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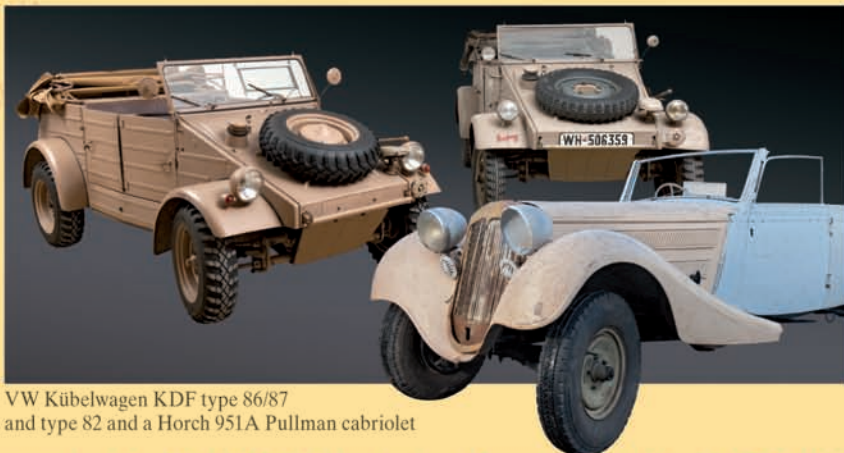


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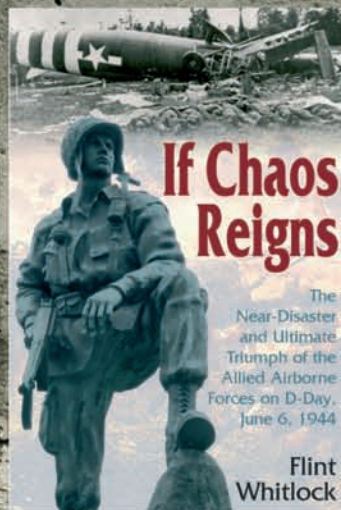
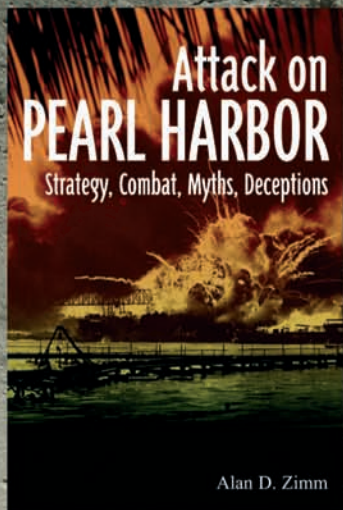
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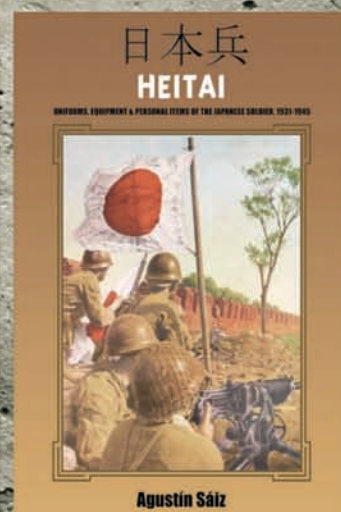
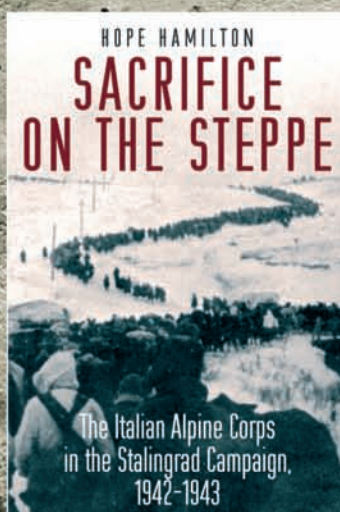
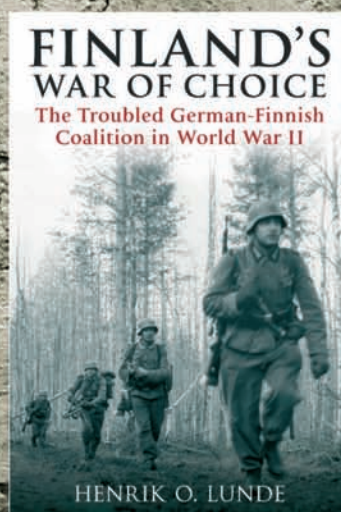
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Cover: 101st Airborne Corporal Louis Laird boards a C-47 transport plane during a training exercise in preparation for D-Day.

Photo: National Archives

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The central figure from *Band of Brothers*, Richard Winters passed into history.

THE SOFT-SPOKEN AIRBORNE SOLDIER WHO MUSED TO HIMSELF AT THE END of D-Day that should God grant him the opportunity to survive the war he would ask nothing more than a quiet little plot of land where he could live in peace has passed away. On January 2, 2011, retired Major Richard Winters, who rose to command of Company E, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, and beyond during World War II, died three weeks shy of his 93rd birthday.

Winters, whose heroism in combat and exemplary leadership skills formed the nucleus for the landmark book *Band of Brothers* by noted historian Stephen Ambrose, epitomized the great American citizen soldier. His exploits with Easy Company during the Normandy campaign, Operation Market-Garden in Holland, at Bastogne, Belgium, during the epic Battle of the Bulge, and all the way to Hitler's Eagle's Nest in the Alps of Bavaria were noted among a wider audience with the 2001 HBO miniseries of the same name.

The 506th was the first airborne unit to be trained as such from the beginning of its formation. Winters joined Easy Company in the summer of 1942 during its arduous training at Toccoa, Georgia. Of more than 500 officers, less than 150 were able to complete the regimen. The same was true of the enlisted ranks, with only 1,800 of an original complement of 5,300 finishing to become members of the 506th. Winters had graduated from Officer Candidate School in June and was promoted to first lieutenant shortly thereafter. Rising to command of Easy Company and later to executive officer of his battalion, he attained the rank of major while aged only in his mid-20s.

A highly decorated veteran of World War II, Winters was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and served as an administrative officer before retiring from the service. His decorations include the Combat Infantryman's Badge, a highly coveted award in the military, the Distinguished Service Cross, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart, Croix de Guerre with Palm, and numerous others.

Winters is perhaps best known for an offensive action that occurred during the first hours of combat for the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment. On D-Day, elements of Easy Company were ordered to silence a battery of German guns that were shelling a portion of Utah Beach where the U.S. 4th Infantry Division was coming ashore. The men of Easy Company accomplished their mission against the guns at Brecourt Manor, and the operation is taught to this day at the United States Military Academy at West Point as a textbook example of assault against a fixed position. It was for Brecourt Manor that Winters received his Distinguished Service Cross.

After the war, Winters went to work for the Nixon Nitration Works, located in Edison, New Jersey, and owned by the family of his military friend, Lewis Nixon. Within five years, Winters had risen to plant manager. He later worked as an executive with a manufacturing company in New Brunswick, New Jersey, before returning to Pennsylvania and going into business for himself in the sale of animal feed to farmers across the state. Settling in Hershey, he retired in 1997 and made the most of that quiet life he had thought of decades earlier in the midst of war.

However, he was continually sought after as a speaker and delivered numerous lectures on leadership at West Point and other locations. His heroics were the subject of several other books, including his own memoirs, titled *Beyond Band of Brothers: The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters*, which was written along with retired Army Colonel Cole Kingseed.

Along the way, Winters married his wife, Ethel, in 1948, and the couple had two children, a son, Tim, and a daughter, Jill. He had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and passed away in Campbelltown, Pennsylvania, not far from his home in Hershey.

While Winters was a man of uncommon valor, he remained humble throughout his life, acknowledging the courage and sacrifice of others always above his own. Perhaps this great humility was enhanced by the experience of combat itself. Winters had seen men die. He had witnessed inhumanity on the grandest scale in history. He emerged a hero in the truest sense, his deeds outliving his days on this earth. By any account, his was a life well lived.

Michael E. Haskew



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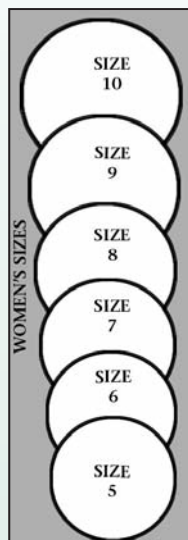
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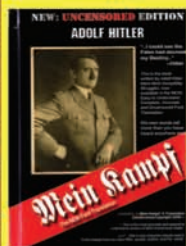
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Marianas Turkey Shoot

Dear Editor:

I just finished reading David Lippman's article on the Marianas Turkey Shoot in the March 2011 issue of *WWII History* magazine. I found it to be an absolutely riveting and fascinating account of that epic battle. Congratulations on an outstanding job.

Max Wisotsky

Highland Park, New Jersey

King George VI

Mr. Rondinella: Your republicanism is showing. Prime ministers come and go; it is the monarchy that lends the tone and character to the era. There is a Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian period, all named after king or a queen. I do not expect to hear of a Thatcher or Blair era anytime in the near future. Within the constraints of a constitutional monarchy, the king or queen is able to curb the excesses of the overeager or encourage action on the part of the timid. More specific to your World War II comments, had King Edward (a Nazi sympathizer) remained on the throne, Britain would have undoubtedly sought an armistice with Germany in the summer of 1940. That certainly would have changed the complexion and outcome of the war. It was the ongoing support of King George that allowed Churchill to remain firm against the government appeasement faction during the long dark period prior to El Alamein. Certainly the king planned and executed no battles. His task was of a much higher level. The king's steadfast character was instrumental to Churchill's decision, and ability, to have Britain stand alone when every other European power had fallen to the Nazis. Just as important, the king and queen were foremost in promoting solidarity among all Britains, especially after the palace itself was bombed. No, Mr. Rondinella, George VI was a very good king who played a very important role in Britain's World War II experience.

Gordon Switzer,

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada

Role of the Submarine

Dear Editor:

I am a World War II vet. I was in the submarine service. I was in the Cavite navy yard when Pearl Harbor was hit. Three days later, December 10, we got hit by Jap bombers, 28 of them. They completely destroyed the Navy yard. Our sister ship, the USS *Sea Lion*, was sunk alongside of us. We were damaged quite a bit, but we were the only boat to get out of there. We got some repair in Manila and went on to make many patrol runs.

What I'm trying to get at is we don't hear much about the submarines' part in the war. If it weren't for submarines the Japanese would have advanced more than they did. There are many good stories that could be printed. There are not many of us

left. The Silent Service doesn't have to be silent any longer.

Arthur Killiam (90 years old)
Roanoke, Virginia

Spain and World War II

Dear Editor:

Thank you to *WWII History* for shedding light on the little-known role of Spain in World War II (March 2011 issue). Mr. Michael D. Hull managed to offer a portrait of Franco's Spain that was neither sympathetic, nor condemnatory, but simply objective—just as every good historian should be.

Mr. Hull's piece is quite solid as it is, but I would like to share some additional facts that may be interesting to *WWII History* readers. While it is correctly stated in the article that Mussolini and Hitler helped Franco's side to win the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War, it is nowhere said that the other side was heavily supported by Stalin's Soviet Union, together with a great number of foreign volunteers (the so-called "International Brigades") in an effort that was mostly organized by the Comintern. I think this information is essential in order to have the whole picture of the Spanish Civil War. It also explains why the only official belligerent action of Spain during the whole of WWII was to send the volunteer Blue Division to fight alongside the Germans in the invasion of the Soviet Union. For Franco, such hostile action was simply fair retribution, in view of prior Soviet intervention in Spain's affairs.

As for the Western democracies, despite some lip service paid to the "loyalist" side, for all intents and purposes they remained neutral during the Spanish Civil War. This was most notably the case of France and Britain. Franco knew too well that he owed his victory in the civil war to such neutrality, almost as much as he owed it to German and Italian assistance. So one way to interpret Franco's own neutrality in WWII is to consider that he was just showing gratitude: he acted toward the British the same way they had acted toward him. Of course, you could also argue that Franco knew the outcome of the war was uncertain, and that he was simply hedging his bets. Whatever his reasons, the end result was good: the Spanish people was spared participation in World War II.

Rafael A. Moro
Coral Gables, Florida

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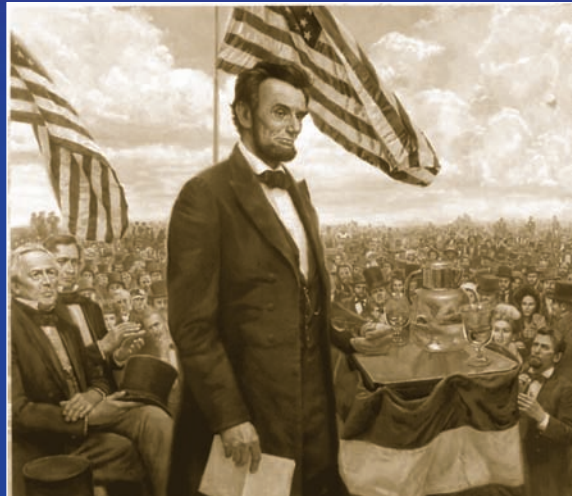


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Destination Australia

Lieutenant Damon "Rocky" Gause fought for survival after the fall of Corregidor.

MOST AMERICANS WERE SURPRISED BY THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR, but the military had known that war with Japan was inevitable. During the summer and fall of 1941, a belated effort had been made to reinforce far-flung U.S. bases in the western Pacific.

In the Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur was calling for every type of aid. At the top of his list were Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers and the crews to fly them. In November 1941, the 27th Bombardment Group was dispatched to Manila. With them was flyboy Damon "Rocky" Gause. When Gause landed in the Philippines he could not imagine the adventure that lay ahead of him. For the next 11 months he was in constant danger of capture and death from a ruthless Japanese enemy.

Damon was born in Jefferson, Georgia, population 2,000. Schoolrooms were boring for the restless young man who craved adventure. He served a stretch in the U.S. Coast Guard and then the U.S. Army in Panama. He worked as a roustabout on oil rigs in South America and took up amateur boxing. Time spent in the local jungles would soon serve him well. His adventurous nature led him to take up flying, and he soon earned his wings.

Flying was expensive, but there was an inexpensive way to log flight hours. Once again Gause enlisted in the Army. He was commissioned as a lieutenant and assigned as a communications officer to the 27th. The bomber squadron steamed into Manila Bay on November 27, 1941. The personnel landed without supplies, equipment, or airplanes. For the next 11 days Lieutenant Gause and his mates unloaded ships by day and partied the nights away.

On Monday morning, December 8, that all changed. Across the time zones it was Sunday morning in Hawaii. Radio monitors in Manila picked up the famous "This is no drill!" message at 3 AM. At Fort McKinley at 8 AM when the men arose for breakfast, a loudspeaker made them aware of the air raid on Pearl Harbor and blared orders to report for duty.

Lieutenant Gause and his men were ordered to set up a communications post, but their radio equipment was still on the docks or aboard ship waiting to be unloaded. Through diligent efforts the men of the 27th were soon rounded up, along with supplies and radio equipment. Within three hours a communications center was up and was transmitting to Hawaii in the east and China to the northwest.

No sooner were communications secured than the first wave of Japanese planes arrived overhead to begin a relentless bombing campaign. After that first raid, Gause sent a radio message to his wife, "Am alive and giving them hell—Rocky."

Unlike the single attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese returned again and again to pulverize Philippine and American air, naval, and army forces. Without airplanes, the flyboys of the 27th became riflemen.

On December 22, up to 43,000 Japanese troops landed on northern Luzon. More troops would follow. Gause and his communications command were eventually ordered to the Bataan Peninsula with the surviving defenders.

While the American and Filipino troops set up their new defensive lines on the peninsula, Rocky and a few intrepid friends drove into Manila and daringly braved the oncoming enemy to gather food and supplies and to continue the waning party life in the capital. A young Filipino woman named Rita Garcia invited Rocky and a buddy to a New Year's Eve party at the Manila Hotel, recently the headquarters of General MacArthur. It would be the last party before the Japanese occupied the city, and it went on until 3:30 in the morning.

Just before dawn, Gause departed with a convoy of trucks bearing supplies and communications equipment. That was the last convoy to reach Bataan.

For the next 13 weeks Bataan was the focus of the war in the Pacific. Over 100,000 American and Filipino soldiers and civilians clung to this speck of land while enduring bombing and artillery bombardment day and night.

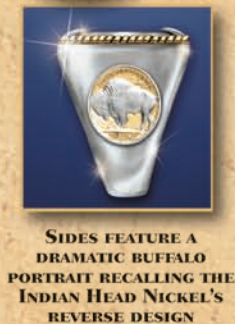
When the Japanese finally broke through, the thousands of starving and exhausted defenders were rounded up. Rocky Gause found himself in a pen with hundreds of other Americans. He did not fancy life as a prisoner of the Japanese. Sizing up the situation, he overpowered a lone guard and stabbed him with his own knife before running for the bay that separated Bataan from the island of Corregidor three miles away. Bullets zipped around him, but he was able to swim to an offshore wreck where

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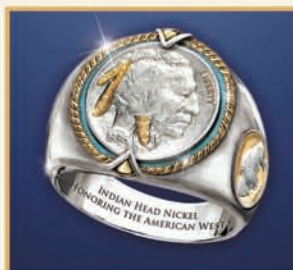
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he rested for a few hours. He found a rowboat and continued toward the island fortress.

On Corregidor, Gause was assigned to command a machine-gun battery of Filipino soldiers. They endured daily bombardment from Japanese positions surrounding them on all sides. Gause was at his post on May 5 when the Japanese landed on the island. He knew that if he was captured and recognized as the man who killed a Japanese guard it would not go well for him. He vowed to escape.

Gause and a Filipino officer found a small native boat and waited for dark before pushing off into Manila Bay. In the morning their little craft was spotted by a Japanese Zero fighter and strafed. The boat was sunk and his buddy mortally wounded. Gause swam on and reached the distant shore in the gathering twilight. After his exhausting 12-hour journey he fell into a deep sleep. He was awakened near dawn by kicks from Japanese soldiers on patrol. But Gause was so exhausted that his body lay as if dead. Satisfied that he was just another dead American the Japanese moved on.

Gause tried to get off the beach but kept running into Japanese camps or patrols. Just as he thought he was done for, an 11-year-old Filipino boy rescued him. The boy led him to a hastily built shack where he was nursed back to health by the boy's family. Gause slept for days, and when he awoke he recognized the boy's sister, the same Rita Garcia he had last seen at the Manila Hotel on New Year's Eve.

Gause regained his strength under Rita's watchful eye. Toward the end of May he decided it was time to move on. The longer he stayed with Rita's family the greater their danger became. Rita helped find a small sailboat. Together they provisioned it and sailed away from Luzon.

Gause hoped the boat would take them to Mindoro, an island south of Luzon, but neither of them had any experience as sailors and after an exhausting night (they dared not sail during the day) they made it as far as the island of Lubang, 25 miles southwest of Manila Bay. Fortunately, Rita had connections on the island, and Gause was hidden from the small but vigilant Japanese garrison.

While on Lubang, Gause befriended Jose Ramos, a local contractor. Ramos was a Spaniard, and as a European from a fascist country he had more freedoms than the native Filipinos. He invited Gause to visit occupied Manila disguised as a fellow Spaniard. Gause agreed, and the two men set off on an adventure that ended in a round of drinking with Spanish-speaking Japanese officers.

Shaken by the experience, Gause retreated to



Photo: © the Gause Family

After a grueling month at sea, "Rocky" Gause (right) and Captain William Osborne beach their small craft, the *Ruth-Lee*, on the Philippine island of Palawan on September 20, 1942.

Lubang. There he was informed that another American officer was on a nearby island. He set sail at once with a native boy as guide and found a Colonel Wells living comfortably among the Filipinos. Gause stayed with him for two weeks.

While Gause was with Wells, another American wandered into their camp. Captain William Lloyd Osborne had commanded a Filipino infantry company before escaping from Bataan and hiding in the jungle. He and Gause would be inseparable for the next five months.

When Gause introduced Osborne to Wells there was immediate tension. Later that evening, Osborne told Gause that Wells was a Nazi spy. With no other place to go, the two remained guests at Wells's home. Two nights later Gause fought Wells for possession of a pistol. It went off and shot Wells in the stomach.

Gause and Osborne fled into the night.

Once again Gause found himself on Lubang, but the situation had changed. In the two weeks of his absence the Japanese had looted the island of food, livestock, fishing boats, and medicines. The islanders were reduced to poverty. Yet, they were determined to help the two Americans escape to Australia.

The Japanese had confiscated a 20-foot motorized skiff, but its balky engine forced them to abandon it. The boat's owner offered to help the Americans liberate it for use in their getaway. It was an aged and leaking boat that the two Americans christened the *Ruth-Lee* after their wives. The next few days were spent sewing flour sacks into sails, mounting a mast, chipping, patching, and refurbishing the Swedish-built diesel engine, which they nicknamed the "little Swede."

When all was ready, Gause had to give Rita the bad news. She had saved his life on several

occasions, but he could not take her with him. It was too dangerous. Sadly she went ashore. He never saw her again. Then the two men got under way in earnest.

Even though Osborne outranked Gause, he had no jungle experience and had never sailed. While on board the *Ruth-Lee*, Gause would be the captain while Osborne tended the engine, cooked, patched leaks, and bailed water, which never stopped seeping into the boat.

Their first stop was at a Japanese-controlled lighthouse where it was said quantities of kerosene could be found. As the little Swede needed fuel oil, a risky raid was necessary. On a stormy night Gause and his mate broke into the lighthouse, overpowered the Japanese keeper, and made off with 55 gallons of precious kerosene. They were on their way to Australia, 3,200 miles away.

The engine ran poorly, and after a few days refused to work at all. Supplies and water were running low when the two itinerant sailors decided to put in at the island of Culion. A town there housed a large leper colony. The two figured correctly that the Japanese would keep their distance. There was a township next to the colony that housed American doctors and about 500 Filipino workers and relatives who cared for the 5,000 lepers.

The sailors found enthusiastic help from the little township. A mechanic went to work on the engine and the propeller shaft, which needed straightening. Electrical output on Culion was limited to one hour a day due to a limited supply of fuel oil to power the local generator. It was during that hour that welding and cutting operations were conducted on the boat. Scraping and caulking continued at other times, and the two American fugitives were feted by the local community in relative safety from the Japanese who were afraid to set foot in the town.

With an overhauled motor and replenished supplies, the *Ruth-Lee* set sail once more for the south and freedom. The sailors had not reckoned with the stormy monsoon season. Traveling at night as they usually did, they were not far from Culion when the wind started blowing and the waves began tossing them about. The two used their limited knowledge of the sea to head into the wind and swells to keep the little boat from being swamped. They tied themselves to the boat to avoid being washed overboard.

With the single-minded goal of staying afloat, they failed to notice their approach to a hidden reef until the *Ruth-Lee* slammed hard against the rigid coral, lifted up, and slammed again. Osborne was thrown about the cabin where he was tending the engine. Gause barely held onto

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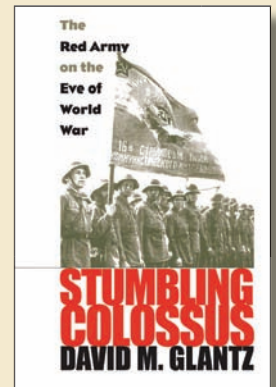
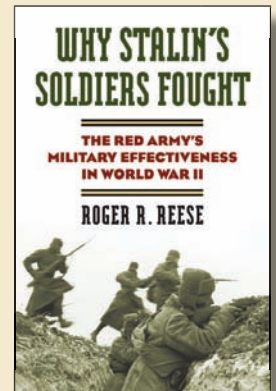
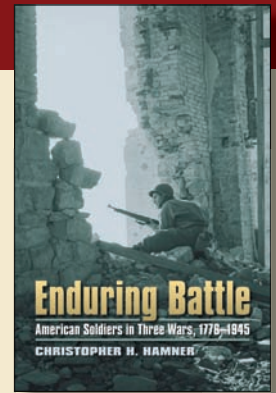
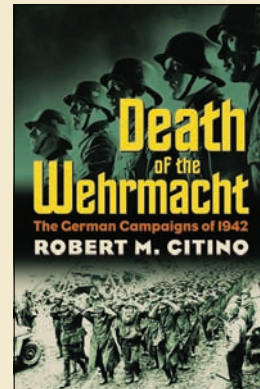
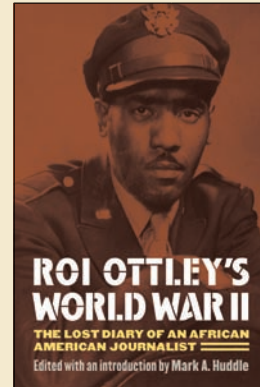
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the tiller. They stuck fast to the reef until dawn when the winds calmed and they were able to jump overboard and guide the leaking boat to the shore. The coral gashed their bare feet and legs as they manhandled the boat off the reef.

It took two days to patch the leaks and holes in the hull before they launched the boat anew into the wind-tossed waves. During the day the churning waters revealed the presence of more dangerous reefs. Gause estimated that the *Ruth-Lee* ran aground as many as 20 times, requiring a standard two days of repair each. To add to the misery of the trip, Gause, landing on an island in search of water and food, waded through what he reckoned was poison ivy. The pain and stinging lasted for two weeks.

On several occasions Japanese patrol boats and at least one submarine cruised nearby. The sailors' homemade Japanese flag served them well. The guardians of the Japanese Empire almost always ignored them. Only once did patrol boats give chase, but the *Ruth-Lee* was able to hide under the jungle overhang of numerous small islands along the coastline until dark and quietly slip away under sail.

One day the men noticed that a shark was following them. It glided along behind the boat all day and was still there the next morning. The men shot at the shark with pistols to no

National Archives



Looking remarkably fit on October 18, 1942, Osborne, and Gause examine a paddle that they used as a rudder to steer the *Ruth-Lee* during their long odyssey.

avail. Gause then fashioned a hook from some wire and baited it with dried meat. They hauled in the eight-foot killer and ate the meat.

Around mid-September the *Ruth-Lee* had reached the southernmost point of the Philippines and was ready for the ocean journey to Australia via Borneo. The engine once again underwent some field repair in a native village and chugged out to sea.

It was not long before a storm blew up in the night and became a genuine typhoon. For two days and nights Gause struggled to hold the tiller into the wind to keep the boat from swamping. Osborne bailed continuously with a

five-gallon can. At the point of total exhaustion, Gause spotted a small island and doggedly pushed the creaking, leaking boat into its lee. Gaining some protection from the howling winds, the two men waited out the storm. Once again they beached their boat. After a few days of rest and repair to the battered hull, the sailors shoved off again for Borneo.

Once away from the Philippines the two American castaways could no longer communicate with the native populations they met. If they flew the Japanese flag, whole villages would empty, their residents fleeing for the hills. In such situations, Gause decided to act Japanese, and they looted what they could find. He thought that if they acted like the Japanese the locals would blame the thievery on the enemy.

The long days of close confinement led to disputes and arguments. Whole days went by with the two men not speaking to each other. In emergencies, however, their teamwork was seamless.

By early October the two survivors had reached the southern coast of Timor. They had one last open ocean journey to reach the safety of Australia. They had long ago run out of the precious kerosene to power the little Swede. The hardy diesel engine now ran on pure coconut oil, which also served as lubricant.

