese forces still holed up on the islands in the Kerama group who refused to call it quits.

"It was fairly quiet during the day, but at night it was different," recalled *Newcomb* quartermaster Nate Cook. "The Japanese were using most of their air power attacking the fleet near Okinawa. But every night they would carry out small air raids over Kerama Retto. To try to protect all of the defenseless ships in the harbor, the Navy used LCVPs with smoke-making gear to create a smoke screen cover. It was eerie; we could hear the planes but not see them. We didn't know whether they could see our masts. A couple times ships tried firing with 20mm guns through the smoke. Unfortunately the enemy could see the tracer shells and follow them down for a kamikaze crash, which they did.

"In addition to the planes, we had to worry about the Japanese still on the islands," said Cook. "They were harassing us in several ways. The extent wasn't clear but we knew that some had swum out at night, climbed a ship's anchor chain, and knifed some sailors. Other 'suicide swimmers' had explosives attached to their torso in such a way that they couldn't be removed without exploding." In addition, Cook described "suicide boats" used by the enemy: fast plywood boats about 16 feet long with 4-cylinder inboard engines tried to get close enough to a ship to drop a depth charge or other explosives over the side.

There is an epilogue to the story of the seizure of Kerama Retto. Back on March 31, a group of LSTs approached the tiny islet of Keise Shima that lay almost within sight of the landing beaches at Okinawa. From the transports emerged the 24 155mm artillery pieces of the 420th Field Artillery Group which were floated ashore and aimed at Naha on Okinawa and the Hagushi beaches only eight miles away.

Although plans were made by Ushijima to silence the big guns with intermittent shelling and raiding parties, that action never materialized. The 420th continued to fulfill its role throughout the Okinawa campaign.

Unfortunately, the recounting of a battle, no matter how insignificant, usually fails to consider its cost to noncombatants. The tragedy of the civilian population of Kerama Retto must be treated as intrinsic to the battle itself; otherwise, war threatens to become meaningless, an end in itself.

In World War II, life sometimes seemed the cheapest of all commodities. In all of the war's enormous cost in human suffering, the smaller tragedy of the Kerama suicides, like the small scale of the battle for the islands themselves, transcended its size to take its place as one part of the greater whole that would amount to the eventual Allied victory. □

ABOVE: Japanese soldiers climb down from hiding spots on a rugged hillside on Kerama Retto and wade to American patrol boats to surrender in May 1945. OPPOSITE: Amtracks cross Keise Shima supported by infantry of the 77th Division. Twenty-four 155mm artillery pieces of the 420th Field Artillery Group were brought ashore the tiny island and aimed at Okinawa only eight miles away.

By Christopher Miskimon

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-216-0435-10; Photo: Koch

A Panzer IV moves through a burning Russian village. Bruno Friesen was drafted into the German Army in 1942 and served as a tank crewman on the Eastern Front.

A Canadian-born Panzer Gunner

Bruno Friesen saw World War II from an unusual place: among the crew of a German PzKpfw. IV tank.

BRUNO FRIESEN LOOKED THROUGH THE SIGHT OF HIS PANZER IV'S 75MM cannon at an approaching column of enemy tanks. He and his fellow German tankers sat roughly 75 kilometers south of Chernovtsy, Romania, in early April 1944. Their tanks overlooked a road the Soviets were sure to use. The ground was wet, the ditches alongside the lane full of water, and the soil sodden. Even tanks would likely bog down in the muddy fields to each side of the road. Likewise, the panzers would have trouble moving to attack. Instead, they took up static positions off the road where they could hit the enemy in their flank as they passed. It was 10 AM.

An armor-piercing shell sat ready in the chamber of Bruno's gun; dozens more sat in various ready racks and stowage bins around him, his loader prepared to push another into the breech. Bruno set the scale on his gunsight for the shell type—capped ballistic—with a range of 2,400 meters. They were only 175 meters from the road. His foot hovered near the pedal for the coaxial machine gun, but he did not expect to use it. He needed to concentrate on the enemy armor, the real threat to his own tank.

