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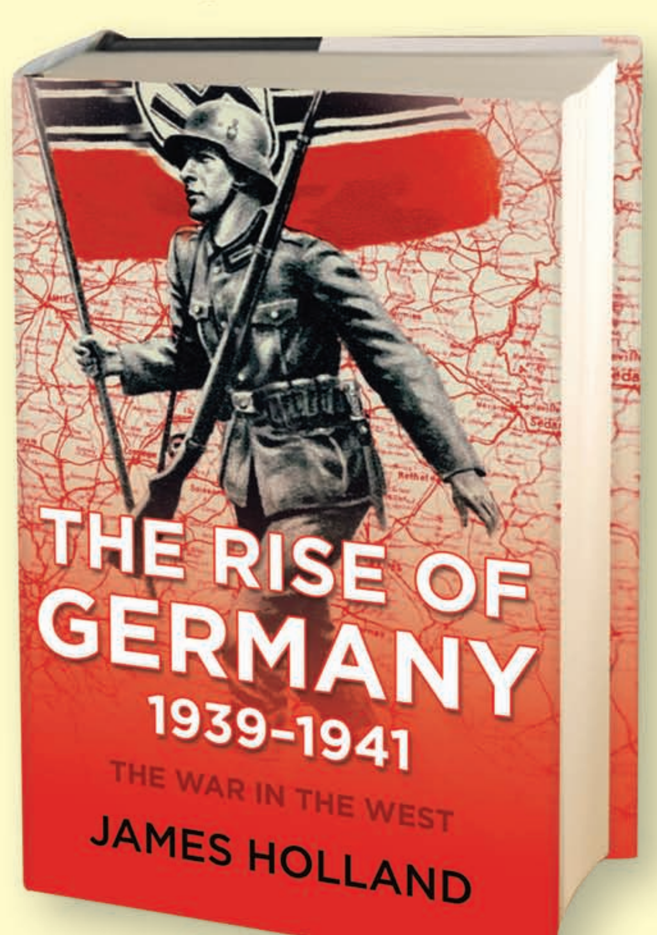

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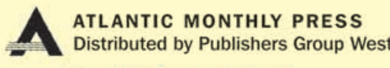

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Painting by Jack Fellows; www.jackfellows.com

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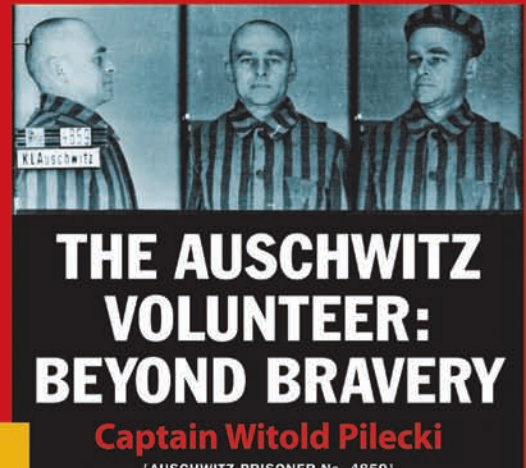

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Editorial

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Frederick and the Devil's Brigade took Monte La Difensa with the V-42 stiletto at the ready.

THE FIGHT AT MONTE LA DIFENSA ON DECEMBER 3, 1943, WAS SWIFT BUT brutal as members of the First Special Service Force, a combined unit of U.S. and Canadian soldiers under the command of American Lt. Col. Robert T. Frederick, captured the promontory in the mountains of Italy. The highly trained troops had scaled the rough rock walls of the heights during the previous night, enduring an arduous trek to the summit to take on the German defenders.

Senior planners with the American Fifth Army had estimated that the battle would take up to five days, but the tough soldiers of the First Special Service Force accomplished the task in only two hours. From there, the men of the so-called Devil's Brigade went on to secure other tactically vital high ground during the Italian Campaign.

The exploits of the First Special Service Force were immortalized in the 1968 feature film *The Devil's Brigade,* starring William Holden and Cliff Robertson, and the unit is the forerunner of today's U.S. Army Special Forces. Frederick rose to the rank of major general during a military career that spanned four decades and also commanded the 45th, 4th, and 6th Infantry Divisions prior to retirement in 1952.

Aside from his outstanding organizational and administrative skills, Frederick proved himself in combat, receiving the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry in action. Among his other contributions to the eventual Allied victory in World War II was his significant influence on the design of the combat knife that the men of the Devil's Brigade carried into action in the Aleutians, the Mediterranean Theater, and beyond. Manufactured by Case Cutlery, the V-42 Stiletto is an iconic combat knife that has become symbolic of the fighting excellence of elite Special Forces in both the United States and Canada. The knife adorns the crests of the U.S. Army's Special Forces and the Canadian Joint Task Force Two. Although only 3,400 were manufactured before production ceased, the V-42 gained a reputation as a sturdy, effective weapon in close, hand-to-hand combat, as well as a companion that easily took care of simple camp chores.

Itself a legendary manufacturer of high-quality knives, Case recently reintroduced the V-42 First Special Service Force Stiletto as a tribute the legacy of the fighting men who made it famous nearly 75 years ago. Researchers evaluated several World War II-era V-42 examples and determined that there were slight variations among them. Therefore, the decision was made to base the reproduction on the materials and the construction of the only V-42 the company owns. That particular combat knife is on display at the Zippo/Case Museum in the company's hometown of Bradford, Pennsylvania.

"We're extremely proud and honored to present a reproduction knife that is symbolic of our military elite and the American freedom they fought, and fight every day, to protect," commented John Sullivan, Case director of marketing. "Case knives and the American military share a long and distinguished history dating as far back as World War I, so we've taken great measure to ensure that the V-42 reproduction model meets the highest standards and is deemed authentic by the same brave Forcemen who carried the original into battle so many years ago."

Meticulously true to the original, the reproduction Case V-42 is 12 1/2 inches long with a blued blade of chrome vanadium. Like the vintage model, its handle is leather and the guard is leather-covered steel. The sheath is patterned after that of the World War II knife and reproduced in fine quality as well.

Veterans of the Devil's Brigade have been thrilled to hold the reproduction V-42 in their hands. The impetus for the project was the continuing public appeal to the company for a true representation of the rare but well-known combat knife that some of World War II's most intrepid fighting men wielded in battle—and ultimately in victory.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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Chicago Doctor Invents *Affordable* Hearing Aid

Outperforms Many Higher Priced Hearing Aids

Reported by J. Page

CHICAGO: A local board-certified Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) physician, Dr. S. Cherukuri, has shaken up the hearing aid industry with the invention of a medical-grade, affordable hearing aid. **This revolutionary hearing aid is designed to help millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford—or do not wish to pay—the much higher cost of traditional hearing aids.**

> **"Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry" – Dr. Babu, Board-Certified ENT Physician**

Dr. Cherukuri knew untreated hearing loss could lead to depression, social isolation, anxiety, and symptoms consistent with Alzheimer's disease. **He didn't know why hearing aids were so expensive when the prices on so many consumer electronics like TVs, DVD players, cell phones, and digital cameras had fallen.**

Since Medicare and most private insurance plans do not cover the costs of hearing aids, which can cost between $2,000-$6,000 for a pair, many of the doctor's patients could not afford the expense. Dr. Cherukuri's goal was to find a solution that would help with the most common types of hearing loss at an affordable price, similar to the **"one-size-fits-most" reading glasses** available at drug stores.

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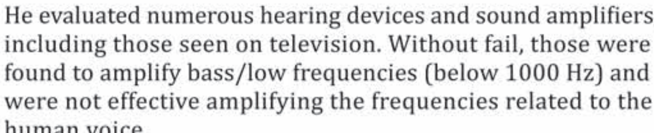

He evaluated numerous hearing devices and sound amplifiers, including those seen on television. Without fail, those were found to amplify bass/low frequencies (below 1000 Hz) and were not effective amplifying the frequencies related to the human voice.

Inspiration from a Surprising Source

The doctor's inspiration to defeat the powers-that-be that kept inexpensive hearing aids out of the hands of the public actually came from a cell phone he had just purchased. **"I felt that if someone could develop an affordable device like an iPhone® for about $200 that could do all sorts of things, I could create a hearing aid at a similar price."**

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The high cost of hearing aids is a result of layers of middlemen and expensive unnecessary features. Dr. Cherukuri concluded that it would be possible to develop a medical-grade hearing aid without sacrificing the quality of components. The result is the **MD**HearingAid ***PRO***, well under $200 each when buying a pair. **It has been declared to be the best low-cost hearing aid that amplifies the range of sounds associated with the human voice without overly amplifying background noise.**

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—Dr. May, ENT physician

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By Michael D. Hull

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The Lethal Lancaster

The Royal Air Force deployed the Avro Lancaster bomber during its strategic campaign to bomb the Third Reich.

WING COMMANDER GUY P. GIBSON OF ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER COMMAND was handed the most challenging assignment of his six-year career in the spring of 1943.

After winning the Distinguished Service Order with bar and the Distinguished Flying Cross by the age of 24, the chunky, modest son of an Indian Forest Service official took command of a unit newly formed for "special duties," No. 617 Squadron. It was destined to gain a unique niche in the history of military aviation.

At the sprawling Scampton Airfield near the city of Lincoln in northeastern England that spring, Gibson oversaw the intense preparation of 700 handpicked pilots, bombardiers, navigators, and gunners for a daring and unprecedented operation—a low-level precision raid by four-engine Avro Lancaster heavy bombers. It was code named Operation Chastise.

Gibson, characterized as an officer who "exerted his authority without apparent effort,“ told the crews, "You're here to do a special job, you're here as a crack squadron, you're here to carry out a raid on Germany, which, I am told, will have startling results. Some say it may even cut short the duration of the war…. All I can tell you is that you will have to practice low flying all day and night until you know how to do it with your eyes shut."

The targets, kept secret during the squadron's training, were the Mohne, Eder, and Sorpe dams in Germany's Ruhr Valley. Since before the start of World War II, Air Ministry planners believed that the destruction of the dams, which stored water vital for production, would cripple Nazi Germany's economy. The untried weapons chosen for the operation were spherical, five-foot-long bombs (actually mines) that contained five tons of Torpex high explosive.

Developed by Dr. Barnes N. Wallis, an engineering genius who had invented the geodetic aircraft design, the bombs were to be dropped from a height of only 60 feet, skip across the surface of the water, roll down the faces of the dams, and explode underwater. Widespread flooding and damage would result.

After several failures, the "bouncing bomb" had been successfully tested off the southern coast of England. The weapon was so cumbersome that the Lancaster had to be modified to hold it, protruding below the bomb bay. Dual spotlights were also fitted to No. 617 Squadron's bombers. The big, robust Lancaster was the only aircraft suited for the unique operation.

In this painting by Robert Taylor, the breaching of the Mohne Dam is accomplished by pilot Dinghy Young flying the Royal Air Force Lancaster bomber visible at lower left. Wing Commander Guy Gibson's bomber is visible in the distance.

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World War II

In the fall of 1944, most allied soldiers predicted that the war in Europe would be over by Christmas. Fierce fighting was taking place along the German frontier at Aachen and the Hürtgen Forest and the collapse of the German Army in the west seemed imminent.

But the German Army was still a foe to be respected and on the 16th of December, it launched a major counter offensive in the heavily wooded area of the Ardennes Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. In the early part of the offensive, the Germans managed to make deep penetrations into the U.S. defenses in that sector. The surprise attack caught the Allied forces completely off guard and it developed into the largest and bloodiest battle fought by the United States in World War II.

By January 25th of 1945, the 'Bulge' in the allied lines had been completely reduced, severely depleting Germany's armored forces on the Western Front, crippling their ability to resist the final Allied push to the Rhine.

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Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Wing Commander Guy Gibson, leader of No. 617 Squadron which executed the daring Dambuster Raid, climbs aboard his Lancaster bomber. This photo was taken in May 1943, and Gibson received the Victoria Cross for his role in the raid. Gibson was killed when his plane was shot down returning from a bombing mission on September 19, 1944. RIGHT: Water pours through the breach in the Eder Dam on the day following the Dambuster Raid. Air crews of RAF No. 617 Squadron completed the perilous mission aboard their Lancaster heavy bombers.

All was made ready for the mission by Sunday, May 16, 1943, and the weather was excellent. That night, 18 Lancasters took off from Scampton, formed up, and thundered at low level across the North Sea and the Dutch coast. Two planes were shot down by German antiaircraft fire, and two had to return to base, one with flak damage and the other after hitting the sea. Another bomber went down when its pilot was blinded by searchlights.

The remaining Lancasters flew on in moonlight through increasing enemy flak and small-arms fire to the Ruhr dams. Gibson dropped the first bomb on the Mohne dam and scored a direct hit. The second plane was hit by flak and crashed, but the third and fourth made successful runs. The dam still held. But the fifth bomber's run did the trick.

As the Lancasters climbed away, Gibson reported, the top of the dam simply "rolled over and the water, looking like stirred porridge in the moonlight," cascaded into the valley below.

The Eder dam was well hidden in a valley and difficult to approach. One of the Lancasters dropped its bomb too late, which exploded on the parapet and took the plane with it. After several abortive runs, two more bombers laid their ordnance accurately and breached the dam with spectacular results. The squadron's remaining bomb damaged the Sorpe dam but failed to cause a breach.

Eight bombers were lost in the operation, and 54 crewmen lost their lives. The cost was high, but the raid gave a major boost to Allied morale. Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest medal for valor, and 33 other members of the squadron were also decorated.

The devastation and widespread flooding inflicted by the raid killed 1,300 civilians, left thousands homeless, damaged 50 bridges, and briefly halted production in the Ruhr. But, because only two of the dams had been breached, the impact was less severe than planned. The dams were repaired by October 1943.

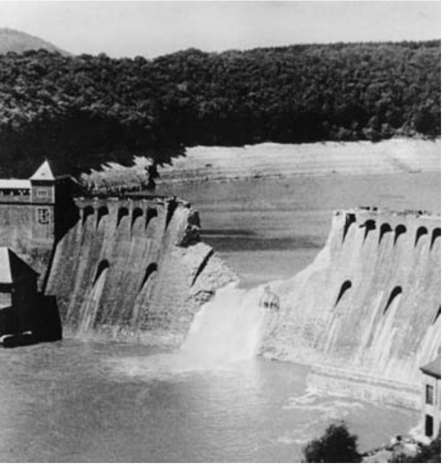
The operation, nevertheless, was remembered as the most celebrated Allied bomber mission of the war. The official Bomber Command history called it "the most precise bombing attack ever delivered and a feat of arms which has never been excelled."

The Avro Lancaster was a remarkable plane. From 1942 onward it was the primary British bomber in the Allied aerial offensive against Germany. Sturdy, versatile, and ideally suited for mass production, it had the RAF's lowest heavy bomber loss rate and was used extensively in high- and low-level day and night raids. Its payload exceeded that of the U.S. Army Air Forces' Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator, and it could carry the heaviest bombs, from 4,000-pounders up to the 12,000-ton "Tallboy" and the 22,000-ton "Grand Slam."

Many experts termed the "Lanc" the most effective bomber of the war. Aviation historian Owen Thetford called it "perhaps the most famous and certainly the most successful heavy bomber used by the Royal Air Force in the Second World War." Historian William Green said that a great plane must have "a touch of genius which transcends the good" and "the luck to be in the right place at the right time." He added, "It must have above-average flying qualities: reliability, ruggedness, fighting ability, and skilled crews. All these things the Lancaster had in good measure."

Yet the bomber was conceived almost by accident, developed as a result of the failure of its predecessor, the twin-engine Avro Manchester. The Lancaster story began in 1936, when the standard RAF night bomber was the ungainly, soon obsolete Handley Page Heyford, a twin-engine biplane, and when Bomber Command possessed only one squadron of Hendon monoplane bombers. The Air Ministry drew up specifications for a twin-engine heavy bomber that September, and Sir Edwin A.V. Roe, an aircraft design pioneer, proposed a design that was powered by two "new and unorthodox" Vulture liquid-cooled engines.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-C0212-0043-012; Photo: Unknown



Named the Manchester, it made its maiden flight from Manchester Ringway Airfield in July 1939, became operational in November 1940, and first saw action on February 24-25, 1941, when it flew a night raid against the French port of Brest. Replacing the twin-engine Handley Page Hampden, the Manchester carried a heavy payload, mounted eight machine guns, and had a maximum range of 1,630 miles, yet it was "one of the RAF's great disappointments," said Thetford. Its engine proved unreliable, and it racked up the highest loss rate

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Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

LEFT: The Lancaster played a significant role in the repatriation of British prisoners of war after World War II ended. In this photo a group of former POWs walk toward the Lancaster that will carry them home to Britain. RIGHT: The Lancaster carried a heavier payload than either the American B-17 Flying Fortress or B-24 Liberator. This Lancaster of No. 467 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, is being loaded with bombs prior to a mission.

of all RAF bombers in the war, so it was removed from combat service in June 1942.

But Roe's design team, headed by brilliant Roy Chadwick, still believed that, with improvements, the Manchester could become an effective bomber. So, four 1,460-horsepower Rolls-Royce Merlin engines were installed on the basic airframe, and the Lancaster was born. Piloted by Captain H.A. "Sam" Brown, the prototype made its maiden flight on January 9, 1941, from Woodford, Northamptonshire. It tested successfully, assembly line work was started immediately, and the first production bomber flew on October 31, 1941. Wing Commander Roderick Learoyd's No. 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron at Waddington, Lincolnshire, received a welcome Christmas present that December 24 when three of the first operational Lancasters arrived to replace its obsolete Hampdens.

The massive, mid-wing Lancaster had a twin tail and four characteristic power turrets (nose, tail, dorsal, and ventral), all mounting twin .303-caliber machine guns except the tail position, which had four .303s. The ventral turret was soon removed. A spacious bomb bay enabled the plane to accommodate a minimum 14,000-ton payload, outperforming such other Bomber Command "heavies" as the Short Stirling and the workhorse Handley Page Halifax.

Manned by a crew of seven, the Lancaster was comparatively easy to fly, maintain, and repair. It had a maximum speed of 287 miles an hour, a range of 1,660 miles, and a ceiling of 24,500 feet. Most of the aircraft were fitted with an H2S radar "can," protruding beneath the after fuselage. A few mounted .50-caliber machine guns, some had bulged bay doors in order to carry the Tallboy and Grand Slam bombs, and others were powered by Packard-built Merlin or Bristol Hercules radial engines.

Sitting in the confines of the Fraser Nash FN50 machine gun turret, a crewman prepares his twin guns for action. The Lancaster was well armed but still vulnerable to German antiaircraft fire and marauding fighters.

Unlike most combat planes built in large numbers, the Lancaster was little changed during the war. Major design modifications proved unnecessary. A total of 7,377 of the bombers were eventually produced, including 430 built in Canada. The Lancaster became the dominant aircraft of RAF Bomber Command and the mainstay of its regular night raids over Nazi-occupied Europe and Germany. By January 1942, there were 256 Lancasters out of 882 heavies in Bomber Command, and a year later there were 652 Lancasters out of 1,093 bombers. The "Lanc" was loved by its crews.

The first Lancaster operation carried out was on March 3, 1942, when four bombers of No. 44 Squadron laid mines in Heligoland Bight, off northwestern Germany. They took off from Waddington at 6:15 PM and returned safely five hours later. Seven days later, on the 10th, Lancasters made their first night raid. Two from No. 44 Squadron joined a 126-strong bomber force in a mission to the Krupp munitions center in Essen. Each of the Lancasters carried 5,000 pounds of incendiaries.

That month, 54 planes were delivered to the first three Lancaster squadrons. More rolled off the assembly lines, and further bombardment groups were formed, beginning a grueling three-year series of raids to the heart of the Third Reich as the spearhead of Bomber Command. The RAF's night raids were complemented increasingly by the daylight missions of U.S. Eighth Air Force B-17 and B-24 bomber groups, and Germany was being bombed around the clock. Although the British had abandoned daytime sorties as being too costly,

Two months later, Lancasters made headlines taking part in one of the most famous air operations of the war, the first of Air Marshal Harris's 1,000-bomber raids.

Almost 900 bombers, including 73 Lancasters, reached Cologne on the night of May 30-31, 1942, and dropped 1,500 tons of bombs, two thirds of them incendiaries. Six hundred acres of the historic Rhine city were burned and leveled, and a month's worth of production destroyed. The raid was a victory for the RAF, but it was also a showpiece that could not be easily replicated. Nevertheless, the mission dramatically exhibited the power and potential of Bomber Command, lifted British morale, encouraged the hard-pressed Russians, and impressed the Americans.

Through the summer and autumn of 1942, Lancasters were increasingly deployed in Bomber Command operations, with occasional detachments for coastal patrol and antishipping duties. On July 17, a Lancaster from No. 61 Squadron sank a U-boat. Besides minelaying sorties and attacks on Hamburg, Stuttgart, Mannheim, Duisburg, and Munich in the latter months of the year, the RAF heavies headed for targets in Italy, focusing on Turin, Milan,

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The *City of Lincoln,* Avro Lancaster B I PA474, has been operated by the Royal Air Force's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight since 1973. The vintage bomber's paint scheme is regularly changed to represent those of famous Lancasters from World War II.

and Genoa.

The year 1943 began with a number of smaller raids, but on the night of January 16-17, Bomber Command visited Berlin for the first time in more than a year with 190 Lancasters and 11 Halifaxes. Only one Lancaster of No. 61 Squadron was lost. The raid was repeated the following night, however, with 170 Lancasters and 17 Halifaxes, and 22 bombers failed to return.

The bombers were given a higher level of accuracy, meanwhile, through such extensive scientific developments as the "Gee" radio-beam navigation system, the "Oboe" blind-bombing device, ground-scanning radar, and "Window," strips of aluminum foil dropped in quantity to cause confusion on enemy radar sets. A major boon to Bomber Command operations was the Pathfinder Force, set up in August 1942 and headed by forceful Group Captain Donald Bennett.

Through the late summer and closing months of 1943, meanwhile, Bomber Command launched a series of punishing raids on enemy targets. On the night of August 17-18, the missile production site at Peenemunde on the Baltic coast was hit by 595 bombers, including 324 Lancasters, causing the Germans' V-2 rocket program to be put back at least three months. Dusseldorf, Cologne, Mannheim, and other cities were hammered again, and the German capital came in for special punishment at the end of the year.

A campaign known as the Battle of Berlin opened on the night of November 18-19, 1943, when an all-Lancaster force of 440 planes, supplemented by four Mosquitoes, attacked the city. British losses soon mounted. Cloud cover grounded enemy fighters, but intense flak downed nine Lancasters. A simultaneous raid on Mannheim by Halifaxes, Stirlings, and 24 Lancasters resulted in the loss of 23 bombers, including two Lancasters. Another 28 of the Avro bombers went down during a mission on November 26-27, and 14 more crashed in England because of bad weather.

A Berlin mission on December 16-17 was even more costly. Twenty-five Lancasters were lost during the attack, and 29 were destroyed on return to their bases. From November 18, 1943, to March 31, 1944, Berlin was assaulted 16 times by Bomber Command. Lancasters flew a total of 156,308 sorties during the war, dropping 608,612 tons of high-explosive bombs and 51,513,106 incendiaries. Aircraft losses in operational and training crashes totaled 3,349.

The Lancaster squadrons were kept busy before and after the Allied armies landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944. They attacked enemy coastal batteries and other key targets behind the beaches, demolished a key railway tunnel at Saumur, extensively damaged U-boat and E-boat pens and river bridges in Le Havre, raided V-1 rocket launching sites, and bombed the German port of Stettin, causing heavy damage and sinking five ships. By August 1944, the RAF's Lancaster force was at peak strength with 42 operational squadrons, including four Canadian, two Australian, and one Polish.

As the Allied armies hammered their way toward the River Rhine frontier in the early months of 1945, the Lancaster force's 56 squadrons flew both day and night raids in and outside Germany. Rail lines, tunnels, and viaducts received special attention with the Bielefeld viaduct demolished on March 14 in the first operational use of the 22,000-pound Grand Slam bomb. The Lancasters also blasted coastal batteries in the Frisian Islands.

On the night of February 13-14, less than three months before the German surrender, Lancasters played a leading role in Operation Thunderclap, one of the most successful and controversial combat missions of the war. Led by nine Mosquito pathfinders and flying in two waves, 796 bombers unloaded 2,700 tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs on Dresden, the medieval capital of Saxony and an important manufacturing center and communications hub. Fanned by strong winds, a firestorm devastated large areas of the city before 300 U.S. Eighth Air Force B-17s arrived to disrupt recovery efforts on February 14-15 and March 2. The total death toll was estimated at between 30,000 and 60,000.

In the final weeks before the German surrender was signed on May 7, 1945, the versatile Lancasters embarked on missions of a different kind, laden with food instead of bombs. During Operation Manna in April-May, bombers from Nos. 1, 3, and 8 Groups flew 2,835 sorties to drop 6,684 tons of rations to the starving people of western Holland. Large areas were still under German control, but the local Wehrmacht commander agreed to a truce and no action was taken against the British planes. The Americans joined the operation, with 400 B-17 runs dropping 800 tons of food in the first three days of May. Lancasters later took part in another humanitarian effort, Operation Exodus, during which Nos. 1, 5, 6, and 8 Groups flew home 74,178 British prisoners of war.

After the war, Lancasters succeeded B-24 Liberators in reconnaissance duties for RAF Coastal Command. Built by Armstrong Whitworth, the last Lancaster was delivered to the RAF in February 1946. Lancasters served in the RAF until December 1953 and were officially withdrawn in a ceremony at St. Mawgan, Cornwall, on October 15, 1956.

The bombers continued to serve in Canada and Argentina, and with the French Navy and the Egyptian, Swedish, and Soviet Air Forces. The Lancaster's proud heritage is kept alive at annual air shows by the meticulously preserved *City of Lincoln,* showpiece of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

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

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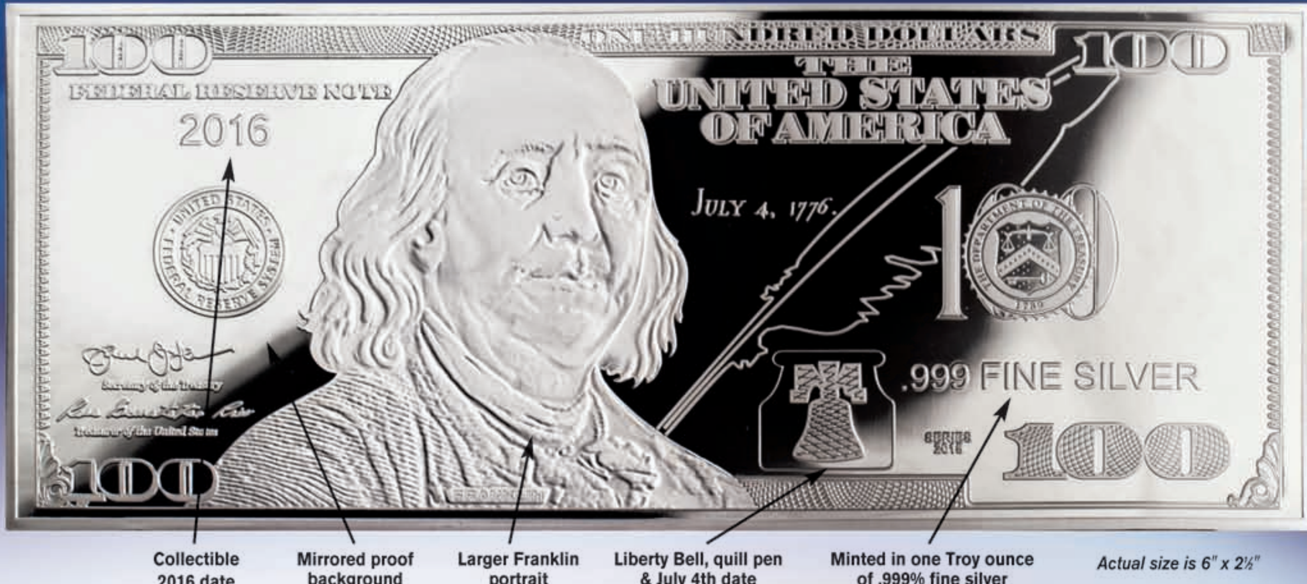

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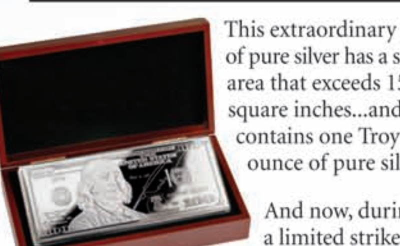

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The Flying Tiger from Dallas

American Volunteer Group pilot Charlie Bond fought the Japanese in the skies above China.

ON MAY 4, 1942, AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP (AVG) PILOTS CHARLIE BOND and Bob Little were in the alert area at Paoshan, China, a small grass aerodrome just north of Burma. The Japanese were not far away; after rampaging through Burma they had crossed into China just three days earlier.

Bond had already been in the air that morning, chasing two high-flying Japanese recon airplanes that he could not catch. He and Little were cleaning their side arms, relaxing a bit, when along came AVG First Squadron Leader Bob Neale to spoil it. Neale was shouting, "Take off! Take off!"

Charlie hopped in his cockpit, started his engine, and looked up to see a formation of 25 Japanese bombers heading right for the airfield. He sat there a moment, hand on the throttle, hesitating. His takeoff would put him on an intersecting path with dropping bombs.

"Hell, I can make it!" he said to himself. He rammed the throttle forward, racing to get in the air and away from the airfield before the bombs fell. In a maximum power climb, he finally got buckled into his parachute. He looked around. He was alone! None of the other Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk fighters had gotten in the air.

The bombers bypassed the airfield to drop their bombs on the city and made a long turn back to the south. There was no fighter escort to be seen, but Charlie picked up the second wave of bombers, another 25 in one big V formation at 18,000 feet. These were the ones he would go after.

Bond climbed 1,000 feet above them then dropped into a diving left turn toward the bomber at the end of the long right leg of the V. His first burst completely enveloped the bomber's fuselage but produced no fire, no smoke. Suddenly, the next two bombers in the V started streaming bluish white smoke, pretending to be wounded. The AVG pilots had been briefed about this trick, but this was the first time Bond had seen it. He ignored them and made another attack on his original target. On his third attack, the bomber's engine disintegrated into a flaming torch. The bomber slowed, fell out of line, and dropped into its final dive.

Charlie attacked the next bomber on the end of the V—and his guns quit. He had run out of ammunition. He made a 180-degree diving turn back to base feeling disappointed. He did a slow roll over the airfield then flew over the city to see what the bombers had done. On his landing approach, he dropped his flaps and pushed on the lever for the landing gear.

Suddenly, he heard loud explosions inside the P-40! He swiveled around. There they were! Three Japanese Zeros "firing like mad" from behind his plane. The explosions were their rounds piercing the fuselage fuel tank behind the cockpit and striking the armor plate behind his seat. The fuel tank exploded. Flames

ABOVE: Pilot Charlie Bond, a veteran with the Flying Tigers, is often credited with the idea of painting the engine cowls of the group's aircraft with shark mouths. TOP LEFT: Their Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk fighter planes painted with the familiar and intimidating shark mouths, members of the American Volunteer Group (AVG), better known as the Flying Tigers, rush to their planes after receiving word of an incoming Japanese air strike.

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Photographed in China in 1942, a group of American Volunteer Group airmen exudes confidence. Shown on the front row left to right are: Charlie Bond, G.L. Paxton, P. Wright, "Scarsdale Jack" Newkirk, D.L. Hill, J.G. Bright, E.S. Conant. Back row: Robert "Buster" Keeton, Frank Lawlor, F.I. Ricketts, R.F. Layher, Henry M. Geselbracht, T.A. Jones, F. Schiel.

whipped through the back of the cockpit and up around Charlie's legs. He had to shut his eyes against the flames encircling him, but he got the canopy back, pulled the nose up, and rolled the P-40 over. The air stream pulled him out of the cockpit. He was tumbling when he pulled the ripcord.

He landed in a Chinese cemetery a mile and a half from the airfield. His head was bleeding, his hands blistering; his face, neck, and shoulders were scorched.

The first Chinese to appear carried a big rock hidden behind his back. Charlie had to pantomime to convince the Chinese guy that he was friendly. The man led him to a nearby hut where the AVG's Doc Richards would later find him. He was flown back to Kunming to be cared for in the AVG dispensary, where he remained for the next 16 days.

By that stage of the war, Charlie Bond had seen a good deal of combat. He was with the last group of AVG pilots to reach Rangoon on November 12, 1941. They went by train to the AVG airfield at Toungoo in central Burma that same day and found themselves enrolled in General Claire Chennault's "kindergarten," where the "Old Man" taught them everything he knew about fighting the Japanese. Chennault had observed the Japanese Air Force in action over China since mid-1937.

On November 16, Bond made his first flight in a P-40. He did loops, rolls, and Immelmann turns—not bad for a bomber pilot. He had trained as a pursuit pilot in the Boeing P-12 biplane, but upon graduation from advanced flight training in January 1939 he was assigned to the 2nd Bomb group, which had America's entire inventory of 14 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers. He participated as a copilot in the bomber highlight of that era, a show-the-flag flight across South America to Brazil. A first lieutenant named Curtis E. LeMay was the planner and chief navigator for the six-plane flight. In June 1941, Bond was ferrying bombers to Canada when a friend called to tell him about an opportunity to get back into fighters—an outfit in China called the American Volunteer Group was looking for pilots. Bond saw his chance to get combat experience that would secure him a regular commission and, most importantly, earn fast money to buy his parents a home.

Bond made his mark on the AVG's history in his first weeks in Burma. At the local Baptist mission, he picked up a section of a British newspaper. On the front page was a picture of an Australian P-40, its lower nose around the air scoop painted brightly to resemble the wide open mouth of a snarling tiger shark.

Bond discussed it with his squadron mates and then with Chennault. The Old Man liked the idea and suggested the shark mouth be painted on all the AVG P-40s. In the end, Bond had to share credit for giving the tigers their teeth with 1st Squadron colleague Erik Shilling. At about the same time that Bond saw the photo, Shilling was looking at a magazine photo of another toothy airplane, this one a German Dornier bomber in the Western Desert. Shilling painted the teeth on his P-40 and showed it to Chennault. It was a case of great AVG minds thinking alike.

On the morning of December 8, 1941, Bond woke to find himself "right in the middle of one hell of a big war!" Pearl Harbor had been hit, and Manila, and the Japanese were moving into neighboring Thailand.