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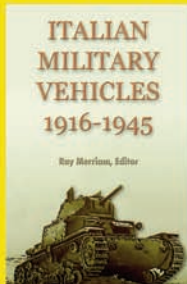
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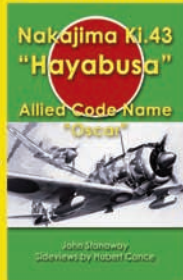
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There were still days when the cranky engine would not turn over and progress was measured with slow but steady wind power.

On this last leg of their adventure, they sailed under the flight path of Japanese bombers roaring to and from Australia. Their Japanese flag could no longer protect them, and they were sure they had been spotted. One evening they made out a destroyer in the distance. They hoped that it was an Allied ship, but it soon launched search planes in the gathering darkness. Gause turned off the engine and lowered his sails to give as small a profile as possible.

The planes swept the growing darkness with powerful searchlights, which came close but never found the *Ruth-Lee*. The next morning brought a rain squall with a protective layer of clouds. It cleared in the afternoon, and as soon as it did a Japanese fighter plane spotted them and began a strafing run. Osborne was grazed in the shoulder by a bullet, and a dozen holes went through the already leaking *Ruth-Lee*. The burst started fires in the hold, and the little boat began settling as water rushed in.

Fortunately, the rising water put out the fires. Osborne began bailing as fast as he could. Gause cut plugs from their fishing pole and dived into the water to jam them into the leaks. Once that was done, both men bailed until they

Photo: © the Gause Family



Major Gause poses in front of his P-47 Thunderbolt at Richmond Air Base in England.

were able to keep ahead of the leaking.

Three more days of uneventful sailing brought them to Australia, where soldiers greeted the battered boat and its dirty, disheveled crew with suspicion until they realized that they were Americans. Soon, the adventurers were whisked away to the Brisbane headquarters of General MacArthur. Gause and Osborne had been barefoot for five months and could not abide the shoes they were given

or the ill-fitting clothes provided by the obliging Australians. They sauntered into the general's hotel headquarters barefoot and wearing the tattered clothes from their trip.

"Sir, Lieutenant Gause reports for duty from Corregidor," said the tired veteran to the general, five months after the fall of the island fortress. MacArthur returned his salute, looked the tired survivors over, and said simply, "Well I'll be damned."

MacArthur personally awarded Gause and Osborne the Distinguished Service Cross. The two were returned to their families on the mainland and stumped for War Bond drives. Both itched for action. Gause was eventually promoted to major and sent to England, where he learned to fly Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters. While on a training mission in March 1944, he crashed and was killed.

Osborne accepted an assignment in Burma commanding a battalion of Merrill's Marauders. He survived the war to retire as a full colonel. He later served as an adviser to the South Vietnamese government and died in 1985. □

Glenn Barnett is a writer and historian living in Los Angeles. His forthcoming book is titled *The Persian War: The Roman Conflicts with Iraq and Iran*.

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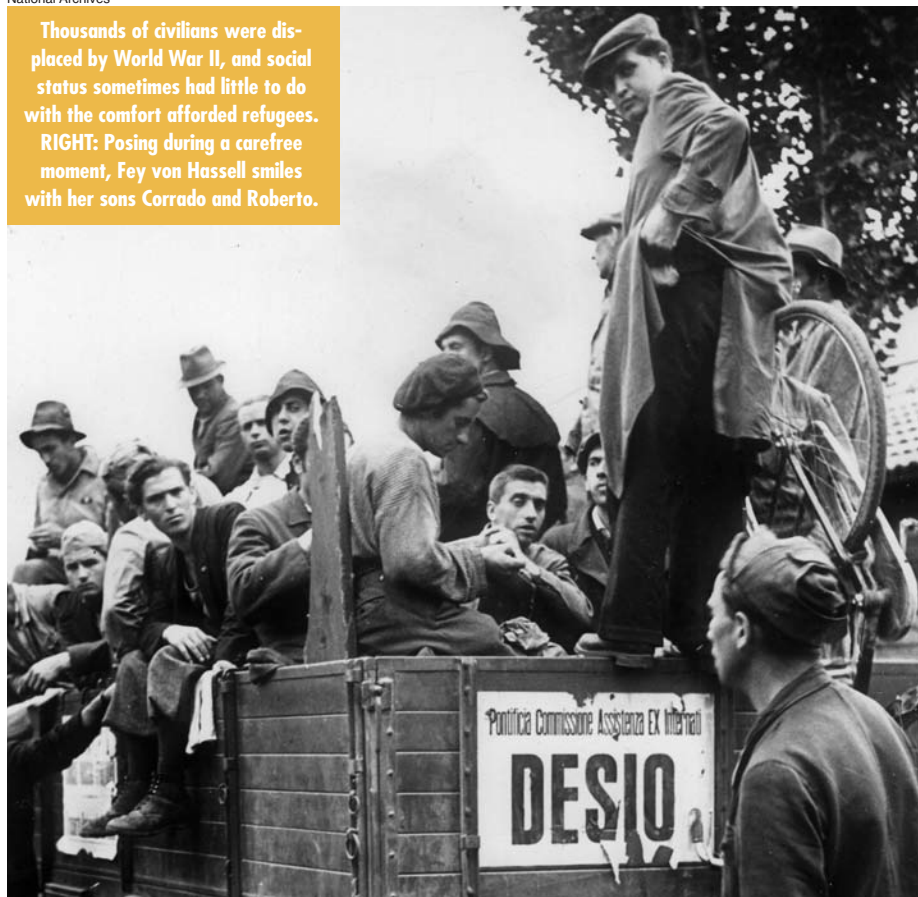
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Thousands of civilians were displaced by World War II, and social status sometimes had little to do with the comfort afforded refugees.

RIGHT: Posing during a carefree moment, Fey von Hassell smiles with her sons Corrado and Roberto.



For over a year Fey was able to lead a fairly mundane, untroubled existence. In the spring of 1944, the SS moved out and Brazza was occupied by a regiment of German Army engineers who allowed Fey and her children to live in three of her mansion's rooms and left them in peace. However, the July 20, 1944, attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler changed everything.

Suddenly, being "politically unstable" was no longer a mere liability. Those so labeled were branded dangerous enemies of the state to be dealt with mercilessly. Ulrich von Hassell was not immediately arrested because he was a civilian, and the actual perpetrators of the assassination attempt against Hitler were Army officers. However, in September 1944, Fey received word that her father, like so many others, had been arrested and hanged. Germany's Sippenhaft laws made Ulrich von Hassell's family,

Fey von Hassell



solely because they were related to him, equally guilty of treason.

The Gestapo arrested Fey and locked her in a women's prison in nearby Udine. After 10 days she was released and sent home, but her troubles had barely begun. On September 26, an SS detachment took her and her little boys to Innsbruck, Austria, and locked them briefly in a hotel. Two days later female SS nurses took her children from her, threw her into the city's Gestapo jail, and left her for three weeks in a filthy bathroom-sized cell with four other women. On October 26 (her 26th birthday) she was taken by rail to the town of Reinerz (now Rynarec, Czechoslovakia) and locked in an isolated hotel with other anti-Nazi notables whom the SS intended to use as bargaining hostages during the imminent German collapse.

To Fey's relief, none of her relatives were among the prisoners, and for over a month they were held in their amicable, comfortable lockup. On November 30, 1944, they were herded onto a train bound for Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland). They made it only as far as Breslau, where they

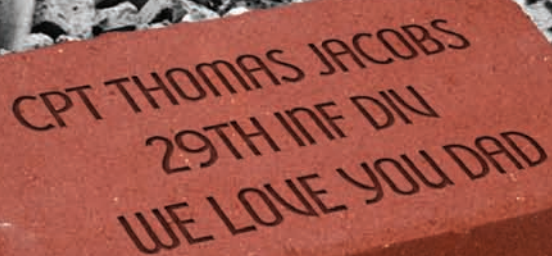
Incredible Wartime Odyssey

Fey von Hassell-Pirzio-Biroli and a large group of aristocratic prisoners survived the terror of Nazi captivity following an arduous journey.

BY THE SPRING OF 1943 THE SITUATION FOR NAZI GERMANY WAS BECOMING grave as military reverses in Russia and Africa sent the formerly unstoppable Wehrmacht reeling. The political situation was evolving as well as German leaders began to explore nonmartial means of staving off unconditional surrender.

At this time Germany's former ambassador to Italy, Ulrich von Hassell, was being visited at his home in Ebenhausen, Germany, by his lovely daughter Fey and her aristocratic Italian husband Detalmo Pirzio-Biroli, who had risen to the rank of lieutenant in Mussolini's army despite his unconcealed anti-Axis sympathies. As had happened to Fey's father, Detalmo's career was destroyed by his refusal to serve the governments of Rome and Berlin, and soon after his and his wife's March 1943 visit to Ebenhausen he joined a band of pro-Allied insurgents operating outside of Milan. He spent the rest of the war harrying Nazi and Fascist forces behind their lines.

Following the fall of Mussolini's Fascist government, Fey fled her Italian estate at Brazza just ahead of a Waffen SS regiment that requisitioned the property as its headquarters. With her little boys, Corrado and Roberto, Fey settled in with one of Detalmo's cousins in nearby Padua, but soon returned to Brazza.



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were halted to give right-of-way to troop transports. They spent the next 36 hours in a bitterly cold detention center without food or beds and with just one toilet.

At 4 AM on December 2, they were kicked awake by a new set of SS guards, herded back onto the train, and sent eastward. With as little use for communism as Nazism, the group was terrified they would fall into Soviet hands, but in the predawn of December 3 the hapless criminals of kin arrived at their first concentration camp—Stutthof.

Fey and her 21 companions were housed in a large barracks on the camp's outskirts and given privileged treatment rather than the soulless barbarism visited on the hordes of less fortunate inmates. The hostages were not forced to perform strenuous physical labor, were allowed to retain their own clothes rather than being dressed in the thin, stiff camp uniforms, were permitted to have books, did not have their heads shaved, and were given direct access to the camp commandant, to whom they could make requests.

Their lot was harsh nevertheless. At midday they were delivered one barrel of watery soup, and in the evenings they received a few small hunks of black bread, meat, and an occasional chunk of cheese. Being steadily weakened by

malnutrition, they were forced to chop their own firewood to heat their drafty dormitory against the severe Baltic winter. Before long scarlet fever and dysentery broke out among them.

Fortunately, one of their number, Bogislav Gordeler, was a medical doctor. Also, the camp commandant had been ordered to keep the hostages alive, so he provided them with medicine. Still, by Christmas half the prisoners were bedridden and the medicine had run out. Fey was down with a 104-degree fever brought on by typhoid and dysentery. The worried camp commandant at the last moment sent medical personnel to treat the foundering hostages.

By mid-January, illness was no longer the group's main concern. The constant drone of Soviet bombers, their cargoes drumming to earth, and the incessant rumble of Red Army artillery tormented the prisoners with fear. When the commandant appeared in the barracks on January 27 and announced all VIP prisoners were to leave in one hour, all reacted with relief and hurriedly packed.

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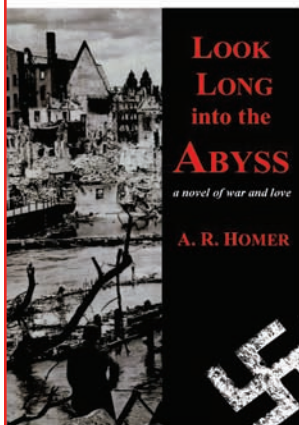


Wrapping themselves in blankets, the freezing, emaciated aristocrats boarded trucks outside their dorm and lurched off to the train station. They climbed aboard an ancient railway carriage whose windows were all broken and that was half full of snow. Slowed by blizzards and endless columns of miserable refugees fleeing the Red Army's massive winter offensive into East Prussia, the train needed 37 hours to cover

the 20 miles from the Vistula River to Danzig. This sole remaining rail link to the west was hopelessly jammed with earlier-arriving trains, so the SS crammed its prisoners into a truck and trundled them to a nearby SS correctional facility called Matzkau.

Because the hostages were too weak to climb, SS convicts dragged them to a hilltop barracks and fed them a good meal that doubtless saved some of their lives. They were kept in the building for the next 10 days and fed standard SS officers' rations to ensure their survival as valuable bargaining leverage. Yet, it was too late for elderly Baroness Anni von Lerchenfeld, who died from pneumonia five days after arriving

The Third Reich is collapsing. The rules have changed. There are no rules.



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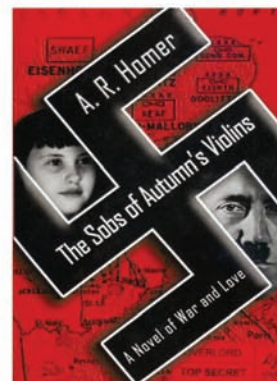
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at Matzkau.

Although shaken and sobered by the aged noblewoman's passing, the captives were strengthened by the improved conditions. Soon the sounds of battle were audible once again in the east.

On February 8, 1945, the group entrained for Buchenwald. Grinding miserably through the surreal, war-torn winter landscape, the train took until March 3 to deliver the hostages to the massive death camp. During the trip elderly Clemens and Elisabeth von Stauffenberg had become so weak that they were removed from the train and left in a hospital.

At Buchenwald Fey's group was merged with another batch of special prisoners, but no one was familiar to her. At this point she *was* given a letter from her mother informing her that her brother Hans Dieter von Hassell had been imprisoned in Kustrin, which the Red Army was rapidly approaching.

Numbering 34, the prisoners of kin were now closer to the Americans and British than to the Russians, but hopes of being liberated by the Western Allies were postponed on April 3 when an SS officer faced the group and yelled, "Pack your bags! Bring only what you can hold on your laps!"

Waiting on Buchenwald's railway platform,

Fey von Hassell



ABOVE: Hjalmar Schacht (left) and S. Payne Best were two of the celebrated captives who traveled with Fey von Hassell during her long journey under arrest by the Nazis. OPPOSITE: Ulrich von Hassell, Fey's father and a former German ambassador to Italy, was implicated in the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler at Wolf's Lair in East Prussia and executed in September.

the captives felt heartened by the noise of artillery now coming from the west, and the warplanes overhead wore U.S. and British markings. Still, there was no salvation. After dark, when the fighter planes departed, the hostages were shoved onto trucks and driven to a town called Weiden. They passed through the community without stopping, halting on the other side of the town. Here they rendezvoused with a police van carrying the former French prime minister Leon Blum; Navy commander Franz Liedig, a well-known anti-Hitler officer

who once served in Germany's Abwehr espionage network; and an anti-Nazi civilian government official named Josef Muller, who had been a close associate of Fey's father.

As the little convoy meandered deeper into Bavaria, the prisoners began to perceive that the hostage program had largely lost its meaning in the enveloping chaos of the crumbling Third Reich. With communications in disarray there was no longer any way that the remaining Nazi government could even transmit any proposals to the Allies, not that anyone in Berlin even knew at this point where the hostages were. Their Waffen SS guards under Obersturmführer (1st Lieutenant) Ernst Bader had little idea what to do with their distinguished charges but were simply fleeing the armies converging from east and west.

On the afternoon of March 5, the procession arrived at the old state prison at Regensburg, where the prisoners were clapped in filthy little cells overnight. The intriguing British captain, S. Payne Best, joined them here. One of the most resourceful and successful of Britain's pre-war counterintelligence operatives, Best was captured in Holland at the war's outbreak and had been in custody ever since. The next morning the captives and their guards spent three hours cowering together in a cellar as a massive

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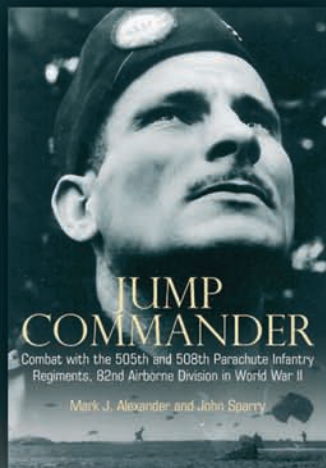
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Fey von Hassell



Fey von Hassell smiles faintly for the camera at her estate, Brazza, in the summer of 1944. Fey is accompanied by a pair of German officers, who were apparently assisting with the children in preparation for relocation.

fleet of American bombers rumbled overhead. Afterward, they all reboarded their trucks and set out southward.

On March 6, they reached the Bavarian forest hamlet of Schonberg and bivouacked in a school. While there, a Gestapo unit arrived and dragged Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoffer, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, and a few other conscientious, courageous critics of the Third Reich off to nearby Flossenbergl concentration camp and hanged them.

After languishing in Schonberg for 10 days, the group moved out again, arriving in the bomb-blasted rubble of Munich on the morning of April 17, 1945. Dumped at the gates of Dachau concentration camp, they were surprisingly well treated and provided with food and hot showers. Considering the dearth of territory remaining in Nazi hands, they assumed Dachau would be their last stop, but to their shock they were, on the 25th, again pushed onto trucks after being ordered to "Bring only what you can carry in your hands!"

Stuffed into the back of a cramped truck, Fey noticed some new additions—former Austrian prime minister Kurt Schuschnigg, his wife and little girl, and Lutheran reverend Martin Niemoller, who had been under arrest since 1937 for his opposition to Hitler's godless regime. This trip took the Sippenhaft felons into the Alps.

The following morning Fey was stunned to be released from her truck and find herself back in Innsbruck, where she had begun her forced odyssey seven months earlier. Blinking in the bright sunlight, she was further amazed to count more than 120 people now in the procession. There were such distinguished persons as Prince Xavier du Bourbon-Parma of France; former Hungarian prime minister Miklos von Kallay; Hessian Prince Phillip; Mario Badoglio, son of Italy's anti-Fascist and post-Mussolini head of state; and Hitler's former finance minister Hjalmer Schacht, who had denounced Germany's slave-supported rearmament policies.

Fey spent the day in a fruitless search for news of her sons. Then that evening she heard the

now familiar, hated order to prepare for another departure. The prisoners were told they were being taken south into Italy, and after another night on back roads they pulled up in a field outside Villabassa, Italy. The SS officers set off on foot into town in search of a restaurant, leaving the captives in the care of their subordinates. During the previous night's journey two of the newly arrived prisoners, Dr. Wilhelm Flugge and Colonel von Bonin, had eavesdropped as the SS discussed how the captives were to be locked in the trucks and blown to bits by bombs being detonated under the vehicles.

Von Bonin was still dressed in his medal-bedecked Army uniform, and when he angrily demanded to be let off the truck the youthful guards relented. In hopes of obtaining rescue, von Bonin and Flugge set off in search of a Wehrmacht bivouac they had heard was nearby. When they located the post, they were delighted to find it commanded by General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, who had been von Bonin's commanding officer on the general staff. Von Vietinghoff sent a detachment of his soldiers back with von Bonin to disarm and arrest the SS, whom they located in a local inn.

By this time the demoralized guards had allowed Fey and the other detainees simply to walk away. Through a torrential cloudburst they trudged into Villabassa and learned their guards were now incarcerated themselves as the hostage drama finally ground to an anticlimactic conclusion. After traveling over most of central and eastern Europe during the previous seven months, Fey von Hassell-Pirzio-Biroli was freed just 60 miles from her estate in Brazza. It was April 27, 1945. Three days later, Hitler was dead.

On May 11, 1945, the overjoyed young woman was reunited with Detalmo, but it was September 11, one year to the day after her arrest, before her children were found. Fey's mother, daughter of Germany's renowned World War I Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, located Corrado and Roberto in an SS-run *Kinderheim* (children's camp) in Austria near the Swiss border.

Hans Dieter had managed to escape from Kustrin before the Red Army's arrival and elude the Nazis and communists. After many adventures of his own, he returned to his loved ones. Fey, Detalmo, and their families were one group of Germans and Italians who were able to win the war. □

Working from his home in Tyler, Texas, author Kelly Bell has been writing professionally since 1981. Specializing in military history, he has contributed to a number of publications. He is a former newspaper staff writer.

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The first “funny” tanks ashore on D-Day were the Sherman duplex-drive (DD) amphibians, nicknamed “Donald Ducks.” The American-built, 33-ton Sherman M-4 was fitted with twin propellers working off its main engine. A large canvas buoyancy screen was erected around the hull, giving it the appearance of a huge baby carriage. Once the tank hit the beach, the canvas was lowered and the Sherman operated in its normal fighting capacity. But the DDs proved vulnerable. With a freeboard of less than a foot, they could be swamped in choppy seas.

These were the only Funnies used by the American assault forces—to their cost—on D-Day. At Omaha Beach, where elements of the

National Archives



U.S. 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions were pinned down and barely managed to gain a foothold on the morning of June 6, most of the DDs were launched too far out. Because of heavy seas, only a few made it to shore. The 741st Tank battalion lost 27 out of its 29 tanks.

Early trials for the DD tanks were conducted in the Staines (Surrey) Reservoir near London. Many British soldiers were understandably apprehensive at the prospect of riding in floating tanks. Lance Corporal Patrick Hennessey of the 13th/18th Lancers said, “The notion that we would swim our tanks across the water was difficult for us to understand. A tank is a solid

No Joke to the Nazis

Hobart’s Funnies were specially designed armored vehicles that contributed to the Allied victory in Europe.

GERMAN DEFENDERS HUNKERED IN THEIR CONCRETE AND STEEL BUNKERS

along the Normandy coast were in for two major shocks on Tuesday, June 6, 1944.

The first came in the early morning hours of that fateful day when they peered out at the chill-gray English Channel and saw a powerful Allied armada of 5,000 ships standing offshore. The second shock came a few hours later when German coastal battery crews observed an amazing assortment of specialized tanks swarming across the beaches as Operation Overlord got into high gear.

Some of the Allied tanks had giant rotating cylinders in front, which flailed the beaches with iron chains, detonating mines. Others carried large bundles of brushwood—fascines—in front, which they dropped into antitank ditches and then rolled across. Still other armored vehicles carried 30-foot bridging gear, or winched and towed disabled vehicles off the beach, or lobbed 40-pound projectiles—“flying dustbins”—at enemy gun emplacements. And there were many amphibious Sherman medium tanks wearing canvas skirts, emerging from the sea like futuristic monsters.

The bizarre collection of tracked vehicles, most of which were modifications of reliable, heavily armored Churchill tanks, belonged to the British Army’s 79th Armored Division, which had been established in 1943 on the orders of Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial General Staff. After the disastrous assault on the French port of Dieppe on August 19, 1942, Allied planners realized that any subsequent invasion of well-defended continental Europe would succeed only with considerable armored support for the infantry.

Designed by British engineers to swim ashore and clear beach obstacles under fire, the specialized armor provided inestimable support to the landing forces on D-Day, confounded the Germans, and made deep penetrations inland. Nicknamed “Hobart’s Funnies,” the vehicles were the brainchild of Major General Percy C.S. Hobart, a Royal Military College graduate, Bengal sapper, decorated World War I veteran, and interwar tank pioneer.

One of the innovative tank designs from General Percy Hobart (above), the crab was an M4 Sherman tank fitted with a flail which pounded the ground ahead of the armored vehicle to detonate land mines.

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The DD (Duplex Drive) Sherman tank was fitted with a specially designed canvas screen for flotation, which theoretically would allow the tank to navigate short stretches of water. When the screen was lowered, the Sherman's 75mm cannon could be put into action.

steel object, and very heavy. 'Surely,' we said, 'it will sink like a stone?' 'Not so,' said the boffins (military scientists), 'consider this stone of which you speak. If you place it in a canvas bucket, and put that bucket into the water, it may go down an inch or two, but it will float.'"

Lieutenant W.D. Little of the Canadian Fort Garry Horse Regiment described the first DD tank he saw, soon to be issued to his unit: "This little barge turned and headed toward us, and as it rolled you could see it struck the bottom of the pond or lake, and started to roll up. Lo and behold, tracks! This was a tremendous surprise. Then as it rolled forward, the tracks kept coming higher; and then as it got to the edge of the water, down came the screen and there was the gun. This was a terrific surprise and shock."

The Crab was a Sherman mounting a rotating roller with flails to clear mines from its path. Conceived by a South African officer and having proved its worth in the Battle of El Alamein, it could clear a gap 10 feet wide at a speed of 1.5 miles per hour and could also destroy barbed-wire obstacles. But it had to operate with another Crab in order to open a path at least two tanks wide. The "Bobbin," a special adaptation of the 39-ton Churchill tank, was designed to help armor traverse soft sand by laying a canvas or wire carpet from a roller on its front. The carpet was almost 10 feet wide and thus capable of supporting most military vehicles.

One Churchill AVRE (assault vehicle, Royal Engineers) was an armored ramp carrier, code-named ARK, adapted to carry a bridge that could be dropped over a 30-foot-wide gap in as

many seconds. The equipment could also be used to surmount a 15-foot wall. In either case, the bridge could support 40 tons, sufficient for all but the heaviest of vehicles.

Other Churchill-based AVREs carried fascines to fill antitank ditches and craters, or spigot mortars firing petards (explosive-filled canisters) used against heavily fortified strongpoints. Some AVREs also mounted Snake, a four-inch, explosive-filled metal tube that could be fired 400 feet into a minefield to clear a lane for armor. The Crocodile, a conversion of the Churchill Mark VII, had a flame gun in place of the hull-mounted machine gun and towed a trailer carrying 400 gallons of fuel that was forced into the gun by compressed nitrogen. The Crocodile spewed a long tongue of flame that terrorized enemy soldiers. Although the German Army itself used flamethrowers widely, many of its officers and men considered the British Crocodile an unfair battlefield weapon. At a reunion of elite World War II airborne troops in Germany in 1990, veterans recalled that they had been so angry at the use of Crocodiles that they would have immediately executed their crews if they had fallen into their hands.

In addition to these Funnies, there was the BARV (beach armored recovery vehicle), a turretless tank with winches or small bulldozer blades for towing or pushing stranded vehicles off the beaches, and an armored version of the heavy-duty Caterpillar bulldozer that could perform a variety of tasks. And, before long, dozer-bladed Churchills and Shermans appeared for cutting brush and undergrowth, as in the Normandy *bocage* countryside.

The British, American, and Canadian Armies made wide use of two-and-a-half-ton DUKW (Duck) amphibious trucks for landing personnel and cargo at Normandy. Having already proved valuable in the Mediterranean theater, the Duck fulfilled the vital role of bridging the gap between landing craft and the dry shore. Other specialized armor included old British Crusader cruiser tanks mounting twin 20mm antiaircraft guns to provide protection from any aerial threat, and light British Tetrarch tanks that were dropped in specially designed Hamilcar gliders.

While the Americans were impressed with the amphibious DD Shermans, which were deployed on all five of the D-Day beaches, they rejected General Hobart's specialized armor. His offer was turned down by Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, commander of the U.S. First Army. One of his staff officers explained later, "The general didn't like the Funnies. He saw it as an infantryman's battle. Besides, the tanks were British. He thought we should do it on our own." Bradley was not alone, and the other Americans failed to appreciate the potential value of the specialized armor. Given a chance to watch Hobart's Funnies in practice runs, U.S. Army officers took one look and dismissed them as highly specialized variants of a basic weapon they considered effective purely as a mobile fortress.