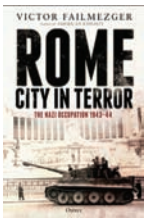
Soon enough, those enemy tanks appeared. Nineteen Soviet T-34/85s rattled down the highway, one behind the other. Infantry clung to each tank, like remora attached to a shark. Bruno took careful aim at a tank about 250 meters away, at an angle of 45 degrees. He fired, sending the armor-piercing projectile soaring towards the T-34 at over 700 meters per second. The round struck true, hitting the Soviet vehicle. It burst into flame as the infantrymen leaped away, taking cover in the mud. The other gunners in the company also opened fire; within seconds, eight T-34s sat burning or knocked out along the road. Plumes of black, oily diesel smoke rose into the air from the hulks.

A short, sharp fight followed before the rest of the Soviet column continued down the road, racing off to the south. Most of their infantry scrambled aboard the surviving tanks. On the German side, two PzKpfw. IVs lay wrecked, though the crews were unscathed. The company commander decided to send three panzers in pursuit of the Soviets while the rest acted as a rear guard. Bruno's tank was one of the pursuers. The trio of panzers sped off down the road, hoping to take the enemy tanks from the rear. They found the 11 remaining T-34s just around a bend in the highway, about 300 meters away. Each panzer fired two shots, leaving four more Soviet tanks burning. They hit another as the Russian turrets traversed to face the rear and returned fire. One round hit Bruno's tank. It failed to penetrate the armor but disabled the 75mm gun. The Soviets kept running, out of sight. The three panzers returned to their company.

The engagement was just one of many for young Bruno Friesen. Through a twist of fate, he served in the German Army, but he was not German. Bruno was born in Canada to Ukrainian immigrants of German descent. In March 1939, his parents, taken in by the promise of the rising Reich, went to Germany to become a part of its apparent ascent. Bruno did not see his

native Canada again for 11 years. His years spent at war for the Nazis are relayed in ***Panzer Gunner: From my Native Canada to the German Ostfront and Back in Action with 25th Panzer Regiment, 7th Panzer Division, 1944-45*** (Bruno Friesen, Helion and Company, South Yorkshire, UK, 2020, 222pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, $35.00, hardcover).

This memoir tells the unusual tale of a teenager born in an Allied nation but serving the Axis. Caught up in the fervor of ethnic Germans to return to Germany during its apparent rise to glory, he was drafted into the German Army in 1942 and served as a tank crewman in the Panzer IV and Jagdpanzer IV. His writing is clear, providing much detail about the characteristics of each vehicle and how they actually performed in frontline combat. Numerous anecdotes of Bruno's fellow soldiers, both good and bad, add depth to his memoir. Unlike the often-embellished accounts of German tankers, this personal story reads authentically. The focus is on the last year of the war on the Eastern Front, a desperate time for a German tank crew. The book is full of descriptions of the techniques used to combat the Soviets. Bruno's struggles to return to Canada after the war are also revealed.



Rome, City in Terror: The Nazi Occupation 1943-44 (Victor Failmezger, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2020, 496pp., maps, photographs, notes, appendices, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)

In September 1943, the Italian government, ruling a population with little stomach to stay in the war and tired of Allied bombing, declared an armistice with the Allies. This was a blow to Nazi Germany, though not an unexpected one. German forces quickly occupied much of Italy. They disarmed Italian troops, swept aside those who resisted, and occupied Rome. Once in control, the Germans disbanded the police, conscripted thousands of Italian civilians to build defensive works, and in a swift, early-morning raid rounded up 1,000 Jews living in the city. Those Jews went to Auschwitz. Still, Roman citizens resisted, helping escaped Allied POWs and conducting raids on German troops. Some even operated from the Vatican. In response, the Gestapo and Nazi military acted brutally to repress the Italians until the Allies liberated Rome on June 4, 1944, two days before the D-Day landings.

The occupation of Rome lasted nine months

New and Noteworthy

Arnhem 1944 2: The Lost Victory. September October 1944 (Christer Bergstrom, Vaktel Books, 2020, $31.99, Hardcover) This second volume in the author's series on Operation Market Garden includes in-depth research and links in the book that lead to online images and videos.