On December 18, the AVG 1st and 2nd Squadrons moved to Kunming, China, while the 3rd Squadron joined the British Royal Air Force (RAF) in the defense of Rangoon. Two days after arriving in Kunming, Bond participated in the wild melee that resulted when the 1st Squadron met 10 unescorted Japanese bombers just southeast of the city. The Japanese were on they way to bomb Kunming but turned back when they encountered Jack Newkirk's 2nd Squadron flight over the city.

Sixteen 1st Squadron P-40s were scrambled and headed south. Two 2nd Squadron flights of four aircraft each were sent up but stayed close to Kunming city. The 1st Squadron leveled off at 20,000 feet. They were about 30 miles southeast of Kunming when they sighted the tight formation of 10 Japanese raiders. As the AVG closed to 1,000 feet above the Japanese, the bombers lowered their dustbin rear gunners; the AVG pilots charged their guns, turned on gun sights and gun switches, then rolled and started down.

Bond eased his target into his gun sight ring, squeezed the trigger on the stick, and nothing happened. In his excitement, Bond had "checked his gun switch so many times that he had turned it off." He was closing fast on the bomber and had to break off violently.

Bond climbed and turned for a second attack, all guns blazing, and watched his tracers puncture the bomber's fuselage. He broke off at the last second and went after the main formation, attacking again and again—on one pass almost colliding with fellow pilot Bill Bartling. Two hundred miles from Kunming and low on fuel, the P-40s tuned back. Days later the Chinese confirmed six of the 10 bombers destroyed.

On January 1, 1942 the AVG 2nd Squadron replaced the 3rd in Rangoon. The Japanese were pushing deeper into Burma, and the British Army retreated before them. On January 23, the Japanese turned from daylight bombing to heavy night attacks on Rangoon. The number of available P-40s in Rangoon was down to 10. Chennault sent 12 1st Squadron P-40s to Rangoon on January 25 to reinforce the 2nd Squadron. Charlie Bond was among them.

Bond's first action over Rangoon came on January 29 when eight P-40s dove into a swarming beehive of at least 35 Japanese Type 96 fighters. Bond missed his first two targets,

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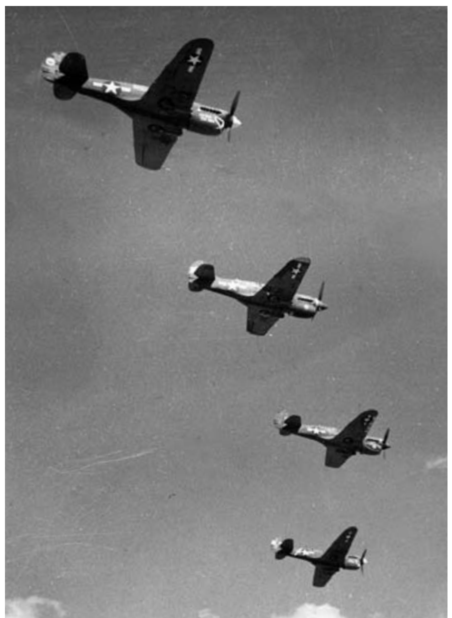
and the fight turned into a few P-40s and a lot of Japanese twisting, turning, diving, and maneuvering to get into position. He fired a burst into one enemy fighter. It dove into a cloud, and Bond waited until it emerged. He watched the tracers from all six guns tear into the cockpit and engine, and the Type 96 went down flaming.

With Japanese bombers coming by night, the pace of combat slowed, and it was February 6 before Bond encountered the enemy again. That morning, six P-40s and two British Hawker Hurricanes tangled with 35 Japanese fighters. Bond caught a Type 97 "Nate" at 500 yards with all six guns. He was sure that pilot's career had ended but was too busy to confirm it and later claimed it as probable. Then, with only one gun working he joined Bob Neale and together they fought a lone Type 97 for more than five minutes. Neale finally bagged it after it got on Bond's tail in a dive. The next day, 1st Squadron Leader Sandy Sandell was killed in a crash while testing repairs to his P-40, and Neale became the new squadron commander. Gregory Boyington was the new vice commander and Bond the squadron operations officer.

For Bond, February 25 began with an early scramble in fog so dense that the AVG pilots could not see halfway down the strip and were taking off directly at each other. The Brewster Buffalo fighters took off from one end of the runway, the Hurricanes from the other. The AVG scrambled from another runway that intersected the RAF runway. The 1st Squadron took off in one direction while the 2nd Squadron came down the same runway but in the opposite direction. Bond's flight saw no action that morning as a result of this scramble.

Early that same afternoon, Bond escorted Blenheim bombers to Moulmein but met no enemy aircraft. That afternoon, 11 P-40s and eight Hurricanes scrambled against 40 Japanese fighters and 12 bombers. Bond's first attack was head-on at a fighter that he quickly set on fire. His second attack, again head-on, resulted in another Japanese fighter going down in flames—two in less than three minutes. Several more quick passes, and a Type 97 suddenly appeared right in front of him, but his guns jammed! He recharged his guns and joined John Blackburn to go after a flight of three Type 97s.

Bond caught one at the top of a climbing turn, but when he fired his .50-caliber guns stopped again. The Japanese fighter was already in a spin, and Bond was sure he was done but claimed him only as a probable. The other two were credited as confirmed kills. It was the best day yet for the AVG. In various



Curtiss P-40 fighter planes of the former American Volunteer Group take wing in the skies over China. After the United States entered the war, the AVG became a component of the U.S. Fourteenth Air Force.

actions, AVG pilots at Rangoon were credited with 25 Japanese aircraft confirmed destroyed and eight probably destroyed. The British Hurricanes got an additional six. There was one AVG loss, pilot Ed Liebolt, who did not return from his flight. Bond's personal score was six destroyed, two probably destroyed, and others damaged.

Rangoon fell on March 6, 1942, and the enemy headed north, threatening India and China. The AVG evacuated its remaining P-40s to the RAF base at Magwe in central Burma. From there, the AVG and what remained of the RAF mounted raids against Burmese airfields now in the hands of the Japanese. On March 21, the Japanese struck back. Three waves of twin-engine bombers, dozens in each wave, pounded Magwe. When the bombers finished, Japanese fighters came down to work over the airfield with machine guns. Most of the RAF's remaining Hurricanes and almost all its Blenheim bombers were destroyed. Two AVG personnel were killed, and all AVG P-40s at the field were hit. The Japanese returned the next day to finish the job, and the evacuation of Magwe began.

At his headquarters in Kunming, Chennault watched the situation evolve. Early on March 22, he called a meeting with the two AVG squadron leaders then in Kunming, Bob Neale of the 1st and Jack Newkirk of the 2nd Squadron, and laid out a plan. The airfield at Chiang Mai in northern Thailand was one of the bases for the aircraft that attacked Magwe. With surprise, the AVG could catch the Japanese on the ground. Chiang Mai was more than 150 miles inside Japanese-controlled territory, beyond the range of the P-40s, and the AVG would not be expected.

The P-40s would fly from Kunming to Loiwing, China, refuel, and then fly on to a small airstrip at Nam Sang in Burma, within easy range of Chiang Mai. The pilots would overnight there and strike Chiang Mai early the next morning. Chennault chose a secondary target, Lampang, 45 miles southeast of Chiang Mai, where the Japanese reportedly based heavy bombers. Neale would be in overall command of the mission and lead six P-40s to Chiang Mai. Newkirk would take four P-40s to Lampang, strike the airfield there, then rejoin Neale's flight at Chiang Mai.

The pilots chosen for this mission were among the AVG's best. "Scarsdale Jack" Newkirk was made an American hero by the press coverage of his actions during the defense of Rangoon, credited with seven victories by the AVG and 25 by the *New York Times*. In his flight were Frank L. Lawlor, Henry M. Geselbracht, and Robert B. "Buster" Keeton. Bob Neale, with 12 victories, was the AVG's top-scoring ace. In his flight was another AVG double ace, William "Black Mac" McGarry, with 10 victories. The other pilots were Charlie Bond, Bill Bartling, Edward F. Rector—all AVG aces—and Gregory Boyington, who would win fame later as "Pappy," commander of the U.S. Marine "Black Sheep," credited with 28 victories and awarded the Medal of Honor.

The night before, Neale reviewed details of the mission. Takeoff would be at 5:45 AM. All 10 aircraft would rendezvous over the field at 10,000 feet, and Neale would lead both flights to Chiang Mai. There Newkirk would break off and take his flight to Lampang. For the main attack on the Chiang Mai airfield, Neale would lead four aircraft down to strafe while two flew top cover.

It was still dark when the P-40s took off. Neale was the first off at 5:55, and Charlie Bond was a minute behind. Boyington was next, and then Bartling, who had never flown at night. Rector and McGarry, who were to fly top cover, took off after the other four. Newkirk's flight was to take off right behind.

There was no moon. It was pitch black outside their cockpits. The pilots could see nothing but the glow of their own exhaust stacks. Neale's flight of six aircraft stayed at 10,000 feet over Nam Sang and circled, waiting for Newkirk and his flight. After 20 minutes, Neale decided that a rendezvous was not going to happen. He turned his flight to a heading of

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150 degrees, a direct line to Chiang Mai.

The sun was starting to light the sky. Charlie Bond was the only one to have flown in this area before, on a recon flight over Chiang Mai on December 13, 1941. Neale was navigating, but Bond followed the flight on his map and tried to make out landmarks in the haze below. He finally recognized the deep gorge of the Salween River as they passed over it. Knowing where to place himself on the map, he was able to determine his ground speed and could calculate how much time it would take the flight to reach Chiang Mai. They would be over their target at 7:12.

Radio silence was essential, and Bond edged up closer on Neale, waggled his wings, and pulled ahead. Neale understood that Bond knew where the target was. He dropped back and let Bond take the lead.

Bond started a gradual descent. There was not much he could see. At 4,000 feet he made out the outline of the airport, a square shape 3,000 to 4,000 feet per side. Seconds later he saw the airplanes. At 1,000 feet, Bond fired a long burst from his guns—to be sure they would fire—and so everyone behind knew that this was it. Ahead was their target, one of the biggest concentrations of Japanese warplanes in Southeast Asia.

What Bond could not yet see was all the activity below. Newkirk's flight had reached Chiang Mai minutes earlier. While Neale's six P-40s circled over Nam Sang waiting for him, Newkirk formed up his flight right after takeoff, climbed to 6,000 feet, and headed directly for Chiang Mai. Newkirk approached the city along its eastern side, and as Bond notes in his diary: "For some reason or other, while flying down to attack Lampang, they decided to strafe the Chiang Mai Railroad Station." That alerted the Japanese and, although Bond could not see it, Japanese pilots were manning their aircraft and the antiaircraft gun crews were already in place.

Bond's dive carried him from south to north across the eastern side of the airfield, over a line of aircraft parked closely together. He opened fire, concentrating on one big group. Then he was past them and switched his fire toward several other single-engine aircraft that he thought were light bombers or modern fighters like the new Mitsubishi Zero.

Neal was right behind Bond, firing on the same row of aircraft on the east side of the field. Greg Boyington was next over the line. Bartling was the last and had a good view of what was happening. "All four of us strafing a very closely packed line of fighters with three twin-engined ships in the center. At the end of our first pass of our four planes I could see a fire which had all three transports in it."

Bartling counted three additional fires. He also saw Japanese pilots sitting in their cockpits and their airplanes' "props turning up ... and quite a few men laying [sic] flat in front of the planes." At the end of his pass, Bartling climbed steeply to 500 feet where he flipped his P-40 around in a wingover that brought him back over the line of aircraft he had just strafed.

Pulling away from his first pass, Bond made a low turn to the left. Just then he saw the only friendly aircraft he would see during the entire action, another P-40 pulling away to his left in a climbing turn. It was Bartling, starting his wingover.

Aware of ground fire, Bond stayed low in a wide turn that brought him sweeping back across the airfield—from west to east this time—over a line of closely parked Type 97 fighters. He saw propellers turning and pilots jumping out of their cockpits and running for cover. Bond strafed the line, porpoising his airplane up and down as he tried to line up his machine guns and hit each airplane in line. Past the end of the row of Type 97s he turned to the right. He counted three fires on the airfield now as a huge one engulfed the three

transports.

BFrom where he was flying top cover at 5,000 feet, Ed Rector watched the first attack by the four P-40s unfold. He saw the fires erupt below. "Three planes were burning in one big fire," he wrote. "AA and MG [machine-gun] nests had opened fire by now, and I counted at least five MG posts around the field throwing tracers at the four strafing planes. AA shells were bursting in ever increasing numbers on mine and McGarry's level, so I began flying a zig-zag course as some were bursting uncomfortably close."

Neale became aware of enemy fire early. He wrote that he stayed at low altitude and made his turns sharp to evade ground fire. At the end of his third pass he found the ground fire so heavy that he rolled his wings to signal the three other P-40s to break off the attack. Then he turned away from the airfield and flew to a point five miles to the southwest. He circled there at 5,000 feet and waited for the others to rendezvous. Eventually Boyington joined up with him there.

A ground crewman waves as a Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bomber takes off from an airfield in China while Curtiss P-40 fighters of the American Volunteer Group sit armed and ready for action.

Bond was the last to break off the attack. After his second pass over the line of Type 97s, he made a third pass from northwest to southeast concentrating his fire on single targets in the southwest area of the airfield. At the end of that pass, he saw antiaircraft bursts at 1,000 to 2,000 feet at the southwest end of the field. He made a low left turn and started a fourth pass back down the same line of targets he had just strafed.

As he flew past the edge of the airfield, Bond turned sharply to the right and was about to start on his fifth pass when he looked up and saw three P-40s. He had been lucky to get away

Continued on page 81

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By Chuck Lyons

National Archives

The Shadowy Secret of MIS-X

One of the most obscure of American intelligence organizations during World War II, MIS-X played a vital role in aiding the escape of American POWs

DURING WORLD WAR II, ONE AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE UNIT WAS SO SECRET IT was known only by its post office box number, 1142. Although it was located only 11 miles down the Potomac from Washington, D.C., in a complex surrounded by multi-alarmed fences, most members of Congress and even the American military leadership knew nothing of its existence.

Known officially as MIS-X (Military Intelligence Service-X), the unit was created in October 1942. It fought the war on what has been called "the barbed wire front."

The unit sent aid packages to POW camps, but those packages also included carefully secreted compasses and tissue paper maps hidden in the handles of shaving razors and hair brushes, cardboard checkerboards that could be steamed apart to reveal documents layered inside them, radio parts hidden in baseballs and in cribbage boards, pens in pipe stems, and other items all intended for a single purpose—aiding in the escape and avoiding the recapture of American prisoners of war.

MIS-X also contacted American manufacturers and, without telling them exactly what they were doing or why, recruited them to assist by producing such things as "peel open" playing cards in which small maps and other documents could be hidden. The Gillette Razor Company, for example, joined in by magnetizing its double-edged razor blades in such a way that, when balanced on a piece of string, the "G" in Gillette pointed due north, creating a handy compass. A Connecticut company manufactured and hid even smaller compasses in the buttons it manufactured for U.S. military uniforms.

At one point in 1944, MIS-X was sending out 120 parcels a day to German POW camps but was forced to reduce its output when coded messages from the camps pleaded with it to do so.

The POWs were simply running out of room to hide things.

Though the exact number is in dispute, according to some estimates as many as 130,000 U.S. troops were captured and became prisoners during World War II, with almost 94,000 of them held by the Germans and 27,000 by the Japanese. Germany also interred 4,700 American civilians, while Japan imprisoned 14,000. Almost 11 percent of the American POWs, 14,072 to be exact, died in captivity.

Another sizable group escaped or at least tried to escape, and by the end of the war 737 of these men had successfully slipped out of German POW camps and avoided recapture. The number of attempted escapes that resulted in recapture is unknown but is certainly many times greater than the number of successful ones, and MIS-X aided in almost all these attempts.

American prisoners of war captured during the opening hours of the Battle of the Bulge trudge toward a rear area and a German prison camp in December 1944. By the time this photo was taken, MIS-X had suspended operations in anticipation of the Allied victory in World War II.

Interestingly, much of the work done to aid these men had begun with the British.

Britain entered the war in 1939, and in June 1940 some 50,000 British troops were captured fighting in rearguard actions at the Battle of Dunkirk. Sir Gerald W.R. Templer, then an acting lieutenant

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colonel in military intelligence, suggested that some provision should be made to make the men's confinement more comfortable and at the same time aid them with any escape plans they might have. He also suggested that some training should be provided to all His Majesty's troops on how to act if captured. British officials at the time were aware that a generation earlier during World War I a large number of British prisoners had escaped from German POW camps without any outside assistance.

What could be done to help with escapes during the current war?

Based on Templer's suggestion, the British created MI-9 (Military Intelligence, Section 9), which first provided training for soldiers in the event that they were captured and then expanded to include aiding with escapes. When the United States entered the war in late 1941, the British willingly shared with U.S. Intelligence what capture and escape information they had gathered and developed.

MIS-X was established as a result of this sharing of information.

Meanwhile, the United States was also in the process of establishing a center to detain and interrogate enemy POWs who were suspected of possessing vital military information. That center was to be located at an abandoned Civil War and World War I military post known as Fort Hunt, 11 miles south of Washington on the Potomac River. The area had once been farmed by George Washington when he resided at his nearby Mount Vernon estate and was at the time World War II began in use as a local picnic area.

Beginning in April 1942, buildings were erected on the site, and the facility was staffed with some 400 military personnel, many of them well educated, fluent in European languages, and familiar with Europe and its customs. A number of them were Jewish. Most were the last to receive their assignments at the end of basic training. Usually they were told to proceed to Washington and wait at a particular intersection, where they were then picked up and taken to the super-secret Fort Hunt.

Local residents of the Fort Hunt neighborhood were of course aware of military activity in the area and watched as buses with blacked-out windows passed back and forth, but they were kept unaware of the camp's true purpose. The idea was put about that it was just another POW camp, one of many that were blossoming throughout the country at the time.

In October 1942, another unit was tucked into the camp, a unit so secret even the post commander, who of course knew of its existence, was unaware of its actual purpose.

That unit was MIS-X. Over the years of its existence Fort Hunt also housed units that studied captured enemy documents, publications, and images, and served as a facility for Operation Paperclip, the effort to bring captured German scientists to the United States, including Werner von Braun, who would gain fame for his work on the U.S. space program.

MIS-X consisted of five subsections dealing with the interrogation of successful escapees about any military information they may have picked up and on what had worked and what had not worked in their escapes. Its work also involved correspondence with POWs, determining camp locations, training and briefing, and technical matters, while areas were in charge of secreting objects in aid packages, developing miniature cameras, and the like. MIS-X had also been given the responsibility of instructing air crews on what to do if shot down in enemy territory, how to act if captured, and how to escape. Further, the unit prepared and distributed escape kits and carried on coded correspondence with POWs.

It was immediately decided that training should be given to all military personnel destined for combat areas. They were made to understand that if captured it was their duty to

be an "irritant constantly occupying and distracting [their] captors through escape efforts [and] striving through any means possible to relay information to [their] comrades."

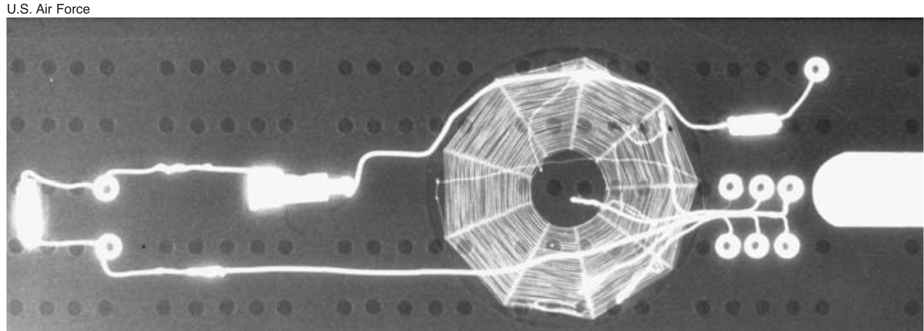
The POW was not to be a passive victim, but was in fact to consider himself still an active combatant.

"The POW was to think of barbed wire as his new front," wrote Lloyd R. Shoemaker, who was an MIS-X operative during the war and wrote about the unit in 1990.

By November 1942, MIS-X was operating and had begun delivering escape and evasion instructions. Those instructions included requirements that servicemen wear heavy shoes in case they had to walk long distances, that they carry escape kits containing such things as mirrors, bandages, fish hooks and line, a tiny compass, and tissue paper maps of known POW camps, that they not carry anything on their persons—such as personal letters—that could identify their unit's location, and that they were to seek out and aid an escape organization existing in any camp to which they were sent.

An escape manual was also produced that detailed such things as how to avoid capture, how to resist interrogation, favored European escape routes, and the like. Among the "salient factors" the escapee needed to make a successful escape, the manual sensibly listed "luck," "good feet," and "common sense."

U.S. Air Force



One example of the ingenuity of MIS-X is this x-ray of a cribbage game board revealing radio components hidden inside by agency operatives. POWs in German camps were able to assemble working radios from these and other parts hidden in everyday items.

Although training and instruction could be given beforehand, many of the MIS-X escape aids could not. They were of no value if they did not arrive at the camps to which they were sent. Likewise, MIS-X needed to know whether they actually arrived at their destination. Further, the POW's in the camps needed to know which items had been sent and where they were hidden.

To solve these problems, a simple letter code was developed. If a POW writing home were to date his letter, for example, March 13, 1943, that would be an indication there was no coded message involved. Dating it 3/13/43, however, would indicate there was such a coded message. Clerks working with the government censorship office scanned all incoming mail from POW camps and separated any that came from known "Code Users" or "CUs" as they were called. Those letters were then routed to Fort Hunt, where they were steamed open, decoded, and recorded. They would then be closed again, slipped back into the normal flow of mail, and continue on their way to parents, girlfriends, brothers, and sisters without the recipients being aware the correspondence had ever been opened and read.

As the training of men to serve as briefers in

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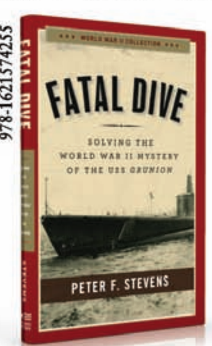

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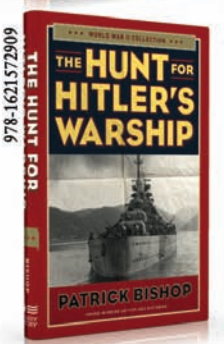

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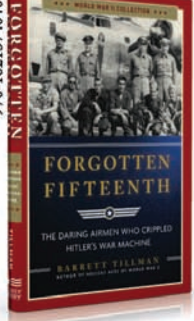

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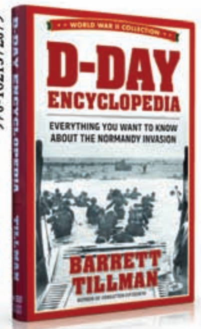

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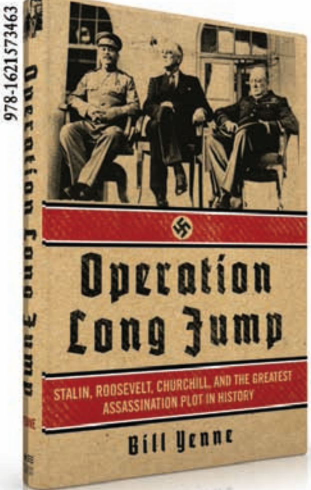

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National Archives

After escaping from captivity in Germany, two American soldiers are questioned by an officer. Such interrogations were valuable in helping MIS-X determine the best ways to assist prisoners and to evaluate their ongoing covert operations.

escape and evasion tactics progressed, one or two men were selected from each battalion and were trained in the letter code. If captured, it was their job to remain in contact with the U.S. military through the regular mails using the new code. These men were so carefully selected, Shoemaker wrote, "that not one ever broke security. Amazingly, MIS-X personnel had been able to maintain greater secrecy that those associated with the atomic bomb project."

By the end of the war, some 7,724 men had been taught the code. None were ever uncovered, and the fact that such a code system was in use was never discovered by the enemy. Through these men, the U.S. military was able to keep in regular contact with virtually every German POW camp.

That correspondence also allowed POWs to send back what knowledge they had gained that could aid in the war effort.

By 1943, for example, MIS-X received coded information from an air officers' camp some eight miles south of Berlin. The coded message read: "Fort emerge forward hatch not working right. Many can't get out." The message alerted the Army Air Forces that the forward hatch on the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber was malfunctioning and preventing evacuation of the plane in emergencies. Within 24 hours repairs had begun throughout the air service. Another message was forwarded to all camps in France warning escapees to avoid the city of Tours, which had heavily policed checkpoints. Another warned of a fake Red Cross inspector who was trying to solicit information from prisoners.

By then parcels had begun to roll into the European camps, but not without some setbacks. Some were humorous, like the operative who was accused of being a hoarder and had a tomato thrown at him when he emptied a College Park, Maryland, grocery of canned fruit for aid packages. Others were more serious, such as the MIS-X operative who was actually detained by the FBI and accused of being a German spy after he tried to buy several identical cameras in a Baltimore store.

But on the whole things went well.

Rather than use Red Cross parcels for its shipments, which would have imperiled the nature of the Red Cross's work, MIS-X created fictional agencies, groups such as the War Prisoners Benefit Foundation and Servicemen's Relief. Three types of packages were sent through each of these agencies: food parcels containing such things as the canned fruit purchased in College Park but no escape aids, clothing, and recreational parcels. It was in the last two kinds of parcels that the escape aids, maps, documents, compasses, civilian clothing, wire cutters, German cash, radio parts, and small cameras, even German uniforms and German-lettered typewriters, were secreted.

In one instance, a camp requested a hand-operated printing press complete with type, ink, and paper, while another asked for "small caliber guns and ammo for close sniping."

In mid-1944, with the Normandy invasion, the number of U.S. troops taken prisoner spiked. About that same time, Hitler issued his well-known order that created "Death Zones" around munitions, armament, and experimental plants in Europe. His order mandated that any escapee captured in these zones would be immediately executed.

In the face of this order, MIS-X informed prisoners that they were no longer expected to escape.

By late October 1944, MIS-X had suspended sending parcels to Europe altogether after being told the Pentagon expected the European war to be over by Christmas. In addition, as Allied troops began closing in on Berlin, German roads and railways were reduced to shambles, making the shipments of parcels almost impossible. At Fort Hunt, activity ground to a near halt with some time being given to aiding POWs in Japanese camps.

The Japanese, however, were much stricter about the number of parcels allowed in their camps. In addition, General Douglas McArthur, the Pacific Theater commander, allowed intelligence operations in his area only if they were under his command, which interfered greatly with the work of MIS-X. The unit did little more than design and issue escape kits for those serving in the Pacific.

With little to do, the MIS-X staff then spent days worrying about the POWs they had been aiding and had grown to know over the previous two years.

On May 8, 1945, the war in Europe ended. Almost immediately escape committee members from the various liberated POW camps were cleared in France and flown to Washington for debriefing.

On August 14, the war in the Pacific ended. Six days later, MIS-X received an order to "burn all your records" and artifacts within the next 24 hours. It took 36 hours.

In that time, MIS-X staff worked over three 30-gallon military trash cans, wadding and burning paper records, breaking up doctored game pieces and game boards, and cutting radio wires into small pieces. Unaltered games, blankets, razors, and clothing were donated to Walter Reed Army Hospital. The Salvation Army was called to remove all remaining food items.

"And with that," Shoemaker wrote, "MIS-X was shut down."

Currently, the U.S. National Park Service is conducting an oral history project about MIS-X and its activities at Fort Hunt. The project is also interested in obtaining copies of papers, letters, photographs, and artifacts connected with MIS-X.

Author Chuck Lyons has contributed to WWII History *on a variety of topics. He resides in Rochester, New York.*

DOCTOR'S MEMORY BREAKTHROUGH

New Discovery for People with Failing Memory

World's Leading Brain Expert and Winner of the Prestigious Kennedy Award, Unveils Exciting News For the Scattered, Unfocused and Forgetful

Dr. Meir Shinitzky, Ph.D. a former visiting professor at Duke University and a recipient of the prestigious J.F. Kennedy Prize

By Steven Wuzubia
Health Correspondent;

Clearwater, Florida: Dr. Meir Shinitzky, Ph.D., is a former visiting professor at Duke University, recipient of the prestigious J.F. Kennedy Prize and author of more than 200 international scientific papers on human body cells. But now he's come up with what the medical world considers his greatest accomplishment — A vital compound. so powerful, it's reported to repair… even regrow damaged brain cells. In layman's terms — Bring back your memory power. And leave you feeling more focused and clear-headed than you have in years!

Dr. Shinitsky explains this phenomenon in simple terms; "Science has shown when your brain nutrient levels drop, you can start to experience memory problems and overall mental fatigue. Your ability to concentrate and stay focused becomes compromised. And gradually, a "mental fog" sets in. It can damage every aspect of your life". Not only do brain cells die but they become dysfunctional as if they begin to fade away as we age. This affects our ability to have mental clarity and focus and impacts our ability to remember things that were easy for us to do in our 20's and 30's.

Scientists think the biggest cause of brain deterioration in older people is the decreased functioning of membranes and molecules that surround the brain cells. These really are the transmitters that connect the tissues or the brain cells to one another that help us with our sharp memory, clear thinking and mental focus, even our powers to reason well. "When we are in our 20's" according to Dr. Shinitzky "our body produces key substances like phosphatidylserine and phosphatidic acid"…unfortunately they are believed to be critical essential nutrients that just fade away with age, much like our memories often do leading to further mental deterioration.

As we get older it becomes more frustrating as there is little comfort when you forget names… misplace your keys…or just feel "a little confused". And even though your foggy memory gets laughed off as just another "senior moment," it's not very funny when it keeps happening to you.

The Missing Link is Found and Tested

It's hard to pronounce that's for sure, but it certainly appears from the astounding clinical research that this one vital nutrient phosphatidylserine (PS) can really make a huge difference in our mental wellness. 17 different double blind studies with placebo controlled groups have been involved in the clinical research of PS with patients between the ages of 55-80 years of age. Periodically the researchers gave these patients memory and cognitive tests and the results were simply amazing:

1) PS patients outperformed placebo patients in All 5 Tests - 100% Success Rate

2) After only 45 days there was a measurable improvement in mental function

3) After 90 days, there was an impressive and amazing improvement in mental function

The group taking phosphatidylserine, not only enjoyed sharper memory, but listen to this… they were also more upbeat and remarkably more happy. In contrast, the moods of the individuals who took the placebo (starch pill), remained unaffected….no mental or mood improvement at all.

My Memory Started to Scare Me.

I would forget all kinds of things and something that I just said earlier in the day would have completely slipped my mind. I almost forgot my granddaughter's birthday and that would have been horrible. I had forgotten lots of other little things along the way. I was worried about it.

Over the last several months I've noticed my memory seemed to be getting pretty unreliable and so I thought I'd better do something about it now. So when I read about this amazing PS nutrient and how much it would help me with my memory I wanted to try it.

It's great! I have actual recall now, which is super. After about 6 weeks of taking it on a daily basis is when I began to notice that I wasn't forgetting things anymore.

Thanks to PS for giving me my memory back. It's given me a lot more self-confidence and self-esteem. I would not trust my memory without it.

- Ethel Macagnoney

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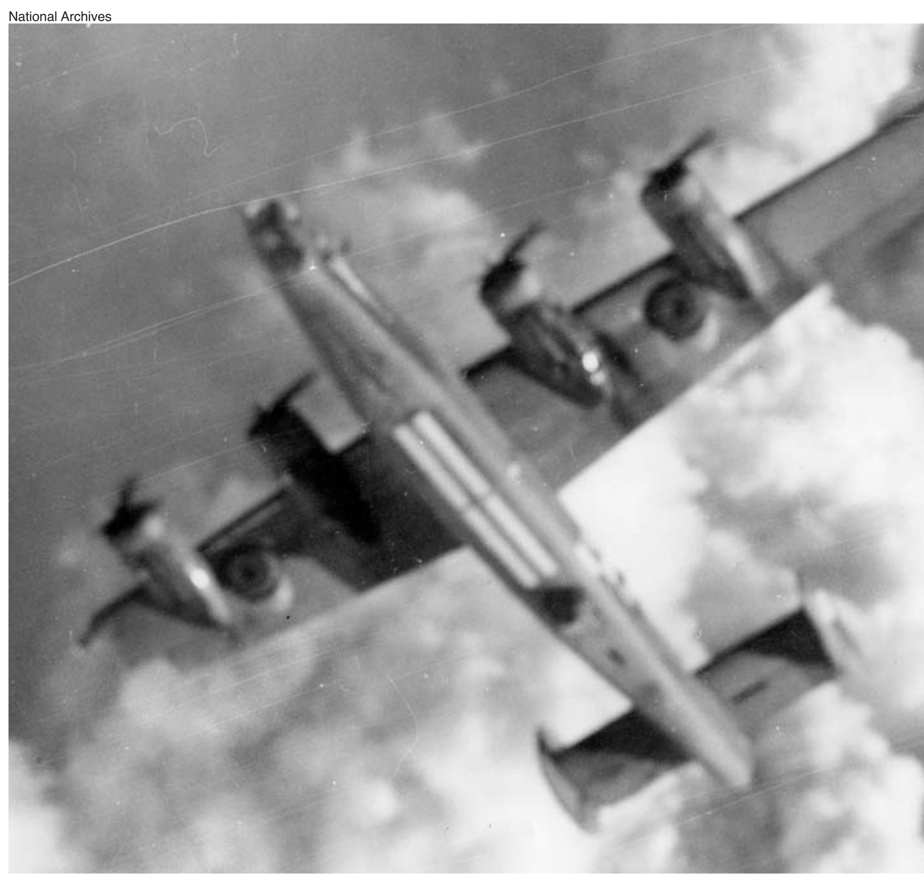
By Duane Schultz

National Archives



The Princess and the POWs

The American airmen Princess Ecaterina Caradja saved from the Germans called her the "Angel of Ploesti."

LIEUTENANT RICHARD BRITT, NAVIGATOR ABOARD A CONSOLIDATED B-24 Liberator bomber named *Chattanooga Choo Choo,* woke up to find himself trapped in the wreckage.

"I was still in the plane," he wrote 45 years later, "with two oxygen bottles in my lap. My left foot caught in the bomb bay wreckage, my right leg folded under me, and the Plexiglas dome of the top turret over my head. I felt no pain, but was unable to think clearly."