Yet, the Funnies—particularly the flail tanks—proved invaluable to the invading British, Canadian, and Free French infantry and commandos on Sword, Gold, and Juno Beaches. On Sword Beach, British Army Captain A. Low watched one of his mine-clearing tank crews use its spinning flail to pulverize a German gun position. The Funnies would have made a big difference on Omaha Beach, where U.S. combat engineers gave their lives while defusing mines—at the time that mines were being harmlessly neutralized by flail tanks on the other beaches. Consequently, American progress through the German obstacles and off the beaches was markedly slower than that of the British forces.

Hobart's Funnies demonstrated their worth dramatically on the Normandy beaches. Where they were used en masse in the forefront of the landings, success was achieved despite stiff enemy opposition. Deep penetrations—as many as six miles on the first day—were made inland. And in the days to come, during the slow, slogging struggle through the Normandy *bocage*, the 79th Armored Division's specialized armor played crucial roles by adapting their characteristics to changing circumstances. From Normandy to Berlin, the AVREs and

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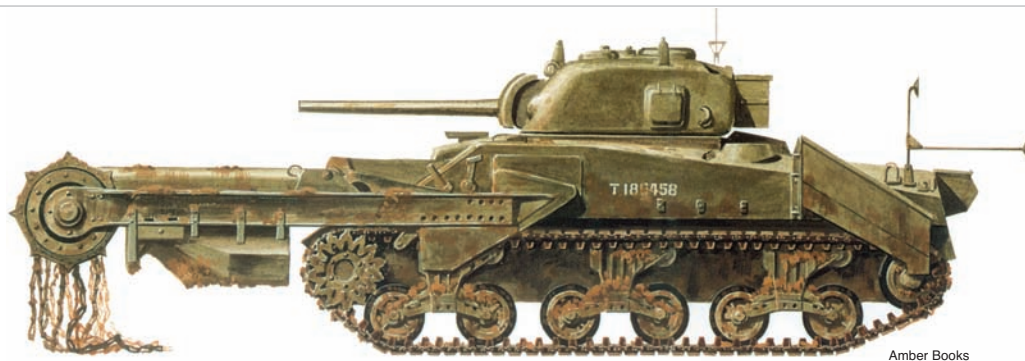
Besppectacled, owlish, and slightly built, Percy Cleghorn Stanley “Hobo” Hobart was a longtime and forceful advocate of mobile armored warfare—and one of the unsung heroes of World War II. An energetic, abrupt-mannered eccentric, he was regarded as highly suspicious by many of his straight-arrow fellow officers in the British Army. Some, including the courtly Sir John Dill, chief of the Imperial General Staff before Alanbrooke, saw him as a “loose cannon” who should be kept on a short leash. But that did not matter; Hobart was highly valued by another brilliant eccentric, Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Hobart was born in India in 1885, the son of an Indian civil servant. He was educated at Clifton School and entered the Royal Military College at Woolwich at the age of 17. At the Shop, as Woolwich was known, he proved to be a moderate sportsman and captained the second rugby eleven. He was commissioned in the Royal Engineers in 1906, and joined the elite 1st Bengal Sappers and Miners Regiment in India. He served with the Mohmand Hills expedition on the North-West Frontier in 1908 and was on the staff of the Delhi Durbar in 1911.

Known as Patrick to his family, Hobart soldiered in France in World War I. He was in the thick of the action at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 and was awarded the Military Cross for his courage and resourcefulness. He also took part in the engagements at Aubers Ridge that May and at Loos in September. Then he was shipped to the Middle East.

Hobart joined the staff of an Indian Army infantry brigade and went with it to Mesopotamia in 1916 to take part in an abortive attempt to relieve the besieged British garrison at Kut-al-Almara. He flew, became a specialist in aerial reconnaissance, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1916, and was mentioned in dispatches six times. Hobart was promoted to brigade major and cited for his staff work during the British advance to Baghdad in 1917.

But he almost threw it all away by making an unauthorized reconnaissance flight along the River Euphrates in March 1918. The plane was shot down behind the Turkish lines, and Hobart and his pilot were captured. They were rescued by an armored car patrol sent more than 50 miles to find them. Hobart managed to avoid a court-martial for disobedience and was restored to his brigade in time to participate in



Amber Books

This profile of the Sherman crab clearly shows the heavy flail chains of the antimine vehicle, which were spun rapidly on a rotor to detonate buried explosive charges. The crab was also capable of defending itself with its 75mm gun.

General Edmund Allenby’s brilliant offensive against the Turks at Meggido in Palestine.

Awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1919, Hobart attended the Staff College in Camberley, Surrey, and then returned to India and the North-West Frontier. While serving on the staff of Eastern Command in India, he became an ardent advocate of armored warfare. Taking a plunge that few officers with prospects were ready to consider, Hobart volunteered to join the newly formed Royal Tank Corps in 1923. He became an instructor at the Quetta Staff College in Baluchistan (now Pakistan), specializing in tank tactics.

During his 1923-1927 tour of duty there, Hobart corresponded with Colonel J.F.C. Fuller, Britain’s leading tank authority, and formulated clear concepts about future armor doctrine. Hobart gained a reputation at Quetta as both a brilliant trainer of troops and a seducer of women. After a scandalizing divorce case, he married the wife of one of his students. It was at this time that Hobart’s sister, Betty, married an up-and-coming officer, the future Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery.

After a short spell with an armored-car unit in India, Hobart returned to England to serve as second in command of the 4th Battalion of the Tank Corps at Catterick, Yorkshire, from 1927 to 1930. Promoted to colonel, he took command of the 2nd Battalion in 1931 and led it in revolutionary exercises on the rolling Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire. The British Army was pioneering mechanized warfare and battlefield radio use, and Hobart played a dynamic and inspiring role.

With the rank of brigadier, Hobart then served as inspector of the Royal Tank Corps in 1933-1936, during which time he founded and led the 1st Tank Brigade. The unit was in the forefront of armored-warfare development at the time when Nazi Germany was creating a secret panzer force and officers like Charles de Gaulle in France and Adna R. Chaffee, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and George S. Patton Jr. in

America were experimenting with armored units. Hobart led the tank brigade with distinction and flair during crucial maneuvers in 1934 as the British Army improvised the world’s first armored division of all arms.

At a Royal Tank Corps dinner in 1935, Hobart met Churchill, who, as First Lord of the Admiralty, had named and helped to develop the world’s first tank in World War I. The two men formed a close association, and Hobart felt a “spiritual kinship” with the future prime minister. The general came to see Churchill as the savior of Great Britain. The following year, Hobart and Churchill met quietly to discuss armor development and the former’s frustration at the army’s emphasis on slow, heavily armored tanks rather than faster cruiser tanks.

Promoted to major general, Hobart served at the War Office and was appointed director of military training. By now, he was described as the army’s “most senior and experienced expert in mechanization” and was in an ideal position to promote his ideas. He believed that well-designed, capably handled tanks, without need of infantry support, would easily overcome enemy armor and infantry and revolutionize modern warfare. For this reason, the stubborn, single-minded Hobart clashed constantly with the cavalry and infantry generals and made enemies at all levels.

He was not easy to work with. Temperamentally unsuited to working as a team member, his impatience and lack of tact antagonized colleagues who might have proved useful to him. A confidential report described how “on various occasions in his military career, he has been reported as impatient, quick-tempered, hot-headed, intolerant, and inclined to see things as he wished them to be, instead of as they were.”

In mid-1938, the difficult Hobart was shunted off to a backwater posting, Egypt. There, in the face of Italian aggression in North Africa, he was ordered in an ill-defined brief to

form armored units. Far removed from War Office infighting and the opposition of generals who failed to grasp the potential of armor, Hobart was in his element in the arid Egyptian desert. With energy and enthusiasm, and despite a lack of modern vehicles, he raised and trained a mobile force that became the 7th Armored Division, which fought the Italians and the Afrika Korps in 1941-1942 and gained fame as the first of the "Desert Rats."

But Hobart's efforts in the desert went unappreciated. His combative advocacy of armor had not endeared him to Sir John Dill (CIGS) and General Archibald P. Wavell, the Middle East commander in chief. Maj. Gen. Henry Maitland "Jumbo" Wilson, the Army commander in Egypt, reported adversely that Hobart was an officer whose "tactical ideas are based on the invincibility and invulnerability of the tank to the exclusion of the employment of other arms in correct proportion." Wilson considered Hobart "self-opinionated and lacking in stability" and had a hand in removing him from command of the 7th Armored Division.

Wavell endorsed Wilson's report and sent Hobart back to England in 1940. Appointed CB (Companion of the Bath), the feisty tank pioneer was ordered to retire and was effectively cashiered. Though disillusioned and embittered, Hobart was nevertheless determined to serve his country at the critical time when it stood alone against the Axis powers. So, at the age of 55, the general became a lance corporal with the Local Defense Volunteers detachment in his picturesque home village of Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire. He was later promoted to deputy area organizer. The LDV, a motley militia network of World War I veterans, youths, and men unfit for regular military service, was mobilized for defense when a German invasion of England seemed imminent after the fall of France in the late spring of 1940. It was later renamed the Home Guard.

Hobart put it about that he was appealing to King George VI to be reinstated in the army. Then, in August of that year, as the Battle of Britain was deciding the fate of Western freedom, the new prime minister, Winston Churchill, was shocked to read a newspaper story about how the nation's leading armor expert was serving as a lowly NCO in the Home Guard.

Churchill was concerned about the poor state of Britain's armored forces. With a few exceptions in the Battle of France and in the Western Desert, British tanks had not performed well. Few in number, they were undergunned and too often prone to mechanical breakdowns. The prime minister was looking for a man to place in supreme charge, one who would steer tank

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philosophy, design, and procurement and raise and train officers and men for armored units. The perceptive Churchill knew that the armored divisions that one day must liberate Europe would have to be at least a match for Adolf Hitler's panzer formations.

But Churchill had an ingrained skepticism of his generals and doubted that there was anyone in the army with enough enthusiasm for the task. He sought advice from General Frederick A. Pile, the leader of Antiaircraft Command during the Battle of Britain. The amiable, unflappable Pile, himself a Tank Corps officer, reported later, "I told him we had a superb trainer of tanks in Hobart, but he had just been sacked. He asked me to get him to come and see him." Pile approached Hobart, who resisted initially because he wanted his honor reinstated.

Eventually, Hobart answered Churchill's summons and went to see him on October 13, 1940. The prime minister took his measure and sent a memorandum to the War Office stating, "I am not at all impressed by the prejudices against him in certain quarters. Such prejudices attach frequently to persons of strong personality and original view."

Hobart, meanwhile, had wasted no time before Churchill rescued him from obscurity. He circulated to select generals in the Tank Corps his proposal for "an armoured Army." He wanted to create wholly armored battle formations that were aggressive and "not tied to or clogged by infantry formations." Hobart envisioned 10 armored divisions, with 10,000 tanks and a vast training program, led by a tank general who would have the full support of the Army Council.

But his demand far exceeded Britain's industrial capacity in 1940-1941, so he settled on a task he knew well—building a tank unit from scratch. In March 1941, Hobart found himself GOC (general officer commanding) of the 11th Armored Division. He raised and trained it with characteristic vigor and purpose, though perceived as "merciless" in his methods. One officer observed that the only way a subordinate could earn Hobo's respect was to "stand up to his bullying." The 11th Armored Division was ready for service in 1942, but its commander was bitterly disappointed to learn that he was officially too old to lead it in the field. He was two years older than Montgomery and two years younger than Alanbrooke. Later that year, while recovering from an illness, Hobart sadly watched the division depart for Tunisia.

That year he was transferred to take com-



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The British Churchill AVRE tank was fitted with a heavy spigot mortar, its plunging shell fire proving particularly effective against concrete fortifications. This AVRE is also equipped with a framework rigged to carry fascines for use in crossing tank traps or natural obstacles which might otherwise impede the progress of armored vehicles.

mand of what would become the 79th Armored Division. But in March 1943, Brooke considered disbanding the division for lack of resources. However, this presented an opportunity to convert Hobart's command into developing specialized armor that could be deployed to penetrate enemy concrete and steel obstacles during the planned Allied assault on mainland Europe. So, Brooke offered the leading role to the forceful armor innovator. After weighing the offer for a day, Hobart accepted the CIGS's invitation, requesting that, as well as training the division, he be allowed to lead it in action, "which you seem so anxious to prevent me from doing." The normally dour Brooke laughingly agreed. Thus, the CIGS ensured Hobo's absolute loyalty.

Given a free rein to mold the 79th Armored Division and assemble its diverse phalanx of battlefield beasts, Hobo became a powerhouse of creative energy and inflexible determination. The division's insignia was an inverted triangle with a ferocious bull's head. Hobart started experiments in late July 1943 with British Valentine tanks, using a flotation device invented by Nicholas Straussler. Basic techniques were worked out during the year, and an Allied program was developed to train five British and two Canadian armored regiments, in addition to three U.S. tank battalions. A demonstration in January 1944 impressed General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied supreme commander, and he directed that the amphibious DD tanks also be used to support the American assault divisions at Omaha and Utah Beaches during the planned invasion.

Meanwhile, noting that the Valentine tank was now obsolescent, General Hobart insisted that the flotation equipment be fitted to the

Sherman, then the first-line tank in British and U.S. armored units. But he pointed out to Eisenhower that the limited industrial facilities then available could not produce enough DDs in time for the invasion, which was planned for May 1944. A British DD expert flew to the United States with a set of drawings, and the first 100 American-built DD tanks were shipped to Liverpool

within six weeks.

As Hobart, under a cloak of secrecy, shaped the 79th Armored Division into a formidable and unique force, his enthusiasm fired the staffers and units. As each problem was discovered in the course of a long series of experiments and trials, Hobart led the way in seeking solutions and badgering the War Office and the Ministry of Supply to meet his demands. By the end of 1943, most of the major problems had been resolved, and the complex Operation Overlord blueprint was taking shape.

Hobart's brother-in-law, Montgomery, championed the 79th Armored Division, and Hobart himself sat in on many conferences with high-ranking British, American, and Canadian generals, trying to sell the diverse mechanical beasts in what some called his Noah's Ark. When General Eisenhower made his bold decision for the Normandy invasion to "go" on June 6, despite a marginal weather forecast, Hobart was on hand to hear it and offer advice to Monty, the ground forces commander.

General Hobart and his lumbering Funnies spearheaded the historic Allied landings, with complete success achieved despite fierce German opposition. Deep penetrations were made inland, and the division—ultimately numbering 1,900 vehicles—rolled eastward toward Berlin with the liberation juggernaut. Units of the 79th Division pushed from Normandy; took part in the clearing of Brest, the English Channel ports, and the Scheldt estuary; fought in the bitter Reichswald campaign; crossed the River Rhine; and took part in the British armies' final pursuit to the Baltic Sea.

Hobart was always in the thick of the action, dashing between his headquarters, Montgomery's mobile command posts, and the leading formations. Sometimes, as around Boulogne, he was personally involved in the fighting. Inexhaustible, Hobart visited his troops before and after action—learning from them, encouraging them, and remorselessly firing those who failed to meet his standards. He bristled when some of the division's elements were put to use in "penny

packet” operations. The final use of DD tanks in northwest Europe came on April 29, 1945, when a squadron of the Staffordshire Yeomanry crossed the River Elbe.

Hobart’s brief but action-filled combat career in World War II was climaxed on March 26, 1945, when he rode one of his Buffalo amphibious carriers across the Rhine accompanied by Churchill, Alanbrooke, Montgomery, and General Miles “Bimbo” Dempsey, commander of the British Second Army. By this time, the 79th Armored Division had a strength of 21,000 officers and men and 1,566 tracked vehicles. There were 14,000 men and 350 armored fighting vehicles in a normal armored division.

Although his fellow countrymen had spurned the offer of Hobart’s Funnies, General Eisenhower paid tribute to his contribution: “The comparatively light casualties which we sustained on all the beaches except Omaha were in large measure due to the success of the novel mechanical contrivances which were employed.... It is doubtful if the assault forces could have firmly established themselves without the assistance of these weapons.”

Monty wrote later, “The division is composed of units and equipment which have no parallel in any other army in the world, and the skilful use of this equipment enabled us to obtain surprise in the tactical battle.”

Sir Basil Liddell Hart, the famous military theorist, described Hobart’s Funnies as the “tactical key to victory,” while Nigel Duncan said in his book about the division, “Inspired by its divisional commander, it pursued its way with gaiety tempered with the resolution to be defeated by no difficulty whether of Nature’s or man’s creation.”

The 79th Armored Division was broken up at the end of the war, and Hobart retired in 1946 and was appointed commandant of the Specialized Armored Experimental Establishment. He was knighted, acted as a military adviser to the Nuffield Organization, and sought—unsuccessfully—to be installed as a professor of modern history at Oxford University despite the sponsorship of Churchill, Alanbrooke, and Montgomery.

Hobart also served as colonel-commandant of the Royal Tank Regiment in 1948-1951 and lieutenant governor of the Royal Chelsea (Veterans) Hospital in 1948-1953. Diagnosed with cancer in 1955, the unsung hero of D-Day died on February 19, 1957, fiercely combative to the end. □

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



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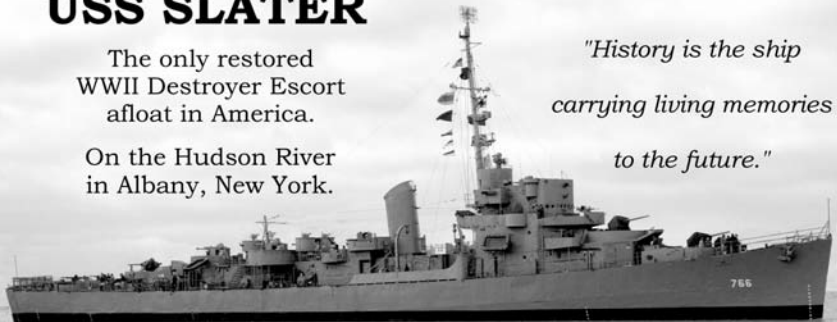


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From the book by Stanley Moss.



Twenty-year-old Major Patrick Leigh-Fermor (seated center) and 18-year-old Captain Stanley Moss (seated right) pose with several Greek partisans who participated in the kidnapping of German General Heinrich Kreipe on the island of Crete.

Kidnap on Crete

The abduction of General Heinrich Kreipe was a triumph for the British Special Operations Executive.

SEVERAL ALLIED OPERATIONS TARGETED A SINGLE ENEMY COMMANDER:

the unsuccessful raid on General Erwin Rommel's headquarters in North Africa to kill the Desert Fox; the assassination of the Butcher of Prague, SS Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heydrich; and the shooting down of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's plane in the sky above Rabaul in 1943. But none of these combined the elements of danger and farce more than the kidnapping of the commander of German forces on Crete.

The idea to kidnap General Friedrich-Wilhelm Mueller was, somehow appropriately, hatched by two young officers in Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) over cocktails in Cairo in September 1943. For Captain Stanley Moss, just 18, it was the chance for some action. But for Major Patrick Leigh-Fermor, 20, there was a more driving motivation. He had been on Crete during the German invasion of 1941, been evacuated, then returned for 17 months as an SOE operative with the Crete resistance, seeing firsthand Mueller's savagery against the Crete populace.

The resistance on Crete had recommended the operation a year before, and SOE Cairo agreed to Leigh-Fermor's proposal. With two Crete SOE agents, Mainoli Paterakis and Georgi Tyrakis, Leigh-Fermor and Moss took off from Bardia in Egypt aboard a Vickers Wellington bomber bound for Crete the night of February 4, 1944.

Things went wrong from the start. The drop zone over the Lashiti plain was so small that only one agent could jump at a time. Leigh-Fermor went first, but as the Wellington was making a wide circle for its next run clouds suddenly closed in, forcing it to head back south to Egypt.

Leigh-Fermor spent two frustrating months hiding with the resistance as eight more attempts by air and two by sea failed to land Moss, Tyrakis, and Paterakis. Finally, on the night of April 4, 1944, a motor launch was able to bring them close enough to Crete's south coast to row ashore in a dinghy and join Leigh-Fermor.

The party marched across Crete's mountains to the village of Kadtamonitza, where they met the SOE's top agent on Crete, Micky Akaumianos. He had his own personal grudge against the Germans. His father had fallen while fighting the Germans during the 1941 invasion.

Akaumianos had disastrous news. Just two days before, Mueller had been replaced as commander on Crete by a decorated veteran of the Eastern Front, Maj. Gen. Heinrich Kreipe. (Mueller's luck would be only temporary. He was hanged for war crimes in 1947.) Leigh-Fermor, despite the disappointment, decided to go ahead. As Moss later wrote, "We supposed that one general was as good a catch as any other."

While Moss holed up in the nearby mountains with the resistance, Leigh-Fermor, who could pass for a native, and Akaumianos took a bus to the capital city of Heraklion. Both were disguised as peasants. From there, they walked five miles to observe Kreipe's villa. Observing it closely, they determined that the villa was too heavily guarded for an assault.

From the nearby farmhouse of Akaumianos's family, the agents kept the area under observation for a week. One day, as they walked the main road, Kreipe rolled by in his chauffeur-driven Opel. Leigh-Fermor and Akaumianos waved to him and, startled, Kreipe waved back. The episode gave them the idea for their attack.

Kreipe's regular schedule made the general vulnerable. His car took him twice a day to his headquarters and back, the last time around 10 PM. They learned that he sometimes stayed even later playing bridge. They decided to stop his car at night and grab him, counting on the villa's staff to assume he was playing bridge to give the kidnappers a few hours' head start.

They returned to the mountain retreat outside Kasdtamonitza to inform Moss and the resistance about the plan. They recruited a local band of guerrillas to help, then marched to the village of Skalani five miles from the kidnap site, which was a hairpin turn in the road that would force Kreipe's car to slow down. The guerrillas almost blew the operation when, bored by being cooped up for two days, they started wandering the area and had to be ordered back to the hills. With those members

Continued on page 75



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THE U.S. 29TH INFANTRY Division was formed in July 1917, three months after America entered World War I. Somewhat surprisingly, it was made up of National Guard units from Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia—surprising since this was a mixture of southern boys and Yankees, and memories of the Civil War, which had ended just over 50 years earlier, were still fresh.

Nevertheless, a circular blue and gray patch worn on the left sleeve of the division uniform symbolized unity in a time of national crisis, and with its new nickname, the Blue and Gray, the division was sent to France in June 1918. It took part in the Meuse-Argonne offensive in October, suffering 5,691 casualties in just 21 days of combat. After returning to the States,

seemed lost, had shouted to his men: “There stands Jackson like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians!”

The men of the 175th Regiment traced their heritage to the Dandy Fifth of Maryland, named after its handsome full-dress uniform. They were instructed that their forebears had saved George Washington’s army at the Battle of Long Island in 1776 by charging the British lines.

With the exception of the 175th Regiment, which was recruited and based solely in the city of Baltimore, the companies of the 115th and 116th Regiments were decentralized and located in armories across Maryland or Virginia—in towns like Annapolis, Westminster, Salisbury, Winchester, and Charlottesville.

Military service was unpopular in the late

BY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL REYNOLDS

the division was demobilized, and the units reverted to their original National Guard status.

Between the world wars, the Delaware and New Jersey units of the 29th were transferred out of the division and replaced by a second Virginia regiment. Thus, the 29th drew its recruits from just two states and the District of Columbia.

The division was composed of three regiments, and the men were indoctrinated from day one in the history of their respective regiments. The men of the 115th learned that its origin lay in the old 1st Maryland and those of the 116th in the 2nd Virginia Regiment dating back to 1760. The latter called themselves the Stonewallers, remembering that at the Battle of First Bull Run the Confederate general, Barnard Bee, seeing Brig. Gen. Thomas Jackson’s brigade standing fast when the battle

seemed lost, had shouted to his men: “There stands Jackson like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians!”

1920s and 1930s, and most National Guard units were understrength and suffered from a lack of training, ammunition, and modern equipment. The 29th Division came together for collective training only two weeks each year. Inevitably, the outbreak of World War II improved recruiting, and on February 3, 1941, the division was inducted into one year of federal service at Fort Meade, Maryland. Two months later the first draft of conscripts, mainly from Maryland and Virginia, arrived and within a short time they outnumbered the volunteers.

Any ideas that the division might be sent to fight the Japanese following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 were soon dashed, and the demoralizing cycle of humdrum training and guard duties along the East Coast continued relentlessly. Ammunition was

BLUE AND GRAY at Omaha Beach

THE U.S. 29TH INFANTRY DIVISION
FOUGHT ITS WAY ASHORE IN NORMANDY
ON THE BLOODIEST OF D-DAY BEACHES.



Under intense German fire during the first wave at Omaha Beach, soldiers of the 29th Infantry Division traverse the wide expanse of the shoreline while others cling to the low seawall, which provides minimal cover. A few soldiers, including one officer with his .45-caliber Colt pistol drawn, have begun to move forward to take on the defenses of the Atlantic Wall.





ABOVE: Manned by a crew of U.S. Coast Guardsmen, *LCI(L)-85* is shown during practice landings prior to the D-Day invasion. This exercise took place at Slapton Sands in the south of England, the site of the ill-fated Exercise Tiger during which Allied transports were attacked by German E-boats. *LCI(L)-85* took heavy fire from German batteries on D-Day and was sunk in the English Channel. **BELOW:** Soldiers practice for their landings on D-Day. These troops are using the Bangalore torpedo, specially designed to blast gaps in barbed wire obstacles. Many of these specialized weapons were lost in the opening minutes of the D-Day landings at Omaha Beach due to strong German resistance and the weight of combat gear, which contributed to the drownings of numerous soldiers who exited their landing craft in water that was above their heads.



still in short supply, and the men wore World War I-vintage steel helmets. Boredom, rather than Japan or Germany, became the biggest enemy, lowering morale greatly.

On March 2, 1942, the 61-year-old commander of the Blue and Gray was replaced, to the delight of the division, by a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow. An officer of the old school but not a martinet, Gerow was popular with his officers and men. He would go on to command a corps in the European campaign. Ten days later, the 29th was restructured to conform to the triangular organization of Regular Army divisions

and reduced in size from 22,000 men to 15,500. It consisted of three regiments (each of three infantry battalions), four artillery battalions, a cavalry reconnaissance troop, and an engineer battalion.

On September 6, 1942, Gerow received orders that his division was to prepare for an immediate deployment overseas, and within a few days the Blue and Gray was moved by train to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. On the 26th, the bulk of the division boarded the giant Cunard liner *Queen Mary* for an unescorted high-speed crossing of the Atlantic. The balance of the division followed in her sister ship, *Queen Eliza-*

beth, and by October 11, the 29th was complete in England. It was to remain there for nearly two years.

The 29th Division spent its first seven months in England in a Victorian barracks in Tidworth in the central-southern part of the country before being dispersed to various towns in Devon and Cornwall in the West Country, towns like Tavistock, Barnstaple, Bodmin, and Okehampton. The soldiers found the winter weather depressing and life unlike anything they had experienced previously. They found the British and their way of life puzzling—no ice or refrigerators, no showers, warm beer, vehicles driving on the wrong side of the road, the perils of English pronunciation, and so on. Keeping warm was a major problem, with no central heating in Army camps and little or none even in the private houses in which some were billeted and others invited.

Some things were familiar and comforting, however—the language, distances measured in miles, even if nobody knew what a city block was, and, of course, girls. And it was hardly surprising that the local girls found the boys of the Blue and Gray attractive—a private first class was paid nearly four times the rate of his British counterpart!

