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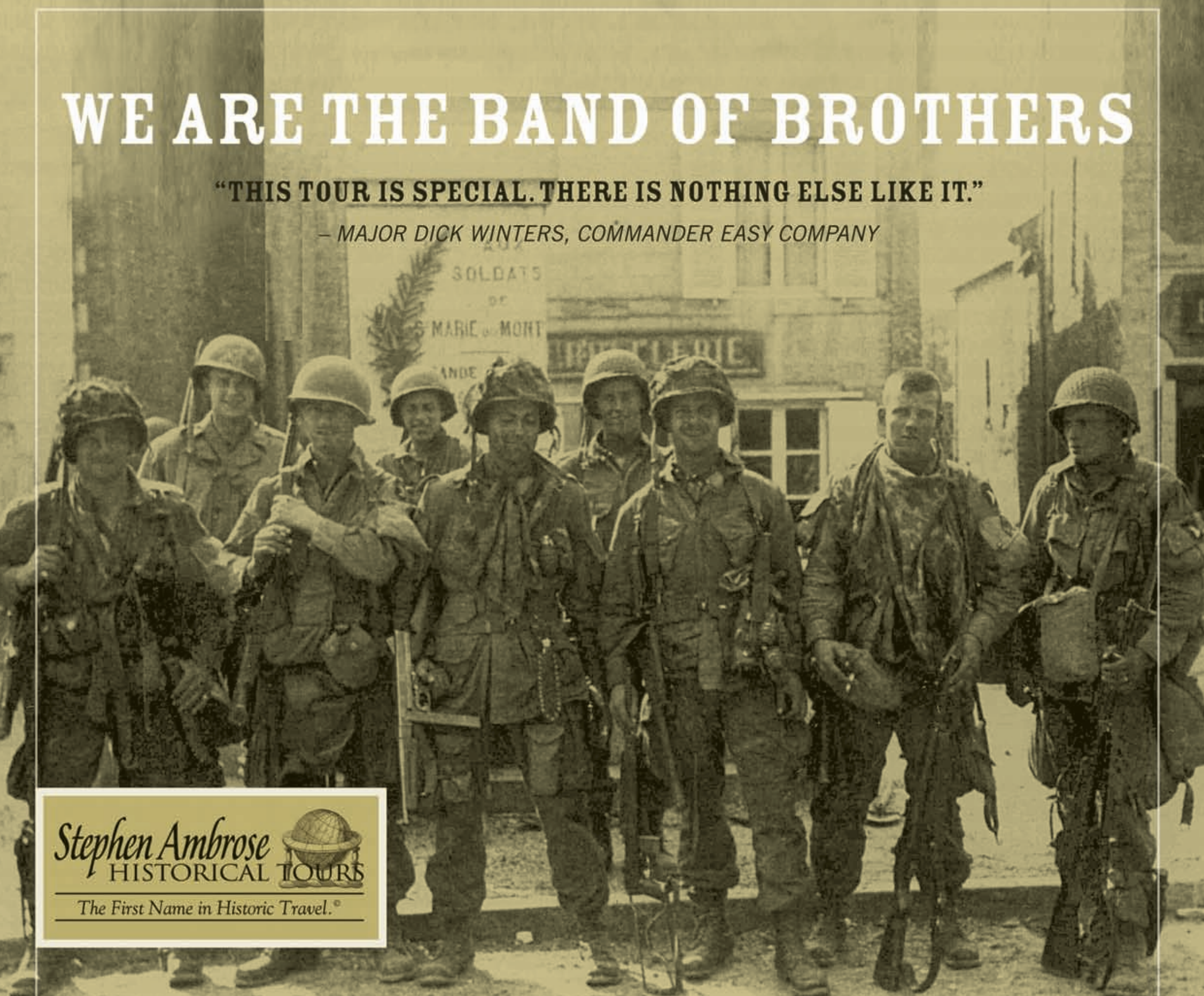

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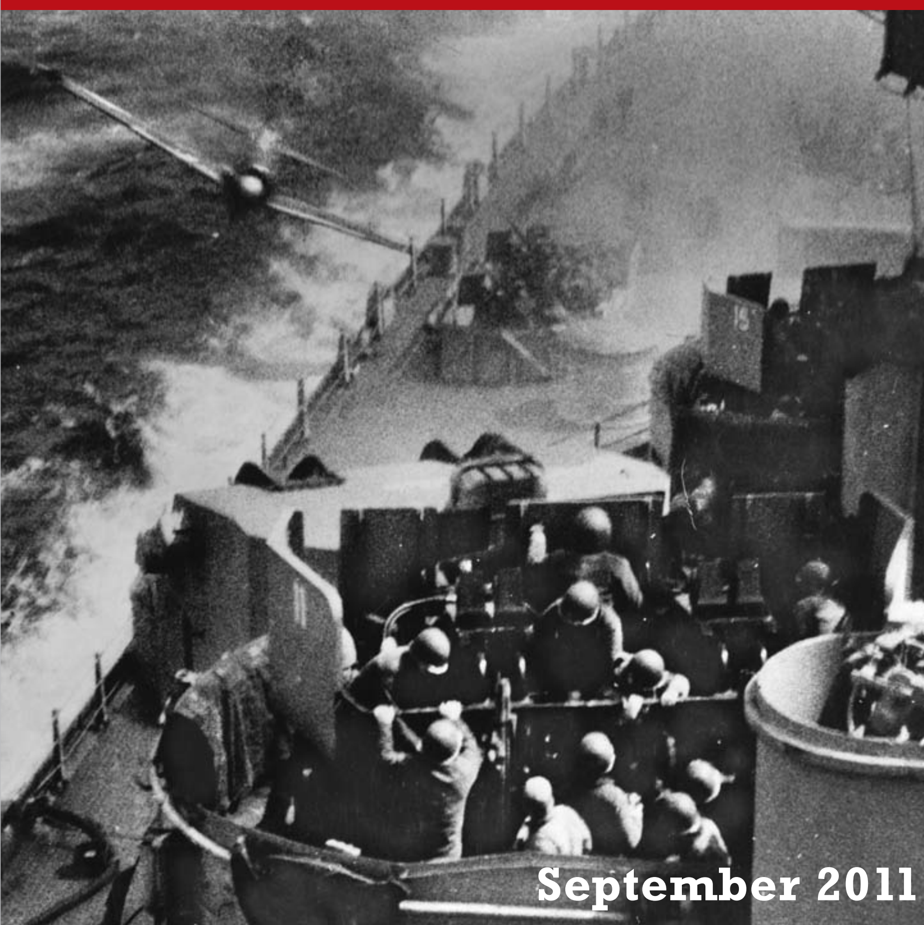

WWII HISTORY

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Cover: GIs land in Northern France on D-Day. Within days the Americans were fighting to capture the port city of Cherbourg from the desperate German defenders. Story page 32.

Photo: Getty Images

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Editorial

The Japanese perspective has been added to the brand new USS *Arizona* Memorial Visitors Center.

ON DECEMBER 7, 2010, A NEWLY RENOVATED AND EXPANDED VISITORS CENTER at Pearl Harbor opened under the auspices of the National Park Service. The grounds of the new $56 million visitors center feature an overlook of the harbor and a moving vista of the gleaming white, upswept curve of the USS *Arizona* Memorial and the rest of Battleship Row. Open areas are studded with walkways and benches for relaxation or contemplation.

For decades, it had been apparent that the original center was inadequate to display many of the artifacts from the dastardly attack that plunged the United States into World War II nearly 70 years ago. Additionally, one perspective on the attack had remained in the shadows—that of the Japanese.

Along with prewar newsreels of baseball great Babe Ruth on tour in Japan, there are photos of street life in Tokyo, women wearing the traditional kimono, the typical hustle and bustle of the city. However, amid the apparent tranquility was a burgeoning militarism in Japan, the growth of a potent war machine, and the yearning for dominance in Asia and the Pacific. Japan in the 1930s was rife with political intrigue and assassination. A rising imperialist government recognized that the small nation needed land and natural resources which could only be gained and controlled through conquest. A vast difference in cultures contributed to the long downward spiral toward war as well.

Today, a glimpse of life in prewar Japan seems appropriate to help visitors grasp the reasons why the nation's leaders found it necessary to go to war with the United States. But why raise the topic now?

Daniel Martinez, the National Park Service's chief historian at Pearl Harbor, recently told the Associated Press that it was simply not practical 30 years ago. "It was just too recent, and the wounds were still open," he reasoned. "The idea of exploration of history would have been found unsavory by some of the Pearl Harbor survivors who were still dealing with the wounds of that war."

As visitors walk through exhibit halls with the themes "Road to War" and "Attack" it does seem logical that the former enemy's point of view should be acknowledged, if not altogether understood. Did the Japanese leaders really believe there was no honorable course of action left open to them? How did U.S. policy push both nations inexorably toward war as well? How is the addition of the Japanese perspective being received by the dwindling number of Pearl Harbor survivors living today or the families of those who have since passed away?

Martinez realizes that the original intent of the visitors center was to memorialize the suffering and loss which occurred on December 7, 1941. However, he does not shy away from a belief that the more complex issue of historical perspective is important.

"We have to understand it," he explained. "Our former enemies are now our closest allies. So how do we reconcile that? Part of reconciling it is trying to tell the story as fairly as we can and allow for those different perspectives to come in there so a broader understanding can take place."

The time may well have come for an effort to broaden perspective and to understand the sweep of history. Japan is a close ally of the United States today—as is Germay. Americans have demonstrated a tremendous capacity to forgive, even to forgive one another as those North and South did following the bloody Civil War. It is important to note, however, that neither forgiveness nor understanding mean that the wound of Pearl Harbor will ever heal or that the sacrifices of those lost that day and on battlefields around the globe will ever be diminished.

—Michael E. Haskew

The Army Historical Foundation has bestowed a Distinguished Writing Award on Bill Warnock for "The Face of Battle," the story of Sergeant John Parks of the 4th Armored Division, which appeared in the October 2010 issue of *WWII History.* The award recognizes authors who have made a significant contribution to the literature on U.S. Army history. Our congratulations go to Bill for his fine work.

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By Jon Diamond

Forgotten Strategist at El Alamein

Major General Eric Dorman-Smith was an architect of the strategy that won the first battle of El Alamein in June 1942, halting the German advance into Egypt.

All photos: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Major General Eric Dorman-Smith (left) confers with General Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff, on August 7, 1942. The discussion took place just after the first battle of El Alamein. TOP: Plumes of smoke rise from a distant battlefield and soldiers confer prior to moving out as an Eighth Army armored brigade prepares to advance toward the Axis enemy in the desert.

WHEN ONE GAZES UPON THE BOOKSHELVES IN THE MILITARY HISTORY SECTION of a well-endowed library, one cannot help but notice the number of volumes dedicated to the battles for North Africa during World War II and particularly to the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. The Desert Campaign in the North African littoral from 1940 to 1943 has been described as the most overwritten campaign in history, thus attesting to the interest of readers during the past 60 years.

The halting of the Axis drive toward the Nile Delta in July 1942 has been ignored for many years, however, along with one of the campaign's principal participants, namely Maj. Gen. Eric Dorman-Smith. Author Corelli Barnett's frightening alternative scenario after the Gazala and Tobruk disasters in June 1942 is not far off mark: "The Eighth Army once finally destroyed, the Germans would hold the magnificent Delta base within a week. The Mediterranean fleet would have to escape southward through the Suez Canal; Palestine and Syria, bereft of troops, would fall in a few days; and then—within a month at Rommel's pace—the oilfields of the Persian Gulf would be wrecked or producing for the Axis."

Barnett's nightmarish revisionist forecast highlights the importance of the series of actions that has, amid controversy, become the Battle of First Alamein. Thus, in the more global strategic context, the seemingly disjointed conflicts of July 1942, by virtue of halting Rommel, helped to turn the tide of the Axis ascent.

There were attempts to not even recognize First Alamein. Some have suggested that First Alamein was only the end of the Battle of Gazala. Charles Richardson, then a senior Eighth Army staff officer, commented, "I can state … that no battle entitled to the name 'First Alamein' ever took place."

By denying the existence of First Alamein, the roles of both General Claude Auchinleck as Eighth Army commander and Eric Dorman-Smith, his deputy chief of staff, in devising and stabilizing Eighth Army's defense of the Nile Delta in July 1942, were significantly diminished. Eric Dorman-Smith did mark July 1,

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1942, as the Battle of El Alamein in his diary, and many historians subsequently have accorded the July fighting the title of First Alamein. Many supporters of General Bernard Montgomery regard this nomenclature distinction as a ludicrous attempt to restore both Auchinleck's and Dorman-Smith's reputations.

Eric Dorman-Smith did, however, play a major role in formulating the strategy with which Auchinleck halted Rommel in July 1942. Surprisingly then, both were sacked in the "August purge" prior to the victorious battles of Alam Halfa and Second Alamein, which Dorman-Smith helped to tactically and strategically shape in his July 27, 1942, *Appreciation of the Situation in the Western Desert.* After Gazala, Auchinleck made himself the Eighth Army commander, replacing General Neil Ritchie. Auchinleck then chose his deputy chief of staff, Dorman-Smith, as his immediate battlefield adviser for the upcoming campaign. Although a highly controversial appointment, it had the critical effect of producing the necessary victory after three weeks of combat against the Panzerarmee Afrika and negating its bid for the Nile Delta. Although Dorman-Smith and his role in First Alamein have been largely forgotten in popular World War II literature, Barnett recognized his merit and dedicated his tome *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970* to the memory of Eric O'Gowan (Dorman-Smith).

Dorman-Smith was born in July 1895 in Ireland. He entered Uppingham in 1910 and left for Sandhurst at the end of 1912. According to Barnett, Dorman-Smith was an Irishman of great charm and high intellectual powers. Added to these abilities, unfortunately, were a fatal gift for wit and a short patience with the stupid. Being too brainy was dangerous in the British Army of Dorman-Smith's generation unless one kept it hidden or at least not abrasively exposed.

Unfortunately, Dorman-Smith disobeyed both. Before World War II, he enjoyed a reputation in the British Army as an advanced military thinker. He played an important part in the struggle to mechanize the Army and its combined operations with infantry, armor, and artillery, which would ultimately be a seminal model for General Richard O'Connor's victory over the Italians in Operation Compass in 1940.

During the Great War, Dorman-Smith was a 19-year-old subaltern in the Northhumberland Fusiliers on the Western Front, winning decorations in 1915. It was during this posting that his appearance was likened to the Indian Chinkara gazelle and, thereafter, he would be called "Chink." Back at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst as a staff officer in 1925, he had come to see the staff college as the "high temple of orthodoxy, its teaching a pedantic reshuffle of the techniques of the past war." He criticized the inflexibility of battlefield thinking. Dorman-Smith was convinced that imaginative tactics, including open-mindedness about the deployment of troops and the speed of reaction, would prevent a repetition of the mistakes of the Great War.

On July 17, 1942, British infantrymen scan the horizon for any indication of enemy troop and armored movement during the first battle for El Alamein.

An abrasive relationship existed between General Bernard Montgomery, the senior lecturer, and Dorman-Smith, his student, at the Camberly Staff College. Dorman-Smith interrupted an early lesson on the faults of pre-1914 doctrine to ask the senior lecturer "what he thought future generations would regard as errors in their current teaching."

"There are no errors," Montgomery snapped.

During an exercise, Dorman-Smith muttered, "Montgomery's only notion of tactics was to take a sledgehammer to crack a walnut." When confronted by Montgomery about the veracity of his criticism, Dorman-Smith said, "Perfectly true, Colonel." Thus, with their enmity publicly visible, Dorman-Smith continued to treat Montgomery scornfully. Despite these interpersonal clashes, Chink graduated from the Staff College in December 1928 in the top four of his class. Dorman-Smith's character flaw resulting in adverse interpersonal relations with professional peers would haunt him throughout his career.

In 1929, Dorman-Smith, as an infantryman, became an instructor in tactics at Chatham, the sapper's equivalent of the Staff College. Two years later, he was appointed brigade major of the 6th Experimental Brigade at Blackdown, serving under Brig. Gen. Archibald Wavell. According to Wavell, "In the two years he [Dorman-Smith] was with me he was invaluable, and the right man for an experimental brigade. I could control his ideas and sort out the good from the bad and keep him on practical lines." They inspired each other; together they inspired the brigade; and they set a tactical and logistical revolution in motion.

While working at the War Office in 1934, Dorman-Smith developed a fondness for General Sir John Dill, whose open-mindedness was in direct contrast with the attitude of the new inspector of regimental artillery, General Sir Alan Brooke, who joined the War Office within a few months. As Dill was sensitive, Chink labeled Brooke insensitive. Thus, working alongside two future chiefs of the Imperial General Staff produced two very different interactions.

In Dorman-Smith's view, Brooke epitomized everything he most disliked about the complacency of the upper classes, and he attributed the

hostility he sensed in Brooke, being in the Horse Artillery, to his suggestions for the Army's mechanization. These clashes were to have important future consequences, exemplified in late January 1942 when Brooke, now chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), perused through the Army reorganization proposals, which Auchinleck, as commander in chief, Middle East, had forwarded.

Brooke frowned over remarks about diluting armor with infantry and the rigidity of divisions, recognizing the tone as Dorman-Smith's loose tongue, which he had heard at the War Office almost a decade earlier. Phrases like "the bankruptcy of the cavalry" concept of armored fighting had been a favorite Dorman-Smith taunt and was as offensive to Brooke in 1942 as it had been in 1934.

Brooke elaborated after the war, "I was at that time beginning to be upset by many messages that emanated from Auchinleck's office. I was beginning to be suspicious that Dorman-Smith was beginning to exercise far too much influence on him." In March 1942, Brooke dispatched Richard McCreery, an armor commander with the CIGS's mind-set, to counter Dorman-Smith's influence. Unfortunately, at the Staff College in 1928 Dorman-Smith had scornfully referred to him as "Dreary McCreery."

In 1936, Dorman-Smith was appointed as an instructor at the Staff College (Camberly), but the commandant, to Chink's dismay, was Lord Gort, VC, who, though a legend of bravery to the public, to him "personified military backwardness." After only 16 months at the Staff College, Dorman-Smith was appointed colonel of 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, in Egypt. Intriguingly, when told to reactivate the defenses of Mersa Matruh, Dorman-Smith presciently commented on the futility of such a directive because Alamein, further to the east, was bound to be the decisive battleground of Egypt.

In May 1938, Dorman-Smith left for India as the director of military training. At Simla, he formed a close companionship with Claude Auchinleck, who was deputy chief, General Staff there. Two years later, Dorman-Smith received a request from General Archibald Wavell, commander in chief, Middle East, to take over as commandant of the new Staff College in Haifa. Thus, it is apparent that Dorman-Smith held a variety of prestigious staff and command positions during the interwar years and was held in high regard by both Auchinleck and Wavell. Captain Basil Liddell Hart, as military correspondent, included Dorman-Smith on a list of 14 officers labeled, "Commanders of Outstanding Promise with the Quality of Audacity."

It was through these very postings that Dorman-Smith would interact with the Army hierarchy that would form Britain's military elite in World War II. These interactions prior to 1942 would ultimately sow the seeds of discord, culminating in Dorman-Smith's dismissal in August 1942 after victory at First Alamein.

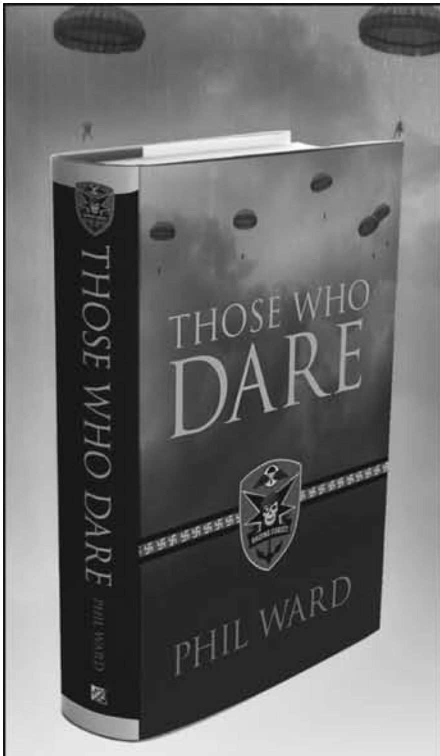
Prior to their debut as the Eighth Army's leadership duo, in late June 1942 Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith had devised a series of changes to Eighth Army's fighting methods and organization. Both men stressed the importance of mobility and maneuver in war and were aware that recent fighting had clearly shown the futility of fixed defenses in the open desert. Their thinking, although viewed as radical, was attempting the risky endeavor to introduce fundamental tactical and logistical changes to an Army reeling in defeat.

A paramount decision was to restructure the use of artillery, which had been badly dispersed during the fighting at Gazala. Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith centralized artillery under divisional, corps, and even Army control. These decisions, which stemmed from their discussions in late June 1942, showed that both men were already thinking ahead to the fast-approaching day when Eighth Army would halt the Afrika Korps.

Dorman-Smith has been called Auchinleck's "evil genius" and was made the scapegoat for all that was amiss with the Eighth Army in the summer of 1942. He was accused of selling Auchinleck fantastic and impracticable offensive plans during the July battles. The opinions of Dorman-Smith's many detractors, privately conveyed to Alan Brooke, helped get Dorman-Smith sacked in August 1942.

Not everyone criticized Dorman-Smith's tactical and logistical plans in July 1942. Brigadier Frederick Kisch, the chief engineer of Eighth Army, on first seeing Dorman-Smith's defensive plans to combat the Panzerarmee Afrika, is reputed to have said that it was the first time he had seen brainpower being applied to defense. In designing the system, Dorman-Smith and Kisch drew from the hard lessons of the battles at Gazala and Mersa Matruh. They designed a system with breadth and depth to deal Rommel a lethal blow in his bid for the conquest of Egypt.

Dorman-Smith and Auchinleck understood one another. However, the informal arrangement between them piqued the rest of the staff at Eighth Army headquarters. Auchinleck froze out other members of the staff with his "evening prayer" sessions in his caravan. These evening meetings were essentially discussions between Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith, effec-



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tively excluding the future disciples of Montgomery such as Charles Richardson (Plans), Hugh Mainwaring (Operations), and David Belchem (Staff Duties).

Dorman-Smith was Auchinleck's chief inspiration and, thus informally, the principal staff officer of Eighth Army. Richardson had little regard for Dorman-Smith, so it is not surprising that this arrangement, compounded by Dorman-Smith's acerbic personality, led to confusion and enmity at Eighth Army headquarters.

In regard to the changes in Eighth Army command that occurred in August, Brooke wanted his protégé, Montgomery, to command Eighth Army after the untimely death of General William "Strafer" Gott, who would have taken command but died when his transport aircraft was shot down by a German fighter plane. Whisking aside Montgomery's abrasive character and quirky habits, Brooke based his choice of Montgomery on his qualities as a hard trainer of troops and a supremely professional soldier.

ABOVE: The crew of a Vickers machine gun, photographed in the desert of North Africa near El Alamein in July 1942, remains alert to attacks by the tanks and battle-hardened grenadiers of General Erwin Rommel's Panzer Army Afrika. LEFT: Wearing a jaunty pith helmet, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill surveys the surrounding area during a visit to Eighth Army troops in Egypt on August 7, 1942. Major General Eric Dorman-Smith was relieved of his duties during the stressful discussions that took place.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Brooke flew to Burg el Arab, Egypt, on August 5, 1942, and were met by Auchinleck, among others. Dorman-Smith sensed Churchill's hostility immediately and in his correspondence noted, "This was not going to be a nice visit."

The atmosphere became worse when Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith gave a private briefing to Churchill in the operations caravan. Churchill was unimpressed and paid little attention to the briefing. The untoward fates of Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith were never in doubt afterward. Auchinleck was unable to properly inform the prime minister of the plans to meet a future offensive by Rommel or the details of Eighth Army's planned offensive in September, fueling Churchill's ire and compulsion for a shakeup in command. Churchill was also determined to remove some of Auchinleck's subordinate commanders; namely, Dorman-Smith; General Thomas Corbett, chief of the General Staff, Middle East; and General William Ramsden, commander of XXX Corps. They were all to be sacked in this August purge.

After First Alamein and prior to Alam Halfa, Auchinleck was replaced by Sir Harold Alexander and Montgomery as commander in chief, Middle East and commanding general of Eighth Army, respectively. He was then to take up a new posting as commander in chief, India. However, Dorman-Smith was summarily removed from his position as Auchinleck's unofficial chief of staff and not given a subsequent command or staff position. Dorman-Smith returned to the United Kingdom and dropped back to his substantive rank of lieutenant colonel. He was doomed to military oblivion except for the brief command of a brigade at Anzio. He was removed under controversial circumstances and left the Army in 1945.

Why was he treated in this manner after so many influential appointments and his contribution to the success of Operation Compass in 1940? Much of the animus between Churchill, Brooke, Montgomery, and Dorman-Smith was decades old.

Enmity also existed among the eventual members of Montgomery's Eighth Army and 21st Army Group staff and Dorman-Smith. These staff officers bore deep resentments over the closeness between Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith just before and during First Alamein. Charles Richardson, then lieutenant colonel, Future Plans, wanted clarity and leadership, not debonair enthusiasm on the part of the deputy chief of staff. He resented the fact that discussions that should have been led by Auchinleck were often presided over by Dorman-Smith. The custodian of the incoming Ultra intelligence decrypts, E.T. "Bill" Williams, an Oxford history professor, was equally distrustful of Dorman-Smith, and he bridled at Chink's arrogance without comprehending his military expertise.

According to Brooke's diary entry for June 28-30, 1942, "At the situation prevailing in the Middle East, it was quite clear that something was radically wrong.... I mistrusted the influence of Dorman-Smith on the Auk." Brooke was intent upon intervening in the structure of the Middle East Command since Dorman-Smith's intention to change the traditional organization of armor and infantry alarmed him.

During July 1942, Brooke's emissary, McCreery, was posted to the Western Desert to "be informed of the intended radical change" as formulated by Dorman-Smith. In Dorman-Smith's presence, McCreery refused to end the traditional separation of armored and infantry divisions, compelling Auchinleck to fire McCreery after this confrontation, which unfortunately was to serve as a prelude to the Brooke-Churchill visit in August 1942.

Another aspect to the growing enmity between Brooke and the Auchinleck/Dorman-Smith team was that Neil Ritchie was one of Brooke's own protégés and had fought with him during the retreat to Dunkirk in 1940. Brooke noted in his diary, "I had grown so fond of him that I hated seeing him subjected to this serious reverse. I told him I considered he had

been pushed on much too fast."

During the Gazala battles, Dorman-Smith was incredulous at Ritchie's underestimation of Rommel's troops and urged Auchinleck, to no avail, to sack Ritchie and take over command himself. Auchinleck was loyal to Ritchie and felt that he was responsible for promoting him to command Eighth Army.

It is, thus, no accident that as early as August 4, 1942, Brooke was convinced that Dorman-Smith should be dismissed. In his diary, he again noted, "I had not yet had a chance of seeing one of the worst offenders, Dorman-Smith." On August 5, after touring Eighth Army headquarters, Brooke had decided "the Dorman-Smith influence on Auchinleck was far too strong."

Coincidentally, as the pivotal First Alamein battle was raging, a censure motion against Churchill's handling of the war came up at Westminster on July 2. Thus, the pressure from the political arena was on Churchill to make changes in the Middle East Command following Eighth Army's failures at Gazala and Tobruk.

In August 1942, all of the principal ingredients were present to blame Eric Dorman-Smith for much of the Eighth Army's setbacks earlier in the spring: First was Dorman-Smith's arrogant and maverick style in the rigid, tradition-bound system of the British Army. Second was his prewar series of antagonistic interactions with the likes of Montgomery and Churchill. Third, at an intellectual level, Dorman-Smith not only snubbed Brooke's tactical configurations about armor and infantry divisions but also publicly and privately scorned his protégés, McCreery and Ritchie. Finally, the time was ripe for a dramatic shakeup in command in the Middle East since Churchill was under intense political pressure to identify and punish a scapegoat for the military shortcomings in the Middle East. Dorman-Smith fulfilled all these criteria.

Despite his sacking, it is quite evident from many in the British Army's hierarchy that Dorman-Smith's rise up the military ladder before World War II was deserved. His keen intellect contributed greatly not only to Operation Compass when he was Wavell's staff assistant to General O'Connor, but, more importantly to the change in fortunes of the Eighth Army at First Alamein in July 1942. Halting Rommel laid the ultimate groundwork for the successful defense of the Nile Delta at the Battle of Alam Halfa just weeks after his dismissal. □

Jon Diamond practices medicine and writes from Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History.

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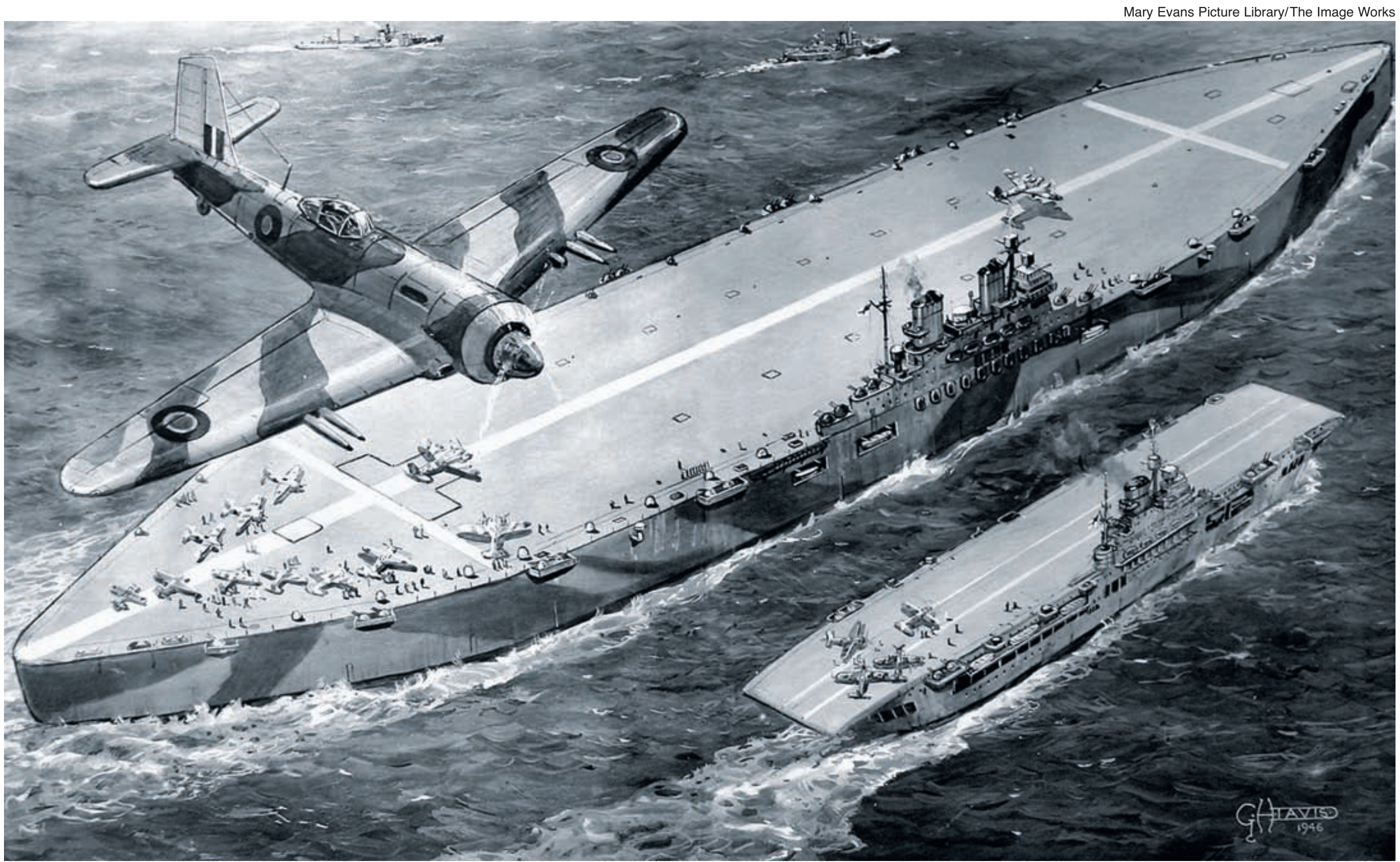

Project Habakkuk

An iceberg aircraft carrier nearly became a reality.

DURING WORLD WAR II BRITISH AND AMERICAN AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, SERVICED and ready for naval combat, averaged 20,000 to 30,000 tons. They exceeded 800 feet in length. Most of that came in steel. A quirky Englishman came up with a plan for a 2.2 million ton aircraft carrier. Her weight would have been overwhelmingly of manmade ice called pykrete. Geoffrey Pyke named his fantasy Project Habakkuk, a biblical reference to its ambitious goal: "... be utterly amazed, for I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told" (Habakkuk 1:5, NIV).

This quirky Englishman, perhaps best described as a cross between Albert Einstein and Howard Hughes, offered Winston Churchill his solution to stemming Nazi U-boat successes across the North Atlantic in late 1942.

Geoffrey Pyke was born in 1894 in the Cromwall Garden vicinity of London. At age five his 44-year-old Orthodox Jewish father died. That left him, his mother Mary, and sister Dorothy living a life of near destitution. If Mary was not previously mentally unbalanced, widowhood and near poverty may well had taken her there. Repeated episodes of unexpected, unwarranted explosive anger ruled the remaining Pyke family household. Incidents could almost be labeled as outright acts of cruelty.

As a child Geoffrey was hastened into the role of head of household. Reaching school age, he was packed off to a school dominated by sons of military officers, but his mother insisted that he maintain the family's traditional Orthodox dress practices. That made her son a standout target for bullying. Pyke survived life at school. Dorothy took advantage of marriage and left home to never come back.

In this artist's rendering of an aircraft carrier to be built with pykrete under the auspices of Project Habakkuk, the relative size of the proposed carrier is compared to that of the carrier HMS *Indefatigable,* a contemporary Royal Navy warship.

World War I began when Pyke was 21 years old. He became a foreign correspondent for London's *Daily Chronicle* newspaper. Without the blessing of the *Chronicle*, he acquired a passport from an American merchant sailor. He got into Germany posing as a citizen of then neutral America. His plan was to canvas as much of Germany as possible to discern how its citizens viewed the war. He covered significant ground but was eventually discovered.

Considered a spy, he was sent off to a detention camp in Ruhleben six miles west of Berlin. Upon arrival he went straight into solitary confinement for 112 days. When he was released, Pyke displayed a keen talent for problem solving. Numerous escapes had been attempted at night under the noses of vigilant guards, and all had failed. Pyke took note of the compound's layout of buildings in relation to the setting sun.