Britt called out for his pilot and copilot but got no answer and then noticed someone else lying nearby, but the face was turned away so he could not make out who it was. He turned his head and looked up through the top turret and saw faces staring back at him, talking fast in a language he did not understand. He could not make sense of the confusion but suddenly heard a voice call to him in English. He saw the face of a middle-aged woman.

"Are you American?" she asked. When he said he was, she answered, "We'll have you out of there in a jiffy."

It was August 1, 1943, the day of the first massive Allied air raid on the oil fields of Ploesti, Romania, a major source of oil and gas for the Nazi war machine. The mission itself was a fiasco, almost a suicide run. Colonel John R. "Killer" Kane, who flew that day, called it "the worst catastrophe in the history of the Army Air Corps. It wasn't a raid, it was a full-scale battle."

One of its wings shot off by flak over the Romanian oil refinery operations at Ploesti, a B-24 Liberator begins to spiral earthward. Princess Ecaterina Caradja helped numerous downed Allied airmen to evade imprisonment at the hands of the Axis.

Military intelligence briefers had assured the men that Ploesti was only lightly defended; they were wrong. In 1943, Ploesti was one of the most heavily defended sites in the European Theater. The planners predicted that the mission would do the most damage by flying the big, slow B-24s at treetop level. However, this left the aircraft at the mercy of the German antiaircraft guns, some of which were situated above the planes as they flew down a valley.

Flying so low meant that the crews of those planes damaged over the target could not bail out but were forced to ride their burning planes into the ground. Many of the planes turned into flying coffins before crashing. The sacrifices were horrific, exploding fuel tanks, shrapnel tearing into limbs, bodies incinerated as pilots held their course through sheets of flames left by the previous waves of aircraft.

The five bomb groups became separated when the leading ones flew at a faster speed than those behind and then took a wrong turn before they reached the target. As a result, some of the refineries were not hit at all and even those that were damaged were back in operation within weeks.

Of the 177 B-24s that took off that morning from their base in Benghazi, North Africa, only 93 made it back by the end of the day. Some 60 of those had so much battle damage that they never flew again. A few others got as far as Turkey or Cyprus, and three crashed into the sea. All the others, like *Chattanooga Choo Choo,* went down in Romania. The human losses were staggering. Of the 1,726 crew members, 532 were killed, captured, or listed as missing in action. In addition, 440 of those who made it back to Benghazi were wounded, some so badly that they never returned to duty.

Richard Britt was among the lucky ones. It took four hours for the Romanian rescuers, encouraged by the English-speaking woman, to free him from the wreckage using knives, saws, axes, and stones. Britt's body was covered in blisters from burns by then, caused by gasoline dripping on him, and he was obviously in great pain.

But then he met the woman who saved him—and so many others. She was Princess Ecaterina Caradja, a 50-year-old aristocrat who was having lunch on her 1,000-acre estate a mile from where Britt's aircraft crashed. She had been abducted at age three by her father, a titled nobleman, who was involved in a financial

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National Archives

Flying low above the oil refinery complex at Ploesti, a B-24 Liberator attempts to evade antiaircraft fire as smoke billows from a burning building.

dispute with his family. He took her to England and abandoned her in an orphanage under an assumed name. When her mother died, her father returned and brought her to a convent in France. A family member found Ecaterina almost by accident when she was nine and brought her back to Romania.

Ecaterina was raised by her grandparents; her grandfather had been a prime minister of Romania and had developed the oil fields at Ploesti. Educated in England, France, and Belgium, she became fluent in five languages. She married Prince Constantin Caradja in 1914 at the age of 21 and devoted much of her life to developing orphanages and caring for those in need. And that was what she started doing for downed American airmen on that afternoon in 1943, when Richard Britt was pulled from his plane. She was helping him into her car, a 1937 Plymouth, when two German soldiers appeared and demanded that she surrender the American to them.

Lieutenant Britt understood the language and was amazed to hear her tell the soldiers "in the most impolite German, 'Go to Hell.'" Had Romania not been an ally of Germany at that time, the soldiers would no doubt have shot or arrested her. Instead, they argued with her, and she shouted back at them just as fiercely.

Suddenly, she left Britt leaning against the car and appeared to dash away. He wondered if he had been abandoned. As the Germans reached out to grab him, the Princess opened the rear door on the far side of the car, grabbed Britt from behind, and began to haul him inside. The soldiers also pulled at him, but she was faster and had a better grip. She shouted for her driver to start the car, and the Plymouth roared away.

After Britt was safely in a hospital, she went on to Bucharest to begin her campaign to keep the American airmen from being taken to Germany. She knew people in the highest circles in Romania but, more importantly, she knew their wives, and it was to the women that she made her case. They pressured their husbands—all the way up to the Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu—who was able to persuade the German commander to leave the American flyers in Romania.

A week later, on August 8, Princess Caradja arranged for the American wounded to be moved to a luxury hotel, now converted to a military hospital, located high in the Transylvanian mountains. The Americans received excellent care from a kind and well-trained staff. Princess Caradja visited often, bringing with her several young, attractive English-speaking women and large amounts of candy and food. She considered the Americans to be her new orphans and was determined to see that they got the best of everything.

A German film crew came to make a newsreel to show the world how well American prisoners were being treated, and a local archbishop brought gifts from the Pope. The large wooden crates from His Holiness contained quart bottles of brandy. The men made quick work of the gift, and the brandy made quick work of them. They said it was a memorable day, which none of them remembered very well. When each man left the hospital for a POW camp, there were tears of farewell from them and the staff.

Princess Caradja arranged for another resort in the Transylvanian Alps to serve as the Americans' POW camp. Located in the village of Timisul de Jos, it was a place of such great natural beauty that the men called it the "Gilded Cage." Lieutenant Britt described it as "probably the best prison camp in the world." The officers' camp was in a three-story building, formerly the hotel for a ski resort. It had a spacious dining room, a gym, tennis courts, large bedrooms, and meticulously landscaped grounds. The enlisted men were housed a few hundred yards away in two buildings of a girls' boarding school. While not up to the standard of luxury of the officers' camp, it was far bet-

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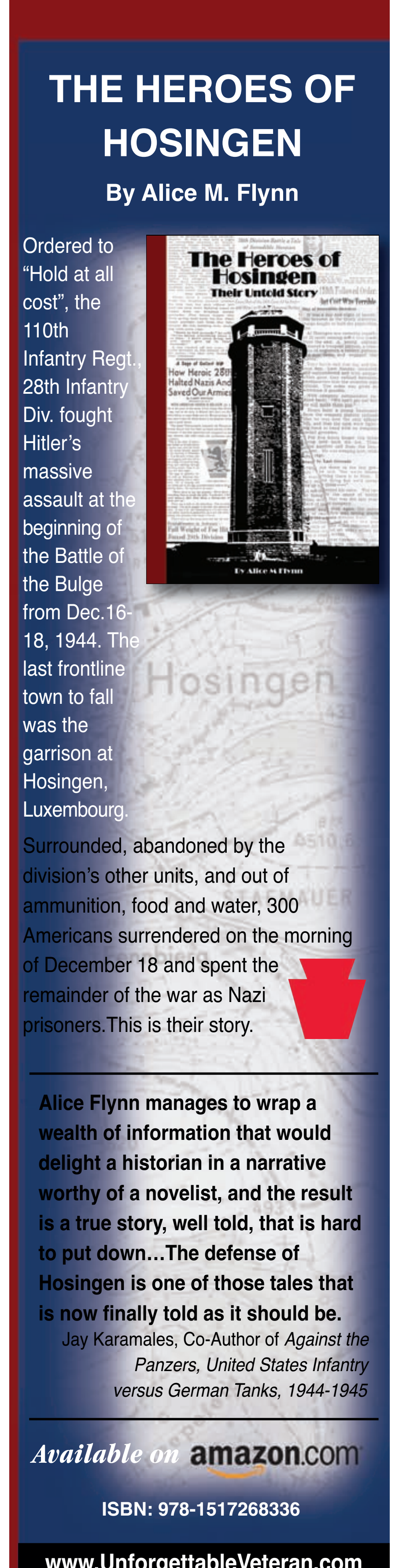

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U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Richard Britt of Houston, Texas, greets Romanian Princess Ecaterina Caradja during a surprise meeting on the set of the NBC television show *Today* in December 1955.

ter than any POW facility in Germany.

The Romanians treated the Americans more like guests than prisoners because they believed that they had flown their mission against the oil fields at such a low level to spare civilian casualties. Aircrews shot down later in high-altitude raids, which did cause massive civilian casualties, were treated like captives and housed near prominent targets such as the Bucharest railway yards. Yet, even those prisoners fared better than those shot down over Germany.

The princess made sure that the Ploesti raiders continued to be treated well. They were paid $225 a month, received regular Red Cross parcels, and were able to purchase real butter, fresh bread, milk, meats, wine, and champagne, items no longer available to most Germans at home. Meals were served on white tablecloths by Russian prisoners, and a barber, a dentist, and a language teacher visited regularly. The Americans even had a radio. The guards knew about it but officially took no notice, allowing the men to keep it once they "promised" not to listen to the BBC, which they did every evening.

Princess Caradja continued to visit and bring gifts—warm winter gloves and underwear, tennis rackets, golf clubs, and English-language books. She arranged weekend passes to Bucharest hotels. Of course, the prisoners were always under guard, but often they got the guards drunk and went their own way, rejoining the hungover guards in the morning. One American was even invited to give a talk at a local Rotary Club meeting.

Although the Ploesti raid airmen lived well, they were still prisoners, and many were determined to escape. The princess sensed their restlessness and spoke to Britt of her concern about what might happen if they were caught. "I'm worried about you," she said. "I'm afraid you might do something foolish. The war is going well for you and badly for the Germans.... You are safe here. If you were to get to a border and were caught, they would shoot you."

Nevertheless, the men were digging a tunnel using a tin can as their only tool. They worked in two-hour shifts but after many weeks had extended it only 12 feet beyond their building. Britt asked the princess for some electrical wiring and lights and for women's clothing, which they planned to wear once they got out. He told her the garments were for a show they were planning to put on.

She brought Britt what he requested, but he was disappointed to see they were bright, gaudy dresses with beads and spangles; the kind worn by flappers in the 1920s. "I looked at her," Britt said, "and saw a glimmer of humor in her eyes. She had outfoxed us." And then the guards found the pile of dirt and the plan to tunnel out was over. None of them escaped during the remainder of their time there.

In August 1944, after Romania severed its alliance with Germany, Princess Caradja helped to arrange an airlift to take "her boys" home. By then there were close to 1,000 Americans, counting all those shot down in later raids on Ploesti. If they had been sent to camps in Germany, they would have had to wait eight more months until Germany's surrender in May 1945 before being freed. Thanks to the princess, they would reach home much sooner.

However, her life became precarious when the Russians occupied Romania. In 1949, the communist regime confiscated her wealth, her

homes and land, and all her possessions, including the orphanages she had established. "My crime," she told an American reporter in 1997, "was being a landowner [which] was worse than being a murderer."

Members of the aristocracy were not issued food ration cards or permitted to have jobs. Some fled the country, but many committed suicide.

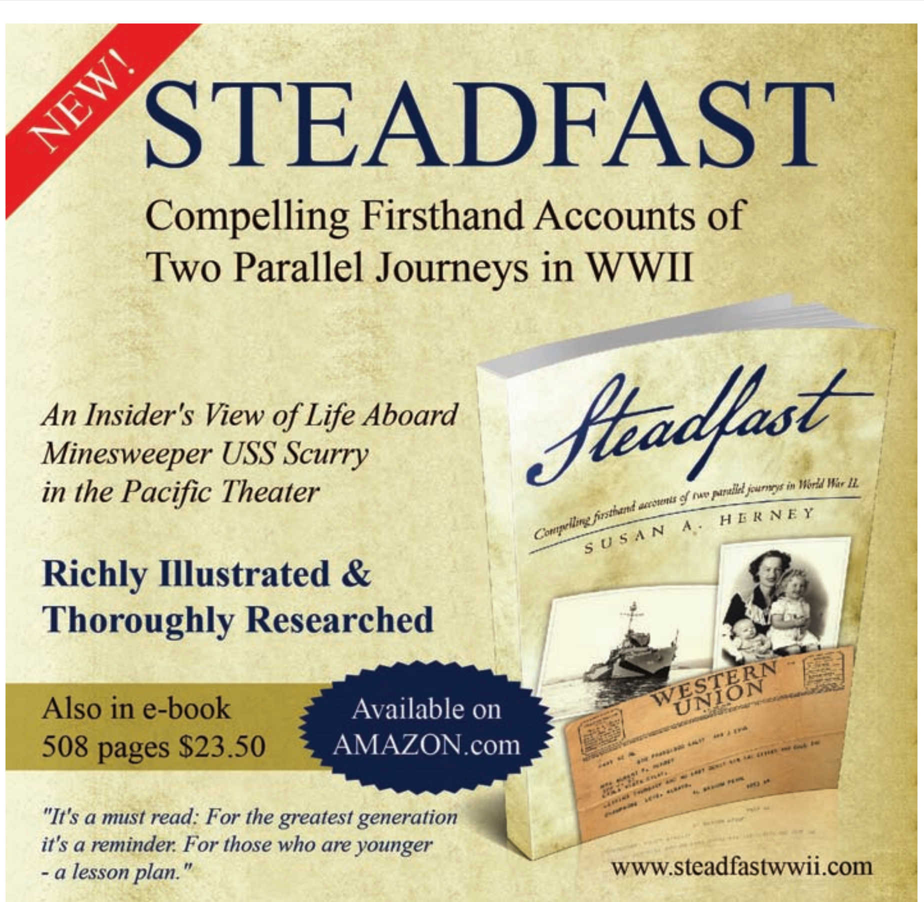
Princess Caradja stayed until 1952, when, with the help of her daughter who lived in Paris, she escaped from Romania by hiding in a tiny compartment on a river barge traveling down the Danube. She remained there, through freezing weather, for 62 days before reaching the West and freedom. She tried without success for the next three years to obtain a visa to the United States. She spent her time giving lectures throughout Western Europe and on the BBC about the threat of communism. In the winter of 1954, she went to Algiers to help earthquake victims. Finally, in 1955, she was granted a visa to America to see "her boys." On her first day, having just gotten off the plane, she was invited to appear on NBC's popular *Today* program hosted by Dave Garroway.

From there she flew to the tiny town of Comfort, Texas, to be reunited with Richard Britt, the navigator she had saved 12 years earlier. For the next 35 years, she made her home in the United States, speaking out wherever she found an audience on the importance of freedom and the dangers of Communism.

The princess searched constantly for the men she had rescued. Finally, in 1972, she had found enough of them to hold a reunion in Dallas, Texas, which became an annual event for the next 19 years. In 1991, when she was 98 years old and confined to a wheelchair, she was honored at a farewell dinner. The princess was going home, back to Romania, where the communists had been overthrown. The new government granted her 20 acres of her former estate, but she chose to live in one of her old orphanages. She died two years later, a few days after reaching the age of 100.

Bill Fili, a rescued airman who had served as the flight engineer aboard a bomber named *Destiny's Deb,* summed up what her boys thought of Princess Caradja. "By her very presence she encouraged us to feel like human beings again. We knew someone cared."

Duane Schultz is a psychologist who has written more than two dozen books and articles on military history. His most recent book is Evans Carlson: Marine Raider: The Man Who Commanded America's First Special Forces *(Westholme, 2014).*



Rock Force *Assault*

AMERICAN AIRBORNE AND GROUND TROOPS SWIFTLY CAPTURED THE FORTRESS ISLAND OF CORREGIDOR IN MANILA BAY WITH A COORDINATED OPERATION IN EARLY 1945.

BY GENE E. SALECKER

AMONG the many objectives facing General Douglas MacArthur on his return to the main Philippine island of Luzon in 1945 was the recapture of the tiny island of Corregidor.

Although Manila could be taken with conventional ground forces aided by both armor and artillery, Corregidor, nicknamed "The Rock," would be a harder nut to crack. Situated only two miles off the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula at the 16-mile-wide entrance to Manila Bay, the large-caliber guns on the island could devastate any ships going into or out of Manila Harbor. Shaped like a giant tadpole, Corregidor's bulbous head measured roughly 1 1/2 miles from side to side and faced almost due west toward the South China Sea while its two-mile-long tail snaked to the east, pointing back toward Manila. While most parts of the tail were only about 25 feet above sea level, the head rose 500 feet above the waters of the bay. Having lived on The Rock for approximately two months in early 1942 when the Japanese invaded the Philippines, MacArthur was more than familiar with the defensive capabilities of Corregidor.

Corregidor was broken into three geographical regions, Bottomside, Middleside, and Topside. Bottomside began at the neck of the island, where the head connected to the tail, and ran eastward, containing all of the tail section. The only barrio, or village, on the island, San Jose, was situated on the southern side of the neck and had served before the war as a housing area for civilian personnel and the dependents of the Philippine Scouts. Boat docks were located on both sides of the neck. On the far eastern end of the tail, on a long strip of flattened land, was Kindley Field, the only airstrip on the island.

Just east of San Jose was a huge dimple of land known as Malinta Hill. Cut into the hill was Malinta Tunnel, which ran straight in for 1,400 feet with perpendicular tunnels running off the main line. The numerous tunnels, built years before the war, contained an underground headquarters, hospital, mess area, a power generator, living quarters, and a quartermaster area. During his time on Corregidor, General MacArthur had housed his staff members, as well as his wife, young son, and his son's nursemaid, inside the relative safety of the thick, bombproof tunnel complex.

The area on Corregidor known as Middleside began just west of San Jose, where the ground began rising toward Topside. Middleside consisted of a small plateau holding the officer and NCO family quarters, as well as a small hospital, a school, and a service club. A few hundred yards above the plateau was Topside, the pinnacle of Corregidor's bulbous tadpole head. Consisting of an even bigger plateau, Topside held a brick headquarters building, numerous brick and mortar "Mile-Long Barracks" buildings, a parade ground, and a nine-hole golf course.

While numerous deep ravines and trees, brush, and large boulders dominated the heights, sheer cliffs on the north, west, and south led straight down to the sea. Situated around the edges of Topside at strategic locations were 23 coastal defense batteries housing 56 12-, 10-, 8-, 6-, and 3-inch guns. Surrendered by the Spanish to the Americans in 1898, it had remained in American hands until May 5, 1942, when it was finally surrendered to the Japanese during their conquest of the Philippines.

As General MacArthur and his forces moved in on Manila from both the north and south in 1945, the capture of Corregidor became crucial. With Corregidor dominating the entrance to Manila Bay, the Japanese guns on the island prevented the Americans from bringing in ships to supply or support the ground forces driving on the city. Working with intelligence reports that indicated there were no more than 900 Japanese soldiers on Corregidor, MacArthur chose General Walter Krueger and his Sixth Army to recapture The Rock.

Krueger was given three choices. He could seize Corregidor with a parachute drop, with an amphibious landing, or with both. Knowing that a parachute drop by itself would be too risky and a lone amphibious assault would be too costly, Krueger chose both. The Japanese had staged an amphibious assault in May 1942 against a half-starved American garrison and had suffered terrible losses. Krueger reasoned that the way to tackle Corregidor was with a combined air and sea attack.

As envisioned by Krueger, the main assault would come from the air. Krueger would drop the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT) on Topside to seize the high ground while a reinforced battalion from the 34th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division made an amphibious assault from the tip of the Bataan Peninsula, which would be wrestled away from the Japanese just prior to the attack. In all, four reinforced battalions, more than 4,500 men, would attack Corregidor, more than enough to overwhelm 900 Japanese soldiers.

The 503rd PRCT was a veteran unit. Activated at Fort Benning, Georgia, on March 10, 1942, the 503rd had been the first paratroopers sent to the Pacific, arriving in Australia in November 1942. Almost a year later, on September 5, 1943, the 503rd became the first

American airborne troops of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team land on the golf course on the island of Corregidor in Manila Bay. The 503rd executed a perilous drop to take the small island from the Japanese in February 1945.

All photos: National Archives

American paratroopers to be dropped into combat in the Pacific, seizing an airstrip at Nadzab, near Lae, during General MacArthur's drive along the northern coast of New Guinea. Several months later, on July 3 and 4, 1944, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were dropped onto the island of Noemfoor, near the northwestern end of New Guinea, in conjunction with an amphibious landing by the 158th Regimental Combat Team.

Although plans had been formulated to drop the 2nd Battalion on July 5, miscalculations with the altimeters on the lead C-47 drop plane had caused the men from the first two battalions to drop from only 125 to 150 feet onto the hard coral surface of a Japanese airfield runway. After suffering almost nine percent casualties to jump injuries, including the loss of one battalion commander, three company commanders, the regimental communications officer, the regimental surgeon, and numerous key noncommissioned officers, the 2nd Battalion was brought over to the island by landing craft on July 9.

After helping to clear the Japanese off Noemfoor Island, the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) had been given time to rest and recuperate. In mid-September, Company C of the 161st Airborne Engineer Battalion and the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion had been attached to the paratroopers, bringing the 503rd up to the capacity of a full regimental combat team.

Colonel George Jones, commanding officer of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, briefs staff officers and other personnel prior to the airborne assault on Corregidor. The troops faced stiff Japanese resistance after they landed.

On November 11, the entire unit had been moved to Leyte Island and placed in reserve during MacArthur's return to the Philippines. A month later it had made an amphibious landing on the island of Mindoro against no enemy opposition. Since December 1944, the paratroopers had been sending out long-range reconnaissance patrols around Mindoro, with very little to show for their efforts.

Considering themselves a veteran unit, morale sank when the paratroopers of the 503rd discovered that the 511th PIR, a "junior parachute unit," was dropped on Luzon. Captain Charles H. "Doc" Bradford, the 2nd Battalion surgeon, wrote, "It seemed again that we would be in reserve, while the big operations in Luzon were carried out by other units." On February 5, 1945, however, morale soared when Colonel George M. Jones was notified that the regimental combat team was about to make another combat jump, this time onto Corregidor.

The jump was scheduled for February 16, and in the next 11 days Colonel Jones and his staff had much to do. On February 6, Jones made an aerial reconnaissance flight over Corregidor with a group of low-level bombers to get a good look at his target. Upon return to base, he contacted General Krueger and picked Kindley Field on Corregidor's tail for his drop zone. He was immediately overruled. Krueger wanted the paratroopers dropped on Topside so that they would have the advantage of the high ground for the support of the amphibious landing. Although much of Topside was covered by the ruins of the prewar barracks buildings, officers' homes, and headquarters building, Jones managed to find two seemingly safe spots to drop his men—the parade ground and the golf course.

While Corregidor's parade ground measured 325 yards long and 250 yards wide and the golf course was roughly 350 yards long and 185 yards wide, both areas were surrounded by tangled undergrowth that had sprung up since 1942, by trees shattered during air and naval bombardments, and by wrecked buildings. Additionally, both areas were pockmarked by bomb and shell craters and were littered with debris, and both fell off sharply at the edges and, on the west and south, gave way to steep cliffs. Although far from ideal jump zones, they were the best that could be found under the circumstances and would provide the paratroopers the advantage of the high ground.

Next, Colonel Jones and his staff had to figure out the prevailing winds over Manila Bay, calculate the correct speed and direction of approach for the C-47s, and determine the optimal jump altitude. It was discovered that the winds over Topside generally came from the east and blew between 15 to 25 miles per hour. Figuring that the C-47s could approach from southwest to northeast at an altitude of 400 feet above Topside, each plane would be over the small drop zones for no more than six seconds. Calculating that it took each paratrooper approximately a half second to get out of the plane and another 25 seconds to reach the ground, it was figured that each man would drift 250 feet to the west during his fall, giving him only 100 feet of safety in case of a sudden wind gust or human error.

With two separate drop zones, it was decided to use two columns of C-47s from the 317th Troop Carrier Group to drop the men. With only six seconds of drop time before the plane was past either drop zone, only six to eight troopers could be dropped at one time. Each plane would have to circle around, one column to the left, the other to the right, and get back in line at the end of the column a couple of times until everybody was safely out of the plane. With the airplanes approaching from the southwest and flying over the island at a diagonal, they at least eliminated the chance of a late jumper falling off the cliff and landing in Manila Bay. Instead, a late jumper would land either on the eastern end of Topside or, at worst, on Middleside.

"Planners knew," wrote historian Robert Ross Smith, "that they were violating the [theory] ... to get the maximum force on the ground in the minimum time. But there was no choice. Terrain and meteorological conditions played

Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Shaped like a tadpole and studded with fortifications that predated World War I, Corregidor was also reinforced with defensive positions prepared by the Japanese. The American parachute assault on the island in 1945 was accompanied by an amphibious landing.

their share in the formulation of the plan; lack of troop carrying aircraft and pilots trained for parachute operations did the rest. The margin of safety was practically zero....”

Undoubtedly, when some of the men heard that they would be jumping onto a drop zone approximately 300 feet by 200 feet on top of a 500-foot-high “rock,” they must have thought that the planners were crazy. When Doc Bradford expressed his doubts to Major Ernest C. Clark, Jr., of regimental headquarters, the major replied, “That’s the beauty of it.... The Japs will never expect it because it looks impossible. No army in this war has pulled anything like it. But our intelligence has got it figured out, and they say it’ll be as easy as opening a kit-bag.” Doubts were raised even higher, however, when it was learned that Colonel Jones expected 20 to 50 percent casualties from the jump into a cluttered, wreckage-strewn area.

In drawing up his plans for the actual assault, Jones decided that since he only had a small number of C-47s to work with and since the drop zones were so small that he would have to bring his paratroopers in via three lifts. Two lifts would come in on the first day, February 16, and the last on February 17. All the planes would be taking off from Elmore and Hill Airstrips near San Jose on Mindoro to fly the 140 miles to Corregidor, a flight time of about one hour and 15 minutes.

According to Jones’ plan, the first group would jump at 8:30 AM from 51 C-47s and consist of the entire 3rd Battalion, Lt. Col. John R. Erickson commanding; the staff officers and radio operators from RCT headquarters; and Company C of the 161st Airborne Engineer Battalion. The 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion would be represented by a section of Headquarters Battery, all of Battery A with its four 75mm pack howitzers, and the 3rd Platoon from Battery D equipped with eight .50-caliber heavy machine guns. The first group had the objective of securing both drop zones for the following two lifts and providing covering fire from above for the intended amphibious landing, which was scheduled to hit the southern beach near San Jose at 10:30 AM.

After the infantrymen were ashore, the second group of paratroopers would arrive at 12:15 PM using the same 51 C-47s that had dropped the first group. Led by Major Lawson B. Caskey, commander of the 2nd Battalion, the group would contain the entire 2nd Battalion; another detachment of RCT headquarters; the Service Company, 503rd PRCT; the remaining engineers from Company C, 161st Airborne Engineer Battalion; the 2nd Platoon from D Battery with its .50-caliber machine guns, and Battery B with its 75mm howitzers, both from the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. After landing, Caskey’s men were to link up with Erickson’s paratroopers and help eliminate any Japanese on Topside.

Finally, the third drop would take off from Mindoro at 7:15 AM the next day, February 17, in 43 C-47s and make the combat drop at 8:30. This last group would be made up of the entire 1st Battalion led by Major Robert Woods; the remaining men of RCT headquarters; the 1st Platoon of Battery D with its .50-caliber machine guns, and Battery C with its 75mm howitzers from the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. Their objective was to assist the other two battalions and begin clearing the rest of Corregidor.

For the first time in the Pacific, the parachute drop would use a control plane. Since there were so many variables and risks concerned with this jump, Colonel Jones would not be jumping with the first stick of men. Instead, he would be flying “about the drop zones” in a C-47 using a radio link with the other planes. Jones was “charged with the missions of correcting the line of flight and/or altering the count of the jump masters based on observations of sticks already dropped.” Once everything was going as planned, Jones would leave the control plane and parachute down to take command.

To prepare the area for the paratroopers and try to eliminate as many Japanese defenders as they could before the actual drop, planes from the Fifth and Thirteen Air Forces had begun pounding Corregidor on a daily basis since January 22. By February 16, both groups had flown a combined 1,012 sorties against The Rock, dropping a total of 3,128 tons of bombs.

On February 13, with just three days to go, U.S. Navy minesweepers swept the waters around the Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor while cruisers and destroyers from Task Group 77.3 began shelling the island. The Japanese on Corregidor returned fire from their big guns, however, and managed to damage two destroyers and a minesweeper. In response, the task group was strengthened on February 15 with

three heavy cruisers and five more destroyers.

On the morning of February 15, infantry from the 151st Regimental Combat Team, 38th Infantry Division made an amphibious landing on the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula, seizing the port of Mariveles with little opposition. As the 151st moved inland, the reinforced combat team of the 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Division was brought ashore in preparation for its amphibious attack on Corregidor the next morning.

By the evening of February 15, all the paratroopers were eager and ready to go. "There was a sentimental aspect about retaking The Rock," wrote Captain Magnus L. Smith, an assistant operations officer for the 503rd PRCT. "Everyone wanted to get in on the show and do what he could. This spirit ran down the chain of command from General MacArthur to the riflemen, sailors, and tail gunners on the aircraft." To further instill eagerness into their troops, the officers of the 503rd PRCT showed captured Japanese movies of the American surrender of Corregidor at their homemade outdoor theater. Depicted in the film were scenes of Japanese soldiers mistreating American captives and stomping on an American flag.

The 3rd Battalion troopers were awakened at 5 AM on February 16 and given an hour to eat, gather their gear, and board their assigned trucks. As with their earlier jumps, each truck was numbered and each waiting C-47 had a corresponding number. After the trucks reached either Elmore or Hill Airfield, the men simply got out of the truck, looked for the corresponding number on one of the C-47s, and then lined up in preparation for the call to climb aboard.

Private First Class Chester W. Nycum of Company G recalled the entire ordeal. "We load on to a convoy of trucks, which are then off to the airstrip where we are directed toward banks of stacked parachutes, each man taking one and strapping it on. We adjust ourselves, and each other, starting to look like a flock of mean, heavily armed penguins as we waddle around fastening our loads."

Around 7:15 AM, the C-47s started taking off from the two airfields on Mindoro and began circling until all 51 planes were in the air. Then, lining up in a formation of Vs, the flight headed northwest toward Corregidor, protected along the way by an umbrella of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt and Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter planes. Ahead of them, flights of Consolidated B-24 Liberator and North American B-25 Mitchell bombers and Douglas A-20 Havoc light bombers were bombing and strafing Corregidor from tail to head, paying particular attention to the areas around the drop zones. Not to be outdone by the aircraft, Navy cruisers and destroyers added their shelling to the cacophony of noise over Corregidor, paying particular attention to the southern beaches around San Jose, site of the intended amphibious invasion.

ABOVE: Their parachutes billowing in the sun, members of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team plummet toward the golf course on Corregidor. Planners recognized the hazards of the jump into a narrow area that was bounded by cliffs and the waters of Manila Bay. OPPOSITE: In this view of the plateau at Topside, American paratroopers are visible among the ruins of a headquarters building and barracks used by the Japanese. The golf course is shown at right, and several parachutes are seen at the edge of the jagged cliffs.

When the transports and fighters were approximately six miles from the drop zones, the C-47s began to form into two columns with a prescribed 500 yards between each plane, 25 or 26 planes per column. The right column would drop the men of Regimental Headquarters, the artillerymen, and H Company on the parade ground, designated Drop Zone A. The left column would drop G and I Companies and the airborne engineers on the golf course, Drop Zone B. Inside every transport, every jumpmaster instructed his stick to stand up, hook up, and make their equipment checks.

In the first plane behind the control plane, Colonel Erickson stood in the door waiting for the green "Go" light. Twenty-three other troopers stood behind him, waiting for their turn to jump on the parade ground. As the C-47 flew over Battery Wheeler, a large gun emplacement on the southwest tip of Topside, the pilot flipped on the green light. The time was 8:33 AM, three minutes behind schedule.

As planned, only seven other men followed Erickson out of Plane No. 1 before the C-47 passed the safe drop area. Even then, the men realized that there had been a miscalculation. The wind was blowing in excess of 25 miles per hour out of the east, and the high jump altitude of 550 feet meant that the men were being blown toward the west—toward the steep 500-foot-high cliffs that led down to the waters of Manila Bay.

Being the first out of the plane, Colonel Erickson landed safely atop Topside in the area of the bomb-blasted parade ground. As he recalled, "Considering the location of my landing, the terrain, and the fact that the area was covered with the jagged stumps of bomb-blasted trees, I was lucky. I had only minor bruises and scratches and was able to get on with my job." The last man of the eight-man stick landed on the very edge of the parade ground.

Watching from his control C-47, Colonel Jones immediately realized that he had to make adjustments, and quick. The next plane was only 500 yards behind the first and coming in at a speed of 100 miles per hour. Instantly Jones was on the radio, telling all of the pilots to drop to an altitude of only 400 feet and shorten the number of men in a stick from eight to five or six. "This did the trick pretty well," admitted Jones, "and contrary to some reports we had no people who landed in the water."

Unfortunately, the three-week aerial bombardment and the preinvasion bombing and shelling had turned Topside into a jumble of deadly obstacles, especially in the area of the parade ground, which was surrounded by buildings. American bombs and shells had demolished all the buildings and had left the area

strewn, according to 1st Lt. Edward T. Flash (Co. F), with "bomb craters, sharp cement boulders, tin, glass, steel bloom from the nearby buildings, and sharp tree limbs sticking skyward." It was no wonder that the Japanese had not prepared Topside against an airborne invasion. The Americans had done it for them.

While the parade ground area was littered with huge chunks of concrete and jagged tree limbs, the small nine-hole golf course turned out to be a better place to land. "We jumped at about 400 feet," admitted Pfc. Reynaldo Rodriquez (Co. G). "I believe this was one of the lowest-level combat jumps made by U.S. parachute troops in World War II.... I was just a little over the treetops that lined the golf course when my parachute blossomed. I came crashing down on the edge of the course. I quickly slipped out of the harness, ran to the assembly area and we established a perimeter around the golf course."

One of the first men to jump onto the golf course was Captain Logan W. Hovis, the surgeon of the 3rd Battalion, who was in the first stick of the second plane. Although Hovis landed safely in the center of the golf course, the strong winds caught hold of his parachute canopy before he could collapse it and dragged his slight 120-pound body across the course. Though he could have tried to grab onto something or cut himself free of the harness, he "did not want to risk injuring his hands." In time, his canopy snagged on a shattered tree but Doc Hovis had become so entangled in his parachute lines that he could not move. Eventually, 1st Lt. William D. Ziler found him and cut him out of his cocoon.