By the spring of 1943, the 29th was the only U.S. infantry division in the United Kingdom, and the men began to wonder if they would ever see action. Their predecessors in Tidworth, the 1st Infantry Division, had been sent to North Africa, and they were aware that other divisions, including National Guard units, were being sent to that theater directly from the States. Many of the GIs wondered why they were in Europe at all. It was Japan, not Germany, that had attacked their country. The fact that a surprising number of the soldiers were of German lineage certainly did not help matters.

In July 1943, Maj. Gen. Gerow was promoted to command V Corps, and on the 22nd of that month the new divisional commander arrived directly from the States. His reputation had preceded him—a West Pointer and a strict disciplinarian of the old school. General Omar Bradley later described him as “a peppery 48-year-old cavalryman whose enthusiasm sometimes exceeded his judgment as a soldier.” He was Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt.

Despite his reputation, the new commander started with a highly popular move. Sensing that morale was low and that training seven days per week was leading to staleness and boredom, he immediately ordered a three-day rest period and an extension of the previously restricted furlough system. Despite this seemingly generous gesture, Gerhardt soon proved himself a fear-

some though competent leader. He was a stickler for neatness and immediately made it clear that nothing but the highest standards were acceptable in his division. Above all, he made strenuous efforts to raise the morale of his men to a point where they considered themselves superior not only to the enemy but to all other troops in the U.S. Army. To this end he invented the battle cry "Twenty-Nine, Let's Go!" and insisted that his men use it in battle drills, on official correspondence, and even on divisional signposts. It soon caught on.

Gerhardt was determined to infuse a new spirit of aggressiveness into his division and placed great emphasis on hard physical training, weapon handling, and shooting. He even demanded that every man be taught how to swim and insisted that any soldier failing to



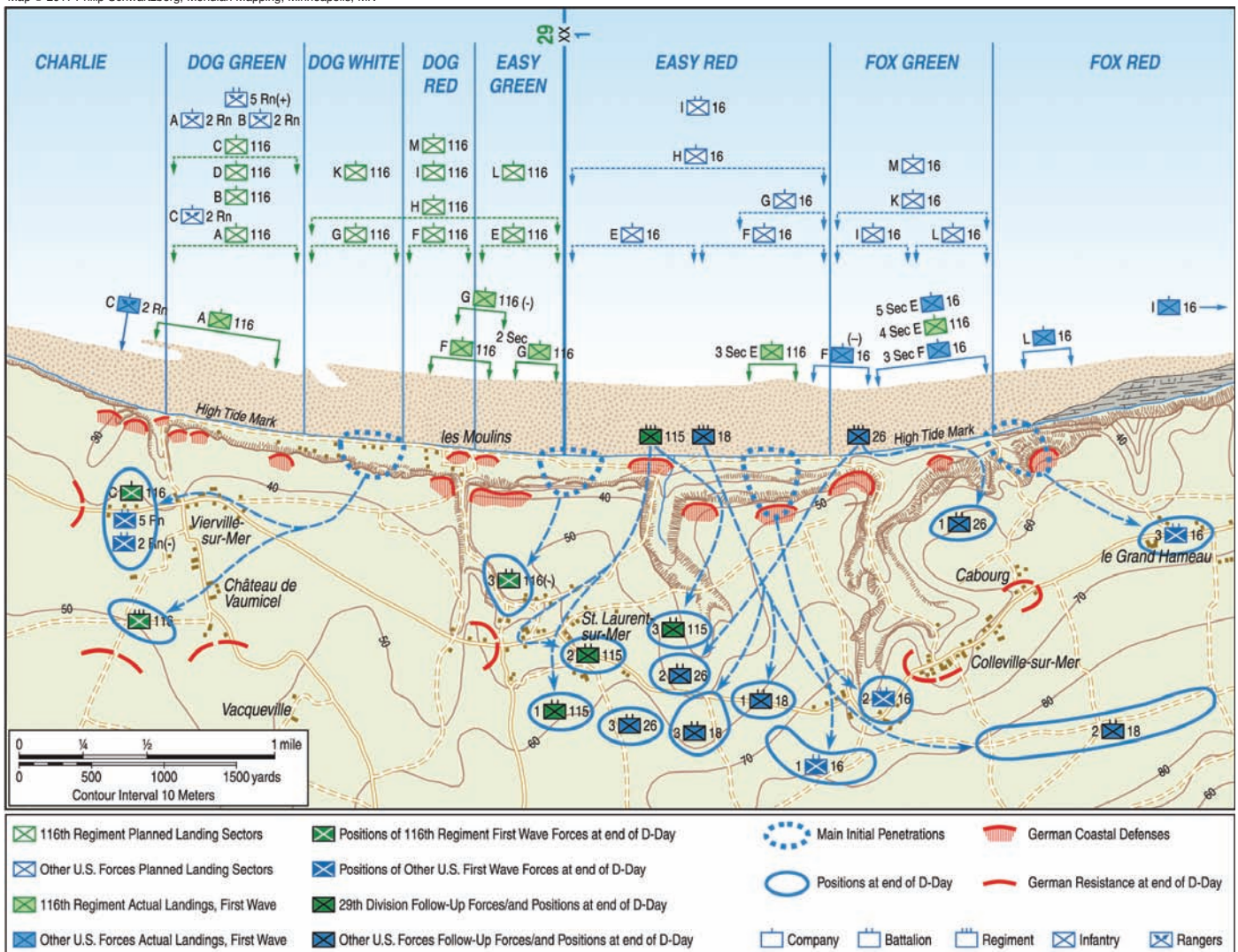
meet his rigorous training standards be transferred out of the division. This resulted in some infantry companies losing nearly half their orig-

inal personnel during their time in England.

In late 1943, Brig. Gen. Norman Cota joined the 29th as its new assistant division commander, a post recently introduced into the Army. Cota had been chief of staff of the 1st Infantry Division in the North Africa campaign and was a perfect choice. He inspired confidence and was a natural leader. Fortunately, he and Gerhardt got on famously. The latter, known to the men as Uncle Charlie, was short and neat to the point of being dapper. The former, known as Dutch, was tall and often casually dressed. They made a formidable pair.

The nearer D-Day approached, the more intense the training became. In December 1943 and January 1944, the 29th was joined by the 1st Infantry Division, recently returned from action in the Mediterranean, and by tank,

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The U.S. landings at Omaha Beach were opposed by troops of the German 352nd Infantry Division, whose weapons were pre-sighted to cover virtually every inch of ground from the shoreline to the low seawall. The Germans were also situated on high bluffs that overlooked the beach, complicating the efforts of the American 29th Infantry Division to move inland. TOP: Brigadier General Norman Cota served as assistant commander of the 29th Infantry Division during the D-Day landings of June 6, 1944. Due to the leadership of Cota and other officers, the infantrymen who had been pinned down on Omaha Beach began to move inland, silencing German defensive positions and seizing the exits from the beach.

artillery, and engineer battalions for landing exercises at Slapton Sands in south Devon. Ships bombarded mock pillboxes, and both the Navy and the assault troops used live ammunition on a lavish scale. The exercise was repeated on April 27, and no one was left in any doubt that they were to be the lead troops in the forthcoming invasion of the European mainland.

Fortunately for the 29th, its landing exercise was carried out successfully and without the calamity that befell the 4th Infantry Division in the early hours of the following day when German E-boats penetrated the escorted convoy of nine U.S. LSTs, sinking two and damaging a third, with the loss of 198 naval personnel and 551 soldiers.

In mid-May, the 29th received a sudden and largely unexpected order to move to special camps between Falmouth and Plymouth. These new camps were isolated, surrounded by barbed wire, and guarded by some 2,000 Counter Intelligence Corps personnel. No unauthorized personnel were permitted to leave or enter, and camouflage discipline was strictly enforced.

At the time of the move, fewer than 200 members of the division knew any of the details of the invasion plan, and it was to be the last week in May before the GIs were briefed on the greatest amphibious operation in the history of warfare and learned that the Stonewallers (the 116th Regiment) were to spearhead the divi-

sion's landing on Omaha Beach alongside the 16th Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division. They were to be the only National Guard unit to land in the first wave on D-Day.

Toward the end of the month the division moved into its final marshalling camps where the men and vehicles were organized into shiploads, and by June 3 they were embarked. However, appalling weather in the English Channel forced General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, to delay D-Day. The men of the Blue and Gray had to spend the next three days in cramped conditions below deck.

H-hour for Omaha was finally set for 6:30 AM on June 6, and at 4 AM the transports carrying the men of the 116th Infantry Regiment stopped engines 20 kilometers offshore—well out of range of the German shore batteries. The men began clambering over the iron rails in pitch darkness into the landing craft, which hung from the sides of the ships. With an 18-knot wind and heavy swell, this proved a difficult transfer, and a number were injured as they mistimed their jumps. Some even fell overboard to their deaths.

The average man was carrying over 60 pounds of equipment, including an assault jacket instead of his normal pack, combat rations, nine grenades, a half-pound block of TNT, rifle ammunition clips, an entrenching

tool, a bayonet, a gas mask, and a poncho, and in some cases extra ammunition belts for BARs (Browning Automatic Rifle), as well as his personal weapon.

The Stonewallers had been told that to ease their passage across the beach the battleships USS *Texas* and USS *Arkansas*, steaming within 12,000 meters of the shore, would shortly be opening fire with 14-inch guns and that, in addition, three cruisers and 15 destroyers would drench the enemy defenses with pinpoint, rapid fire. They were also informed that an air bombardment was to blast the Nazi gun emplacements, that British Supermarine Spitfires and four squadrons of American Republic P-47 Thunderbolts would be overhead at all times, and that during the night paratroopers had already landed behind enemy lines to cut off reinforcements. While this may have given them some encouragement, seasickness and the freezing spray from the rough sea were of more immediate concern, and before long, as the landing craft circled in a holding pattern, they were being swamped and the men had to help the crafts' pumps by bailing with their helmets.

Meanwhile, aboard the cruiser USS *Augusta*, the commander of First U.S. Army, General Omar Bradley, had just learned that the German 352nd Infantry Division had been moved from St. Lô to the assault beaches for a defense exercise. He quickly forwarded this information to



Gerow at V Corps headquarters, but it was impossible to pass it to the troops already aboard their landing craft. Even if Maj. Gen. Gerhardt and officers of the 29th Division had been told about the 352nd, there was nothing they could have done about it. This failure of both the American and British intelligence agencies was particularly serious, for the 352nd was not on an exercise at all—it had taken up its coastal defensive positions 11 weeks before D-Day!

Bradley reminisced later in his autobiography, *A Soldier's Story*: “At 0615 smoke thickened the mist on the coastline as heavy bombers of the U.S. Eighth Air Force rumbled overhead. Not until later did we learn that most of the 13,000 bombs dropped by these heavies had cascaded harmlessly into the hedgerows three miles behind the coast. In bombing through the overcast, air had deliberately delayed the drop to lessen the danger of spillover on craft approaching the shore. The margin of safety had undermined the effectiveness of the heavy air mission.”

And there was more bad news for the Stonewallers. The low cloud, mist, dust, and smoke caused by grass fires set alight on the bluffs by the naval bombardment soon obscured most of their targets and reference points. Most of the shells and rockets fell well short of the sea wall. In fact, few of the German strongpoints were seriously damaged by the air and naval bombardments.

The landing plan for Omaha saw the amphibious Sherman tanks of the 743rd Tank Battalion leading the assault. They were due to land at H minus 5 (6:25 AM), but the rough seas caused the naval officer in charge of the eight landing craft to give up any idea of launching the tanks 6,000 meters offshore. Knowing they would have little chance of reaching the beach before they were swamped, he decided to run his craft right onto the shore and let the Shermans drive off.

It was a wise decision. The 741st Tank Battalion supporting the 1st Division on the eastern part of Omaha lost 27 of its 32 Shermans in its attempt to swim them. Even so, things did not go as well for the 743rd as hoped. Two of A Company's tanks were swamped, and B Company, landing opposite the Vierville draw, came under immediate artillery, cannon, and antitank fire and lost seven of its 16 tanks. The company commander's landing craft was sunk just offshore, and four other officers were killed or wounded, leaving a single lieutenant in command. Nevertheless, the nine remaining Shermans began engaging enemy positions from the water's edge. Company C touched down successfully to the east but soon attracted fire. The



ABOVE: American soldiers crowd the flat bottom of an LCVP, or Higgins boat, as they approach Omaha Beach at Normandy. They are equipped with M1 Garand and M1 Carbine rifles, while their combat loads often weighed in excess of 60 pounds. Concentrated German fire caused some landing craft to stop short of the beach and discharge their cargo of infantrymen into deep water. **BELOW:** Churning through the rough waters of the English Channel, Higgins boats laden with U.S. soldiers approach Omaha Beach on D-Day. Some soldiers have already disembarked and are seen wading through the surf toward shore, while intense German fire rakes the waterline. Shrouds of smoke are visible in the distance. **OPPOSITE:** Soldiers of the U.S. 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division assaulted Omaha Beach along with the troops of the 29th Infantry Division on D-Day. These men of Company E, 16th Regiment have just exited their Higgins boat, which embarked from the transport USS *Samuel Chase*.

Corbis / Bettmann



novelist Ernest Hemingway, who accompanied the invasion force but did not go ashore because of an injured leg, wrote later that he saw five tanks hit and set on fire. He described the Shermans as “crouched like big yellow toads along the high water mark.”

Owing to the ineffectiveness of both the naval and air bombardments, many of the

infantrymen in the first waves of the 116th Regiment found themselves under direct fire even before leaving their assault craft. The companies landed more or less simultaneously with a company of the 1st Battalion coming ashore just east of the Vierville draw and suffering the worst, losing an estimated 65 percent of its strength within 10 minutes.

One landing craft foundered a kilometer offshore on a sand bar, and most of its complement drowned under the weight of their personal loads; another completely disintegrated after being hit by mortar shells, and in a third all 32 men including the company commander, Captain Taylor Fellers, were killed.

The following account, prepared by the U.S. War Department's Historical Division after interviewing survivors, paints a horrific picture of what it was like for the hapless soldiers of A Company. "All boats came under criss-cross machine-gun fire.... As the first men jumped, they crumpled and flopped into the water. Then order was lost. It seemed to the men that the only way to get ashore was to dive head first in and swim clear of the fire that was striking the boats. But, as they hit the water, their heavy equipment dragged them down and soon they were struggling to keep afloat. Some were hit in the water and wounded. Some drowned then and there.... But some moved safely through the bullet fire to the sand and then, finding they could not hold there, went back into the water and used it as cover, only their heads sticking out. Those who survived kept moving forward with the tide, sheltering at times behind underwater obstacles and in this way finally made their landings. Within minutes of the ramps being lowered, A Company had become inert, leaderless and almost incapable of action. Every officer and sergeant had been killed or wounded.... It had become a struggle for survival and rescue. The men in the water pushed wounded men ahead of them, and those who had reached the sands crawled back into the

water pulling others to land to save them from drowning, in many cases to see the rescued men wounded again or to be hit themselves. Within twenty minutes of striking the beach A Company had ceased to be an assault company and had become a forlorn little rescue party bent on survival and the saving of lives."

And so it was to be for many others on D-Day. Company C of the 2nd Rangers, coming

**The tide was drowning
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in just to the west of the Vierville draw shortly after A Company, lost 35 of 64 men. Company G of the 2nd Battalion, 116th Regiment, which should have landed between the Vierville and les Moulins draws, ended up in scattered groups just to the east of les Moulins. Half the groups gained some protection from the smoke of brush fires set alight by explosions on the bluffs, but those landing farther to the east ran

into heavy machine-gun fire, and one boat team lost 14 of its complement of 31.

Company F, 2nd Battalion came ashore just to the east of its planned sector, directly in front of les Moulins; half the company, unprotected by smoke, came under heavy fire and took 45 minutes to cross the exposed beach, many of the men using the beach obstacles for some sort of protection. Half were cut down. The other half of the company managed to reach the protection of the shingle bank, but by then they had lost all their officers and were largely disorganized.

Company E of the same battalion, meant to land on Company F's left flank, veered over a kilometer to the east and ended up in scattered groups in the 1st Division's sector. Two of its boats made good landings with only two casualties, but a third was hit by an artillery shell, and the others came under heavy machine-gun fire. The company commander, Captain Lawrence Madill, was killed.

There were two reasons for so many of the assault boats landing well to the east of their designated positions: the strong current running laterally eastward and the difficulties of navigating through the smoke and beach obstacles.

By 7 AM, A Company had been cut to pieces at the water's edge, F Company was disorganized with heavy losses, G Company was scattered but had some groups preparing to move west along the beach to find their assigned objective, and E Company was nowhere to be found in the Blue and Gray sector.

A Special Engineer Task Force, which in the Blue and Gray sector comprised the 146th



Engineer Combat Battalion and a number of naval combat demolition units, had the mission of preparing eight 50-meter gaps through the German obstacle belt in just 30 minutes. It ran into trouble even before coming ashore. Delays in loading and navigational problems resulted in four of the assault teams arriving 10 or more minutes late and only three finding their designated disembarkation points. Most were swept to the east, and a number landed where there were no infantry or tanks to give them covering fire.

The conditions under which the teams had to work could not have been worse. Apart from enemy fire, friendly infantry sheltering behind the obstacles due for destruction and others passing through them toward the sea wall caused severe delays. In addition, only six of the Sherman dozer tanks assisting the engineer task force reached the beach in working order, and three of these were soon disabled by artillery fire. Nevertheless, despite appalling casualties, two gaps had been cleared in the 116th's sector by 7 AM. Sadly, the equipment for marking these gaps had been lost, so they were invisible in high water conditions.

At 7 AM, the second assault wave began touching down in a series of landings that lasted 40 minutes. The U.S. War Department's official narrative has this description: "The later waves did not come in under the conditions planned for their arrival. The tide, flowing into the obstacle belt by 0700, was through it an hour later, rising eight feet in that period; but the obstacles were gapped at only a few places. The enemy fire, which had decimated the first waves, was not neutralized when the larger landings commenced. No advances had been made beyond the shingle, and neither tanks nor the scattered pockets of infantry already ashore were able to give much covering fire.... Mislandings continued to be a disrupting factor, not merely in scattering the infantry units but also in preventing engineers from carrying out special assignments and in separating headquarters elements from their units, thus hindering reorganization."

The other three companies of the 1st Battalion, 116th Regiment were scheduled to land on a one-kilometer front to the east of the Vierville draw at 7 AM in support of its now decimated A Company. Only two or three sections did so. B Company's assault craft failed to recognize the essential landmarks, and the company ended up scattered a kilometer on each side of the A Company survivors. Those who did land in the right place suffered the same fate as their comrades, and the company commander, Captain Ettore Zappacosta, was killed.



These two iconic images of the landings at Omaha Beach on D-Day were captured by *Life* magazine photographer Robert Capa. The impetuous photographer accompanied U.S. troops to Omaha Beach and hurriedly snapped a number of frames at the sector code-named Easy Red Beach. When the rolls of film were delivered for developing, an overanxious technician dried the emulsions too quickly and destroyed all but 10 of the photographs Capa had risked his life to obtain. In the above photo, a soldier struggles through the churning surf toward cover. In the photo on the opposite page, soldiers utilize heavy beach obstacles as refuge against withering German fire directed from the heights above Omaha Beach.

Company C landed 10 minutes later in relatively good shape, but a kilometer to the east of the Vierville draw. Drifting smoke gave it protection from direct fire, and it suffered only five or six casualties but lost all its flamethrowers, 60mm mortars, bangalore torpedoes, and demolition charges when the boat carrying them overturned in the surf. The company found itself on its own but sheltered by a meter-high wooden sea wall.

Company D (Heavy Weapons) was less fortunate. One boat was swamped and had to be abandoned, another was sunk by a mine or artillery round, and a third stopped 100 meters offshore. The company commander, Captain Walter Schilling, was killed—the third in the same battalion that morning—and only three of its six medium mortars, three of its 11 machine guns, and a limited amount of ammunition were brought ashore.

Major Sidney V. Bingham, Jr., the commander of the 116th's 2nd Battalion, had been among the first to reach the shingle, but for nearly an hour he had no radio to contact the widely scattered elements of his battalion, and his attempt to organize an assault at les Moulins was unsuccessful. He did manage to get about 50 men across the shingle near a prominent three-story house at the mouth of

the draw, and although he personally led a group of 10 men nearly to the top of the bluff east of the draw, they were unable to knock out an enemy machine-gun nest and had to return to the house.

The last company of the 2nd Battalion, the Heavy Weapons Company, had become dispersed during the run-in to the beach, and its machine-gun platoon and two mortar sections ended up in the 1st Division's sector; the rest of the company, after suffering heavy casualties, found themselves around les Moulins.

At approximately 7:15 AM, Lt. Col. Max Schneider's Ranger force of eight companies approached the Vierville draw in 18 landing craft. Two companies were from the 2nd Rangers and six from the 5th. Three other companies of the 2nd Rangers, under Lt. Col. James Rudder, were at this time assaulting the German strongpoint at Pointe du Hoc, but nothing had been heard from them and it was wrongly assumed that the assault had failed. Schneider soon assessed the situation in front of him and ordered his force to swing east. Even so, A and B Companies of the 2nd Rangers landed where A Company of the 116th had been decimated and suffered the same fate. Only about half reached the sea wall. Fortunately, the 450 men of the 5th Rangers came ashore halfway

between the Vierville and les Moulins draws with only five or six casualties.

Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Meeks's 3rd Battalion of the 116th should have followed the 2nd Battalion onto the two-kilometer sector of beach astride the les Moulins draw between 7:20 and 7:30. In fact, it came ashore a few minutes late, well to the east, with part of L Company and the whole of M Company in the 1st Division's zone. Fortunately, there were only a few casualties, and it is clear that the later assault waves had a much easier time than those landing on or just after H-hour.

By 7:30 AM, the exhausted men of the 116th Infantry Regiment were lining the whole of the sea wall or shingle embankment in their sector of Omaha Beach. In some areas, notably in front of the German strongpoints guarding draws, losses in officers and NCOs were so high that remnants of units were practically

fire. Beyond that were the bare and steep bluffs.

It was into this desperate and seemingly hopeless situation that Cota, the deputy commander of the Blue and Gray, and Colonel Charles Canham, the commander of the 116th, and their command groups disembarked at 7:30. Losing only one officer, they landed more or less halfway between the Vierville and les Moulins draws and found C Company of the 1st Battalion, some 2nd Battalion elements, and 450 men of Max Schneider's Provisional Ranger Force to their left and right. In most places the men were crowded shoulder to shoulder, sometimes several rows deep.

Realizing that the situation was now critical and that they had little or no chance of storming the enemy strongpoints defending the Vierville and les Moulins draws, Cota and Canham resolved to advance up the bluffs. This involved crossing the flat salt marsh, some 100 meters

halfway between the draws. Cota has been credited with the exhortation, "There are two kinds of soldiers on this beach—those who are dead and those who are going to die! So let's get the hell off this damned beach!" However, those words were actually spoken by Colonel George Taylor of the 16th Regimental Combat Team, 1st Division.

There were countless other acts of bravery by young officers and NCOs as they started breaching the wire obstacles and leading their men off the beach and through the minefields. Company C of the 116th, under Captain Berthier Hawks, who had suffered a crushed foot in the landing, led the way at about 7:50. Then, at 8:10 AM, Max Schneider gave the codeword "Tallyho."

It was the order for each platoon of Rangers to make their own way up the bluff and on to their designated assembly area south of Vierville-sur-Mer. According to the memorial plaque to the Rangers in the Vierville draw, this happened after Cota gave the order, "Rangers, lead the way!" Colonel Canham, despite a severe wrist wound, also led a mixed group of 2nd Battalion men up another part of the bluff nearer to les Moulins at about the same time.

Once on the hillside, the various groups were protected from direct fire and by the smoke from the grass fires. In some places the smoke was so thick that men put on their gas masks. Cota tried to contact the 1st Division during his move up the bluff to report his own actions and to find out what was happening on the other part of Omaha, but without success.

By 8:30 AM, the last of more than 600 men were leaving the sea wall, and a half hour later the crest of the bluff had been secured. No Germans were found in the trenches there, and remarkably few casualties had been incurred. Along with C Company of the 116th, there were men from B, F, G, and H companies, the 121st Engineers, most of the 5th Rangers, and of course Cota and Canham with his Regimental Headquarters. In the case of H Company, a machine-gun platoon had moved laterally all the way from the 1st Division's part of the beach. But the moves up the bluff had been uncoordinated, with few of the men being aware of what was going on except in their immediate vicinity.

On reaching the top of the bluff, no one could see more than a couple of hundred meters because of the many hedgerows, and most had no idea what to do next. When Cota arrived, he found elements of the 116th and 5th Rangers scattered all over the fields beyond the crest, with the furthestmost groups near the coastal road. Some sporadic long-range machine-gun fire was



After hours of harrowing combat and finally gaining the upper hand at Omaha Beach, these soldiers of the 16th Regiment, 1st Infantry Division rest in the shelter of the steep cliffs at Omaha Beach. This photo was taken in the vicinity of the French seaside village of Colleville-sur-Mer.

leaderless. Engineers, Navy personnel from wrecked craft, and elements of other supporting units were all mixed in with the infantry. And now there was a problem of morale.

The tide was drowning wounded men who had been cut down on the sands, and bodies were being carried ashore just below the shingle. Stunned and shaken by what they had experienced, the men found the sea wall and shingle bank all too welcome as cover. Ahead of them, with wire and minefields to go through, was the area between the sea wall and the bluff, and this was fully exposed to enemy

deep, devoid of cover and blocked by a double-apron wire fence and an antipersonnel minefield. The bluffs themselves were up to 30 meters high, steep and bare but pockmarked with small folds and depressions that provided some cover. Fortunately, the main German defenses were sited to cover the beach and the draws themselves rather than the ground in between.

Cota immediately took personal command of one group of soldiers, and after the first man was cut down as he tried to move through a gap blown in the wire, led the way himself in the dash to the foot of the bluff roughly

coming from the direction of Vierville, and the occasional artillery round landed in the general area, but there was no organized opposition. Even so, it was another hour before Cota was able to bring some order to the mixed force and get units moving again. He personally organized some of the men into fire and maneuver teams and led the advance across the open fields.

The small number of Germans in the area retreated, and the Americans were soon able to advance along the track connecting les Moulins to Vierville-sur-Mer. Again C Company of the 116th was in the lead, entering Vierville shortly before 11 AM. Cota's group was not far behind. No Germans were found in the village, but a platoon of B Company advancing toward the Chateau Vaumicel, just south of Vierville-sur-Mer, had to overcome a small German resistance nest and then beat off a counterattack. The Germans had deployed from three trucks coming up from the south. Canham's group of 2nd Battalion men with some Rangers attached had been equally successful in their move from the beach, and they arrived in Vierville-sur-Mer with few casualties.

Just before midday, C Company of the 116th and B Company of the 5th Rangers began a move down the coast road toward Pointe du Hoc. About 500 meters out of Vierville-sur-Mer, however, they were halted by enemy machine guns. A full-scale attack by the main Ranger force to overcome this opposition was planned for the early evening but was later cancelled. The Rangers were now an essential part of the force defending the hard-won gains south and west of Vierville-sur-Mer, and Colonel Canham was not prepared to risk losing them. His force had few heavy weapons and no tanks or supporting artillery. Some guns of the 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalion had been landed on the beach, but the crest of the bluff prevented them firing in close support.