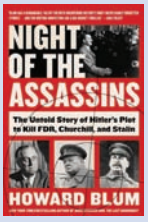
Poland and the Second World War 1938-1948 (Evan McGilvray, Pen and Sword Books, 2020, $39.95, hardcover) The book covers pre-war planning and diplomacy through the Soviet occupation after the war. Also included are accounts of Free Polish units fighting abroad.

The History of the Panzerwaffe Volume 3: The Panzer Division (Thomas Anderson, Osprey Publishing, 2020, $40.00, hardcover) This new volume covers the organization, structure, and experiences of German armored divisions during the war. It is well illustrated and detailed.

The Burma Air Campaign 1941-1945 (Michael Pearson, Pen and Sword Books, 2020, $22.95, softcover) This air campaign included close air support against the Japanese, strategic bombing, and air transport. The author also covers Japanese activities early in the war.

British Escort Carriers 1941-45 (Angus Konstam, Osprey Publishing, 2020, $19.00, softcover) The Royal Navy operated several escort carriers, some built domestically and others acquired through Lend-Lease. This book covers the role they played in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Whatever It Took: An American Paratrooper's Extraordinary Memoir of Escape, Survival and Heroism in the Last Days of World War II (Henry Langrehr and Jim DeFelice, William Morrow, 2020, $27.99, hardcover) Henry Langrehr served as a paratrooper, dropping into Normandy on D-Day. He was captured but made a daring escape.



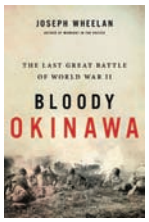
Night of the Assassins: The Untold Story of Hitler's Plot to Kill FDR, Churchill and Stalin (Howard Blum, Harper Collins, 2020, $29.99, hardcover) When the three top Allied leaders met in Tehran in 1943, the Nazis sent a squad of men to assassinate them. An American Secret Service man and a Soviet NKVD officer had to cooperate to stop them.

Mortar Gunner on the Eastern Front Volume II: Russia, Hungary, Lithuania and the Battle for East Prussia (Dr. Hans Heinz Rehfeldt, Greenhill Books, 2020, $32.95, hardcover) The author served in a mortar platoon on the Eastern Front. This book is the conclusion to his detailed two-volume memoir.

The Dauntless in Battle (Peter C. Smith, Pen and Sword Publishing, 2020, $34.95, hardcover) The Douglas SBD Dauntless was America's dive bomber during the beginning of the war. It saw action in numerous engagements and gained fame at the Battle of Midway.

The Royal Netherlands Navy of World War II (Ryan K. Noppen, Osprey Publishing, 2020, $19.00, softcover) The small Netherlands Navy had global commitments even after the nation fell under Nazi occupation. This book outlines the vessels that composed that navy and their difficult service.

but has seen little coverage in the English-speaking world. This new work is the first full-length book to cover this subject in English. The endurance of the average Roman citizen and the will of some to actively fight back are covered in detail. The author spent years researching his topic, much of it in the Roman archives; the thoroughness of his work is evident in the writing.



Bloody Okinawa: The Last Great Battle of World War II (Joseph Wheelan, Da Capo Publishers, New York, 2020, 432pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

The war in Europe had only a month remaining when the largest invasion of the Pacific War began. On April 1, 1945, the first of over 184,000 American troops landed on Okinawa. The island sat only 350 miles from the Japanese mainland, making it an important staging area for the planned assault in late 1945. The 140,000 Japanese defenders did not try to repel their enemy at the beaches; rather, they let the Americans get inland with the aim of inflicting heavy casualties. Weeks of ruthless, close-range combat followed, leaving both the landscape and its occupants shattered and exhausted. After 82 days of combat, 125,000 of them lay dead, along with 7,500 U.S. troops and over 100,000 Okinawan civilians. The fighting was so costly it weighed heavily in the U.S. government's decision to drop the atomic bombs a few months later.

The author used both American and Japanese accounts of the battle to create the narrative for this book. The result is a very human story of courage, suffering and endurance. All aspects of the fight are recounted, from combat on land to the naval fight offshore to the brutal attacks of the kamikazes and the efforts made to repulse them. This is an in-depth and well-written account of the last great battle of World War II.