As it turned out, Doc Hovis's expert hands would find more than enough work throughout the next few days. The other 3rd Battalion surgeon, Captain Robert R. McKnight, severely fractured an ankle upon landing and was pinned down by enemy fire for some time behind a fallen tree. After rescue, the injured McKnight was evacuated from Corregidor.

The strong winds blew 25 paratroopers from Company I past the golf course and about 300 yards to the southeast, off Topside and 200 feet down the cliff face near a small promontory named Breakwater Point. Scrambling out of their parachute harnesses, the men collected together and were following a narrow trail back up to the top when they spotted eight or nine Japanese soldiers apparently watching the maneuvers of the landing craft of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment coming around the west end of Corregidor to attack the south shore.

Springing into action, the I Company paratroopers fired their rifles and threw hand grenades at the Japanese assemblage. Unknowingly, they had just killed the Japanese commander on Corregidor, Captain Akira Itagaki, who had failed to fortify Topside against airborne assault on the belief that such an attack was impossible.

After the first few dozen transport planes made their first pass over both the parade ground and the golf course, they began taking ground fire from the Japanese. Although taken completely by surprise by the airborne assault, the Japanese were quick to respond. Now, in addition to the jumble of jagged debris below them, the paratroopers had to worry about incoming fire from the aroused Japanese garrison on Corregidor.

Although the drop zone at the parade ground was less than ideal, one gun crew from Battery A, 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion got lucky. "We were most fortunate in our jump," Pfc. James Wilcox recalled. "Our equipment landed in the exact center of the drop zone.... The net result was that our section had its gun assembled and at our rendezvous point *hours* before the next section arrived. The other two sections had been jumped off the top of the island, some even into the sea, and didn't get there at all."

Colonel Jones recalled the story of the missing artillery sections. "One artillery battery [sic] ... landed on the hillside near the water. They found it [more] convenient to walk to the water's edge and get picked up by a PT boat which was standing by to take care of any water landing emergencies and actually came in over the beach in good style."

The commanding officer of the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, Major Arlis E. Kline, had a most memorable descent. "I was dropping towards Landing Zone A [the parade ground] when I was hit by an unidentified piece of flying steel," he stated. "My arm was so badly wounded I could not control my chute as I passed towards the last few houses along Officers Row." Barely missing becoming impaled on a jagged tree trunk but suffering serious leg injuries, Kline ended up hanging in a tree, with his feet touching the ground but unable to stand and release his harness. For a time, he lapsed in and out of consciousness until one of the men that had followed him out of the aircraft cut him down.

Another member of the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion was Captain Emmet R. Spicer, a doctor. The award for his posthumous Silver Star read in part: "Upon landing by parachute, Captain Spicer immediately organized his aid station and then proceeded under heavy enemy machine gun, sniper and mortar fire towards Wheeler Battery, attempting to evacuate the many wounded personnel to the aid station. He was fully aware of the personal risk involved and was repeatedly advised against going into this dangerous area. Stating that it was his duty to minister aid to the wounded despite the attendant danger, he proceeded at once toward the enemy-infested area. He

paused several times en route to aid injured and wounded soldiers, ministering to them while still under a hail of enemy bullets. His performance of duty in complete disregard to his own safety was far above that normally required or expected and in the execution of them he gave his own life."

When Doc Spicer's body was recovered, it was noticed that he had filled out his own emergency medical tag. Written below his name, rank, and serial number, the doctor had entered the following under "Injury": "GSW [gunshot wound]." Under "Prognosis" he had entered "Death."

Another trooper to win the Silver Star was Sergeant John A. Hanson (3rd Battalion, Headquarters Company). Landing safely atop Topside, he immediately realized that three bundles containing 81mm mortar rounds were missing. "Realizing the urgency for their need," stated his Silver Star citation, "he immediately began a search for them." Finding that they had drifted over the cliff and landed in a ravine near the entrance of several enemy-occupied caves, Sergeant Hanson, "although fully aware of the enemy situation and the danger involved," did not hesitate to climb down the ravine to recover the ammo. Although immediately coming under fire, he reached the bundles and carried the ammunition "piece by piece up the torturous incline to the top. Although near exhaustion and still under enemy fire, he did not stop until the mortars were put in action." The mortar rounds that Sergeant Hanson retrieved were later used to silence a Japanese antiaircraft gun "which threatened personnel jumping in later echelons."

At 9:40 AM, with most of the C-47s having circled three or four times to empty their loads, Colonel Jones decided to leave his own C-47 and join his men on The Rock. In quick succession, he and his orderly jumped from the control plane. "We landed in a sheared-off tree area short of the parade ground, which was our target for landing. A four- or five-inch tree stump took the flesh off the inside of my thighs on each leg, which was somewhat painful, but did not require any attention from the medics.... At any rate, my orderly sustained a broken ankle, but we moved to Topside...."

By 9:50 AM, all of the men were down and the C-47s and escort planes were winging their way back to Mindoro to pick up their second sticks. The island of Corregidor was still taking a pounding from warships and aircraft as the landing barges carrying the 3rd Battalion of the 34th Infantry Regiment neared the landing beach at San Jose. By 10 AM, in spite of his injury and the steady rain of incoming fire, Colonel Jones had his regimental combat team set up in

Initial opposition to the American amphibious landing on Corregidor was light. In this photo, infantrymen of the 34th Regiment land from larger Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) and smaller Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM). A tank is visible forward of the center LCM. This photo was taken near the village of San Jose shortly after the landings commenced.

a devastated Mile-Long Barracks building on the north side of the parade ground. With Jones landing on Corregidor, the attacking forces, both paratroopers and infantry, now became part of "Rock Force" under his overall command. He now had sole control over every American combatant on Corregidor.

By the time the command post was set up, the 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT found some opposition from pillboxes developing along the slopes. The Japanese, members of the Manila Bay Entrance Force who had sought shelter from the preinvasion bombardment, were now fully aware of the assault from above and were filtering through the caves and ravines cut inside Topside and Malinta Hill to fight back at the invaders. And, instead of only 900 Japanese soldiers there was actually close to 6,000, with approximately 3,000 positioned to defend Topside and the other 3,000 concentrated in the Malinta Hill and Tunnel areas. Since most of the Japanese forces had been set up to repel an amphibious invasion, it had taken a little while to respond to the attack from above.

Fortunately for the Americans, the Japanese communication center was located on Topside, far from the suspected invasion beaches, and was captured within the first hour of battle. That coup along with the quick killing of Captain Itagaki left the Corregidor defenders without a head or nervous system to control the rest of the body.

By 10 AM, most of the paratroopers of Companies G, H, and I and the artillery pieces and heavy machine guns of Batteries A and D had assembled and had secured the two landing zones. Only one plane, carrying a stick of demolition men, had been forced to abandon the drop because of engine trouble. Squads of men were beginning to spread out from the drop zones, trying to clear the demolished structures that had suddenly become havens for Japanese snipers. Company G, under the command of Captain Jean P. Doerr, captured and secured the area around Ramsey Ravine, south of and overlooking the left flank of the American amphibious assault. Two .50-caliber machine guns from Battery D, 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion were placed atop the ravine and provided heavy covering fire for the waterborne invasion of the 24th Infantry Division.

At 10:28 AM, the first landing craft carrying the infantrymen touched shore at Black Beach near San Jose, on the south side of the tadpole's neck. Surprisingly, opposition was light against the first four waves, and the foot soldiers pushed quickly inland, reaching the top of Malinta Hill by 11 AM. After that, the infantry and vehicles along the beach began to take heavy fire as the Japanese shook off their preinvasion pounding.

Around 10:30 AM, while the 34th Infantry Regiment troops were landing, the wind began

to increase on Topside. After this discovery and determining that he had 161 jump casualties, including nine people from his medical staff and 13 from the field artillery, Colonel Jones had some doubt about allowing the second jump to take place. While he could have had his 2nd Battalion paratroopers flown to Mariveles on the tip of the Bataan Peninsula and brought over to Corregidor by landing craft, that action would have left the 3rd Battalion on top of The Rock all by itself—already with about 16 percent casualties. However, when communication with Mindoro could not be established the decision on whether to let the 2nd Battalion jump or not became a moot point. The paratroopers were going to jump.

Back on Mindoro, the 2nd Battalion was awakened at 7:30 AM and given a leisurely breakfast. After gathering up their gear, including their weapons and Mae West life vests, they loaded onto the trucks, and beginning around 9:30, were taken to Hill and Elmore airstrips. "We got to the strip about 10:30 as the planes were coming in from delivering the 3rd Battalion," recalled 1st Lt. William T. Calhoun (Co. F). "We could see bullet holes in some of them, so we knew that they had drawn fire. Our plane, No. 23, came in, and we started getting our equipment ready. The pilot told me a lot of jumpers were blown over the cliffs...."

The men from Company E, along with six planeloads of men from 2nd Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the guns and men of Battery B, and machine guns and men from Battery D, were slated to drop on the parade ground. The men from Companies D and F along with three planeloads of men from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, were scheduled to drop on the golf course.

The 50 C-47s began taking off around 11 AM. Once all of the planes were airborne, the flight, which was once again protected by squadrons of P-38 and P-47 fighters, headed toward Luzon. By 12:30 PM, Corregidor was in view.

"Suddenly [Technical Sergeant Philip] Todd [Co. F] said, 'There it is!'" continued Lieutenant Calhoun. "I saw bare, white cliffs rising out of the sea, coming out from under our left wing. Then I could see Topside and chutes strung all the way from the sea, up the cliffs and on 'A' and 'B' Fields. We could hear small arms fire, both rifles and machine guns. I first thought it was all fights on the ground then a bullet crashed through the plane and I said, 'Oh! Oh!'"

Major Lawson Caskey, the 2nd Battalion commander, was the first man from the second lift to jump, leaving his C-47 over the parade ground at 12:40 PM, 25 minutes behind schedule. By now, all of the C-47 pilots knew that they had to stay at about 400 feet altitude, and the jumpmasters knew that there was a 25 mile per hour wind blowing to the east. At the same time, the Japanese were more alert when the second lift arrived, opening fire with antiaircraft guns, especially from Battery Wheeler in the direct flight path of the parade ground planes and from Battery Cheney a little farther north along the west coast.

The commander of Company E, Captain Hudson C. Hill, was the first man out of his plane at 12:44 PM. After the plane passed over the parade ground, he waited the recommended seven seconds and then jumped. "I landed in the ruins of a concrete building," he remembered. "The building was three floors high. Upon hitting the top of the building my parachute collapsed and I tumbled through the ruins to the ground floor. The only serious result of the fall was to have seven teeth knocked out or broken off. The loss of the seven teeth was a fair exchange for possible death had I landed outside the building. The ground outside the building was being swept with intense enemy machine-gun fire from pillboxes...."

With blood streaming from his mouth, Captain Hill discarded his parachute and harness and surveyed the situation. Eventually, about 50 men from Company E landed in or around the ruined building he was in and became trapped by machine-gun crossfire coming from Batteries Wheeler and Cheney. At both batteries, the Japanese had managed to retrieve a couple of .50-caliber American machine guns and ammunition that had been misdropped by the first lift and were now firing them at the invading paratroopers of the second lift.

"Several men could be [seen] attempting to free themselves from their parachute harnesses and avoid the heavy enemy fire," Hill continued. "Several of the men in the area did not move, they were still in their harnesses, and very evidently would never know what hit them."

While floating down into the area south and west of the parade ground, Staff Sergeant Edward Gulsvick, the platoon sergeant for Company E's 60mm mortar platoon, was hit and severely wounded by Japanese fire. Upon landing, he saw that several Japanese were attempting to "spear the jumpers on their bayonets as they landed."

Although already wounded and in an exposed position, Gulsvick opened up with his Thompson submachine gun and killed 14 Japanese soldiers singlehandedly. Ignoring his severe wounds, Sergeant Gulsvick attempted to drag a fellow paratrooper to safety but was hit and killed by simultaneous bursts from Japanese machine guns near Batteries Wheeler and Cheney. For his unselfish act of heroism, Sergeant Gulsvick received a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross.

The men from Company F jumped over the golf course and caught as much enemy fire as the men jumping onto the parade ground. Lieutenant Edward T. Flash, commander of F Com-

Immediately after reaching the ground on Corregidor, paratroopers of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team assemble and set off to seize objectives. The paratroopers took on determined Japanese defenders but ultimately wrested the island from enemy control.

pany's 2nd Platoon, recalled, "Our aircraft made three passes, extremely low, dropping approximately three troopers each pass. Each time we passed over the golf course the floor of the aircraft was riddled with bullets, splinters flying everywhere. Three men were wounded in the legs on the first pass. Two men insisted on jumping, but the third man was bleeding profusely and had to return with the aircraft to Mindoro."

After hitting the ground, 20-year-old Private Lloyd G. McCarter caught sight of a Japanese machine-gun nest that was spraying his Company F comrades as they touched down on the golf course. Disregarding his own safety, he raced across 30 yards of open ground under intense enemy fire, emptying his Thompson submachine gun and tossing hand grenades toward the nest. When only a few yards away, a well thrown grenade landed in the midst of the Japanese position and silenced the gun forever.

Private First Class Richard A. Lampman was in another Company F plane. "I remember being four or five in the stick," he wrote, "and when I landed helped a trooper that had one of those sharp pointed trees in his leg all the way through. He could not stand or lay [sic] down. I managed to break it so he could lay flat on the ground. I also helped one of the 'old timers' who had broken his ankle. This was Acting Sergeant James Wright.... The wind was blowing their chutes and I was afraid they would become more seriously wounded or killed."

"Each artillery battery dropped six 75mm pack howitzers as we did not know what our losses would be," commented Captain Henry W. Gibson, commanding officer of Battery B, 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. "My men recovered all six of our howitzers plus two of A Battery's. I headed for battalion headquarters in the old barracks to report to the battalion commanding officer. When I got there, I found Major [Arlis] Kline [the commanding officer] on a stretcher with his head all bandaged and his arms in slings." Kline had been wounded in the arm while descending and had sustained further injury when he landed in a tree.

Lieutenant Calhoun, who jumped over the golf course, recalled, "The wind was strong. I sure did want to get this landing over, and I did in a hurry. From the low altitude jump we were not in the air long. I went down into a large crater, slammed into its rocky side with my right side splintering the stock of my M1 rifle. It knocked the breath out of me and I thought broke some ribs. I did not breathe easy for days.... Although shaken I was very glad to be down on the ground safely and without injury."

Around 1:20 PM, while some of the 2nd Battalion paratroopers were still landing, there was a steady increase in sniper and heavy machine-gun fire from the east. West of the golf course, Captain Hill and the 50 men from Company F still trapped inside one of the Mile-Long Barracks buildings finally managed to contact their executive officer and call in an artillery strike on the enemy gun emplacements that had them pinned down since landing.

Remembered Captain Hill, "When the welcome sound of the 75mm pack howitzer was heard ... the fire from the pillboxes abruptly ceased."

By 1:30 PM, about an hour after the 2nd Battalion began its combat parachute drop, everybody was on the ground. Although numerous medical bundles had been lost or remained unclaimed, the battalion and regimental aid stations had been set up and the uninjured doctors were doing all that they could for the injured

ABOVE: Vigilant against Japanese soldiers hiding in caves and ditches, American soldiers advance warily across Corregidor's rough terrain. The Americans were victorious after a brief but tough fight. BELOW: American soldiers fire a 60mm mortar at Japanese troops holed up in a cave on Corregidor. The Americans were forced to root out diehard defenders, some of whom chose suicide rather than surrender.

and wounded. At 2:00, Colonel Erickson directed naval gunfire against some pesky Japanese pillboxes that were holding up the advance of his 3rd Battalion troopers.

By 3 PM, the Americans were firmly in possession of the high ground of Topside. Both the 2nd Battalion and RCT Headquarters had their command centers set up in the barracks buildings just north of the parade ground, while 3rd Battalion Headquarters was set up in a lighthouse just north of the golf course. The 2nd Battalion had relieved 3rd Battalion of the job of holding the drop zones and had established a perimeter with Company E to the north and northeast, including the hospital and more barracks buildings. Company D held a position along the east and southeast flank while Company F established a line to the west. The 1st Platoon of Company I, although part of the 3rd Battalion, was kept in place on the southwest side of the perimeter, facing dangerous Battery Wheeler and a steep ravine, where 24 Japanese soldiers had already been killed.

Once relieved, the 3rd Battalion had headed northeast on Topside, hoping to grab positions to aid the infantrymen of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Regiment and establish contact with the men on Malinta Hill. Company G traveled the farthest east and held a spot overlooking San Jose and the landing beaches, controlling the route leading down to Bottomside. Company H went northeast and established a perimeter behind an antiaircraft emplacement known as Battery Chicago, which they had captured from behind, and the last two platoons of Company I held the high ground overlooking Ramsey Ravine, just southwest of San Jose.

At 3:10 PM, as if to punctuate the fact that the 503rd PRCT was there to stay, T/5 Frank Guy Arrigo and Pfc. Clyde Bates shinnied up the tall Corregidor flagpole at the parade ground under sniper fire and raised the American flag over The Rock for the first time in almost three years. The singular sight of that flag helped boost the morale of everyone who saw it.

Near nightfall, Companies G, H, and I were pulled back from their outside positions and into a tighter perimeter. Although sporadic fire continued throughout the night, most of the fighting on February 16 was over. The second jump onto Topside had been less destructive than the first, mainly because the pilots and jumpmasters had learned from the mistakes of the first drop. The total jump injuries sustained during the second drop was somewhere around 50. Combined with the 161 injuries of the first drop and several listed as "Later Reported," the combined total for both jumps was 222 injuries. Since 2,050 men from the 503rd jumped on

Raising their flag in triumph for the first time on Corregidor in three years, Americans T/5 Frank Guy Arrigo and Pfc. Clyde I. Bates climb the pole to secure the banner.

Corregidor on February 16, jump casualties amounted to a loss of 10.8 percent, much less than the 20-50 percent that had been feared.

In addition to the 222 jump casualties, the 503rd PRCT also had 50 men wounded in their parachutes while descending or shot on the ground while still in their chutes. However, the entire regimental combat team suffered only 21 deaths. Three men had parachute malfunctions, with one man landing in the bottom of the empty Topside swimming pool. Another two were killed when they slammed into concrete buildings as they landed. Fifteen were killed by Japanese fire after becoming entangled in their chutes. The cause of death for the last man is not stipulated. In all, by the end of February 16, 1945, the 503rd PRCT had been deprived of the services of 293 men from all units, a total loss of 14.2 percent.

At 8:30 AM on February 17, another 44 C-47 transport planes carrying Major Robert H. Woods's 1st Battalion paratroopers from the Mindoro airstrips passed over Corregidor. Lieutenant Calhoun, already on Topside, wrote, "Expecting to welcome the arrival of the 1st Battalion, many of the 2d and 3d Battalion men on the ground were surprised when the only parachutes to fall from the aircraft were those of the equipment bundles. Word had not filtered down to all ranks that it had been decided that Topside was sufficiently secure that there was no need to suffer unnecessary jump casualties on the dangerous and undersized landing zones."

During the night, after studying the available information, and still working under the assumption that Corregidor was inhabited by no more than 900 Japanese soldiers, Colonel Jones had made the decision to bring the 1st Battalion in by landing craft.

While the planes were passing over the island and the air crews were shoving out the equipment bundles, the Japanese opened up with a heavy barrage of antiaircraft fire. Noted Lieutenant Calhoun, "It is just as well [that the third jump was not made], for whilst Topside may have been considered by Rock Force HQ to be secure, the ravines surrounding it were most definitely not. It was from the ravines that numerous streams of small arms fire arced upwards towards the fully-laden aircraft as they slowed overhead to drop their bundles. Sixteen of the aircraft received fresh holes from hits. Several men, principally airmen, were wounded by this ground fire."

Flown to San Marcelino Airfield above the Bataan Peninsula, the 1st Battalion paratroopers were eventually placed aboard landing craft and brought to Corregidor's Black Beach at 4:35 PM.

"Once Rock Force was ashore," wrote historian Smith, "operations on Corregidor evolved into a large scale mop-up." Rock Force developed a pattern to eliminate the Japanese.

Noted Colonel Jones, "During the period from 16 February to 23 February our systematic destruction of the enemy fell into a familiar and an extremely effective pattern; direct fire of artillery used as assault weapons on enemy emplacements, naval and/or air bombardment followed by immediate ground attack.... In proportion, enemy casualties far exceeded ours."

On the afternoon of February 18, while the paratroopers were still consolidating their positions, Private Lloyd McCarter, who had singlehandedly attacked a Japanese machine-gun position five minutes after landing on The Rock, killed six Japanese snipers that had been firing at members of his Company F. In order to figure out where the deadly fire was coming from, McCarter had stood up, drawn the snipers' fire, and then in turn calmly shot down each man.

During the predawn hours of February 19, the Japanese launched a banzai attack, costing them more than 400 men. Private McCarter was instrumental in throwing back this attack. On the evening of February 18, McCarter had spotted Japanese troops trying to outflank the Company F perimeter and had voluntarily moved into an exposed position so that he could better see the enemy and pick them off with his Thompson submachine gun.

Throughout the night, the Japanese continued to attack his position, but McCarter never wavered, killing each man that came close to his

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Bob Watson

LAST MAN IN HELL

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

ROBERT L. WATSON SURVIVED THE FIGHTING ON OMAHA BEACH AND LATER GUIDED LANDING CRAFT TO SHORE AND ESCORTED DEPARTING GERMAN POWS.

The Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM) carrying Army engineers and Navy beachmasters hit a mine on its way into Omaha Beach. The explosion rocked the craft, killing the men in the front and tossing others into the water. Beachmaster Robert L. Watson flew backward into the air, cutting his left leg on the LCM's bulwark before plunging into the freezing water.

The saltwater stung his wounds. The 60 pounds of equipment on his back pulled him into the depths, but he quickly inflated the lifebelt around his chest and popped to the surface. "I'm in shock," recalled Watson, "and I'm scared to death." It was early morning on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and

he could not tell which of the other men bobbing in the water was alive or dead. Worse, he knew that other landing craft were not allowed to stop and pick up survivors.

"I thought I was the last man in hell," he recalled.

Watson soon spotted a Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVP) headed straight for him. He screamed at the coxswain, "Hey! Stop! Hey! I'm over here!" The craft slowed long enough for him to grab a rope drooping from the side. He clung to the side of the craft with one hand, gagging as salt water splashed his face. His new ride dragged him all the way to the beach, tearing the skin off his hands in the process.

Watson let go of the rope about 40 yards from the beach in shallow water. He found a nightmare. German artillery shells exploded on the beach while machine-gun fire stitched the sand. Sherman tanks burned on the water line and half-sunk landing craft bobbed in the water, red with blood. The dead and body parts littered the beach.

"It was horrible," Watson remembered. "Everyone's screaming for help, everyone's wounded."

Watson crawled on his hands and knees up the beach, his uniform in tatters but his helmet still on. "Bob, get your head together," he told himself and kept repeating, "I don't want to die here, I don't want to die here." Once

A landing craft delivers soldiers to the Normandy beachhead. Navy Beachmaster Bob Watson grabbed onto the rope hanging on the side of a similar craft to save his life and it dragged him to Omaha Beach in the opening hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944.
RIGHT: Navy Beachmaster Bob Watson spent 28 days on Omaha Beach and received a battlefield promotion to coxswain.

National Archives

out of the water, he pulled his bolt-action Springfield rifle from its protective plastic bag.

Watson then crawled up to an Army medic who had lost everything but the strings of morphine syrettes he wore around his neck. He gave Watson one and, shouting over the din of battle, told him, "Just give it to a medic." Watson, in return, fished some sulfa powder and pressure bandages from his first aid kit and handed them to the medic. Watson climbed farther up the beach, over dead and wounded Americans, and removed all the first aid kits he could find, throwing them back to the medic.

Watson had arrived an hour into the battle. Companies E and F of Colonel George Taylor's 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division had landed on Fox Green and Easy Red Beaches opposite the Colleville Draw and encountered a slaughter. The Germans defended either side of the draw with two major defensive positions, Widerstandsnests (WN) 61 and 62. On Watson's left, WN 61 stood low to the beach firing an 88mm cannon from a concrete bunker. On his right, WN 62 stood atop a hill dominating the area with its 75mm cannon.

Although some heavy guns had been knocked out before Watson arrived, enemy artillery, mortars, machine guns, and sniper fire rained onto the beach. Many American soldiers were killed as they charged out of their landing craft. Some never made it out. Those who survived struggled up the beach, exhausted and weighted down by equipment and soaking wet uniforms. Many more were cut down. Almost all the officers in F Company were either killed or wounded.

Watson continued up the beach until he met an Army captain who ordered him to the firing line. Watson pointed at his helmet, which bore the distinct Navy orange crescent and a black number six on the front and gray band around the base, identifying him as a Navy beachmaster. The captain was unimpressed. "Get your ass up there or I'll blow your head off!" he demanded.

The carnage of ground combat had been the farthest thing from Bobby Watson's mind some 2½ years earlier as he trimmed rose bushes in a garden with his father across the street from their Lynn, Massachusetts, home. Watson's mother interrupted their work when she called out from their house to come listen to the radio. They rushed inside to hear that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. Like so many Americans, Watson's first thought was, "Where the hell is Pearl Harbor?"

Both: National Archives

Navy beachmasters train at England's Slapton Sands with signal equipment to ensure supply ships bring in the correct equipment.

Watson, a 17-year-old student at English High School, was working as the head usher at the local movie theater when the country went to war. As the months passed, he spent his time watching war newsreels, seeing bayonet charges, weapons firing, and men getting killed. When his draft notice arrived in July 1943, he decided to join the U.S. Navy, where he figured he would get three hot meals a day and sleep on a bed. He realized that in the Army and Marine Corps, "You can't get a deal like that." But before he left, he watched his last movie, Humphrey Bogart's *Casablanca*.

Watson joined the Navy at the Newport Naval Station, Rhode Island. After six weeks of training, he and his fellow draftees were declared sailors. Upon graduation, the new swabbies lined up in front of their barracks and an officer offered them two options: men less than six feet in height were offered the submarine service; everyone else was offered the Naval Armed Guard.

The next day, the men entered a large auditorium where they were assigned to outgoing units. Watson did not like his chances for a good assignment. "You know if your name ends with W, X, Y, and Z, you're in a world of hurt."

When the officer calling names finally reached the letter W, he called out, "Six-man draft of the 6th Naval Beach Battalion, Camp Bradford, Virginia, amphibious training station! About face!" Watson and five other sailors headed off to their new school. When he asked the coxswain in charge where they were going, the coxswain said, "You got it made! You're gonna be a gator! You're gonna crawl out of the water and onto the beach."

The men soon arrived at Camp Bradford, where they slept on coiled springs in their Armbruster tents while awaiting their mattresses. At the quartermaster, Watson received Army gear, complete with an Army jacket and paratrooper boots. When he was issued a double-bladed knife to strap to his leg for combat, he wondered, "What happened to the Navy that served three meals a day?"

Naval beach battalions worked the landing beaches after an amphibious assault, managing the incoming ships that delivered men and vehicles. They coordinated with Army commanders on the battlefield and ordered weapons or equipment needed from inbound ships. They also handled casualty and prisoner of war (POW) evacuations.

Commander Eugene C. Carusi led the 6th Naval Beach Battalion, which was made up of three companies—A, B, and C—and a battalion headquarters. Watson was assigned to Company B's 6th Platoon, known as B-6, under the command of Lieutenant (j.g.) George Wade, the beachmaster, and Ensign James E. Allison, the assistant beachmaster. Both Wade and Allison had graduated from the accelerated officer's course and were known as 90-Day Wonders. Watson thought highly of them: "They were two of the nicest guys you wanted to meet."

The training was intense. The sailors learned to fire various weapons, conducted gas mask drills, practiced aircraft recognition, and crawled under logs while live rounds snapped above their heads. When they were ordered to

Clattering down rope ladders with full equipment, American soldiers board a landing craft for the invasion of France. Bob Watson thought this kind of training irrelevant until D-Day.

climb over a wall draped with a cargo net, Watson thought, "What the hell do I need that for?" He would later learn.

Watson trained to fire a number of weapons, including a bolt-action M1903 Springfield rifle. "I had never fired a damn rifle," he admitted, yet enjoyed hitting the targets. The Marine sergeant watching Watson's skill asked him to sign a form. "I'd put you in the Marine Corps as a sniper." Watson told him no thanks. Knowing that the Marines fought in hand-to-hand combat with knives, he thought to himself, "I'm 18 years old, I'm a Christian. Can I do that?"

The most important training involved loading onto an LCVP, also known as a Higgins Boat, which would head out about a half mile into Chesapeake Bay, then turn around and head back to the beach. LCVPs held up to 35 men and had a retractable bow ramp. When the men heard an air horn blown by either Lieutenant Wade or Ensign Allison on the beach, the ramp dropped and the men charged out. They had to be off the craft in 36 seconds.

"If they blew the horn halfway in," recalled Watson, "the coxswain would stop, drop the ramp, and we would swim to shore." To keep from drowning, the men inflated their life belts by squeezing two switches inside the belt, which activated two carbon dioxide bottles.

After six months of constant training, the men headed to Long Island, New York, where they waited for a transport ship. Watson had time to meet his mother and sister, who had come down from Massachusetts for the day. Finally, on January 7, 1944, Watson and his mates lined up on Pier 92 and boarded the SS *Mauretania*, a luxury liner converted into a troopship. After descending a seemingly endless amount of stairs and ladders, he reported to an assigning officer and asked for a top bunk. The officer said that Watson and three other sailors would get the top bunk. They would rotate sleeping to maximize space.

The *Mauretania* was part of a huge convoy headed to England via Nova Scotia. The convoy could only sail as fast as its slowest ship. During the 13-day trip there were several German U-boat warnings. Over the intercom came the order, "Batten down the hatch! Lock that sucker down!" The alerts left an impression on Watson. "It was quite scary," he remembered.

One night while up on deck, Watson could see something burning on the horizon. "We lost about 10 ships out of about 100."

When the ship finally docked at Liverpool, Watson and his fellow sailors loaded onto trucks and headed south to a small town where they billeted for less than a month before shipping out to Swansea, Wales, on April 12. They set up in a cow pasture, living in tents. "Brrrrr!" said Watson, recalling the experience. "We were allowed one bucket of coal a day and all you could steal."

The sailors discovered they were across the street from the 1st Infantry Division's 5th Engineer Special Brigade, to which Watson's 6th Naval Beach Battalion was now attached. Together they would support Colonel George Taylor's 16th Infantry Regiment for the amphibious assault on the Fox Green and Easy Red sectors of Omaha Beach.

Settling in, Watson dug trenches outside his tent for air raids and spent his time getting to know the Army engineers. During a surprise inspection, he discovered that he was the only sailor who knew his rifle's serial number. After a few months of training, the sailors and engineers transferred to Portland on the southern coast of England to await the order for the invasion. He and his comrades slept in tents and in civilians' houses, and he could see about 500 ships in the port. There, the men learned they were destined for Normandy. They were shown a sand table of Omaha Beach, and an officer told them, "This is the beach."

The sailors learned they were hitting the beaches across from the town of Colleville and the Colleville Draw, the road between the cliffs that overlooked the beach. They were told to look for a church steeple on the way in to stay on course.

Before boarding their ships, Watson and about 9,000 men were marshaled into a huge valley. There they found a general standing atop a tank. "You now are going to lead the great crusade!" the general said into a speaker sys-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM) races for the beach. The LCM Watson rode in hit a mine and sank nearly 300 yards from Omaha Beach. BELOW: Under fire, American soldiers and sailors crawl up the beach near the Colleville Draw through enemy obstacles. The man on the left wears a Navy engineer helmet with a white inverted "U." Bob Watson wore a similar helmet, except his "U" was orange.

tem. Watson was shocked by the general's loudness. "Hitler could hear everything he said!" The general continued, "You are the best trained army in the world. We are going to invade France, and I am sorry to inform you that some of you will not be coming back."

To Watson, it was the same pep talk he had heard from his football coach. But then the general made a promise that made him feel better about the invasion: "At 0300 the Air Force will come over and bomb the beach so severely you won't even need to take your shovel with you since there will be so many craters on that beach. There will be bomb craters everywhere! At 0430, Navy guns will open up and pulverize the German defenses. We're going to send in a dozen LCIs with rockets, and we're going to run those rockets onto the beach and pulverize those shore batteries. We're going to send in one hundred tanks. It will be the biggest bombardment parade in history."

He never learned the name of the general.

On June 4, Watson and his team boarded the transport USS *Henrico* (APA-45) for the trek across the Channel. It joined the assault force and headed out to sea but turned around when an approaching storm threatened the invasion. The *Henrico* returned to port for 24 hours and headed out again on the night of June 5. Onboard, Watson could see ships everywhere. "In front of us were minesweepers," he said.

Reveille sounded at 3 AM on June 6, D-Day. Watson could hear the anchor drop. An officer called out, "Everyone's going to have a shower and everyone's going to get fed."

After a shower and a breakfast of steak and eggs, Watson waited down below for his number to be called. When he heard it, he went up on deck to his assigned spot, ready to load onto an LCVP. A deck officer informed his group that halfway to the beach they would see a control boat that would help guide them in. He concluded by telling the men they were about to descend cargo nets to the craft, and if they fell off, "We will not stop the war!"

Loaded down with equipment and with his plastic-covered Springfield rifle strapped on his back, Watson went over the side to discover a LCM waiting below. LCMs were bigger than LCVPs and designed to carry vehicles or tanks. Watson dropped into the craft and took his place aft with three other beachmasters. Engineers with Big Red One patches, the symbol of the 1st Infantry Division, filled the rest of the craft.

"I had the warmest seat," said Watson. "My butt was against the engine room bulkhead."

The LCM took off into four-foot swells. Water splashed into the craft as the bilge pumps fought to keep the craft afloat. The men used their helmets to scoop out the ankle-deep water. Looking to his left, Watson saw an LCVP cruising three inches above the water. "The next thing I knew, it was gone."

Watson's craft was scheduled to land at 7:30, an hour after the battle for Fox Green and Easy Red sectors had started. The plan had been for amphibious tanks to land first, quickly followed by two infantry companies of more than 200 men to fight the enemy while engineers destroyed beach obstacles. More tanks, artillery, and other vehicles and reinforcements would follow. Watson and his men would come in and set up equipment to manage ship-to-shore operations.

Nothing went as planned. In the predawn darkness, the craft carrying the tanks took longer than expected to form up, and the assault infantry hit the beach without armor protection. The various waves of landing craft became mixed up in the confusion.