At 6:30 PM, John Metcalfe, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, after finally managing to leave the cliff area to the west of the Vierville draw, reported to Colonel Canham in Vierville-sur-Mer. This was the first time that the regimental commander became aware of the true state of his 1st Battalion, and it would be another five hours before he learned the full facts about his 2nd and 3rd Battalions at the head of the les Moulins draw near St. Laurent-sur-Mer.

By midday Cota and Canham had much of which to be proud, but the main task of clearing the two draws to enable tanks and vehicles to exit the beach was unfinished. At around 1 PM, a heavy naval bombardment, including fire from the battleship *Texas*, was directed at the strong-points guarding the Vierville draw, and it was



Several weeks after the Allied landings in Normandy, soldiers of the 29th Infantry Division ask a Frenchman for information. Although the landings of June 6, 1944, were successful, the action at Omaha Beach was by far the costliest for the Allies. The landings there had taken place in the early morning, and several hours later the issue remained in doubt, causing General Omar Bradley, commander of U.S. ground forces in Normandy, to contemplate withdrawing the troops from Omaha Beach.

not long before a destroyer reported Germans leaving the concrete emplacements to surrender.

Shortly afterward, Dutch Cota, with his aide and four men, calmly walked down the road to the beach to see why no vehicles were coming up. After receiving some scattered small-arms fire and capturing five Germans, whom they made lead the way through a minefield, the Cota group reached the beach to find the sad remnants of A Company of the 1st Battalion and some Shermans of B Company of the 743rd Tank Battalion farther to the east.

Cota found that despite their heavy casualties, the loss of some 75 percent of their equipment, and isolated enemy snipers, Lt. Col. Robert Ploger's 121st Engineers were about to start work on the obstacles in the draw. However, there were not enough infantry available for the systematic mopping up of the Germans still in the area, and the engineers themselves had to send out combat patrols to do the job, delaying their proper mission.

Dutch Cota continued his walk along the promenade to see what had happened at les Moulins. He was unaware that shortly before 10 AM the commander of V Corps, General Gerow, had ordered Colonel Eugene Slappeg's 115th Regiment of the Blue and Gray to land in support of the beleaguered 116th.

Slappeg's men had been loaded into a dozen

large landing craft, each capable of carrying a company and putting them, dry-shod, straight onto the beach. The problem, however, was navigating these slow 246-ton craft through an uncleared obstacle belt in the face of continuing artillery fire. For the men of the 115th there was an additional problem—their vehicles were not due to come ashore on D-Day, and so they were carrying abnormally heavy loads including extra ammunition.

The 115th was ordered to land near the les Moulins draw, but it soon became clear to the captains of the landing craft that in the absence of cleared and marked lanes through the beach obstacles a landing in that sector was out of the question. They asked for new orders and, despite the chaos there, were told to come ashore in the 1st Division's sector, about 1,500 meters east of les Moulins.

Although the landing was difficult, with several craft colliding, it was achieved with remarkably few casualties. Slappeg soon received orders from the deputy commander of the 1st Division to attack and secure St. Laurent-sur-Mer, which was thought to be defended by about a company of Germans. He in turn ordered his 1st Battalion to cut off the village from the rear while the other two battalions attacked it frontally.

Continued on page 78

The Killing *of* Il Duce



On April 29, 1945, the corpses of Mussolini and his mistress Claretta Petacci hang lifelessly among those of Fascist comrades from a steel girder at a gasoline station in the Piazzale Loreto. Among their executed associates is Alessandro Pavolini, the last individual to hold the post of party secretary.

INTRIGUE STILL SURROUNDS THE EXECUTION OF MUSSOLINI AND HIS MISTRESS CLARETTA PETACCI BY COMMUNIST PARTISANS IN 1945. **BY BLAINE TAYLOR**

AT 3 AM ON SUNDAY, April 29, 1945, a yellow furniture truck stopped at the Piazzale Loreto, a vast, open traffic roundabout where five roads intersected in the northern Italian city of Milan. This industrial center had been held for only four days by Communist partisans, but from 1919 on it had been the spiritual headquarters of the Fascist Party founded there by former journalist and World War I Army mountain corps veteran Benito Mussolini.

In a very real sense, his first political career, ended the day before by his demise, had now come full circle as Mussolini's dead body was dumped from the van onto the wet cobblestones of the empty roundabout, followed by those of 16 other men and a lone female, his mistress since 1933, Claretta Petacci. All 18 people, their dead bodies thrown out by 10 men, had simply been murdered by Communist Party execution squads in hails of gunfire.

Without any sort of trial, 15 men were shot in the back at the town of Dongo on the shore of Lake Como, with Marcello Petacci slain in the water as he swam in vain for his life.

As for the Fascist Duce (Leader) and his lady, how, where, why, and by whom they were shot are all still unsolved mysteries even today. While the executions of the men were thinly disguised, politically motivated assassinations, the killing of Claretta Petacci was and remains a shameful, common criminal act by ruthless men who had power over her and wrongfully exercised it—no more and no less.

By 8 AM, word had gotten around the city via a special newspaper edition as well as bulletins on Radio Free Milan that the hated Duce, revered just four months earlier at public rallies by this very same citizenry, was dead and available for scorn in the Piazzale Loreto. It was there, on August 13, 1944, that the Fascists, egged on by the German SS, had shot 15 partisans. This day's butchery had been allegedly in revenge for that earlier deed.

A large, ugly, depraved, and nasty crowd of civilians and partisans gathered and quickly got out of control; neither fire hoses nor bullets fired in the air could deter or disperse it.

Two men kicked the late Mussolini in the jaw while another put a pendant in his dead hand as a mock symbol of his lost power; a woman fired five pistol shots into his head as retaliation, she asserted, for the same number of her

dead sons, all slain in Il Duce's series of imperialistic wars since 1935. A fiery rag was thrown in his face, his skull was cracked, and one of his eyes fell out of its socket.

Another woman hitched up her skirt, squatted down, and urinated on his face, which others spit on with abandon, while yet a third brought forth a whip with which to beat his battered corpse. A man tried to stuff a dead mouse into the former Italian premier's slack, broken mouth, chanting all the while, "Make a speech now!" over and over again.

Pushed beyond hatred and emotional endurance, the angry mob stormed forward and

the crosspiece of an unfinished Standard Oil gas station that has long since disappeared.

As the sole female corpse was raised, the belle of that gruesome ball's skirt fell downward around her face, revealing a panty-less torso to the taunts of the crowd. Some accounts say that a woman, others say a male partisan chaplain stepped forward and placed a rope taut around her legs, thus securing her skirt in place for the cameras of the world to film.

A woman gasped aloud, "Imagine, all that and not a run in her stockings!"

Il Duce's face was blood splashed, and his famous mouth gaped open, while Claretta's eyes

National Archives



Shortly after their execution, the bodies of Mussolini and Claretta Petacci were dumped in the public square at Dongo. Crowds jeered and mutilated the bodies, which were then transported to Milan and strung up to endure more abuse.

actually trampled the 18 bodies where they lay.

When a burly man picked up the slain Duce by the armpits and held him for the throng to view, the latter chanted, "Higher! Higher! We can't see! String them up! To the hooks, like pigs!" Thus it came to pass that the bodies of Il Duce, his mistress, and four others were tied with ropes and hoisted six feet off the ground, their dangling bodies lashed by the ankles to

stared dully into space. The former Fascist Party secretary, Achille Starace, dressed in a jogging suit for his daily run, was brought forth, faced the dead, and incredibly gave the stiff-armed Fascist salute to "My Duce!" He was then shot in the back by a four-man firing squad.

Just then, the rope holding the dead body of Francesco Barracu snapped, and his corpse hit the ground below with a sickening thud;

Starace was strung up in his place like a piece of meat beside the others. Next, Mussolini's rope was cut, and he fell to the cobblestones on the top of his head, his brains oozing out onto the wet street.

At 1 PM, the combined protests of the Catholic cardinal of Milan and the just arriving American military government succeeded in having the bodies taken down, placed in plain wooden coffins, and sent to the city morgue.

There, the body of Mussolini was formally autopsied. The 5-foot, 6-inch tall Duce weighed 158 pounds, with sparse white hair on his battered, bald head. Because he was hit by seven to nine bullets while still alive, the immediate cause of death was determined to have been four shots near the heart. His stomach bore

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ulcer scars, but none of the long-rumored syphilis was visible. He had had a minor gall bladder problem, however.

Mussolini's corpse was buried anonymously in Milan's Musocco Cemetery in section 16, grave 384, while part of his brain was handed over for study to St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital in Washington, D.C., and only returned to his widow, Donna Rachele, decades later.

Claretta had been killed by two 9mm bullets, which added to the mystery of the weaponry used. She was also buried in Milan under the name of Rita Colfosco and in 1956 was exhumed by the Petacci family, which had meanwhile returned to Italy from its Spanish exile at the end of the war. Today her remains rest in Rome's Verano Cemetery in a pink marble tomb topped with a white marble statue. Rumor had it that her corpse had been retrieved to secure hidden gems sewn into the hem of her skirt.

The bloody killings and their gruesome aftermath horrified the world, but to the Italians the



ABOVE: During happier days, Mussolini and Hitler ride through the streets of Munich in an open car. This photo was taken during Mussolini's state visit to Germany and the capital city of Bavaria in 1940. **LEFT:** A smiling Claretta Petacci was introduced to Mussolini while she was still a teenager. She maintained her relationship with the Fascist leader until the end.

entire episode conjured up mainly postwar political connotations: to the beaten Fascists, the partisans had acted simply as "the Italian arm of the Red Army," as the agents of Josef Stalin in Moscow; while to the rest of the body politic, the events at the Piazzale Loreto symbolized the birth pangs of the coming socialist republic that even Mussolini himself would have supported over the monarchy that had both hired and fired him.

The final saga for Mussolini and Petacci began when Il Duce arrived in Milan at 7 PM on April 18, just 11 days before his death, with Ms. Petacci, the eldest daughter of a former Vatican physician, following later. On the 21st, an American OSS plan to capture Mussolini by paratroopers was vetoed, while his own German Waffen SS battalion-sized escort was removed and sent to the front to fight the advancing Allies and Communist partisan forces.

EVEN SOME OF his own Fascists, as well as Claretta's larcenous brother Marcello, were plotting to have Mussolini murdered while suspicions were running deep among members of his circle that the Germans were planning to trade him to the Allies to save their skins.

The Catholic Church offered Il Duce asylum, as did several South American countries. He refused and vowed he would never surrender

but instead would lead a Fascist last stand in the Valtellina region, on the far side of Lake Como.

When the betrayed Duce heard of German plans for a secret surrender of all Axis forces in northern Italy on April 25, he left Milan in a huff for the town of Como, 25 miles distant, trailed by his SS bodyguard chief, Lieutenant Fritz Birzer and Secret Police Lieutenant Otto Kisch, each ordered not to let him out of their sight or to shoot him themselves if he tried to escape.

He did try—twice. He was now a man on the run, but why?

Although informed that neutral Switzerland would not accept him, his family, or any other Fascists, Mussolini nevertheless seemed to be headed there rather than, as he asserted, to a final battle that drew only 12 faithful soldiers.

It has also been suggested that Mussolini meant instead to cross the frontier into the Nazi-held South Tyrolean region of Austria and there stand until death with still-resisting German troops, but even now no one really knows for sure.

Yet another theory has lingered since 1945—that Il Duce was trying to rendezvous with British secret agents to trade his life and those of the members of his sizable entourage in return for secret prewar letters between him and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill,

as well as for others penned during the final stages of the war.

There was also the hoard of loot that the fleeing Fascists took with them in a convoy of 28 vehicles, an estimated millions in cash, checks, jewels, gold bullion and other riches taken from slain Jews, all later stolen by the partisans and used to launch the postwar Italian Communist Party as the largest in Western Europe. This has been referred to ever since as Il Duce's Gold or the Dongo Treasure in reference to where it was captured on April 27 along with Mussolini and his fleeing minions.

All of this has been endlessly discussed since 1945 in a veritable phalanx of articles and books in both English and Italian, the most recent being an excellent trio of works brought forth for the 60th anniversary of the end of the Italian campaign and the Duce-Petacci-Fascist slayings of April 28, 1945.

The first two books, written by Ray Moseley and Luciano Garibaldi, respectively, appeared in 2004 and were titled *Mussolini: The Last 600 Days of Il Duce* and *Mussolini: The Secrets of His Death/Did Winston Churchill Order Mussolini's Execution?* The third volume of this trio, Sergio Luzzatto's lyrical *The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy* appeared in 2005.

On Friday, April 27, the convoy of German SS, Luftwaffe, and Italian Fascist vehicles of uncertain numbers was stopped by a small, vastly outnumbered unit of the 52nd Garibaldi Partisan Brigade commanded by Count Pier Luigi Bellini delle Stelle, alias Pedro, at the small village of Musso along Lake Como. Bluffing as to the size of their actual force, the Red negotiators told the Germans that they could proceed unharmed, but only on the condition that no Italians were in the enemy column.

Luftwaffe Lieutenant Hans Fallmeyer, according to Moseley, and Lieutenant Fritz Birzer agreed to these conditions. The latter hastened to the hidden Duce, who was inside an armored car and armed with a submachine gun and wearing his standard gray-green forage cap and uniform of the Fascist Militia.

Mussolini argued that all of his entourage should be allowed to continue, but the Nazi lieutenant was firm, insisting that only the Duce himself could go and that even Claretta had to be left behind. Urged by her to accept the terms, an embarrassed Duce reluctantly agreed.

Birzer got his own overcoat and steel helmet from a Luftwaffe sergeant and gave them to Mussolini to wear, but the mortified Duce protested that he would be ashamed to be found dressed as a German and hidden in a German vehicle. However, he finally relented.

The disguised Duce slipped out of the armored car and into a truck of Luftwaffe men, wearing the German steel helmet backward until Lieutenant Birzer righted it. Tearing off his own Fascist Militia jacket, the crestfallen Mussolini replaced it with the field gray overcoat that was discovered in Rome in 1999, to further hide the rest of his own uniform, complete with the traditional black shirt of the Fascisti. Sitting quietly at the far end in the left corner of the fourth truck in line, Mussolini pretended to be drunk.

THE HIDDEN DUCE was betrayed by an Austrian who told the partisans, "There are Italians; have the trucks searched," as well as an Italian Fascist, Nicola Bombacci, who lamented, "He is with us! It is not fair that he should get away!" Thus forewarned, the Communists stopped the convoy a second time, at the next village, Dongo, just opposite the town hall.

A former sailor in the Italian Navy, a clog-maker from Dongo named Giuseppe Negri

National Archives



Prior to being strung up by their heels, the bodies of Mussolini and Claretta Petacci lie in a heap in the public square of Milan. Mussolini's lifeless hand is holding a Fascist standard, which was placed there in ridicule of his once great power.

who had joined the Partisans, searched the truck and was startled to see the profile of the man he had formerly served. He reported immediately to Urbano Lazzaro (alias Bill), asserting, "Oh, Bill! We've got the Big Bastard! ... It's really Mussolini! ... I've seen him with my own eyes!"

Incredulous, Lazzaro climbed into the truck himself and approached the mysterious figure

pointed out to him obligingly by the real Luftwaffe men who knew the truth. Lazzaro tapped the seated man on the shoulder and called out, "Comrade!" but got no answer. He then stated louder, "Your Excellency!" and tapped his shoulder once more, but was still met with silence and no movement. He addressed the silent figure yet a third time: "Cavalier Benito Mussolini!"

Later he recalled, "I take off his helmet and see his bald pate and the characteristic shape of his head. I take off his sunglasses and lower the collar of his coat. It is he, Mussolini."

Lazzaro removed the man's machine gun and was offered in turn from his unbuttoned coat a 9mm, long-barreled Glisenti automatic pistol without a word in response to the question, "Do you have any other weapons?"

He stood up and said, "I am Mussolini. I shall not make any trouble."

Arrested by Lazzaro, the now meek Duce told the Germans not to defend him; he was taken from the truck and marched to the town

hall, his captors following respectfully behind. There, according to Moseley, "He took off his coat, which was too long for him, and was found to be wearing a black shirt and a pair of Militia trousers. He wore boots, but had no jacket."

At Milan, the slain Duce still had on the trousers and the boots, but the shirt had disappeared while he swung from the girders of the

filling station and was also absent from the coffin in the morgue, as photographs clearly show.

Also taken by Lazzaro from the captured Duce was a briefcase and other baggage that had the originals of his most important, personal papers, to which Mussolini exclaimed, "Take care of those bags! They contain Italy's destiny!" These files included his letters to and from Churchill, correspondence with Hitler, and a document covering the January 1944 Verona Trial of the traitors who had voted against him in 1943. A fourth set of papers detailed the alleged homosexual activities of Italian Crown Prince Umberto, then the designated lieutenant general of the realm.

Lazzaro gave all of this to his superior, Luigi Canali (alias Captain Neri), who wanted to honor the terms of the 1943 armistice with the

the Expeditionary Corps in Russia, became a Communist, and helped found the 52nd Garibaldi Partisan Brigade that captured his former Duce.

A further twist to this complicated tale was that of Neri's own mistress: Giuseppina Tuissi (aka Gianna), who was shot by their Communist colleagues on June 23, 1945. Her body was dumped into Lake Como.

THE FIRST AND LAST of Mussolini's files of personal papers disappeared forever, but the others were copied by the Allies and then deposited in the Italian State Archives after being examined by the Communists. As a precaution, however, Mussolini had made a three copies: one for Claretta, which she gave to Marcello and which the partisans seized; and a

papers and documents personally seen by Lazzaro, 344 pages dwindled to little more than 70 after several deletions by interested parties.

Some historians speculate that on September 15, 1945, at a secret meeting held between British agents and Como Communist leader Dante Gorreri, the latter turned over 62 Duce-Churchill letters for an estimated 2.5 million Italian lira laundered in Switzerland and then returned to Italy to be used to launch the new republic. Supposedly, during this exchange, the partisans agreed to accept the blame for the killing of Claretta, who had allegedly been shot by the British because she knew of the secret correspondence.

According to Bruno Giovanni Lonati (alias Giacomo), a British Special Operations Executive agent, "Captain John," the alias of Robert Maccarrone, shot both the Duce and Claretta. The name of a second British agent, Malcolm Smith, aka Johnson, also surfaced. All this was part of a fantastic yarn known as the so-called British Thread.

Taken away, Mussolini was rejoined at the De Maria farmhouse at Bonzanigo by Petacci, who begged her captors to shoot her as well if that was to be the ultimate fate of the apprehended Mussolini. They spent the night together in a peasant bed.

Meanwhile, a Communist murderer code-named Colonel Valerio was sent from Milan to execute them both. Valerio has been identified over the decades as several different Communists.

As he went into the De Maria farmhouse to meet the captive Duce for the first and only time, Valerio chortled, "I'll tell him I've come to rescue him!" The men hustled the Duce, now sporting a black beret, and Claretta, frantically searching among the bedsheets for her missing panties, out the door and into a waiting car.

Later, 19-year-old Dorina Mazzola claimed to have seen both victims gunned down just outside the De Maria farmhouse, and it was then that the long-accepted version of their having been shot by the gate of the Villa Belmonte was first challenged by historians.

Exactly who actually shot first Claretta and then Mussolini has been debated. It was even asserted that a second shooting of the already dead bodies was held at the Villa Belmonte. Some others said that the doomed pair committed suicide inside the De Maria farmhouse instead.

At a Communist rally in Rome in March 1947, a former partisan named Audisio was officially proclaimed before an audience of 40,000 as the killer of Mussolini and Petacci. This occurred during a campaign for the Italian

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Achille Starace, former secretary general of the Fascist Party, is shot in the back by a partisan firing squad following his capture. Several of Mussolini's associates were captured and executed, either along with him or shortly thereafter.

Allies that required the Duce to be turned over to them for trial. The top Communists in Milan ignored this legal clause. Neri also opposed the seizure of the Dongo Treasure by his Communist bosses, and some have accused him of having shot Mussolini himself.

According to some sources, Neri was assassinated by the Communists in May 1945, not because of having done that, but for bringing the British secret service into the affair.

Ironically, Neri had been drafted into the Italian Army in 1936 as a lieutenant of engineers in East Africa, later took part in the retreat of

second for the Imperial Japanese ambassador to the Salo Republic, Baron Shinrokuro Hikada, which was delivered by him to the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo. Mussolini gave the third and final set to his Fascist Education Minister, Carlo Alberto Biggini, who died supposedly of cancer in the hospital in the autumn of 1945, one of the few top Fascists not to have been shot.

There were, too, the now infamous Duce Diaries, 10 notebooks in his own handwriting that were given to Baron Hikada as well. Most of these vanished. Of the Duce's own original

Parliament, and he was elected.

It was also subsequently agreed that both Audisio's submachine gun and pistol failed to fire in succession and that it was a 7.65mm L/MAS 1938 model F20830 submachine gun with a red ribbon tied to the end of the barrel and belonging to another partisan named Moretti that was the actual murder weapon. Captured from the Fascists, the weapon reportedly fired five French-made bullets into Mussolini while the mysterious 9mm rounds fired into Petacci came from an unknown weapon.

No mention has been made of where the weapons are today. In all, Audisio is said to have given as many as 22 different published accounts of these events before his death in 1971.

Valerio claimed that Il Duce was a trembling coward in death, begging that his life be spared: "I will give you an empire!" But other accounts stated that he pulled himself together after being told "Your luck has run out," and having seen how Claretta argued with the murderers, "You cannot kill us like this!" before being gunned down herself.

One partisan claimed that Mussolini's last words were, "Shoot me in the chest!" while another felt that "Aim for my heart!" was, in fact, more accurate. Still other versions are "Long live Italy!" and "But, colonel...."

Afterward, Audisio was supposed to have said, "Look at his face! It suits him, doesn't it?" In any event, the man contemptuously called "Hitler's gauleiter for northern Italy" by his enemies and code-named "Karl Heinz" by the Germans was dead.

FORMAL FASCISM died on the Piazzale Loreto on April 29, 1945. In perhaps the greatest irony of all, Audisio and his men very nearly never made their rendezvous with destiny in Milan. After having bluffed their way past U.S. Army patrols, which never searched the yellow truck, they were arrested by yet another partisan unit while on their way into the city at 10 PM on the 28th.

"They're Fascists!" screamed the irate officer in command, and this seemed to be confirmed when he found the list of the top Fascists that Colonel Valerio himself had written to identify those to be shot.

The names of the slain "Dongo 16" have rarely been noted. They included Fascist Party Secretary Alessandro Pavolini; Francesco Maria Barracu, Paolo Zerbino, Fernando Mezzasoma, Ruggero Romano, and Augusto Liverani, Salo Republic ministers all; Inspector for Lombardy Paolo Porta; the Duce's secretary Luigi Gatti; Bologna University Rector Goffredo Coppola; Stefani News Agency Director Ernesto

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Mussolini's corpse is shown hanging by its heels at a Milan garage. The former Duce is strung up between former Fascist General Secretary Achille Starace and his mistress, Claretta Petacci.

Daquanno; Agricultural Federation employee Mario Nudi; Duce aide Vito Casalnuovo; Italian Air Force pilot Pietro Calistri; public relations man Idreno Utimpergher; Mussolini's longtime socialist friend, Nicola Bombacci; and Claretta's brother, Marcello, whom the partisans initially mistook for a Spanish diplomat and then for Il Duce's son, Vittorio.

Neo-Fascism lives on mainly in the person of the Duce's granddaughter, Italian film actress Alessandra Mussolini, child of Mussolini's jazz musician son Romano and Sophia Loren's divorced sister. Alessandra was elected to the nation's legislature in the 1990s.

When neo-Fascist Domenico Leccisi of the MSI Party stole the Duce's body on April 23, 1946, he unwittingly launched the late Duce's second political career as a traveling corpse. Leccisi had seen Mussolini twice, in 1936 and 1945, and found his remains to be still recognizable. Later, Leccisi was also elected to Parliament and even concocted a plot to kill Audisio. Fascist deputies were returned to office in the 1953 elections.

As for the missing Duce, his body was surrendered to a pair of Franciscan friars and hidden in the convent of Cerro Maggiore with the knowledge of the cardinal of Milan and of the Italian Socialist government for 11 years. By that time, the remains were skeletal and fit into a small trunk.

The so-called Padua Trial began on April 29, 1957, to resolve the issue of the disappearance of the Dongo Treasure and the subsequent murders of those linked to it. The trial adjourned

inconclusively the following August and was never reconvened.

On September 1, 1957, Mussolini's remains were finally returned to his widow and entombed in the family crypt at Predappio, the town where Il Duce was born in 1883. It has since become a shrine for 70,000 pilgrims and tourists who visit annually. It is guarded around the clock by twin neo-Fascist sentries in long capes.

The crossbar of the Milan gas station became a sort of monument to socialist and communist unions that staged parades past it, and painted upon it were the names of the five slain Fascists and Claretta Petacci who had been suspended from it. Later, a merchant supposedly bought the piece as an investment for resale. Ironically, the flames of the memory of that day in Milan were fanned not by the Socialists who wanted to forget it, but rather by the neo-Fascists as a symbol of rightist anger.

It appears that the long-forgotten Claretta Petacci may yet have a final word. In 1945, when she took her leave of Lake Garda to chase after her departed Duce, she left behind with the caretakers at the Villa Mirabella her own papers.

These were two large boxes of 600 love letters from the Duce spanning the 12 years of their passionate association from February 1933 to April 1945. Containing not only gossip but also highly valuable military, political, and diplomatic tidbits, they were buried for safekeeping at Gardone and willed by Claretta to her younger sister and confidante, Myriam Petacci.

Dug up by the family in 1950, the 15 volumes were immediately confiscated by the Italian Socialist Republic. Myriam lost her case for repossession in the courts and died in 1991. The documents were ordered sealed for 50 years, or until April 25, 1995. When that date came and went, they remained sealed as they are today.

Today, the sole family heir is the younger son of Claretta's murdered brother Marcello, broke and living in a trailer park in Phoenix, Arizona. Someday, when his legal inheritance is duly honored, Signor Petacci will become one of the most famous and richest men in the world as his late aunt's papers are released and published globally. □

Towson, Maryland, freelance writer Blaine Taylor is the author of six books on World War II, among them the 1996 biography Fascist Eagle: Italy's Air Marshal Italo Balbo, and is researching Mussolini's marshals. In 1975, he published "The Medical Case History of Benito Mussolini" in the Maryland State Medical Journal.

DEATH OF A Fighting Lady

A seaman recalls his harrowing rescue as the light carrier USS *Princeton* sank in the Sibuyan Sea during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. **BY JOAN HUNT**



The 13,000 ton Independence-class aircraft carrier USS *Princeton*, which was commissioned on February 25, 1943, quickly became known as the “Fighting Lady.” She made a name for herself supporting the occupation of Baker Island in August of that year, followed by raiding against Japanese installations on Makin and Tarawa atolls in the Gilbert Islands in September, and a busy November supporting the Bougainville landings and raiding Rabaul and Nauru and participating in the invasion of Tarawa and Makin that same month. Following a quick overhaul at the Puget Sound Naval Yard, she continued in action during the conquest of the Marshall Islands in January and

Sibuyan Sea at Leyte Gulf while serving under the command of Admiral William F. (Bull) Halsey. Assigned to Task Force 38.3, *Princeton* (CVL-23) was in company with three other carriers, USS *Lexington*, USS *Essex*, and USS *Langley*, along with four battleships, four light cruisers, and 17 screening destroyers.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf took place in conjunction with the U.S. invasion of the Philip-

pines in October 1944, and a significant component of U.S. airpower that supported the landings and provided air cover for the naval vessels operating at sea was the tremendous capability of the Grumman F6F Hellcat. The Hellcat entered service in mid-1943 with six wing-mounted .50-caliber machine guns, each with 400 rounds of ammunition. Some variants included a 20mm cannon with 200 rounds replacing the innermost machine gun in each wing. The Hellcat could carry up to two 1,000-pound bombs as well as six 5-inch-high velocity aircraft rockets.