Leningrad: The Advance of Panzer Group 4, 1941 (W. Charles de Beaulieu, translated by Linden Lyons, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2020, maps, appendices, index, $34.95, hardcover)

Army Group North crossed the border into the Soviet Union in June 1941, with its objective the city of Leningrad. The Germans had to cross 800 kilometers of enemy territory and needed to secure a crossing of the Dvina River. Panzer Group 4, containing the XLI and LVI Panzer Corps, made 70 kilometers the first day, but Soviet counterattacks harried their flanks, resulting in a large tank battle before the advance continued. The group pushed through Latvia to the Stalin Line and beyond. In mid-July, when they were 100 kilometers from Leningrad, their army group commander devised other plans for them. This created a delay of several irreplaceable weeks.

The author of this work was the chief of the general staff of Panzer Group 4. He published this account in German in 1961, but this is the first English translation. More than just an account, the book also contains the author's assessment of the action. A series of good maps accompanies the text.

Churchill's Few: The Battle of Britain, the Turning Point of World War II (John Willis, Mensch Publishing, London, UK, 2020, 336 pp., $22.00, hardcover)

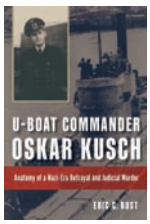
Bob Doe was one of the most successful fighter aces of the Battle of Britain, though few have ever heard of him. Cyril Bamberger began a sergeant pilot and won a Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar for his courage. German Luftwaffe pilot Ulrich Steinhilper was shot down during the battle and taken prisoner; he became one of the greatest escapers of the war. Joseph Slagowski served as one of the Free Polish flyers who defended Britain in its time of greatest need. Geoffrey Page suffered horrible burns as a result of his service. Geoffrey Meyers, an intelligence officer who had been a reporter for the *Daily Telegraph* before the war, saw his squadron decimated by the fighting and wrote poignant letters to his family about his experiences.

These six personalities all served in the Battle of Britain, doing their parts for their respective countries. The term "turning point" is generally overused in military history, but it fully applies to this campaign, which had great consequences for the course of the war. The author weaves the experiences of these people into a compelling narrative, showing how the participation of individuals contributed to the sweep of the overall course of the war.

Soviet Soldier Versus Finnish Soldier: The Continuation War 1941-44 (David Campbell, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2020, 80pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $22.00, softcover)

The Finnish Army performed brilliantly during the Winter War of 1939-40, but Soviet forces still swamped them under their superior weight of numbers. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Finland allied with the Third Reich, hoping to regain its lost territory. That conflict, known as the Continuation War, lasted until 1944, when a massive Soviet offensive forced the Finns to make terms and end their pact with Hitler's regime. During the Continuation War, the Finns walked a tight line between trying to get back what was lost but not pushing the Soviets too hard by joining the German in the attacks on Leningrad. They quickly retook their lost land and then settled into a form of trench warfare to hold their lines.

This latest volume in Osprey's Combat series compares the training, organization, and equipment of the Finns and Soviets as they fought the Continuation War. After showing how each army prepared for war, the book demonstrates them in action by recounting three battles with an analysis of their overall effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses. As expected with Osprey's works, the book is superbly illustrated with period photographs and original artwork. The writing is clear and full of good background information and detail. The author's assessments are well-reasoned and based on sober logic and rational evaluation.



U-Boat Commander Oskar Kusch: Anatomy of a Nazi-Era Betrayal and Judicial Murder (Eric C. Rust, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2020, 340pp., notes, bibliography, index, $45.00, hardcover)

On May 12, 1944, Lieutenant Oskar Kusch of the German Navy and commanding officer of the submarine *U-154* was executed for making statements critical of the Third Reich. He had led his crew on two combat patrols in the South Atlantic in 1943, sinking one ship and damaging two others off the coast of Brazil. Several of his fellow officers denounced him, and the court-martial that followed proclaimed that his remarks had undercut his crew's will and readiness to fight. A naval expert did testify that Kusch had acted in accordance with his responsibilities, and one charge of cowardice was dismissed. Before his arrest, his father pleaded with him to desert and go to Switzerland. Kusch refused, stating he had a duty to the German people and his crew, who thought highly of him. Despite hints of impending clemency, he was killed anyway—made an example by the regime and the navy together.