"Every landing craft was taking on water like crazy," said Watson. LCVPs began sinking. Those that stayed afloat took enemy fire. "Landing craft were exploding around me." Watson succumbed to seasickness and threw up. He was not alone. At least he could see the church steeple in Colleville, telling him he was on target.

The enemy fire spooked the coxswain, who slowed his craft to a crawl. "Get to the beach!" the Army officers yelled at him. "Get this thing going!" Their reprimands worked. He gave it more power. That's when Watson's LCM, about 300 yards from the beach, hit the floating mine. He then hitched a ride from the LCVP and reached the carnage of Omaha Beach. Watson remembered what the general and the deck officer had told him about the signal boat and the battlefield preparations. None of it had come true. There was no control boat out in

the water, there were no bomb craters on the beach to use as foxholes, and he never saw an Allied plane.

Watson joined the firing line as ordered by the captain. About 300 yards to his right, he could see Germans running behind WN 62 to a reinforced hut, retrieving supplies. He loaded his wet ammunition clips into his rifle and took aim. "I was scared that the ammunition wouldn't work," he said, but he squeezed off his first shot without any problems. He then fired about 10 clips at the enemy.

"I don't know if I killed anyone or not," said Watson. "I didn't really care."

After doing his part in reducing WN 62, Watson decided to head back to the beach and perform his job. "My orders were to get on the beach line and move to the beach station." While he searched for his unit, he came across Lieutenant (j.g.) James F. Collins, the medical officer. He took a look at Watson's lacerated leg and said, "Later."

Company B sailors gathered just below WN 62. Out of the entire company, there were only 36 left. "A lot of our boys didn't show up," said Watson. One missing man was Lieutenant Wade. "He never made it to the beach."

Watson did find Dick Wyatt, who had been with him on the LCM before it sank, but he did not know how he survived the sinking. The men put up large red banners and flags, signaling to incoming ships that they were approaching Easy Red Beach. Every quarter of a mile along both Fox Green and Easy Red the beachmasters set up sandbagged communication stations. "The Germans made great sandbags," he said.

Watson and his fellow beachmasters set up colored signal lights to designate the beach at night and regular signal lights to communicate with ships in the Channel. "The Army called us and said, 'We need ambulances,'" explained Watson, "and we would get on the lights."

The beachmasters became so proficient they joked that they could order an ice cream sandwich with their lights and flags. "We were Amazon!" joked Watson. "Anything you needed, you could pick up the phone, and we'd get it." When the requested ambulances drove off their craft, the beachmasters would drive a jeep in front of them and lead the convoy up the draw and to the 1st Infantry Division headquarters.

As the fighting progressed inland, wounded Americans and prisoners of war were brought down to the beach. Watson was surprised to find that many of the Germans were not German. They were foreign conscripts. Despite enemy artillery still exploding on the beach, the Americans set up a POW pen at the wide open base of the draw (a parking lot today). Both POWs and the wounded needed to be moved off the beach since there was no room for additional craft to land.

Watson was working with Wyatt when a boatswain's mate ordered them both to the beach. They found Ensign Allison waving a red flag, signaling the ships in the Channel to stay away as enemy artillery fire pounded the beach. With Wade dead, Allison was now in charge. "Do you know how to drive a bulldozer?" asked Allison. Even though he did not, Watson told him he could. Allison told him and Wyatt to bring an abandoned bulldozer back to him.

As the two men headed off, an artillery round exploded, almost cutting an Army corporal in half. They got him to a medic and continued to the bulldozer. Fortunately, it was wounded, then we'll push you back."

Later in the afternoon, a Navy lieutenant in charge of one of the 6th's companies asked Watson his rank. When Watson told him he was a seaman first class, the lieutenant told him, "Now you're a coxswain." That night, an exhausted Watson and Wyatt commandeered a German dugout to the left (facing the beach) of the top of WN 62 (near today's 5th U.S. Engineer Special Brigade Monument). The two men slept well despite the noise of battle. Coxswain Bob Watson had survived D-Day.

The next day the two sailors continued pushing craft and ships into the Channel until an officer told them to use their bulldozer to plow straight into the water and clear the obstacles as the tide fell. Engineers would first clear the mines so the bulldozer could do its work safely.

National Archives

While a tank rolls forward, American soldiers escort German prisoners of war to a waiting ship. Note the gas mask bag on the chest of the center soldier. Soldiers had to wear them for the first seven days on the beach.

still running. As Watson looked at the controls, Wyatt tapped him on the back and pointed to the water. There lay Allison, floating face down in the surf. The two men ran to him and lifted him out of the water only to discover that he had been hit in the back of the head by shrapnel. They dragged him up the beach to Dr. Collier, who took one look at him and shook his head.

Watson and Wyatt spent the rest of the day on the bulldozer. When their bulldozer fell prey to a German artillery barrage, they found another one. Once the tide receded, empty landing craft became stranded on the beach. The two beachmasters pushed them back into the water, but only if they obeyed their rules. When one coxswain ordered, "Push me back to the water," Watson told him, "No way, you get loaded with

The plan was to place a line of buoys to guide incoming craft. Once the demolition crews removed the mines, Watson and Wyatt went to work breaking up the obstacles. Soon they had created a driveway for the landing craft. They also helped clear wrecked landing craft along the beach.

Everyone on the beach had to be in full battle gear until D+7. One day a dirt cloud stirred up on the western side of the beach. As it floated toward the Colleville Draw, someone hollered, "Gas! Gas! Gas!" Men scrambled to find their gas masks, which many had discarded shortly after landing. Watson kept his strapped onto the side of his bulldozer. As the cloud approached, he quickly donned his gas mask, but it was a false alarm.

When the bulldozer ran low on gas, Watson

drove it up a hill to a refueling station and onto a mat that Army engineers had laid to keep vehicles out of the sand. A military policeman guarding the station yelled at him, "Keep that damn thing off my road!" so Watson tried to maneuver the bulldozer to the side.

Boom! Watson's tracks detonated a German S-mine, otherwise known as a Bouncing Betty, which, when triggered, launches three feet into the air before exploding. The blast hurtled Watson off his seat and down the hill. Shrapnel lacerated his right leg. Wyatt was also injured.

National Archives

ABOVE: Just one of the many Navy communications command posts on the Normandy beaches. Sailors used signal lights, flags, and radio communication to keep supplies arriving to the troops as they were needed. OPPOSITE TOP: The Colleville Draw was the widest of the five draws on Omaha Beach. Bob Watson escorted enemy prisoners from a pen that would have been to the bottom right of the photograph. Various ships and landing craft deliver supplies and take away prisoners and wounded soldiers. OPPOSITE INSET: Navy veteran Bob Watson sports modern Navy fatigues when speaking to local school groups about his experiences on Omaha Beach.

Doctors and medics from a nearby aid station rushed over to the two sailors and helped them in. Once his wounds were treated, he spent the night there.

The next morning Watson awoke feeling much better. He was brewing some hot chocolate outside the station when the Navy lieutenant who promoted him the day before walked up and asked a nearby attending physician, "Can I have Watson?" When the doctor said Watson was only available for limited duty, the officer said, "Hop in my jeep."

They drove down the draw to the crowded POW holding pen. "There were jillions of them," Watson recalled of the Germans. His new job was to escort prisoners from the pen to the beach and load them onto any ship or craft he could find. Watson and an Army corporal lined up 300 prisoners, four abreast, and led them in a jeep mounting a .30-caliber machine gun. The prisoners marched with their hands on their heads. As Watson shepherded the Germans to the beach, they asked questions like, "Are you going to put on us on a boat and take us to New York City?" and "You got any cigarettes?"

When the Germans shelled the beach, Watson used a unique alarm system: "German 88mm shells whistle," he explained. "The German prisoners could hear it before me. If they got down, I got down with them." Whenever enemy salvos came in, Watson hollered for more guards. "I was worried about the ones who had a chance to escape."

For about a week, Watson and the corporal marched POWs to the beach, mostly putting them on LSTs. "LSTs were ideal for the job," said Watson. The center of the ship was just a huge space surrounded by a catwalk. One soldier with a machine gun could guard the prisoners from the catwalk.

While the Germans were, for the most part, docile, American LST officers sometimes were not. One day Watson spotted an empty LST and marched his POWs to the ramp officer, an ensign, and told him, "These prisoners are yours." The ensign, uncomfortable with a shipload of the enemy, picked up the ship's phone and yelled, "Give me the bridge! Give me the bridge!" It was no use. Watson marched the prisoners into the hold, the ramp went up, the doors closed, and the captain waited for high tide to raise the ship.

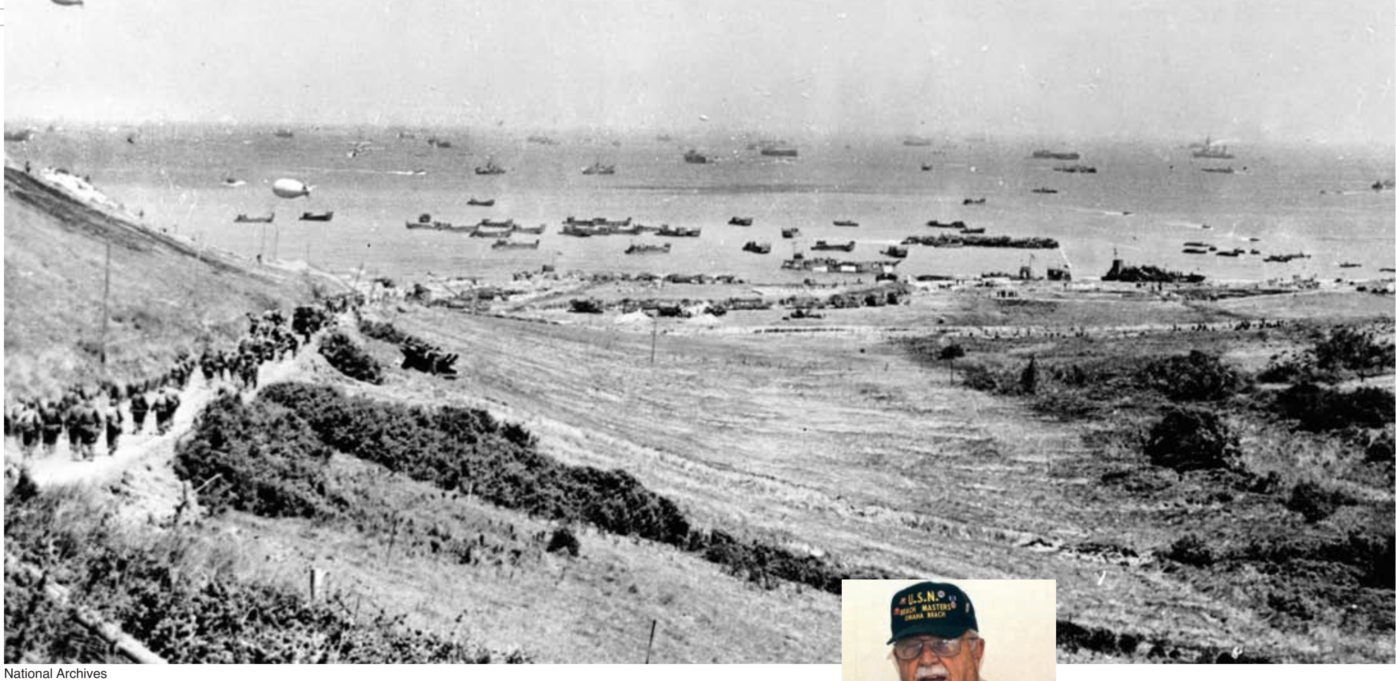
Once Watson's legs healed, he took on a new job carrying wounded soldiers on stretchers to the beach. "My arms are at least half an inch longer from all the stretcher carrying," he joked. He and Wyatt improved their sleeping trench by adding mattresses taken from a damaged Landing Craft Infantry (LCI). "We had all the comforts of home." They also built a cover to keep out the rain. "People were jealous of Dick and I."

When German aircraft strafed the beach, the two sailors were safe in their trench. During one raid, the LSTs offshore fired 20mm antiaircraft weapons wildly into the air. "And what goes up, must come down," recalled Watson. Antiaircraft shells rained down, wounding Commander Carusi at the other end of Watson's trench. Even though he was only 40 feet away, Watson never saw him. "The medics were on him," he recalled. "All we knew was a man had been hit." Carusi was put in a jeep and driven to an airstrip above the beach. A C-47 transport flew him to England for treatment.

Ten days after D-Day a brutal storm hit Normandy, beaching ships and destroying an American-built pier. "The storm tore it to hell," said Watson. He rode out the storm in his covered trench. After the storm, engineers tried to rebuild the pier, but it was now much shorter. Landing craft had to come in closer to deposit their cargoes.

Watson and his fellow beachmasters lived off K and C rations, candy bars, and any other food they could pilfer from the arriving ships. "Nothing went across that beach without us eating it," he said. "We needed to test everything to make sure the boys got the very best." Watson was also able to replace his torn-up uniform with new clothes.

Although numerous Army generals and Navy admirals visited Omaha Beach throughout June, Watson never saw any of them. "The only officers I saw were 90-Day Wonders." Watson and Wyatt once drove a jeep into the city of Bayeux looking for a beer garden. All they found were grateful locals. "They were awfully pleased to see us." After driving around for about 20 minutes without finding anything,



National Archives

Bob Watson

Watson told Wyatt, "Let's get the hell out of here and get back to the beach."

Watson received his third wound when a piece of shrapnel tore through his left foot. He made his way to a hospital tent where he took off his boot for the attending nurse. It was filled with blood. She quickly stitched the wound and told him that it was not serious enough to have him admitted, but he should make sure the medics knew so he could receive a Purple Heart medal. After she gave him a new pair of socks, she offered to keep him there for a few days, but he replied, "I want to get back to my unit."

Watson reported his wound to the medics, but it worried him since he thought that once he was bandaged the Navy would contact his mother and say, "Bobby has been wounded."

Finally, after 28 days of fighting, taking shrapnel, bulldozing, escorting prisoners, and carrying the wounded, Watson and his platoon were relieved of duty, or as he remembers it, "They told us, 'We don't need you here anymore.'" On July 3, he and the five other survivors of his platoon boarded a ship along with a number of German prisoners for the journey back to England.

The beachmasters took up residence in a London hotel across from a pub. Even though they were not heavy drinkers and had no money, they went across the street to celebrate. "Nobody was firing at us anymore!" Watson explained. The locals offered the Yanks a brew called Tobey's Ale. One pint followed another as the locals celebrated too. "We drank all the Tobey's Ale left in England."

The next morning, Watson woke up with a pounding headache and a throbbing right arm. He understood the pain in his head but not his arm, so he rolled up his sleeve to discover a tattoo of an anchor with a ribbon initialed "USN." He was shocked. "Where the hell did I get this damn tattoo?" he thought, "because I didn't have any money." He soon learned that his other beachmasters had the same tattoo. Decades later, Watson returned to the area to see that the hotel was still there, "But there ain't no tattoo parlor near that place!"

With his service newly marked on his arm, Watson boarded a ship bound for New York City. He arrived in September at the same pier from which he had departed, Pier 92. He then took a train to Lynn, Massachusetts. There he walked to the movie theater where had worked and presented himself to his old manager, Mr. Collins.

"Where in the hell did you come from?" Collins asked. When Watson told him he needed a ride home, Collins helped him pack his sea bag, mattress, and equipment into his car and they drove off.

They arrived to an empty house. Watson's mother had become a welding inspector in the Boston shipyard for the war effort, while his father worked in the shoe business. They were both at work, but a quick phone call to his mother got her home early. Upon arriving, she embraced her sailor son, exclaiming, "Good God! It's really you!" His father came home a little bit later.

But there was still a war on. Watson received orders to report to the Beach Battalion School at Oceanside, California. Since the Navy had no need for more beachmasters, he was given a new job escorting Navy truck convoys with a jeep. They must have heard about his Omaha Beach duties. To make extra money, he filled in as a soda jerk at the PX and drove a cab on weekends.

One day as he worked the counter of the PX someone came in and told him that an American bomber had dropped an atomic bomb on Japan. Watson's first thought was, "God bless Harry Truman."

While the day work was routine, the nights were not. Watson and his fellow sailors attended dances whenever they could. One night they rushed to a dance hall to get ahead of a group of Marines. Watson grabbed the hand of a girl on the dance floor and spun her around. Her name was Marjorie Ewing. The encounter changed his life. "I spun her one time, and 68 years later she is still spinning."

The couple married exactly one year and one day after D-Day, June 7, 1945. They eventually had three boys, Mark, Bob Jr., and Mike.

Reflecting on his war experiences, Watson said, "You go through that one time and that's enough. I don't want to do that again." Yet, he found positives from the experience. "I grew up there." When asked today if he would have done anything different during his 28 days on Omaha Beach, Watson replied, "I did my best."

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is the Research Director for Sovereign Media, and author of Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It. *He is also a tour guide for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours and leads tours of Normandy and General George S. Patton's battlefields.*

American mechanized cavalrymen fought a textbook delaying action against the German Nordwind offensive during the winter of 1944 and earned high praise.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

National Archives

AN UNEXPECTED DELAY AT

Ludweiler

"Lieutenant Rochester, take a look at this."

The American patrol halted next to an abandoned industrial building. There, clear in the new fallen snow, they saw fresh footprints leading inside. Left by hobnail boots, these tracks could only have been made by German soldiers.

Rushing in, the GIs surprised three sentries calmly eating their lunch. It was over in a minute. The prisoners, all suffering from trench foot, were disarmed and rushed back to headquarters for interrogation. There they revealed German plans to ring in 1945 later that night with a heavy frontal assault on the American lines.

Orders quickly flashed to all units: Get ready. Holes were dug deeper, extra grenades and ammunition crates stockpiled, artillery concentrations set. New Year's Eve parties would have to wait.

On December 31, 1944, a small force of American cavalrymen defended the hills surrounding Ludweiler, a gritty iron-making village in the Alsace region of southwestern Germany. They were stretched dangerously thin. A mere 1,500 lightly equipped troopers held an outpost line extending seven miles, normally a full division's frontage. Intelligence officers estimated the enemy outnumbered them three to one. It appeared an impossible mission, but that was nothing new for the cavalry.

Author's Collection

After German forces launched their massive surprise attack through Belgium's Ardennes Forest on December 16, 1944, U.S. Third Army commander Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., staged a counteroffensive that astounded friend and foe alike with its speed, daring, and ferocity. To accomplish this, Patton disengaged two of his three corps and wheeled them north into the enemy's exposed flank. Remaining on the line was XX Corps, which could not cover the entire Third Army sector without help.

Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower acted quickly to remedy this situation. On December 18, he directed Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers' 6th Army Group, operating south of Patton, to cancel all attack plans and assume a defensive posture. Ike also ordered Devers to shift his northern boundary well into what was Third Army's sector.

The 6th Army Group was badly situated for defensive operations. Allied soldiers had the rugged Vosges Mountains at their backs while facing them was a network of powerful fortifications known as the Westwall, or Siegfried Line. Commanders feared that enemy armor could punch through weakened U.S. positions and seize a chokepoint at the Saverne Gap, potentially trapping thousands of American soldiers on the Alsatian plains.

Mindful of the powerful German offensive then reaching its crescendo in the Ardennes, Eisenhower summoned Devers to his Paris headquarters on December 26 for a conference. Concerned over what he termed 6th Army Group's "overextended front," the supreme commander wanted all of its troops withdrawn behind the Vosges Mountains. This would shorten the lines, Ike claimed, and also make one corps available for a theater reserve.

Devers was loath to abandon 6th Army Group's hard-won gains in Alsace. His principal American subordinate, Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, argued that it was "a terribly difficult proposition to give up a strong defensive position when you feel confident that you can hold it." Patch, commanding the Seventh U.S. Army, persuaded his chief to ignore for the time being Eisenhower's orders to retreat.

Patch was taking a calculated risk by so exposing his forces, especially Maj. Gen. Wade H. Haislip's XV Corps in the north. There the Saar River Valley made an ideal avenue of advance for any German counterattack striking toward the Saverne

The snow-covered town of Ludweiler, Germany, appears tranquil in the midst of war. This photo was taken from the vantage point of a church overlooking the town on January 8, 1945, from the sector that was occupied by the U.S. 106th Cavalry. German troops defended the wooded area visible at upper right. LEFT: Soldiers of the Seventh Army man a .50-caliber machine gun during the days leading up to Operation Nordwind, the German offensive in southern France. As General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army advanced northward during the Battle of the Bulge, the 106th Cavalry was charged with occupying an area Patton's command had vacated.

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Self-propelled 105mm howitzers of Troop E, 106th Cavalry fire on German positions in France on December 20, 1944. To the north the Battle of the Bulge was raging, and this image was captured only three days before the 106th Cavalry Squadron was ordered to relieve elements of the Third Army, which hurried northward to the relief of the encircled city of Bastogne, Belgium.

Gap. Adding to Haislip's cares was an order making XV Corps responsible for covering 25 miles of front previously held by Third Army to its north.

This was a quiet sector, but XV Corps did not possess the troop strength needed to properly defend it. Haislip spread his infantry divisions out as much as he dared, yet a seven-mile gap remained on his left (northern) flank. The situation called for an "economy of force" operation, in which highly mobile troops hold a series of outposts while observing enemy activity and slowing down any assault as much as possible. Tacticians term it a delay mission, one in which outnumbered defenders trade space for time until a counterattack can be organized.

The tactical delay is a job historically assigned to cavalrymen, and Maj. Gen. Haislip fortunately had in XV Corps a battle tested cavalry outfit ready to take on this challenging mission. The 106th Cavalry Group (Mechanized) had been rolling across France, first with Third Army and now Seventh Army, since July 1944. But the 106th Cavalry's combat experience thus far had been as the vanguard of an attacking force; this would be their first attempt at conducting a delay under fire.

Like many National Guard outfits, the Illinois-based 106th Cavalry Regiment was called to federal duty in 1940. The unit then was primarily horse mounted. Soon, however, wartime reorganizations required the 106th to exchange its beloved steeds for mechanized fighting vehicles more suitable for the form of rapid maneuver warfare that American forces expected to conduct.

In 1943, Colonel Vennard Wilson took command of the 106th Cavalry Regiment. A career Army officer and veteran of World War I, Wilson brought with him a strong emphasis on battle-focused training. Troopers soon adopted his no nonsense attitude, quickly learning the deadly business of mechanized reconnaissance while stationed at Camp Hood, Texas.

Soon after deploying to England in 1944, Wilson's regiment was redesignated the 106th Cavalry Group (Mechanized). This meant its First and Second Cavalry Squadrons (each equivalent to a battalion) were deactivated and replaced by two independent cavalry reconnaissance squadrons. These units were labeled the 106th and 121st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons (Mechanized).

Group headquarters also controlled any number of attached units on the battlefield. Armor, tank destroyer, field artillery, and engineer assets could, depending on the mission, be "chopped" to the 106th Cavalry Group for a specific time and released once their work was done. These attachments assisted the 106th and 121st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons in their primary duty: gaining and maintaining contact with the enemy.

A cavalry reconnaissance squadron (CRS) was uniquely configured to serve as the combat commander's eyes and ears. Fast-moving, flexible, and heavily armed, the CRS performed a variety of battlefield tasks ranging from long-range reconnaissance and pursuit operations to more mundane chores such as route clearance and security.

The CRS operated as a combined arms formation with three reconnaissance troops (company equivalent) acting as the maneuver element, an assault gun troop providing fire support, and a light tank company bringing armored shock effect to the fight. Troops A, B, and C were designated as the squadron's reconnaissance component, Troop E as their assault gun outfit (there was no Troop D), and Company F the tank unit. A squadron headquarters/service troop and medical detachment completed the CRS organization.

The 145-man reconnaissance troop was made up of a headquarters section and three platoons, each containing 29 cavalrymen. A recon platoon's equipment included three M8 armored cars and six jeeps, which were called "Bantams" by the 106th troopers. Three Bantams carried side-mounted .30-caliber machine guns and were used for mounted reconnaissance work; remaining vehicles transported the troop's 60mm mortar section.

Troop E consisted of 116 men and six assault guns. Capable of both direct (line-of-sight) and indirect fire, the M8 Howitzer Motor Carriage (HMC) mounted a 75mm cannon on a light tank chassis and took five men to crew. The 94-man light tank outfit (Company F) utilized M5A1 Stuarts, each of which had a four-man crew. Company F operated with 17 M5A1s plus a maintenance and supply section.

American cavalrymen led the charge across France following the collapse of German defenses in Normandy. The 106th Cavalry Group took part in this pursuit, often covering

40-50 miles a day as the vanguard of Maj. Gen. Haislip's XV Corps. The cavalry's mobility, firepower, and superb radio communications all proved decisive during the summer and early fall of 1944.

Slowed by overextended supply lines, poor weather, and stiffening enemy resistance, the Allied offensive inevitably lost momentum as winter drew near. Assigned in October to clear the Foret de Parroy near Luneberg, France, the 106th Cavalry Group spent seven weeks fighting mainly on foot. There Colonel Wilson's outfit learned at great cost how ill equipped it was for dismounted combat. Although trained in infantry tactics, most troopers carried short-range M1 carbines and Thompson submachine guns rather than hard-hitting M1 Garands or Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs). They had none of the special support weapons found in an infantry organization, and even at full strength a cavalry platoon was less than three-quarters the size of its infantry counterpart.

These organizational shortcomings would again plague the 106th Cavalry as it took up the long left flank of XV Corps' line during the last days of December 1944. On December 23, following an overnight road march of 60 miles, the 106th moved in to relieve elements of Third Army's 6th Cavalry Group. A thin trace of foxholes near Wadgassen marked Patton's southern flank, held by riflemen of the 95th Infantry Division, XX Corps. To the right, at a French town named Morsbach, stood the 103rd Infantry Division and the rest of XV Corps.

In between stretched seven miles of frontage overlooking the Saar and Rossel Rivers. The hilly terrain was pitted by several open quarries that serviced a large ironworks in Völklingen, across the Saar. Good roads connected the hamlets of Gross Rosseln, Schauffhausen, and Werbeln to Ludweiler, a small village located at the foot of what American maps labeled Hill 283. From this height, U.S. soldiers could observe everything that went on in Völklingen and the Westwall fortifications guarding that city.

To the east another quarry-scarred prominence, Hill 306, covered the French-German border. Troopers holding this section of the line had their backs to the Rossel River with only one bridge open in case they needed to retreat. Snow, ice, and extreme cold all affected operations as frostbite and trench foot forced many cavalrymen to leave their posts in search of medical attention.

Knowing his unit was too weak to hold its assigned sector with continuous fortifications, Colonel Wilson instead established a system of four-man strongpoints dug in along key terrain. Each CRS employed two reconnaissance troops augmented with tanks on the outpost line while retaining one troop in reserve. The assault guns were positioned to provide fire support as needed. Roving patrols, minefields, and wire obstacles covered the ground between outposts. A system of secondary positions, set up 400-600 yards behind the outpost line, was mapped and marked so hurriedly withdrawing troopers could find their fallback locations day or night.

Backing up the cavalry were several attached units. Two artillery battalions, the 493rd Armored Field Artillery (105mm self-propelled) and the 242nd Field Artillery (105mm towed), reached out with indirect fire all along the front. Also in support was the combat-tested 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion, whose 36 4.2-inch tubes could deliver a heavy volume of accurate high-explosive mortar fire against short-range targets.

Protecting against armored attack were six towed 3-inch antitank guns belonging to Company A, 824th Tank Destroyer (TD) Battalion. Each cavalry squadron also received a company

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ABOVE: The Stuart light tank was a superb reconnaissance vehicle but its 37mm main weapon was useless against German armor. The 106th Cavalry Squadron fielded the Stuart until the spring of 1945, when medium tanks with 75mm guns became available. This photo was taken in Ludweiler, Germany. BELOW: On January 2, 1945, the day after the German Army launched Operation Nordwind, engineers of the 106th Cavalry Squadron prepare a roadblock to slow the enemy advance a half mile from the town of Ludweiler, Germany.

Both: Author's Collection

ABOVE: Joseph Pedraza, a T/5 with Troop B, 106th Cavalry Squadron, sits in the turret of a snow-blanketed armored car near Ludweiler, Germany, in January 1945. The armored car has been secreted in a trench dug by the cavalrymen of Troop B to provide better concealment. RIGHT: "We are now getting big, fur-lined, white overcoats," wrote T/5 Glenn Kappelman in a letter home dated January 19, 1945. Kappelman added, "They also have a big hood and are really warm too. One can't be seen easily in the snow in white."

of combat engineers. These "jacks of all trades" helped buttress the outpost line while acting as infantry, but their real value as bridge-building experts was soon to be tried.

Like most military plans, the American scheme of maneuver was simple in concept but devilishly difficult to carry out under fire. Sentries would first detect advancing enemy forces, then force them to deploy by firing their individual and crew-served weapons. As U.S. artillery, mortars, and assault guns continued to disrupt German progress, those troopers on the outpost line were to fall back on their secondary battle positions while reserves moved up. Colonel Wilson intended to repeat this process as often as necessary, swapping terrain for time until the enemy attack ran out of steam or reinforcements from XV Corps arrived.

Soldiers of the 106th Cavalry Group and its attached units spent the last day of 1944 on high alert while trying to keep warm in their foxholes. Across the front, observers began reporting signs of increased German activity. Cavalrymen posted on Hill 283 saw enemy infantry moving around on the far side of the Saar; artillery fire broke up those formations. Late in the day, 88mm shells destroyed an antitank cannon belonging to the 824th TD Battalion. Two gunners were killed in this action.

The midafternoon patrol led by Lieutenant William L. Rochester of Troop C, 106th CRS brought in valuable intelligence when it returned with the three German engineers captured at Wadgassen. These talkative prisoners described a surprise attack being planned for midnight, confirming what the troopers had been observing all day. Colonel Wilson passed this news up to XV Corps while directing his cavalrymen to make all necessary preparations for a nighttime delaying action.

The generals also knew something was coming. On that very day, Seventh Army chief Maj. Gen. Patch called a meeting of his corps commanders to warn them of an imminent assault. On the outpost line no one quite knew what the enemy was up to, only that it looked big.

In fact, the German Army had launched what would be its last major offensive in the West. Code named Operation Nordwind (Northwind), this strategy was conceived in late December by Adolf Hitler and his Western Front commander in chief, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. Hitler and von Rundstedt saw how much the Allies had weakened their southern armies to support Patton's Ardennes counterattack and sought to exploit that vulnerability.

Nordwind was designed as a sequential offensive, meaning the commitment of armored exploitation forces would depend on the success of initial attacks. Those first moves were to fall on the exposed U.S. Seventh Army. German commanders expected to punch a hole in the lines, opening an avenue for follow-on panzer divisions to seize the Saverne Gap and isolate Haislip's XV Corps.

Two Sturmgruppen, division-sized assault forces, would strike American positions in the Saar Valley, 15 miles east of the 106th Cavalry Group's sector. The lead element consisted of crack SS infantry along with hastily trained Volksgrenadier formations, many filled with former sailors and Luftwaffe ground personnel. Orchestrating this offensive was Col. Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz, commander of Army Group G.

Operation Nordwind was set to commence at midnight on December 31, 1944. The plan also called for supporting assaults all along the U.S. lines to prevent reinforcements from rushing to the defenders' aid. One of these thrusts was aimed squarely at the 106th Cavalry Group and its strategic hilltops.

On December 26, orders came down from LXXXII Army Corps to Lt. Gen. Wolf-Günther Trierenberg, commander of the 347th Infantry Division. They directed Trierenberg to

conduct a limited attack on the night of December 31-January 1 with the objective of recapturing Hill 283 from the Americans. Preparations were to begin at once.

Trierenberg, a seasoned veteran of campaigns in Poland, France, and Russia, had much to do in the days before his division's assault. The 347th was badly in need of rifles, machine guns, and, most of all, infantrymen to fire these implements of war.

Organized in 1943, the 347th Infantry Division garrisoned Amsterdam, Holland, before moving south to help stop the Allied breakout in France the next year. In September 1944, it was almost completely wiped out by the U.S.

3rd Armored Division west of Huy. Survivors retreated back to the Eifel region of western Germany, where the unit rested and reconstituted.

The German Army's ability to rebuild itself following the fall of France is appropriately called the "Miracle in the West." Like so many other shattered formations, Trierenberg's division combed out all able-bodied men from its rear echelon, replacing them with amputees, the sickly, and other soldiers deemed unsuitable for frontline duty. They also received modern equipment and weapons to replace what was lost in battle.

The 347th quietly withdrew from the Eifel just prior to Hitler's Ardennes Offensive, moving south by rail to the Saar Valley. It settled in near Völklingen, where the division continued to train replacements and acquire munitions. By the end of 1944, Lt. Gen. Trierenberg could report his artillery was nearly at full strength with one battalion (12 guns) of 150mm towed howitzers and three battalions (also 12 guns each) of 105mm cannon. These field pieces, however, were all horse drawn.

For infantry, Trierenberg had two regiments, the 860th and the 861st. Each regiment operated with two battalions, although these were down to about half their authorized manpower. The commanding general relied on the 347th Fusilier Battalion for his hardest assignments. This 300-man recon unit consisted of Trierenberg's best-led, most heavily armed foot soldiers and was given the primary objective of taking Hill 283.

The 347th Infantry Division also possessed engineers, antitank guns, and the usual signal and support elements. While these echelons all played a role in the assault, Trierenberg's infantry would do the heavy work. There were approximately 3,500 riflemen on hand to attempt the New Year's Eve attack.

No artillery preparation was fired in hopes of achieving surprise. The 861st Infantry Regiment advanced on Hill 283 to the north, the 347th Fusilier Battalion making the main assault while another battalion protected its right flank along the Saar River. Farther south in the 860th Regiment's zone, two battalions struck westward against Hill 306 and the Rossel River bridge. First contact with the Americans occurred at 2330 hours.

Sergeant Jim Moore, on the outpost line with Troop B, 106th CRS, held a strong position on top of Hill 283. Suddenly, a trip flare ignited, warning Moore of enemy activity. The unit history tells what happened next: "It was a bright, moonlit night, almost like daylight. We had our guns trained on the crest of the hill in front of us to the north. And the Germans started coming across the skyline. We cut them down like grass."

Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Lightly armed and armored American cavalrymen of the 106th Squadron fought the Germans in a lengthy delaying action at Ludweiler, Germany, during the Nordwind offensive.