One row of buildings lay in line with it. Pyke saw that the reflecting rays nearly blinded the guards. With a German-speaking Englishman, a fellow inmate, in tow the two slinked along the outside of a row of buildings. They kept a low sil-

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houette just beneath the windows. The guards never saw the two walk out of the compound. The two Brits made it through the Netherlands and back to England. Pyke became the darling of the *Chronicle* as readers read of his adventures in Germany.

In 1918, Pyke married Margaret Chubb. He became a father, took up commodities investments, and came to own one-third of the world's tin wealth. He devised his own economic theory and practices. Many of his competitors found those practices barely moral and barely legal. Pyke, with little censoring of his opinion, saw his competition as "stupidly inept."

Pyke would go on to renown for one smashing idiom. He could never curtail his voiced opinions of others. He always felt mentally above them. In his rawest form, Pyke could have been a peer to a disciplined, practiced intellectual giant such as Albert Einstein. At the same time, he could truly leave people marveling at the simplicity of his adaptable genius while totally alienating and offending them. His mind paused in vivid, imaginative wonderings of things to create.

One aspect of Pyke's personality that separated him from most others was his hypergraphia. He insistently wrote on whatever scraps of paper came into his hands at any and all times of day and night. The need to write consumed his entire life. Whatever idea came to mind he committed to paper. Hypergraphia plagued him to the day he died. From paper, ideas were then worked toward some application, either practical or bizarre.

Those having known Pyke used words such as querulous, flamboyant, disorganized, eccentric, standoffish, and haughty to describe him. Pyke showed his mastery of nontraditional thinking when his son reached school age in 1926. He opened a school under his own design. Traditional teaching was shunned. Applicant teachers were hired under specific criteria. Influences of religious teachings would be prohibited from the classes. Education took on an entirely new application. Learning emphasized by practical experience minimized textbook usage.

One child found his way underneath the building. He proceeded to track the maze of plumbing pipes and electrical wiring. Upon revealing himself, his lesson became the effects of gravity upon water flow, plumbing, the structural integrity of buildings, and electricity. No disciplinary measures emerged. On the playground, seesaws had built-in hooks under the seats. Weights could be added and adjusted by the children for more exciting rides. Thus, they were introduced to fulcrum engineering.

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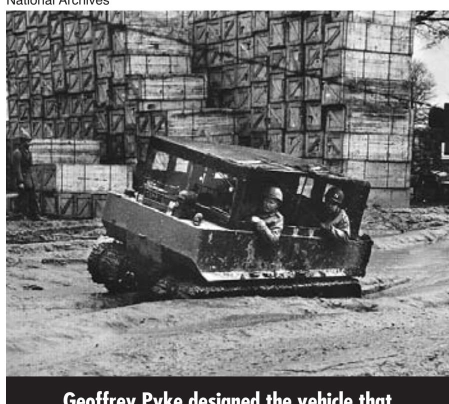

Geoffrey Pyke designed the vehicle that became the U.S. M26 Weasel. Although it was intended for use in snow, it found application on the muddy roads of France.

If a child had a pet that died, they were encouraged to bring the deceased animal in for dissecting to determine the cause of death. This became an anatomy class. By the end of 1928, Pyke was financially stable and productive.

The Pyke who came to formulate pykrete emerged from the disasters of the 1929 stock market crash that gave rise to the Great Depression. Pyke lost everything in the Depression. That included immediate family ties. A severe morbid depression consumed him. He moved to a hermit's existence in Surrey, England. Personal hygiene virtually disappeared. Amid his living quarters no time was taken to clean house. He acquired bumps and bruises from colliding into furniture and tripping over trash. The single consistency remaining was his hypergraphia. If not for a mysterious, anonymous young woman hired as housekeeper and secretary, Pyke would have existed in near total isolation into the mid-1930s.

All the while, his mind kept generating simple ideas turned into complex applications. While Spain was tormented by civil war, Pyke came up with ideas to share with Spaniards fighting Nazi-supported fascism there. One was using sphagnum moss as emergency wound dressings for combat injuries. He looked at motorcycles in an entirely different light. He altered the bike's exhaust pipe back into its sidecar. The sidecar became a heated transport container for hot meals delivered to soldiers in the field.

As World War II approached, Pyke recruited college students into a covert action plan against the Nazis. Pyke sent students posing as touring golf enthusiasts to tour Germany. Their ultimate goal was to evaluate how common Germans viewed Nazi policies and expectations of any outcomes if war erupted. With war declared, Pyke's mind went into high gear. Radar was in its birth throes. It was little

known and primitively used.

In the meantime, England applied a defensive line of high-altitude balloons as a deterrent to incoming enemy warplanes. Pyke suggested putting high-intensity microphone receivers in the balloons to magnify the sounds of plane engines approaching England. The notion was not taken seriously by authorities. Pyke continued on with generating ideas.

Traditional militarists saw war in three environments: land, sea, and air. Pyke saw a fourth in winter climates such as Norway, especially since the Nazis were working on components for a potential atomic bomb there.

Climates such as this required their own peculiar tactics and equipment. Pyke researched a vehicle to transport soldiers across winter terrain. It became his Operation Plough. Originally, he envisioned a contraption much like a tracked armored personnel carrier moving through snow with an engine-driven screw plowing its way along. British authorities passed the project off to the Americans. As a project consultant, Pyke visited America to see the U.S. Army develop his notion.

By the time it came to fruition, the U.S. Army had had enough of Pyke and his quirkiness. Americans found him arrogantly repulsive and offensive, in large part due to his personal appearance and hygiene. In turn, Pyke said the same of his hosts. Freely and in great detail he complained to his British superiors about American obstinance. His boss, Lord Louis Mountbatten, stepped in.

Pyke would never be invited back to America. However, Project Plough became the U.S. Army's M-26 Weasel and was effectively used everywhere but in the snow.

Other than fellow scientist acquaintances, some barely tolerating him, Pyke had one associate who consistently sided with him. That was Mountbatten. At age 41, he had become the youngest chief of staff in the British Army when named chief of command, Combined Operations. His superior officers were at least 10 years older.

National Archives

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LEFT: Lord Louis Mountbatten, chief of command, Combined Operations, for the British armed forces, championed the cause of Project Habakkuk. RIGHT: Eccentric scientist Geoffrey Pyke conceived the idea of an iceberg aircraft carrier and worked to gain support for Project Habakkuk.

Mountbatten was open to new ideas, and Pyke became the most active, imaginative mind he encountered. When Pyke was in America on his Operation Plough mission, he sent Mountbatten a 232-page memo for an upcoming project named Habakkuk. Mountbatten was sold on the idea within the first dozen pages.

Pyke's selling point was pykrete, which may

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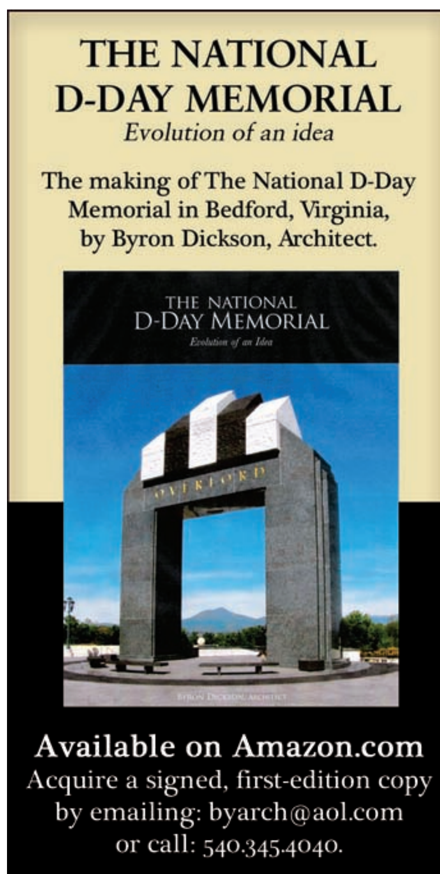
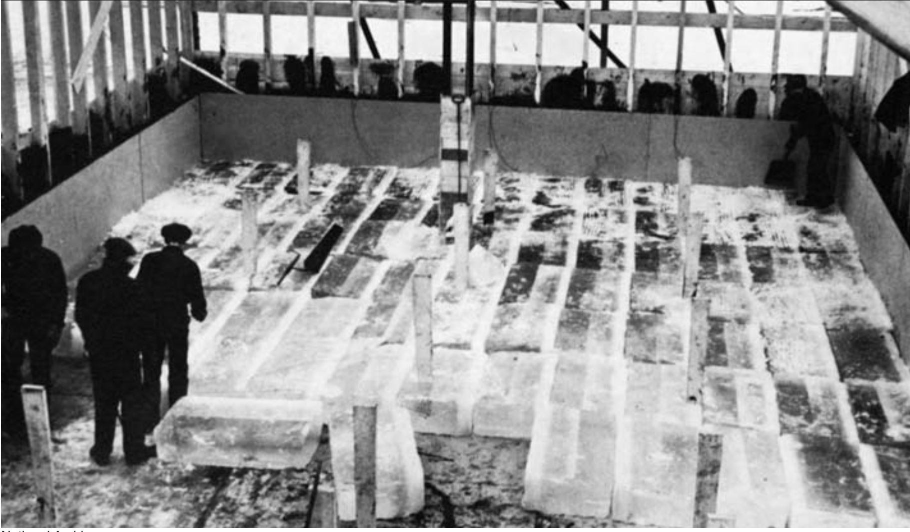


A model of the iceberg aircraft carrier, built on Patricia Lake in Canada, was 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and weighed 1,000 tons.



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have been invented by a coworker, Max F. Perutz, born of Jewish parents in Vienna. When not excelling at biochemistry, Perutz applied equal energy to studying Alpine glaciers. He observed that the character of the ice changed when materials such as wood particles were introduced into its flow.

Perutz ended up in England working in the Combined Operations department, where he met Pyke. He shared with Pyke how simple ice could be molecularly changed by adding wood by-products to water and then freezing it. In their basement workshop beneath a London meatpacking company, the mixture was combined into a new alloy with tensile strength magnified beyond belief.

A suitable mixture of 15 percent wood pulp to 85 percent water could be poured into any mold, forming it into any desired shape and thickness. The wood by-products strengthened the ice, insulated it, and made it float better. The combination was nearly impervious to blunt trauma. Oddly, it was still susceptible to a saw blade. Stronger than concrete, the mixture was named pykrete, incorporating the name of one of its developers.

The next question revolved around what to do with the new discovery. It was decided to attempt to make a boat out of it.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had such an idea in mind already. By late 1942, Nazi U-boats ravaged Allied merchant shipping in the North Atlantic. In desperation Churchill conceived one far-fetched remedy, taking nature's own massive icebergs and smoothing them over to make landing strips in the North Atlantic to provide air cover for convoys.

Churchill's vision did not come about, but Mountbatten grew to appreciate Habakkuk more and more. The time arrived when he enthusiastically rushed off to share it with Churchill at his private residence. He brought along a chunk of pykrete with the thought to fill Churchill's bathtub with hot water and see how long it took the pykrete to melt. The block of modified ice seemed to float for hours unchanged by heated water.

Churchill was awestruck. He wanted a man-made iceberg aircraft carrier 2,000 feet long, 300 feet wide, with a depth of 200 feet holding a draft of 150 feet. Its hull and bottom would measure a 40-foot thickness of pykrete. Such a vessel would supposedly be impregnable to shells and torpedoes. It was meant to withstand North Atlantic waves towering 50 feet. It would carry 200 single-engine British fighter planes as well as 100 British twin-engine bombers. The seafaring range would be nothing less than 7,000 miles doing at least seven knots.

The vessel's infrastructure would contain a massive refrigeration system that would constantly moderate the ship's structural temperature. Its final tonnage of ice, steel, wood, and other materials came in at 2.2 million tons. In comparison, the liner *Queen Elizabeth* sailed at 83,600 tons. The most fascinating aspect of it all was that the vessel could regenerate parts of itself. Even if significant surface damage was incurred, it was a simple fix. Just mix more pykrete solution and apply until frozen in place. There would be a few problems in working out cooling systems for electric motors and steering. All Churchill had to say on those facets was for the Project Habakkuk team to resolve such issues.

Churchill saw great hope for an answer to

the Nazi U-boat menace. He also hoped the project would develop into a vessel capable of blockading enemy ports and into a large floating dock.

On August 19, 1944, during planning for Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe, Mountbatten took that opportunity to request of General Sir Alan Brooke time to present Project Habakkuk and the wonders of pykrete. Mountbatten took center stage and explained the makings of pykrete and the possibility of a 2.2 million ton iceberg aircraft carrier. He produced two square chunks of ice. One was untreated ice. The other was pykrete. He announced he would fire his pistol into each chunk.

Those in the room hurriedly lined up behind Mountbatten. One bullet fired into the regular ice block shattered and sent ice shrapnel flying around the room. Firing into the pykrete sent the bullet ricocheting across the room. One fragment went through a pants leg of an officer with no injury to him. Another spectator had a spent bullet fragment harmlessly bounce off his shoulder.

The only real injury came to U.S. Army Air Forces chief Henry "Hap" Arnold. At Mountbatten's invitation, he took a hatchet and pounded on the pykrete. The whacks literally bounced back, jarring his arm and shoulder enough to cause a pained yelp. Other than an insignificant indention and a few scratches, the pykrete remained unscathed. Americans were somewhat impressed with the display but not thoroughly sold on Project Habakkuk, which was relocated to Canada for further research and development.

By late 1943, an eight-man Habakkuk team set up shop at Patricia Lake near Jasper, Alberta, Canada. The elevated mountainous site was removed from the hustle and bustle of crowds. A floating workshop was built on top of the lake. The wooden structure measured 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 20 feet high. The air conditioning system was powered by a one-horsepower engine.

It was envisioned that a completed vessel of desired measurements would require 300,000 tons of wood pulp, 25,000 tons of fireboard insulation, and at least 10,000 tons of steel. Just to see if such an object would float, a prototype was made. It came in at 60 feet long and 30 feet wide and weighing 1,000 tons, and it did float.

Project Habakkuk never got any further than that. It was continually challenged by both British and American skeptics. U.S. war planners decided to save steel for traditional aircraft carriers. As with anything in its research and development phase, cost overruns plagued the effort. The success of the Normandy invasion and a reversal of fortune in the Battle of the Atlantic also doomed Project Habakkuk.

Geoffrey Pyke carried on with his grand designs, which ended up going nowhere. One of his last great visions was an elongated pneumatic tube attached to troop carrier ships to land soldiers on Japanese-held islands. That idea failed on paper.

After the war, Pyke carried on with his peculiar habits while writing, researching, and planning. It seems most of his energy was channeled into writing. On February 21, 1948, at age 54, Pyke was found dead by his landlady. The cause of death was an intentional sleeping pill overdose. He was still writing while fading away into death. The further he lapsed, the more scrawled the writing. It seemed he was approaching a topic even Albert Einstein had yet to ponder. Pyke may have been plotting a mathematical formula of the time-space continuum. □

Stephen D. Lutz resides in Portage, Michigan. He is a Vietnam veteran and has retired following a 25-year career in the healthcare industry.

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By Sheldon Winkler

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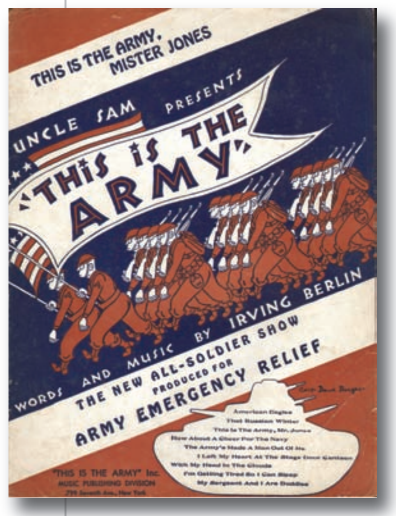
The film *This is the Army* premiered in Washington, D.C., at Warner's Earle Theater on August 12, 1943.

This Is the Army



Irving Berlin made the movie and the musical famous during World War II.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND POPULAR PATRIOTIC show of World War II and one of the most unique productions in the history of entertainment was Irving Berlin's *This Is the Army,* which originally began as a Broadway musical.

General George C. Marshall gave Berlin permission to stage a morale-boosting revue early in 1942 to raise money for the military.

Rehearsals were held at Camp Upton, New York, beginning in the spring of 1942 in an old Civilian Conservation Corps barracks called T-11. At one end was a large recreation room with a stone fireplace, where Berlin placed his special piano. It was next to a latrine, which had a hot water tank. Berlin liked to lean against the tank to warm his back.

Berlin completed most of the score by the end of April. The show was then auditioned on Governor's Island in New York Harbor for General Irving J. Phillipson. Immediately thereafter, Berlin received the approval he was waiting for.

The musical, which was directed by 24-year-old Ezra Stone (radio's Henry Aldrich), opened on Broadway with a cast of 300 uniformed soldiers on July 4, 1942, to rave reviews. The most popular songs from the revue were "This Is the Army Mr. Jones" and "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen." Other notable numbers include "I'm Getting Tired So I Can Sleep," "How About a Cheer for the Navy," "American Eagles," and "With My Head in the Clouds for the Air Corps."

The simple song lyrics introduced human feelings and emotions into the score, which made military life more understandable to wartime audiences. The songs were easy to sing and the lyrics easy to remember.

The show was so successful that the initial four-week engagement was extended to 12 weeks followed by a national tour, and then with a greatly reduced cast to tours of the European, Far East, and Pacific Theaters. Berlin ingeniously inserted new songs into the show depending on the audience and location. In England, he added "My British Buddy," and in the Pacific he included "Heaven Watch the Philippines."

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt saw the show several times during its first weeks at the Broadway Theatre and became a devotee. She desperately wanted her husband to see it, but he was unable to travel to New York City. A special matinee command performance was arranged for October 8, 1942, at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C., for the president. He thoroughly enjoyed the performance and invited the complete cast and crew to the White House the following day. The president shook hands with the entire company, over 350 soldiers, which kept him up until 1:30 the following morning.

This Is the Army was an exposition of patriotism as well as pure and simple entertainment, and the musical theater was an exceptional vehicle for boosting wartime morale. The show was a rousing, captivating musical tribute to Americans in uniform, including those in the Navy and Air Corps.

The story of Army life was told simply in song and dance, with a bit of added comedy. No battle scenes, no deaths, and no destruction were introduced. Girls, sweethearts, and mothers were the objects of songs. Kathleen E.R. Smith, in her book, *God Bless America—Tin Pan Alley Goes to War,* contends that the impression of Army life presented was more like a summer camp vacation instead of the serious matter of preparing for war.

By the time the national tour of *This Is the Army* concluded on February 13, 1943, in San Francisco, about $2 million had been raised for the Army Emergency

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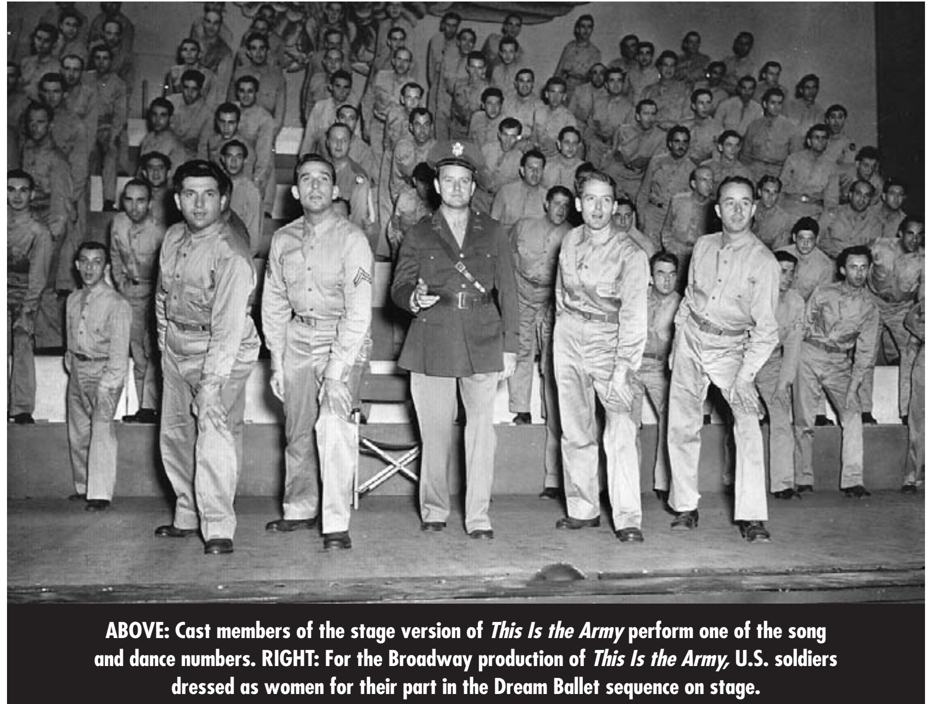


ABOVE: Cast members of the stage version of *This Is the Army* perform one of the song and dance numbers. RIGHT: For the Broadway production of *This Is the Army,* U.S. soldiers dressed as women for their part in the Dream Ballet sequence on stage.

Relief Fund for deserving wives, children, and parents of servicemen and women.

The international touring company of *This Is the Army* first went to England in November 1943, and Irving Berlin met King George VI and Queen Elizabeth after a London performance. Berlin also received an invitation to lunch with Prime Minister Winston Churchill at his 10 Downing Street residence in error. The invitation was intended for Isaiah Berlin, a well-known English philosopher and political thinker who was assigned to the British embassy in Washington at that time. Churchill did not realize the error until well after the meeting, when he was informed that his lunch guest that day was the famous American songwriter.

After touring the English provinces, the company went to North Africa for two weeks and then sailed for Italy. *This Is the Army* was presented at the San Carlo Opera House in Naples in early April 1944. The group arrived in Rome by truck only six days after the Eternal City fell to the Allies. The musical was presented twice a day at the Royal Opera House in June.

Egypt was the next stop in early August, with *This Is the Army* being performed at the Cairo Opera House until the end of the month. September and October were spent in Iran. The company then traveled to the vast Pacific Theater, with New Guinea the first stop at the end of December 1944.

The company eventually landed at Guam in early August 1945, days before the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. A number of island-hopping stops followed, from Leyte in the Philippines to Okinawa, Iwo Jima, and other Pacific islands. The touring company reached Hawaii on October 10 and gave its final performance in Honolulu on October 22, 1945. Irving Berlin spoke after the last performance and expressed hope that he would never again have to compose a war song.

This Is the Army was made into a Technicolor movie by Warner Brothers in 1943. The film starred future President Ronald Reagan (then an Army lieutenant), George Murphy (later a senator from California), and Joan Leslie. The motion picture was produced by Hal B. Wallis and Jack L. Warner and directed by Michael Curtiz. The entire cast and crew were transported to Hollywood in February 1943 and stayed at a large tent camp near Warner Brothers Studio under military command. Every day they marched to the studio and proceeded to duty at their assigned sound stages. At the end of the day's shooting, they marched back to their campsite in formation.

Irving Berlin's doleful cinematic performance of "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," recreating the role he previously played in his World War I musical *Yip! Yip! Yaphank*, is legendary. Boxer Joe Louis, Frances Langford, and Ezra Stone also appeared in the movie version, along with Kate Smith, who naturally sang "God Bless America." Included in the cast were hundreds of soldiers released from duty until the filming was completed.

Although the movie was mainly a musical that merged entertainment and propaganda, a thin plot tells the story of Jerry Jones (George Murphy) and his son, Johnny (Ronald Reagan), during the course of two world wars. *This Is The Army* won an Academy Award in 1943 for best musical score. The movie was not seen on television until it reverted to the public domain in the 1970s. The outstanding Berlin songs, presented with bits of optimism and escapism, were largely responsible for the success of the film.

An illustrated souvenir book entitled *Irving Berlin's All Soldier Show This Is The Army* was available for purchase at performances of the

musical. An expanded version, with complete words and music, for the motion picture was later made available and sold in music and other stores and theaters during wartime. The words "All Soldier Show" were dropped from the title of the movie album. All proceeds from the sale of the souvenir albums went to the Army Emergency Relief Fund. The souvenir album originally cost 50 cents. Copies occasionally appear for sale today for considerably more money.

The son of a synagogue cantor, Israel Baline was born in Russia on May 11, 1888. His family immigrated to the United States in 1893 to escape oppression when Israel was five years old. The family initially lived on Monroe Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. After a few weeks, the Balines moved to a brownstone at 330 Cherry Street.

Young Israel began singing on street corners and in restaurants after his father's death to help support his mother and siblings. In the early 1900s he became a singing waiter and began to write songs. His first published hit, for which he wrote only the lyrics, was "Marie from Sunny Italy." "Alexander's Ragtime Band," an all-time classic still popular today, was written in 1911. Baline changed his name to a more American

Creator Irving Berlin (left) and director Michael Curtiz discuss the filming of the movie version of the musical *This Is the Army*. Curtiz also directed the classic film *Casablanca*. The screen adaptation of *This Is the Army* raised nearly $10 million for the Army Emergency Relief Fund.

sounding Irving Berlin at that time.

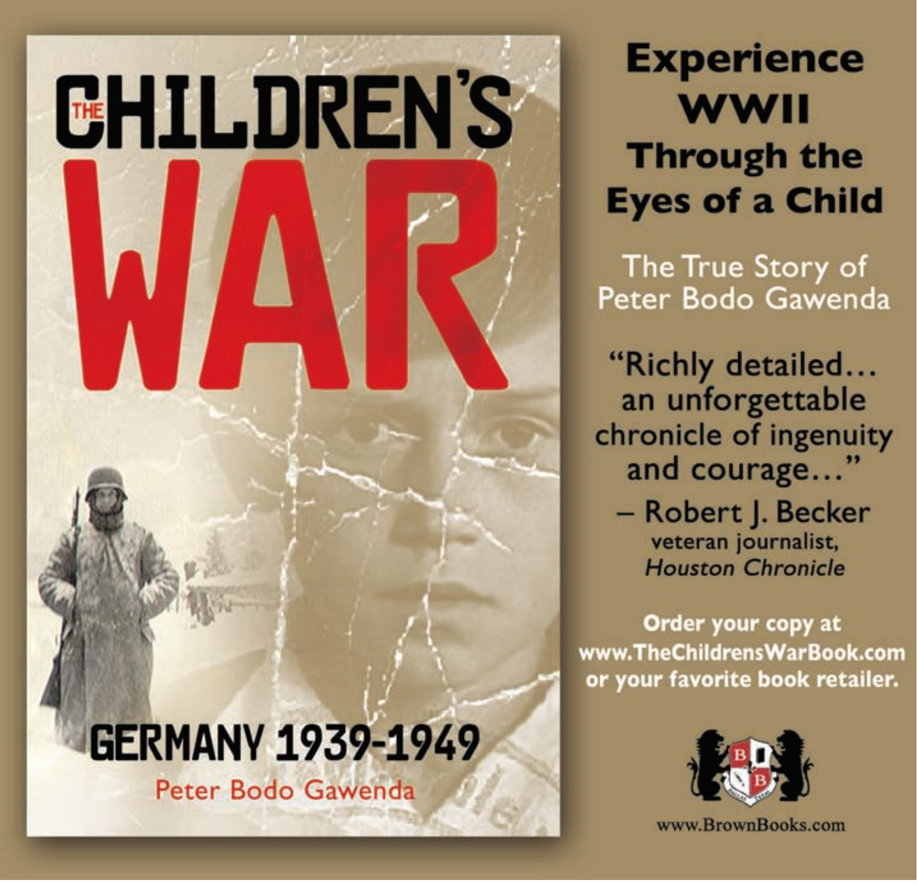
Berlin was drafted into the Army in 1917 during World War I and was sent to Camp Upton in Yaphank, Long Island, where he wrote the musical *Yip! Yip! Yaphank*. The review raised $83,000 to build a service center at Camp Upton. However, the service center was never built, and Berlin never found out what became of the money.

"God Bless America," which was originally written for this show, was thought to be a little too hymn-like for a musical, and remained unknown and unpublished in Berlin's files. Kate Smith introduced the song during a CBS radio broadcast on Armistice Day, November 11, 1938, and recorded "God Bless America" for RCA Victor on March 21, 1939. Her original version was reissued over the years on many occasions and was also recorded by numerous other artists.

Berlin wanted "God Bless America" to be the final number of the Broadway musical. Director Ezra Stone had other ideas and used the song "This Time." Stone eventually realized how wrong he was!

Irving Berlin suggested that Kate Smith recreate her radio introduction of "God Bless

Continued on page 77



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By Sherri Kimmel

National Archives

Decades of Diplomacy

German diplomat Erwin Wickert served in wartime Japan and knew the renowned Soviet spy Richard Sorge.

I AM RIDING A BORROWED BIKE ALONG THE RHINE, PASSING THE Schaum-Hof, where last night I dined on a deck overlooking the river with a stately Dutch lady friend of a friend. She lent me this bike and directed me to this path.

Coming fast on my right is the Eva Braun House, a brown brick, turreted three-story rising benignly among large, leafy trees. It was here, behind a brick wall enclosure, festooned now with the red, white, and pink blooms of early summer, that Hitler spent many a sweet weekend. I pass the Dreesen Hotel, its flat-fronted white expanse slung out like a docked Mississippi riverboat against the bike path. Its sleeping room balconies jutting over the path, the Dreesen peers over the Rhine, as it did when Adolf Hitler and Eva, his mistress, repaired here for their evening meal.

Where I am headed is 40 minutes away by bike, along this ribbon tracing the Rhine, then I cross over a busy highway. I stop to fill a paper bag, a treat for the man who awaits, the man who once was connected to Hitler, not by allegiance but by status in the foreign service for the dictator's Reich.

I first met Erwin Wickert in June 2001. I had taken the short train hop from Cologne to Oberwinter to write a biographical sketch for the alumni magazine of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Wickert attended the college in the mid-1930s. I found his face attractive with aristocratic cheekbones and Prussian blue eyes. His smoothly backswept white hair suggested a dashing youth and fastidious old age. Though his face preserved his beauty and dignity, his frail and bent frame reminded me just how long he had been on this Earth.

Long enough to witness pre-Hitler privation in his native Prussia, long enough to have joined the Nazi party though he could not tolerate the National Socialists, long enough to staff, in a minor capacity, one of the most important Axis embassies of World War II. He had witnessed the destruction and rebirth of Germany and participated in that rebirth as a civil servant for the architect of the new Germany, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

Named *Time* magazine man of the year in 1953, and in 2003 voted by Germans in a television poll the most prominent German in history (Martin Luther was fourth and Hitler nowhere to be found), Adenauer was Wickert's family friend and political mentor. Wickert, once described by a journalist as "an exceptional person in foreign service," spent most of his life close to the main stage but never was a major player on it.

The day we met, we sipped tea from a silver pot at a lace-covered table in a back garden that was fragranced by 100 rose bushes. He spoke of working for an enemy of the United States while living in the land of America's other great foe, Japan. His encounters with evil in Tokyo in the 1940s fascinated me. But for a straight biographical sketch I needed to learn about his career as an award-winning radio-play writer and commentator and his eventual return to the foreign service as the German ambassador to Romania.

It was a career that he began as the lowest functionary in the German embassy in Shanghai and concluded when he returned triumphantly to China in 1976 as the German ambassador. And then there was his other vocation as author of more than 20 books of fiction and nonfiction. At age 90 he continued to publish, regularly bylining broadsheet-length newspaper articles about current politics and historical events he has witnessed as well as book reviews. In the fall of 2001, he

ABOVE: Erwin Wickert as photographed by the author in 2001. Wickert endured repeated American incendiary bombing while he was stationed in Tokyo during the war.

Author Photo

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Both: Erwin Wickert

ABOVE: Erwin Wickert, with Helma Ott, wife of the German ambassador and the journalist Adam Vollhard at a 1942 party for Ott's son, who was leaving to serve in the German Army. BELOW: Ambassador Eugen Ott (left) with his private secretary, Fraülein Bauart, and his second in command, Erich Kordt, at a party for Ott's son in 1942. Minister Plenipotentiary Kordt had twice plotted unsuccessfully to kill Hitler, says Wickert.

published the second volume of his autobiography, and a book of his collected journalism came out in spring 2003.

His most recent book, correspondence to and from famous friends including the philosopher Karl Jaspers, author Günter Grass, and former chancellor Kurt Kiesinger, was published in January 2005. After all the drama he has lived through he resides quietly alone (his wife died a few years earlier) in a sweeping house perched on a hill overlooking the Rhine.

My focus during that first visit was his arrival at Dickinson College, a ploy to escape the repression he had endured while living in a country wild for National Socialism. There was no one more Hitler happy than his own father, also named Erwin, a minor government functionary. During our six hours together that day, Wickert and I skimmed the highlights of his life as a young child in Brandenberg in those days of endless bread lines and wheelbarrows full of useless currency.

I learned how his father had forced his free-thinking 18-year-old son to offer himself as an SS officer candidate. This was in 1934, one year after Hitler had gained power. The son had sabotaged his appointment, though, when, during an interview, his Nazi interrogator asked why he was applying. "It is my father who wants me to become an officer," he replied.

The elder Erwin wrote the regimental commander demanding to know why his son had been rejected, but no reply came. And the son never revealed what he had told the SS man. After spending one required semester in a well-appointed SS comradeship house for students attending Karl-Wilhelm University in Berlin, Wickert headed to America to escape the authoritarian demands of his country and his father. He formalized his rejection of his father and his beliefs by refusing the elder Wickert's offer to help pay his way.

By the time Wickert reached Dickinson, where he learned "democratic ideas," as his father later griped to a neighbor, he had already made something of a name for himself in Germany as a writer. In America he continued his journalism, editing a magazine for foreign exchange students and earning his degree in economics at Dickinson.

Intrigued by the Far East, he hopped trains with hobos, hitchhiked cross-country to San Francisco, and signed on as a deckhand on a ship bound for China. Wickert spent several months in China traveling, polishing his writing, and meeting future legendary figures such as John Rabe, known today as the "Oscar Schindler of China" for his role in saving 250,000 Chinese.

Penniless and ill in China, Wickert returned to Germany, where he pursued a Ph.D. in art history at Heidelberg University. There he convinced the philosopher Karl Jaspers to admit him to his select seminar. Wickert's burgeoning publishing career and his stint in America had made him attractive to this pioneer of existentialism. After earning a Ph.D., Wickert hoped to escape Germany again and return to America as a cultural attaché. While awaiting his assignment from the German foreign office, he was offered an assistant professorship at Heidelberg. He did not stay long because all the men on campus were being drafted into the military.

"I wouldn't survive the war as an assistant professor in Heidelberg," he told me. "Somebody would grasp me and say, 'You're a young man; what are you doing there at the university teaching history of art? You have much better things to do—you go to the army, shoot people,' or something like that." When he shared his concerns with Jaspers, the philosopher told him, "The foreign office has many people who have been abroad like you and have been in America. You'll find people who understand your ideas much better than people who are in the army."