The actions of the Nazis against the Jews and others they deemed "undesirable" are well doc-

umented. Less well-known are actions taken against their own military personnel and citizens. This book brings light to one of these innumerable shameful acts of the Nazis. The author clearly relays the background and history of the case. His prose is clear, and his thorough research brings many details about Kusch and his situation into the work.

Widowmaker: Living and Dying with the Corsair (Tim Hiller-Graves, Casemate Publishing, Havertown PA, 2020, 202pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

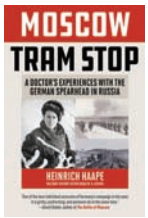
The Vought F-4U Corsair is one of the iconic aircraft of World War II, but it proved a difficult plane to operate. It took pilots time to get used to handling the Corsair and its quirks. Initially, the U.S. Navy refused to employ it aboard aircraft carriers because they thought it unsafe. The United States Marine Corps flew it from land bases to great effect against the Japanese, and the British Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm did fly it from carriers. They proved it could operate from a carrier in the hands of an experienced, competent pilot, but at a cost in pilots and planes while they gained that knowledge. The British eventually acquired over 2,000 Corsairs. The Americans took notice of the British success and finally placed two squadrons of Marine Corsairs aboard the *USS Essex* in December 1944.

This is the story of the flyers who took a difficult aircraft and turned it into a fighter-bomber deadly to the enemy. It also covers the life of the Corsair's chief designer, Rex Beisel, and the plane's development. The book is well illustrated with over 200 images, many of them previously unpublished. The author interviewed over 90 veterans of the Corsair from the U.S., UK, Canada, and New Zealand. The book is a thorough study of the Corsair's strengths and faults along with those who flew it.

Tank Attack at Monte Cassino: The Cavendish Road Operation 1944 (Jeffrey Plowman, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2020, maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

The monastery perched above the Italian town of Monte Cassino proved a difficult position to capture in 1944. The German troops entrenched inside its historic walls had an excellent view of the surrounding area and could place artillery or machine-gun fire against attackers. On March 19, 1944, the Allies began an ambitious plan to use a mountain trail to assault the German position north of the monastery. The plan involved tanks crewed by Americans, Indians, and New Zealanders working together to scale the narrow track against heavy enemy resistance. The operation nearly succeeded and would have allowed the Allies to pierce the Gustav Line and begin the advance toward Rome, unhinging German plans for the defense of the Italian peninsula. Its failure lengthened the already long and bloody struggle for the country.

The Cavendish Road operation is little known today, but it is one of the "what-ifs" of the Italian campaign. The author skillfully reveals the planning and preparation for the attack along with the events of the actual fighting. The soldiers who conducted the assault are also given detailed attention, as are the reasons for its ultimate failure despite the initial Allied success.



Moscow Tram Stop: A Doctor's Experiences with the German Spearhead in Russia (Heinrich Happe, Stackpole Books, Guilford, CT, 2020, 468pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover)

Heinrich Happe joined the Wehrmacht just as World War II began. A medical doctor who received his degree in 1938, Happe went through basic training as an artilleryman before transfer to the medical corps. He served in an infantry battalion in the spearhead of Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Despite the initial Soviet setbacks, he noted how tenaciously Red Army soldiers fought even when doomed to defeat. The advance toward Moscow continued, rapid at first before slowing over the summer. By October, rain and snow punished the Germans as they struggled to maintain their momentum. By December, snow and freezing temperatures combined with that continuing Soviet tenacity to stop the Germans just short of their goal. Within a few months, as that horrible winter ended, Happe's battalion, once 800 strong, contained only 28 men.

Happe survived the war. Along the way he earned so many combat decorations the Nazi Party pressured him to join, but he refused. His memoir reveals the unusual point of view of a doctor on the Eastern Front, though he often had to take part in the fighting as well. With his training in medicine and psychology, he was well placed to observe the physical and emotional tolls combat places on human beings. After the war, he never practiced medicine again. □

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

One of the best FPS studios in the industry brings *Medal of Honor* into the immersive world of virtual reality.