Another member of Troop B recalled, "The enemy began firing from all sides. Our tanks and the men on the outposts returned the fire." From his lookout in a nearby house, Private Stanley J. Szczapa "broke a window, put a machine gun through and opened fire. But in spite of all the lead, the Germans kept coming. It looked like they were drunk or doped."

The fusiliers had completely surrounded Troop B's widely dispersed strongpoints. One cavalryman stated his team was fighting well "but the Germans were all around us, having infiltrated to our rear before the attack." It was time to displace.

Staff Sergeant Benjamin J. DiMichele ordered everyone out to their secondary positions. Communication wires had been cut, however, so some men failed to get the word and were taken prisoner. The rest boarded light tanks for a harrowing ride to Ludweiler.

Farther north, the soldiers of Troop C, 106th CRS were hit by bursts of heavy machine-gun fire just after midnight. They held against determined assaults for 30 minutes before moving to a fallback position in the village of Schauffhausen. But the enemy got there first.

Just as they had done on Hill 283, German infantry effectively infiltrated Troop C's lines. Prowling antitank teams destroyed two accompanying light tanks with panzerfaust rockets, prompting the troop commander, Captain John F. Brady, to pull his outfit all the way back to Ludweiler. In doing so, Brady broke Troop C's connection to XX Corps.

The situation in the south was equally perilous. Here, the 121st CRS held a tenuous line of observation posts east of the Rossel River. Sergeant Benjamin S. Hill and his three-man team occupying Hill 306 kept careful watch as

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ABOVE: From the cover of a snow bank near Ludweiler, Germany, T/5 Tom Klora and Pfc. Eugene Wimberly chat while on alert in January 1945. The German forces engaged in the Nordwind offensive were so close at times that their dogs could be heard barking when sentries changed, and their conversation was audible. BELOW: Vehicles and tents of Troop E, 121st Cavalry Squadron are shown in the Ludweiler area in February 1945. After bitter fighting, the German Nordwind offensive failed, and the bravery of these cavalry soldiers was a major factor in their defeat.

the New Year approached.

"Exactly at 2330 hours all hell broke loose," the unit history recorded. "It was a general bedlam of madmen shrieking and shouting, the air was filled with the clamor of personnel mines, hand grenades and shells splitting the trees. Timed between these split-second thunderclaps was the spitting fire and sharp staccato barking of a hundred burp guns."

Some Germans threw themselves on Sergteant Hill's wire obstacles so their comrades could step across. Others shouted for Hill and his men to give up. "Surrender, hell!" the veteran replied. "Come and get me, you sons of bitches."

With enemy riflemen swarming all around his position, communications severed, and ammunition running low, Hill recognized it was time to go. On his order, the surviving cavalrymen boarded their vehicles and began heading back toward the bridge. Unknown to them, however, German forces had overwhelmed a platoon of engineers guarding this vital span. The only way across the Rossel was cut off.

Abandoning their trucks, Hill's contingent took cover in the village of Petit-Rosselle. They hoped to wade the river and rejoin their unit once the enemy attack passed them by. But when a curious German infantryman discovered their hiding place, the troopers had no choice but to fight their way across.

Covering his soldiers' escape with an M1 rifle, Hill shot seven enemy machine gunners before reaching the cover of a long trench leading to friendly territory. Hill's cavalrymen all made it back safely, although the ordeal left everyone cold, numb, and shaken.

Colonel Wilson later termed Hill's stubborn delay as "the decisive stand that prevented the Germans from achieving their objective of flanking the Group." For this act Hill received the Distinguished Service Cross, America's second highest award for valor, but did not live to receive it. He was killed in action near Sternberg, Germany, on April 8, 1945.

Other members of the 121st CRS also swam the Rossel to safety. Several tankmen, however, refused to abandon their vehicles just because the bridge was in enemy hands. Fortunately for them, some combat engineers were on hand to construct a makeshift crossing out of scavenged I-beams and an old barn door. Their span proved just sturdy enough for the tankers' 17-ton Stuarts to roll across.

The 347th Infantry Division's nighttime assault had pushed Colonel Wilson's outpost line back over a mile and captured both hilltop objectives. Its rapid advance also caused chaos in the 106th's rear area, forcing both the group headquarters and its attached artillery to displace. This meant these cannons and chemical mortars were on the move just when needed most.

By dawn, however, all 4.2-inch mortars and 105mm howitzers were back in action. Working with the cavalry's assault guns, they helped slow the Germans' advance and bought time for troopers to occupy secondary battle positions. Additional help came from XX Corps artillery, which conducted counterbattery fire against enemy gun emplacements with its big 8-inch cannon.

The attack spent itself by mid-morning on New Year's Day. While an artillery duel raged overhead, German riflemen frantically dug in on their newly won high ground. Those fusiliers who had previously faced combat warned their comrades that an American counterattack would not be long in coming. They were right.

Troop C of the 121st CRS launched a hasty assault on Hill 283 in late afternoon but was turned back by heavy fire. The enemy, having fought so hard to take this objective, was not going to surrender it without a fight. Colonel Wilson knew the situation demanded a heavier response come morning, but did he have the combat strength to accomplish it?

The job went to Troop A, 106th CRS. Just after noon on January 2, the cavalrymen set out on foot toward Hill 283 while U.S. howitzers pounded the objective. A platoon of tanks accompanied them. "There was no opposition until we approached the far edge of the woods," recounted a unit historian. "Then the Germans started to throw in artillery fire. The advance stopped temporarily and the men looked for cover in foxholes and ditches and behind large trees."

Once the cannonade ceased, officers got their soldiers up and moving again. "The men of the second and third platoons advanced with four light tanks," remembered one trooper. "Everything looked fine at first. The tankers opened up and mowed down 10 or 15 Germans." Then another enemy barrage hit, pinning the Americans down 25 yards short of their objective. A machine gun began firing on Troop A's right flank, and men began to fall. When artillery fire knocked out one of their tanks, the GIs began to pull back. One cavalryman was killed and 12 wounded during this abortive attack.

Troop C of the 106th CRS enjoyed better success in the north. Late that afternoon they secured Wadgassen, reestablishing the link with Patton's XX Corps. Also on January 2, the 103rd Infantry Division took responsibility for three miles of frontage previously watched by the 121st CRS. This enabled Wilson's outfit to focus its attention on the key terrain surrounding Ludweiler.

A final attempt to push the enemy off Hill 283 took place at 1300 hours on January 3,

when the dismounted cavalrymen of Troop B, 121st CRS stepped off to seize a road junction at the eastern edge of town. Worried that he was walking into an ambush, Lieutenant Robert J. Moore motioned his platoon into a row of houses. Just then a friendly 4.2-inch mortar round exploded outside. Fired short, it alerted German observers to Moore's attack.

Enemy shellfire soon added to the lieutenant's miseries. "My troopers were already taking cover," Moore later wrote, "when I decided to exit this trap as rapidly as possible." A torrent of heavy artillery followed his men as they ran. "Shells ricocheted off every house I passed," he remembered. "The Germans were walking the barrage back with us and were doing too good of a job with it. These were highly trained crews with excellent spotting and control."

Lieutenant Moore said the enemy threw an estimated 480 rounds at his platoon that day. Only one cavalryman suffered minor injuries, but a shell fragment "murdered" the treasured gas cooking stove Moore had been carrying since Normandy. He mourned the loss of his stove for weeks.

After January 4, both the Americans and Germans around Ludweiler seemed content to hold in place. Neither side possessed sufficient combat power to mount a follow-on attack, nor were the belligerents willing to abandon what terrain they did control. Farther east, the main Nordwind assaults sputtered out as well. After battering themselves against XV Corps' main defensive lines for three days, General Blaskowitz's troops finally suspended all offensive activity. Occasional fighting would flare up later in January, but it soon became clear that Hitler's last offensive in the West had ended in total failure.

On the other hand, Lt. Gen. Trierenberg of the 347th Infantry Division was well satisfied with his soldiers' performance during their New Year's Eve assault. German riflemen took and held all assigned objectives against stiff opposition, in the process capturing key terrain, several dozen prisoners, and plenty of abandoned equipment. No record of German casualties has survived. Likely the number of killed and wounded was substantial, given the constant shelling Trierenberg's men endured while in battle.

The 106th Cavalry Group commander could be justifiably proud of his men as well. Placed on a greatly extended line, Colonel Wilson's lightly equipped troopers fiercely resisted an attacking force that outnumbered them at least three to one. The cavalrymen then disengaged under fire at night, a most demanding task, and occupied fallback positions from which they could not be dislodged. Their fight at Ludweiler stands as a superbly executed delaying action.

The New Year's Eve battle cost 10 American lives with another 33 men wounded. An additional 48 GIs were reported missing in action, although most of these men later wound up in German prison camps.

For the rest of January, combat on the Ludweiler front mainly consisted of minor patrol action and occasional artillery strikes. On February 9, 1945, the 106th Cavalry Group came off the line for a well-deserved rest, its first since entering battle in July. Taking its place was the newly arrived 101st Cavalry, which recaptured Hill 283 on March 13.

Two days later the 106th Cavalry Group, refreshed and reequipped with new M24 Chaffee light tanks, joined XV Corps for its final push into the Rhineland. Once again screening the corps' left flank, Wilson's troopers advanced rapidly across southern Germany during 10 weeks of relentless fighting. War's end found them in Salzburg, Austria, having ridden 1,700 miles across Europe since landing in Normandy 10 months earlier.

Their delay at Ludweiler, however, may have been the 106th's finest hour. Maj. Gen. Haislip, the man who gave them that challenging mission, expressed his confidence in Colonel Wilson's troopers thusly: "The 106th Cavalry Group was more than once worth a division to the XV Corps."

Always out front, the mechanized cavalry of World War II could be counted on to take on the toughest jobs and accomplish them against great odds.

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer who writes from his home in Scotia, New York. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Raymond H.C. Teske Jr. in the preparation of this article.

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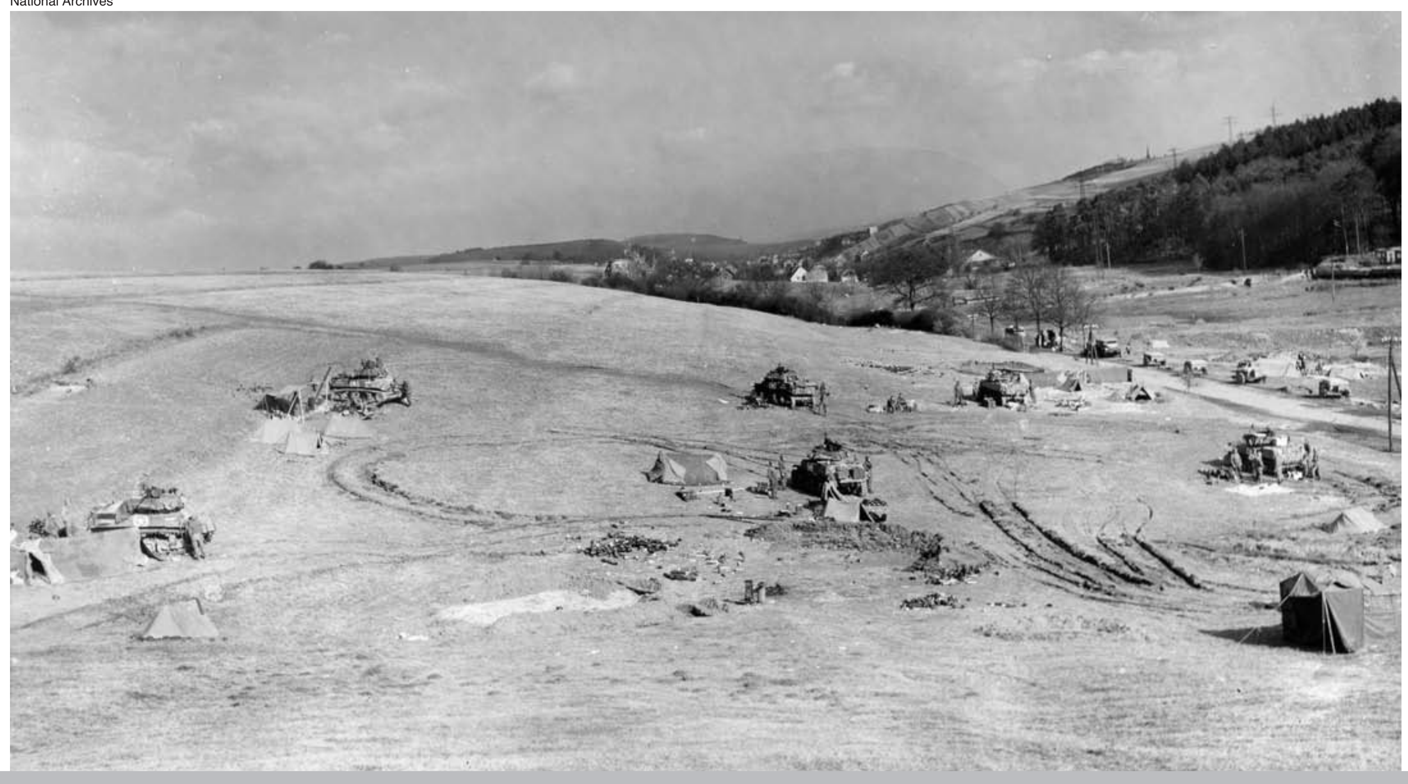
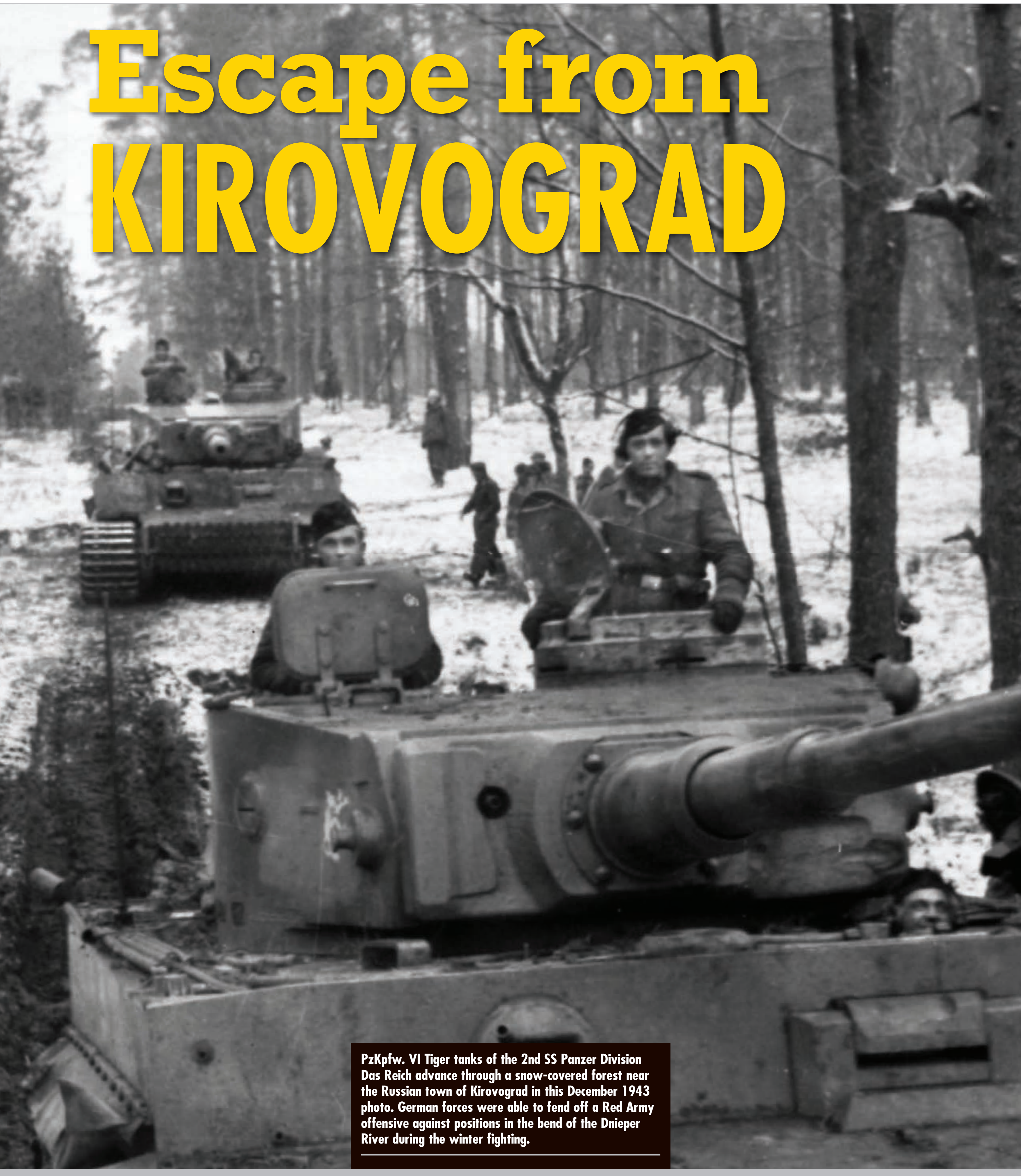
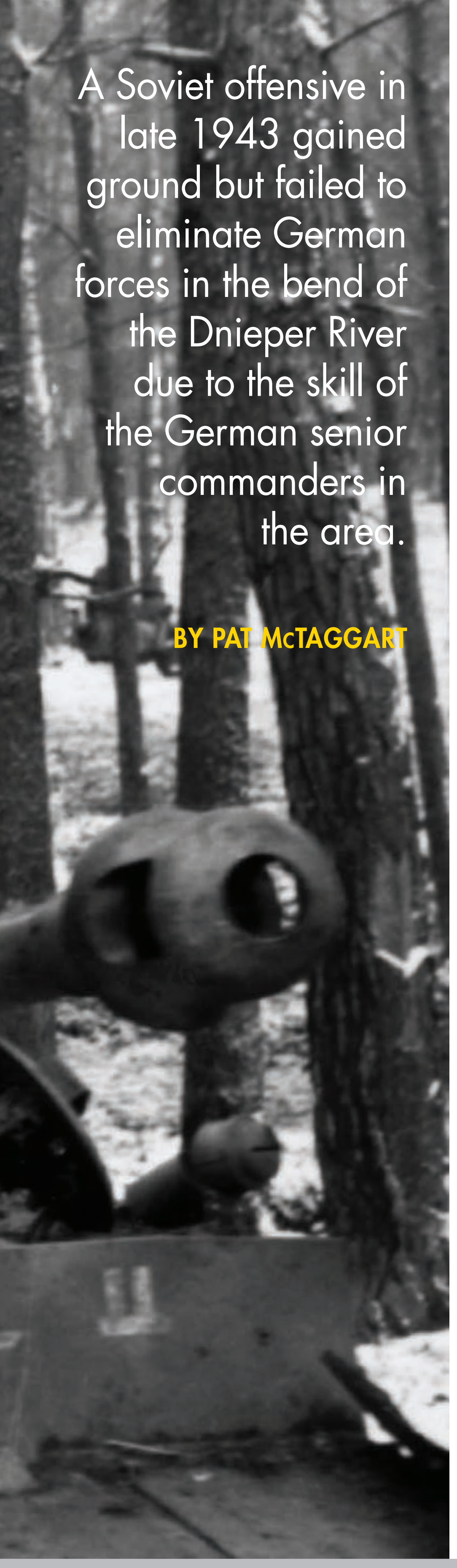




Escape from KIROVOGRAD

PzKpfw. VI Tiger tanks of the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich advance through a snow-covered forest near the Russian town of Kirovograd in this December 1943 photo. German forces were able to fend off a Red Army offensive against positions in the bend of the Dnieper River during the winter fighting.



A Soviet offensive in late 1943 gained ground but failed to eliminate German forces in the bend of the Dnieper River due to the skill of the German senior commanders in the area.

BY PAT McTAGGART

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-571-1721-29; Photo: Schnitzer

THE WANING MONTHS OF 1943 WERE A BLEAK TIME FOR THE German forces in southern Russia. Since the massive battle at Kursk in July, the Red Army had pushed the armies of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's Army Group South hundreds of kilometers to the west.

The Soviet city of Belgorod fell on August 5, followed by the liberation of Kharkov later in the month. With the Germans still reeling, the Soviets were on the western bank of the Dnieper River by early October.

After a brief lull for rest and refitting, the Russians struck again, pushing across the Dnieper and retaking Kiev on November 6. Throughout most of November and December, they kept driving westward in the Kiev sector.

While General Hermann Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army was trying to hold the Russians west of Kiev, the other armies in southern Russia were also in trouble. Along the Sea of Azov's coast, General Karl Hollidt's Sixth Army, part of General Josef Harpe's Army Group A, was sent reeling across the Nogai Steppe in the last week of October. By the end of the month, General Fedor Ivanovich Tolbukhin's 4th Ukrainian Front had sealed off the Crimea, trapping General Erwin Jaenecke's Seventeenth Army and effectively keeping it from participating in any further action. By the end of November, Tolbukhin had pushed the Sixth Army away from the coast, forcing it to form a new defensive line 100 kilometers to the north.

On Hollidt's left flank, Army Group South's First Panzer Army, commanded by General Hans Hube, had been pushed back about 100 kilometers from its Dnieper positions on its left flank and in its center, but Hube's right flank still held firm along the river line. The bulge created in the Zaporozhye was hit time and again by the 3rd Guards and 12th Armies of General Rodian Iakovlevich Malinovskii's 3rd Ukrainian Front, but German forces were able to stop them from breaking through.

To Hube's north was General Otto Wöhler's Eighth Army. In the Kanev sector, at the junction of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, the Germans had held their river line. South of Kanev the Soviets had crossed the Dnieper in the Cherkassy area and had made gains of about 20 kilometers, but the rest of the army had been forced to steadily retreat before finally establishing a new line.

Throughout November and the first week of December, General Ivan Stepanovich Konev, commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, faced both Wöhler's army and part of Hube's First Panzer Army. Although he had seven infantry armies backed by the powerful 5th Guards Tank Army (Col. Gen. Pavel Alekseevich Rotmistrov), Konev resorted to battering the Germans, biding his time for a decisive strike. He was fighting a battle of attrition—something the Germans could not possibly afford.

On paper Wöhler's Eighth Army looked impressive. During the first week of December he controlled Maj. Gen. Friedrich Schulz's III Panzer Corps (57th and 72nd Infantry Divisions, 5th SS Panzer Division Wiking, 3rd Panzer Division, and SS Major Lucien Lippert's Wallonien brigade, made up of anti-Communist French-speaking Belgians. Also included were Maj. Gen. Rudolf von Bünau's XLVII Panzer Corps (320th, 389th, 282nd, and 106th Infantry Divisions) and General Wilhelm Stemmermann's XI Army Corps (14th and 11th Panzer Divisions and the 376th Infantry Division). His army reserve was Maj. Gen. August Schmidt's 10th Panzergrenadier Division (10th PGD).

Konev's war of attrition had taken its toll. Most of the infantry divisions were only 50 to 75 percent combat effective if they were lucky, and the small flow of replacements for casualties proved totally inadequate.

It was the same for the panzer divisions. The 3rd Panzer Division reported that the experienced troops of the division were in fighting trim but lamented, "Newly arrived replacements were inadequately prepared for combat and required additional training." It also reported that tracks and motors were worn out on the panzers and motorized vehicles and that spare parts were in short supply.

The commander of the 3rd Panzer was a newcomer to the Eastern Front. Brig. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein had taken over the division on October 25. Before that he had served as chief of staff for Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps and later the German-Italian Army in Africa. In a 1968 letter to the author, Bayerlein, who died in 1970, said he was excited about taking command of a panzer division, but the problems facing troops on the Eastern Front were reminiscent of the logistics that faced Rommel in Africa.

"Lack of supplies, replacements of both men and vehicles and a superior enemy force—that's what we faced in Africa and that is what we faced in Russia," he wrote. "I had only exchanged the sweltering heat of Africa for the bitter cold of the Steppe. Also, we had recently participated in the Kiev counteroffensive. Our panzers were worn out, even though our mechanics worked hard with what they had to try and keep them serviceable."

While Konev kept the Germans guessing, hitting them up and down the line, his staff was working on plans for a new offensive. The Soviet High Command (Stavka) saw great possibilities for the southern sector of the front. The Russian success at Kiev had created a bulge farther to the south. Moscow saw the chance of swinging the 1st Ukrainian Front south with the objective of cutting off and destroying several German corps and destroying the Eighth Army. Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front would advance westward to complete the destruction.

Born into a peasant family in 1897, Konev was called up to serve in the czar's army in 1916. When the war with Germany ended he returned home and became a rising star in the local Bolshevist party.

During the Russian Civil War he fought in the Far East and became the commissar of the 17th Maritime Corps. Attending the Frunze Military Academy in 1926, Konev commanded a regiment, division, and a corps before returning to the academy for two years to study from 1932 to 1934. He was posted to Mongolia in 1937 and later took part in battles with the Japanese along the Khalkin-Gol River.

Surviving Stalin's army purges, Konev commanded the 19th Army at the beginning of the German invasion before taking command of the Western Front, which was charged with defending the approaches to Moscow on September 12, 1941. He later commanded the Kalinin Front, Western Front again, Northwestern Front, and Steppe Front, which was later renamed the 2nd Ukrainian Front.

As he looked at the maps laid out before him, the area held by Schulz's III Panzer Corps drew his attention. The city within Schulz's sector would need to be taken quickly if the destruction of the Germans was to be achieved. Its name was Kirovograd.

Founded around a military settlement in 1754, the city was located on important trade crossroads, which eventually made it a major center of trade. One of the few good east-west roads in the region ran through Kirovograd, as did a north-south rail line, which made it a prime location for a supply and communications center.

The city was occupied by the Germans in early August 1941. As the main attack continued eastward, the occupying forces were joined by SS Major Gunther Hermann's Einsatzkiommando 4b, a subunit of SS Brig. Gen. Otto Rausch's Einsatzgruppe C. Between August 23 and September 30, 1941, Hermann's men systematically slaughtered the approximately 5,000 Jewish inhabitants of the city. When the "action" was over, there were about 10 survivors.

Berlin also recognized the importance of Kirovograd. The roads and rail hub at the city brought in vital supplies to both the Eighth and First Panzer Armies. In addition to the lines of communication going in and out of the city, a retreat in the Kirovograd sector would expose the left flank of the First Panzer Army, forcing a retreat or inviting a Russian strike in the army's rear area. This was something that Hitler would not tolerate.

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LEFT: Brigadier General Fritz Bayerlein (left) commanded the German 3rd Panzer Division during the autumn and winter campaigns in the region of the Dnieper River. RIGHT: Red Army General Ivan Konev, at right, studying a map with a staff officer, commanded the 2nd Ukrainian Front and directed large numbers of tanks and troops against the Germans in the winter of 1943-1944.

Konev kept fine tuning his operational plans while he waited for the weather to change. Heavy rains and above freezing temperatures had made the movement of armored and mechanized forces nearly impossible, as most of the roads in the area had turned into seas of mud. The Russian commander used the time to slowly bring up supplies and to integrate replacements into his divisions. Many of those replacements came from newly liberated areas of Russia, and they had just the basics of military training. The rain also hampered the Germans' ability to use aerial reconnaissance, making it easier for Konev to mask his disposition of troops in the main points of the planned attack.

The weather finally turned cold enough for the Soviets to resume their offensive. General Nikolai Fedorovich Vatutin's 1st Ukrainian Front hit General Erhard Raus' Fourth Panzer Army west of Kiev with a ferocity that put Raus' army on the verge of disintegration. Field Marshal von Manstein immediately called Berlin for reinforcements. In the meantime, he tried to counter the Russians with what meager forces he had.

Meanwhile, Konev began his thrust toward Kirovograd with the object of encircling its defenders and the other divisions of the XLVII Panzer Corps. The land east of the city was fairly good tank country with flat, open plains broken by low ridges. Konev made good use of the terrain, and his 5th Guards Tank Army and 5th Guards Army (Lt. Gen. Aleksei Semenovich Zhadov) made good progress.

Soviet pincers were already closing around Kirovograd, and Manstein called on his worn-out panzer and mechanized divisions to stem the Russian tide. Brig. Gen. Wend von Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer Division was involved in an attack in the first week of December that stopped a Russian breakthrough near Dykivka, about 53 kilometers northeast of Kirovograd. It then moved to the Novhordivka sector, 72 kilometers southwest of the city, to fend off another attack. After that, the division moved to Ostnyanazhka, 16 kilometers north of Kirovograd, to take part in a counterattack that slowed but failed to stop a new Soviet assault.

"My men were thoroughly worn out," he wrote in 1972. "Our vehicles suffered many breakdowns as we were sent to stop the Russians in several areas. The division did its best at Ostnyanazhka, but it was not enough. We were finally forced to call off the counterattack and take up defensive positions in the area."

Colonel Martin Unrein's 14th Panzer Division also participated in operations north of Kirovograd and was part of the Ostnyanazhka counterattack. Following the action, it took up defensive positions in the Kam'yanka, some 56

kilometers north of the city.

The main body of the 3rd Panzer Division was also part of the counterattack. At its conclusion, Bayerlein's men took up defensive positions for a couple of days. "We were exhausted," he recalled. "Our panzer force was greatly understrength, as were the rest of the other panzer divisions. We were also about 20 percent understrength as far as personnel went."

Manstein's pleas for reinforcements did have some results. Elements of the 2nd Fallschirmjäger (Parachute) Division (2nd FJD) began arriving in the Kirovograd area during the second week of December, as the Russians had not yet closed their trap. The unit supported von Wietherheim's 11th Panzer Division during the battle around Novhordivka.

The paratroopers were supported in their attack by the newly activated 286th Assault Gun Detachment (Captain Albert Bausch), which had recently arrived from France. When the attack began, the 286th was at the head of the assault, forming an armored wedge in front of the paratroops. Its 3rd Battery destroyed five Russian tanks and several antitank guns as it moved forward.

Several key hills had to be taken from the enemy before Novhordivka could be stormed. The Russians had fortified their positions with antitank guns, which were supported by infantry and some tanks. In a December 18 attack the paratroopers stormed hills 170.3 and 163.7. Bausch disregarded orders to provide support from a distance and ordered his guns to advance with the infantry. After a two-day struggle the hills were taken, and a foothold in on the southern edge of the town was secured.

The battle continued unabated both inside the town and on the hills in the area. Lieutenant Erich Lepwokski, temporary leader of 5/FJ Rgt. 2, led his men against a line of Soviet antitank guns positioned on Hill 167 along with the rest of the regiment's 2nd Battalion. The two PzKpfw. V Panther tanks, supplied by the 11th Panzer, that were to support the attack were driven back by heavy fire. Lepkowski and elements of the 7th Company succeeded in overrunning an enemy antitank battery, but that was as far as they got.

A second attempt to take the hill was made later in the day. The Germans succeeded in driving the two defending infantry battalions off the hill, but they had paid a heavy price. Lepkowski's 5th Company had only 45 combat-effective men left. The 7th Company had only 35. Novhordivka finally fell, and the paratroopers took a defensive stance with Bausch's assault gun detachment in support of the defenses.

Sovfoto

In this obviously posed photo, Soviet tank crewmen scan the horizon for enemy troop movements during their Ukraine offensive undertaken in the winter of 1943. One of the soldiers gestures as though he has located something of interest—probably at the suggestion of the photographer.

Meanwhile, the Russians were still pressing Kirovograd from the east. Schmidt's 10th PGD was sent to support Colonel Otto Schwarz's 376th Infantry Division, which occupied positions in and around the city. In heavy fighting the Soviet attack was stalled, prompting both sides to form static positions. While Vatutin continued to batter the Fourth Panzer Army in the north, Konev used the time to regroup his units in front of the city for the next phase of his Kirovograd operation. Meanwhile, Soviet spearhead units continued to filter around the city.

The defense of Kirovograd was now in the hands of Maj. Gen. Nikolaus von Vormann, who had just replaced General Rudolf von Bünau as commander of the XLVII Panzer Corps. At the beginning of January von Vormann's order of battle looked more like a small army than a corps as far as subordinate divisions were concerned, although all were understrength.

Born in the West Prussian city of Neumark in 1895, Vormann saw service in World War I and remained in the Army during the postwar years. He served as chief of staff to the III and XXVIII Army Corps during the first years of the war before taking command of the 23rd Panzer Division in December 1942. Vormann led the division during the retreat to the Don and the battle for the Donets Basin. In the fall of 1943, the 23rd distinguished itself in the battle for the Dnieper bend. Vormann took command of the XLVII Panzer Corps just two days before his 49th birthday.

His corps headquarters was located at Mala Vyska, some 43 kilometers northeast of Kirovograd. Looking at his battle maps, the German commander could see that his divisions were stretched incredibly thin. Von Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer Division occupied a line northeast of Kirovograd about 15 kilometers west of Zham'yanka, with Schmidt's 10th PGD to his right. Unrein, who was promoted to brigadier general on January 1, held positions northeast of Adzhamka, about 30 kilometers from Kirovograd. South of Unrein, Schwarz's 376th Infantry Division manned an arc-shaped line about 25 kilometers west of the city.

Bayerlein, who was due to relinquish his command in order to supervise the formation and training of the Panzer Lehr Division in France, was moving his 3rd Panzer to the Kirovograd area. Vormann's other two divisions, Maj. Gen. Werner Forst's 106th Infantry and Brig. Gen. Hermann Frenking's 282nd, manned the line to the north of the 11th Panzer. North of the Eighth Army, the 1st Ukrainian Front was already moving again, making some progress against the Fourth Panzer Army while Konev bided his time. He planned to reopen his attack on January 5 while the Germans were preoccupied with Vatutin's assault. At 0600 all hell broke loose in the Kirovograd sector as more than 188,000 Soviet shells rained down on the German line.

"My headquarters was west of Kirovograd,"

Sovfoto

Camouflaged to blend in with the winter landscape, Soviet soldiers advance warily through a village near Kirovograd in the winter of 1943. At times during the campaign the fighting was house to house. Note the submachine gun carried by the soldier in the foreground. Such automatic weapons gave the Red Army tremendous firepower at the squad level.

Bayerlien recalled, "but we could clearly hear the thunder of that devastating barrage. I immediately ordered the division to go on full alert. After that, I visited some of my units that occupied forward defensive positions to get an idea of how things were going in our sector. Then I had my driver head back to my battle headquarters at Lelekovka [about three kilometers northeast of Kirovograd]."

After conferring with his staff, Bayerlein set out for the city. The situation was becoming critical even as his vehicle sped off. Following the Soviet bombardment, Konev unleashed four armies to hammer the German line. Maj. Gen. Fedorovich Tarasov's 53rd Army struck north of Kirovograd while Zhadov's 5th Guards Army hit the line west of Zham'yanka. South of Kirovograd Col. Gen. Mikhail Stepanovich Shumilov's 7th Guards Army struck the Novhordivka sector. The attacks north and south of the city were supported by more than 500 tanks from Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army.