Wickert called the foreign office again and eventually was posted to Shanghai. He quickly married his Heidelberg girlfriend and, lacking any allegiance, bowed to foreign office pressure to join the Nazi party. Wickert knew that if he did not acquiesce they would be stuck in Germany. Erwin and Inge, nicknamed Franz, climbed aboard a train to Moscow then took

the Trans-Siberian Railway express across the continent to China, snacking on the caviar that was offered freely in the passenger cars. It was August 1940.

Assigned to the German embassy in China's most important commercial center, Shanghai, as the youngest and lowest-ranking employee and a radio attaché not a diplomat, Wickert soon fell out of favor with the Nazi brass. His job was to program a German station, one of 26 radio stations in the city. He naively proclaimed it "the voice of Europe" and refused an order to play only German classical music, bumping Wagner for the American jazz records he had acquired while studying at Dickinson.

When some Italian fascists approached him about broadcasting a program on the station, he showed them the door. Patience with his impertinence ended on the eighth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, January 30, 1941, when Wickert objected to a radio speech that the Nazi party chief gave to mark the occasion.

"That was underestimating the power of the Nazi party, because the next day, he [the party leader] sent a telegram to the German ambassador and to the foreign office to have me recalled immediately," Wickert told me. "He said I was very tactless, very young, and unreliable. I had really made a blunder in making a Nazi chief my enemy. But I don't regret it," he said with a satisfied smile. "I feel hate for him."

Wickert rallied high-ranking supporters to preempt his return to Germany. Erich Kordt, the second-ranking German minister in Tokyo, pulled some strings and had him transferred to the embassy in Japan. Returning to Germany, Wickert said, would have meant his death.

In Tokyo, Wickert was the second lowest in rank and still not of diplomatic status. His tactical blunders in Shanghai made that impossible. For the embassy staff Wickert was entrusted with writing a daily bulletin of news that he culled from American and British stations through two listeners who reported to him. Along with his four-page news digest, the embassy published another bulletin of "official news" or propaganda.

In his radio programming, Wickert presented Allied reports along with the German and Japanese points of view. While his mornings were occupied dictating his bulletin to a secretary, he spent the afternoons reporting to Berlin the Japanese news "that drew our attention. We talked politics all the time in the afternoon. I was busy all the time. The times were so fascinating and full of surprises."

Now, a year after my first visit, I am ready for surprises. I see his house ahead—white stucco with a sturdy wooden door. Wickert is waiting beside the open door, even smaller and frailer than I remember, but just as neatly attired in a crisp pinstriped shirt, red tie, navy sweater, and gray slacks. He kisses me on both cheeks, then we head downstairs to his writing studio. Shelves hold various editions of his books and yellow binders containing clippings of all the articles he has written since the early 1930s. The binders, with labels inscribed in his neat hand, are arranged chronologically and by subject.

I sink into a leather chair and pour a cup of tea from the pot that his white-aproned maid has whisked into the room. He gets right to the point, matter-of-factly and succinctly laying out the parameters of our talk. I may interview him from 9 AM until 1 PM each day. He takes a nap each afternoon to rejuvenate himself for his research and writing. Evenings he reserves for correspondence. It is clear by his tone and demeanor that the terms are not negotiable.

I am eager to explore Wickert's encounters with Richard Sorge, the German-born spy for Stalin who has been romanticized or vilified—depending upon the author's or director's point of view—in prose and film. Sorge is now cham-

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pioned as a hero in Russia, the country that played the Judas role after his capture by the Japanese. Stalin did not try to stop his death by hanging in 1944 in Tokyo.

Sorge and Wickert met in 1936, when Wickert was visiting China for the first time after his graduation from Dickinson College. Wickert, who wanted to write articles about the living conditions of Chinese and Japanese workers, had been referred to as "a man from the *Frankfurter Zeitung*." Sorge was considered an expert on labor, a fitting concern for a closet communist. While working publicly as a journalist, Sorge went about his espionage. In 1941, Wickert was back in China, now with the embassy in Shanghai, and Sorge was still plying his public career as a writer and his secret one as a spy.

"The books made a big deal about how handsome and dashing he was. Was that true?" I asked.

"No, he wasn't handsome," Wickert replies, and I feel mildly disappointed. "He was tall, and maybe for girls he may have been good-looking, but his walk … he threw a little bit his leg behind him. I think he must have been hurt."

"Yes, in World War I, with shrapnel."

Wickert described Sorge's face. "Something about it didn't quite fit together, and so everybody looked twice when they saw him—an interesting face…."

By the time Wickert moved to Tokyo's German embassy, Sorge had shifted his spy cell from China as well. He made fast friends with Wickert's boss, Ambassador Eugen Ott, and his wife, Helma, enabling him to infiltrate the embassy. Sorge began publishing a news bulletin for the German community that he composed in an embassy office, and he and the ambassador had breakfast together almost daily. Wickert laughs off Weymant's claims that the 40-ish Helma and Sorge carried on a torrid affair. Sorge, he says, went for less "massive" and younger women.

One of the younger women to whom Sorge took a shine was Wickert's young blonde bride, Franz. Wickert broke up their flirtation at a party.

The legendary drinking, he says, was not exaggerated. Wickert recalls how, one hot summer night when Franz was staying in the mountain resort of Karuizawa, he visited Tokyo's Imperial Hotel bar. There sat Sorge, drunk and loudly denouncing Hitler as a criminal for attacking the Soviet Union. Germany had invaded Russia that very day.

Wickert remembered: "I said, 'Sorge, keep quiet. There are all sorts of people here, maybe even the agent of the German secret police, Meisinger, or his people. He said, 'Meisinger is an….' I had never seen him drunk like that."

When Sorge attempted to leave the hotel,

Wickert stopped him, saying firmly, "You can't go out like that. I'll order a room for you in the hotel, and you'll stay there."

He continued, "So I got a room for Sorge, got him to the room and then I put him to bed and went out. The next morning, he came out unshaven. He found me in the breakfast room and asked, 'Could you lend me 100 yen?' I said, 'All right.' I thought I would never see them again, but he paid them to me."

Did Wickert suspect Sorge?

"He was one of these more adventurous people who was disgusted with everything in the world and was sarcastic about it. But we never thought that in the background he had this very strange belief—strange, for an intelligent person, about socialism."

On day two of the interview, I am eager for more encounters with evil, though in Sorge's case one might argue that he was not evil—just committed to an unpopular cause. But there is no doubt about the Butcher of Warsaw, Josef Meisinger.

Wickert takes me into a second downstairs office, where he keeps his old files. He begins plowing through a box of photos, meticulously categorized by his late wife. He pulls out photos of an embassy party, the women in fancy dresses with their 1940s rolled hair. Wickert, in white tuxedo and black bow tie, laughs with the towering Helma Ott. There is Ambassador Ott with Erich Kordt, Helma Ott with the philosopher Count Karlfried Graf Dürkheim, then Ott's son Helmut with a cluster of Teutonic beauties. He shows me a photo from another day, with Shinzaku Hogen, his close friend, a future Japanese ambassador, at his left. And then he shows me Meisinger, stocky, brutish, coarse.

The arrival of Meisinger in Japan was fear inspiring because of his penchant for murder. According to Wickert, his slaughter of Polish intellectuals and Jews was considered even too much for Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's SS chief. When Meisinger came on as the head of the embassy's SS, Wickert began having murderous fantasies of his own.

Wickert had his reasons. "I was not very well liked by him because of my fight with the Nazi leader in Shanghai. There was always the danger that if you really antagonized Meisinger he would say, 'Well, this young man, Wickert, might be better to go to the front in Germany. We'll put him on one of the blockade runners.' And the blockade runners were mostly sunk, intercepted by enemy warships or by planes."

Wickert and his friend, the young diplomat Franzl Krapf, mulled over various assassination plots. "Whenever I was awake during the night I thought about the most adventurous things or methods which seemed, in the daytime, absolutely impossible," Wickert says with a tone of resignation. "The police and Meisinger's friends in the Kempetai (Japanese secret police) would have found me out, and that would have been my end."

Meisinger was eventually returned to Warsaw to stand trial for the murders. "It served him right that he was hung," says Wickert, with a nod of satisfaction. "For a long time after he was dead the thought tormented me, whether I had overlooked the possibility to kill him."

Wickert first encountered Japanese Emperor Hirohito on New Year's Eve at the palace in Tokyo. Russian and German embassy staff were invited to a reception with Hirohito and the royal family. "We were presented one by one to the emperor and empress, and on both sides were the princes and princesses, all in robes like the pre-First World War. You went in, and you were called up in the anteroom. They said, 'Mr. Wickert,' and the door opened, and you had to go in, slowly, walk to the midst of the balustrade. You had to bow to the emperor. Then you had to go two or three paces to the

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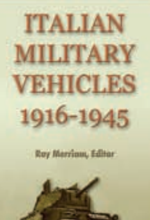

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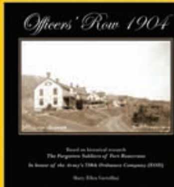

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Erwin Wickert

Erwin Wickert (center), with, from left, Shinzaku Hogen, a future Japanese ambassador to Vienna, according to Wickert, and Adam Vollhard, who wrote for the German News Agency in Tokyo.

right, to the empress, and then to the princes and princesses.

"On the way back, you had to go backwards to the door. You should always look at the balustrade. It was difficult to find the door without looking at it. In the midst of going back you had to bow again. I was so nervous. Why? Because in front of me was a lady from the embassy, a diplomat's wife. When the door opened, she had to bow, too. What you call it?"

"Curtsy," I prompt him.

"Curtsy, yes, and then her whole dress opened up, because it was very tight, and so I thought this was very funny. It didn't fall apart completely, but it was close to doing it."

On November 30, 1942, Wickert was aboard the German auxiliary cruiser *Thor,* a commerce raider that was docked in Tokyo Bay. As he toured the vessel, a sudden explosion ripped through the neighboring supply ship *Uckermark*. *Thor* was sunk by the explosion, and Wickert swam for his life.

"I heard some sort of a hiss," he remembered. "Suddenly there was a cloud on the right side of me, several hundred meters high and with flames coming out… I went to the railing, too, and jumped. I went down very deep first. I was trying to swim to land in Yokohama Harbor. Doing the backstroke, I looked up and saw the cloud, the whole cloud, and parts of the ship. I looked back to the ship and saw the people who were standing there still…. They didn't know what to do. I thought I would die there. This German was on his balcony looking at what happened in the harbor—all flames and smoke and clouds. He saw me coming, and he said he thought he saw a ghost. My face was green, and I had a cut because the debris was flying around."

That night, Wickert joined his wife at Kawaguchi, the resort in the shadow of Mount Fuji where the embassy families lived. The next day, his second child, Ulrich, now a broadcaster in Germany, was born.

During the last nine months of the war, the Americans began what Wickert called "incendiary bombing." Large areas of Tokyo burned, lighting up the night sky, leaving nothing but safes containing family treasures poking above ground. He experienced his last big air raid on May 25, 1945, after Germany had capitulated but Japan was still at war. He remembered that when a plane fell the Japanese "applauded but didn't know if it was an American plane or a Japanese plane." That day, while his wife and children were at their Kawaguchi home, Wickert escaped their other flame-engulfed house in Tokyo.

"Everything burned, went down. And just a few yards away from our so-called air raid shelter there was a man dying. He was hit by a bomb in his leg, and the leg was very swollen, and the trousers were very tight about it," Wickert recalled. "So I went to the air raid shelter where we had our first-aid equipment. There was a scissor, and I tried to cut the trousers, and then he cried. He said it was hurting so much. He had what do you call … Rosenkranz.… He had a Buddhist rosary."

Wickert approached a policeman. "I said, 'We have somebody who is hit, and if you don't do something about it, he'll die. Could you help us to carry him to the hospital? The hospital was burned down, too. So we just had to let him die. In the morning he was dead already."

When the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Wickert was safe with his family at the Mount Fuji resort. He understands the reasons for the actions by the Americans.

"I thought, yes, because the war couldn't go on, and the other possibility would be Americans landing in Japan. Invasion. And I knew how the Japanese felt about it. They would have sacrificed, like the kamikazes. And that would have prolonged the war without any reason. The end would be the same. The Americans would come, and I thought maybe they would have dozens of bombs, atomic bombs. Then came the Nagasaki bomb, so I thought it was very good to have it, to end the war right now as soon as possible. So I think it was the right thing.

"On the other hand," he continues, "I'm not sure whether the Japanese would have really sacrificed themselves in defending their country if the landing operation would have gone on a long time. There was the discrepancy between the corruption of the people—uninterested in the war and everything at home—and the cries of the young officers to continue to fight, to sacrifice themselves. When I went to Tokyo immediately after the capitulation I saw the banners in the streets, and I wrote them down: 'Welcome the American victories over all the world.'"

He shakes his head. "Even now I cannot understand it. Everything was broken down; the myth was broken down. Japan was not able to be the nation really sought out by the gods, by heaven, to pacify and to reign."

It had taken a while for the news of Hitler's April 30, 1945, suicide to reach the Germans in Tokyo, for Berlin sent no announcement to the embassy. Finally, someone intercepted a German news broadcast—proclaiming that Hitler had died—from a radio station in Norway. Heinrich Stahmer, who had taken over for Eugen Ott as ambassador, called for the embassy staff to attend a memorial service for the fallen Führer.

"All the German embassy personnel came," Wickert remembered. "There was a symphony orchestra, which was directed by the German Helmut Fellmer. They played Siegfried's Death or something else from Richard Wagner. And he [Stahmer] gave a speech that Hitler died a heroic death. And then he had the colors of the party thrown out, and the national hymn was thrown out, and there also was a program.

"I said, 'I'll preserve this mimeographed thing.' I still have it, and I published it in this book."

Wickert held a copy of his 1991 autobiography, *Mut und Übermut* (Courage and

Continued on page 75

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Liberating the Great Port

THE BATTLE FOR THE FRENCH PORT CITY OF CHERBOURG AND THE COTENTIN PENINSULA WAS A LENGTHY AFFAIR. **BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN**

IT WAS THE STORM THAT FORCED THE BATTLE.

On June 19, 1944, a massive gale hit the English Channel, sweeping in from the west, hitting the gigantic artificial harbors the Allies had built on their D-Day invasion beaches. By daylight on the 20th, the artificial roads and piers had disappeared under waves that reached eight feet high. For three days, the storm tore at the British breakwaters off Arromanches and the American ones at St. Laurent-sur-Mer, destroying the American harbor entirely and badly damaging the British piers. More than 140,000 tons of supplies were destroyed, and 800 ships lost or beached.

When General Omar Nelson Bradley, who commanded the U.S. First Army and later the 12th Army Group, visited the battered artificial harbor, he wiped sea spray from his eyes and kicked the sand in frustration. "Nothing pained us more than the beaches. Each day the deficit mounted until we fell thousands of tons in arrears, especially in ammunition." Down to three days' supply of ammo, Bradley postponed his drive south until the port city of Cherbourg was taken. In the meantime, ammunition would be rationed, if necessary.

The general strode around the ruined harbor and said to a naval lieutenant, "Hard to believe a storm could do all this."

The lieutenant responded, "General, we would much sooner have had the whole damned Luftwaffe come down on our heads."

The losses were greater than anything the Germans had been able to inflict on the Normandy beaches with their V-weapons, bombers, and midget submarines, and the Allied offensive now seemed stalled. The Americans were down to two days of ammunition, and the British were three full divisions short. Only a fifth of the planned quantities of supplies could be landed on the remaining artificial harbor on the British invasion beaches. A replacement harbor was urgently needed. The nearest one was Cherbourg. Without it, the invasion of Normandy might fail.

The capture of Cherbourg had been a central factor in the planning of the invasion of Normandy since the site had been chosen in 1942. The famed harbor had been used by Atlantic freighters and passenger liners ranging from tiny coal boats to the massive *Titanic*. It had been a mile off this harbor that, in 1864, the Union warship *Kearsarge* defeated the Confederate raider *Alabama* during America's Civil War. The latter ship had been preying on Union merchant shipping in the English Channel.

Fred Ramage/Keystone/Getty Images

American infantrymen proceed cautiously along a dirt road in the Bois de Valognes, on the way to Cherbourg. The city of Valognes was liberated by U.S. forces on June 20, two weeks after D-Day. The road is littered with bicycles and other equipment discarded in haste by retreating German soldiers.

National Archives

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ABOVE: A detachment of Americans returns fire against Germans in concealed positions at St. Sauveur. The Germans were fighting a rear-guard action as the main body of their troops retreated from the town. St. Sauveur fell to the Allies on June 16. RIGHT: Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley (left), commander of the U.S. First Army, surveys the battlefield with Major General J. Lawton Collins, commander of the U.S. VII Corps during its drive northward toward the great French port city of Cherbourg.

Now, with its piers, docks, and cranes, Cherbourg was the logical first target port to be seized after the Allies came ashore in Normandy on D-Day, June 6. Everyone who could read a map could see that. The problem was, Adolf Hitler could read a map, too.

With the Americans streaming in through the *bocage* country, driving across the Cotentin Peninsula, headed straight for Carteret and the opposite Baie du Mont St. Michel, it was obvious that the American strategy was to cut off Cherbourg from reinforcement, then move on the isolated port city and seize it from the rear. Just as obviously, Hitler was determined to defend Cherbourg like every other position he might lose: to the last man and last bullet.

To do so, Hitler ordered Lt. Gen. Wilhelm von Schlieben, who commanded four divisions on the peninsula, to hold Cherbourg. If he could not, the city had to be captured as a "field of ruins." Schlieben, described by his later British interrogators as an obedient toady, went straight to work.

Von Schlieben had the parts of four divisions under his command: the elements of his own battered 709th Infantry Division, which had originally held Utah Beach; the 243rd Infantry Division, which held the west coast of the Cotentin Peninsula; parts of the 77th Infantry and the 91st Air Landing Divisions, which had been cut off by the American advance; and other odd outfits: the 30th Mobile Brigade, the Seventh Army's tough mechanized Sturm Battalion, two battalions of French R35 and S35 tanks (training outfits that had been activated after the invasion), battalions of *nebelwerfer* rocket artillery, and a variety of fortress command units in the city itself, including a battalion of German Marines.

Most importantly, von Schlieben had under his command a fairly modern fortress in Cherbourg itself. The city was surrounded by a ring of hills upon which the Germans had deployed strongpoints with machine-gun, antitank, and 88mm gun emplacements, along with tank barriers. Behind that stood older French forts that had held up the Nazi offensive of 1940, now reinforced with heavy guns and German engineering. The guns were a mixed bag—one battery consisted of two captured British 3.7-inch antiaircraft guns, part of the loot at Dunkirk. Batteries named "Querqueville" and "Hamburg" could fire out to sea with 280mm shells that could damage American and British warships sent in to provide covering fire.

Lee McCardell, covering the advance for the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper, wrote, "So-called pillboxes in the first line of German defenses ... were actually inland forts with steel and reinforced concrete walls four or five feet thick. Built into the hills of Normandy so their parapets were level with surrounding ground, the forts were heavily armed with mortars, machine-guns, and 88mm rifles. Around the forts lay a pattern of smaller defenses, pillboxes, redoubts, rifle pits, sunken ... mortar emplacements permitting 360-degree traverse, observation posts and other works. Approaches were further protected by minefields, barbed wire and anti-tank ditches at least 20 feet wide at the top and 20 feet deep. Each strongpoint was connected to the other ... by a system of deep, camouflaged trenches and underground tunnels."

Even so, the Germans had key disadvantages. Most of the 21,000 defenders came from second-line divisions and lacked both equipment and determination. The 709th had very few vehicles and had been battered since D-Day. A fifth of the defenders were Polish and Russian former prisoners of war who had put on the German uniform rather than starve to death in Nazi POW camps. One Russian, who commanded several such "Ost" units, when drunk admitted to "wanting a bit of plunder." Supplies were short, air cover nonexistent, and every road could be hammered by ubiquitous American and British fighter-bombers or warships.

Nonetheless, Cherbourg would not be an easy nut to crack, and in charge of the offensive would be one of the U.S. Army's best leaders, Lt. Gen. J. Lawton "Lightning Joe" Collins, who had already won his spurs by defeating the Japanese on Guadalcanal. Now this veteran of two amphibious campaigns was leading the U.S. VII Corps, heading north to crush the defenders of Cherbourg.

Collins had three divisions available: the veteran 4th Infantry, which formed the first wave at Utah Beach; the 9th Infantry, which had fought in North Africa; and the new 79th Infantry, which was as well trained and

U.S. Army Art Collection

A German war artist depicted this scene of field artillery in action against the advancing Allies on the Cotentin Peninsula. One of the principal objectives of the Allied forces in the weeks following the June 6, 1944, D-Day landings was to cut off the peninsula, trapping the German troops still resisting there, and then taking the port city of Cherbourg.

equipped as the other two. All were backed up by independent tank battalions, plenty of artillery, squadrons of fighter-bombers, and warships from the U.S. and Royal Navies offshore, including the massive battleships USS *Texas* and USS *Arkansas,* whose 14-inch guns could crush the fixed German coast defenses.

Collins was the son of an Irish Catholic immigrant who wound up in New Orleans as a Union drummer boy in the Civil War. Born in Algiers, Louisiana, Collins got into West Point through his uncle, political boss and longtime New Orleans Mayor Martin Behrman. A member of the class of 1917, he was appointed chief of staff to Lt. Gen. Delos Emmons, who replaced the luckless General Walter Short as commander of the Hawaiian defenses. Collins got his brigadier general's star in February 1942, and command of the 25th "Tropic Lightning" Division in May 1942, leading the Army on Guadalcanal. His superb performance gave Collins command of VII Corps and the invasion of Utah Beach, which was highly successful.

Collins was ahead of the storm and the game. Two days before the storm hit, he was planning his attack on Cherbourg. His plan was to line up his three divisions: the 9th on the left, the 4th on the right, and the 79th in the center, and grind up the peninsula to the city, with the two veteran divisions acting as pincer hammers with the 79th as the anvil in the center. Cherbourg would be attacked from three sides, with naval support. Simple and deadly attrition would do the job.

THE ATTACK WENT IN ON THE 19TH, ahead of the storm. The 9th Infantry attacked on the left, sweeping through the German defenses quickly, reaching their objectives at Rauville-la-Bigot and St. Germain-le Gaillard before noon. The 4th Cavalry Regiment faced a little more opposition but reached its objective of Rocheville. To hold the gap between the 9th Infantry and the 79th, Collins borrowed the 1st Battalion of the 359th Infantry Regiment from the 90th Infantry Division. So far the 90th had performed poorly, but this battle might give the division's men a chance to shape up.

Major Randall Bryant, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, led his men, surprising himself and his team by bouncing a bazooka round off a road and into the belly of a German tank.

By mid-afternoon, the 9th Infantry was ready to continue the attack and moved ahead with the 39th Infantry Regiment reaching Couville and the 60th reaching Helleville. That evening, the 4th Cavalry Regiment entered St. Martin le Gréard. The 9th Infantry was doing well.

Meanwhile, the 79th attacked from its line of Golleville to Urville, and its 313th Infantry Regiment reached its objective, the Bois de la Brique, west of the small city of Valognes, against slight resistance. The 315th was supposed to bypass Valognes, but resistance held it up. The 79th contained the city from the west.

The veteran 4th Infantry Division headed north backed by the 24th Cavalry Squadron, which screened the right flank. The Americans jumped off before daylight, anticipating having to face the tough Sturm Battalion and the 1,000-odd men of the 729th Regiment. Private William Jones, of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry, helped dig out Germans holding on near Montebourg. "They would lay there and fire at you until they ran out of ammunition and they would jump up and surrender. They were real dedicated people," he said later.

The Germans fought back from deep entrenchments, and it took until dawn before the attack could continue with tank support.

When the Sherman tanks showed up, the Germans withdrew. Company B, 70th Tank Battalion, circled the Germans from the rear, battling concealed antitank guns.

Bob Knoebel, a gunner in a lead Sherman, said, "We were going from one side of the road to another, and our tank was instantly on fire. In fact, I glanced in back of me and flames were already up in the air, just that quick."

Knoebel bailed out and slid down the sloping front of his tank, landing on the road. Just ahead, German soldiers brandished their weapons and beckoned Knoebel and his lieutenant to become prisoners. Knoebel and his lieutenant ran away instead, reaching another tank, whose commander urged Knoebel to join his crew. Knoebel slipped into his gunner's slot, and the tank rolled out, trying to flank the antitank gun that had knocked out Knoebel's old tank.

Instead, Knoebel's new tank was hit by German *panzerfaust* antitank shells, which knocked it out, and Knoebel was hit in the legs. He crawled into a nearby ditch, but the Germans finally captured him.

Private Harper Coleman, a D-Day veteran, also in 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry, said, "This was the way it was for most of the time, one hedgerow to the next on your stomach, or lower, if you could. Many incoming shells to all sides and Burp ... guns all the time. We would advance some distance and bog down when no one could go forward. After some time there would be the next order to start another attack. This went on day and night."

By 6 PM, the 8th Infantry Regiment was near Valognes, and the 22nd entered the deserted town of Montebourg. The 22nd Infantry found the city destroyed and civilians—dirty, frightened, and bewildered—hiding in cellars.

"They are living in the most extreme poverty," wrote Lieutenant John Ausland to his family. "Clothing as such is unknown. All they have are rags. Dirty berets are the most common head dress for men. Women's dresses are torn and dirty."

The streets were so rubble choked that engineers had to bring up bulldozers to clear them. Engineer Sam Ricker said, "When we entered Montebourg, there wasn't anything there but rubble. It was our job to clean the roadways out. Most of the time we took a bulldozer and they moved all this debris to the sides where trucks and jeeps and different vehicles could advance."

The 4th moved along through the heavy storm that pounded the D-Day beaches. "The rain and wind made conditions unbearable for the men in the field," one soldier wrote.

National Archives

Smoke from the discharge of their weapon and the swirling dust created by the recoil shroud this American antitank gun crew during a heated exchange of fire with German soldiers putting up stiff resistance on the Cotentin Peninsula.

But the weak German resistance was not a sign that they were collapsing. Von Schlieben was carrying out his orders to withdraw to Cherbourg, offering just enough resistance to keep the Americans moving slowly.

That the Americans did. On June 20, the 4th Infantry finally popped out of the murderous *bocage* country and into Valognes, finding the city choked with rubble but the Germans gone. It was worse than Montebourg, and the bulldozers took several days to clear the roads. They kept moving until they reached their objective at the Bois de Roudou, just in front of the main German defense line.

Two regiments of the 79th also headed north up the N13 highway until they hit the main German line. The Germans fell back so fast that the Americans captured four intact light tanks and an 88mm gun at one point and eight more tanks at another.

The 9th Infantry had a harder time, intending to cut off the most northwesterly part of the Cotentin Peninsula, the Cap de la Hague, which was perceived as a possible last-stand area for the Germans. The 60th Infantry's advance was rapid until noon, when heavy German artillery fire stopped the veteran 60th Infantry from reaching its initial objective, Hill 170.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions attacked abreast north and south of the Bois de Nerest and came under heavy German fire from 88mm and 20mm guns. Lt. Col. James D. Johnston, commanding 2nd Battalion, was mortally wounded by shellfire. Maj. Gen. Manton Eddy, who commanded the division, altered his plan and attacked to the north, taking positions on the crossroads formed by the junction of the les Pieux and Cherbourg roads. With those arteries in hand, the Americans tried to turn east but were stopped in their tracks. "Road marches were over," wrote official historian Gordon Harrison. "Hard fighting lay ahead."

The VII Corps now faced a belt of concrete and field fortifications in a semicircle four to six miles from Cherbourg. With their usual thoroughness, the Germans covered every approach route into the city, with antitank obstacles in stream beds and antiaircraft guns configured for land defense. To defend these entrenchments, von Schlieben formed Kampfgruppe Mueller, under Lt. Col. Franz Mueller, using pieces of the 243rd Division. This outfit held the line from Vauville to Ste. Crois-Hague. Next came the 919th Infantry Regiment and the 17th Machine-Gun Battalion under Lt. Col. Guenther Keil. Next was the 739th Regiment under Colonel Walter Koehn and then the 729th under Colonel Helmuth Rohrbach.

The defensive positions were strong; the troops, however, were inferior. Some battalions were down to 180 men. Von Schlieben told his bosses that he needed three full divisions with tanks and regular resupply to hold Cherbourg. He had none of the above. At least he had plenty of ammunition for immediate needs, and the German Navy tried to help out, delivering supplies by E-boat and U-boat, while the Luftwaffe used 107 transport planes to drop 188 tons of supplies into the besieged perimeter.

As rain and wind poured down on the front,

the Americans used June 20 and 21 to tighten up the line and reorganize. From extensive aerial reconnaissance, the French Underground, and radio intercepts, the Americans had a fairly complete grasp of the German defenses.

Meanwhile, the 4th Infantry continued to move ahead, trying to cut the main road from Cherbourg to St. Pierre-Eglise, but German resistance kept them 500 yards short of their objective, Hill 158.

On the 21st, the skies cleared and the 8th and 12th Infantry Regiments attacked northwest into the main Cherbourg defenses, heading for high ground 800 yards northwest of Bois de Roudou. The 8th first had to clear out V-1 launching sites and found the defenders very determined, holding out in concrete shelters. The 1st and 3rd Battalions fought their way out of the woods, and the 2nd Battalion brought in tanks to finish cleaning out the defenders. Some 300 prisoners were taken in the attack.

The 12th Infantry was stopped by a blown bridge, so it halted for the day. By end of the 21st, Cherbourg was sealed off, with all three U.S. divisions ready to attack. With supplies short and the American artificial harbors, codenamed Mulberry, wrecked, taking Cherbourg was even more vital. Collins told his men that the attack was "the major effort of the American army."

That night, Collins tried diplomacy to take Cherbourg. He broadcast a surrender demand to the defenders in German, Russian, Polish, and French, giving von Schlieben until 9 AM on the 22nd to capitulate. Von Schlieben did not answer the request.

To rip up the German fixed defenses, Collins called for the IX Bomber Command and the British 2nd Tactical Air Force to hammer the defenders. After the British Hawker Typhoons and North American P-51 Mustangs did their job, the Ninth Air Force's Lockheed P-38s and Martin B-26 Marauder bombers pounded the German strongpoints.

The American plan called for the 9th and 79th Divisions to attack into the city while the 4th Division sealed Cherbourg. The 9th Division's objective was Octeville to Cherbourg's west, while the 79th would grab Fort du Roule, the Vauban-style French-built fort that garrisoned the city's southern approaches. H-Hour was to be 2 PM.

At 12:50 PM, the RAF attacked, their Typhoon rockets creating an incredible din for 20 minutes, which cost the British 24 fighter-bombers to flak. Then wave after wave of American heavy bombers roared in, 375 in all, hammering the German fortifications with armor-piercing bombs and high explosives.

National Archives

To slow down the progress of the American VII Corps during its drive to Cherbourg, the Germans flooded some low-lying areas by breaching dams and blowing up containment facilities. A German soldier mans an MG-42 machine gun, part of defense of the approaches to Cherbourg.

Lieutenant Gabriel Greenwood, a 27-year-old fighter pilot in the 405th Fighter Group, described the defenders' antiaircraft barrage: "It was as though the earth had erupted and spread ... up into the sky through our planes. I never saw so much flak, tracers, flares, or felt so many concussions before." Nonetheless, Greenwood made his attacks. "It was really a hellhole. A battlefield in all its awful magnificence."

The American pilots struggled through flak and smoke created by the earlier attacks and had trouble spotting targets. Lieutenant Edward Michelson, zooming along at 300 mph in his P-38, saw a scene of chaos. "The ground fire was so intense it seemed the only safe place to be was below treetop level."

ANOTHER PILOT, CAPTAIN JACK Reed, got his plane filled with shrapnel. "We were on the deck in a ravine and all hell broke loose," he said. He saw two P-38s near him get turned into fireballs in seconds.

Lieutenant Alvin Siegel of the 358th Fighter Group dropped his bombs on gun emplacements and then saw a truck on a road as he pulled out. "I peeled off and dove," he said. "At that altitude I just barely had enough time to line up on the truck, squirt a short burst of fire and pull up immediately. I had to pull up right away to keep from going into the ground. I looked around and the truck was burning mightily and black smoke was curling up into the air. There must have been some type of munitions in the truck that made it burn so black."

But the attacks were not all successful. There were numerous "friendly fire" incidents, and by 1:30, forward American positions were asking that the air attacks be stopped. The fighter attacks ended at 2 PM when the troops went forward.

The medium bombers hit the Germans blind to provide the attackers with a rolling barrage. The bombers smacked the Germans but also hit their own troops, making the 9th Infantry suspicious of close air support for the rest of the war.

The bombing did little good. While it disrupted German communications, killed German soldiers, and kicked up a lot of gun positions, it did not pulverize the defenses. The attacks were neither well coordinated with the advance nor accurate.

As a result, all three divisions made slow advances against the German defenses, which showed ample determination. The 47th Infantry headed for Bois du Mont du Roc, while the 60th headed for Flottemanville. The Americans bypassed defenders, relying on their practiced "holding attack" tactic. In this, one battalion would engage defenders and pin them down, while a second and third moved around to cut the Germans off. It worked, but it was slow work. "It became necessary to destroy these prepared positions one by one," the division historian wrote.

Private First Class Dominic Dilberto's I Company of the 39th Infantry found the air force had done its job in their sector, discovering dead Ger-

National Archives

Their camouflaged helmets prominently visible, German troops fire an 80mm mortar at advancing American troops in the hedgerow country of Normandy.

mans in a blasted position. "Their bodies were bloated, black and emitted a sickening stench," he said. "This area was dotted with huge coastal emplacements. In one such pillbox, we found a dazed German officer just sitting there waiting for us. He was our first prisoner."

Dilberto and his crew were lucky. Pfc. Lloyd Guerin, a replacement in the 9th, was assigned to deal with a sniper whom a tank had just flushed out. "He might as well have told me to build a stairway to heaven," Guerin said later. "I didn't know what to do." He and a pal crawled 100 yards up a ditch. "I looked back and the other guy wasn't there. When I got a little further the sniper stopped firing. I don't know what happened—either someone shot him or he left. But the tankers said it was okay, so I went back. The squad leader asked me what happened, and I said, 'Job completed,' or something like that."

The 79th Division moved forward, three regiments abreast, up the N13 highway, and ran into a strongpoint that straddled the road at les Chevres. The 3rd Battalion of the 313th Infantry attacked the strongpoint on the left, while the 1st attacked frontally in the usual holding attack, which broke the German line. Next came the German fortified antiaircraft position at la Mare a Canards, and the 313th had to stop there.

The 314th fought in draws east of Tolelvast until dark, when a battalion slipped around the Germans. Here, the 314th was a few hundred yards from the main German Army switchboard but did not know it. The bunker was not discovered, and for a day or so the Germans had an excellent observation post right behind American lines.

The 79th relied on artillery fire to blast holes in the German wires and communications, but the larger forts were impervious to even large-caliber shells. Lieutenant Bryon Nelson, an artillery forward observer, called in fire on the German pillboxes. "The 155mm projectiles literally bounced off the pillboxes," he said. The Americans had to dig out the Germans by crawling under their fire, and relying on satchel charges, grenades, and flamethrowers.