Aboard the USS *Princeton*, it was Aviation Machinist Mate 3rd Class Frank L. Heineman's



Fires rage aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Princeton* following the attack of a lone Japanese Yokosuka D4Y “Judy” dive-bomber. The loss of *Princeton* was the most significant sustained by the U.S. Navy during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. LEFT: Seaman Frank Heineman (far right) poses during leisure time with three of his U.S. Navy buddies. Heineman was aboard the *Princeton* when the ship went down in the Sibuyan Sea.

job to keep his new F6F-5 Grumman fighter plane in the air. The F6F-5 resembled the earlier F6F-3 variant but it had extra armor, stronger main landing gear legs, and spring tabs on the ailerons for better maneuverability; most of them had water-injection engines. Both versions had a 250-gallon fuel capacity in internal tanks and a 150-gallon belly drop-tank.

Now aged 87 and living in Buena Park, California, Heineman, known to his shipmates as “Heine,” was assigned to the *Princeton* immediately after training, and he was aboard the Fighting Lady on the fateful day of October 24, 1944.

At daybreak, elements of the Japanese Navy

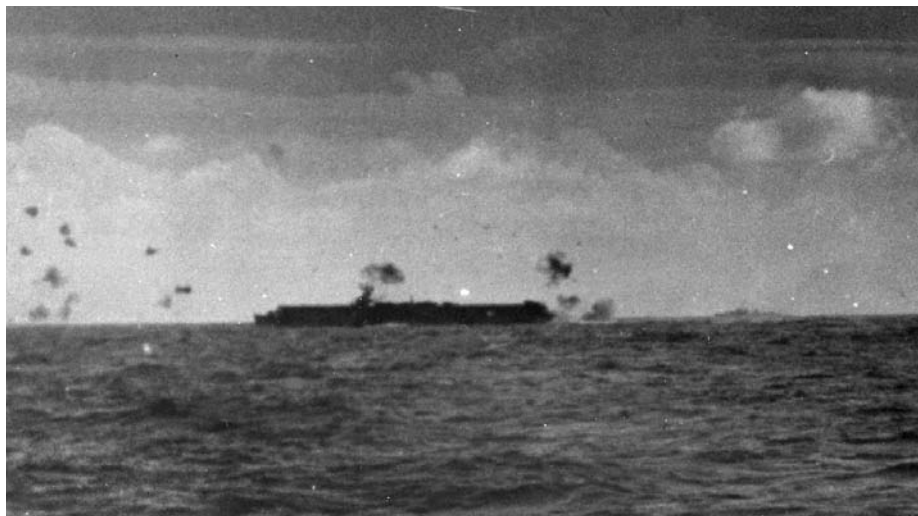
were approaching the Philippines from the north and west, and Task Force 38.3 was facing a threat to the U.S. landings being conducted on the beaches of the island of Leyte. After several days of air operations that pounded enemy targets ashore in support of the Leyte invasion, the carriers launched Hellcats on combat air patrol that morning and other planes on search missions. More aircraft were on deck, ready for attack missions.

At about 10 AM a lone Japanese Yokosuka D4Y “Judy” dive-bomber dropped a single bomb between the carrier’s elevators. The bomb penetrated the flight deck and hangar before exploding. The destroyer USS *Irwin* and

the cruiser USS *Birmingham* came to the aid of the stricken carrier; however, sometime after 3 PM massive secondary explosions ripped through the ship and seriously damaged *Birmingham*. The USS *Princeton* was doomed.

Joan Hunt: What was your responsibility aboard the USS *Princeton*?

Frank Heineman: I had to make sure that the plane was properly fueled and ready to take off at a moment’s notice, maintaining the plane’s oxygen and fuel injection water system, seeing to it that the plane was securely lashed down when not in use. We all had to wipe off the oil slicks that accumulate during



ABOVE: Antiaircraft fire blossoms in the skies surrounding the aircraft carrier *USS Princeton* in the Sibuyan Sea during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. **RIGHT:** Smoke billows from the stricken *Princeton* following the attack of a Japanese dive-bomber on October 24, 1944. A single bomb penetrated the flight deck and hangar before exploding and causing both elevators to be blown askew. The cruiser *USS Reno* stands by to lend assistance.

take off at a moment's notice, maintaining the plane's oxygen and fuel injection water system, seeing to it that the plane was securely lashed down when not in use. We all had to wipe off the oil slicks that accumulate during air time. They streak the fuselage undercarriage, allowing the enemy a greater chance to spot them overhead during battle. I assisted the pilot while he prepared for flight and gave him the "all clear" signal to start his engine. This was accomplished by a cartridge starter and causes the propeller to spin about four revolutions. This is enough to cause the magnet to send the necessary electricity to fire up the engine. All we had to do now was to pull the wheel chocks, and the pilot was free to go airborne.



JH: How did the F6F-5 fighter planes stack up in battle?

FH: They had a definite advantage over their enemies' planes. The lighter Japanese Zeros were very maneuverable and on some occasions would give our pilots some trouble. Our planes were equipped with half-inch armor plate behind the pilot's head and back. I had seen my pilot come back from a sortie with a hole in the

canopy behind his head. When I inspected the inside of the fuselage, there was a large indentation in the armor plate behind his head. This is the kind of hit that would have killed my pilot had he been piloting a Japanese plane, as they didn't have the armor or self-sealing fuel tanks needed to bring the fighter planes back to a safe landing aboard their carriers.

The American pilots had a decided advantage in combat as their Pratt & Whitney engines were equipped with a water fuel injection system, which, when called upon during the heat of battle, would give them a chance to outrun, outmaneuver, and possibly finish off the enemy.

JH: How had the *USS Princeton* performed since you were transferred aboard in spring of 1944?

FH: She had already accumulated seven battle stars and was now ready to acquire more by attacking Japanese targets in the Central Pacific. We continued on supporting amphibious landings at Hollandia, New Guinea. In June, the *Princeton* participated in the invasion of Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and Rota, all of these islands making up the Mariana chain. This was quite a campaign, loaded with enemy action.

REMEMBERING *PRINCETON*'S DEMISE

SAILOR DON ANDREWS of Waterbury, Connecticut, was aboard the *USS Reno* when the cruiser fired two torpedoes that finally sank the carrier *USS Princeton*, and he described the event as "eerie." The *Reno*, he said, was a light cruiser there to protect the carriers.

"We each had 5-inch guns and six or 12 torpedoes," he said. "It was a sad sight, very depressing, because of how effective she was, and to see her languishing in the water and then ultimately get hit by torpedoes and removed as a navigational hazard—very sad."

Andrews was working as an apprentice toolmaker before the war, and his company wanted to get him a deferment, but his older brother George had joined the Navy in 1938, and he decided to join up rather than take his chances in the U.S. Army. He was 18 years old when he went to Newport,

Rhode Island, for basic training, and when given his choice of schools, he chose to be a water-tender, which sent him to Philadelphia for training.

The *USS Reno* was being built in San Francisco, and Andrews was assigned to its first crew. "We were there for several months. It was a nice experience, and we enjoyed the city sightseeing, and I met a friend in San Francisco who gave me a tour and we met a couple nice ladies, so I had fun waiting for the ship to be commissioned," he said.

At sea as a boiler tender, Andrews was stationed right next to the engine room, and his job was to control the water levels in the boilers. "After the shakedown cruise, we went to the South Pacific, Hawaii, and across the equator. We saw a lot of action in 1944 in Saipan, Iwo Jima, Haha Jima, and Chichi Jima in June. We shot down about 23 planes in the overall time we were there," said Andrews, during which time the *USS Reno* earned three battle stars. "We were still in the Leyte area until November 3."

Our planes really had a field day, as our whole carrier group shot down about 400 enemy aircraft. That also included the amount hit by gunfire from our ships that were under attack. This incident is what created the name the "Mariana's Turkey Shoot," as representing what had happened that day.

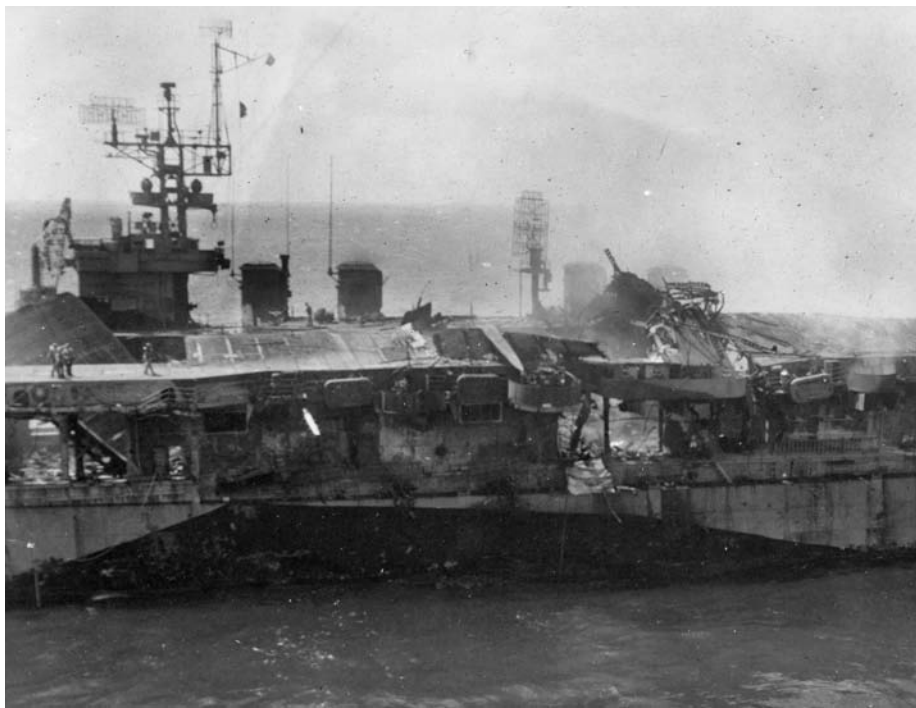
JH: How did the USS *Princeton*'s planes fare in this engagement?

FH: Darkness was fast approaching, and our aircraft were on their way back to the fleet. As they were nearing their destination, realizing they were low on fuel and nightfall was closing in fast, it became apparent to the admiral some drastic action would have to be taken. After giving it some thought, knowing that his decision would put the fleet at the risk of a Japanese submarine attack, he ordered all carrier captains to light up their flight decks and prepare for night landings.

The incoming planes, low on fuel, pilots tired from a day-long battle with hundreds of Japanese aircraft of all types, were left very little room for error. Most of them would have to come aboard on the first attempt, no wave-off or trying another landing. Our carrier was very lucky, as we retrieved our squadron without a mishap, although we did have to wave off a Japanese Zero trying to come aboard without an arrestor hook to bring him safely to a halt. Never saw him again.

JH: Where were you when the bomb hit the USS *Princeton* that morning?

FH: Having sent our fighter planes off about 0600 hours with the mission of attacking the Luzon airfields in support of General Douglas MacArthur's landing troops, the planes began returning about 0900 hours, and I had just secured my F6F-5 Grumman aircraft. I had checked it over thoroughly for any problems and found the oxygen tank needing a replacement. After securing a new one in place, I crawled out of the fuselage and was securing



The close-up photo of the USS *Princeton* on the afternoon of October 24, 1944, reveals the extent of the damage to the aircraft carrier. Shortly after 3 PM, a massive internal explosion set off raging fires aboard the ship and sprayed the nearby cruiser USS *Birmingham* with shrapnel.

the hatch when all hell cut loose. I got up just in time to hear ack-ack fire from the Marine gunners on the forward 40mm gun mount.

I can still visualize the large white hub of his [the Japanese pilot] propeller, not more than 100 feet above me, as he released his lethal bomb that hit amidships between the forward and after elevators. It penetrated the flight deck, producing a 15-inch hole, then continued on down through the hangar deck and into the galley area, where it exploded, killing cooks, bakers, and other crewmen in the vicinity of the blast. The flames shot up through the holes it had created, setting the hangar deck on fire.

JH: What was the immediate result of the strike?

FH: While the firefighting crew was busy on the flight deck trying to extinguish the flames with an inadequate water supply due to damage suffered below, the hangar deck containing 10 MB Avenger Torpedo bombers being prepared for another strike at the enemy was all ablaze with 100-octane high-test fuel as its source. The bomb, when it exploded, produced so heavy a concussion that our TBMs dropped their extra fuel tanks to the deck; they burst open upon impact and spilled the fuel in all directions. The firefighters could not contain this fire, which had quickly spread throughout the hangar deck with hungry flames making their way to the torpedoes secured in the bomb bays of the TBMs.

On that day, the *Reno* suffered its own calamity. A torpedo fired by the Japanese submarine *I-41* slammed into the cruiser's port side.

"Out of the blue, there was an explosion," Andrews remembers, "my body jumped up over a foot, and I landed on my feet. I was down below when it happened, on the 8-12 watch. I was in the boiler room, and it hit in the forward engine room on the port side. They sealed all the hatches, but we had no idea what was the extent of the damage. There were 45 or 50 killed off the bat, and that type of cruiser is considered a floating land mine. There were magazines all over the thing, and it listed terribly."

Getting himself topside, he was given a bottle of Southern Comfort whiskey and a fistful of salt tablets for dehydration, which made him sick to his stomach. "Leaning over the side to puke, a couple of guys grabbed me by my ankles and swung me over the side. I was so sick, I said let me go, but darn it, they pulled me up."

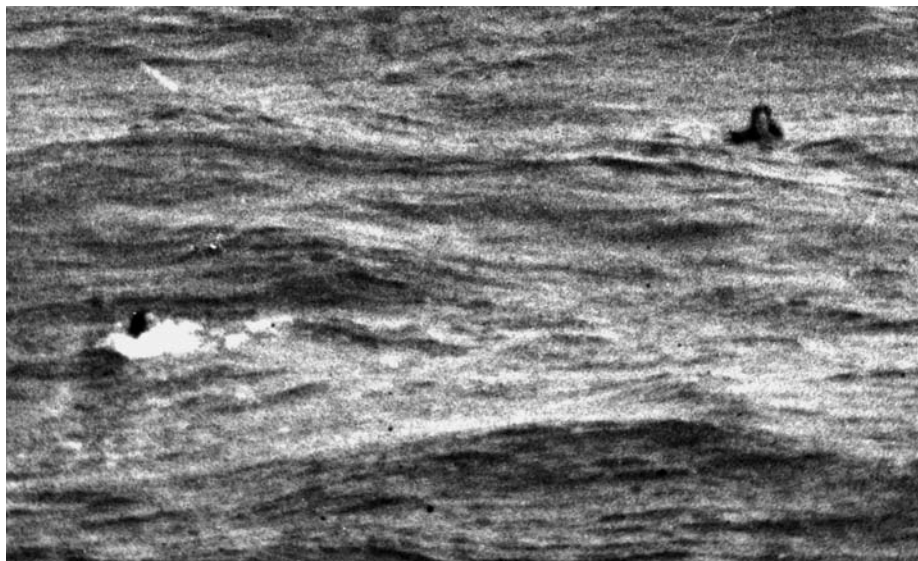
The following morning, it was decided to leave a skeleton crew aboard, and

the rest of the crew had to get in the water, with the plan that they would be picked up by destroyers. "It was kind of scary," said Andrews, noting that they were floating in life preservers, and a few of the guys had rifles to ward off sharks. "We didn't see any, though," he recalled.

After they were picked up, Andrews and the rest of the crew also went to Ulithi. The *Reno* was towed there, a 1,500-mile journey, for temporary repairs and then went to dry dock in Charleston, South Carolina, where it was refurbished and made sea ready.

"Then we did transport duty for troops in Europe," said Andrews. "An interesting thing that happened on the transport was we not only picked up troops, but also got a stowaway, a 12- or 14-year-old French kid. I'd love to know what happened to him."

Andrews went into the service as a seaman apprentice, got a slew of unit citations, but never sent for the medals. "Being alive was enough," he said. □



ABOVE: Survivors of the sunken USS *Princeton* bob in the water while awaiting rescue on October 24, 1944. Ten officers and 98 enlisted men were killed out of a complement of 1,361 sailors. More casualties were sustained aboard the cruiser USS *Birmingham* as a result of a secondary explosion. Eighty-five *Birmingham* sailors died, and 300 were wounded. **BELOW:** A damage control party contemplates its options to combat the extensive damage aboard the USS *Princeton*. Despite the valiant efforts of her crew, the light carrier was a total loss. *Princeton* had earned nine battle stars during its brief combat career



JH: What did you do next?

FH: As the fire continued unabated, those of us located topside tried to render assistance as much as we could. We experienced the effect of several torpedoes blowing up on the hangar deck. The blasts, at regular intervals, would lift us about six inches above the flight deck. The captain announced over our loudspeakers so all could hear the order “abandon ship, abandon ship!” This is an order a sailor never wants to hear.

JH: Were there lifeboats, or did you just

jump overboard?

FH: I had a young crewman under my guidance, as he was working to be a plane captain. He was very eager to be one and showed good promise, when tested. His name was James (Jimmie) Jarrell from Louisville, Kentucky. Here we are on the forward flight deck and about 400 feet from our gear locker, as the fire was out of control and preventing us from retrieving our life jackets. We recovered a life raft from my plane’s cockpit. As Jimmie was just learning to swim, I thought it would be a

good idea if he lowered himself in the water via the line thrown over the side for that purpose. I dropped the inflated life raft to him and said I would join him shortly. Problem was, when I hit the water there was no Jimmie sitting in the life raft waiting for me. I swam around looking in all directions for a sign of him or the raft. That is the last I saw of a really fine young man, full of vim and vigor.

JH: How did you survive without a life raft?

FH: After swimming for a couple of hours, I came upon a 5-inch powder bag can that was occupied by a sailor who was a cook. There was enough buoyancy that it was capable of supporting us both until we were pulled out of the water by the [destroyer] USS *Morrison*.

JH: Where was the USS *Morrison* headed?

FH: Now that the Japanese aircraft were no longer coming at us, the *Morrison* pulled up along the port side of the *Princeton*, which by this time had developed a 10-degree list to port. As we arrived we were greeted by a bunch of debris and two plane tractors coming off the flight deck. Fortunately, no one was hit, but then our ship’s radar antennas managed to interlock with the *Princeton*’s antennas. When we finally broke away from her grasp, the *Morrison*’s ability to use our radar system to aim and fire our 5-inch guns was nullified.

JH: Were other ships giving aid to try and save the USS *Princeton*?

FH: The light cruiser USS *Birmingham* was on the starboard side of the ship, doing her best to help put her fire out. Everybody had turned to getting the fire under control, when the admiral gave orders to all ships in the area to break off aid to the *Princeton* and get under way, as Japanese aircraft had been sighted and were heading our way. Our patrolling Hellcats engaged in dogfights with them and soon the USS *Birmingham*, the [cruiser] *Reno*, and the [destroyer] *Ward* returned after being away for a couple of hours. Upon their return, they were greeted by a severe fire [aboard the *Princeton*] burning out of control.

JH: With so much fuel and munitions aboard the *Princeton*, wasn’t it risky being near her in the water?

FH: As it turns out, it was. The USS *Morrison* with myself and our surviving crew was off at a distance cruising about observing the ever-increasing flame and smoke on board the *Princeton*, noting that the USS *Birmingham* was the only ship spraying water on it, when all of a sudden there was a terrific explosion on the fantail. The whole aft end of the *Princeton* blew sky high, showering the *Birmingham* with an endless amount of deadly shrapnel. In an instant, this explosion killed and wounded 600

men on the *Birmingham* and the *Princeton*.

JH: What did you see from your vantage point on the *Morrison*?

FH: [It was] a horrific scene of the worst kind, crewmen helping the injured and dying as they lost their footing because of the blood-covered decks, ladders, and passageways. They quickly poured sand all around in order to regain traction of their deck shoes. Now aboard the *Princeton*, our new captain, John Hoskins, lost a foot, as Captain William H. Buracker rendered aid to stop the bleeding. Commander Roland Sala, our senior medical officer, although injured, administered morphine and sulfa powder, using a sheath knife to cut off part of the leg that was dangling. Shortly after, Dr. Sala himself had to be given treatment for his wounds. All the ships that were helping out and near the *Princeton*

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ABOVE: Seaman Frank Heineman stands with his wife Priscilla, who passed away in the spring of 2009. Frank was discharged from the U.S. Navy on December 7, 1945, and the two were married for 65 years. **RIGHT:** USS *Birmingham* attempts to train fire hoses along the port side of the *Princeton*. Moments later, an explosion ripped through the carrier and badly damaged the cruiser as well.

were ordered to pull away and get a good distance, as there was no chance to save her and we were going to sink her.

JH: How was the *Princeton* sunk?

FH: The light cruiser USS *Reno* was given the order to take over and finish off the USS *Princeton* [after near misses by the USS *Irwin*, whose launching tubes had been damaged]. The *Reno* launched two torpedoes at her hull broadside, and they both struck her around the magazine area. The explosion was so violent that it sent up a column of smoke, topping out at 1,500 feet. When the smoke cleared, the Fighting Lady, as she was known, had disappeared beneath the ocean waves, finding a new home

some 20,000 feet down, taking with her the nine battle stars she so valiantly fought for and earned, as costly as it was.

JH: Where did you and the other survivors go?

FH: All of us survivors ended up at Ulithi, our farthest supply base in the north Pacific. Here we were issued the much-needed and required clothing, gear, and necessities to sustain us. We were put aboard a troop transport and got under way for a long trip home. We ended up in San Diego, California, while they worked on our records and getting the right paperwork finished so that we could go on our survivors leave and return for our next tour of duty.

JH: How many perished aboard the USS *Princeton*?



FH: One hundred and fifteen lives were lost.

JH: What was the result of the action at Leyte?

FH: The Third and Seventh Fleets had wrecked the Imperial Japanese Navy. We finished off four aircraft carriers, three battleships, 10 cruisers, and nine destroyers, damaging many more. The battle for Leyte Gulf was an overwhelming triumph for the U.S. Navy against the losses.

The United States lost the light carrier *Princeton*, two escort carriers—the USS *Saint Lo* and USS *Gambier Bay*, two destroyers—the USS *Johnston* and USS *Hoel*, and one destroyer

escort—the USS *Samuel B. Roberts* and a few lesser craft (these in the battle off Samar on October 25).

The Battle of Leyte Gulf left the U.S. Navy in command of the eastern approaches to the Philippines, providing support for General MacArthur's invading forces and maintaining the seaborne supply lines pouring men and munitions into the combat area.

Two months after Heineman's experience at Leyte Gulf, he escorted Priscilla, his sweetheart from Lakeview High School, down the aisle. Stationed later at Brown Field in California and living in Chula Vista, he repaired the same type of airplanes that were aboard the *Princeton*, and the following year the Heinemans' first child was born, "a real beauty, a blond baby girl, we named Diana Lynn," he said. He was

discharged from the service on December 7, 1945, Pearl Harbor Day.

Heineman refers to his loving wife of 65 years—mother of two daughters, grandmother of five, and great grandmother of five—who passed away in April 2009, as "missing in action." □

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Easy Company's SILENT BROTHER

ED MAUSER, WHO FOUGHT AS A MEMBER OF THE CELEBRATED BAND OF BROTHERS, HADN'T TALKED ABOUT HIS ODYSSEY—UNTIL NOW. **BY KEVIN M. HYMEL**

PARATROOPER ED MAUSER never forgot the first thing he saw when he leaped from the doorway of his C-47 transport plane in the opening hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944. It was another plane, holding Lieutenant Thomas Meehan, the commander of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, and 18 other paratroopers. "I thought the plane was going to make a landing, it hit the hedgerow and exploded. I knew all the fellows on it."

Mauser had little time to think about what he had seen. After his parachute deployed, the strap of his leg bag yanked down to his ankle. "I thought I was going to break my legs," he recalled. He reached down to adjust the strap, but the bag fell off. Within seconds he hit French soil.

"It was one of my better landings."

Immediately, a cow came by, which cheered him because it meant he was not in a minefield. Mauser noticed the cow moving its lips and imagined it was saying: "What's this midnight stranger doing here?" He wasted no time getting out of his chute and climbing atop a hedgerow to get his bearings.

Mauser, who fought with Easy Company's 2nd Platoon from Normandy to Austria, never spoke about his war odyssey. For decades he kept a promise to his wife to stay silent. He first learned about the Pearl Harbor attack over the radio, while sitting on the sunporch of his LaSalle, Illinois, home. He was 23 years old and worked at a clock-making com-



Major Richard Winters (fifth from the right, standing) congratulates Easy Company's commander, Lieutenant Ronald Spiers, on leading a successful attack on the town of Foy, in Matt Hall's painting, *Breakout From Bastogne*. In the foreground, lower right hand corner, Private Ed Mauser watches as Tech Sergeant George Luz shares a Hershey bar with some Belgian children. Mauser was later wounded when an enemy shell exploded near him. INSET: Ed Mauser served in the cavalry before he joined Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.

pany. Two weeks later he was drafted and entered the cavalry in 1942 even though he "didn't know nothing about horses."

By the time he learned, the cavalry had become mechanized.

Sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, Mauser was waiting to be assigned to a unit when he saw paratroops jumping out of planes. "I wondered if they would take me," he said. One week later, he was in the airborne. Once he earned his jump wings, he transferred to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he joined Easy Company.

Once with the unit, Mauser and his new comrades spent the next nine



months training, doing a lot of running, walking, push-ups, pull-ups, and climbing over fences. He made friends, including Sal Bolino from Brooklyn, and Eddie Sabo, from Utica, Illinois, near Mauser's hometown.

His stateside training complete, Mauser and the division shipped out for England. His new home was the town of Aldbourn, where he continued training and jumping from planes. While there, he got a letter informing him his 32-year-old sister, Mary, had died of cancer. He showed the letter to his company commander, Captain Herbert Sobel, who gave him a pass to a Red Cross station in nearby Swindon, where he could send money home for Mary's funeral.



ABOVE: Paratroopers jump from a C-47 over Fort Benning, Georgia, where Mauser earned his wings. He would complete his stateside training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. **BELOW:** Airborne Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division load equipment onto a C-47 in preparation for a jump. Mauser carried so much equipment for the D-Day assault that his comrades had to shove him into his plane.

Sobel, who Mauser thought was a good company commander, did not last long with Easy Company. In late November, after his noncommissioned officers all wrote letters refusing to serve under him and sent them to the battalion and regimental commanders, Colonel Robert Sink transferred Sobel to a training camp and placed Lieutenant Meehan in command.

As training continued, there were constant reminders of the war. Once, while passing by the latrine, Mauser spied a German V-1 unmanned jet flying overhead. "I could see the flash from the tail and I knew it was a buzz bomb. It seemed like it ran out of gas and fell down." He hugged the latrine wall as the bomb exploded. "I could feel the wall shake."