A steel storm also hit the men of the 2nd FJD. On Hill 159.9 the remaining 45 men of Lepkowski's 5th Company pressed themselves into the bottom of their secondary positions on the reverse side of the hill as the artillery continued to pound them. Lepkowski and most of his remaining men were veterans of battles in Africa and Italy, and they had dug their positions well, having been under the guns and air attacks of the Western Allies. As soon as the Soviet fire abated, they rushed to their frontline foxholes.

On the heels of the bombardment came a wave of Soviet tanks and infantry. The paratroopers themselves had no antitank weapons, but they did have bundles of hand grenades taped together, which they hoped would disable or destroy the steel monsters at close range, and antiaircraft elements dug in at critical areas. Luckily for the paratroopers, Bausch's assault gun detachment was also on hand to meet the Russian attack. Set up in ambush positions, the assault guns, assisted by paratroop antitank methods, destroyed a leading group of 25 tanks within a few minutes with the loss of only two disabled vehicles. During the first day of the Russian attack, more than 120 enemy tanks were claimed as destroyed or disabled in the 2nd FJD's sector.

Although bloodied, the Soviets were able to make several penetrations in the German line, allowing Rotmistrov's tanks to speed westward south of Kirovograd. It was the same in the north, with Soviet tanks making their way through gaps in the line. Red Army infantry followed closely, swirling around stubborn strongpoints and leaving them for troops of the second wave.

Vormann had already informed Berlin of the attack. Explaining the situation he faced, he asked permission to retreat to a shorter line to the west of Kirovograd. His request was immediately denied. Hitler would have none of it and ordered that Kirovograd be defended to the last man and the last bullet.

Bayerlein was contacted by Vormann later in the morning. The 3rd Panzer was ordered to ready itself for movement immediately. Bayerlein informed his superior that the order had already been given, and he asked for a situation report. The picture was not a pretty one.

Von Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer had been forced to engage in a fighting retreat. The Soviet 7th and 8th Mechanized Corps had broken through at the junction of the 11th Panzer and Schmidt's 10th PGD and were continuing to drive west. The 10th was badly battered and was already retreating to the southwest.

Unrein's left flank had been broken, and the 14th Panzer was being pushed back toward Adzhamka. To Unrein's right, mechanized forces had severed the junction with the 376th Infantry Division and the 2nd FJD, forcing Schwarz back in conjunction with Unrein's retreat. To help stave off a full-blown rout, Unrein sent 12 panzers to help the 376th combat advancing Soviet tanks.

As Bayerlein digested the information, he could hear the sounds of tanks in the distance. "What are your orders Herr General?" he asked Vormann.

Bayerlein was told to prepare for a counterattack to the northwest to close the gap that was forming between the 10th PGD and the 11th Panzer Division. The main attack was to take place the next day, but Bayerlein sent his reinforced armored reconnaissance battalion, commanded by Major Charly Deichen, toward Terbovka at 1500 hours as an advance force to counter the Russians. By the time Deichen reached the village, Soviet tanks had already bypassed it.

Things went from bad to worse as the Russian vanguard, the 67th Tank Brigade, was reported closing on Vormann's headquarters at Mala Vyska. Transport and supply personnel under the command of a Colonel von Bernuth, augmented by headquarters security forces, formed a defensive line and halted the Soviets just a few kilometers from the town. However, the Russians succeeded in cutting communications between Vormann and Kirovograd, leaving the corps commander in the dark about the rapidly developing situation.

On the morning of January 6, Bayerlein began his counterattack at 0600. With Captain Botho König's II/Pz. Rgt.6 and Captain Karl-Heinz Brandt's I/ Pz. Gren. Rgt. 3 in the lead, the 3rd Panzer hit the Russians north of Lelekova and kept rolling through the startled Soviet defenders. A few T-34s and 15 enemy 76mm antitank guns were destroyed in the first hours of the attack.

Bayerlein planned to cut supply lines to the Soviet forces west of Kirovograd. He also hoped to link up with von Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer, which was coming down from the north. As darkness set in, the 3rd Panzer had advanced eight kilometers, but it could go no farther.

Bayerlein's supply columns could not keep up with his tracked vehicles because of the deep snow. As a result, the divisional artillery had depleted its ordnance. His armor was also short of ammunition. The Soviets had recovered from their initial surprise, and reinforcements were rushing to the area. Only five kilometers away was the spearhead of the 11th Panzer, but it might as well have been on the moon.

Driving back to his headquarters, Bayerlein discussed the situation with his operations officer, Lt. Col. Wilhelm Voss. He had been thinking about the stupidity of Hitler's no withdrawal order on the return trip.

"We had come up against this in Africa," he recalled. "It almost cost us the Afrika Korps at Alamein. If Rommel had not gone against it, the war in Africa would have been over in 1942. The Sixth Army had been destroyed at Stalingrad because of such an order."

Voss told Bayerlein that communications with the XLVII Panzer Corps were still out. He also said there was no doubt that the divisions defending Kirovograd, including the 3rd Panzer, were now encircled.

Bayerlein thought that Kirovograd sounded too much like Stalingrad. "We must break out," he told Voss.

Citing their dwindling supplies, Bayerlein convinced Voss that it would be better to fight from outside the pocket, where ammunition and fuel would be available. He also said that the division would be much more mobile, as a panzer division should be. With the issue decided, he told Voss to move whatever supplies were left to the front and hand them out to the fighting units.

"We will break out tomorrow," he said. "Make all the necessary preparations."

The lack of communications with Vormann's headquarters was a stroke of good luck for Bayerlein. He would use his own judgment, unencumbered by a senior commander who would probably follow Hitler's order to the letter.

At midday on January 7 Bayerlein went to meet with Schmidt, Unrein, and Schwarz. He told Schmidt, who was the senior officer present, of his intentions. Schmidt did not object to the plan, but he also stated that he would continue to obey the no withdrawal order. The other two officers followed his lead.

The main front was now only 10 kilometers to the east of Kirovograd, and some Soviet units had even made it into the southern suburbs of the city before being stopped. With the lines shrinking, Schmidt said he would use part of his 10th PGD to take over Bayerlein's sector.

Returning to his headquarters, Bayerlein held an officers call with those who could be spared from the fighting. "We need freedom of action," he told the assembled men. "Therefore, we will break out of this trap tonight."

The general and Voss then returned to planning the breakout attempt, which would begin just when it started to get dark at 1600. A total of five combat groups would move, one behind the other, toward the positions of the 11th Panzer Division.

Group A was the spearhead. Composed of all the division's running tanks, the armored infantry carrier company, Colonel Hans Lattmann's self-propelled artillery, and armored engineers, Group A's job was to batter its way through the Russian defenses. Group B would follow with more engineers and artillery and Colonel Ernst Wellmann's Pz. Gren. Rgt. 2. The next group would consist of medical units, wounded troops, supply columns, and towed damaged vehicles. Lt. Col. Wilhelm Beuremann's reinforced Pz. Gren. Rgt. 394 was next. The rear guard, Group E, was Deichen's Armored Reconnaissance Battalion 3. Self-propelled antitank and antiaircraft elements would guard the columns' flanks.

At 1600, the lead element, spearheaded by König's reinforced II/Pz. Rgt. 6, moved out. Bayerlein had ordered that a final radio message be sent to Vormann and Wöhler. It said, "3rd Panzer Division is busting through the ring in a northwesterly direction in order to close gap in the front and to operate in the enemy's rear against the encircled town." He did not wait to see whether anyone received the message, ordering radio silence as soon as it was sent.

The temperature was 13 degrees, and no moonlight shone through the overcast sky. Bayerlein was in his Kübelwagen (open-topped utility vehicle) with König's tanks. As they approached recently constructed Soviet positions, Russian antitank guns opened up on the lead tank, which burst into flames. The fire exposed the advancing columns, but it also sent the Russians into a panic. In the flickering light of the burning panzer, Bayerlein's force must have seemed much larger than it actually was.

König's panzers attacked with covering fire given by the panzergrenadiers and the artillery. With guns blazing, the panzers overran the Soviet positions, crushing antitank guns under their tracks and scattering the Russian defenders. With the path to freedom clear for the moment, Bayerlein ordered the division to move forward again.

The columns could only move as fast as their slowest vehicles, but the surprise from the initial battle kept the Soviets from staging any night attack. As dawn broke, the Germans anxiously eyed their flanks while continuing northeast. Finally, after a 40-kilometer forced march, Bayerlein spotted the lead elements of the 11th Panzer Division near the village of Ivanivka. With the loss of only one panzer and a few trucks, the breakout had succeeded.

"We were all very relieved when we saw the steel helmets of the men of the 11th Panzer," Bayerlein recalled.

Communications with the XLVII Panzer Corps were now restored. Bayerlein learned what had happened as he made his report to Vormann. The 67th Tank Brigade had broken through headquarters defenses and had forced the corps staff to flee. The corps adjutant, Major Kurt Hasse, was a two-time gold medal winner in the equestrian event at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Organizing a defense with what was left of the corps signal battalion along with cooks and supply personnel, Hasse held off the Soviets until the staff escaped. He died defending his position, as did many of the others.

During the hurried evacuation, the corps transmitters and signaling devices were left behind. Vormann and his staff had to make it about 15 kilometers to Novomyrhorod in the deep snow. Once there, he used an Eighth Army telephone exchange to regain contact with his subunits after his communications personnel jury rigged the system. Now that he could once again communicate with his divisions and with Eighth Army headquarters, it was time to strike back.

Fighting was now raging inside Kirovograd, with the three divisions trapped there being slowly pushed back into a dwindling pocket. The hard-pressed 2nd FJD was barely holding the line south of the city, with some companies suffering 60 to 70 percent casualties, and the Russians were still pushing elements westward through the porous line.

At the point of the Soviet assault, the 67th Tank Brigade, after taking Mala Vyska, roamed the battlefield like a phantom. It had surprised defending forces at an airfield south of Mala Vyska and had destroyed the facility. Unfortunately for the Russians, the aircraft stationed there, the III/Schlachtgeschwader (ground attack wing) 2, was on a mission. The unit, commanded by tank-busting ace Captain Hans-Ulrich Rudel, would exact a heavy toll on the brigade during the next few days.

Field Marshal von Manstein had already ordered elements of SS Brig. Gen. Hermann Priess' 3rd SS "Totenkopf" (Death's Head) Panzer Division and Maj. Gen. Walter Hoernlein's "Grossdeutschland" (Greater Germany) Panzer Division to assemble behind the 2nd FJD soon after the Soviet attack began. Those units were almost at their assembly points. After Bayerlein's breakout, Vormann now had a striking force of two panzer divisions north of Kirovograd, and he could count on the two arriving panzer divisions in the south. With luck, the Germans could cut off the Russian forces west of the city and plug the gaps in their line at the same time.

After refueling his vehicles and resupplying his depleted ammunition stores, Bayerlein was ordered to do an about face and attack Soviet forces in the Lelekova area. The Russians had already taken most of Kirovograd, and Unrein's 14th Panzer Division was conducting a desperate rearguard action in what was still in German hands while the 376th Infantry and 10th PGD retreated toward Bayerlein's objective.

With König's II/Pz. Rgt. 6 once again in the lead, the 3rd Panzer slammed into the left flank of the 7th Mechanized Corps. The Russians reacted quickly, stopping the German advance. Bayerlein ordered König to retreat and regroup in a depression that was out of Russian view. Marking the Soviet positions, the general had his division artillery open up a murderous barrage.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-578-1936-16A; Photo: Gemmelsbacher

The 2nd Fallschirmjäger Division reinforced the German defenders of Kirovograd in December 1943, and these elite airborne troops proved to be superb foot soldiers during the lengthy battle. These two soldiers are taking up a defensive position with a Raketen-Panzer-Büchse 54, a potent antitank weapon.

On the heels of the barrage, König and elements of Wellmann's Pz. Gr. Rgt. 3 sliced through the Soviet line and advanced toward the village of Osykuvate, some eight kilometers north of Kirovograd. On their way to the village the Germans all but destroyed the 48th Mechanized Brigade, eliminating about 40 antitank guns, killing around 400 Russians, and taking another 500 prisoner. The rest of the brigade simply melted away.

To his east, von Wiethersheim also made good progress. "We ran into some initial resistance, but the panzergrenadiers accompanying the panzers soon overcame the Russian positions," he recalled. "Our artillery hit Russian positions to the rear as we advanced, taking out several antitank guns."

On January 9, Bayerlein summoned Deichen to his command post. He told the major to take his reconnaissance battalion and head toward Mala Vyska to try and destroy the troublesome 67th Tank Brigade. Accompanying him would be the 6th Company of König's panzer battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Thiemer. He was also told that he could expect Luftwaffe support. Some time was lost in respelling the tanks, but by midafternoon the battle group was on its way. Some time later, reconnaissance patrols reported that the enemy brigade was in an area around Mala Vyska and was taking a hammering from Rudel's Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers.

In a 1967 visit to Rudel at his home just outside of Küfstein, Austria, the author asked the one-legged pilot about Kirovograd and other actions that he participated in during the war. He stated, "It was a good day for hunting."

"We climbed into our 'Kanonvogel' [cannon bird—nickname for the Ju-87G] and flew to the Mala Vyska area," he recalled. "There were many Russian tanks around the town. I can only conclude that they were waiting for supplies or fuel since they were so far in front of the main Russian force.

"My Gruppe attacked relentlessly. Our Stukas were armed with bombs and a 3.7-centimeter cannon under each wing. Each cannon had six shells. I ordered the squadrons to attack one after the other. The fields were soon littered with burning enemy tanks. Our temporary airfield was close, so we could easily land to refuel and rearm. We didn't stop chasing the tanks until it became dark. I destroyed 16 tanks and seven assault guns, and my comrades added many more."

The remnants of the shattered brigade headed east, straight toward Deichen's reinforced battalion, which had dug in for the night and was preparing for a morning attack. Deichen received reports from his outposts that tracked vehicles were heading his way, followed by patrols reporting enemy tanks with mounted infantry being spotted. He immediately alerted his companies and Thiemer's panzers, ordering them to prepare for immediate movement.

Deichen had Thiemer's panzers form an armored wedge with 1st Lt. Kleffel's armored carriers in the middle. First Lt. Möller's motorcycles would bring up the rear. At the first signs of daylight, the column moved forward toward the Russians. Enemy vehicles were spotted about 1,500 meters away, and Deichen ordered his men to attack.

The Soviet column consisted of about 15 T-34 tanks and some trucks. Speeding forward, Thiemer's panzers got to within killing range before the Russians could react. In accordance with German doctrine, the panzers halted before firing, giving the gunners a stable platform. Picking their targets carefully, the gunners fired a salvo that set several of the tanks ablaze. The surviving enemy vehicles took flight with the Germans hot on their heels. Within a few minutes practically all of the Russian vehicles were destroyed, and a number of prisoners were taken. Deichen, having accomplished his mission, then set out to rejoin the rest of the division.

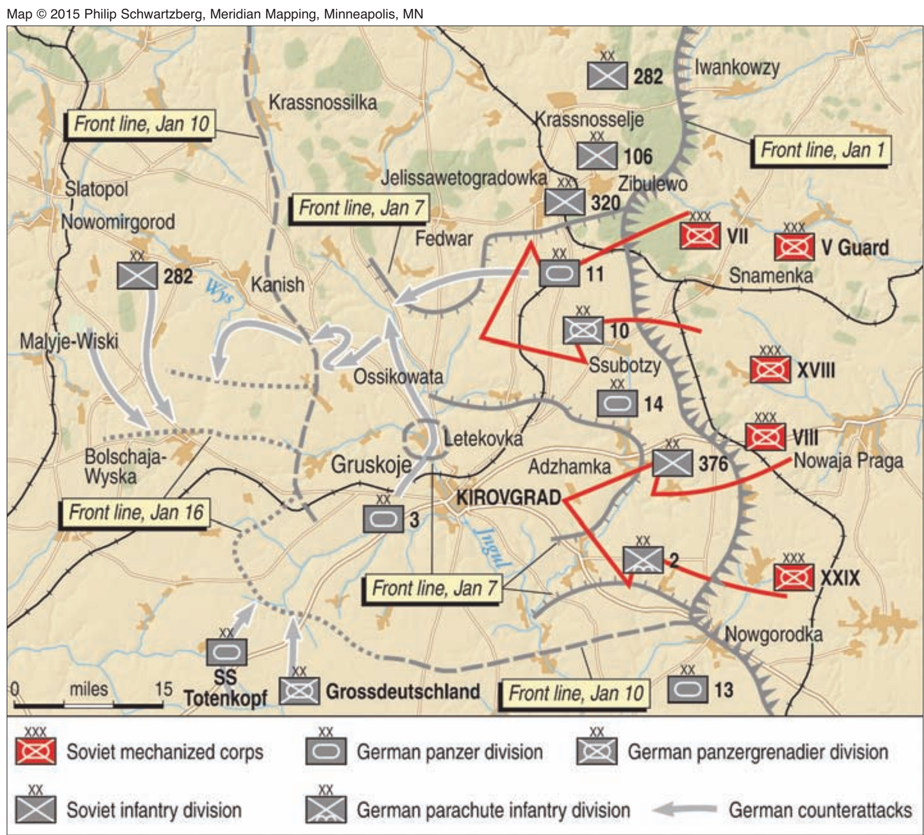
While Bayerlein and von Wiethersheim kept the Russians off guard, the three divisions of the Kirovograd garrison slowly retreated to the northwest. About 11 kilometers to the west, the 331st Regimental Group, a remnant of the shattered 167th Infantry Division, reached the village of Gruzkoye. It had been a hard day for the regiment, which had exploited the 3rd Panzer's success by fighting its way through the Soviet defenses to reach the village, which was about eight kilometers west of Kirovograd.

Upon hearing of the Soviet advance into the city, Hitler belatedly gave permission for the three trapped divisions to break out, not knowing that most of the German troops had already left. The few rearguard units still present in the city quickly pulled out to join up with their parent units. As night fell on January 9, the weary landsers of the 331st received new orders. They were to support the 3rd Panzer in a night attack to link up with the surrounded units.

General Schmidt was informed of the attack and immediately ordered the bulk of the three divisions to prepare for a westward assault. Coordinating with Bayerlein, the two forces attacked, catching a number of panicked Soviet units between them. The Russians quickly fled.

Schmidt described the escape in the 10th Divisional history: "We were led out of the Lelekovka pocket without loss. Because there was only one frozen road for supply, the withdrawal of the divisions had to be precisely scheduled.... Only a few enemy tanks vainly tried to stop the breakout....The 10th Panzergrenadier Division withdrew with all its wounded. No serviceable heavy weapons or guns were left to the enemy."

Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



German commanders exercised superb troop deployment and movement during the defense of Kirovograd, shifting forces as necessary and mounting precision counterattacks to thwart the Red Army offensive during the winter of 1943-1944.

Before dawn the forward patrols of the 331st met up with Schmidt's advance elements. Three German divisions had been saved from annihilation, and a new line could now be formed, trapping the Soviet forces that were left west of Kirovograd.

The Russians were furious about letting the Germans slip through their fingers and began hammering the enemy line with heavy artillery. The paratroopers of the 2nd FJD were hit particularly hard, but they held their ground as elements of Hoernlein's Grossdeutschland took up positions on their left flank. Priess' Totenkopf Panzer Division was following to strengthen the line. Also coming from the south was Korps Abteiling (Detachment) A, which consisted of the remnants of the 161st, 293rd, and 355th Infantry Divisions.

To relieve pressure on the paratroopers, a battle group of the Grossdeutschland attacked Soviet forces entrenched in and around the village of Karlivkha on the morning of January 10. Supported by Stukas, the battle group managed to penetrate the village but was driven back by heavy fire. A second attack took place at 1700. Although sustaining heavy losses, the Germans managed to take the southern half of the village before being forced to go into a defensive posture. It was a costly operation, but the Soviets were forced to divert units attacking the 2nd FJD to stop them, giving the paratroopers a welcome respite.

The 3rd Panzer Division had little time to celebrate the rescue of their comrades. As soon as the liberation was complete, the division was ordered north to Kanizh to help the 320th Infantry Division, which was in danger of being overrun. Some Soviet tanks and supporting units had already broken through the division's defenses. Bayerlein's men were now in an all-around battle, trying to stop the Russian breakthrough while defending against Soviet units trying to retreat from the pocket that had formed west of Kirovograd. As Bayerlein put it, "It was hard to tell who was surrounded—the Germans or the Russians."

Lieutenant Helmut Leuthardt's 5/Pz. Rgt. 6 struck the Soviets that had broken through the lines of the 320th. The Russians were setting up positions in the village of Andreevka when they were surprised by Leuthardt's panzers. After a preliminary salvo, the panzers rushed the half finished antitank gun positions, spraying them with machine-gun fire. Crushing the remaining guns under their treads, the panzers

swept through the village, firing at the Russian survivors. In a few minutes Leuthardt's men had destroyed 15 76mm antitank guns. They then proceeded to hunt down the tanks that had broken through.

While fending off the Soviet attack on one front, Bayerlein ordered another combat group to block a Russian breakout attempt west of Mala Vyska. At the village of Maryanrovka, 28 kilometers north of Kirovograd, the combat group ran into heavy enemy resistance. Panzergrenadier Rgt. 394, which was defending in the Vladmirovka area, also reported a concentration of enemy tanks moving on its position. Luckily for the 3rd Panzer, two regiments of Freyking's 282nd Infantry Division were arriving to support the division.

On January 11, a Russian attack, preceded by a heavy artillery barrage, hit the German line north of Gruzkoye. The ferocity of the attack pushed the Germans back, and the Russians threatened to break through. Only heavy German counterfire prevented a mini-disaster.

Bayerlein called on König's panzer battalion to lead a counterattack the next day, with the rest of the division and Freyking's two regiments to follow. The attack hit the Russians hard. Deichen's reconnaissance battalion drove the Soviets out of Maryanrovka and kept going. Accompanied by mounted infantry, König's panzers bypassed Aleksandrovka and headed for Soviet defenses on the edge of a forest south of the village.

The Russians had little time to react. While the panzers blazed away, the infantry dismounted and rushed forward. The surprised Soviets fired a ragged volley before pulling back, leaving eight assault guns and two tanks ablaze—victims of König's guns. Ten antitank guns were also destroyed.

With followup forces arriving to press the Russians further, the 3rd Panzer pulled out of the line. The constant combat of the past few days had taken its toll on both men and equipment, and the landsers hoped they could get some much needed rest. The respite would last only a few hours, however, as the division received orders to head to a new hot spot the following day.

akg-images

Advancing along a muddy road in the Ukraine during the winter of 1944, Soviet soldiers pause to take a look at a knocked-out German tank. This PzKpfw. VI Tiger has previously been fitted with additional armor skirting, but to no avail.

A strong Soviet force had hit the junction of the XI Army Corps and the XLVII Panzer Corps and had forced a gap between the two units. Colonel Hermann Hohn's 72nd Infantry Division, on the IX Corps' southern flank, and Brig. Gen. Paul Forster's 389th Infantry Division, which was guarding XLVII Panzer Corps' northern flank, had both been forced to retreat, causing the gap. On Forster's right, Maj. Gen. Werner Forst's 106th Infantry Division was also forced to retreat because of its exposed flank. A domino effect across both corps was likely unless the situation was restored.

Vormann ordered the 3rd Panzer to assemble at Pancheve, five kilometers northwest of Kanizh. Once there, the division would hit the Russian flank. Bayerlein and Voss worked out the details of the attack while the 3rd was on the move.

As the 3rd Panzer headed toward its assembly area, the fighting southwest of Kirovograd continued unabated. Soviet forces attacked the line 27 kilometers west of the city. During previous attacks the Russians had identified the defending German units in the sector as the weakened 14th Panzer and 376th Infantry Divisions. Having been occupied with fighting the 2nd FJD and the Grossdeutschland farther south for the past few days, they failed to realize that the 3rd SS Panzer Division had inserted itself between the two divisions.

After the usual preliminary artillery barrage, the Russians attacked with a combined armor and motorized force. The SS grenadiers held their fire as the enemy approached. Priess' men were veteran troops, and they knew their job well. The order to engage was finally given, and a hurricane of bullets and shells hit the advancing Soviets. Well-camouflaged antitank weapons blazed away, turning several enemy vehicles into twisted, burning hulks. The defense left the Russians reeling, and the attack was stopped dead in its tracks.

Russian forces then moved farther south where they found the 376th. They hit the division's left flank in a wooded area. The headquarters of the 3rd SS Panzer received a message stating, "The left flank of the 376th is fully enveloped. To plug the gap a battle group from the SS Regiment Eicke, supported by part of SS Flak Detachment 3, moved to meet the threat. Combined with elements of the 376th, these units stopped the breakthrough, and the line was restored."

The Russians tried different parts of the line south of Kirovograd, but the added punch of the Grossdeutschland and 3rd SS Panzer led the attacking units to disaster. Leaving behind hundreds of bodies and dozens of burning tanks, Soviet commanders finally called off their doomed attacks. Both sides were drained by the heavy fighting, and the front in the south soon stabilized.

While the Russians battered the southern sector, the 3rd Panzer began its attack at 0900 on January 15. By noon, several enemy positions had been taken with heavy losses to the Soviets in both men and material. The main objective of the attack was the village of Rymentarovka. A company of PzKpfw. V Panther medium tanks from the 11th Panzer Division had been attached to the 3rd to support the assault. The preliminary attack on the forward Russian positions succeeded perhaps too well, as the

rapidly advancing panzers moved ahead at full speed, resulting in the following motorized infantry losing contact with them. Without panzer-infantry coordination, the strongly defended village could not be taken that day.

After regrouping the following day, the attack on Rymentarovka resumed. Panzergrenadier 3, supported by the Panthers of the 11th Panzer, stormed the village after a brief bombardment, while Pz. Gren. Rgt. 394 provided flank security. The Russians put up stiff resistance at first, but after several positions fell they withdrew, leaving the village in German hands. A Soviet counterattack was met by König's battalion, which sent the surviving Russians fleeing.

The fighting around Kirovograd had been costly for both sides. Some German infantry regiments were now at barely battalion strength, and the remaining tanks in the panzer divisions were in desperate need of repair. To the Germans' good fortune, the Russians had shot their bolt after mid-January. They had gained ground and had taken Kirovograd, but the main objective of encircling and destroying the Eighth Army had failed. Instead, they looked to the northeast, where two German corps were on the verge of being encircled and destroyed in the Korsun-Cherkassy area.

Wöhler's Eighth Army Headquarters claimed that 490 enemy tanks, 100 artillery pieces, 15 antiaircraft guns, and dozens of antitank guns had been destroyed between January 9 and January 15 alone. It also claimed 3,871 prisoners taken. Thousands of other Russianss had either been killed or wounded.

The front west of Kirovograd had now stabilized, with the 3rd Panzer occupying positions north of Pancheve. To Bayerlein's right were the 106th Infantry, 11th Panzer, 282nd Infantry, and Priess' 3rd SS Panzer. Schwarz's 36th Infantry held the sector directly west of Kirovograd. Running south of the 376th were the 14th Panzer, Grossdeutschland, and the 2nd FJD.

With the line now sealed, the few remaining Russian units to the west were hunted down and destroyed, either by Rudel's Stukas or by armored security units. Out of ammunition, food, and fuel, they were easy prey for the hunters, who were aided in their search by reconnaissance aircraft.

Bayerlein's disobedience of Hitler's orders resulted in Vormann having a mobile force that was used again and again to settle several dangerous situations. Surprisingly, he was not disciplined by Berlin, and he left the 3rd Panzer to take up his new command of the Panzer Lehr Division. If things had turned out differently at Kirovograd, and if he had survived the combat after his breakout, Bayerlein would probably have been sent to prison or possibly executed.

The Eighth Army had won a decisive defensive victory. Although the Russians continued to press the armies on either side of Wöhler, the enemy forces in front of the Eighth Army would need several weeks to rest and replace the men and material lost during the battle.

In his memoirs, Field Marshal von Manstein praised both the Eighth Army and the neighboring Sixth Army, stating, "Thanks to the heroism of the German troops and the numerous stopgaps devised by the two army commands, the enemy in this combat area continued to have only limited success, despite the fact that he was now many times stronger in numbers and material. Although the Eighth Army's front was pushed back a little to the west and Kirovograd was abandoned, the enemy did not accomplish a decisive breakthrough for the purpose of trapping our forces in the Dnieper bend."

Pat McTaggart is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front and has written on many aspects of the titanic struggle between the armed forces of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. He resides in Elkader, Iowa.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-711-0427-04; Photo: Scheerer

Colonel Karl Lorenz, who later rose to the rank of brigadier general and command of the Panzergrenadier Regiment Grossdeutschland, pauses alongside a PzKpfw. V Panther mediun tank to discuss upcoming movements with other officers. With its high-velocity 75mm cannon, the Panther constituted the German response to the legendary Soviet T-34 medium tank.

U.S. Navy

Crew members abandon the USS *Lexington* (CV-2) after being attacked by Japanese torpedoes and bombs during the Battle of Coral Sea. The mortally stricken carrier was later torpedoed and sunk by the destroyer USS *Phelps*.

A Legacy of Service

The aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* lasted only six months after Pearl Harbor, but her actions paved the way to future victory.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER KAKUISHI TAKAHASHI LOOKED DOWN ON HIS targets from 14,000 feet. They were long, narrow forms with flat decks and large funnel stacks, the American aircraft carriers USS *Lexington* and *Yorktown*. It was 11 AM on May 8, 1942, and the Battle of the Coral Sea was in full swing. The Japanese aviator was in command of a strike mission determined to sink the enemy ships. Takahashi's force included both torpedo and dive bombers escorted by Zero fighters. Thinking quickly, he devised a plan to hit the Americans with a coordinated assault by both types of attack planes, a technique the Americans themselves were still struggling to work out.

The 18 torpedo planes were sent down to 4,000 feet at 11:09. They were accompanied by all 18 Zeros, with the assumption they would need fighter cover more than the bombers. The torpedo plane commander was given authority to divide his aircraft between the two enemy carriers as he saw fit. The 33 bombers were moved down to 10,000 feet and deployed in V-shaped groups. Once the torpedo planes began their attacks the bombers would dive in, giving the Americans near-simultaneous attacks to deal with. At the last minute Takahashi would divide the bombers between *Lexington* and *Yorktown*.

The attack went in; Japanese aircraft maneuvered for their killing blows while American fighters twisted and turned to intercept them. Black puffs of smoke dotted the air as antiaircraft fire exploded. The carriers turned and curved through the water trying to avoid the maelstrom of bombs and torpedoes that fell upon them. *Lexington*'s captain, Frederick C. "Ted" Sherman, was an expert ship handler, so skilled he rarely needed tugboats to help dock his ship. He sent his ship back and forth in an effort to avoid torpedoes inbound from both directions. Sherman's deft orders foiled the tracks of the first five torpedoes, but six more flew in.

One Japanese torpedo bomber blew up as an American Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber riddled it with gunfire. The explosion caused another to abort its attack, leaving four more planes. They dropped their fish into the water from only 700 yards. The planes flashed by *Lexington*, one succumbing to a torrent of antiaircraft fire. It crashed into the sea just ahead of the ship's bow. *Lexington*'s luck had run out, however. Two torpedoes crashed into the port side, damaging some of the ship's gasoline tanks and causing fumes to spread. This was due to an unconsidered design flaw, a result of the ship having been converted from a battlecruiser hull rather than designed from the keel up as a carrier.

The incoming Japanese bombers scored two hits as well, one of which started several fires. The crew began fighting the blazes, and things seemed to be under control when, at 12:47, a massive explosion caused by gas fumes rocked the ship. The battle for the survival of the *Lexington* was now underway; it was a battle her crew would ultimately lose. The proud carrier would be scuttled by the destroyer *Phelps* shortly before 8 PM, after more than 2,700 of her crew were rescued. Some 216 sailors died.

The *Lexington*'s legacy was much more than her loss at the Coral Sea. She and her crews gave years of service to the United States and helped develop carrier aviation. Many of the lessons learned from the ship, including those of her loss, would help guide future carrier development, from air tactics to ship design. *Lexington*'s proud story is well told in Phil Keith's newest book, ***Stay the Rising Sun: The True Story of USS Lexington, Her Valiant Crew, and Changing the Course of WWII*** (Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2015, 234 pp., photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover). The entire story of *Lexington*'s service is told, with a focus on her vital service in World War II. Everything, from her construction to her sinking, including

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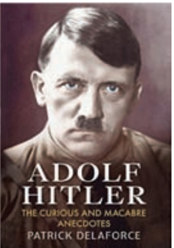
peacetime humanitarian missions, participation in fleet training exercises, and early wartime service prior to the Coral Sea, is recounted in clear, flowing prose that keeps the reader engaged. Using numerous resources, the author is able to combine them into a seamless narrative, which relates the individual tales of officers, pilots, and sailors in a way that effectively supports the overall story of *Lexington.* The history of a ship is really the combined stories of her crewmembers. The success of this book is in its combining of these accounts into a whole that is indeed greater than the sum of its parts, an entertaining and accurate portrayal of the war in the Pacific in early 1942.

General Jacob Devers: World War II's Forgotten Four Star (John A. Adams, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 2015, 456 pp., maps, table, notes, bibliography, index, $45.00, hardcover)

Jacob Devers is the least known of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's army group commanders after Omar Bradley and Bernard Montgomery, but his contributions are no less impressive. Devers had a "can do" attitude and remarkable determination. In 1941, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, who had an eye for talent, selected Devers from a position of relative obscurity in the Panama Canal Zone to assist in preparing the Army for war. Devers showed his abilities by preparing the Army for rapid expansion and training, along with heading the Armored Force in such a way that it was better armed for combat. He later took command of the 6th Army Group, which invaded Southern France and ended the war on the Austrian border.

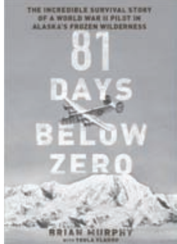
This is a detailed look at a relatively unknown but effective leader and his war at the army group level. The level of detail is good, a requirement for any book dealing with such a lofty subject. It effectively tells the story of how Devers overcame the challenges of such a command and achieved a greatness that has gone largely unheralded until now.