McCardell told his Baltimore newspaper readers that the typical American soldier "hadn't had his shoes off in a week. His feet were killing him. He would have given $10 for a clean pair of 10-cent socks. Aside from canned rations, he carried only what he wore plus his canteen, a shovel, an ammunition belt, an extra bandolier, a knife, his bayonet, and his rifle."

At one point, Colonel Bernard B. MacMahon's 315th Infantry faced a major defensive position at Les Ingoufs. A Polish deserter showed MacMahon that the guns there had been destroyed, so MacMahon gambled on psychological warfare. He brought up loudspeakers to demand a German surrender. Out came large numbers of German soldiers, waving white flags, arms raised. A group of five German officers followed them, asking if MacMahon could save German honor and everybody's lives by firing a few phosphorous shells into the position so their commander could feel he "had satisfied his obligation to the Führer and surrender."

MacMahon had no phosphorous shells. Well, how about five phosphorous grenades? MacMahon could find only four. They were duly tossed into a cornfield, and the garrison and field hospital surrendered, sending 2,000 German, Russian, and Polish POWs into the bag.

The 4th Infantry had a tougher time, attacking toward Tourlaville with confused fighting. The Germans mounted infiltrating counterattacks into the rear of the American forward battalions. The 22nd Infantry was surrounded for a while and had to fight to keep its supply routes clear. On the left flank, the 8th Infantry had to capture high ground east of La Glacerie in the triangle between the Trotebec River and its main tributary. The 8th came under heavy fire from Germans behind the ubiquitous Normandy hedgerows and artillery. It lost 31 killed and 92 wounded. Treebursts tore men apart.

Lieutenant John Ausland called in fighter support, but the 12 Republic P-47 Thunderbolts that answered the request missed La Glacerie's emplacements. "The Germans simply came out of their dugouts after the bombardment was over and started firing. Later in the day, with the help of tanks, the battalion captured the stronghold and took over 60 prisoners," he said. "While some of the guns had been destroyed by air bombardment, most of them were intact."

THE VICTORY UPSET LT. COL. Carlton McNeely, who commanded 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry. One of his subordinates, Captain George Mabry, found McNeely sitting behind a tree, head in his hands, crying. Mabry sat next to McNeely and asked what was wrong.

"George, it tears me up to see so many of our fine young men being killed like that," McNeely said.

Mabry agreed but urged McNeely to put his feelings aside and say, "You German SOBs, you killed my buddies, I'm going to get 10 more of you for that. We cannot afford to let the death of our friends affect us so much because it will affect our ability to fight and lead."

McNeely saw the point. After talking for a while, he regained his composure.

The 12th Infantry had a tough time, too. Lieutenant Ralph Hampton, a forward observer, said of the hedgerow country, "You couldn't see more than 50 yards. You had to use a map to know where you were. The map had lines on it for each hedgerow—looked like a spider's web. Those hedgerow battles were

very severe, with 'screaming meemies' and poor observation."

The Americans struggled to defeat well-concealed antitank guns and defenders lying in wait with *panzerfaust* rocket launchers, the first disposable antitank weapon. The German *panzerfaust* crews blew up Sherman tanks before the Americans knew the Germans were there. Clarence McNamee, a tank crewman in B Company, 70th Tank Battalion, saw one of his company's tanks take a direct hit from an antitank gun. The tankers abandoned their vehicle and ran behind it, which was the wrong thing to do. The next German shell hit the tracks of the damaged tank and killed the crew members. "It was sickening," McNamee said later. "While killing became second nature, this was a friend. He had played accordion for us just the night before."

The American advance on the 22nd was slow against desperate and determined German resistance, but Collins saw signs the Germans would crack. A lot of POWs were coming in, including some of the odds-and-sods that Von Schlieben had to use for defense: labor troops, military police, coast artillerymen, and Russian and Polish "volunteers" who had little desire to lose their lives against Americans.

Some Germans endured. One teenager from the Reich Labor Service wrote of the bombing, "An inferno descended—roaring, shattering, shaking, crashing. Then quiet. Dust, ash, and dirt made the sky gray. A horrific silence lay over our battery position."

Von Schlieben knew the game was probably a loser, too. But Hitler tried to buck up his spirits with a harsh message on the 22nd, which read, "Even if the worst comes to the worst, it is your duty to defend the last bunker and leave to the enemy not a harbor but a field of ruins ... the German people and the whole world are watching your fight; on it depends the conduct and result of operations to smash the beachheads, the honor of the German Army and of your own name."

Von Schlieben was not impressed. He reported to Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, his boss at Army Group B, that his men were exhausted in body and spirit, the port garrison was over-aged and undertrained, and many men were suffering from *verbunkert,* or bunker paralysis, being unwilling to fight outside their ferro-concrete positions. Many of his troops from the 77th and 243rd Divisions lacked leaders and were mostly drains on his food and ammunition supply. Von Schlieben signaled, "Reinforcement is absolutely necessary."

Rommel pondered what to do. He toyed with shipping the tough 15th Parachute Regiment from Brittany to Cherbourg by E-boat, lighter, and U-boat, but Allied naval supremacy shut that down. He pondered airdropping in the paratroopers, but they had not trained in that role, nor did Rommel have enough Junkers Ju-52 transports to do the job, and the droning tri-motored planes could not penetrate the Allied air umbrella either. The best the Luftwaffe could do was to parachute in bags of Iron Crosses that von Schlieben requested to present to his men. Cherbourg was on its own. At least von Schlieben and the Allied air force were doing the job Hitler wanted, blasting the port into ruins.

Next day saw heavy fighting. All three divisions moved in through wrecked towns and villages. The 9th Infantry's 39th Infantry Regiment cleared fortified positions west of Beaudienville, which had been bypassed. The 47th Infantry stormed Hill 171, capturing 400 prisoners. The Americans were now inside the outer defense ring, standing astride the ridge leading to Cherbourg. The 60th Infantry waited out a long-delayed artillery bombardment on Flottemanville and captured the town with little resistance. The 79th kept moving up, working around German defenses, battling German infiltration parties.

The 4th Division did not reach its primary objective of Tourlaville but made progress with its tank support. The American Shermans rolled into fields and steamed over German riflemen, which broke their will and resistance. The 3rd Battalion of the 8th Infantry launched its attack just as the enemy was about to launch its own, which enabled the Americans to rout the concentrated Germans with heavy fire.

The 4th Division had a hard day. Lieutenant Paul Massa, another forward observer, was

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Following the capture of the crossroads town of Carentan, the U.S. VII Corps, under General J. Lawton "Lightning Joe" Collins made sluggish progress northward on the Cotentin Peninsula with the strategic objective of capturing the port city of Cherbourg.

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ABOVE: An American M4 Sherman tank leads an armored column down a rubble-strewn street in Cherbourg. When Cherbourg fell to American troops the city had been subjected to repeated Allied air and naval bombardment which had destroyed much of the city's buildings. RIGHT: The battleship USS *Texas,* a veteral of World War I, stood off the coast of Cherbourg and bombarded the city's fortifications in an effort to assist the troops of the American VII Corps in its capture.

operating with the 1st Battalion of the 12th Infantry. On the morning of June 23, he and his men were advancing about a hundred feet behind armor of the 70th Tank Battalion. The Sherman tanks sprayed the hedgerows with machine-gun fire. Suddenly there was an explosion, and the lead tank was hit. "The tank stopped, his motor roared like it had slipped out of gear, and then the lid of the turret flew open and the crew scrambled out. All except one man. He was trapped inside, and I heard his screams as he burned to death."

Later, Massa found himself lying in a ditch sweating out an artillery bombardment when he found, of all things, a newspaper clipping that showed a photograph. "The caption told how Mrs. Natalie Pugash and her daughter of Tampa, Florida, were making a victory garden, while 1st Lt. Joseph Pugash was serving overseas with the Army." Massa was pleased—Pugash was a pal from Artillery Officer Candidate School and in a nearby unit. Massa hung on to the clipping. Moments later, Massa's radioman, Corporal Fishman, hopped into the ditch, and said, "Lieutenant Pugash is dead. His body is on the other side of this hedgerow."

Massa said later he felt like he had been hit over the head by a sledgehammer. "If Fishman had said that my own brother was dead, it would not have hit me any harder. By this time, I had seen too many dead friends. I couldn't bring myself to go look at Joe's body."

By dusk, the Americans had moved into the outer ring of the Cherbourg fortress, and von Schlieben knew the score. He radioed on the morning of the 24th that he had no more reserves and ordered his men to fight to the last cartridge. The fall of Cherbourg was inevitable. "The only question is whether it is possible to postpone it for a few days." He also requested additional Iron Crosses with which to decorate his men, and more bags full of the medals were parachuted in by the Luftwaffe.

On June 24, the VI Corps continued to close in on the city. The 9th Division overran three defended Luftwaffe installations. German fire was heavy, but when the American infantry came up, defenses crumbled. The 47th Infantry helped the 39th capture an antiaircraft emplacement, then turned north to the old French fort of Equeurdreville, and the German battery north of it, the Redoute des Forches. They got there by dusk but postponed the attack until daylight.

THE 314TH INFANTRY ATTACKED with support from dive-bombing P-47s to clear la Mare a Canards and move within sight of Fort du Roule. Three attempts to take the fort were frustrated, but the 313th, on the flank, cut down resistance west of La Glacerie and Hameau Gringot, hauling in 320 prisoners and several artillery pieces.

The Cherbourg defense was starting to collapse under the sheer weight of American firepower and the efficiency of American holding attacks, but the Germans continued to show their expertise in last-ditch stands, especially in the east against the veteran 4th Infantry. East of La Glacerie, German light artillery, antiaircraft guns, and mortars threw back the first American attack. The Americans tried again with tank support, and the Germans pulled out, another one of their specialties.

The 8th Infantry lost 37 killed, including the commander of the 1st Battalion, Lt. Col. Conrad Simmons. The 12th Infantry also lost the commander of its 1st Battalion, Lt. Col. John W. Merrill, who had taken over the battalion only the day before. At Digosville, the Germans held an artillery position, so the Americans called in 12 dive-bombing P-47s to winkle them out. The Germans withdrew, leaving behind six field pieces because they were unable to move them. Tourlaville was occupied without a fight that evening, and the 12th Infantry hauled in 800 POWs.

Lieutenant Massa walked away from other survivors at Tourlaville and studied the route of advance. "Fragments from large-caliber shells mutilated and mangled human bodies. Dead men had huge holes through their bodies, and arms or legs torn off. One man was in a sitting position, with the top of his head neatly removed. The inside of his head was empty, as though everything had been scooped out," he said later.

Von Schlieben's new report to his bosses read, "Concentrated enemy fire and bombing attacks have split the front. Numerous batteries have been put out of action or have worn out. Combat efficiency has fallen off considerably. The troops squeezed into a small area will hardly be able to withstand an attack on the 25th."

Next morning saw the U.S. and Royal Navies enter the battle, with three battleships, four cruisers, and screening destroyers trading salvos with the German coastal batteries.

At 4:30 AM, the warships, battle ensigns snapping, steamed into action behind minesweepers. The English Channel was now dead calm after the storm. "The sea was glassy smooth under light airs, which barely increased after daylight," wrote naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison. "There was a light haze which, as the ships approached the French coast, was

enhanced by smoke from artillery fire and demolished bomb targets, blown over the water by an 8-knot southwest breeze."

With Consolidated B-24 bombers and Grumman TBM Avengers flying antisubmarine patrol to the west and P-38s overhead for top cover, the warships bore down on three key batteries.

Then came the wait to fire or be fired upon. The Americans were not to fire until noon unless requested or fired upon, to avoid friendly fire incidents. But the Germans did not open up. Finally, the Germans opened fire at 12:05 PM, attacking the minesweepers. HMS *Glasgow* and HMS *Enterprise,* two light cruisers, answered back, and at 12:51 a German 150mm shell smacked into *Glasgow*'s port hangar. Four minutes later another hit her after superstructure. She pulled out of line, but *Glasgow* continued to fire on the aggressor, Battery 308, hurling 318 rounds of 6-inch shells to temporarily silence the Germans.

At 12:12, the battleship *Nevada,* a veteran of Pearl Harbor and D-Day, opened fire with her 14-inch guns, and 18 rounds later got the word from her spotter plane, "Nice firing. You are digging them out in nice big holes." Ultimately, *Nevada* would fire 112 rounds of 14-inch and 985 rounds of 5-inch shells.

The bombardment went on for 90 minutes, with the British and American warships suppressing the German batteries. The Querqueville battery seemed to have a charmed life, surviving the fire of a battleship and four cruisers. Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo, commanding the force, was amazed at the large number of near misses, and a sailor on the cruiser USS *Quincy* remarked, "It's just like throwing rocks at a bottle—no matter how many you throw, you can't hit it."

The battleships *Texas* and *Arkansas* took on Battery Hamburg, and it seemed every hummock and hill had a German gun. The battery consisted of four 280mm (11-inch) gun turrets with powerful armor, protected by six 88mm antiaircraft guns. *Texas* and *Arkansas* traded rounds with the German battery, and a German shell hit the destroyer *Laffey*—it turned out to be a dud, and the damage control team pried it loose and hurled it overboard.

One of the hidden advantages the Americans had in the battle was the German use of slave labor in their factories ... the *sklavenarbeiter* had no desire to see Germany win, so they sabotaged production as much as possible, often filling shells with sand or dirt instead of gunpowder.

Another shell hit the water on the destroyer *Barton*'s shoreward side and ricocheted into her hull, ripping through bulkheads. This 9.4-inch (240mm) shell also turned out to be a dud.

Soon both sides were blazing at each other. Battery Hamburg next nailed the destroyer *O'Brien,* when a 280mm shell sheared away the ladder to her bridge, scattering her signal flags and ripping into her combat information center. It killed 13 men and wounded 19. *O'Brien*'s skipper was Commander William Ward Outerbridge, who had commanded the destroyer USS *Ward* in the famous duel with the midget submarine at Pearl Harbor. He turned his ship north immediately and avoided further damage with help from a good smoke screen.

Taking three quick hits and near misses on battleships, the Americans and British decided to open the range. The Germans still tried to do damage. A gust of wind cleared the smoke screen away from *Texas*.

A *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent, Martin Somers, wrote, "A destroyer begins to lay a smoke screen. The destroyer just ahead of us gets four near misses. Water spouts high around her. An 11-inch shell misses us by 300 yards, but the enemy's shooting improves rapidly. Four near misses ... bracket us. We're hit below the water line on the port side twice, but the 6-inch shells bounce off the heavy armor. The fierce blast of our own guns mingles with the explosion of near misses from the batteries."

At 1:16 PM, a Battery Hamburg shell skidded across the top of the *Texas*'s conning tower, wrecking the bridge, killing the helmsman, and wounding 11 men. *Texas*'s genteel skipper, Captain Charles A. Baker, was thrown to the deck but not injured.

"Crash, shriek, and the sky has fallen, it seems. The enclosed bridge is suddenly dark, as glass, shrapnel and debris of all sorts fly around us. Clouds of yellow brown smoke obscure everything, and we simply do not know what has happened," Somers wrote.

The executive officer in the conning tower promptly took control, keeping *Texas* in the game, hurling a shell at Hamburg that pierced her armor and knocked out one of the big guns. Another shell landed in the cabin of ship's clerk, Warrant Officer M.A. Clark, but failed to explode. Somers went down to sick bay to check on the wounded. The seriously injured had "broken and torn legs and arms, causing great loss of blood. All were suffering from intense shock. Without transfusions they would not have had a chance to survive."

The bombardment raged for another hour, until 3:01, when Admiral Deyo ordered his ships to pull out, for fear that their shells might hit advancing American troops. Collins was pleased with the result, writing later to Deyo, "I witnessed your Naval bombardment of the coastal batteries and covering strongpoints around Cherbourg ... the results were excellent, and did much to engage the enemy's fire while our troops stormed into Cherbourg from the rear." They had tied down the Ger-

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Advancing past the bodies of dead German soldiers, American infantrymen seek to solidify the gains they have made while taking shelter from enemy gunfire. The dead Germans had recently occupied one of several heavily reinforced gun emplacements that defended Cherbourg against attack from land and sea.

National Archives

A long column of shell-shocked German troops is led to captivity. Cherbourg's port facilities were a shambles; however, the German commander decided not to fight to the last man. RIGHT: Captain Earl Topley, who led some of the first American troops into Cherbourg, examines the body of a dead German soldier on June 27, 1944. Topley believed that the dead German may have killed three of his men before being shot to death in turn by American infantrymen.

man batteries and silenced some, buying time for the ground troops to close in and assault the positions.

Collins, watching from a hill outside the city, said, "It was a thrilling and ... an awe-inspiring sight. I knew definitely then that Cherbourg was ours."

Meanwhile, VII Corps continued its advance. Under Major Gerden Johnson, the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, pushed hard north of Tourlaville against a coastal battery, which put out white flags. Johnson's men moved forward with "Company B on the left disappearing down into a wooded draw. Suddenly Company B came under a barrage of mortar and 20mm anti-aircraft fire from the hill where the white flags were observed to still be waving. The barrage lasted for approximately 15 minutes."

The barrage also took out the bulk of the battalion headquarters. Johnson rose from the mess and brought up some Sherman tanks, telling them to open fire on the defenders. The Shermans did so, and at 1:30 PM the garrison surrendered for real. The Americans showed restraint and took in 400 men and three massive 8-inch guns. The other two battalions entered Cherbourg itself that evening, hampered by scattered fire and mines. The 1st/12th fought all night to cut down pillboxes east of the Fort des Flamands. Early on the 26th, the Americans brought up tanks, and the 350 Germans in the pillboxes surrendered.

With that, the 4th Infantry's part in the liberation of Cherbourg was done, but the fighting still raged. On the city's west side, the 47th Infantry pushed through Cherbourg's suburbs, heading for a fort at Equeurdreville. The fort stood atop a hill surrounded by a dry moat. But it was being used only as an artillery observation post and was not well defended.

On the morning of the 25th, a company of the 2nd/47th attacked the fort with mortar cover. In 15 minutes, the Germans were waving white flags. Simultaneously, the 3rd/47th attacked the Redoute des Forches with heavy artillery support. The German right collapsed, and the 9th Division streamed through, capturing more than 1,000 men.

Von Schlieben had more bad news for his bosses: "Loss of the city shortly is unavoidable ... 2,000 wounded without possibility of being moved. Is the destruction of the remaining troops necessary as part of the general picture in view of the failure of effective counterattacks? Directive urgently requested."

On the afternoon of the 25th, Von Schlieben reported, "In addition to superiority in material and artillery, air force and tanks, heavy fire from the sea has started, directed by spotter planes. I must state in the line of duty that further sacrifices cannot alter anything."

Rommel was stuck. All he could do was radio back, "You will continue to fight until the last cartridge in accordance with the order from the Führer."

Meanwhile, the 79th Division continued its advance, aiming at Fort du Roule, the primary outer fort. The most formidable of Cherbourg's defenses, Fort du Roule was built into the face of a rocky promontory above the city in best Vauban style. Its guns commanded the whole harbor and were in lower levels under the edge of a cliff. Above them were mortars, machine guns, and concrete pillboxes covering an antitank ditch.

To defeat this, the Americans sent in P-47s to bombard the position, but this had little impact. Next the Americans tried field artillery, with some effect. The 2nd and 3rd/314th attacked from the south but were pinned down by small-arms fire 700 yards from the fort. The Americans massed their .50-caliber machine guns and opened up on the defenders, shredding them and forcing the survivors to retreat. The 2nd Battalion then attacked through the 3rd Battalion's cover, under heavy German machine-gun fire.

National Archives

Now American valor shone. Corporal John D. Kelly's platoon of E Company, 2nd/314th, was immobilized by German machine-gun fire from a pillbox. Kelly grabbed a 10-foot pole charge, crawled up the slope through enemy fire, and fixed the charge. It did not go off. He returned with another charge and this time blew off the ends of the German machine guns. Kelly returned up the slope a third time, blew open the pillbox's rear door, and hurled hand grenades into it until the Germans emerged and surrendered.

At the same time, Company K of the 3rd/314th was also stopped by heavy German 88mm and machine-gun fire. Lieutenant Carlos C. Ogden, who had just taken over the company from its wounded commander, armed

himself with rifle and grenades and advanced alone under fire toward the enemy emplacements. Despite a head wound, Ogden continued up the slope until from a place of vantage he fired a rifle grenade that destroyed the 88mm gun. With hand grenades he then knocked out the machine guns, receiving a second wound but enabling and inspiring his company to resume the advance. "I knew we were going to get killed if we stayed down there," Ogden said later.

Both Kelly and Ogden were awarded the Medal of Honor. Kelly died of wounds in a subsequent action, on November 23, 1944, and lies buried in the U.S. Military Cemetery in Epinal, France. Ogden reached the rank of major before retiring from the Army, died in 2001, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Bravery of this nature further crumbled the German defenses, and white flags and surrenders started popping up in Fort du Roule. By midnight, the 314th controlled the fort's upper defenses.

The 313th attacked from Hameau Gringor into the flats southeast of Cherbourg but could not get much farther, as they came under fire from the lower-level Fort du Roule guns, still not captured. To put the fort out of business, the Americans lowered demolitions from the captured top area, and used point-blank fire from antitank guns. Staff Sergeant Paul A. Hurst led a demolition team around the cliff's west side, which finally overwhelmed the fort's stubborn defenders.

The 47th Infantry had a hard time with a fixed defense, too, battling the old arsenal, which was studded with antitank, antiaircraft, and machine guns. Bad weather and heavy smoke from German demolition teams prevented the use of artillery. General Eddy, commanding the 9th, delayed his assault until the 27th.

IT TURNED OUT TO BE A WISE MOVE. On the 26th, the 39th Infantry learned from a POW that von Schlieben was dug in at an underground shelter at St. Sauveur on Cherbourg's southern outskirts. Von Schlieben had fled his tactical headquarters because of American shelling. At 3:06 PM, he fired off a last message to Berlin: "Documents burned, codes destroyed."

Two companies of the 39th hustled over to take the general, hoping that he would then surrender the fortress. The Americans dashed through artillery and rocket fire to the tunnel entrance and sent in a POW to ask for von Schlieben's surrender. The demand was refused. The Americans brought up two tank destroyers to fire into the bunker, and Eddy wrote later in his diary, "The tank destroyers' projectiles had caused so much dust and fumes ... that the German soldiers, once finding that the white flag had been raised, began to pour out. These Germans were in such a rush that they denied the General his wish for a more formal surrender. The avalanche of soldiers carried him and his party with it." Out came von Schlieben, the top naval commander in Cherbourg, Rear Admiral Walther Hennecke, and 800 prisoners.

National Archives

General Wilhelm von Schlieben, commander of the German garrison of Cherbourg, and Rear Admiral Walter Hennecke, commander of the sea defenses around the city and throughout Normandy, emerge from their reinforced bunker to surrender to Allied soldiers.

Von Schlieben accepted lunch from Eddy but would not order a general surrender for the fortress. He could not; his communications had broken down. Just to add to his misery, Von Schlieben's next meals consisted of K-rations, and there was no shower in the farmhouse where he was held, and the vehicle carrying his trunk from Cherbourg collided with a truck en route to the U.S. First Army's command post. The general's uniforms were strewn across the road and souvenir-hunting GIs got most of the gold braid and rank badges before MPs could pick them up.

The 39th kept moving and bagged another surrender, 400 Germans dug in at Cherbourg City Hall. They surrendered when told that von Schlieben had gone in the bag. The Americans also promised protection from French snipers. Along with them was a mass of ragged male and female slave laborers who had built and maintained the fortress.

Lieutenant Byron Nelson, the 79th's forward observer, entered the town and walked into a tavern called Emil Ludwig's, right on the beach, alongside his division's top brass. They found a picture of Hitler hanging on the wall. A colonel took it down and ground his heel "right in Der Führer's face." Nelson knew who had won this battle, he said later, "The lowly infantryman."

Von Schlieben's surrender had a domino impact on the remaining German positions. Next day, Eddy planned a three-battalion assault on the arsenal, but sent in a psychological warfare unit first to ask Maj. Gen. Robert Sattler, Cherbourg's deputy commander, who headed the arsenal's defense, for surrender. Told that von Schlieben had given up, Sattler ran up white flags, and the 47th Infantry took 400 more POWs without a fight.

Some 20,000 German prisoners tossed down their coal scuttle helmets, flipped on their peaked caps, and shuffled into captivity four abreast. Sergeant Hank Henderson, a 4th Infantry medic, watched them go by. "One little German corporal stepped out of ranks and said, 'I would like to see that automatic artillery in action before you shoot me.' He thought it was automatic because our batteries fired so rapidly," Henderson said. Nearly speechless, Henderson told the corporal the artillery was not automatic and nobody was going to be shot.

But 6,000 Germans still fought on in Cap de la Hague west and east of the city. To the east,

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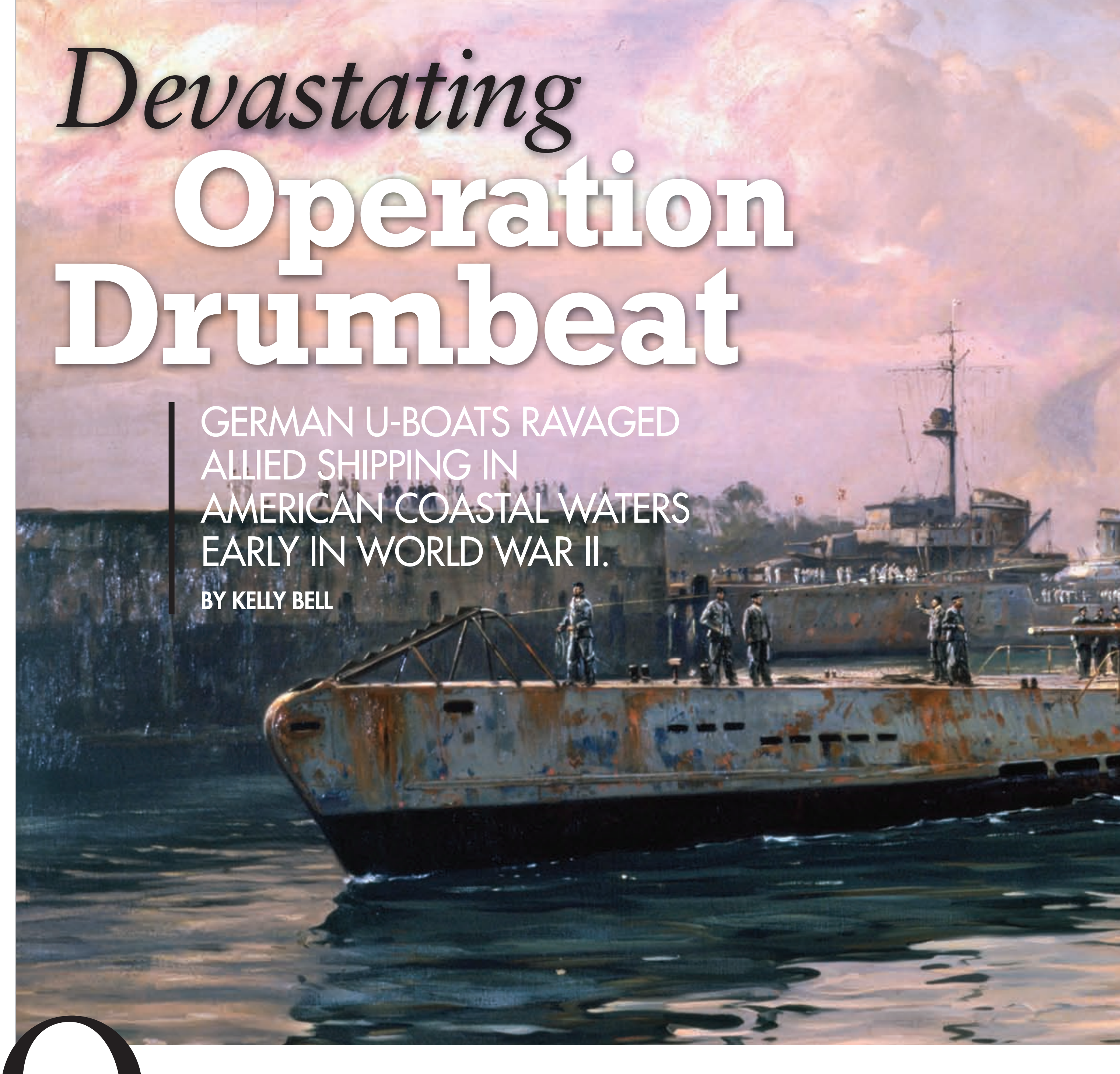


Devastating Operation Drumbeat

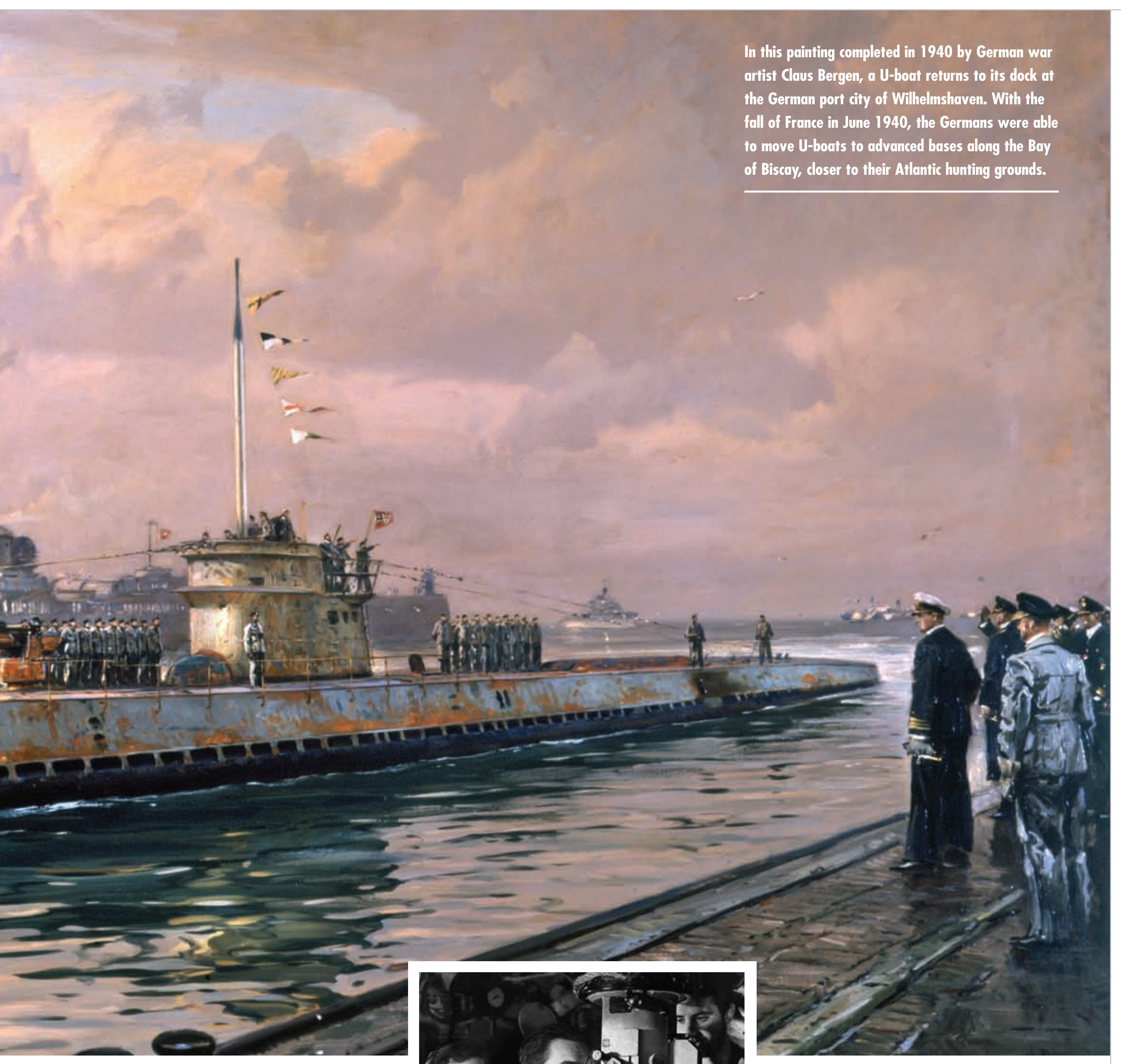
GERMAN U-BOATS RAVAGED ALLIED SHIPPING IN AMERICAN COASTAL WATERS EARLY IN WORLD WAR II.

BY KELLY BELL

ON DECEMBER 9, 1941, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, the commander of the Kriegsmarine, lifted all restrictions on German naval attacks against American vessels by his surface and submarine fleets. Atlantic sparring between the two powers had been occurring for several months but would now escalate into full-blown conflagration. For the United States a painful lesson on the consequences of complacency and arrogant refusal to accept outside assistance was coming.

Despite their fearsome reputation, the U-boats commanded by Admiral Karl Dönitz were few in number. When war flared with Great Britain on September 3, 1939, he counted just 57 U-boats, 46 of which were operational. German industry had concentrated on armaments to prosecute a war on land and in the air, and the deliveries of new submarines to the Kriegsmarine amounted to a paltry two per month. Despite this scarcity, ongoing mechanical problems, and unreliable torpedoes, Dönitz's crews sank over a million tons of British shipping from July through October 1940 in what the submariners called the Happy Time.

The U-boat chief estimated a fleet of 300 submersibles would be required to adequately cut England off from its outside sources of supplies, and with his minuscule fleet's early successes he may not have been overly ambitious in proclaiming that he might knock Great Britain out of the war before the United States entered the conflict. His hopes rose along with production figures, which later increased to 20 U-boats per month by the time Germany declared war on the United States in Decem-



In this painting completed in 1940 by German war artist Claus Bergen, a U-boat returns to its dock at the German port city of Wilhelmshaven. With the fall of France in June 1940, the Germans were able to move U-boats to advanced bases along the Bay of Biscay, closer to their Atlantic hunting grounds.

Photographed in May 1942, an officer aboard one of Admiral Karl Dönitz's U-boats watches a deadly torpedo strike home against an Allied merchant vessel.

ber 1941. It was time to show the Americans what they could expect from their adversaries and perhaps even make them think twice about dispatching an expeditionary force to Europe.

If the U-boats could seriously disrupt Atlantic shipping and also sink American supply ships close to their own shores, the losses would be even more demoralizing. Dönitz commenced plans for his first hunting forays into U.S. coastal waters. He called the missions Operation Drumbeat.

It took a herculean effort by the admiral to scrounge and prepare enough U-boats to make an impression. In December he possessed just 91 operational submarines. Twenty-three were in the Mediterranean, three were en route there, six were stationed just west of Gibraltar, and four were off Reykjavik, Iceland. Thirty-three of the remaining 55 were dry-docked for repairs and maintenance. Eleven more were embarking for or returning from patrols, six were undergoing refit, and five were in the middle of patrols.