As the date of the D-Day landings approached, the 101st transferred to Oppottery, in southern England, to prepare for the jump into France. The men spent a week sequestered in tents near an airfield, with guards inside and out of the marshaling wire. On June 3, Mauser and his comrades learned about their objectives when officers displayed maps and sand tables of the region inland from Utah Beach. He also learned, by way of rumor, that the hedgerows in France were going to be tough.

Despite the bad weather on June 4, Mauser prepared for his jump. He was suited up completely when word came that Operation Overlord had been delayed because of storms over

the English Channel. "We were disappointed," admitted Mauser about the 24-hour delay, "but we knew there was no way we were going to get out of it."

The next day was the real thing. The men were issued motion sickness pills, but Mauser refused to take his. He packed his M1 Garand rifle diagonally across his chest and stuffed his leg bag with a box of ammunition and grenades. Included in his equipment was a toy "cricket" that had been issued to signal other airborne troopers upon landing in the dark. His parachute, reserve chute, and all his equipment weighed about 80 pounds. It took two or three guys to help get him on the plane, "pushing my rear end the whole way." Once seated in the plane, he took off his reserve chute to lighten his load.

The planes began roaring off their air strips at 10:30 PM, with about 18 troopers per plane. It took two and a half hours to reach the Normandy coast. The whole time Mauser braced himself for fire from the Channel Islands, which intelligence had reported contained German antiaircraft batteries. But the islands were silent. "The Air Corps must have taken them out," recalled Mauser.

Mauser's plane hit the French coast after 1 AM. His plane was flying the rear of a diamond

formation with three others. "Plane 66 was in front of me, 67 was to the left, and 68 was to the right. I was in plane 69." German flak began hitting Mauser's plane, but fortunately no rounds penetrated the fuselage. The fire had an electric effect on the paratroopers. Men began shouting, "Let's get the hell out of here!"

Everyone stood up and hooked up while the pilot tried to maneuver away from the tracers. "We went from 1,500 feet to 400 at high speed," Mauser said. When the green jump light went on, Mauser jumped out. The prop blast from the propellers snapped his neck back. "My neck still hurts," he joked more than 65 years later. Because of the rough exit, he faced backward as he floated to the ground, witnessing the crash of plane 66. "Meehan never

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should have been in that plane," Mauser said with regret. "The noncoms get rid of Sobel, and Meehan got killed. He was only 21 years old."

Sitting on top of a hedgerow after his mine-detecting cow had wandered off, Mauser saw a figure walking toward him. Not knowing if the man was friend or foe, he pulled out his cricket and clicked it once. It was Sergeant Robert Smith, who told Mauser, "Join the club."

He was no longer alone. The two soldiers began walking inland, away from Utah Beach, and inaccurate mortar fire began to fall. "It was good that the Germans fired so soon," explained Mauser. They left that area quickly.

The next paratrooper they ran into was a surprise — Captain Sobel. "Everybody says he didn't jump, but I can verify that he did," insisted Mauser. He is correct. General Order No. 12 from the 506th's headquarters lists Sobel as one of the officers receiving the Combat Infantryman Badge for exemplary conduct in the face of the enemy. Sobel was direct with Mauser and Smith. "Follow me," he said. The two men fell in line. "He was the captain," recalled Mauser, "so you did what he told you."

As they walked, Mauser came upon a camera. He went to grab it, but Sobel told him, "Don't touch that camera, it may be booby trapped." Instead, Mauser attached a string to the camera and pulled it away from its resting spot. Nothing happened. "I think Sobel ended up with camera."

The three men walked to the town of Vierville where Mauser saw about 15 paratroopers firing into a house. He got down on his hands and knees and was crawling along a short stone wall when he noticed a body with a blanket over it. He asked the paratroopers who it was, and they told him it was Benjamin Stoney. "I knew him pretty well." Some historians have argued with Mauser that Stoney was killed on June 8, but Mauser has always been adamant. "I know

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ABOVE: An Airborne soldier lies dead near Ste. Mere du Mont, near Utah Beach. The first dead soldier Mauser encountered was his friend Benjamin Stoney. **RIGHT:** American soldiers scramble away from a burning house in Normandy. Mauser fired into a similar house filled with Germans in Vierville.

what I saw and when I saw it."

Mauser then joined the fight. The paratroopers threw grenades into the house, causing it to catch fire. The Germans came running out with their hands up. Even though the paratroopers gathered them up, Mauser knew there were too few Americans to guard them and there was no place to keep them. "We were told no prisoners on the first day," recalled Mauser. "I can just imagine what happened to them."

For his first meal in Europe, Mauser dined on steak. Soldier Cleveland Petty had killed a cow and cut it up for his friends. The men built a small fire to cook their dinner. Mauser told his comrades about the crash of plane 66. As the sun went down a few mortars exploded nearby, but they did not interrupt the meal. For his D-Day bed, Mauser slept in a hedgerow.

A few nights later, Mauser and two other men were cleaning out a village when they entered a house and discovered it empty.

Mauser went out back where a few chickens clucked around the yard. He noticed a small barn with a loft. Then he heard something from the barn and noticed a flashlight coming down from the loft. He immediately recognized it as a German pump flashlight. A German exited the barn, shined the flashlight in Mauser's face, and ordered "Halt! Hands up!" Mauser had other plans. He dove to the ground and fired one round from his rifle. The German dropped dead. The episode left Mauser upset. "I jumped right down in the middle of a bunch of chicken crap." It took him almost a week to get the chicken residue washed out of his uniform.

Mauser spent the rest of the month fighting around the hedgerows and swamps of Normandy. "I went 20 days without a shower," he

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confessed, "I never took off my boots." When the division was ordered off the line, the men were shuttled back to England in a large boat. "It felt good to be back in England." Everyone received a week-long furlough to London. Mauser was disappointed that the pubs closed at 10 PM, but he enjoyed that everyone went out singing for the rest of the night. "I didn't meet any women, though," he admitted. "I was bashful back then."

It was while on furlough that Mauser got into trouble. Two MPs confronted him for walking around with an unbuttoned blouse. They brought him back to their headquarters and told him to report back to his unit. When he returned to Easy Company, he reported to Captain Dick Winters, who had taken over the company after Meehan's death. "What happened in London?" Winters asked. Mauser explained and Winters's order was direct: "That's going to cost you \$15."

Mauser thought it was unfair that he should be reprimanded for such a small offense after surviving the Normandy campaign. "It's not fair," he told Winters, who was unwavering: "It's still going to cost you \$15." Mauser paid up.

The unit went back to training until Operation Market Garden, the liberation of Holland. "We had just a couple of days to prepare," explained Mauser. For the September 17, 1944, drop he kept his reserve chute but packed lighter than he had for the D-Day jump. The troopers in his plane passed the time smoking cigarettes. "I thought they were going to burn the plane down." He said a few prayers for his own safety.

At about noon Mauser jumped out of his plane. "It was a beautiful day," he recalled. Everything seemed silent, save the rustling of his

opening chute. "You could hear a pin drop." He looked down and saw he was headed to a freshly plowed field. "Oh, what a marvelous feeling!" After the soft landing, he formed up quickly with his company and marched down the highway to Eindhoven. People emerged from their homes to pass out food, wine, and beer. "Young girls came out to hug and kiss you," remembered Mauser. "I got a hug but not a kiss."

Once inside Eindhoven, Mauser went on a patrol. He was standing near a building when he saw a German running about 200 yards away. Mauser took aim and shot at the soldier but missed, revealing his position. The Germans, now alerted to the patrol's presence, opened fire. "We ran back," explained Mauser. "I could hear the bullets flying past us." They jumped over a fence into an orchard, but one Easy Company man, Vernon Menze, got hit by a mortar shell before he could make it to safety. "I kind of felt guilty about it," confessed

Mauser. "But that was war."

With Eindhoven secure, Mauser and his buddies bedded down for the night in a building with cots. The men were resting when an officer came in and shouted, "First squad get on your feet."

Mauser thought, "Where the hell are we going to go?" The men marched out of the building and ended up in a Dutch dentist's office where Mauser had a decayed tooth filled. "Other than that, there was no action." The Germans bombed the area but did little damage.

Once the operation failed to capture the vital bridge at Arnhem, Easy Company was transferred northwest to a slice of land between two

any of the Britons he had come to rescue; it was just too dark. The whole operation lasted a couple of hours. "I later heard that one of the pilots told Heyliger, 'You're the best-looking Yankee I've ever seen.' The operation was over before daylight, which was fortunate. The next day, the Germans bombed the boats on the south side of the river. Mauser received the Bronze Star for his role in the mission.

After the mission, Easy lost another soldier. "I remember this one kid in training who talked so tough that we thought he'd win the war." But one night, out on the dikes of Holland, Mauser heard someone moaning and crying. It was the tough-talking soldier, shaking in his

spread out and lay down.

As morning came, the men were ordered to get up and wake up any sleeping soldiers. Mauser got up and shook the man who had been lying next to him all night. It turned out to be a dead German soldier. "I got the hell out of there."

From Holland the entire division transferred to Mourmelon, France, to absorb replacements and prepare for their next mission, which was expected that spring. Mauser received a four-day pass to Paris. "I had no money, but I had candy bars and cigarettes, and they were better than money." He stayed in a seven-story hotel where he poured cups of water down on unsuspecting passers by. "I had never been that high before." He also enjoyed his first subway ride and visited a nightclub.

Back in Mourmelon, Mauser received an odd "Dear John" letter. His girlfriend sent him back his picture. "I knew something was wrong because I gave her a picture of me and she gave me a picture of her." She never sent him a letter, but he had little time to dwell on it. Soon after the picture arrived, word went out for the division to pack up and head out.

The Germans had broken through First Army's front line, and the result was the Battle of the Bulge. The 101st was put on trucks and rushed north to Bastogne. They drove all night and arrived to see American soldiers retreating. "You'll never stop them," the soldiers told Mauser. "You'll never stop them." Some of them gave up their ammunition; some did not. "We could hear shelling now and then."

On December 18, 1944, Easy Company occupied the Bois Jacques in already-dug foxholes, three men to a foxhole. "We got surrounded on my birthday," he recalled wryly, "a good present." He could see German tanks, but was confident they could not get through the woods. Life in the foxholes was tough and cold. Rubbing hands together was the only possibility for warmth. Some men put gunny sacks on their feet for warmth, but Mauser could not find any. The men were shelled constantly.

"Some guys refused to leave their foxholes to answer the call of nature," he explained. "They would forget what they had done when jumping back into their holes—resulting in some shouts of 'Oh my God!'"

With fog socking in the battlefield, the only things in the air were buzz bombs, which the men could hear at night. When the fog finally cleared, aircraft began dropping supplies to the besieged paratroopers. Mauser and some comrades ran out and retrieved one tube that landed between the lines. The airdrops brought much needed supplies, especially K rations.

THE 101ST WAS PUT ON TRUCKS AND RUSHED NORTH TO BASTOGNE. THEY DROVE ALL NIGHT AND ARRIVED TO SEE AMERICAN SOLDIERS RETREATING. "YOU'LL NEVER STOP THEM," THE SOLDIERS TOLD MAUSER. "YOU'LL NEVER STOP THEM."



Dutch civilians show 101st Airborne soldiers the lay of the land in Holland. The locals hugged and kissed their liberators as they made their way into Eindhoven.

rivers, referred to as "the Island." On October 22, Easy Company was tasked with rescuing about 100 British pilots and paratroopers still stuck behind enemy lines near Arnhem. In pitch-black darkness, the men pushed off in British assault boats with about six troopers per boat. Captain Fred "Moose" Heyliger, the company's new commanding officer, took the boat to the right of Mauser's.

"We went across and set up our .30-caliber machine gun for protection," Mauser said.

Guarding the flank, Mauser could not see

foxhole. Mauser asked him what was the matter, but he could not answer. "We had to take him out of there."

During Mauser's stint on the Island, he had a few good nights of rest. In one instance, he went into a mattress store to bed down. "The owner of the store probably did not like that, but we didn't ask for permission." Later, he took up residence in a barn filled with hay, where he dug a hole in the hay and lived like a mole. One night, an NCO ordered everyone out of the barn and into a garden. The men

On December 22, a German officer came through the lines with a surrender request for Brig. Maj. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe, the division's temporary commander. When McAuliffe's famous answer, "Nuts!" made the rounds to the troops, Mauser cheered. Despite McAuliffe's tough words, there were times when Mauser worried that the Germans just might overrun Bastogne.

"They had more equipment than we did, but they must have thought we had more equipment than we had." Still, there was hope on the horizon. "I heard Patton was on his way, but we didn't know when he was going to come."

Even though Patton's 4th Armored Division

Kevin Lamb



National Archives



ABOVE: With newly acquired rations in hand, a group of paratroopers in surrounded Bastogne returns to the front line. Mauser ran into no man's land to retrieve a supply container dropped by parachute. **LEFT:** Ed Mauser pays tribute to his comrades who died in Lieutenant Thomas Meehan's airplane at the crash site memorial in Normandy in 2010. The memory of the plane going down stayed with Mauser the rest of his life.

broke the Bastogne siege on December 26, more tough fighting was ahead. The Germans continued to blast the Bois Jacques with artillery, killing Mauser's friends Warren "Skip" Muck and Alex Penkala. "Muck was friendly kid," remembered Mauser. "My foxhole was pretty close to him."

One day when Mauser was standing guard in his foxhole, he put his rifle down and stepped out to relieve himself. Just then a German reconnaissance plane flew low over him. "If I had my gun I could have knocked him down," he asserted. But then he noticed the pilot smile and wave. "I waved and smiled back."

One night Mauser participated in a patrol into Foy, a town northwest of the Bois Jacques. After trekking more than 500 yards over open, snow-covered ground, Mauser's patrol walked two and a half blocks into the town without encountering a German. They decided not to press their luck and headed back to the woods. But as they approached their front lines, they came under fire from Fox Company, on the left of Easy. Mauser could hear bullets zinging over his head. "Stop shooting, we're Americans!" Mauser and his comrades shouted, and the firing stopped.

On January 13, the division pushed into Foy. As Easy Company charged the town, Mauser emptied his rifle at white-clad Germans. "I

don't know if I hit any of them." With the town taken, Mauser occupied a shell hole for protection. While in his new home, an enemy round exploded in front of him. Rocks and mud tore into his face. Mauser went to the aid station where a medic cleaned his face. "That's a Purple Heart," the medic told him, but the medal was never issued.

Two days later, Mauser got hit again when he was sitting in a barn with his helmet off. A mortar shell dropped in and exploded. Mauser immediately checked his body for wounds and discovered a piece of shrapnel had cut his right wrist down to the bone. A medic wrapped the wrist and, worried it would get infected, sent Mauser to the rear. He ended up in a hospital, ashamed of his status.

"In the operating room, the guy next to me, he was hit in the stomach and hip," recalled Mauser. "I couldn't look at him. I felt silly. I had a small wound and half his body was bleeding."

Mauser got out of the hospital in April and returned to Easy. He reported to the new company commander, Captain Ronald Spiers, who was blunt: "Go back to your unit." Mauser was stunned. "I thought he'd say 'How are you doing,' but nothing! He thought I was a gold-bricker, but I kept my mouth shut." Spiers already had a tough reputation within the bat-

talion for shooting prisoners on D-Day. During the Battle of the Bulge, he lined up two young German prisoners and shot them.

"The two kids were bragging," recalled Mauser about the incident. "There were a lot of stories about him killing prisoners. You didn't want to fool with Spiers."

By this time, Nazi Germany was collapsing and the American Army was advancing at will. As Mauser headed east on the autobahn in an amphibious DUKW, he saw thousands of Germans walking the other way. "We cussed them like hell and shook our fists at them."

On the way into the heart of Germany, Mauser visited a concentration camp. "It was all cleared out," he recalled, "with a wire fence all over the yard, even the children's playground was all gravel." He saw the ovens where the Germans did away with so many Jews and visited the living quarters with bunks without any bedding. "It was all empty, but I knew it was going on," he explained. "It was in the newspapers, and we would get word of mouth from other GIs."

When Easy Company reached Berchtesgaden, Mauser was ordered to take three men and check out a farmhouse. They broke through the front door and found two old women. One woman clutched her stomach and said "Krank,

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Dunkirk

After 70 Years

BY JON DIAMOND

OPERATION DYNAMO REMAINS A
MIRACULOUS EPISODE IN THE ANNALS
OF MODERN MILITARY HISTORY.

FOLLOWING THE 70TH anniversary of the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from the beaches and harbor of Dunkirk, one is amazed at the number of articles and volumes written about the subject. These encompass official histories, personal accounts of the

Imperial War Museum



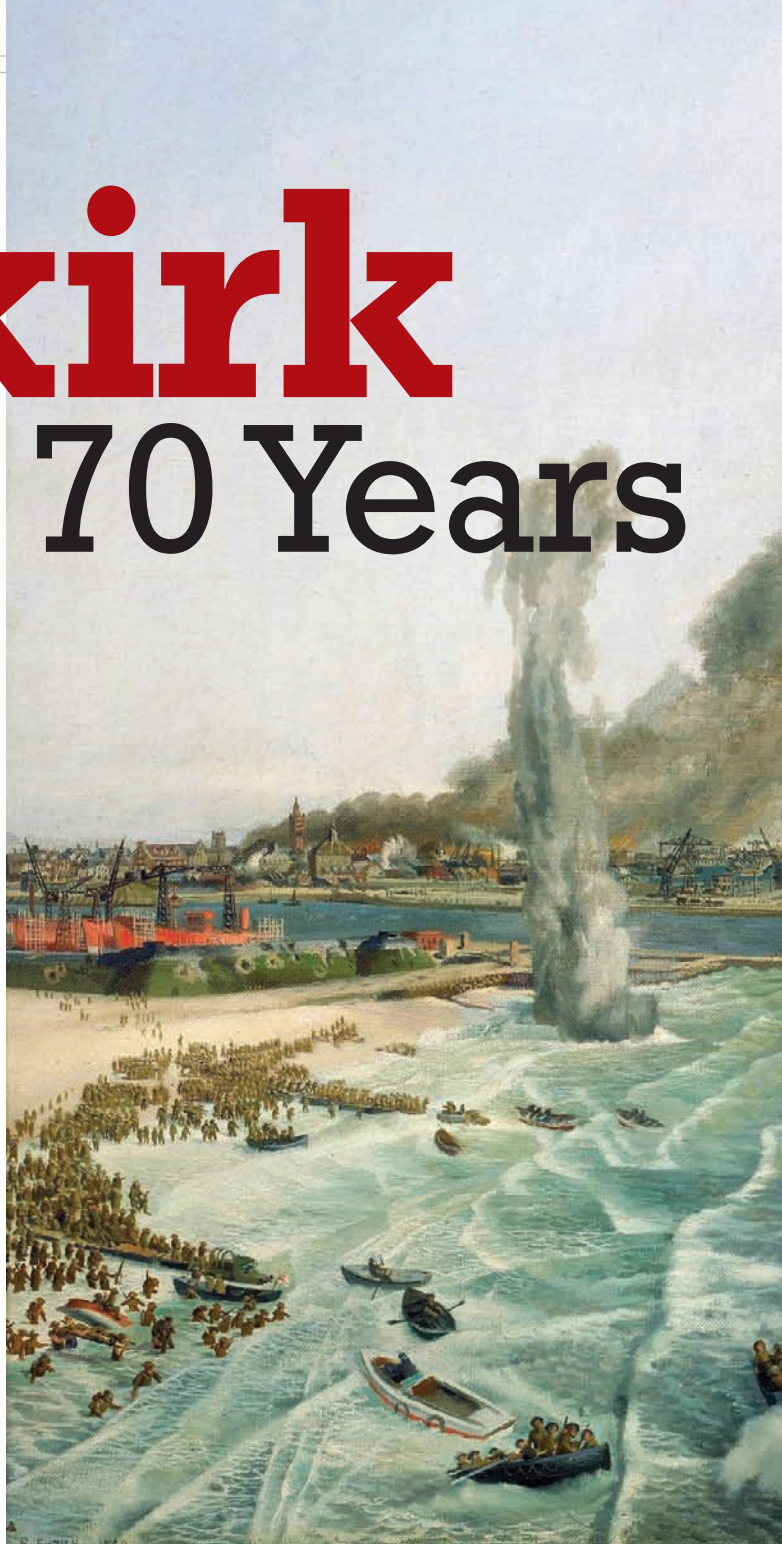
General Lord Gort, commander of the BEF, confers with General Alfonse-Joseph Georges, commander of all French armies in the field at the time of the German offensive against France and the Low Countries on May 10, 1940.

battle's participants, and historical tomes. Those nine days of Sunday, May 26, 1940, through Monday, June 3, 1940, live on in the very words of the military and political leaders who, for posterity's sake, kept meticulous diaries and memoirs, often against existing regulations.

One of the unforgiving aspects of history is that as time marches on the actual words and observations of principal participants in historic events (through their diaries and memoirs) gradually become blurred by review, synopsis, and tangential reference. The tincture of time distorts the views that were held from the outset of an event's occurrence. Also, the beholder of the moment does not have the luxury of hindsight nor the ability to peruse other documents and

sources to form an opinion. The notation made at the moment is often spontaneous and candid.

It was primarily due to the mettle of Lord Gort, Vice Admiral Sir



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Bertram Ramsay, and Captain William Tennant that difficult and timely decisions were made that ultimately allowed the Dunkirk evacuation to commence, continue, and succeed.

On June 2, 1940, British War Minister Anthony Eden summed up the BEF's experience during the previous three weeks in northern France and Belgium quite adequately: "The BEF advanced into Belgium and took up its position on the River Dyle. The advance lasted several days. Through events it could not control our Army had to come back in less than half that time. It did so with little confusion and with few losses. Seventy-five miles forward, a fight at the end of the advance, and seventy-five miles back, fighting all the way, all in the space of ten days."



Under a distant pall of smoke from burning oil tanks and constant Luftwaffe air attack, Allied soldiers line the shore and the east mole to await evacuation from the embattled beach at Dunkirk, France. Artist Richard Ernst Eurich depicts the remarkably orderly fashion in which troops embarked aboard a hodgepodge of rescue craft. The long sea wall is visible across the center of the image.

On May 14, the BBC broadcast an announcement requesting all owners of “self-propelled pleasure craft” between 30 and 100 feet long to send them to the Admiralty to augment the latter’s fleet of ships suitable for a coastal evacuation. Across the English Channel in France, the commander of the BEF was John Standish Surtees Prendergast Vereker, 6th Viscount Gort, who at the time of Dunkirk was 54 years old. He was a member of the Grenadier Guards and the recipient of the Military Cross, the Distinguished Service Order and two Bars, and the Victoria Cross in addition to being wounded four times during World War I.

Despite these impeccable credentials, up to the moment when he was selected by the then War Minister Leslie Hore-Belisha to be the chief of

the Imperial General Staff (IGS), Gort had never commanded any unit larger than a brigade. One observer noted of Gort, “I had no confidence in his leadership when it came to handling a large force. He seemed incapable of seeing the wood for trees.”

As historian Alistair Horne has pointed out, Gort, during the Phony War, had “busied himself tirelessly with such details as the proper use of hand-grenades, the art of patrolling at night, small-arms fire, and map-reading in the snow. He should have perhaps been voicing to the British Cabinet his doubt of the French Army and its strategy.” Thus, Gort, according to General Sir Edward Spears, the British liaison to the French high command, was regarded “as a sort of friendly and jovial battalion



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ABOVE: Flush with victory during the lightning campaign that swept across France in the spring of 1940, German soldiers advance past burning Allied vehicles near Dunkirk. **BELOW:** As Luftwaffe bombs fall into the sea offshore, British soldiers fire their rifles at low-flying German bombers. One of Hitler's greatest blunders of World War II was the order that halted the ground offensive against the BEF and other Allied troops trapped against the English Channel at Dunkirk. Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring could not make good his promise to destroy the Allied force from the air.



National Archives

commander" by the French generals, and they treated him as such.

On May 16, Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Pownall, Gort's chief of staff, entered in his diary, "The news from the far south is very bad. German mechanized columns are getting deep into France towards Laon and St. Quentin. I hope to God the French have some means of stopping them and closing the gap or we are *bust*."

Already Pownall was visualizing a wedge driving between the British and French forces in the south with its spearhead advancing due

west to the Channel coast. The next day's entry revealed, "The Germans can drive on west to Amiens-Abbeville or northwest to Calais, unless somehow they can be stopped." Also, on the 17th, Pownall commented, "Gort is quite splendid, not at all rattled, rather enjoying himself with a fine grasp of the operation as a whole. He knows more about war than all these Frenchmen."

This day, Gort ordered the British I and II Corps to withdraw from the River Senne to the River Dendre. According to Pownall, "If Gort

had decided to stay on the Senne we should tonight have an open flank of some twenty miles!" According to a French historian, "The night of May 18-19th marked the crucial moment when the British High Command started thinking in terms of a separate strategy that might mean breaking with its French and Belgian allies."

On May 19, Churchill spoke to the British people. "It would be foolish to deny the gravity of the hour," he intoned. "It would be still more foolish to lose heart or courage, or to suppose that well-trained and well-equipped armies numbering millions of men can be overcome in the space of a few weeks or even months by a swoop or raid of mechanized vehicles, however formidable."

In a rather contradictory fashion, Pownall called Maj. Gen. R.H. Dewing at the War Office in London, and as a result of that conversation a precautionary measure was instituted to assemble a small fleet to assist in an evacuation of the BEF from northern France and Belgium via Dunkirk if needed. Pownall wrote, "We were therefore examining the possibility of a withdrawal in the direction of Dunkirk whence it might be possible to get some shipping to get some troops home."

Earlier on the 19th, both Pownall and Gort realized that by "going north-west one could get the flank protection of the Douai-La Bassée-Aire Canal.... A series of water obstacles on this avenue of retreat gave some hope of conducting it in a more or less orderly fashion. But the withdrawal ended at the sea at Dunkirk, from which hopes of evacuation of personnel were small indeed (and of material none at all) in the light of modern air bombing against a port."

By May 20, Gort began to challenge the wisdom and orders of London and the French high command, in effect making him both defiant and disobedient, which ultimately was fortunate for the BEF and Britain. An apt comparison is drawn by Horne between Admiral John Jellicoe during the World War I naval battle of Jutland and Gort in France: "Gort, by 20 May was certainly the man who, by forfeiting Britain's only land force, could easily have lost the war at least in a week of afternoons."

On May 20, Churchill sent over the current chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Lord Ironside, to assess how well-founded Gort's pessimism was and secondly to quash his notion of evacuation. Churchill stated that Ironside "could not accept this proposal [Gort's retreat to the coast], as, like most of us, he [the CIGS] favors the southward march." Ironside was to tell Gort to "force his way through all

opposition in order to join up with the French in the south.”

However, Ironside found the situation was just as bad as Gort had indicated. He found the local French generals “in a state of complete depression. No plan, no thought of a plan. Ready to be slaughtered. Defeated at the end without casualties.... Situation desperate.... Personally, I think we cannot extricate the BEF.”