Adolf Hitler: The Curious and Macabre Anecdotes (Patrick Delaforce, Fonthill Media, Stroud, UK, 2015, photographs, notes, $19.95, softcover)

The details of Hitler's life are often lost in the myths and stories that surround him. He is rightly seen as one of history's most horrid villains, but he was not born with a swastika on his arm. As a boy he once made the girls in his school laugh during a ceremony by brushing at a nonexistent mustache when they looked at him. In 1923, he smuggled cash from the sales of *Mein Kampf* in a steamer trunk aboard a train from Switzerland like a common criminal.

It is easy to discount Hitler and other Nazis as purely insane scoundrels, but this is an easy answer that does not require the reader to have to think about human nature and evil. The author tries to show the path Hitler took to eventual infamy with a series of anecdotes about his life and those close to him. Some of the stories of his youth are rather innocent, while others clearly point to his extreme views, callousness, and lust for power. The book is able to reveal all this without showing any appearance of sympathy for the dictator, always a risk when trying to show the full story of a wicked man, rather than just brand him as bad.



81 Days Below Zero: The Incredible Survival Story of a World War II Pilot in Alaska's Frozen Wilderness (Brian Murphy, Da Capo Press, Boston, MA, 2015, 256 pp., map, photographs, bibliography, index, $24.99, hardcover)

Leon Crane was a city boy, brought up on the streets of Philadelphia. Growing up, he had learned the ways of survival amid neighborhoods of rowhouses and local toughs. It could never have prepared him for the cards fate dealt him in December 1943. Now a young pilot stationed at Ladd Field, Alaska, he was scheduled for a training mission on the morning of December 21. After staying up late into the night playing cards, Leon snatched a few hours' sleep before rising for his flight. The young aviator was part of the crew of a Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber named *Iceberg Inez.* It was a difficult environment for flying, but there was a war on and the crew had a job to do.

The B-24 took off from the airfield as planned. Initially the training flight went well. Then a sudden failure sent the plane into a spin. The pilot recovered only to have it happen again. *Iceberg Inez* was going down. Leon Crane and several others bailed out, but Leon landed alone in the snow some two miles from where his plane crashed and exploded. He had a small book of matches, his parachute, a Boy Scout knife, and the clothes on his back. It was only the beginning of Leon's ordeal. The freezing temperatures, wind, snow, and ice all conspired to kill him. The

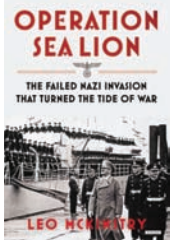
young pilot would fight through, however, spending 12 weeks in the frozen wasteland before walking out on his own.

Leon Crane's amazing story is recounted in great detail. The author relates the young aviator's harrowing tale in smooth prose, which beckons the reader to continue reading. There are many survival stories of airmen and sailors adrift at sea and how they beat the odds. This story reveals how one flyer endured an experience just as extreme and lived to tell about it.

Flying Warbirds: An Illustrated Profile of the Flying Heritage Collection's Rare WWII-era Aircraft (Cory Graff, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2015, 240 pp., photographs, index, $40.00, hardcover)

The Flying Heritage Collection is a private museum containing some of the rarest aircraft in the world, with the stated goal of returning every one of them to flying condition. Located in Everett, Washington, the museum allows visitors to view planes that otherwise require a trip around the world to see. This new book allows those who cannot get to the museum to see them in vivid color photographs with accompanying text giving the background of each one, both in general for that type and the specific history of the plane in the collection.

This coffee table book uses each chapter to look at a pair of aircraft that shared some significant detail. In some cases that detail is that they met in combat, including some of the classic air battles of the war, such as the Battle of Britain and the combat of the Flying Tigers in China. While the text is informative and well done, the photographs make this book stand out. Photos of each plane are complemented with period images of the aircraft in service.



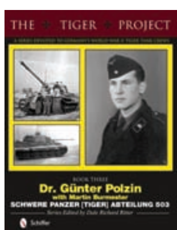
Operation Sea Lion: The Failed Nazi Invasion That Turned the Tide of War (Leo McKinstry, Overlook Press, New York, 2014, 392 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.50, hardcover)

The summer of 1940 was among the darkest days in the history of Great Britain. World War II was in full swing. France was defeated, and Britain stood alone against the might of Nazi Germany. The German high command conceived a two-part operation to defeat the British. First, an air assault would soften the island nation's defenses, and then an invasion

by ground forces would complete the victory, leaving Hitler triumphant. Such a success would have paved the way for the possibility of a defeated Soviet Union and an eventual confrontation with the United States.

It did not happen that way, thanks to the herculean effort of Britain's military forces. The Germans made massive preparations for an amphibious assault on Britain, gathering ships and barges to get their army across the English Channel. The Luftwaffe filled the sky with aircraft to knock the Royal Air Force out of the war and destroy British defensive capabilities. All this proved for naught; the British military managed to thwart the Nazis at every turn. The Royal Air Force maintained an air defense despite the enemy onslaught. British citizens were organized into ad hoc fighting units, and even the sea was turned against the Germans by using fuel to light its surface afire.

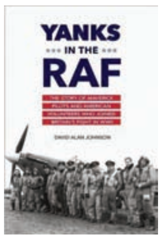
Sea Lion is frequently mentioned in histories of the war but rarely is it given such in-depth attention. Detailed accounts of what occurred on both sides give the reader a thorough understanding of Nazi Germany's first real defeat of World War II.



The Tiger Project: A Series Devoted to Germany's World War II Tiger Tank Crews—Book Three (Dr. Gunter Polzin, Schiffer Books, Atglen, PA, 136 pp., maps, photographs, index, $49.99, hardcover)

The Tiger tank still captivates readers 70 years after it fired its last shot in combat. Despite its shortcomings, the Tiger was long on firepower and armor protection, enabling it to excel in the defensive battles Germany fought during the final two years of the war. In the hands of a well-trained crew, the Tiger could achieve very lopsided victories against enemy armor.

This book is part of an ongoing series to show the experiences of these panzer crewmen. This volume focuses on Heavy Tank Battalion 503, which fielded both the Tiger I and II models. It began its war on the Eastern Front, transitioned to France to resist the Allied invasion at Normandy, and ended its war in Hungary in 1945. The author was a member of the battalion's 2nd Company, making the book an authentic account of the unit's time at war. Schiffer Books excels at such detailed and focused books.

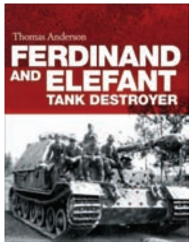


Yanks in the RAF: The Story of Maverick Pilots and American Volunteers Who Joined Britain's Fight in WWII (David Alan Johnson, Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 2015, 290 pp., photographs, notes bibliography, index, $25.00, hardcover)

The United States initially stayed out of World War II; it was content to sell weapons, equipment, and resources but stopped short of committing troops. With Great Britain in desperate straits, this did not sit well with some Americans, however. Before long American pilots were getting to England, often sneaking across the border into Canada, much as their fathers had done in World War I. Once there they volunteered to fight for the British. Their reasons for doing so varied; some simply wanted adventure and excitement in the age-old way of young men. Others were more fervent, wanting to strike a blow against fascism.

Whatever their reason, they soon found themselves fighting alongside their British brethren. The Americans were formed into three distinct units known as the Eagle Squadrons. After overcoming the usual difficulties between allies from different cultures, these men went on to defend Britain and take part in the Dieppe Raid. Eventually, after America entered the war, they were repatriated into the U.S. Army Air Corps, using their experience to prepare American pilots for the war.

Written in clear prose with an excellent eye for detail, this book is an interesting look at a relatively small group of men who made an invaluable contribution to the war effort. There are many good photographs showing the pilots in service, and many of their personal accounts are used to give the book substance. The author keeps the reader interested and turning pages from beginning to end.



Ferdinand and Elefant Tank Destroyer (Thomas Anderson, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2015, 256 pp., photographs, index, $34.95, hardcover)

When it came to tank destroyers during World War II, the German Army had the biggest, most powerful, and in many ways most successful designs. Among the most effective of all the German tank-killing vehicles were the Ferdinand and its derivative, the Elefant. Armed with the potent 88mm L/71 cannon, these heavily armored brutes could destroy any Allied tank from a distance. Their basic design was derived from

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Who Are the Indigenous People of Palestine?

The Jewish people have lived in Palestine continuously for more than 3,000 years—far longer than any ethnic group. Why do Arabs deny this history?

Many Arabs and anti-Israel activists claim Palestinians are the true indigenous people of the Holy Land, comparing their plight to that of Native Americans. Yet the ethnogenesis of the Jewish people—Hebrew language, Torah, Jewish religion, culture and self-identity—began in Palestine more than 1,800 years before Arabs arrived.

What are the facts?

Palestinian Deputy of Jerusalem Affairs Salwa Habib recently asserted that the "Palestinian people has been present in Jerusalem for thousands of years . . . centuries before the Jewish religion." Such attempts to delegitimize Israel's connection to the Holy Land disregard abundant archaeological, historical and genealogical evidence that confirms a continuous Jewish presence in Palestine dating back to the Hebrews' return from Egypt, circa 1200 BCE. By contrast, Arabs first arrived in Palestine around 640 CE, first became a dominant population there in the twelfth century and first called themselves Palestinians only in 1964.

> The Jews' return to Palestine reflects an indigenous people's self-determination to create a state on the site of its ancestral kingdom.

The U.N. defines an indigenous people as having a) continuously occupied ancestral lands, b) common ancestry with original occupants, c) a distinct common culture, d) a distinct language, e) a religion that emphasizes spiritual ties to the land, and f) a genetic connection to a specific people.

Are Palestinian Arabs indigenous? Comparisons of Palestinians to indigenous Native Americans fall short, as do claims that Palestinians are indigenous to the Holy Land. Unlike American Native People, Palestinian Arabs were not the aboriginal nor ever the sole inhabitants of this land. In addition, the population of Native Americans after white conquest was decimated by massacre and disease, while the Palestinian population has thrived and expanded dramatically over the past century. Finally, Native Americans were never offered a state of their own, whereas Palestinian Arabs have been offered a state many times, starting in 1947, but have refused these offers in favor of futile attempts for nearly 70 years to expel the Jews.

Arabs began to dominate the Holy Land when they arrived as Muslim conquerors in 1187 CE, especially during Mamluk rule, from 1260-1516 CE. However, just as white colonists in the Americas cannot call themselves indigenous people simply because they lived in an area for centuries, neither can Palestinian Arabs. As for other criteria of indigeneity, Palestinians speak Arabic, which is *not* a language specific to Palestine, nor had they identified as Palestinians before Egypt's President Nasser so dubbed them in 1964. In reality, there is no ethnic difference between Palestinian Arabs, Syrians and Jordanians. Likewise, Palestinians have no culture peculiar to Palestine, nor do they have strong religious ties to it. The Koran, for example, never mentions Jerusalem, which has been the capital of the Holy Land for several thousand years. Finally, despite claims by some Palestinians of a relationship to Canaanites, there is no genealogical or genetic evidence connecting Arabs to extinct Biblical peoples.

Are Jews indigenous to Palestine? The ancient Jewish connection to Palestine is confirmed in the Jewish Bible, the Christian Gospels and the Koran, as well as by countless Jewish antiquities and copious scholarly research. Genetic studies show that today's Jews—whether the Diaspora cast them to Europe, North America, Africa or other parts of the Middle East—are related genealogically to Jews of Biblical times. Jews also have a distinct language, culture and religion that are linked inextricably to Palestine. Indeed, for thousands of years Jewish liturgy has expressed the yearning of Jews to return to the land of Israel: "Next year in Jerusalem" is uttered by every observant Jew at Passover, and Jerusalem itself is a major character in the Torah, cited more than 600 times. Finally, of course, like Native Americans, Jews were dispossessed of their ancient lands—by the Romans, Christian Crusaders, Muslims, Babylonians and Ottomans. Surely just because Jews were deprived of their aboriginal lands doesn't mean they have no claim to them. Rather than colonialism, of which Israel is accused by anti-Zionists, the Jews' return to Palestine actually reflects an indigenous people's self-determination to create a state on the site of its ancestral kingdom.

There's no doubt that Jews are the legitimate indigenous people of Palestine. That's not, however, to deny Palestinian hopes for a sovereign state. In fact, Israel has many times offered to support such a state, if only Palestinians would abandon their jihad against Israel's legitimacy and accept the right of the Jewish people to <u>their</u> own state.

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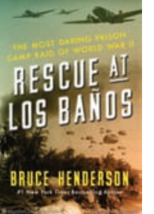
the Tiger chassis, enabling the vehicles to carry heavy frontal armor. Like other super-heavy German armored vehicles, however, they suffered from limited mobility and an unreliable drivetrain that strained under their considerable weight.

Only 90 Ferdinands were built, only enough to equip two units with them in time for the Battle of Kursk. From there the Ferdinands continued fighting on the Eastern Front until they were no longer mechanically sound. They were then shipped back to Germany to be refitted and improved into the Elefant design. A small number were sent to Italy; one of them was captured by the U.S. Army and still exists today as a museum exhibit. Still, most of them ended the war on the Eastern Front.

The vast amount of technical data in this volume gives readers as thorough an education in the design as they could want. The numerous illustrations show the tank destroyer's progression from the proving grounds to the factory and then the battlefield. Organizational charts show how the units were formed and equipped, giving a complete view of a unique and rare vehicle.

Rescue at Los Banos: The Most Daring Prison Camp Raid of World War II (Bruce Henderson, William Morrow Books, New York, 2015, 384 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $27.99, hardcover)

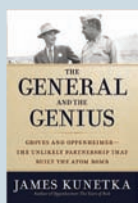


The war in the Philippine Islands was drawing to a close in February 1945. American forces, bolstered by Filipino resistance fighters, were steadily pushing the Japanese back. This would seem to be good news for the 2,146 prisoners, mostly Americans, being held at the Los Banos internment camp. These civilians had suffered horribly at the hands of their captors since Japanese forces had overrun the islands in 1942. Now, with the possibility of

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

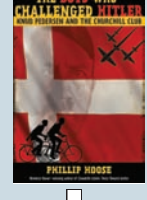
Bf 109E/F vs Yak-1/7: Eastern Front 1941-42 (Dmitriy Khazanov and Aleksander Medved, Osprey Publishing, 2015, $18.95, softcover) The skies over the Soviet Union belonged to Germany at the beginning of the war. A year later the pilots of the Red Air Force were starting to hold their own.

What the RAF Airman Took to War (Bill Howard, Shire Publications, 2015, $12.95, hardcover) British flyers took a myriad of items, both issued and personal, into battle. This book selects many of the more interesting objects and tells the story behind each.

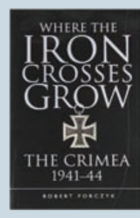


The General and the Genius: Groves and Oppenheimer, the Unlikely Partnership That Built the Atom Bomb (James Kunetka, Regnery History, 2015, $29.99, hardcover) These two men were very different, almost opposites. However, they were able to collaborate in creating a fearsome new weapon to end the war.

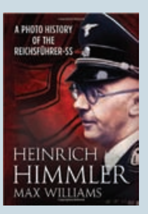
The Boys Who Challenged Hitler (Phillip Hoose, Farrar Straus Giroux, 2015, $19.99, hardcover) A group of teenaged Danish boys, angry that their nation failed to resist the Nazis, decided to act on their own. Their acts of sabotage helped to spur a larger resistance movement.



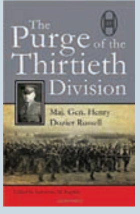
Where the Iron Crosses Grow: The Crimea 1941-44 (Robert Forczyk, Osprey Publishing, 2014, $25.95, hardcover) This portion of the Eastern Front saw horrible fighting, even including naval forces. The author uses research material never before translated into English.



Himmler: A Photo History of the Reichführer-SS (Max Williams, Fonthill Media, 2015, $65.00, hardcover) These 768 pages delve into the life and imagery of one of history's most reviled figures in a thorough look at his life using photographs.



The Purge of the Thirtieth Division (Maj. Gen. Henry Dozier Russell, Naval Institute Press, 2015, $59.95, hardcover) This is a reprint of a World War II-era book by a National Guard officer who wanted to expose the regular Army's replacement of



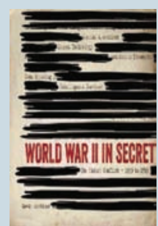
liberation beckoning, a final threat loomed; the defeated Japanese might execute the Americans or simply let them starve.

A daring rescue mission was planned using paratroopers of the 11th Airborne Division. A scouting force of American and Filipino fighters would approach the camp and mark a drop zone. After that a company of paratroopers would land and seize the camp. Meanwhile, other U.S. soldiers would approach the camp across a lake using enough amphibious tractors to carry the prisoners and troops together. Finally, a combined force of infantry and tanks would advance nearby, diverting Japanese attention.

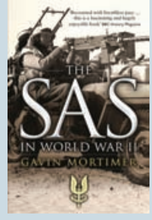
Using numerous personal accounts and interviews, the book reads almost like a novel, pulling the reader into the story. The prisoners' struggle for survival takes up the first part of the book with their rescue filling the rest. This provides an excellent background to the need for the rescue and gives cause for pride to the rescuers. □

Guardsmen with active officers to promote their own agenda. It takes an in-depth look at the 1940-41 Army maneuvers and buildup of the Army as a whole.

Race to the Rhine: Liberating France and the Low Countries (Leo Marriott and Simon Forty, Casemate Publishers, 2015, $29.95, hardcover) This book covers World War II in northwestern Europe. It is a photobook with many good maps and diagrams to accompany the photographs.



World War II in Secret: The Hidden Conflict 1939 to 1945 (Gavin Mortimer, Zenith Press, 2015, $30.00, hardcover) This is the story of the war told through its secrets, covert missions, and classified technology. The book is well illustrated with many charts and maps to complement the text.



The SAS in World War II (Gavin Mortimer, Osprey Publishing, 2015, $12.95, softcover) This is the complete story of the elite British Special Forces organization during the war. Much of the book's material was drawn from the Regimental Archives of the Special Air Service.

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 BY JOSEPH LUSTER

BATTLE OF THE BULGE DELIVERS CAMPAIGN-SPECIFIC STRATEGY AND THE *WARGAMING* TITLES CONTINUE TO EXPAND AND EVOLVE.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

PUBLISHER SHENANDOAH STUDIO • **DEVELOPER** SHENANDOAH STUDIO **SYSTEM** iOS, MAC, PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

It's one thing to create games based solely on World War II, but how often do you see a developer focus so closely on a single battle? It makes sense when the battle in question happens to be the Battle of the Bulge, the German offensive campaign that caught the Allied forces almost completely by surprise in 1944. Shenandoah Studio's *Battle of the Bulge* brings that colossal conflict and all the grueling tactical warfare that came along with it to PC, Mac, and iOS, the latter of which we tried out for ourselves with the latest update.

Battle of the Bulge does its best to be historically accurate, which can make its opening moments frustrating depending on which side you choose. It's definitely a good idea to dig into the tutorial first, because there are a ton of fine details to commit to memory and keep in mind when deciding every little move on the map. If you tackle the campaign on the Axis side you'll get the opportunity to pull off a genuine surprise attack, rendering the Allied forces effectively immobile for the first couple of turns. Play on the Allied side and you'll want to use those crippling moments to begin planning your defensive counter-strategy, both keeping the Axis units from capturing Bastogne and holding their troops and supply line away from the Meuse River.

Time plays a major role in gameplay, and it's always in the back of your mind even when not on full display on the screen. Most moves take at least a little bit of time off the clock, from 30-minute chunks and so on, so it's important to factor that in, especially when a particular objective must be met before the end of a certain day. Thus, choosing whether or not to, say, pass on a move and let the opponent take their turn becomes one of the strategies on which the entire game hinges. All the while, you'll see names and numbers representing the very real units under your command. When two or more go head to head against one another, sometimes they'll face utter defeat, and other times they'll simply retreat under fire. It all contributes to the developer's efforts to imbue at least some sense of humanity upon what otherwise looks like a fairly static board full of ever-shuffling pieces.

The attention to detail in *Battle of the Bulge* is much appreciated, but it can truly be unforgiving to anyone who isn't accustomed to its style of strategy. Typically first missions in games like these tend to be more lenient than the rest, with the difficulty scaling gradually, but you will lose your first time out if you don't pay close attention—especially if you choose the Allied forces—and it will take you a long time to fail, with little in the way of indication as to how you're currently faring. Seasoned vets of strategy gaming will scoff at the notion, but the rest of the potential players out there might take a while to warm up to the whole thing.

Even if you don't make it too deep into the missions, *Battle of the Bulge* will likely spark or further fuel any interest you may have in this particular campaign. While it's certainly no substitute for reading a book or watching a proper documentary on the subject, playing through each moment helps to provide insight into the harsh, unrelenting nature of the battle. If you do end up playing the latest version of *Battle of the Bulge* on an iOS device, hopefully you have access to an iPad because that will save you any eye strain that might make the going even tougher.

WORLD OF TANKS/WORLD OF WARSHIPS

PUBLISHER WARGAMING • **DEVELOPER** WARGAMING **SYSTEM** PC, PS4, XBOX ONE, XBOX 360 • **AVAILABLE** NOW

The folks at Wargaming haven't taken much of a break from expanding their various *World of* games, especially in the case of some recent updates to the stalwart *World of Tanks* and relative newcomer *World of Warships*. In the case of the veteran game, *World of Tanks* is finally making the leap to another console, with a PlayStation 4 version officially announced during this year's Tokyo Game Show event. Similar to the way it's set up on Xbox 360 and Xbox One, *World of Tanks* will be free to all users, and a PlayStation Plus membership won't even be required to play.

The PlayStation 4 version of *World of Tanks* brings in some new features, including full compatibility with the Dualshock 4 controller that incorporates the light bar, controller speaker capabilities, and touchpad support. This version will also support Share Play and PS Vita Remote Play, so you can share your victories and defeats and also play remotely via your portable system if you have one handy. Two new maps will be exclusive to PlayStation 4 for a limited time, and while you don't need that PS Plus membership, if you do have one you'll get a free premium tank with exclusive camouflage, as well as three days of Premium Account time and discounts on other purchases.

As for *World of Warships*, the full game launched in mid-September, offering up PvP and PvE modes across 10 maps, with a variety of vessels to choose from. The player-versus-player side of things gives teams of 12 the chance to take on one another, and established players with a level 9 Service Record can try out the first season of Ranked Battles for the true challenge of 7-versus-7 Domination matches.

Shortly after the full game's arrival, Wargaming readied the Soviet Tech Tree for *World of Warships*, setting an October 19 launch for the addition. This introduces a full destroyer line, including the legendary Izyaslav, Gnevny, and Tashkent. Soviet destroyers boast powerful and accurate cannons, as well as fast and strong antiaircraft armaments. Rounding out the update is a durable, thick-armored set of German cruisers, so there's plenty of new stuff to try out even if you've been spending your fair share of time in the pre-release beta version. □

Continued from page 23

with four passes. Another one would be really pushing it. He climbed to join the three P-40s, Rector, McGarry, and Bartling. Bond looked at his watch. The attack had lasted eight minutes. Bond had made four passes; Bob Neale had made three. No one had made more.

The four P-40s, with Bond in the lead, turned away from the airfield and headed northwest around the mountain. Rector was first to notice McGarry dropping behind. Rector circled back and tried to get alongside, but McGarry was flying so slowly that he flew right past. Bond and Bartling turned back. There was smoke coming from McGarry's engine, and he was losing altitude.

The Salween River was just ahead. If McGarry could get to the Burmese side his chances of survival would increase. Suddenly, the P-40 rolled over and McGarry dropped out. He was about 1,000 feet above the trees when his parachute opened. The P-40 nosed down, crashed into the side of a hill, and burst into flames. McGarry landed in a clearing 200 meters from where the aircraft impacted. He got on his feet and waved.

The three P-40s circled slowly overhead. With flaps and gear down, Rector made a slow pass over McGarry to drop a candy bar he kept as an emergency ration. Bartling flew over and dropped a map. Bond put a circle on his map to mark McGarry's position and wrote the time. He flew over McGarry one last time and dropped it. All that could be done for Mac had been done. The three P-40s turned on a heading for Nam Sang.

Eight of the Chiang Mai raiders landed at Loiwing later that day. "Scarsdale Jack" was missing. His flight never reached Lampang. Newkirk had been struck by ground fire while strafing an armored car south of Chiang Mai and hit the ground at high speed. There was no chance he survived. Black Mac McGarry would spend the rest of the war in a small POW compound on the grounds of Thammasat University in Bangkok.

Bond was sure there were at least 50 aircraft on the field and that the AVG must have destroyed at least 25 or 30. The next day, March 25, 1942, the *New York Times* headlined the victory: "U.S. Fliers in Burma Smash 40 Planes." It was the one bright spot on the front page where other headlines spoke of Japanese bombers pounding Corregidor and the loss of two U.S. destroyers off Java. The official AVG tally for the Chiang Mai raid was put at 15 Japanese aircraft destroyed.

Bond returned from Karachi, Pakistan, leading a mixed flight of replacement P-40Es and a few P-43 Lancers to find that Greg Boyington had resigned from the AVG and that he was now the 1st Squadron vice commander. Not many days later, Bond went with a flight of eight P-40s to Paoshan to work with Chinese bombers supporting the ground war. Two days later he was shot down and became a patient at the AVG's Kunming dispensary.

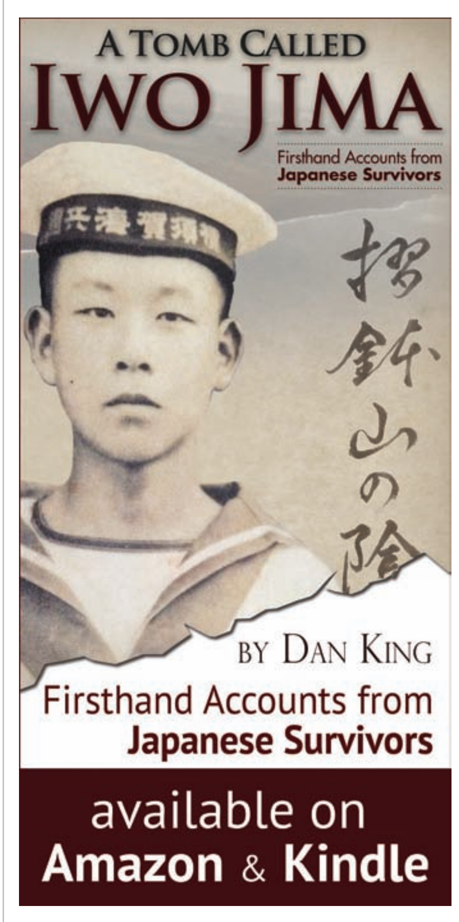
Charlie Bond still had some fighting to do in China. He was sent to Chungking soon after being declared fit for duty, and in early June went to Kweilin, which was coming under frequent air attacks. His first action there came on the morning of June 12 during an early scramble to intercept five bombers escorted by fighters. The latter included the twin-engined Kawasaki KI-45 Toryu fighter, which the AVG had not met before and believed to be a bomber. He made two passes on the bombers. Then five of his six guns quit, and smoke started curling from behind his instrument panel. His cooling system must have taken hits from a bomber.

Bond caught sight of two Type 97s on his tail. One pulled away, but the other stuck to him and fired while he crouched behind armor plate and listened to the pings. When Bond's engine quit, the Type 97 turned away. Bond headed for the rice paddies below. He bounced out of one, soared over a dike, and plopped into another filled with water. When he hit, the right side of the gunsight caught his head. A phone in a small schoolhouse put him in contact with an American missionary who got him on a train back to Kweilin, where all the gang met "old hard luck Bond" at the station.

Because of the monsoon season, the AVG would see little more action before it was disbanded on July 4, 1942. Bond was among the 18 AVG pilots who agreed to stay in China for an additional two weeks to give the 23rd Figher Group a chance to settle in. He left China on July 19.

Bond reentered the U.S. Army Air Corps as a second lieutenant in October 1942 but was promoted to major in three weeks. He went on to complete a distinguished career, including assignments as deputy commander of the Seventh and Thirteenth Air Forces during the Vietnam War and commander of the Twelfth Air Force. He retired from the U.S. Air Force in July 1968 with the rank of major general.

Bob Bergin is a former Foreign Service officer and Southeast Asia specialist who writes about aviation history, the OSS, and World War II in the China-Burma-India Theater.



Corregidor

Continued from page 45

spot. By 2 AM on February 19, all of the other paratroopers close to McCarter had been wounded, but the plucky private carried on. When McCarter ran out of ammunition, he crawled back to the Company F perimeter, loaded himself up, and went out again. When his Thompson submachine gun grew so hot that it would no longer fire, he discarded the useless weapon and grabbed a BAR from the hands of a dead paratrooper. When that weapon also overheated, he threw that aside and snatched up an M1 rifle from another dead trooper.

At 6 AM, when the Japanese staged their banzai charge, the pile of dead Japanese bodies was so high in front of Private McCarter's forward position that he had to stand up to see the enemy and get off clean shots. While standing erect behind this mountain of dead Japanese, McCarter was shot squarely in the chest, which finally knocked him to the ground. When a medic crawled forward to pull McCarter to safety, the young private refused, insisting that he had to stay put to warn his companions of the approaching enemy. A few minutes later, however, he collapsed from loss of blood and the medic finally pulled him inside the Company F perimeter.

Although seriously wounded, McCarter did not die. By himself, McCarter had killed more than 30 Japanese soldiers and had helped his company in killing dozens more. Eventually taken off of Corregidor and sent to an Army hospital, he was still recovering from his chest wound several months later when was asked to come to the White House so that President Harry S. Truman could personally present him with the Medal of Honor. It was the only Medal of Honor given to any American fighting man on Corregidor.

Over the next few days following the banzai charge, the Japanese committed destructive suicide by blowing up underground ammunition and fuel dumps, usually after being cornered by American troops, who were also injured by the explosions. On the night of February 21-22, the Japanese exploded the vast amount of ammunition and explosives stored inside Malinta Tunnel. By 6 PM on February 23, Colonel Jones was able to declare that Topside was secure.

On February 24, the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 503rd PRCT began attacking eastward along the tail of Corregidor while the 2nd Battalion stayed atop Topside and the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment dug out the last Japanese defenders on Malinta Hill. Although the paratroopers faced a few banzai charges, they kept advancing and by February 26 were near Monkey Point, only 2,000 yards from the tip of Corregidor's pointed tail.

Shortly after 11 AM on February 26, the Japanese exploded an underground arsenal near Monkey Point in what historian Smith called a "suicidal tour de force." The tremendous explosion caused 196 American casualties, including 52 killed. A Sherman tank, which had stopped near the vicinity of the main charge, was blown end over end for hundreds of feet. Debris from the explosion hit a destroyer 2,000 yards offshore, and a man standing on Topside, almost a mile away, was hit by flying rocks. Many of the men killed and injured in the explosion were paratroopers belonging to the 1st Battalion, 503rd PRCT.

By 4 PM on February 26, the paratroopers reached the far eastern tip of Corregidor. Except for a little mopping up, the battle was over. On March 2, General MacArthur returned to The Rock and replaced the battletorn flag of the 503rd PRCT with a brand new American flag. During the flag-raising ceremony, Colonel Jones stepped forward, saluted General MacArthur, and said, "Sir, I present to you Fortress Corregidor."

The 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team had 17 officers and 148 enlisted men killed on Corregidor. It also had 17 officers and 267 enlisted men wounded, 64 sick paratroopers evacuated, and 331 troopers listed as injured for a total of 844 casualties. Out of a total force of 2,962 paratroopers, engineers, artillerymen, and other personnel, the 503rd PRCT suffered casualties of 28.5 percent.

The reinforced 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division had 264 casualties out of 1,598 men. Overall, Rock Force suffered 1,105 casualties out of 4,560 men, a loss of 24.3 percent. The Japanese, who fought to the bitter end, had almost 100 percent casualties. Only 20 Japanese soldiers were taken prisoner. Among the men killed were 200 soldiers that tried to swim to the Bataan Peninsula but were intercepted by the surrounding U.S. Navy ships.

In 1942, it had taken the Japanese five months to conquer the 1,300 American defenders on Corregidor. In 1945, it took Rock Force 15 days against 6,000 defenders to take it back.

Gene Eric Salecker is a retired university police officer who teaches 8th-grade social studies in Bensenville, Illinois. He is the author of four books, including Blossoming Silk Against the Rising Sun: US and Japanese Paratroopers in the Pacific in World War II. *He resides in River Grove, Illinois.*

"My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

Inaugural Address
Friday, January 20, 1961

- John F. Kennedy

The just-released John F. Kennedy presidential dollar figured to be among the most popular issues in the ongoing series of $1 coins honoring the nation's chief executives, now in the ninth year of its roughly 10-year run. JFK was one of America's most beloved presidents, and his shocking assassination ensured that his images would endure, as if frozen in time, in our nation's history.

Historic Coin Portrait The new coin design is the work of Don Everhart, a senior sculptor-engraver on the U.S. Mint's roster of staff artists. Depicting a contemplative JFK looking down and seemingly lost in thought, the image is similar to the official portrait hanging in the White House – also capturing Kennedy in a reflective moment, with his head bowed and eyes downcast. The portrait was painted in 1970, seven years after the assassination, and was closely monitored by Kennedy's widow, Jacqueline, who not only commissioned the artist, Aaron Shikler, but also gave him detailed instructions on how she wanted the president to be shown. The portrait differs greatly from the presidential images on other White House paintings, and Everhart has acknowledged that Shikler's work inspired the equally unique likeness of JFK on the coin.

A Woman's Touch It's a little-known fact, but Jacqueline Kennedy, one of America's favorite First Ladies, also played a role in the final design of the enormously popular Kennedy half dollar, which was first issued in 1964. She asked the coin's designer, Mint Chief Engraver Gilroy Roberts, to modify the details of her husband's hair - and the changes were, of course, made.

JFK, Purple Heart & Navy SEALs John F. Kennedy was a different kind of president – the youngest ever elected, recipient of a Purple Heart for his heroism, creator of the Navy SEALs, and the first (and so far only) Roman Catholic, to cite four important examples. In my opinion, such a president deserves a coin that likewise bears a historic design. I believe Don Everhart captured what Jackie and JFK would have liked, given the design of the presidential painting. I base this on a story my parents told me many years ago regarding an interaction they had with Jack and Jackie Kennedy at a 1959 dinner in Lake Charles, Louisiana. (See Bonus Gifts)

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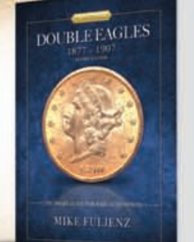

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