Hoping to utilize the long-range Type IXB and IXC boats, Dönitz implored the high command for 12 more IXBs. He managed to get six.

Dönitz's men called him the Lion. He demanded perfection from his

Both: ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

National Archives

Settling by the bow, an American tanker billows smoke and flame following the successful attack of a German U-boat.

sailors in their confrontations with the enemy. Unsatisfactory performance was not tolerated, but the yearning of his U-boat crewmen to achieve his standards was induced by much more than fear. The Lion never failed to meticulously look after the well-being of his men, assuring that their rations, medical facilities, and overall readiness for combat were the best of the Third Reich's branches of the military. He was invariably present on the dock at Lorient, France, as his boats embarked on and returned from their voyages, and his sailors' fervent desire to please him ensured the success of Germany's submarines early in World War II.

Kapitanleutnant (Lieutenant Commander) Reinhard Hardegen would play a prominent role in the coming offensive. Originally trained as a naval pilot, Hardegen's aviation career was cut short by a plane crash in the 1930s that left him with a shortened right leg, permanently bleeding stomach lining, and lifelong diptheria. He was able to stay in his beloved Navy by having himself frequently transferred a step ahead of his medical transcript, which always arrived at his postings just after he departed. Doctors repeatedly learned of his physical debilities only after he had left their jurisdictions, but on the eve of his country's first serious strikes against its powerful new enemy his clinical records caught up with him.

Hardegen had told Admiral Hans-Georg Friedeburg, a lieutenant of Dönitz, that he was "fit to return to the sea," without specifically mentioning U-boats, which had little room for sickbays. When Hardegen repeated this clever wording to Dönitz,who had been grimly poring over the medical report, the admiral was impressed and amused by his fearless young commander's desire and ambition. Despite describing Hardegen as "pale as a boat's wake," Dönitz had to admit this was the kind of man he needed at this time. The sickly officer was on his way to America as skipper of *U-123*.

AFTER BRIEFING HARDEGEN AND two more of his submarine commanders, Richard Zapp of *U-66* and Ernst Kals of *U-130,* Dönitz swiftly but efficiently guided Operation Drumbeat as it began to take shape. These three officers and their commands would make up Group Hardegen. They would steam as soon as possible for the U.S. East Coast and rendezvous with two other U-boats designated Group Bleichrodt. These five submarines would unleash an unprecedented reign of terror on the pitifully unprepared American coastline during the first six months of 1942. It was a campaign that went largely unnoticed by a German populace preoccupied with the Russian front and an American public still in shock over the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and anxiously watching the Philippines. It was nonetheless a monumental clash, and for the men involved it was the center of the universe.

At 9:30 AM on December 23, 1941, Hardegen's U-boats, laden with everything from torpedoes to Christmas presents, weighed anchor and churned into the Bay of Biscay. The New World was far from ready for its approaching attackers. No blackouts, radio silence, or other precautions of any note were being employed, and the wolf pack would find excellent hunting.

Just before midnight on the 27th, *U-123* crossed the demarcation line of 20 degrees west, where German submariners could finally learn their precise destinations. Opening their sealed orders, Hardegen assembled his officers and showed them the contents: a map of the U.S. East Coast and tourist guides to New York City. With the sudden American entry into hostilities, Dönitz had no detailed navigational material for the U.S. East Coast and was forced to send military personnel to forage through libraries to collect even this much.

Hardegen also learned from the orders that following the initial attacks off New York the U-boats were to move steadily southward, assaulting shipping until reaching Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, where their fuel would be running low, necessitating a return home.

The crew settled into a routine over the next few days as they steamed uneventfully across the Atlantic. Then, at 4 AM on January 2, a

wireless transmission arrived instructing Hardegen to attack a Greek freighter that had broken radio silence and broadcast a distress signal because of a damaged rudder. Guided by the ongoing directions the vessel, *Dimitrios,* was sending to an approaching ocean-going tug, *U-123* advanced to point-blank range late on the night of the 4th, only for her crew to realize at the last second that two destroyers were escorting the Greek ship. Hurriedly backing off without being noticed, Hardegen resumed his westward trek.

Although disgusted with himself for not having attacked, Hardegen had likely saved his U-boat. The Drumbeat boats were already being tracked by British naval intelligence. The dispatch informing him of *Dimitrios*'s position had been intercepted, decrypted, and passed on to the Canadian Navy, accounting for the destroyers' presence. In fact, all five submarines were being plotted on their transatlantic passages by Royal Navy cryptanalysts at their headquarters in the town of Bletchley, 50 miles northwest of London.

Bletchley-based U-boat tracking specialist Rodger Winn was familiar with *U-123* and even had Hardegen's dossier. He knew this German was aggressive and independent and that Dönitz had recently begun pulling his U-boats from the high seas convoy routes despite heavy losses off Gibraltar. Abandoning the mid-Atlantic shipping lanes at a time when he no longer had sufficient reserves to withdraw from other theaters to replace those removed from North Atlantic convoy hunting was a baffling maneuver unless the Kriegsmarine was implementing a major strategy change.

Since Hitler had just declared war on America, it did not take Winn long to deduce Dönitz's intentions. By telling an aide, "Be sure that the people upstairs keep Washington informed," he made the first of Britain's attempts to warn her powerful but ill-prepared ally of the approaching peril.

In Washington, the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) was in shambles. Taken totally by surprise by Pearl Harbor, it was also a jumble of unnecessarily complex administrative structures, confusion, and internal feuding. Furthermore, the director of War Plans in Operation, 55-year-old Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, looked upon counterintelligence and espionage with profound contempt and refused to utilize the ONI, whose very capable head, Captain Alan G. Kirk, had resigned in disgust in October 1941.

The commander of the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Fleet was a hard-drinking 63-year-old admiral named Ernest King. Although his fondness for

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ABOVE: U-boat Ace Reinhard Hardegen (left) and a war correspondent named Meisinger pose during a period of rest aboard *U-123.* Hardegen was the leading U-boat skipper during Operation Drumbeat, which brought World War II to America's Eastern Seaboard. BELOW: U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Adolphus Andrews commanded the Eastern Sea Frontier but refused to heed advice from the British.

National Archives

whiskey and allegedly other officers' wives called his personal life into question, his diverse service record as an officer experienced in submarines, destroyers, and aircraft was exemplary. King had brought home a Navy Cross from World War I but offset it with another legacy from this conflict—a rancorous hatred of anything British. Also, as one of his daughters later related, "He is the most even-tempered man in the Navy. He is always in a rage." Finally, King, too, held ONI in the lowest of esteem. All this time Hardegen and his pack were drawing nearer.

At 5 AM eastern time, January 9, 1942, *U-123* was struggling through a violent marine blizzard 560 nautical miles east of Cape Cod. She had come 2,597 miles, and her men were anxious for some sign of land and targets. Hardegen himself visited the snow-slashed conning tower, and after futilely trying to discern anything through the roiling gray seascape sent his bridge watch below and submerged the boat for some smooth running below the turbulent surface.

When the seas calmed, the skipper ordered the U-boat back to the surface, and radio operator Fritz Rafalski began to intercept American wireless messages from both merchant and military vessels. At 5 PM a message arrived from Dönitz instructing his captains to concentrate on the area from New York City to Atlantic City. Another of the boats, *U-125* commanded by Commander Ulrich Folkers, would hunt seaward of Hardegen off the New York and New Jersey coasts, Zapp off Cape Hatteras, Ernst Kals in Cabot Strait off Cape Breton Island, and Heinrich Bleichrodt southeast of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Because of strictly enforced radio silence, Hardegen could not be sure the other U-boats had received Dönitz's dispatch, but there was no point in worrying about that now since each U-boat was to independently attack targets of opportunity—simultaneously, they hoped, so that stricken vessels could not broadcast news of their attackers in time to save other potential victims. Hastily restationing his bridge watch, the commander eagerly commenced hunting. Soon after night fell on the prowling U-boats, the Operations Intelligence Center submarine tracking room in London stirred to its business.

During the night Winn's decoding operatives had learned not only of Hardegen's location and apparent American destination, but also of the mission's name—Drumbeat. The decoders also overheard another transmission from Dönitz to his men, instructing them that he expected them to be in their attack area by January 13. Because the German submarines were not responding to their chief via radio, Winn had to deduce their definite intentions himself.

Calculating Hardegen's route from his known position at his brush with *Dimitrios* and assuming the U-boat was cruising steadily at about 10 knots, Winn figured *U-123*'s objective was the U.S.-Canada seaboard as far south as Delaware Bay, and if that was where he was headed it was a safe wager his fellow skippers had similarly target-rich destinations in mind.

Furthermore, five more Class IX U-boats had just sortied from Lorient. U-boats *103, 106, 107, 108,* and *128* were now westbound. Winn headed for his office to telephone Coastal Command and Western Approaches to advise them of the situation.

At 5 AM on January 11, Hardegen was reading the sheaves of wireless intercepts from incautious cargo captains whose broadcasts for aid and position fixes following the previous night's storm were flooding the airwaves. The tempest had done Hardegen's job for him in at least one instance as the steamer *Africander* had already been sunk by the rough seas, and at 4:35 that afternoon he was on the conning tower when one of his lookouts spotted the 9,076-ton British freighter *Cyclops*.

After a slow, careful stalk *U-123* was in attack position 1,500 yards from her unsuspecting quarry, and Hardegen handed over the attack periscope to First Officer Rudolf Hoffman, who barked preparatory orders to the forward torpedo room. At 8:49 PM, Hoffman hit the launch button and bellowed, "Los!" Somebody in the torpedo room yelled back, "Failure!"

Petty Officer Rudolf Fuhrman slammed his palm against the manual launch button, and the greased missile hissed from its tube as every man on board fell silent and listened. The torturous tension lasted 97 seconds until a muffled explosion shook the sub slightly and Hardegen ordered all deck gun crews to their combat stations. Hoping to silence radio calls for help, the machine gunners opened fire on the antenna array on the steamer's deckhouse, but the target was still out of range of the bullets. Maneuvering to the front of *Cyclops,* Hardegen drilled her port side with a stern torpedo just forward of the bridge at 8:18. Five minutes later the ship went under.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH DÖNITZ'S orders, Hardegen did not pick up survivors and resumed course for his hunting grounds. Drumbeat was under way, and in the very area Winn had warned about.

Because of the time-consuming sinking of *Cyclops* and the heavy seas, *U-123* did not arrive off New York City until 4:48 on the afternoon of the 14th, when her crew established her position by Long Island's Montauk Point lighthouse. Cruising on the surface to the mouth of New York harbor, the Germans were stunned when a large vessel steamed casually past as if there was no war. It was the 9,577-ton Norwegian tanker *Norness* bound for Halifax with a cargo of precious petroleum.

Hoffman fired torpedoes from 800 and 700 yards. The first missed, but the second hit squarely at the waterline below the aft mast. The explosion was a spectacular 50-yard-high column of orange flame as the big ship quickly listed to starboard, but the tilt stopped at a few degrees and the target showed no sign of going down. Cruising to the other side, Hardegen fired a second torpedo into the hull just below the bridge. When this exploded, emergency SOS calls from the stricken tanker abruptly stopped, but the huge hole in the port side apparently counterflooded the vessel and she resumed an even keel. A fourth torpedo malfunctioned and missed. It took a fifth to finish off this fat trophy.

No ships ever responded to the *Norness* distress signals, and apart from Hardegen's there is no record of them. The next day a fishing trawler happened to sight a life raft full of chilled survivors and picked them up before sounding the alarm on this attack. The tanker sank in water so shallow that her bow still protruded above the waves. So close to shore and no defensive military action meant that locals were already asking, "Where is the U.S. Navy?"

The man responsible for New England's coastal defenses was Rear Admiral Adolphus "Dolly" Andrews, commander of the North Atlantic Coastal Naval Frontier. When word reached him of *Norness*'s demise, the 63-year-old Andrews ignored standard naval procedure decreeing that in such cases every available seaworthy warship be launched for immediate aggressive counterattack. Instead, he launched a cutter, minesweeper, and a few planes to investigate the immediate area of the tanker's sinking.

Furthermore, the commander of First Bomber Command, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Arnold N. Krogstad, mysteriously sent his search planes fanning out over a sprawling slice of the Atlantic ranging from 0 to 180 degrees rather than concentrating on the area of 40 degrees latitude, where the attack had occurred. Hardegen should have been imponderably grateful for all the aid afforded him. At the moment, however, he was gingerly negotiating the treacherous waters off Long Island to take up a submerged daylight position at the seaward entrance of Ambrose Channel—the direct route into New York harbor.

While these Germans passed an uneventful day on the bottom, another U-boat flotilla arrived off Newfoundland and sank the British steamer *Dayrose.* Also, Kals's *U-130* had sunk the Norwegian steamer *Frisco* and the Panamanian freighter *Friar Rock* off Sidney, Nova Scotia, on the 13th.

It was the 19th before Bleichrodt found a target, a medium-sized freighter off Seal Island just south of Nova Scotia. The ship was anchored in 55 meters of water while waiting for a chance to enter ice-choked Yarmouth Harbor. Creeping to point-blank range, the Knight's Cross wearer

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Finished off by the powerful deck gun of a U-boat, an Allied merchant ship is caught by the camera while in its death throes.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Its back broken by a German torpedo, the tanker SS *Dixie Arrow* belches thick smoke and flame as it goes down off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, in March 1942. High-octane fuel caused catastrophic explosions aboard stricken tankers. RIGHT: When the merchant ship SS *Gulfstate* was torpedoed and sunk on April 3, 1942, a U.S. Navy blimp searched for survivors. This clutch of seamen, floating among debris from the sinking, attempts to inflate a rubber life raft dropped from the blimp.

fired five torpedoes at the stationary, looming target without touching it. Problems with overcomplicated, unreliable torpedoes were not fully rectified until early 1943. On the 21st, Bleichrodt fired yet another dud at a 6,000-ton freighter off Shelburne, Nova Scotia.

Still guided only by a tourist brochure, Hardegen was nearing Ambrose Channel at 9 PM on January 14 when he saw a bright light dead ahead. Wondering if he had spotted a target of opportunity, he steered toward the beacon through steadily shallower water. Ignoring his increasingly agitated navigator, Walter Kaeding, who was warning him the light was on the shore, the skipper kept approaching until he saw foamy white waves breaking on a beach just in front of him. "Both back! Emergency full!" he screamed through the hatch. Backing his boat to safety, he turned her away from the rocks and resumed his search for Ambrose Channel.

Unknown to Hardegen, the channel lightship mentioned in his traveler's pamphlet had been temporarily relocated to Cape Cod, so his search for the floating nocturnal beacon was both fruitless and disorienting. There was, however, the glowing horizon to the west.

Although they were below the narrows and could not see the storied New York skyscrapers, the submariners were awestruck by the luminous heavens above Manhattan. Having visited the metropolis before the war during his around-the-world cadet cruise, Hardegen was stunned at how nothing seemed to have changed from peacetime. New Yorkers were taking no apparent precautions in case of air or sea attack even after losing three ships just offshore.

As the skipper gazed at the glittering vista, he let his eyes wander north to Rockaway Beach and Coney Island and realized he had a golden propaganda opportunity. Hastily summoning the mission's war correspondent, he had the young man photograph the scene before taking bearings from dead-ahead Sandy Hook, turning away and prowling toward the New Jersey shore.

As they steered away from Sandy Hook, men on the bridge watch were stunned to notice a large, lantern-bedecked tanker following blithely in the sub's wake. Hoffman leaped to his attack post as Hardegen ordered the boat swung around into a position where the target was silhouetted against the urban backdrop. Flooding No. 1 tube, Hoffman lined up on the ship's bridge, and at 2,460 feet bellowed, "Los!" The muffled boom of a direct hit came 58 seconds later, and a massive yellowish-red plume erupted from the precise spot where Hoffman had aimed. The stricken vessel quickly listed to starboard.

Through his binoculars Hardegen could see crewmen racing to man an aft gun. With his submarine bathed in flickering light from the blazing victim, he hastily finished her off with a torpedo from a stern tube.

The victim was the 6,867-ton British tanker *Coimbra,* which went down with the captain and 35 of his crew. Like *U-123*'s earlier kills, her bow remained jutting above the water, and Hardegen acidly recorded in his log, "The Americans had recalled some of their lightships, so it was a good thing my wrecks were sticking

partly out of the water. Otherwise how would other ships find the harbor?"

Long Island residents watched in horror the arching pyre so near shore. At 5 AM the Germans turned from their latest kill and headed south. They were still totally unmolested by the U.S. Navy.

On the evening of January 15, *U-123* surfaced after a long stretch underwater to escape rough seas and was immediately spotted by a coastal patrol plane. Hardegen ordered all men forward to add their collective weight to the speed of the emergency plunge. He was the last man off the bridge and had seen the warplane turning toward them just as he grabbed the hatch. There soon came four distinct but distant explosions to starboard as the Americans dropped bombs. Suspecting the airmen might have vectored in more bombers or a destroyer, Hardegen surfaced just long enough to climb back onto the wet bridge and scan the sea and sky with his binoculars.

There was nothing, and the only radio traffic was a bulletin from New York's Hydrographic Institute declaring the waters around Sandy Hook a danger zone until January 31. The submariners realized the air attack had been a fluke. They had just happened to surface under the bomber. This chance encounter would be the only military resistance they would encounter during the entire mission.

By this time, Admiral King had commenced gathering his scattered destroyers, summoning them from ports, training cruises, and convoy escort duty—not for coastal antisubmarine missions but to accompany troop convoy AT10 on its voyage to Northern Ireland. While *U-123* was sinking *Norness* and *Coimbra*, the U.S. destroyers *Mayrant, Rowan, Trippe, Wainwright, Roe, Gwin, Monssen, Livermore, Charles F. Hughes, Lansdale, Ludlow, Ingraham,* and *Hilary P. Jones* were casually assembling off New York. Hardegen somehow managed to avoid stumbling into any of the warships. None of the U-boats in the vicinity spotted any of the transports and their human cargo.

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Following a successful attack, U-boat crewmen have come topside to watch the blazing hulk of an Allied merchant ship slide beneath the waves.

Twelve destroyers still off the New England coast remained idle until the *Bristol* embarked for Casco Bay for routine assignment on the 15th and the *Ellyson* went to New London, Connecticut, for training. The other 10 remained berthed. The opportunity to crush Drumbeat and make Dönitz cautious about approaching U.S. shores again was obvious and potentially easy to exploit, but King did nothing. For lesser negligence the Army and Navy commanders at Pearl Harbor had been fired.

Meanwhile, with six torpedoes left, Hardegen was moving south as Zapp and Folkers arrived at their hunting grounds. The slaughter was just beginning.

Richard Zapp in *U-66* cruised into the risky, shoal-bisected sea-lanes off North Carolina on January 16. Two nights later he spotted his first victim as a blacked-out tanker tried to slip through the moonless night northeast of Diamond Shoals. It was the 6,635-ton *Allan Jackson,* en route from Cartegena, Colombia, to New York with 72,870 barrels of oil. Zapp's first officer lined up his forward tubes and sent two torpedoes into *Jackson*'s starboard hull, igniting an offshore petroleum bonfire. The conflagration was so immense and intense that Zapp decided his original intention of picking up survivors to interrogate about the proximity of more targets was too dangerous.

AFTER WAITING 20 MINUTES AND watching the tanker break up and sink among its blazing cargo, the Germans turned away and resumed hunting. *Jackson* went down with 22 of her 35-man crew. The following night Zapp deliberately sank the 7,988-ton Canadian passenger-cargo ship *Lady Hawkins*. A total of 162 of the ship's 212 passengers and 88 of her 109 crewmen were lost, sending Drumbeat's death toll to over 400. King had yet to react.

During the night of January 16, Rafalski intercepted a transmission on the 600-meter band that gave *U-123*'s crew a great deal of amusement. The U.S. Army Air Forces had announced that an American coastal bomber had sunk the marauding U-boat off New York. Apparently the crew of that plane had been as inexperienced at interpreting the results of attacks as they were at launching them. Otherwise, there was little excitement that night as *U-123* spotted nothing but a small fishing boat.

The following evening the Germans saw their first hostile warship as an unidentified destroyer passed them on the seaward side off Five Fathom Bank. They were lurking in dangerously shallow water and would have been trapped if attacked. Bracketed between the destroyer and the shore and with very little depth beneath them, they could not have fled out to sea or dove to safety, but the ship steamed past. By 7:13 PM, it was out of sight.

Hardegen later claimed to have sunk a 4,000-ton freighter just before daybreak, but no record of its loss is found in Allied maritime records. Rapidly departing the vicinity, the raiders headed east into deep water for a daylight sprint toward Cape Hatteras where, according to wireless intercepts, excellent hunt-

ing was accumulating.

After a defiant daylong surface dash, *U-123* arrived off Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, at dawn on the 18th and settled to the bottom in 147 feet of seawater. Breaking the surface at 6:46 PM on January 19, she steered for Cape Hatteras, 50 more miles to the south. Hardegen had five torpedoes remaining, and the coming night's work would be devastating.

At 9:04, the Germans sighted and attacked a medium-sized northbound freighter, but their first shot malfunctioned and missed. By the time they caught up with their quarry, they were back off Kitty Hawk. This time the torpedo ran true, striking starboard and just aft of the funnel. Hardegen had maneuvered to within just 450 yards of the ship, and seconds after the explosion *U-123* was showered with burning debris. This vessel, which went under at map coordinates 36-06N, 75-24W, eluded identification. The raiders did not tarry to pick up survivors because of their rush to investigate a ship's lights spotted to the south.

Before the night ended, Hardegen and his men bagged the 5,269-ton freighter *City of Atlanta,* the 3,779-ton freighter *Ciltvaira,* and using their last torpedo and 10 rounds from their 105mm deck gun, crippled the empty tanker *Malay.* Forty-six merchant seamen died that night.

There was no excuse for the dearth of destroyer protection along the Eastern Seaboard. During the first four months of 1942, the transatlantic convoy routes were so sedate that sailors lost their fear of U-boats and became casual about showing lights at night. Just one convoy, 0N67 in late February, suffered a U-boat attack, losing six ships. Meanwhile, 62 vessels had been lost to torpedoes in coastal waters in less than two months. In March, 74 went down in the Atlantic west of 50 degrees west longitude.

In northern convoy waters, including the Halifax, Argentia, Hvalfjord, and Londonderry sectors, just 6.33 percent of the sinkings occurred, but 41.7 percent of the destroyer fleet was stationed there. The submarine-infested Eastern Seaboard saw 49.3 percent of the tonnage lost but only had 4.9 percent of the U.S. Navy's Atlantic destroyers. Through it all, King ignored the accurate Royal Navy intelligence warnings he was receiving.

On January 23, the U.S. Navy lied to the American public, claiming to have destroyed an unspecified number of U-boats off the East Coast. In fact, the four miserably aimed bombs dropped in the general direction of *U-123* by a patrol plane were the closest thing to an attack of any kind on a Drumbeat U-boat.

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ABOVE: U-boat crewmen man a submarine's deck gun while a merchant ship burns on the horizon. The easy victories of Operation Drumbeat eventually gave way to increased Allied patrols by antisubmarine aircraft and warships, along with improved technology to detect and fight the Nazi submarines. BELOW: Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, commander of the German Navy, greets the crew of a submarine recently returned from a combat patrol. The U-boat crew mortality rate was extremely high.

National Archives

Thus far, Drumbeat was a major success. The largest number of U-boats to prowl the coast throughout January was three, including *U-123,* Zapp's *U-66,* and Folker's *U-125.* This tiny fleet killed over 500 seamen and civilians by month's end, and as these U-boats turned for home their replacements began arriving.

After leaving the burning *Malay, U-123* was spotted and pursued by the mammoth Norwegian whaling factory, *Kosmos II,* which was operating as a tanker. Its skipper, 36-year-old Einar Gleditsch, tried his best to ram the sub.

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ABOVE: A Consolidated PBY Catalina patrol bomber, fitted for antisubmarine warfare, flies low during exercises in May 1942 and drops a practice bomb filled with water. RIGHT: A Martin PBM patrol bomber scores a direct hit on a surfaced U-boat on the open sea.

At 16,966 tons, *Kosmos II* was the biggest cargo ship afloat and would have smashed the U-boat like a beer can, but Hardegen's frantic engineers were able to sufficiently patch up an ailing starboard engine to gain a one-knot edge in speed over their pursuer.

Hardegen stood in his conning tower capriciously firing flares onto the whaler's bridge less than 100 yards behind. Unable to submerge since this would have slowed them enough for their pursuer to catch up, the Germans had to outdistance their foe on the surface. The Norwegians, upon sighting the sub, had immediately broadcast to the Navy information on its location and heading. One hour and 50 minutes later, a plane appeared and buzzed the area where the U-boat had last been sighted, but by then it had reached deep water and safety.

Hardegen alone had sunk nine ships totaling 40,898 tons on this first American cruise, and on January 25 the homebound warriors sighted the 3,044-ton British armed steamer *Culebra* and sank her in a dramatic exchange of deck gunfire during which the Germans' 20mm gun exploded and badly wounded their war correspondent, Alwin Tolle.

Culebra had been carrying disassembled Royal Air Force planes, making her a valuable kill. After giving her survivors rations, bailing buckets, and a navigation fix to Bermuda, Hardegen and his men resumed their return trek in high spirits. They had just been notified via wireless that Hardegen was to be awarded the Knight's Cross on his arrival in Lorient. *U-123*'s entire crew would be well feted.

Two days later, her men again used their deck guns, sinking the 9,231-ton tanker *Pan Norway.* It took two and a half hours of pounding from 105mm and 37mm cannon to finish this latest victim.

On the night of February 6, Bleichrodt in his *U-109* sank the 3,531-ton Panamanian steamer *Halcyon* off Bermuda then turned for home, bringing Drumbeat's first phase to an end. The five U-boats had bagged 25 ships totaling 156,939 tons.

At the beginning of March, *U-123* and her men were ready for their second U.S. patrol. During their absence, the replacement U-boats had destroyed 48 ships weighing 281,661 tons, and *U-156* commanded by Kapitanleutnant Werner Hartemstein had even shelled the Lagos oil refinery on the Dutch island of Aruba in the Caribbean.

THE U.S. NAVY HAD TARDILY BEEFED up its presence in destroyers, coastal patrol craft, and observation blimps, but Dönitz had confounded the cryptanalysts by implementing his new Triton code. The reeling Allies had no way of knowing that Hardegen was returning. This time he would prowl the shipping lanes off Virginia.

Late on the night of March 2, under a total eclipse of the moon, *U-123* slipped out of Lorient. On the morning of March 22, she sank the 7,034-ton *Muskogee,* bound from Venezuela to Halifax with a load of crude oil. The Germans were still a full 600 miles east of Cape Hatteras.

Early on March 22, Hardegen sank the brand-new 8,150-ton British tanker *Empire Steel,* which went down in a horrifyingly spectacular explosion of high-octane fuel. Then, late on the night of March 26, came an adventure new to every man on board.

In World War I the British had great success with their Q-boats. These innocuous looking freighters carried hidden deck guns, depth charges, and machine guns and had their holds packed with timber to assure maximum buoyancy. When Hardegen came across the USS *Carolyn,* he casually torpedoed her just fore of the bridge, then watched as the deck housing fell away and revealed guns. With the torpedo having done little damage, *Carolyn* swung toward her attacker and opened up with every gun she had while *U-123*'s gunners were emerging to man their own deck weapons. The new war correspondent, named Holzer, had come on deck to take a look and came to grief even more quickly than his predecessor as a burst of automatic gunfire nearly ripped off his right leg at the hip.

Carolyn's inexperienced gun crews could not hit their target as it submerged and took off at full speed. *U-123* was shaken but undamaged by the exploding shells and depth charges, and, unknown to the U-boat hunters, she was swinging around for another attack. Seething with rage, Hardegen flooded his No. 1 tube and from a range of just 500 yards shot a torpedo into *Carolyn*'s engine room at about 11 PM. About this same time, Holzer bled to death.

An hour and 20 minutes later the burning ship's ammunition ignited and blew her apart. After burying their youthful comrade at sea, the grim submariners resumed their patrol. They were headed for Diamond Shoals. Meanwhile,

it took nine hours for the U.S. Navy to respond to *Carolyn*'s distress calls and dispatch a destroyer, bomber, and tug. No trace of the ship, her assailant, or survivors was found.

The coastal shipping lanes were somewhat better patrolled than they had been earlier in the year, and when *U-123* surfaced off Hatteras Light on the morning of March 30, Hardegen was surprised at the number of patrol boats and planes. Sinking to the sandy bottom 82 feet down, he spent the daylight hours listening to cargo ships passing overhead and worried that the Americans were finally becoming more vigilant.

After dark, the submariners churned southwest to hunt off Cape Lookout and soon spotted a medium-sized freighter, which escaped when the stern torpedo fired at it veered off course and ran harmlessly aground. The next couple of nights were spent dodging PT boats and planes, and then on the evening of April 3 another of *U-123*'s torpedoes went haywire when fired at the empty tanker *Liebre*. The angry skipper ordered his gunners topside and had them cripple the target, but as he maneuvered into position to finish *Liebre* with another torpedo, a lookout noticed a patrol craft approaching at high speed.

Hastily submerging, the U-boat narrowly missed being cut in two by the warship. After a poorly aimed depth charge rattled but did not harm, Hardegen decided to not press his luck and headed south.

In the predawn of April 5, he incapacitated the tankers SS *Oklahoma* and SS *Esso Baton Rouge* off the sparsely populated Georgia Sea Islands. Ironically, both ships were repaired only to be sunk by other U-boats later in the war. That evening, Hardegen sank the state-of-the-art cold storage motor ship SS *Esparta* off St. Simon's Sound.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy had finally begun to stir.

King was not alone in his Anglophobia. His chief of staff, Rear Admiral Richard S. Edwards, was likewise inclined. When Winn visited Washington in March to attempt to persuade the Navy to introduce coastal blackouts, numerous shore patrols, coastal convoys, destroyer escorts, and a U-boat tracking center similar to the British example, Edwards icily replied, "Americans wish to learn their own lessons, and have plenty of ships with which to do so."

Infuriated, Winn exploded, "The trouble is, admiral, it's not only your bloody ships you're losing! A lot of them are ours!"

This powerful retort, soon reinforced by the second round of Drumbeat, finally made an impression on King and Edwards. In May, they began taking steps to darken coastal cities,learn the sub-tracking business from Winn and installing deck artillery manned by well trained Navy personnel aboard cargo ships. Although blackouts were never effectively initiated, the other precautions would eventually tip the balance against Hitler's sea wolves.

For the moment, though, Hardegen and his pack were still having things their own way. On the night of April 10, with only two torpedoes remaining, he scored a direct hit from 2,000 yards on the 8,081-ton tanker *Gulfamerica*. The Germans surfaced 820 feet from their burning target, which was on its maiden voyage, to finish her off with deck guns. Their first shot ignited a film of oil coating the water around them, but the wind blew the flames away from the U-boat.

Crowds of spectators, bathed in brilliant red, flickering light, watched entranced from the Jacksonville, Florida, beach. *U-123* and her muzzle flashes were clearly visible from the shore, but Hardegen did not wait long. He knew the military was unlikely to overlook a sinking this spectacular and might arrive any time. He soon departed southward.

About midnight, a plane spotted *U-123* and reported her position to the destroyer *Dahlgren,* which battered the sub with depth charges. Lying helplessly on the bottom in just 72 feet of water and issuing a telltale stream of bubbles, the boat was a sitting duck for what should have been the U.S. Navy's first-ever successful attack on a U-boat in World War II, but *Dahlgren* broke off her attack just as the Germans were preparing to abandon ship. Apparently not noticing the bubbles or perhaps misinterpreting them to mean the sub had been destroyed, the Americans abruptly secured from general quarters and headed northeast at 3:58 AM on the 11th.

Hardegen was not finished. He used his last torpedo to sink the 2,609-ton American freighter SS *Leslie* just before dawn on the 13th, then a couple of hours later set his well-practiced deck gunners on the 2,747-ton Swedish freighter *Korsholm,* sinking her with a cargo of phosphate. After destroying this neutral vessel, *U-123,* steaming on just one engine, headed home.

Hardegen had sunk another nine ships totaling 52,336 tons. Operation Drumbeat was winding down, but portents of the easy days' end were already apparent. On March 1, *U-656* was sunk by depth charges dropped by a Lockheed Hudson off Cape Race, Newfoundland. Two weeks later, off nearby Virgin Rocks, *U-503* was blown out of the water by a PBY-3 Catalina flying boat.

Just after midnight April 14, the destroyer

Continued on page 77

National Archives

Raked by heavy machine-gun and cannon fire from an Allied patrol aircraft, a German U-boat is doomed. Improved technology and refined antisubmarine tactics were responsible for a reversal of fortune in the Battle of the Atlantic.

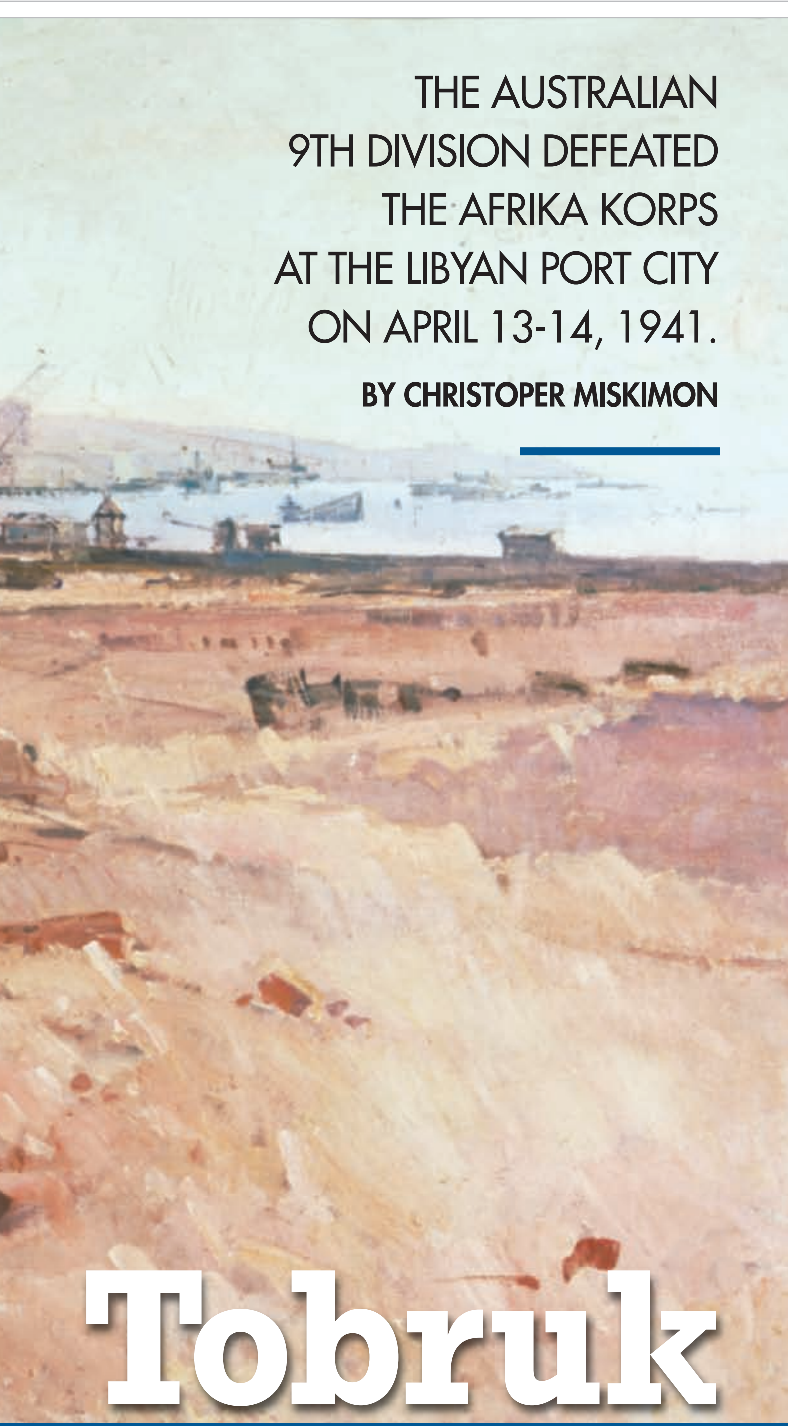
Australian War Memorial

Easter Victory at

IN APRIL 1941, things were going quite well for the German armed forces. In a series of earlier campaigns, they had conquered Poland, the Low Countries, Norway, and France. Though tentative plans to invade England had been shelved after the desperate and heroic British defense in the Battle of Britain, U-boats were now trying to slowly starve the stubborn British into submission.