MEDAL OF HONOR: ABOVE AND BEYOND

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Depending on what kind of setup you have, virtual reality may be old news to you, or it might still be fresh and awe-inspiring. Your familiarity with it will ultimately decide how impressed you are with one of the latest attempts at bringing World War II to life in VR. *Medal of Honor: Above and Beyond* takes a well-worn series and injects it with the expertise of Respawn Entertainment—a developer known for games like *Titanfall*, *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order*, and *Apex Legends*—and the results are more or less what you would expect from a base-level WWII outing.

Those who aren't as experienced (read: jaded) with VR are more likely to be wowed by what EA and Respawn have put together with *Medal of Honor: Above and Beyond*. While you won't find many surprises in the story department, hitting those familiar beats in the more personal realm of virtual reality makes a pretty mighty impact. As long as you have the right controller tech to complement your headset, you'll find running and gunning through the campaign to be both satisfying and, at times, downright badass.

The way each true-to-the-era weapon handles is unique, from your traditional sidearms to the wrist-flick action of cocking your shotgun. Everything you need is essentially "on your person," as well, so you just have to reach around your shoulder or toward your "holster" to retrieve whatever weapon you feel each given situation requires. With all of the immersive qualities in mind, though, don't expect *Medal of Honor* to go too far (above and) beyond what's currently available in VR. It's not a game-changer, but it does benefit from having a big-name publisher and the type of budget one would expect from EA behind it.

Outside of the main campaign, the other star of *Above and Beyond* is multiplayer. All told there are five multiplayer modes to choose from, including Domination, Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Blast Radius, and Mad Bomber. The first three are pretty standard, while Blast Radius is a king-of-the-hill style game and Mad Bomber has you planting and defusing bombs. When multiplayer works well, it's certainly exciting enough to keep you coming back for more.

Even if you're not a huge shooter fan, Respawn has injected some very compelling historical features into this one. Using interviews combined with 360-degree footage, the team spoke with war veterans and captured their powerful first-hand stories, preserving them for future generations through state-of-the-art technology. They could release these separately and it would be worth the price of admission alone.

Despite the somewhat lacking story and a few other mild disappointments, it's nice to have a VR war game that goes back to the roots of a long-running series like *Medal of Honor*. Even without taking the multiplayer into account, the single player is practically a throwback to a bygone era, just with some fancier window dressing and the thrills of virtual reality. If you're looking for a game to light up your own headset—or perhaps an entry point into the virtual realm in the first place—Respawn's mission is worth undertaking. Just know that you'll need either the HTC Vive, Oculus Rift, or Valve Index headset to get your own personal battle started.

LAND OF WAR - THE BEGINNING

PUBLISHER MS GAMES DISTRIBUTION • **GENRE** SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** Switch • **AVAILABLE** Q1 2021

Since the dawn of the interactive medium, World War II games have run the gamut of battles depicted, even if the vast majority of titles tend to stick to specific eras. *Land of War - The Beginning* claims to be "absolutely the first video game" to focus on the early stages of the war during the period of 1939 to 1940, bringing a group of developers known as MS Games together to do so as their very first production. The goal: to depict the start of World War II through the eyes of an ordinary soldier, and we'll soon be able to see if they succeeded in doing so.

The creators behind *Land of War* describe themselves as "fanatics of classical WWII shooters," so it's no surprise to see some of the heavy hitters of the genre make an appearance in their list of inspirations. Games like *Medal of Honor*, as well as the early entries in the *Call of Duty* series, are just a few of the titles that fueled the passion behind this particular project, which looks to boil down the gameplay to fast-paced action with clean and simple controls and plenty of authenticity when it comes to bringing this period of the war to life.

With the rare setting comes some equally rare gear and weapons, dozens of which MS Games says haven't been featured in other games. Many of these are prototype weapons that were only used in small quantities within specific units, with all of the functions and aesthetics of these tools intact and modeled as realistically as possible. Judging from the initial trailers and screenshots, it certainly seems like the team at MS Games knows exactly what it wants to create and has the resources to do so in a fully fleshed-out manner. Hopefully by the time this issue is in your hands we'll have a better idea of just how well they pulled off the old school shooter vibe, while still paying respect to the setting and coming through with environments and storytelling that services the initial concept.

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