Yugoslavia and Greece were falling, and plans for the conquest of the Soviet Union were moving forward. In the desert of North Africa, the British, after initial success against the Italian Army, were now in retreat toward the Egyptian frontier, hounded by General Erwin Rommel and the newly arrived German Afrika Korps. The Axis juggernaut was about to receive a small yet stinging defeat, however, one that would teach Australian and British troops that their foe was not invincible. At the same time, the Germans would learn of the tenacity and maturing skill of their British Commonwealth opponents along with the dangers of overreaching. The lesson would come to be known as the Easter Battle, and it would take place in the desert sands outside the coastal city of Tobruk.

Soon to be famous as Fortress Tobruk, this city in eastern Libya sat astride the coastal road that wound its way along the Mediterranean Sea to the Egyptian border and beyond. A bay provided a natural harbor with sufficient depth for large oceangoing vessels, making Tobruk an important supply point for any Axis advance into Egypt. The rest of the local coastline was broken by a series of wadis, steep and low areas through which water flowed after a desert rain, that would hinder vehicle movement.



Tobruk

THE AUSTRALIAN 9TH DIVISION DEFEATED THE AFRIKA KORPS AT THE LIBYAN PORT CITY ON APRIL 13-14, 1941.

BY CHRISTOPER MISKIMON

Inland from the town a series of two escarpments rose into the plain above. This desert plain was nearly featureless, dotted by a few patches of thorny shrubs or the occasional well, surrounded by a few fig trees.

The Italian Army had occupied Tobruk until its capture by Commonwealth forces in early January 1941. The British advance had continued until Rommel's counteroffensive on March 31. As British forces fell back, the Australian 9th Division, only recently called to the front from Palestine, was ordered to move to Tobruk from its position in Derna to the west.

The 9th Division was commanded by Maj. Gen. Leslie J. Morshead. In overall command of the Tobruk defense was Maj. Gen. John Lavarack, former commander of the Australian 7th Division. He was to have the 9th Division, the 18th Brigade of the 7th Division, and several thousand British troops with artillery, tanks, and support units. The artillery was a mix of 48 25-pounders, 12 18-pounders, and 12 4.5-inch howitzers while the available armor included about 60 cruiser, infantry and light tanks with some 30 armored cars.

Some 26 more tanks were undergoing repair at the time of the first battle. Additionally, there were several antitank units but a shortage of guns to equip them. While there were a number of the standard British 2-pounders, most Australian units had to make do with captured Italian weapons. Some Australians also manned captured Italian field artillery pieces.

Air support was provided by several squadrons of Hawker Hurricane fighters and Bristol Blenheim bombers. With this force, Lavarack was expected to hold out for two months, thus enabling the British to reinforce their army in Egypt. Eventually, the garrison would hold for eight months.

Lavarack and Morshead worked well together and quickly developed a defensive scheme largely based on the fortifications begun by the Italians before they had lost Tobruk to the British. A perimeter was manned averaging nine miles outside the town. It arced around Tobruk in a half circle ending at the shoreline. The Italians had placed barbed wire around much of this perimeter during their occupation and had also begun an antitank ditch, though it was incomplete at the time of the Easter Battle. Some of the ditch had been covered with boards and a thin layer of sand to camouflage it. Mines were placed to slow enemy penetrations.

The perimeter was guarded by a series of strongpoints arranged in a zigzag pattern, one forward then one back, alternating that way along the entire length to the wadis. The forward posts were 750 yards apart, with the second row some 500 yards behind the first. They were numbered consecutively; outer posts were odd numbered, inner posts even numbered.

These strongpoints were positioned to provide interlocking fire to cover the perimeter as well as good observation. They averaged 260 feet wide with three circular weapons pits made from concrete, two for machine guns and one for an antitank gun. To improve cover, these pits were flush with the ground. Communications trenches, also made with

LEFT: War artist Ivor Hele, who accompanied Australian troops during the desert war, painted this image of Diggers hard at work on a trench on the outskirts of Tobruk. These preparations were under way in February 1941, two weeks after the Australians captured the port city on Libya's Mediterranean coast. BELOW: During the siege of Tobruk in April 1941, German General Erwin Rommel, commander of Panzerarmee Afrika, examines a map with a staff officer. Rommel was frustrated by the poor maps of the area.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: **Manning an extensive network of trenches and strongpoints around the Tobruk perimeter, Australian troops successfully repulsed a concerted effort by German forces under the command of General Erwin Rommel to capture the important port city. BELOW: Four Australian soldiers, concealed in an antitank ditch, conduct a patrol near the El Adem road on the outskirts of Tobruk.**

Australian War Memorial

concrete, connected the pits. These were typically eight to nine feet deep with an overhead cover of boards and earth.

This main line of defense was called the Red Line. Behind it antitank mines were placed to contain armored penetrations. Three miles behind the Red Line sat the second line of defense, the Blue Line, manned by reserve units. If this were breached, the last stand would take place at the Green Line, two to four miles outside Tobruk itself.

The artillery was sited to cover the troops manning the Red Line. The shortage of antitank guns meant that all field artillery was positioned and sited for the antitank role as well. A mobile reserve of tanks, artillery, and antitank guns was formed to reinforce and plug gaps. Morshead dictated that no ground should be surrendered, deep patrols should be conducted every night to spoil any chance of enemy surprise, positions and obstacles must be improved continuously, and defensive actions would be conducted in depth using the reserve. The infantry manning the perimeter would allow any armored penetrations to continue and to be engaged by the artillery; their job would be to engage any accompanying infantry.

Thus organized, the Aussies and their British and Indian cohorts dug in and prepared for the enemy onslaught. The forces arrayed against them were formidable. The German 5th Light Division, while not fully equipped, had strong armored forces in its 5th Armored Regiment, with about 150 tanks including the Panzer Mk. II, III, and IV, commanded by a Colonel Herbert Olbrich. The 5th itself was commanded by General Johannes Streich. It also had a reconnaissance unit with 25 armored cars; two machine-gun battalions, artillery, antitank, and antiaircraft battalions rounded out the force.

The antitank units fielded a mixture of 37mm and 50mm weapons, with a few 88mm guns added from the flak regiment. Air support came from Fliegerkorps X, with a mixture of up to 450 fighters, dive-bombers, and bombers. The Italians had elements of three separate divisions in the area: one infantry, the Brescia division; the motorized Trento; and the armored Ariete. The Ariete Division could muster about 80 M13-40 and L-3 tanks. The estimated total strength of this force was roughly 25,000 troops.

The Germans had reason to be confident. While the 5th Light Division troops were new to desert fighting, they were experienced veterans of Poland and France, well versed in the tactics of the Blitzkrieg. They considered their Mark III and IV panzers superior to the majority of British tanks in the North African theater though they did fear the Matilda infantry tank with its thick armor. They had good air support, and their main opponent, the Australian 9th Division, was a newly formed unit with limited training and experience. It also lacked a full issue of equipment.

Unfortunately for the Afrika Korps and its Italian allies, the situation was not so favorable. While it was true that the Australians were new troops and lacked much equipment, they were in a strong defensive position. They were well supplied, had plenty of good artillery and air support, and also had the advantage of interior lines for the movement of their reserves.

Besides these Allied advantages, the German and Italian forces faced many difficulties that further unbalanced the equation. Their own supplies had to cross hundreds of miles to reach them from Tripoli, making resupply tenuous to forward units and vulnerable to air attack. The lack of experience in desert fighting meant German units did not realize the

need to carry additional water and fuel with them to avoid shortages.

Further, these distances and the desert conditions played havoc with tanks and vehicles, causing mechanical failures. The initial Axis superiority in tanks was actually much diminished as panzers broke down during the advance. For the Easter Battle, some sources report the Germans as having only about 38 tanks fit and ready for combat, with a few dozen more Italian tanks to join them, perhaps a total of only 55 to 60 tanks in all. Axis armored units were not at full strength, though still a formidable force. The same could be said of Fliegerkorps X; only 250 of its planes were generally available at a given time.

Finally, it may be said that German overconfidence played a part in the battle as well. By the time 5th Division elements reached the area of Tobruk, they were exhausted from the pace of the advance, and their vehicles and equipment needed maintenance. Rommel, eager to chase the British to the Suez Canal, underestimated both the size and morale of the garrison in Tobruk. Streich, the 5th Division commander, wanted time for his men to rest and reconstitute, but Rommel ordered him to assault the besieged Australians. With so much success in their efforts thus far, the Germans seemed to have succumbed to the victory disease. In the coming days they would pay dearly for their pride.

The battle itself began at midday on Good Friday, April 11, 1941. The area to be attacked was on the southern side of the perimeter, around the road leading south from Tobruk to El Adem. This portion of the line was guarded by the Australian 20th Infantry Brigade with three battalions. The 2/13th Battalion occupied the strongpoints east and slightly west of the road with the 2/17th battalion to the west of them. The brigade reserve was the 2/15th Battalion, headquartered less than four miles behind the Red Line further up the road, where the roads to El Adem and Bardia intersected.

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ABOVE: Outpost R39 in the southern sector of Tobruk's defenses is visible in this photograph taken after the the war. German forces did penetrate the perimeter of the Australian defensive system between outposts R33 and R35. LEFT: General Sir Leslie Morshead, commander of the Australian 9th Infantry Division, converses with Brigadier Palmer of the division's 3rd Brigade during preparations to defend Tobruk against attack by German and Italian forces in April 1941.

The 5th Panzer Regiment received orders to attack the Tobruk perimeter at 7:30 AM. Moving out an hour later, it reached its assembly area at 3 PM and immediately came under enemy fire. The Australians reported destroying five German tanks 1,000 yards from Outposts R59 and R63. Also at 3 PM, some 700 German infantry moved to within 400 yards of 2/13th's strongpoints. The Aussies opened fire with machine guns and rifles on the advancing Germans.

MEANWHILE, D COMPANY OF THE 2/17th, occupying the eastern portion of the battalion position, nearest the El Adem road, spotted seven enemy tanks in front of its westernmost strongpoint, R31, and an hour later saw infantry in front of the next post to the east, R33. When both moved toward the barbed wire of the perimeter, British artillery opened fire on them. The infantry was stopped, but the tanks pressed on.

The 5th Panzer Regiment began its attack at about 4 PM with 25 tanks. These tanks moved up to the D Company portion of the line and quickly ran into the antitank ditch, which they found impassable. The D Company commander, Captain Balfe, observed the tanks come through the British barrage and opened fire on the forward outposts. Balfe reported 70 Axis tanks, including Panzer IVs and Italian M13s with a large number of Italian light tanks as well. As he watched, they moved up in three waves of 20 tanks each with a fourth wave of 10. Though they fired at his positions, they did not move in.

Balfe later reported that the ditch in front of his company was not deep enough to prevent the tanks from crossing. The minefield had been hastily emplaced, and he did not think it capable of holding up the Axis armor. None of his strongpoints had their antitank guns, though some had antitank rifles of limited value. His troops were reduced to using these few anti-tank weapons along with machine-gun and rifle fire to combat the tanks. Inexplicably, the tanks broke off after a short time and moved off to the east toward the 2/13th. Unknown to Balfe, the Germans considered the ditch impassable and had decided to move east to find a better crossing point. As the unit moved, Australian troops adjusted the artillery fire to stay on the Germans.

The next trial for D Company began when another 700 enemy infantry approached some of their outposts. The Australians were spread thin; the outposts that could range the German troops had only a few dozen rifles and Bren

guns to hold them off. When they began taking fire the Germans went to ground, but soon they began moving under the cover of their own machine guns.

As the sun began to set over the battlefield, these troops reached the antitank ditch and dug in. Soon mortar fire from the antitank ditch began to pelt the Australian positions; because the Australians had been hastily deployed without full equipment, they lacked mortars of their own with which to reply. The British artillerymen feared to fire on the ditch due its proximity to the Australian positions.

The Allied command had received a report of a tank breakthrough near the area where the German attack had begun. They quickly ordered the 1st Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) to move up and stop the penetration. When they arrived at the scene, there was no breakthrough, so the 11 cruiser tanks made their way east toward the El Adem road in search of the enemy. Meanwhile, the 5th Panzer Regiment's tanks were moving along the ditch, now in front of the 2/13th. As they moved, they tried to suppress the Australian outposts with fire. Here the mortar platoon of the 2/13th, manning two Italian 47mm antitank guns, opened fire on the Axis force, quickly knocking out one Italian tank and hitting a few others. Another Italian light tank, previously disabled, was also shot up by the mortarmen. Its crew surrendered.

By 5:15 the German regiment had reached the El Adem road but found a substantial minefield blocking its progress. The Germans began to move their tanks away just as the 1st RTR arrived. Both sides opened fire as the Germans withdrew, adjusted artillery following them as they went.

The British tankers continued on to the road, where another mixed group of German and Italian tanks was spotted about a mile outside the perimeter. These advanced at about 7 PM and were engaged by both the tanks and artillery in a brisk 30-minute engagement. As it ended with another German withdrawal to the south, British losses were two Cruiser tanks destroyed and one disabled versus seven knocked-out Axis tanks.

Imperial War Museum

Their sandbagged emplacement provides some protection against ground attack as an Australian gun crew services its 3.7-inch antiaircraft gun at Tobruk.

In front of D Company, patrols were sent out by the Australians and found the German infantry had withdrawn. After dark, more German tanks and engineers probed the 2/13th's line. The engineers were equipped to breach the wire and the ditch. The Australians launched a quick counterattack, however, which drove off the enemy, even forcing them to abandon their breaching equipment.

Overall, the German attackers had been surprised at the ferocity of the Australian defense, conducted at times at the point of a bayonet. The 5th Panzer Regiment had been foiled by the unexpected antitank ditch, heavy shelling, and antitank fire.

As the night went on, the Australians feverishly tried to bolster their defenses with both engineers of their own and more mines. General Lavarack ordered patrols to ascertain the enemy's next move and moved the reserve 18th Brigade closer to the perimeter.

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, DAWNED without the expected Axis assault. The Germans were trying to formulate a new plan of attack but were frustrated by their poor maps (which were on a 1:400,000 scale) and the failure of the Italian High Command to send them the defensive plans for the Tobruk area. Thus the Germans were totally uninformed about the extent or configuration of the Allied defenses.

To gain the information they so desperately needed, the Germans sent out reconnaissance probes to seek weak points in the antitank ditch. A German engineer officer reported finding an area, two and a half miles west of the previous day's initial attack, where there was no antitank ditch. Olbrich dispatched 24 tanks to the suspected gap with orders to renew the attack. Engineers were attached to this force to breach any obstacles or ditches that might in fact be there. Once assembled, this force approached the Australian lines at about 3:15 PM.

The attack came under heavy fire almost as soon as it began. Artillery rounds screamed in with what Olbrich called "superb accuracy" while overhead British aircraft pounded the German force with bombs. At first the panzers tried to support the engineers while they attempted to breach the Australian lines. The fire the engineers drew was so intense, however, that despite great bravery they simply could not follow the armored advance.

By 4 PM, the Germans could make out the enemy positions, but 45 minutes later they ran into the antitank ditch they thought was not there, stopping their assault cold. They waited for 15 minutes, hoping the engineers might appear despite the fearful odds. Artillery and antitank fire pounded them the entire time. When the supporting engineers failed to appear, the order was given to withdraw. Again, British artillery followed them, adjusting as they moved. Even under the heavy shelling, the Germans grimly retained their discipline and fell back in good order.

The second day had ended with another failed Axis assault, though the attack was really more a reconnaissance in force, lacking the full support a major attack required. Overhead, British and German aircraft dueled on April 12 as Ju-87 Stukas tried to dive-bomb the harbor only to be engaged by Hurricanes of the RAF and an intense and murderous antiaircraft fire that claimed four enemy planes. The Axis positioned their troops for a more decisive engagement to begin the next day.

The primary assault force for the attack would be the 5th Light Division, formed up on both sides of the El Adem road, with the Italian units spread out to its left along the Allied perimeter. Directly to the 5th Division's left was the Italian Ariete armored division. The Brescia infantry division was farther to the west around the road to Derna. There they would make a demonstration attack to divide their enemy's attention.

The 8th Machine Gun Battalion would initiate the main assault by creating a breach in the Australian line through which 5th Panzer Regiment would pour, one of its battalions driving north to seize the crossroads while the other strove to the northwest toward Fort Pilastrino, located on a ridge of the same name, close to the 20th Brigade headquarters. With these objectives taken, Axis forces would continue their offensive, with the 5th Panzer Regiment leading the way for the Ariete division all the way to Tobruk itself. The attack would begin at 5 PM on the 13th, with the tank breakthrough taking place before dawn on the morning of the 14th, following an artillery preparation.

Unfortunately for the Axis forces, planning for the attack was hampered once again by the lack of accurate intelligence and aerial reconnaissance caused at least in part by poor coordination between the Italian High Command and the German forces. The outdated maps were a factor as well. Compounding this was the aggressive Australian patrolling, which foiled German attempts at scouting on the ground.

The selected breaching point, some two and a half miles west of the El Adem road, lay near Post R33. The tank ditch in this area was some 12 feet deep, a serious though not insurmountable obstacle. Had German scouts been able to range more freely, they might have discovered a flaw in the defenses. Less than 2,000 yards northwest of R33, the tank ditch in front of Posts R27 and R29 was less than three feet deep. Even worse, between Posts R11 and R21, near the targeted Pilastrino Ridge, there was no ditch at all. Lacking this crucial information, the attack would go through the Australian lines at R33. Facing the Germans were the men of D Company, 2/17th, who had fought off a portion of the German attack two days before and occupied Outposts R30 to R35.

Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: A few Australian tanks were present to provide mobile firepower and take on German armor at Tobruk. In this photo Australian Matilda tanks are shown speeding forward. LEFT: Australian soldiers guard captured German and Italian soldiers taken prisoner during the fighting of April 1941.

The first signs of the imminent assault came during the afternoon of the 13th, when Axis troops and vehicles demonstrated across a 10-mile-wide area in front of the Australian positions. Shortly afterward, a staff car preceded by motorcycles was spotted moving along the perimeter, stopping in some dead ground about 4,000 yards out, appearing to the Australians to be setting up a headquarters. A Luftwaffe plane flew over, dropping leaflets asking for the surrender of the defending troops. Other aircraft flew over, obviously reconnoitering the defenses, especially the wire and antitank ditch.

Trucks carrying German infantry then appeared, also about 4,000 yards out. The Australians watched these troops disembark from their transport with almost relaxed ease, staying concentrated despite their proximity to the enemy. Well-directed artillery fire and close air support soon made them regret their slowness, and they dispersed away from the trucks. Soon small detachments of them began to creep forward, moving to within 1,500 yards. There, they set up machine guns and took the Australian outposts under fire, shooting at anything that moved.

At 4 PM, the 20th Brigade commander, Lt. Col. Crawford, called B Company, his reserve, up to new positions behind D Company. One hour later Axis artillery started pounding the D Company portion of the line with heavy fire; a half hour after that, enemy infantry with a few tanks were spotted approaching the wire. Moving under covering fire from machine guns and rifles, this group came to within 500 yards of the line. The defenders called in artillery, and soon 25-pounder shells began crashing into the Axis advance, stopping it cold.

As darkness fell, RAF reconnaissance flights showed Axis forces massing near the El Adem road, with some 300 tanks and vehicles clustered nearby. Solitary panzers came up to the tank ditch and cruised along it, either scouting for an easier crossing point or trying to mask the infantry and engineers who were coming up behind them. That infantry moved up to the antitank ditch in front of D Company and secured the area to be breached while sappers began to clear lanes through the mines.

With the outer perimeter penetrated, a small group of 30 German soldiers tried to capture R33. To give them the edge, they took with them eight machine guns, two small cannon, and a mortar, more than enough firepower to overwhelm a single outpost. Emplacing themselves a scant 100 yards east of R33, they opened fire, drawing a brisk response from the Australians inside. When it became apparent to the defenders that the German troops could not

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: During the German advance against Tobruk in April 1941, sappers construct a passage across one of numerous antitank ditches. BELOW: German artillerymen await the signal of their commander to fire a heavy field gun on the defenders of Tobruk.

Imperial War Museum

be pushed back by fire, the outpost commander led six of his men in a vigorous counterattack. This small group of Australians tore into the far larger German unit, bayonets fixed to their rifles and throwing grenades ahead of them as they advanced.

The daring gambit paid off. When it was over, the Australians had driven off the entire group, captured a prisoner, and left a dozen dead Germans lying on the ground. One of the Aussies, Corporal Jack Edmundson, fought so bravely he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the first Australian to receive the honor during the war.

Patrols were sent out all along the Australian perimeter, with two going out near R33. Both returned with reports of enemy activity nearby and a prisoner from the 8th Machine Gun Battalion. Lt. Col. Crawford decided to make a dawn counterattack against this force and alerted B Company; the reserve moved up earlier, to be ready for the task. As an added precaution, D Company of the 2/15th Battalion, the brigade reserve, was moved up to new, closer positions just behind B Company.

Shortly after midnight, the Germans started their penetration of the line. Several hundred infantry broke through the wire around R33 and spread out in a fan around the outpost for several hundred yards. Captain Balfe fired a flare with his Very pistol, calling for artillery. Once again 25-pounder shells fell on the Germans, but this time they were not to be deterred. Despite casualties, they remained firmly in place around the post.

AT 4 AM, AXIS ARMOR WAS SPOTTED gathering near the El Adem road and immediately came under the now customary artillery bombardment. By 4:45, the German tank force began its movement toward the perimeter near R41. Because of the bad maps, German engineers had to lead the tank columns to their crossing points. In the dark, units of the 5th Panzer Regiment became disorganized, requiring radio silence to be broken to realign for the attack. This wasted precious time. When the regiment finally reached the breach point, the German artillery had already shifted. For once, however, luck was with the Germans. An early morning fog helped conceal them, preventing concentrated fire from being placed on them as their tanks crossed the ditch one at a time.

Once through the perimeter, a few German tanks supported the infantry around the outposts, laying heavy fire on them. After the entire unit was through, the tanks formed up and moved out toward their objectives. A few of them towed antitank or flak guns; others carried infantry. The Australian infantry, following their plan, allowed the German tanks to proceed deeper into the perimeter. They called for artillery, which pelted the exposed German infantry, killing many of them and driving the rest off the tanks they were riding and back toward the wire.

This separated the tanks from most of the infantry they would so sorely need to root out the guns that awaited them just a few miles ahead. With their infantry pinned down, they made a risky decision and the German armor moved on with only a few infantry still along, the 2nd Battalion in the lead with the 1st trailing behind.

The Axis tankers made their way east toward the road through the dust and smoke of the battlefield, then turned north to move on the crossroads. After moving about 4,000 yards, the column ran headlong into the Blue Line defenses. In their path lay the 32 25-pounder guns that

had shelled them so relentlessly as well as an Australian antitank regiment.

Though they lacked armor-piercing ammunition, the British artillerymen depressed their guns and started pouring direct fire into the Germans over open sights. The big, high-explosive shells were too much for the tanks' armor, and panzer after panzer was destroyed. When they tried to flank the artillery to the right, the antitank gunners opened fire and stopped them. With at least five tanks knocked out, the 2nd Battalion was ordered to withdraw. It turned around and ran right into the 1st Battalion coming up behind, causing temporary confusion.

To compound their problems, Portees (2-pounder antitank guns mounted on trucks for added mobility) had moved around the German flanks and now began sniping at the panzers as they headed south. General Morshead ordered the 1st RTR's cruiser tanks forward to engage the German armor as well. The British tanks approached from the east and identified their foe through the swirling dust and smoke. At 7 AM, they closed with and engaged the Germans, who themselves had just turned east to try to escape the gauntlet of fire they were now taking from all sides. With the eastern side of the box closed, the German tank columns once again turned south and headed back toward the gap they had entered just a few hours earlier.

To their credit and despite the horrible pounding they had taken, the German withdrawal was carried out in good order. As they moved, the panzer crews took up 360-degree firing positions to enable them to evacuate their dead and wounded from the knocked-out tanks. When they moved, the British tanks joined by two Matilda infantry tanks gave chase.

German Lieutenant Joachim Schorm, of the 6th Company of the tank regiment, recalled the confusing maelstrom into which he and his panzer crews had been thrown: "We are right in the middle of it with no prospect of getting out. From both flanks, armor-piercing shells whiz by at 1000 meters per second.... Above us Italian fighter planes come into the fray. Two of them crash in our midst ... we take a wounded and two others aboard, and the other panzers do the same...we have to press on toward the south, as it is the only way through. Good God! Supposing we don't find it?"

Despite the obvious fear and despair, the regiment kept its cohesion and continued as a unit.

Meanwhile, back at the breach at R33, the German and Australian troops were fighting desperately—the Germans to keep the gap open, the Australians to close it and trap the Axis forces within. Behind Post R32, inward of the breach, the German used several antitank and field guns to try and knock it out for good. Despite the heavy fire from these guns, the Aussies managed to knock out all the crews of the cannon with rifle fire. In response, another field gun and several of the dreaded 88s were brought from outside the perimeter, right up to the breach. Once again, however, the Australian infantry shot down the gun crews one by one. As dawn broke, German machine gun positions were also targeted and knocked out.

As the retreating panzers approached the breach, the Axis infantry within the perimeter were pinned down and cut off from their comrades outside it. Over 100 Germans took cover in a cluster of ruins known as Goschens House, north of the outpost line. Then D Company, 2/15th, north of the Germans set up a blocking position and B Company, 2/17th attacked them. Once again throwing grenades and brandishing bayonets on the muzzles of their rifles, the Australians rushed their opponents, killing or capturing 36 of them. Later 75 more would be captured there.

The panzers now started their withdrawal through the breach, carrying what infantry they could with the rest running alongside. Some of the panzers were festooned with Australian prisoners captured earlier. Smoke from burning tanks obscured much of the battlefield, including the gap in the antitank ditch. Blindly the panzer drivers went back through the breach, some of them stopping to limber the abandoned cannon, their dead gunners lying around them.

The men of D Company, unable to see into the smoke-shrouded withdrawal site, poured fire into it anyway. Most of the Australian prisoners the Germans had captured jumped off the tanks in the confusion and ran to freedom. Some of the German infantry took cover in the tank ditch from this murderous fire, only to be captured later. Captain Balfe could see that the Germans, despite retaining their good order, were retreating. He had to restrain his men from chasing them outside the perimeter.

The next few hours were spent rounding up wounded and prisoners and taking the toll. The 5th Panzer Regiment had lost 40 men and 17 of the 38 tanks it had taken through the breach.

Australian War Memorial

With field glasses hanging around his neck, Lieutenant Colonel J.W. Crawford and a detachment of Australian infantrymen pose with a German tank that was destroyed during Rommel's unsuccessful Easter attack.

Large numbers of the 8th Machine Gun Battalion's men were now dead, wounded, or captured. Rommel ordered another attack for 6 PM that same day, but there were not enough troops or vehicles to scrape together, and the attack was called off. Though additional fighting would go on for much of April, the Easter Battle itself was over.

Losses for the Axis side were estimated at 150 killed with another 250 taken prisoner. Twenty-nine tanks were also lost. The Allied defenders of Tobruk listed casualties of 26 dead, 24 wounded, four tanks and one artillery piece lost. In the skies over the besieged town, 17 German and one British

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Divine Wind Over Okinawa

FEROCIOUS ATTACKS BY JAPANESE PLANES TOOK A HEAVY TOLL IN LIVES AND DAMAGED DOZENS OF U.S. NAVY VESSELS DURING OPERATIONS TO CAPTURE THE ISLAND. **BY KELLY BELL**

APRIL 1, 1945, WAS EASTER SUNDAY AND APRIL FOOL'S DAY. IT WAS ALSO the day the U.S. Army and Marine Corps launched Operation Iceberg, their massive amphibious assault on the Japanese island of Okinawa. Private First Class L.B. Bell was an artilleryman with the Marine 2nd Division, and at dawn he and his buddies were waiting in the chow line for their breakfast before clambering into the landing craft bobbing beside their troop transport.

He later remembered his first acquaintance with the kamikaze, Japanese suicide pilots bent on crashing their aircraft into U.S. Navy ships to sink or disable them. The suicide pilots in had been named in reference to a "Divine Wind" that had destroyed an invasion fleet centuries earlier and saved Japan from conquest. These modern kamikaze, it was hoped, could do the same.

Bell remembered, "The Zero came in on a shallow dive and hit the water approximately 200 yards shy of our LST, skipped over us, and hit a troop transport about 300 yards past, severely damaging it and killing a number of Marines."

By the spring of 1945, the Rykuyu Islands, the largest of which is Okinawa, were Japan's last line of defense between its home islands and the inexorably advancing Allied fleets encircling the shrinking Imperial domain. However, Emperor Hirohito's military commanders were not quite finished dishing out destruction.

The previous October in Tokyo, Rear Admiral Takajiro Ohnishi, commander of the Ministry of Munitions Naval Aviation Division, had been assigned command of the First Air Fleet, then based in the Philippines. After arriving in Manila to assume his new post he began campaigning for what he correctly believed was his military's last hope of inflicting substantial damage on the encroaching Allies.

A strong believer in the pseudo-religious Bushido cult with its accompanying code of conduct, he regarded the 1871 abolition of the samurai caste a serious miscarriage of Japanese culture and something to be defied. He and a few of his like-minded comrades devised a lethal new addition to their coun-

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A kamikaze pilot misses his target, the escort carrier USS *Sangamon,* by about 25 feet off Kerama Retto near Okinawa on May 4, 1945. The aircraft carrier is shrouded in smoke from antiaircraft gunfire, and planes with their wings folded are grouped tightly on the flight deck. OPPOSITE: Five members of the 72nd Shinbu Squadron pose bravely for the camera on the day before their suicide missions against the U.S. fleet positioned off Okinawa. Three of these young pilots are 17 years old, one is 18, and another 19.

over, and off the island.

Vice Admiral Matome Ugaki, commander of the Fifth Air Fleet, was given tactical responsibility for Okinawa's defense, which was codenamed Operation Ten-Go. Ugaki was dismayed to learn his suicide attackers were to concentrate on attacks against Allied supply and troop ships. In earlier campaigns he had witnessed the devastation wrought by U.S. carrier-based warplanes. He lobbied hard and long to have priorities changed to attacks on aircraft carriers, but his superiors ignored his counsel. They did give the carriers equal attention to the supply fleet, but events would prove Ugaki's fear of the Allied flattops was justified. With attacks divided between the carriers and supply fleet, the kamikazes were spread too thinly, and American carrier aircraft shot Japanese planes down in great numbers.

On March 24, the Americans attacked the Kerama Islands, 15 miles southwest of Okinawa. The move surprised the Japanese and distracted Ugaki and his commanders, who were surprised a second time when U.S. Task Force 58 set its planes on the airfields and harbors of Okinawa. Most of the Japanese aircraft available were either designated as kamikaze

ABOVE: The shattered Fletcher-class destroyer USS *Newcomb* lies at anchor off Kerama Retto on April 11, 1945. The small picket line destroyer was struck by five kamikaze suicide planes in a span of 90 minutes but managed to stay afloat. RIGHT: A Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter rigged with a bomb and turned into a human missile by its kamikaze pilot bears down on the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, a veteran of the Pacific War, on May 14, 1945.

try's dwindling arsenal. Suicide aircraft and boats seemed the last hope of seriously challenging the growing might of American arms. What could be more lethal that a bomb-packed craft whose guidance system was an endlessly calculating and fanatical human brain? Not only would the kamikaze pack a pulverizing wallop, but such an honorable loss of life was well suited to a philosophy that glorified self-sacrifice.

Ohnishi and his supporters had to argue their point long and convincingly to overcome considerable opposition from more conventional-minded commanders. Eventually, they won their case when Admiral Soemu Toyoda, commander of the Combined Fleet, had to abandon his anti-kamikaze position when asked what alternative existed besides surrender. He had no answer, and formations of suicide planes and their pilots were soon bound for the empire's forward outposts.

The Rykuyus were a rich prize. Should they fall, the Allies would have a stranglehold on Japanese supply lines and a base for heavy bomber raids against Japan's major cities and military installations. Only 340 miles from the home islands, Okinawa had to be held at all costs. If Tokyo kept refusing to surrender, the Rykuyus would also serve well as a staging point for a potential invasion of the home islands. The Japanese realized Okinawa was bound to be the Allies' next target, but the Americans and British never dreamed of the ghastly reception awaiting them on, or engaged in the defense of Okinawa itself. The Keramas were secured on the 26th.

This was also the day the first kamikazes participated in the Okinawa campaign, but their scattered strikes inflicted little damage. The suicide squadrons were still assembling and not yet ready to seriously challenge these earlier-than-expected invaders. Furthermore, the initial attacks tipped off the Allies that there might be serious suicide opposition to Operation Iceberg, so they began making preparations. However, there was not enough time to adequately prepare the large ring of radar stations and specially prepared antiaircraft destroyers manned by fighter detection units to vector combat air patrol (CAP) fighters to Japanese targets. The anti-kamikaze defenses were complicated, espe-

cially in overlapping sectors. They also proved rather ineffective against night attacks because the CAP pilots had trouble seeing their targets even when vectoring was accurate.

Exactly 24 hours before the landings were to commence, the defenders almost pulled off a major coup when a solitary kamikaze penetrated all the defenses and crashed into the Allied flagship, the cruiser USS *Indianapolis*. Admiral Raymond Spruance, overall Allied naval commander, was aboard when the kamikaze struck but was not injured.

BECAUSE OF THEIR THICK, HEAVY armor plating British carriers were unable to carry as many planes as their American counterparts with their wooden decks, but off Okinawa this added protection proved a fair swap. As the landings were getting underway on April 1, four Mitsubishi Zeros on a flight out of Formosa targeted the British carrier HMS *Indefatigable*. The screening CAP flamed three, but the fourth scored a direct hit, only to crumple harmlessly on *Indefatigable*'s three-inch-thick steel shield.

As the cloudless Easter Sunday dawned, other GIs and Marines saw repeats of the kamikaze attack recounted by Pfc. Bell. Many kamikazes either missed their targets or fell easy prey to the CAP and shipboard antiaircraft gunners. This was because nearly all the Japanese one-way pilots were half-trained adolescents. Many had never before flown solo or landed a plane. The empire's few remaining veteran airmen were far too valuable to expend in suicide attacks, but enough of the rookies were getting through to make a blazing contribution.

Kamikazes reached the battleship USS *West Virginia* and the destroyer USS *Adams* on the first day, drydocking *Adams* for the rest of the war. That night the Japanese launched what they thought would be a surprise attack, sending multiple formations of death divers. Radar detected the approaching flights, however, and alerted a force of Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters that were modified for night fighting. These interceptors ranged destructively through the inexperienced attackers before they could reach Okinawa, downing nearly all of them. It was a brief respite.

As the invasion expanded so did the magnitude of the kamikaze attacks. On the afternoon of April 3, a diving Zero grazed the carrier USS *Wake Island* and inflicted sufficient damage to force her to withdraw to Guam for repairs. That same day a Shinyo suicide boat blew up a landing craft filled with Marines. Then, on April 5, Ugaki was ready to deploy his entire kamikaze fleet.

He code-named the first major offensive Kikusui 1. It was a massive flotilla of more than 700 suicide and conventional aircraft, and on the afternoon of April 5 it fell upon the Allied fleet in numbers that overwhelmed its defenses. The Japanese tried unsuccessfully to use chaff, strips of aluminum dropped from aircraft, to blind the American radar, and carrier-based planes from Task Force 58 met the attackers before they reached the picket ring of radar destroyers. Although these initial Hellcat pilots shot down more than 200 planes and another 200 fell to later arriving interceptors and antiaircraft fire, 180 planes penetrated the American defenses from 3 PM to 7 PM.

The inexperience of the Japanese airmen again was evident as the vast majority of them missed their targets. Only two cargo ships and one landing craft were sunk, but one Japanese plane crashed into the carrier HMS *Illustrious* just below her waterline, inflicting considerable damage that her crew somehow overlooked until much later in the campaign.

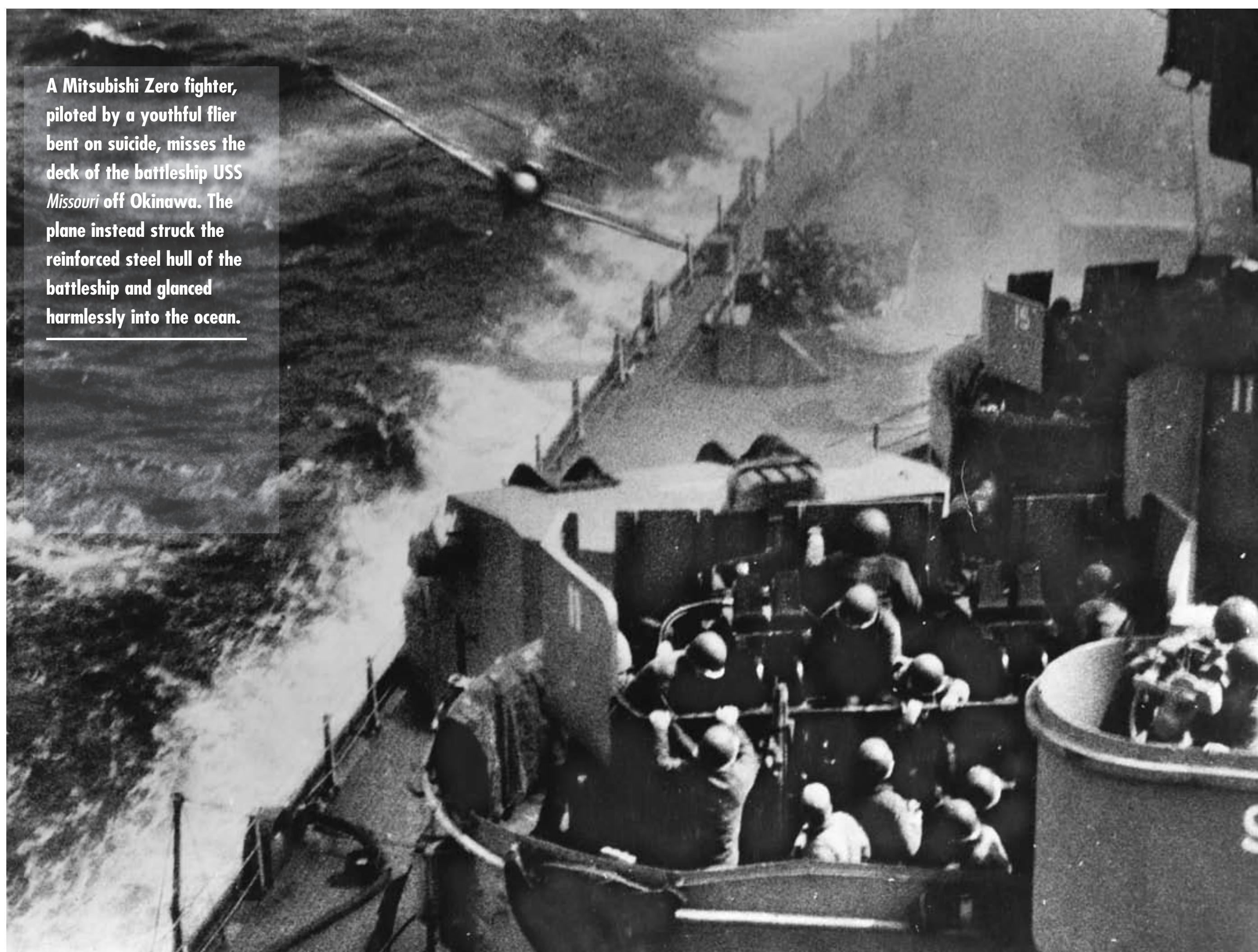
Unwittingly, Japanese officers had aided the defenders by ordering their pilots to attack the first enemy vessels they encountered. The logic here was that by doing so the suicide planes would not be airborne as long, giving the Allies less time to shoot them down. This strategy backfired when, repeatedly, pilots plunged into destroyers that already were severely damaged or dead in the water, and thus essentially worthless targets.

Although the attacks of April 5 knocked out radar destroyers *Bush* and *Calhoun,* they also sank the crippled and nonparticipating destroyers *Emmons, Newcomb, Leutze, Morris,* and *Witter* while overlooking or ignoring targets of much greater value. The U.S. invasion of Okinawa might have stalled if the troops ran low on supplies, but the neophyte suicide pilots rarely made it to the inner battle zone. American supply ships continued to deliver arms, ammunition, medical provisions, food, and reinforcements while the Imperial defenders ashore were steadily depleted.

On April 7, the Imperial Japanese Navy sent its super battleship *Yamato* on an ambitious mission to Okinawa. With just enough fuel for a one-way voyage, the 70,000-ton warship was to be used as bait to lure the Allies' carriers out to sea where they not only would be more vulnerable to kamikaze attack but too far from Okinawa to support the ground forces fighting there. When the kamikaze formations appeared above the American carriers, *Yamato* would dash full speed for Okinawa, beach herself in shallow water so she could not be sunk, and then use her 18-inch guns to shell the American-held sector.

This tactic failed when the carrier captains saw through the ruse and only sortied far enough out to sea for their aircraft to be in range of the gargantuan battleship. American torpedo planes and dive-bombers sank *Yamato* while she was still in deep water. The entire, massive invasion fleet then turned its attention back to Okinawa.

The aircraft carrier USS *Bunker Hill* billows smoke after being struck by a Japanese kamikaze suicide plane off Okinawa on May 11, 1945. A number of the carrier's combat pilots were trapped below decks and suffocated.



A Mitsubishi Zero fighter, piloted by a youthful flier bent on suicide, misses the deck of the battleship USS *Missouri* off Okinawa. The plane instead struck the reinforced steel hull of the battleship and glanced harmlessly into the ocean.

With dependable air support and a steady flow of supplies, U.S. ground forces captured Yontan airfield on Okinawa. Marine Air Group 33 immediately arrived with a complement of 82 Chance Vought F4U Corsair fighters to bolster ground support and strengthen the antikamikaze screen.

On April 10, violent thunderstorms grounded all planes on both sides, but the next day the sun came out. Ugaki's pilots managed a major coup when two Yokosuka Judy divebombers survived the CAP and dense antiaircraft fire and hit the carrier USS *Enterprise* just below the waterline. Working frantically, damage control parties managed to seal off the holed section of hull before the flattop capsized, but she had to withdraw.

Kikusui 2 kicked off on the 12th when 150 fighters escorted 185 suicide aircraft, including nine of the newly developed Ohka manned missiles, fell upon the Allied armada. Still going after the first targets they encountered, they decimated the destroyers of Radar Stations 1, 2, and 14. The first Ohka ever to strike a hostile ship nearly cut the destroyer USS *Mannert L. Abele* in two, sinking her with 79 of her crewmen in a twinkling.

The kamikazes had crippled or sunk seven destroyers by 2:30 PM, and that evening late-arriving planes hit the battleships *Idaho* and *Tennessee*. Yet, Ugaki still failed to realize his strategy was faulty as his pilots continued to expend themselves on the outer perimeter while ignoring plum targets closer to shore.

APRIL 12 WAS ALSO THE DAY THE Americans learned of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. After spending 12 years in the White House, Roosevelt was the only president many of the young men fighting on Okinawa could remember. Disheartened that their chief had not lived to see the final victory, the Army and Marine troops fought with gusto the next day when the Japanese launched a violent counteroffensive. The Japanese land and air forces failed to coordinate their actions, however, as the ground attack began between aerial offensives, and no kamikazes or conventional warplanes came to the support of the ground troops.

Kikusui 3 kicked off April 16 and deployed just 300 conventional and kamikaze planes reinforced by a flight from Formosa. When these planes descended on Task Force 58 most of the pilots repeated their predecessors' errors, wasting themselves on low-priority targets. One of them did manage to strike the carrier USS *Intrepid* and punch through her deck. The plane's bomb exploded in the hangar and ignited a raging conflagration that killed 10 men and sent *Intrepid* off for repairs that were not completed until after Japan's surrender.

Despite their imprudent target selection, the kamikazes had now left the Allies with just 11 carriers to support the Okinawa campaign. Fearing further attrition, Spruance dispersed his precious flattops so they would not present a conspicuous, collective objective. For the time being no more kamikazes appeared.

After using up more than 800 planes in suicide attacks since the first of the month, Ugaki and Ohnishi had to wait for additional aircraft

to be delivered before they could resume more than occasional attacks. This gave the U.S. troops ashore a crucial respite they used to overrun the adjacent island of Ie Shima and Okinawa's northern sector. They wasted no time installing radar posts in both areas.

The next major kamikaze flight arrived just before dusk on April 22. After a six-day lapse in attacks, the Japanese hoped this one, launched from airfields on Kyushu and Formosa, would take the Allies by surprise, but the new radar sets detected the raiders just in time for a squadron of Corsairs to rise to the defense. The Marines shot down 34 planes and dispersed most of the rest. A minesweeper and landing craft were lost along with 60 men.

With just 115 planes, Kikusui 4 was small, but it finally targeted the invasion forces' vital transport and supply elements. The freighter *Canada Victory* was sunk, the merchantman *Rathburn* was crippled, and the destroyer *Ralph Talbot* sunk. The following afternoon a large flight attacked the radar installations but was decimated when Station 2 vectored in Corsairs that scattered the suicide planes before they reached the perimeter.

Starting at 10 PM a lone kamikaze spent 15 minutes circling the floodlit and red-cross-emblazoned hospital ship *Comfort,* looking her over and coming to an informed decision before pulling up and heartlessly diving into her. Thirty died in this wanton act of murder. About half were homebound wounded soldiers, but the pilot also killed a whole surgical team and an additional six Army nurses.

On April 30, a ragged pack of kamikazes targeted the minelayer USS *Terror.* Enough got through to cripple the vessel and kill 48 of her sailors while wounding another 173. It was one of the campaign's most devastating attacks, bringing April's total to 115 Allied ships sunk. Another 61 had been compelled to leave for repairs. Most of these needed such extensive work that they were forced to retire to distant Pearl Harbor or San Francisco to find adequate repair facilities.

The Japanese had wrought this destruction at a cost of slightly more than 1,000 novice pilots who, considering their extremely limited qualifications, could not have been used for any other purpose. Back in Tokyo news of this success essentially killed all remaining opposition to the suicide attacks. Okinawa was turning out to be much more expensive for the Allies than either side had anticipated. Still, the forces of liberation doggedly kept up the pressure.

As daylight was fading on May 3, Kikusui 5 roared in from Formosa immediately after the Marine CAP had left for the evening. Their marks were Radar Stations 9 and 10 west of Okinawa. The outposts' crews, not expecting an attack so late in the day, had just shut down their sets when the yellow-painted warplanes dove on them. The attackers sank the destroyer *Little*, left her sister ship *Aaron Ward* dead in the water, and killed or wounded 241 sailors. A tug towed *Aaron Ward* to an anchorage Spruance had set aside off Kerama for crippled ships. It was crowded with vessels awaiting work crews that would cut them up for scrap.

May 1 dawned with an attack on Radar Station 12 that sank the destroyer *Luce* with 149 of her men. Minutes later the overextended CAP could not save the destroyer *Morrison.* Two bomb-carrying Zeros crashed into her from 12 o'clock high, destroying her engines and boilers. Before most of the men below decks could get topside, two old Kawanishi floatplanes out of Kyushu plowed into her hull. *Morrison*'s after turret exploded like a volcano, disintegrating her stern and sending her under with 159 crewmen. Bobbing in the debris-cluttered sea, 103 of her horrified survivors watched helplessly as three Zeros slammed into their sister ship *Ingraham,* transforming her into a floating bonfire. A landing craft tried to tow her out to sea, but yet another suicide plane hit and sank it.

The weather was helping the Japanese because CAP pilots and antiaircraft gunners could not see through a thick haze that had formed just before dawn. The kamikaze pilots, however, were having no trouble picking out the highly visible white wakes of their frantically maneuvering targets. A large number of planes then took aim at a group of minesweepers north of Kerama. While the available interceptors were distracted by this raid, a single unnoticed Nakajima Oscar flew at treetop level over Okinawa, pulled up as it crossed the beach and plunged into the cruiser *Birmingham* at 8:41 AM. Penetrating the deck, its bomb detonated deep inside the ship, causing flooding and fires that killed 51 men. *Birmingham* limped out of action.

By the morning of May 4, this latest suicide offensive had sunk or crippled another 12 ships. Allied naval casualties included 420 dead or missing and another 470 wounded.

That evening the Royal Navy felt the kamikazes' sting as Formosa-based planes attacked the carriers *Indomitable* and *Formidable* southwest of Okinawa. *Formidable*'s radar operators mistook an approaching Zero for a friendly plane and allowed its pilot to take careful aim. Using the favored tactic of pulling up at the last moment, he went into a dive, revved his engine to full power, and crashed into the flight deck at extreme speed. The armor plating was hardly dented, but the impact dislodged a large slab of steel that had been improperly welded to the deck's underside. It fell onto and ruptured the carrier's central boiler, reducing her speed to 18 knots. The Zero's bomb exploded topside, killing eight men and destroying 12 of the flattop's limited store of fighters. Kikusui 5 was over. It had bled the Allies badly, but at great cost to the Japanese.

A damage control party works feverishly to extinguish fires aboard the USS *Enterprise* after the aircraft carrier was struck by a kamikaze and forced to withdraw from the fighting in the waters around embattled Okinawa.

The Japanese had hoped the violent suicide attacks offshore would assist their army's latest offensive by cutting into the Americans' supply lifeline to their ground forces, but this strategy overlooked the impact of the Allies' pulverizing naval firepower. Shelling from their warships broke the Japanese offensive and fatally depleted the defenders' manpower reserves. Against this weakened defense, the U.S. Marines and Army began to break out of Okinawa's southern sector.

For a while the Japanese were able to launch only sporadic suicide attacks. On May 8, both sides received word of Germany's unconditional surrender. This was expected but very welcome news for the Allies, but the Japanese seemed to take it as a signal to display their defiance.

On the 11th a typhoon of kamikazes crowded the sky as Kikusui 6 arrived. The first victims were the destroyers *Hugh W. Hadley* and *Evans*, both of which were reduced to drifting wreckage. Just after 10 AM a Zero and a Judy dive-bomber evaded the CAP by approaching through low cloud cover and hit the carrier USS *Bunker Hill*. The Zero impacted first and set the after deck ablaze. The Judy crashed onto the same spot and tore a huge hole in the weakened deck. The Judy's bomb came loose and tumbled into the ship's interior before exploding.

For the next five hours a raging conflagration enveloped the carrier's stern, killing 404 men, wounding another 256, and very nearly sinking the vessel. The grievously hurt *Bunker Hill* would not have survived another direct hit, but frantic Corsair and Hellcat pilots knocked down every other enemy plane that approached until darkness halted the attacks.

Imperial War Museum

Crewmen aboard the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS *Formidable* clean up the debris and assess superficial damage suffered when the warship was struck by a kamikaze off the Sakashima Islands while supporting operations on Okinawa. The carrier's armored flight deck saved it from more extensive damage.

The next day the Japanese lulled the Allies into a false sense of security by not appearing at all ... until sunset. Then two kamikazes crashed into the battleship *New Mexico* and killed 54 of her crew.

By this point U.S. ground forces had captured enough airstrips on Okinawa for land-based warplanes to deploy for CAP service and infantry support. This enabled the carriers to depart for Kyushu to assault the airfields of the 5th Air Fleet. Despite losing 130 of his aircraft both on the ground and in the air in these strikes, Ugaki quickly retaliated. On the 14th, *Enterprise* returned after having her earlier damage repaired and was immediately set upon by 24 kamikazes. Just one plane survived the antiaircraft fire and CAP, but it scored a direct hit on the carrier's essential elevator, knocking

BORN OF DESPERATION, THE KAMIKAZE WERE NEVERTHELESS DESTRUCTIVE.

Although suicide attacks by Japanese pilots were nothing new, until late in the war such tactics had been restricted to machines too badly damaged either to fight or make it back to their bases or carriers. By the summer of 1944, Japan and her depleted forces were having trouble inflicting significant damage on the huge Allied fleets approaching the empire's heart.

During the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944, two pilots from the light carrier *Chiyoda,* on their own volition, deliberately crashed into and severely damaged the battleships USS *South Dakota* and USS *Indiana*. Hearing of these self-sacrificing tactics, Chiyoda's skipper, Captain Eiichiro Jyo, perceived a notion he thought might offset the devastating losses Japanese air power was suffering from the blistering antiaircraft fire the Americans surrounded their ships with during aerial assaults.

If an airplane became a weapon flown by a fanatical and willing pilot who did not bother to dodge lethal antiaircraft fire and interceptors, the odds of delivering substantial destruction were greatly increased. There would be no need for bombardiers or gunners, and each plane would need only enough precious fuel for a one-way trip. All the pilot would have to do was aim at a mark and pray the defenders would not score a direct hit.

Jyo passed on his recommendations to his superiors. The commander of Carrier Division Three, Rear Admiral Sueo Obayashi, was captivated by this notion of "special attack units," but Mobile Fleet commander Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa and Combined Fleet commander Admiral Soemu Toyoda were markedly cool toward the idea. Along with many other high-ranking officers, they believed their remaining veteran airmen would be able to mount telling conventional resistance to the Allies, especially after the delivery of revolutionary new jet- and rocket-powered warplanes being developed in cooperation with Germany.

As 1944 wore on, Japan came under increasing bombing attacks from massive Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers flown from newly captured airfields on Saipan in the Mariana Islands. This drastically cut into production of the new technology, making it unlikely the innovative weapons could be deployed in time to avoid defeat. That autumn Rear Admiral Takajiro

it out and igniting a damaging fire. *Enterprise* again turned for the drydocks.

Still, the aerial attacks on Ugaki's airfields temporarily took the edge off the suicide offensive. Scattered attacks resumed on the 17th. Corporal Fred Reese, a rifleman in the 2nd Marine Division, later recalled that a Zero charged his LST so low it was "skimming the waves," but the coxswain yanked the craft around so that only the plane's wing struck it, inflicting little damage.

On the 20th, 40 Japanese aimed for the supply fleet moored just off Okinawa's west coast but again displayed poor target selection. They dove on the encircling destroyers, crippling *Chase, Register,* and *Thatcher.* One pilot crashed his Zero into the drifting hulk of an abandoned LST.

The Allies again targeted the sprawling Kyushu airfields on May 23, this time using a just-arrived squadron of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters. Renowned and dreaded for their pulverizing .50-caliber firepower, these fighters destroyed 84 parked aircraft, including a number of the twin-engine Betty bombers used to launch the Ohka rockets. This destructive preemptive strike left Ugaki with just 65 aircraft for Kikusui 7.

The small number of available planes coupled with violent thunderstorms to severely limit the damage done by the next attacks. Just eight ships, none larger than a destroyer, were damaged, and none sunk. Ugaki tried to achieve the element of surprise by sending the next offensive immediately, but this wave, too, flew into dirty weather. Two Aichi Val dive-bombers did manage to strike the destroyer *Braine* off Ie Shima, setting her afire and killing 66 sailors, and a lone kamikaze crashed into the destroyer *Forrest,* killing five men and leaving her dead in the water.

Vice Admiral Matome Ugaki, the father of the kamikaze air fleets that attacked Allied naval vessels off Okinawa and elsewhere in the Pacific, was photographed before taking off on his own kamikaze mission.

The following dawn a suicide flight of Nakajima Irving night fighters and Yokosuka Frances bombers (all twin-engine planes) attacked Radar Station 15, virtually disintegrating the destroyer *Drexler* and killing 158 of her crew. Two hours later another formation made a potentially crippling assault on the Allies' main supply anchorage but because of poor aim sank only one freighter, *Josiah Snelling,* and slightly damaged four other merchantmen.

The final attack of Kikusui 8 came just after midnight when a twin-engine plane spent 15 minutes slowly circling the destroyer *Shubrick,* lulling her crew into assuming it was a reconnaissance plane. The pilot suddenly turned and plowed into the stern just over the engine room, ripping a 30-foot hole in her deck and hull. Surprisingly, only 32 men were killed, but damage control could not stanch the gaping wound and she began to settle in the water. She foundered just after the last of her crew were removed. *Shubrick* was one of the last victims of Operation Ten-Go.

Although the kamikazes would keep coming through the first three weeks of June, the Allies declared Okinawa secure on the 18th. The last major campaign of World War II ground to a conclusion as Ugaki, Ohnishi, and their fellow commanders began hoarding their remaining warplanes and approximately 5,000 pilots in training for the anticipated amphibious invasion of Japan's home islands. Then the Americans used a horrific new martial technology to immolate the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A cease-fire went into effect August 16, 1945.

This was also the day Ugaki practiced what he had been preaching, flying a Zero in a final attack on Task Force 58. He never made it. An American flying a Corsair shot him down before he reached the fleet. Ohnishi followed suit. On that morning he wrote a final message to his country's young people: "You are the treasure of the nation. With all the fervor of the special attackers, strive for the welfare of Japan and for peace throughout the world."

Perhaps he did not notice the incongruity of an adjuration for peace coming from a warlord who had sent a multitude of young men to flaming death and then committed suicide himself, leaving the next generation to rebuild their ravaged islands without him. He likely saw no place for himself there in peacetime. □

Kelly Bell has been writing professionally from his home in Tyler, Texas, since 1981. His work has been published in such periodicals as Command, Strategy & Tactics, *and* Muzzle Loader.

Ohnishi arrived in the Philippines to take command of the First Air Fleet, and advocates of the special attacks found their champion.

Japanese culture had always glorified self-sacrifice for a cause, and no samurai was more militant than Ohnishi. He could think of nothing nobler for a Japanese soldier than to die for his country and cause. For him, deliberately flying a bomb-laden warplane into ships manned by Western barbarians was the ultimate act of heroism.

The suicide squadrons would be called kamikaze (Divine Wind) in honor of the medieval typhoon that destroyed the Japan-bound invasion fleet of Genghis Khan. With Okinawa being the Allies' obvious next objective, Ohnishi commenced preparations for Japanese pilots to die in its defense. The Bushido cult would honor their memory. The Americans and British would remember them much more ruefully. □

U.S. Army Art

In this heroic and romanticized depiction by a contemporary war artist, kamikaze pilots await orders to man their planes for a one-way strike against the U.S. Navy off Okinawa. Stationed at Tachikawa Airfield near Tokyo, these young pilots, wearing ceremonial white scarves and samurai swords, are prepared to die for the emperor.

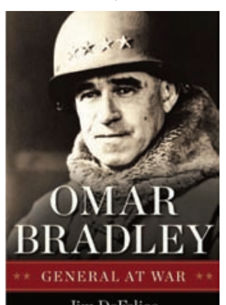
By Al Hemingway

National Archives

The Consummate General

Outwardly modest and unassuming, General Omar Bradley nonetheless made huge contributions to the Allied victory in World War. II.

AS A SMALL CHILD GROWING UP IN MISSOURI, OMAR BRADLEY WAS TAUGHT that honesty and hard work were virtues one should strive for in leading a decent, fulfilling life. Bringing attention to oneself by bragging about one's own exploits was a quality that was not looked upon favorably by Bradley's father. Years later, when he was in command of troops in North Africa and Europe, a little notoriety, ironically, may have gone a long way to enhance his personality and let the American public learn what the average GI already knew, that Bradley was a competent general who cared about his troops.



In this new biography of the U.S. Army's last five-star general, *Omar Bradley: General at War* (Regnery Publishing Co., Washington, D.C., 2011, 452 pp., photos, index, notes, $29.95, hardcover), historian Jim DeFelice closely examines Bradley's 35-year career as a soldier and his close relationship with Eisenhower, Patton, and Montgomery.

Bradley came from a humble background. His father, a local school teacher, taught the young boy how to fish and hunt. When his father died, Bradley was devastated. The young Bradley persevered because of the values deeply instilled in him by his father. He would carry this stoicism with him for the rest of his life.

Bradley was accepted and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1915, 44th out of 164 cadets. The class produced 59 generals and was to become known as the "class the stars fell on."

It was at the academy that Bradley honed his tactical skills, often called the "science of the battlefield." Bradley joined a small cadre of cadets in an informal setting conducted by Lieutenant Forrest Harding that would reap immeasurable benefits when he was commanding large bodies of troops during World War II.

His quiet, efficient demeanor won over superiors, and he rose through the ranks quickly. He was working in General George C. Marshall's office at Fort Benning, Georgia, prior to the war. There he was instrumental in the formation and training of the 2nd Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne Division. It was also there that Bradley got to work closely with George Patton. Although the two had vastly different personalities, the pair enjoyed a close and, for the most part, affable relationship throughout the war.

For his nearly 30 years in the Army, Bradley had yet to see actual combat. It is ironic that, as a general, he would come close to death on numerous occasions while traveling near the front as a corps and army group commander. After his superlative performance in Africa and Sicily, he was tapped by Marshall to lead an army group for the D-Day landings at Normandy.

Bradley's no nonsense approach to combat was instrumental in revolutionizing training, coordinating the air and ground forces, and assisting in implementing the concept of integrated air power and ground assaults. His logistical planning for the Normandy landings was on a scale never before seen in war. It was a Herculean effort that proved essential in maintaining a constant flow of supplies to the troops in the field.

Major General Omar N. Bradley and Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair confer during the maneuvers of the Third Army in Louisiana in August 1942.

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A Most Stalwart and Reliable Ally

Is Israel indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier?

In previous *hasbarah* (educating and clarifying) messages, we made clear what a tremendous asset for our country Israel is. We gave many examples of its contribution to American safety in that important area of the world. But there is much more.

What are the facts?

Turmoil in the Middle East. There is upheaval in the Middle East. Governments shift, and the future of this vital area is up in the air. In those dire circumstances, it is a tremendous comfort to our country that Israel, a beacon of Western values, is its stalwart and unshakable ally.

Unreliable "allies." Egypt, a long-term "ally" of our country, is the beneficiary of billions of dollars of American aid. Its dictator, Hosni Mubarak has been dethroned. As of now, it is unclear who and what will be Egypt's new government. It is widely assumed, however, that it may be the Muslim Brotherhood. Far from being a religious organization, as its name would imply, it is dominated by fanatical radicals, ardent antagonists of the West, obsessed anti-Semites, and sworn enemies of the State of Israel. If the Muslim Brotherhood would indeed come to power, a bloody war, more violent than anything that has come before, is likely to ensue.

"What a comfort for our country to have stalwart and completely reliable Israel in its corner..."

Saudi Arabia, a tyrannical kingdom, is another important "ally" of the U.S. It is the most important source of petroleum, the lifeblood of the industrial world. It is, however, totally unreliable and hostile to all the values for which the United States stands. The precedent of Iran cannot fail to be on the minds of our government. The Shah of Iran was a staunch ally of the U.S. We lavished billions of dollars and huge quantities of our most advanced weapons on him. But, virtually from one day to the next, the mullahs and the ayatollahs – fanatical enemies of our country, of Israel, and of anything Western – came to power. Instead of friends and allies, Iran's theocratic government became the most virulent enemy of the United States. Could something like that happen in Saudi Arabia? It is not at all unlikely!

Other U.S. allies in the region – Jordan, the "new" Iraq, and the Gulf emirates – are even weaker and less reliable reeds to lean on. Libya, which once, under King Idris, hosted the Wheeler Air Base, became an enemy of the U.S. under the loathsome Khaddafi. Turkey, once a strong ally, has cast its lot with Iran.

A stalwart partner. Israel, in contrast, presents a totally different picture. Israel's reliability, capability, credibility and stability, are enormous and irreplaceable assets for our country. Many prominent military people and elected representatives have recognized this. Gen. John Keegan, a former chief of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, determined that Israel's contribution to U.S. intelligence was "equal to five CIA's." Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said that "The intelligence received from Israel exceeds the intelligence received from all NATO countries combined. The Soviet military hardware that was transferred by Israel to the USA tilted the global balance of power in favor of our country."

In 1981, Israel bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor. While at first condemned by virtually the whole world – sad to say, including the United States – it saved our country a nuclear confrontation with Iraq. At the present time, US soldiers in Iraq and in Afghanistan benefit from Israel's experience in combating Improvised Explosive Devices, car bombs and suicide bombers. Israel is the most advanced battle-tested laboratory for U.S. military systems. The F-16 jet fighter, for instance, includes over 600 Israeli-designed modifications, which saved billions of dollars and years of research and development.

But there is more: Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank. Its superb harbors, its outstanding military installations, the air- and sea-lift capabilities, and the trained manpower to maintain sophisticated equipment are readily at hand in Israel.

Israel does receive substantial benefits from the United States – a yearly contribution of $3 billion – all of it in military assistance, no economic assistance at all. The majority of this contribution must be spent in the US, generating thousands of jobs in our defense industries.

Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier. If it were not for Israel, thousands of American troops would have to be stationed in the Middle East, at the cost of billions of dollars a year. In contrast to the unreliable friendship of Muslim countries, the friendship and support of Israel are unshakable because they are based on shared values, love of peace and democracy. What a comfort for our country to have stalwart and completely reliable Israel in its corner, especially at a time when in this strategic area turmoil, upheaval and revolution are the order of the day. Yes, Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East.

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Gerardo Joffe, President

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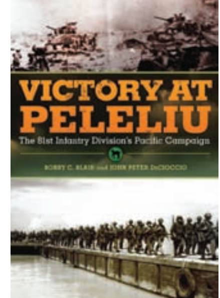
He played a pivotal role in the breakout from the beachheads after the D-Day landings. He was also flexible as the American Army drove deeper into France, and ultimately Germany, to the ever-changing situation that developed.

In spite of all his success, the author is quick to point out Bradley's shortcomings. The failure of the intelligence in the Battle of the Bulge, his failure to close the Falaise Gap, and ignoring the media and not using it to his full advantage are a few of the items the author alludes to in his book.

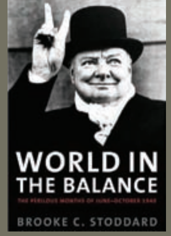
Nevertheless, Omar Bradley was an extremely knowledgeable general who achieved success through hard work and due diligence when it came to his profession. He was, without doubt, the consummate general.

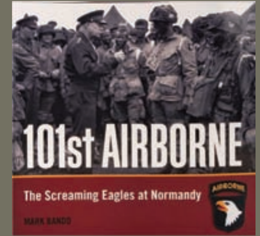
"If an army benefits from having a Patton, it truly succeeds when it has a Bradley to advise him, direct him, and supply him," the author writes.

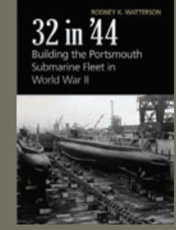


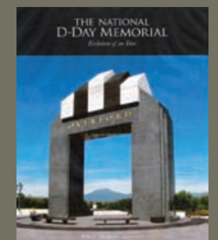
Victory at Peleliu: The 81st Infantry Division's Pacific Campaign by Bobby C. Blair and John Peter DeCioccio, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2011, 310 pp., photos, maps, $34.95, hardcover.

Short Bursts









World in Balance: The Perilous Months of June-October 1940 by Brooke C. Stoddard, Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2011, 256 pp., notes, index, photographs, hardcover.

The year 1940 was not a very good one for the Allies. France fell, the British made a hasty retreat from Dunkirk to avoid annihilation and capture, and Belgium, Norway, Poland, Denmark, plus other countries, had fallen under the control of the Nazi boot.

Only the island nation of Great Britain remained to be taken and Hitler had plans to do just that—by bombing them into submission and then invading. The British government had no one to turn to for assistance (although the United States had not entered the war, it was providing war material through the Lend-Lease Act) and had to face Hitler's hordes alone.

And face the Nazis they did. Inspired by the words of their cigar-smoking, defiant Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the English stood steadfast and finally beat the tyrannical despot's air force during those frightening and uncertain months of the Battle of Britain in 1940.

101st Airborne: The Screaming Eagles at Normandy by Mark Bando, Quayside Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, 156 pp., index, photographs, $29.99, softcover.

Enough cannot be written about the heroic exploits of the "Screaming Eagles" and their outstanding performance during the Normandy invasion on June 6, 1944. This book is chock full of photos, some color and from private collections, that have never before been seen.

Bando traces the combat of the 101st Airborne from D-Day to war's end. There are even chapters devoted to the 82nd Airborne and another relating the story of the real Private Ryan, Frederick "Fritz" Niland, who lost three of his brothers during the time he jumped into Normandy. His account was used by Steven Spielberg in his 1998 movie *Saving Private Ryan.*

32 in '44: Building the Portsmouth Submarine Fleet in World War II by Rodney K. Watterson, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2011, 172 pp., index, notes, photographs, $34.95, hardcover.

After the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, America mobilized for war. One of the items that the U.S. was in short supply of was submarines. Shipbuilding companies across the nation went all-out to increase their production, and one of the top manufacturers during that period was the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in New Hampshire, which launched a record four submarines on January 27, 1944.

Prior to the war, Portsmouth had been producing just two subs a year and employing about 2,000 workers. Those numbers would increase dramatically during the ensuing years, with a record 32 vessels being launched by a highly motivated group of more than 20,000 employees.

The author highlights the professionalism of these workers, and the pioneering approach that management undertook to accomplish these record-setting achievements.

Bombs Away! The World War II Bombing Campaigns over Europe by John R. Bruning, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, 292 pp., index, notes, photographs, maps, $50.00, hardcover.

This coffee table-size book covers the six-year strategic bombing campaign over Europe by Allied forces and early German offensive efforts during the Battle of Britain. The author begins with the evolution of the bomber aircraft from both the Allies and the German perspective. By implementing a plan of attack that included not only air, but sea and land warfare as well, the Allies were finally able to achieve victory.

The book has some great photographs, some in color, that have never before been published. There are maps included to give the reader a better insight into the bombing campaign. A map of Great Britain depicting the Royal Air Force and German Luftwaffe units deployed during the Battle of Britain is very detailed and a wonderful addition to the book.

The National D-Day Memorial: Evolution of an Idea by Byron Dickson, Dickson Architects, Roanoke, VA, 2011, 104 pp., $24.95, softcover.

Byron Dickson, the Roanoke architect who assisted in designing the D-Day Memorial, located in Bedford, Virginia, has given a superb account of the planning, design, construction, and dedication of the monument that was built as a tribute to those who stormed ashore on the five beaches on that fateful day in June 1944.

The massive 88-acre site is dominated by the 44-foot-high Overlord Arch that commemorates the where, what, and when of the monumental event. The grounds are dotted with gardens, sculptures, gazebos, and an "invasion pool" depicting a soldier, holding his M-1 Garand rifle over his head, attempting to make it safely ashore.

The book is filled with numerous photographs illustrating the construction phase, and artist's sketches used as models for the project. Nestled near the Blue Ridge Mountains, the memorial is a fitting tribute to those who participated in D-Day, especially the soldiers who gave their lives to free Europe from the grip of fascism. □

At long last a book has emerged chronicling the exploits of the 81st Infantry Division in World War II. The unit, called the Wildcats, fought on Angaur and Peleliu in September-November 1944 in some of the hardest and bloodiest combat in the Pacific Theater. Much has been written about the exploits of the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu, but very little about the 81st Infantry, which performed magnificently during the operation.

On September 17, 1944, the Wildcats, minus the 323rd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), hit the beach at Angaur Island, just six miles from Peleliu. The soldiers moved rapidly until they encountered a heavily defended area in the northwest section of the island referred to as "the Bowl." Here, the Japanese put up a dogged resistance and repulsed numerous attacks. Finally, because of lack of food and water, the enemy opposition waned. Instead of attempting to seize each cave and sustaining more casualties, the 81st Division commanders decided to seal the caves, leaving the enemy to die a slow and painful death.

Meanwhile, the 1st Marine Division and the 323rd RCT were attacking an area on Peleliu known as the Umurbrogol Pocket. It was a coral ridgeline honeycombed with caves that housed enemy artillery, machine guns, and snipers. The Japanese fended off repeated assaults by the Marines and the soldiers, and the position was soon dubbed "Bloody Nose Ridge."

The authors illustrate the numerous contributions that the Wildcats made during the operations, such as developing creative measures in the use of sandbags and allowing them to provide protection for artillery, heavy weapons, and as barriers when crawling toward enemy fire. They manhandled pack howitzers as close to cave openings as possible to gain a better advantage. By using a pump to spray oil and igniting it with phosphorous grenades, the soldiers were able to burn the enemy from their coral sanctuaries and out into the open. The troops built a conveyor to bring supplies up the steep coral ridges and wounded back down in a quick and timely fashion.

For those readers who want to learn more about the Battles of Peleliu and Angaur from another perspective, this book is a good choice. It is a well-written account giving long overdue recognition to a fine fighting unit in World War II.

Last of the Few: The Battle of Britain in the Words of the Pilots Who Won It by Max Arthur, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2011, 304 pp., index, photographs, $24.95, hardcover.

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few," Winston Churchill said when the Royal Air Force had beaten the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain. After the prime minister had uttered his now-famous words, the pilots and crews who had performed so magnificently during the summer and fall of 1940 would forever be known as "The Few."

In his new book, former RAF pilot Max Arthur, a well-known oral historian in England, has spent numerous hours compiling a history of the air battle that took place in the skies over Great Britain, in the words of those who fought it.

Civilians had a ringside seat as British fighters scrambled skyward to meet the German Luftwaffe to do battle and save their island nation. In the end, the British won the day—but not without horrendous losses of their own. In addition to the more than 1,500 aircraft

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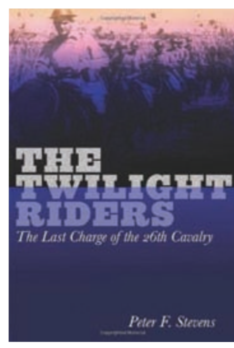
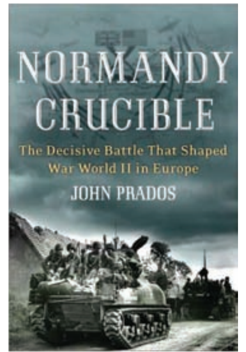
destroyed and the nearly 1,000 pilots killed and wounded, civilian casualties were 23,002 dead and another 32,138 wounded. On one raid alone in December 1940, almost 3,000 civilians were killed.

Despite the threat of death looming over the flight crews like an evil specter, RAF pilots answered the call as Sergeant Fred Roberts, a member of No. 19 Squadron, recalled: "We didn't really discuss death—if a pilot were killed, it was horrible to think that half an hour before we'd been strapping him in a plane. But he'd be gone—and there'd be a replacement tomorrow. That was as far as our thoughts went. There was no such thing as stress in those days, there was no counseling or anything like that. It was an act of war—they died, they were killed."





The Twilight Riders: The Last Charge of the 26th Cavalry by Peter F. Stevens, Lyons Press, Guilford, CT, 2011, 290 pp., notes, index, photographs, $24.95, hardcover.

When Japanese infantry waded ashore in the Philippine Archipelago in December 1941, General Douglas MacArthur told Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright he needed to have units fight a delaying action so that the bulk of his forces could withdraw and make a stand on the Bataan Peninsula. Wainwright called upon his best troopers, the 26th Cavalry, horsemen comprised mostly of Philippine Scouts and led by white officers, to do the job.

For nearly two months, the cavalrymen fought superbly against overwhelming odds and kept the enemy off balance. On the morning of January 16, 1942, near the village of Morong, Lieutenant Edwin P. Ramsey and his troopers were ordered to stand down after a grueling two-day reconnaissance patrol. When word reached them that the Japanese had breached the center of the line, Ramsey's men were personally ordered by Wainwright to take the advance guard.

As the horse soldiers inched their way into Morong, the enemy opened fire. Ramsey observed scores of Japanese soldiers crossing the Batolan Bridge and making their way into the village. Realizing they were still disorganized, Ramsey gave the order to charge.

Ramsey would later recall, "To them we must have seemed a vision from another century, wild-eyed horses pounding headlong; cheering, whooping men firing from saddles."

The 26th drove the Japanese from Morong and saved the day. It was the last mounted charge in the history of the U.S. Cavalry. When Wainwright surrendered to the Japanese, some of the cavalrymen joined guerrilla forces and fought until U.S. forces liberated the Philippines in 1944. The horsemen suffered 301 killed and countless wounded during the campaign. If it were not for their heroic stand, the enemy would have seized the Philippines much sooner. As Wainwright wrote in his official report: "This devoted little band of horsemen had maintained the best traditions of the American Cavalry."

Normandy Crucible: The Decisive Battle That Shaped World War II in Europe by John Prados, NAL Caliber, New York, 2011, 336 pp., notes, index, $25.95, hardcover.

Noted military historian John Prados, intrigued by the Normandy invasion, offers a fresh look at the campaign that he believes shaped the outcome of World War II. Prados closely examines how the Allies gained a foothold on the beaches but were stopped when German resistance stiffened. This prompted him to examine intelligence reports, official records, and other data to gain a better insight into why and how the enemy could rebound so quickly after such a stunning defeat at the beachheads.

With the American Army's breakout at St. Lo and the British advance on Caen, it appeared that the Allies were once again on the move and the downfall of Germany would proceed at a quicker pace. However, with the stunning offensive in the Ardennes, known as the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans once again hastily reorganized and smashed the Allied line.

Prados's narrative not only gives the reader the big picture of the strategies employed by the commanders in the field, but also personal accounts from those intimately involved in the fighting.

Once again, Prados does a bang-up job and offers new data on a period of World War II that has been well researched and written about for more than 60 years.

Pacific Air: How Fearless Flyboys, Peerless Aircraft, and Fast Flattops Conquered the Skies in the War with Japan by David Sears, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA, 2011, 372 pp., index, notes, photographs, $27.50, hardcover.

The author, a Vietnam veteran and naval officer, has written an excellent book focusing on the exploits of World War II pilots whose innovative approach to aerial combat helped the United States gain air supremacy that eventually defeated the Japanese Empire.

In the early days of the Pacific War, American planes were no match for the quick and nimble Mitsubishi Zero fighter. The plane, piloted by experienced Japanese aviators, dominated the skies. Gradually, as the Grumman Corporation's F4F Wildcat and F6F Hellcat fighters and TBF Avenger torpedo bomber and the rugged Vought F4U Corsair fighter appeared on the scene, the tide began to turn.

Navy pilots such as David McCampbell, Edward "Butch" O'Hare, and John Thach made a difference in the air war through their ground-breaking tactics that would result in more than 5,000 enemy aircraft being destroyed, an incredible 19-to-1 ratio, and aiding in winning the pivotal Battle of the Philippine Sea.

Sears's account is a tribute to the men who pioneered the aerial tactics that enabled the Navy and Marine aviators to beat the Japanese at their own game—and achieve victory.

Churchill's War Lab: Code-breakers, Boffins and Innovators: The Mavericks Churchill Led to Victory by Taylor Downing, Overlook Press, New York, 2011, 416 pp., index, notes, photographs, $30.00, hardcover.

It takes much more than armies, logistics, and leadership to win battles and, ultimately, wars. A good, solid intelligence system and innovative thinkers that can devise new and improved weaponry, radar, and other war-related equipment are also essential.

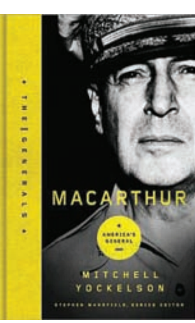
No one knew this better than Winston Churchill. And during World War II the ubiquitous British prime minister, who had his hands in nearly every aspect of England's war machine, assembled some of the top scientists, code breakers, and analysts to combat the Nazi threat.

One of the most unusual members of this odd mix was Professor Frederick Lindemann, a renowned physicist, who had hobnobbed with Albert Einstein prior to the war while visiting Berlin. Although crass and insensitive in social surroundings, this absent-minded professor developed a method for pilots to come out of a tailspin during World War I.

Lindemann also had the uncanny ability to summarize most technical or scientific matters very quickly so even a layman could understand them. This proved invaluable to Churchill, who was never a math wizard, so he could read Lindemann's brief synopsis on an issue and quickly comprehend it.

Downing has written an interesting account of another lesser-known facet of World War II. He gives us a wonderful glimpse into Churchill's inner war room and the characters who occupied it. But, with all their idiosyncrasies and quirks, this unlikely group helped end the conflict and achieve victory for the Allied cause.

MacArthur: America's General by Mitchell Yockelson, Thomas Nelson Books, Nashville, TN, 2011, 224 pp., notes, index, $19.99, hardcover.



Yockelson examines the life of arguably America's most famous and controversial general and his more than 50 years of service to his country. As the author states, MacArthur's life and experiences were not without flaws, especially during the 1932 Bonus Army march in Washington, D.C., when he ordered the burning of ramshackle houses built by World War I veterans who had descended upon the nation's capital to demand the bonus that had been promised to them after the war.

Egotistical and arrogant, MacArthur butted heads with presidents, the most famous encounter being with Harry Truman during the Korean War in which Truman finally axed him. On another occasion, MacArthur got into a heated debate over the Army budget with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and made some disparaging remarks to the president. Roosevelt admonished him, but when he offered to resign, FDR calmly told him that they both had to set aside their differences and work together.

This is a gem of a book that delivers new information on the charismatic General Douglas MacArthur. □

top secret

Continued from page 30

Insolence). "I think it was the only memorial service anywhere held for Hitler. In Germany, certainly not."

Wickert was relieved that Hitler was dead. "[I was] suddenly elated. Like a pressure had gone from me. Like, for instance, you have a toothache or backache. You get used to it. Maybe for years you have a backache. But then suddenly you are free of any complaint. It was a quiet elation, a freeing."

Soon after the memorial service came confirmation of news that Wickert had reported in 1944 about Jews being killed in Nazi concentration camps. The first word of the atrocities had come from British and American broadcasts. Wickert was ordered by Ambassador Stahmer to retract his reports.

"My impression had been that the army was still very intact, not doing any atrocities," Wickert said. "When I left Germany in 1940 there was still the old German officers' morality. And then this happened. It was absolutely impossible for me to understand it. At first I didn't believe it."

With Hitler gone, the embassy staff rebelled at taking orders from his yes-man, the grieving Stahmer. "We wrote him a letter and said, 'We don't take any orders from you anymore. You have failed in every way.' This is the letter we sent him," he said, turning to a page in his autobiography.

The embassy in shambles, Wickert retreated to the area around Mount Fuji, where he spent the next two years with his wife and two sons reading philosophy and American newspapers while writing two novels and two novellas. Finally, he was writing again, a pleasure he had denied himself during the war because he thought it would be unseemly to write love stories while people were dying all around him. He supported his family with installment payments from a war insurance policy he had taken out in Tokyo and by trading their valuables on the black market.

"It was two years of leave in the midst of life to study, work, do whatever you wanted to do. It was wonderful," he smiled.

The Wickerts' reverie ended in October 1947 when they returned to Germany on a troop carrier. While his wife and children stayed with his parents, Erwin was detained in a camp in southern Germany. By deceiving the American officer in charge of the camp, Wickert was able to gain early release.

"I outsmarted and betrayed them. I mean, I was a liar," he said in a tone of voice which conveys that he was not proud of the fact.

Joining his wife and children in Heidelberg, Wickert began to piece together a living by writing radio plays. But his career was briefly halted when he was asked to prove he had been legitimately de-Nazified.

"I showed them the letter of the party leader in Shanghai who asked for my recall, saying I was a terrible character—no tact and no cooperation. And I had a letter where they told me that my book was forbidden [in Germany]. And they said, 'You'll be de-Nazified all right.' From then on I was an established radio writer."

Wickert built a lucrative career as an award-winning script writer and broadcaster before rejoining the foreign service in 1955, serving in Paris, Bonn, and London before being named ambassador to Romania in 1971. He returned to his career as a writer after retiring as ambassador to China, where he observed the post-Mao opening of the country between 1976 and 1980.

One issue that Wickert had been reluctant to discuss was his relationship with his father, who was a devoted Nazi. Finally, he was willing to comment on the subject two weeks after the death of his sister.

"Of course it would have been … I would have preferred, I mean, if I had a father who in any way respected my ideas," he responded when asked whether he had hoped to reconcile with his father. "But … I saw it was impossible."

Wickert cleared his throat and then explained in a halting and sad voice that, though his father lived until age 92, he was an unrepentant follower of Hitler.

"He held to his beliefs—very stubborn. I mean, he was an unfortunate character, " he remarked. "I didn't hate him. I saw him shortly before he died, and I talked with him but knew he wouldn't understand me anymore. He wouldn't understand anything at all because he was more or less in a coma. But I pitied him because of his way of leading his life. That's it."

During a life of adventure and intrigue, Erwin Wickert somehow managed to remain an intensely private person. He was willing to share glimpses of the past; however, he set solid boundaries and much of what he remembers will remain only with him. He passed away on March 26, 2008. □

Sherri Kimmel is the senior editor of Dickinson Magazine *and director of editorial services at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and lives in nearby Mechanicsburg. Kimmel won a research grant from Dickinson College in 2002, which funded two trips to Germany to interview Erwin Wickert.*

SHOOTERS RULE AT E3.

If a single word could succinctly sum up this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo—aka E3, which took place from June 7-9—it would be SHOOTERS. That may not sound much different from, well, pretty much the entire last decade, but the miasma of rat-a-tat-tat was particularly thick this year. That's not to say it's entirely a bad thing. Heck, outside of strategy games, shooting is more or less the bread and butter of the virtual WWII enthusiast, and it looks like that won't be changing anytime soon.

Despite the fact that the expo was overwhelmed by more modern takes on war—most of which cowered under the looming shadow of The Big Two, *Battlefield 3* and *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*—there's still plenty of WWII action to be had, and not all of it puts you in permanent first-person mode. British developer Wargaming.net, for instance, was on display in full force. WWII tanks held their ground menacingly outside of the convention center in a promotional push for their Player vs. Player (PvP) focused, free-to-play *World of Tanks*.

World of Tanks may have been showing off a bit at the expo, but it's available now under the "Play 4 Free" model, with micro-transactions bolstering its in-game economy. As for what lies ahead, read on for a couple of standout titles that made an appearance at E3 2011.

BROTHERS IN ARMS: FURIOUS 4

At first glance—a very distant first glance, that is—one might mistake *Furious 4* for another simple addition to the storied *Brothers in Arms* franchise. Established in 2005 with Gearbox Software's *Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30,* the series has followed a true-story-inspired continuity for two sequels and a handful of spinoffs and ports. The last proper entry, *Hell's Highway,* carried on the legacy of the 101st Airborne Division, but that all ends with next year's wilder, more off-the-cuff *Furious 4*.

Furious 4 is more Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* than anything, weaving together a fictional take on World War II, with the titular group of Four heading deep into Nazi territory to target Hitler himself. Along the way they'll find no shortage of ways to maim and torture Nazi soldiers, resulting in some gruesome, but no doubt entertaining death sequences that recall Gearbox's own manic multiplayer shooter, *Borderlands*.

When interviewed about the game, Ubisoft's Nouredine Abboud said, "We didn't derive inspiration from *Inglorious Basterds,* but when the film was shown, and we saw it, it reinforced the confidence we had that this would be something that many people would like."

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Gearbox Software

SYSTEM(S)
Xbox 360, PS3, PC

AVAILABLE
2012

Of course, when such drastic changes are applied to an established franchise, some fans are bound to find their feathers a tad ruffled. Reactions to *Furious 4* were no different, but Ubisoft has been doing its best to assuage fears that the final chapter in Sergeant Matthew Baker's epic tale of war is being overlooked for something flashier. In the end, it seems to come down to inspiration. Abboud again: "If we had a great idea for the best sequel to *Brothers in Arms,* we would have done it. Maybe the next wave of consoles will give us some ideas of what to do that is new and different."

Well, one thing's for sure, *Furious 4* falls in the category of "new and different," so Baker's story may just have to wait a bit. The fictional Nazi slaughter will be eagerly gunning for Xbox 360, Playstation 3, and PC next year.

BIRDS OF STEEL

The first thing would-be dogfighters should notice about Konami's upcoming *Birds of Steel* is the pedigree of the developer behind it. Perhaps not as widely known as it should be, Gaijin Entertainment previously worked on *IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey*—a dynamic WWII aerial shooter boasting relatively brutal realism in its sorties—and *Apache Air Assault,* a combat flight sim featuring Apache attack helicopters. If the quality of both is any indication, *Birds of Steel* should be another air combat mission worth hotly pursuing.

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
Gaijin Entertainment

SYSTEM(S)
Xbox 360, PS3

AVAILABLE
2012

This time around Gaijin is focusing on multiplayer, both cooperative and competitive, but there's still plenty of content for the loner pilots out there. Some of the historical missions *Birds of Steel* visits include the battles of Midway, Guadalcanal, and Coral Sea, the Siege of Malta, and the attack on Pearl Harbor. Fictional missions mix it up with the real thing, as well, and over 100 famous aircraft—from Spitfires to Zeros—will be selectable when the game hits, spanning all sides of the war.

In addition to standard Co-op and Versus modes, there will also be monthly dogfight tournaments and the ability to create, edit, and share videos of your smooth, wing-ripping aerial moves. As of the time of this writing there's no concrete release date, but expect *Birds of Steel* sometime next year.

THE SKIES BEYOND

Speaking of dogfighting, *Birds of Steel* wasn't alone on the showroom floor. Its gritty realism was contested at E3 this year thanks to two titles that have graced these pages in preview form before. The first, *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars* (covered most recently), features a more relaxed, arcade-style approach to the genre, without being entirely free of simulation trappings. One thing that wasn't known at the time of our first write-up, though, is the fact that the Playstation 3 version of *Air Conflicts* will support compatibility with Playstation Move motion controls. The game is also scheduled for release on Xbox 360 and PC.

Combat Wings: The Great Battles of World War II is another title we've covered before, but was nevertheless present at the expo. As its name suggests, *Combat Wings* puts players in real show-stopping historical battles, spanning four campaigns with 30 missions and 60 playable planes. We should finally see some of that head-spinning combat this September on Xbox 360, Playstation 3, and PC.

insight

Continued from page 23

America" in the movie version of *This Is the Army.* Warner Brothers, the studio that purchased the film rights from Berlin for $250,000, which was promptly donated to the Army, agreed. The five-minute color cameo, which later gained historic status, was staged in a Hollywood studio in early May 1943.

In a massive recreated radio theater backed by a large orchestra and chorus conducted by Jack Miller, Smith belted out "God Bless America" with poise and conviction. Smith sang the verse and three choruses in one of the movie's most unforgettable highlights.

This Is the Army was especially significant in that African American performers were included in the cast at Mr. Berlin's insistence. *This Is the Army* thus became the only integrated unit in the military at that time, with white and African American soldiers working and living together.

Author Lawrence Bergreen has written that the daring, progressive decision was not so much from Berlin's social beliefs as from his show business background and savvy. African American performers had long been stars and popular with both white and African American audiences. Berlin was simply incorporating what he was familiar with into the Army by integrating the revue.

Among the numbers performed by African American actors was "That's What the Well-Dressed Man in Harlem Will Wear," which featured champion boxer Joe Louis as himself in the movie version.

This Is the Army eventually raised more than $10 million for the Army Emergency Relief Fund from the stage productions and movie version until performances ceased at the end of 1945.

The United States Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in honor of Irving Berlin in 2002. The stamp portrait is a colorized version of an Edward Steichen photograph of Berlin, taken in black and white in 1932. The portrait of Irving Berlin is superimposed over part of the original handwritten score of "God Bless America," with Berlin's signature from that score at the bottom of the stamp. □

Dr. Sheldon Winkler, a professor emeritus at Temple University, has authored or co-authored six textbooks and over 170 articles and chapters in professional journals and textbooks on a variety of dental and medical topics. A frequent contributor to WWII History, *he is currently writing a book on the music of World War II. He resides in Scottsdale, Arizona.*

tobruk

Continued from page 61

aircraft were brought down.

Though Rommel had vowed to take Tobruk, such was not to be, at least not yet. More fighting lay ahead for him and his Afrika Korps in the war of movement that characterized the North African theater. Downplaying the battle, German Maj. Gen. Alfred Toppe would later reclassify the attacks of April 13-14 as "raids" and summarize the failure with the phrase, "The forces available were inadequate for the task."

Another attack on Tobruk occurred in late April, lasting into early May. In this assault the Germans made more gains but again failed to take the fortress. When Rommel returned after the Battle of Gazala, he mounted another attack that took the city, along with thousands of prisoners and vast amounts of supplies, on June 21, 1942. Later, in retreat after El Alamein, the Axis would leave the town to the advancing Allies without a shot fired.

Like Rommel, the Australian troops who fought there also made a lasting reputation for themselves, one that added to their nation's military lore. During the siege, German Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels referred to the defenders as "rats." With their characteristic pluck, the Commonwealth troops took the name for themselves. From then on nicknamed the "Rats of Tobruk," they and their British and Commonwealth brethren would hold out until the British Crusader offensive pushed the Axis forces back and enabled the relief of the garrison in December.

The 9th Division had been withdrawn in October. Sent to Syria, it was there the men learned that Tobruk had finally fallen to Rommel. The division went on to fight in the Pacific, one of the few Allied units to fight against Germany, Italy, and Japan.

During the war in North Africa, Rommel's reputation grew until his very name took on the power of a sort of devil, the very mention of his presence almost a harbinger of Allied defeat. The ability of the Tobruk garrison to hold out against him became a psychological beacon of resistance to the Axis. While the size of this battle and the number of casualties suffered were relatively low compared to the larger, more epic engagements of the war, the Easter Battle was significant as the first, albeit small, victory in the saga of Fortress Tobruk. □

Frequent contributor Christopher Miskimon has served in both the infantry and field artillery branches of the U.S. Army. He resides in Denver, Colorado.

drumbeat

Continued from page 53

USS *Roper* sank *U-85* off Nags Head, North Carolina. By July 15, five more U-boats had gone down in American coastal waters. By autumn 1942, the panic along the Eastern Seaboard had subsided.

Although *U-123* was again bound for Lorient, her adventures were still not ended. Early on the 17th, she sank the 4,834-ton freighter *Alcoa Guide* with gunfire 260 miles east of Cape Hatteras.

After arriving safely in occupied France, Hardegen was whisked to Hitler's headquarters outside Rastenburg, East Prussia, where the Führer personally presented him with the oak leaves to the Knight's Cross. During the subsequent dinner, Hardegen sat to Hitler's right and shocked him by commenting on what he saw as flaws in several policies of the regime. He was particularly concerned with the dearth of aircraft carriers and with Hitler's obsession with the war in the East while turning his back on the growing threat from the West.

Following a perilous voyage to Norway to have his beloved *U-123* extensively overhauled, Hardegen turned over command to Second Officer Horst von Schroeter, then departed for Gotenhafen Training Flotilla where he would serve as an instructor. Aboard *U-123* and his earlier boat *U-147,* he had sunk 23 ships totaling 119,408 tons. His precarious health was failing as persistent diphtheria and his bleeding stomach kept him hospitalized for long stretches. After briefly serving as an infantry commander late in the war, he was captured and imprisoned by the British, who erroneously accused him of being an SS officer of the same name. He was finally released in November 1946.

Led by Hardegen, Operation Drumbeat had taken full advantage of American unpreparedness and resistance to accepting British aid in order to launch a devastating campaign against Allied shipping. Drumbeat's destructive impact far exceeded the human and material toll of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During the six months the wolf packs were allowed to rampage virtually unchecked, 397 ships and almost 5,000 men and women were killed.

Eventually, the Allies prevailed in the Battle of the Atlantic despite the best efforts of Admiral Karl Dönitz and his marauding U-boats during Operation Drumbeat. □

Kelly Bell has been writing professionally from his home in Tyler, Texas, since 1981. His work has been published in such periodicals as Command, Strategy & Tactics, *and* Muzzle Loader.

Continued from page 43

the 22nd Infantry moved against the well-defended Maupertus airfield, attacking at 11 AM on the 26th with all three battalions. It took the Americans all day to take the airfield.

After that, the 22nd turned to attack Battery Hamburg, which had stood off the Navy effectively. With fire from the 44th Field Artillery Battalion, the battery was soon silenced, and 990 Germans surrendered, filling the already swollen POW camps. With that, German defenses in the west Cotentin collapsed and armored cavalry found the area unoccupied.

Cap de la Hague was a tougher nut, with an estimated 3,000 troops defending it. On June 28, the 9th Division went in to sweep the area, while the 79th headed south to rejoin VIII Corps and the planned breakout.

The Americans attacked on the morning of the 29th, with the 47th Infantry on the north coast and the 60th in the center, on the main cape highway. Little resistance was found until the troops reached Beaumont-Hague, with GIs clambering through fortified but unoccupied positions to seize a ridge at Nicolle. From there, they assaulted a main German position with artillery support and bagged 250 prisoners.

The Germans were still fighting back, though, relying on antitank ditches and guns to stop the Americans in the open terrain. The 3rd/60th blasted through the Germans with tank destroyer and tank support and overran the key road junction on June 30. By the end of the day, the mop-up was complete, with about 6,000 POWs going in the bag, twice the number expected. The Cotentin Peninsula was liberated. Cherbourg was free.

And the port was a wreck.

"The demolition of the port is a masterful job, beyond a doubt the most complete, intensive, and best-planned demolition in history," wrote Colonel Alvin G. Viney, who prepared the original engineer plan for port rehabilitation. With nearly a month to blast open the port, von Schlieben's demolition teams had done their work well, starting as early as June 7, the day after D-Day.

All basins in the harbor were blocked with sunken ships. The harbor was strewn with mines. Gare Maritime, which controlled the electricity and heating plant for the port, had been demolished. Some 20,000 cubic yards of masonry were blasted into the large, deep basin used in peacetime for liners like the *Queen Mary.* The entrance to this basin was blocked by two large ships. Quay walls were damaged. Cranes were demolished. The ocean poured through a cratered breakwater. "The whole port was as nearly a wreck as demolitions could make of it," said the U.S. official history. Hennecke got an Iron Cross from Hitler for his efficiency.

The only good news for the Americans was that the city itself and its rail lines were in decent shape, so the Americans could move supplies and equipment into Cherbourg to clear the harbor speedily. And the city had fallen much earlier than expected, so the Americans had time to start unclogging the port.

They also had time to count the cost. In the battle for the Cotentin and Cherbourg, VII Corps had lost 2,800 killed, 5,700 missing, and 13,500 wounded. German casualties were more difficult to count, but some 39,000 men had been taken prisoner. These would be shipped to American and Canadian POW camps across the Atlantic.

There the defeated men of Cherbourg met up with more determined German POWs, Afrika Korps veterans, and U-boat crews who were still full of Nazi elitism. They did not believe the Allies were winning the war. When the bedraggled Cherbourg POWs began pouring into camps in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Manitoba, they set their longer-held brethren straight—the Allies were stomping Germany thoroughly. It was a shock for men who had also fought with Rommel, albeit in happier times in North Africa.

Von Schlieben wound up in British hands, at the senior officers' camp at Trent Park, where he and other generals whined to each other about their failures, as British wire recorders picked up every conversation for intelligence purposes. "With his pink complexion, round boyish face, huge bulk and lumbering gait he gives the appearance of an overgrown, mentally under-developed school-boy type who will bully his inferiors and toady to his superiors. At first very truculent. Polite firmness proved successful. Has more bluff than guts. Like most prisoners of war he is much inclined to self-pity. Conversation with him revealed colossal ignorance. He said the Russians were a primitive people who had achieved little. Scotland was a completely unknown place to him. He asked if it were hilly or flat," the British assessment of von Schlieben wrote. He was freed in 1947 and died in Giessen in then West Germany in 1964.

Also devastated was Col. Gen. Friedrich Dollmann, who commanded the Seventh Army. Cherbourg fell under his command, and two days after the surrender Dollmann was found dead in his headquarters' bathroom near Le Mans. Officially, he died of a heart attack. But his senior officers believed he committed suicide out of shame over the loss of Cherbourg.

Also upset was Hitler. Despite the "field of ruins," Cherbourg had not held out as long as expected, and von Schlieben's quick capitulation marked him down as a poor specimen of Nazi leadership.

Collins did better. Ahead for him was promotion to full general in 1948 and appointment as U.S. Army Chief of Staff in 1949. He served as U.S. representative on the NATO Standing Group after that, retired in 1956, and served as a consultant with Pfizer & Co. until April 1969. He died in 1987.

Now came the difficult task of cleaning up Cherbourg harbor, a Navy task, under Rear Admiral John Wilkes, who arrived on July 14, along with a few hundred Navy Seabees. They went to work, backed by six British and three American salvage vessels and scores of minesweepers, all veterans of port-clearing operations in North Africa, Palermo, and Naples. Some 133 mines were swept by July 13, but not all. By August 12, three American and one British craft were sunk.

The first freight was landed at Cherbourg on July 16, when Navy DUKWs began discharging cargoes from four Liberty ships on a specially cleared beach. But the main basins were not cleared until September 21, a three-month delay, which meant that the invasion beaches still had to be used to unload supplies. von Schlieben had done his work well. The log jam of supplies would mean that the Anglo-American advance, short of fuel, would sputter to a halt near the German frontier.

But on June 30, as engineers from the 101st Airborne Division rolled into town to help reduce strongpoints, these issues were all in the future. The engineers found massive damage to the city, but much of it intact. GIs puzzled over that French social artifact, the sidewalk urinal, and queued up to use the old Wehrmacht brothels, thoughtfully left intact and in business. Troops were warned about contracting venereal disease.

Instead, they culled souvenirs, of which there were plenty. The best one was a massive underground wine cellar liberated by the 9th Infantry Division. At first, General Eddy tried to keep his men from drinking it; then he realized how impossible that was. Besides, his men had just fought a harsh and horrific battle.

"Okay," he finally said. "Everybody take 24 hours and get drunk." □

Author David H. Lippman has been writing on World War II topics for many years. He maintains a daily website on the topic and resides in Newark, New Jersey.

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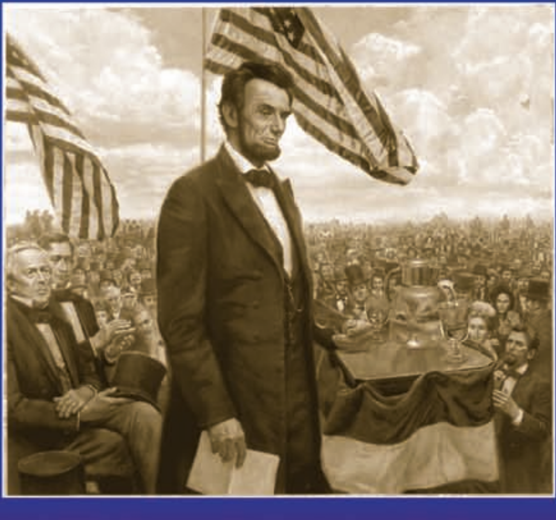

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