Despite these pessimistic views, Gort told Ironside that he was still inclined to launch a counterattack south of Arras with two divisions, the 5th and 50th. A few days later, Ironside’s diary entry showed his own continued sense of defeatism. “The final debacle cannot be long delayed and it is difficult to see how we can help. It cannot mean the evacuation of more than a minute portion of the BEF and the abandonment of all the equipment of which we are so short in this country. Horrible days we have to live through.... We shall have lost practically all our trained soldiers by the next few days unless a miracle appears to help us.” Ironside thought that 30,000 men at the most might get away.

The decisive action of May 20, 1940, went to the German armored columns of General Heinz Guderian, the foremost proponent of the concept of blitzkrieg, or lightning war. By 2 PM, Guderian was at the outskirts of Abbeville. The gap between the French armies in the north and those in action along the Somme was 55 miles by late afternoon. The Allied armies were well cut in two. Allied forces fighting in Belgium and Flanders were caught in a trap.

On May 21, Gort ignored a French delay in the Arras attack and ordered the British 5th and 50th Divisions with 100 tanks forward. German General Erwin Rommel, commanding the 7th Panzer Division, noted, “Powerful armored forces had swarmed out of Arras, subjecting us to heavy losses in men and equipment. The anti-tank guns that we speedily brought into action proved too light to be effective against the heavily armored British tanks. Most of them were put out of action by the enemy artillery fire—likewise their crews.... Finally the divisional artillery and some 88mm anti-aircraft guns managed to halt the enemy armor.”

This operation was to be the only serious counterattack launched by the encircled Allied armies. The results convinced Gort that the only way out for the BEF was to withdraw to Dunkirk, thereby ignoring any further attempt to break through to the French forces in the south. The Arras attack shocked the German high command.

According to Pownall, “General Rommel was so shaken that he thought he was being

opposed by five divisions.” Some historians have asserted that Gort’s decision to attack at Arras may have started a chain of decisions to save the BEF that would culminate in this being his “moment of destiny.”

On May 22, the Royal Air Force evacuated the airfield at Merville, its final base in France.

Imperial War Museum



Captain William Tennant of the British Royal Navy was ordered to Dunkirk as the senior naval officer present during the evacuation of Allied troops from Europe. Tennant proved to be up to the challenge and commanded the forces at his disposal capably.

All future operations, including Dunkirk, would be conducted from Britain.

On May 23, Rommel outflanked the remnants of the British 5th and 50th Divisions from the west. This maneuver truly upset Gort. He had lost almost all confidence in the orders coming from the French high command. Gort decided to withdraw his forces north of Arras during the night. Pownall opined in his diary entry on May 23, “For one thing we haven’t ammunition to conduct real offensive operations, perhaps 300 r.p.g. [rounds per gun] on the average, is all we have at and in front of railhead. We are none too well off for small arms ammunition—and have asked for some to be dropped by air. Our rations are only about three days. That is mighty close running in view of the bombing that has taken place, and will continue, on our ports.”

In fact, Gort warned Eden, “My view is that any advance by us will be in the nature of a sortie and relief must come from the south as we have not, repeat not, ammunition for serious attack.”

Eden’s response reassured Gort along the lines of his mental preparation. “Should, however, situation on your communications make this at any time impossible you should inform us so that we can inform French and make naval and air arrangements to assist you should you have to withdraw on the northern coast.”

General Sir Alan Brooke’s entry for this date was no more optimistic. “Nothing but a miracle can save the BEF now and the end cannot be very far off!... It is a fortnight since the German advance started and the success they have achieved is nothing short of phenomenal. There is no doubt that they are most wonderful soldiers.”

According to Horne, “Gort’s judgment was now already formulated. It was that the Weygand Plan would never materialize, that the French would never attack, and that the only hope of preserving anything of the BEF was to fall back on Dunkirk while there was still time.”

Gort’s order for the 5th and 50th Divisions to disengage on the night of May 23 to begin the withdrawal from Arras demonstrated that he knew his actions would culminate in evacuation. Gort was aware that by then the French Army was finished and that it was his duty to save that force for future actions.

During the night of May 23, the evacuation of Boulogne began. By 3 AM on the 24th, the destroyer HMS *Vimera* left the mole in Boulogne harbor. According to the official war diary of the evacuation, the last vessel “reached Dover at 0355/24 where she landed some 1,400 men. This took the total number of men, women and children evacuated from Boulogne to roughly 4,368.” After this ship’s departure, all organized resistance in Boulogne ceased.

With the German capture of Boulogne, Vice Admiral Ramsay, who was in charge of Operation Dynamo, had just lost a major port of embarkation. Ramsay was born in London in 1883 and joined the Royal Navy in 1898. During World War I, he served for two years on a monitor as part of the Dover Patrol off the Belgian coast. He resigned from the Navy in 1938 but was coaxed out of retirement by Churchill the following year. For Operation Dynamo, Ramsay took up station in the underground tunnels beneath Dover Castle.

On May 24, Hitler issued a phenomenal order to corps commanders to halt the panzer spearhead. The task of ending the Battle of France would be left to the Luftwaffe and the infantry. Upon issuing this order, Hitler began to speak admiringly of the British Empire, the usefulness of its existence, and the value of the civilization that Great Britain had introduced to the world. His aim was to make peace with

Britain on a basis that the British would regard as honorable.

German General Ewald von Kleist noted, "The German armor was nearer the port [of Dunkirk] than the bulk of the British forces." General Ritter von Thoma, who later was to surrender to British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in North Africa, remembered, "I was right out in front, with the first tanks, near Bergues.... from there I could see everything that was going on in Dunkirk."

Kleist questioned Hitler a few days later about his decision, pointing out that the Wehrmacht had wasted a unique opportunity by not occupying Dunkirk before the British escaped. "Possibly," replied Hitler, "but I didn't want our tanks to get stuck in the Flanders mud."

Kleist also claimed, "[Luftwaffe chief Hermann] Göring had undertaken to settle Dunkirk's hash with planes alone.... He begged Hitler to bestow the honor not on the army but on the Luftwaffe, thereby making the battle of Dunkirk a victory for the regime."

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt claimed, "The Führer had counted on a speedy end to western operations.... He deliberately let the bulk of the BEF escape, so as to make peace negotiations easier."

Hitler, by halting his tanks and overestimating Göring's abilities, had made the first serious mistake since the start of hostilities. His order enabled the Allies to embark units from the Dunkirk trap. During the three-day respite afforded by the halting of the panzers, Gort had managed to erect a strong defensive perimeter around Dunkirk.

Pownall's wrote on May 24, "We are examining again the withdrawal northwards to the coast from Calais to Ostend." Even he realized that something was afoot in the German assault when he noted later that night, "There is certainly one [German panzer formation] now round Calais and as far east as Gravelines where they seem to have been stopped."

Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax wrote in his diary on May 25, "The one firm rock on which everyone was willing to build for the last two years was the French Army, and the Germans walked through it like they did the Poles."

General Sir John Dill, commander of the BEF's I Corps, visited Gort's headquarters on the 24th. According to Pownall, "He hinted too that there was criticism at home that the BEF, 200,000 fighting men who claimed to be better fighters than the Bosche, were not doing enough."

That same day, Churchill decided that the garrison at Calais, commanded by Brigadier Claude Nicolson, must hold out for as long as possible

to allow the BEF to continue to retreat into the Dunkirk perimeter. Ships originally sent to Calais to evacuate Nicolson's force were ordered back to Dover. Churchill contacted Nicolson: "Every hour you continue to exist is of the greatest help to the BEF. Government has therefore decided you must continue to fight. Have greatest possible admiration for your splendid stand. Evacuation will not (repeat not) take place."

Pownall's entry for May 25 summed up the events quite well. "It is all a first-class mess-up and events go slowly from bad to worse, like a Greek tragedy the end seems inevitably to come closer and closer with each succeeding day and event."

Also on May 25, Lord Gort was somewhere near Lille contemplating a major dilemma. The Germans had captured Boulogne, and Calais would surrender the next day. If Belgium capitulated, a 20-mile gap would develop on his left flank. In a moment of prescience, Gort ordered General Pownall to move the 5th and 50th Divisions from the south and "send them over to Brookie [General Alan Brooke] on the left" to fill the gap between the BEF left flank and the fast disintegrating Belgian Army.

This move violated Gort's orders from both London and the French General Staff, but it saved the BEF from destruction. However, Dill, slated to replace Ironside as chief of the Imperial General Staff on May 27, telegraphed Churchill outlining the dangers now threatening the BEF as a result of the breaching of the Belgian front.

In reply to messages from Dill and Gort, Eden wired Gort, "I have had information all of which goes to show that French offensive from Somme cannot be made in sufficient strength.... Should this prove to be the case you will be faced with a situation in which the safety of the BEF will predominate."

Churchill telegraphed Reynaud at 6:55 PM, "I must tell you that a Staff Officer [probably Pownall] has reported to the War Office confirming the withdrawal of the two divisions from the Arras region." Thus, Gort's decision to withdraw to Dunkirk, although unknown to the French, was not made *in vacuo* of the British leadership. However, since Gort's decision was made without consulting the French, it embittered them immensely.

On the morning of May 26, Nicolson's defenders held out for several hours. During the afternoon, the Germans captured vital defensive points in Calais. Nicolson surrendered at 4 PM. This leader of a forlorn last stand would die of his wounds as a prisoner of the Germans at Rotenberg am Fulda, a castle south of Frankfurt, in June 1943. Guderian



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was now poised to capture Dunkirk when he received a further order (in addition to order of May 24) to halt, thereby forbidding his forces to cross the Aa Canal.

Lord Gort received a message from Eden in the morning confirming that his chief concern was the BEF's safety. Eden stated, "Only course open to you may be to fight your way back to west where all beaches and ports east of Gravelines [between Calais to the west and Dunkirk to the east] will be used for embarkation. Navy will provide fleet of ships and small boats and RAF would give full support.... Preliminary plans should be urgently prepared."

Gort replied, "I must not conceal from you that a great part of the BEF and its equipment will inevitably be lost even in best circumstances."

French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud had visited London, and upon his departure the war office telegraphed Gort, "Prime Minister has



had conversation with M. Reynaud this afternoon.... It will not be possible for French to deliver attack in the south in sufficient strength to enable them to effect junction with northern armies. In these circumstances no course open to you but to fall back upon the coast.... M. Reynaud communicating General Weygand and latter will no doubt issue orders in this sense forthwith.... You are now authorized to operate towards coast forthwith in conjunction with French and Belgian Armies."

Thus, Gort's plan to retire to Dunkirk was officially backed in London; however, it left the BEF commander with the impression that Reynaud and Weygand also concurred, which was not the case, and would stir the political pot.

At 6:45 PM, the Admiralty issued the order to begin the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk. Lt. Col. John Austin's personal account describes the BEF's retreat to Dunkirk. "Every road scouring the landscape was one thick mass

of transport and troops, great long lines of them stretching far back to the Eastern horizon, and all the lines converging towards the one focus, Dunkirk. Ambulances, lorries, trucks, bren gun carriers, artillery columns, everything except tanks, all crawling along these roads in well-defined lines over the flat, featureless country."

Göring had been warned about the possibility of a British evacuation on May 27. German Admiral Otto Schniewind told him, "A regular and orderly transport of large numbers of troops with equipment cannot take place in the hurried and difficult conditions prevailing.... Evacuation of troops without equipment, however, is conceivable by means of large numbers of smaller vessels, coastal and ferry steamers, fishing trawlers, drifters, and other small craft, in good weather, even from the open coast."

German reconnaissance aircraft reported that there were 13 warships and nine troop transports in Dunkirk harbor. German Army Intel-

A long line of British troops snakes along the beach at Dunkirk. The soldiers of the BEF made up the bulk of those Allied troops evacuated from northwest France in June 1940. Most of the soldiers rescued at Dunkirk continued to serve in the armed forces and fought the Germans another day.

ligence concluded, "The embarkation of the BEF has begun."

Captain William Tennant, chief staff officer to the First Sea Lord who had also just been appointed captain of the battlecruiser HMS *Repulse*, had volunteered his service to Vice Admiral Ramsay to help with the evacuation at Dunkirk. Ramsay ordered him to Dunkirk as senior naval officer (SNO) ashore, and early on the afternoon of May 27 he sailed from Dover with 12 officers and 160 ratings with a communications staff aboard the destroyer HMS *Wolfhound*. Every 30 minutes during the passage across the English Channel the *Wolfhound*

was attacked by Nazi dive-bombers. While the British gunners had no great success against the Luftwaffe's planes, the attacks helped Tennant realize just how harrowing the Channel crossing would be.

Tennant recalled that as he went ashore at 6 PM to contact the British Army commanders in the town "the sight of Dunkirk gave one a rather hollow feeling in the pit of the stomach. The Boche had been going for it pretty hard, there was not a pane of glass left anywhere and most of it was still unswept in the center of the streets."

Tennant swiftly assessed the docks as unusable and stationed his sailors along the beaches east of Dunkirk to act as shore police. He had found some British soldiers dazed by the Luftwaffe's bombing while others ransacked private property, roaming in undisciplined packs.

Ashore for only two hours, Tennant made the first of several brilliant decisions, which would favorably impact the evacuation. At 8 PM, he notified Admiral Ramsay, "Please send

flank of the BEF between the Belgian town of Ypres and the sea. Brooke hurried into the breach at the head of the British II Corps and managed to reestablish a continuous line between Ypres and Dixmude, thereby maintaining the Dunkirk perimeter intact.

Demonstrating a true leader's gift of flexibility, Tennant realized the evacuation process from the beaches was impossibly slow. Small groups of men were picked up here and there. In desperation, Tennant reexamined Dunkirk's outer harbor and the beaches east of the town. Although the Luftwaffe had set Dunkirk's piers and quays ablaze, the air attacks had completely ignored the two long breakwaters or moles that formed the entrance to the harbor. The clouds of smoke generated from the German air assault and the Wehrmacht's artillery barrages on the town of Dunkirk hung low over the harbor impairing visibility to and from the air.

The moles were a mile apart at the land side and angled toward each other into the open

tered on the dunes and beaches of Malo-les-Bains and marched out in disciplined groups onto the mole and along the walkway. There was no need for the men to enter the fiery inferno of Dunkirk itself. Under their own officers, supervised by Tennant's naval shore party, the beleaguered troops could exit from their makeshift beach trenches right onto the evacuation ships.

During the evening of May 27, Tennant directed the steamer *Queen of the Channel* to enter the harbor and tie up at the east mole. The vessel eased into place alongside the breakwater, and to Tennant's relief was quickly secured. This experiment demonstrated very quickly to Tennant that, although not ideal, the east mole was preferable to the alternatives offered on the open beach.

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ABOVE: A Royal Navy sailor assists a British soldier wounded during the evacuation from Dunkirk as he comes aboard a vessel bound for England. A pair of French soldiers, still wearing their distinctive helmets, follows closely behind. **LEFT:** Intense Luftwaffe air attacks took their toll in lives and rescue vessels at Dunkirk. In this photo, a trawler has been hit and settled to the bottom near the shore alongside the destroyer HMS *Vanquisher*.



every available craft to beaches east of Dunkirk immediately. Evacuation tomorrow night is problematical." Thus, Tennant determined that the town of Dunkirk and its harbors were not going to be points of embarkation and informed Operation Dynamo's control center in Dover of this fact. The beaches east of Dunkirk were to be utilized immediately, at least for the time being.

Also on the 27th, Belgium's King Leopold negotiated an armistice with the Germans. At 11 PM, Gort was told that the Belgians would lay down their arms at midnight. In one hour's time, a 16-mile gap would open on the left

water. Made of concrete pilings and covered with an eight-foot-wide boardwalk, the moles seemed to Tennant to present too great a risk to try to bring ships alongside them to tie up. However, if large numbers of men were to be evacuated by ship, there was no other way.

The west mole was only about 500 feet long, and the water at its near end seemed dangerously shallow. The east mole attracted Tennant's attention as it ran some 1,400 yards out to sea. The base of the east mole ran right into the sandy beach at the town limits of Dunkirk near the holiday resort of Malo-les-Bains. Tennant saw that troops could be mus-

At 4:36 AM on May 28, a signal went to Ramsay in Dover requesting an alteration in plans. Now Tennant wanted as many ships as possible, especially the fast modern destroyers, not off the beaches but alongside the east mole. This modification proved to be the pathway to safety for almost 200,000 of the 338,000 British and French troops embarked during the next several days.

Pownall was in a very somber mood. His entry for the day summed up some of the deficiencies of the BEF. "And so here we are back on the shores of France on which we landed with such high hearts over eight months ago.

Months spent in working and preparing the force for the ordeal that was to come. I think we were a gallant band who little deserve this ignominious end to our efforts. There have been many difficulties to overcome, most of them due to the unreadiness of the Army for war and the neglect with which the statesmen and the country as a whole has treated the Army for two decades. Our struggle here was to overcome in a short space those severe handicaps—to prepare a semi-amateur army for an all-in struggle against the world's greatest fighting machine. I think we can claim a great measure of success in our preparations. Yet here we are literally driven into the sea.”

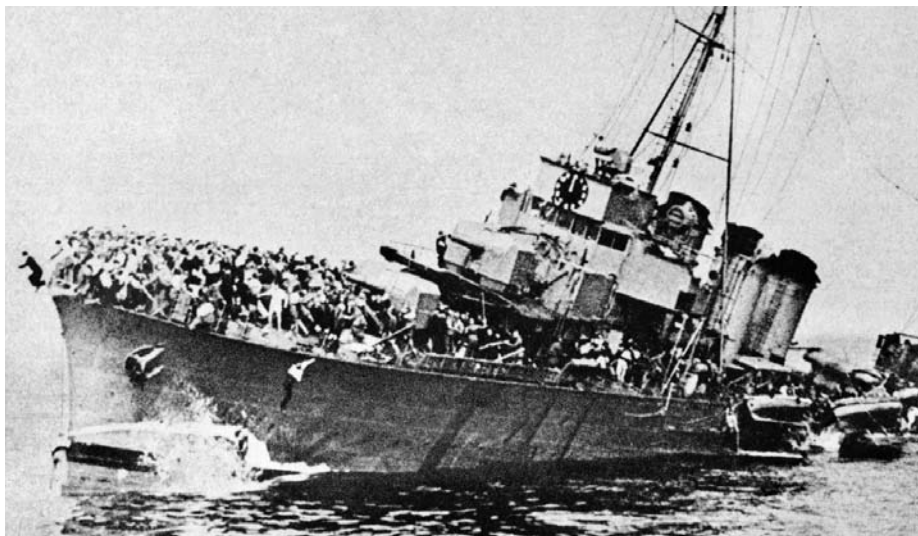
To some, May 29, 1940, is considered the turning point at Dunkirk. That morning Gort still thought further evacuation might become impossible since Dunkirk was under fire from German artillery, which was adding to the devastation already caused by the Luftwaffe. Yet as the day went on the prospects brightened. The arrival of French warships contributed immensely to the embarkation efforts. More than 47,000 men were evacuated from the Dunkirk mole and from the beaches that day, nearly three times as many as the day before.

Losses, however, were grievous at sea. Three destroyers were sunk, and six had been damaged. Numerous other vessels were hit during air attacks and torpedo runs by German E-boats. German artillery began ranging against the sea approaches to Dunkirk.

Admiral Ramsay ordered three destroyers to test the artillery against a new central navigation route (X) while minesweeping was still under way. The three destroyers were bombed from the air, but they drew no artillery fire. Minesweeping continued, and by mid-afternoon evacuation ships were ordered to utilize this new route since there was no imminent danger from German artillery.

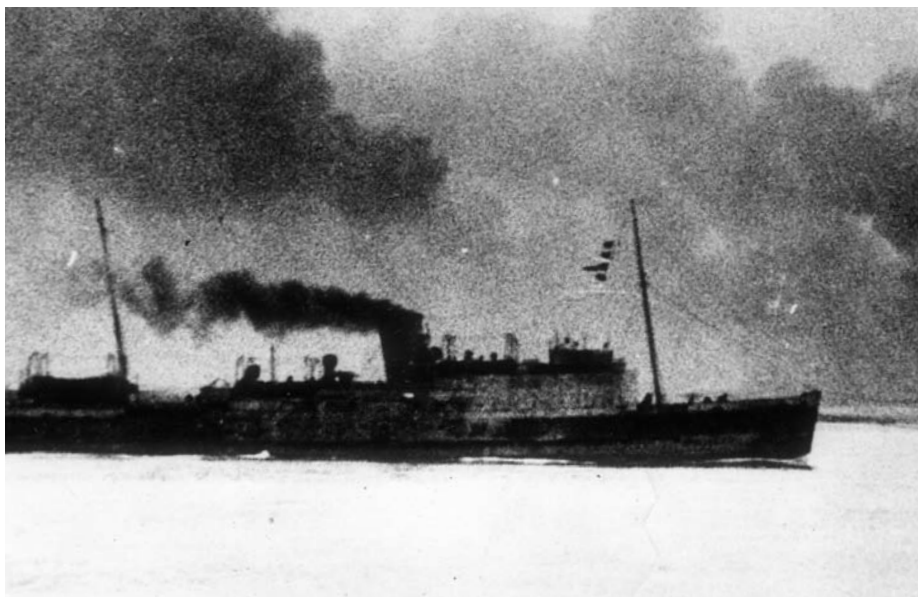
The German Air Ministry situation report for this day read, “...The full force of the air attacks was directed against the numerous merchant vessels in the adjacent sea areas and the warships escorting them.” An important ramification of the Luftwaffe's strategy was that attacks on the perimeter line and on the retreating armies virtually ceased, allowing more troops to arrive at the beaches relatively unhindered.

On the afternoon of the 29th, it was decided at the Admiralty that the naval organization off Dunkirk should be strengthened. It was not intended that Captain Tennant should be superseded as SNO; however, Rear Admiral W.F. Wake-Walker was appointed “for command of seagoing ships and vessels off the Belgian coast.”



Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: On May 30, 1940, the French destroyer *Borrasque*, loaded with 1,200 soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk, struck a mine and listed heavily to port before sinking. Survivors were rescued by another French destroyer, the *Branlebas*. **BELOW:** With smoke belching from its single stack, a transport pulls away from the embattled beach at Dunkirk. During Operation Dynamo more than 300,000 Allied soldiers were ferried across the English Channel to safety in southern England.



National Archives

While Admiral Wake-Walker was en route to his new station, the Admiralty came to the conclusion that the destroyer loss rate was unacceptable. The First Sea Lord, Admiral Dudley Pound, made the decision to withdraw his modern destroyers since his primary charge was the protection of Britain's sea lanes and the destroyer flotillas were a vital component of that naval mission. Ramsay was allotted 15 remaining destroyers of older classes.

During the night of May 29, the British 4th Division reached Nieuport. It was incorporated in a combined Franco-British corps with orders to defend the sector from Bergues to Les Moeres. In the early hours of May 30, Eden sent secret instructions to Gort “authorizing

him to capitulate when in his judgment ... no further proportionate damage could be inflicted on the enemy.”

Ramsay was still trying to make sense of all the signals he was receiving at Dover. He needed to know if the east mole was still operational after the repeated bombing the previous evening. Ramsay sent the destroyer HMS *Vanquisher* to investigate early on the morning of the 30th, and the report was that it could still possibly be used.

The Army leaders were also creative in their attempts to facilitate the evacuation. The soldiers began to build ersatz piers out of trucks, Bren carriers, ammunition wagons, and other vehicles to enable the crews of the small boats



Their decks crowded with soldiers evacuated during Operation Dynamo, British destroyers reach the safety of the port of Dover. Residents of the city celebrated the success of the evacuation from Dunkirk and welcomed the soldiers with sandwiches and hot coffee.

to embark troops from deeper water. Clearly, the level of the tide would impact the success of these impromptu jetties. As a result of this ingenuity, the flow of men from the beaches steadily increased.

After meeting with Pownall and the chiefs of staff and service ministers on the 30th, Churchill decided that French troops must be given an equal opportunity to evacuate not only in their own vessels but in British ships. After meeting with Gort's staff at Dover, Ramsay was told that the BEF perimeter would hold until early on June 1. With this information, Ramsay decided to continue evacuation through June 1 and perhaps longer.

Throughout the day, the evacuation contin-

ued and the numbers lifted kept rising despite the difficulties off the beaches and the temporary suspension of work at the mole, which Ramsay had rescinded. After conferring with the First Sea Lord, Ramsay convinced his superior to allow the modern destroyers to return to Dunkirk to hasten the evacuation. The tally on May 30 was 53,823 men being safely brought to England. More than half were evacuated from the open beaches by small vessels.

The British cabinet decided on May 31 that the commander of the BEF should return to England when the size of the force remaining on land was reduced to three divisions. Gort told the French commanders at Dunkirk, "My government has recalled me to London, but I

am leaving General [Harold] Alexander behind with three British divisions which will act under your orders for the defense of the bridgehead."

In a fractious exchange with the French commanders at Dunkirk, Alexander informed them of his intended plan: "I have been in touch with Mr. Anthony Eden. He has ordered me to cooperate with the French forces in the fullest measure compatible with the security of the British troops. I consider their existence seriously threatened and I am sticking to my decision to embark tomorrow, June 1st." Thus, according to Alexander's operations order, the perimeter was to be abandoned by 11 PM on May 31.

Ramsay was under increased pressure because embarkation from the beaches was deteriorating owing to changes in weather patterns. Also, evacuation from the mole was becoming more dangerous. Adding to this, Ramsay received a signal informing him that the final evacuation of the rear guard of the BEF was postponed to the night of June 1st, extending the evacuation efforts by at least an additional 24 hours.

Miraculously, the evacuation from the beaches improved with the wind and surf calming sufficiently. The makeshift jetties made by the Royal Engineers were significantly increasing the evacuation numbers from the beaches. Despite German artillery fire, the mole was still in use. On the day of Gort's evacuation, 68,014 other men safely reached England. About one-third of this number were plucked from the beaches. By daybreak on June 1, a phenomenal 200,000 British, French, and Belgian troops had been embarked to England during Operation Dynamo.

Four destroyers were sunk in the first few hours of daylight on June 1. Another four were seriously damaged. In addition to the devastation wreaked upon the destroyer flotillas, steamers, minesweepers, and small boats of all varieties were listing or engulfed by fire.

The Admiralty suspended the evacuation effort at 7 AM on June 2. Ramsay stated that he had ordered all ships to withdraw from Dunkirk before daylight. He wrote: "In these circumstances, it was apparent that continuation of the operation by day must cause losses of ships and personnel out of all proportion to the number of troops evacuated, and if persisted in, the momentum of evacuation would automatically and rapidly decrease."

Once darkness occurred, however, ships would return to resume evacuation efforts.

Clearly, evacuation efforts would not be completed by the dawn of Sunday, June 2, as originally planned. The Dunkirk perimeter would hold as originally planned until midnight. In accordance with the instructions he

had received from the war office, Alexander ordered the last remaining British troops to withdraw into Dunkirk harbor “with all available anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns and with such troops as had not yet embarked.”

It was Alexander’s intention to continue the evacuation during the night from the western beaches and Dunkirk, the rear guard retiring at dawn to Dunkirk itself. Wake-Walker, Alexander, and Tennant met to finalize plans for the overnight evacuation. All were made aware that the French were holding a line behind the remaining BEF troops through which the British rear guard would withdraw. Ramsay had ordered all efforts shifted to nocturnal loading. By midnight on June 1, another 64,429 men were evacuated to England.

Approximately 4,000 men of the BEF rear guard still remained ashore on June 2. Another 50,000 to 60,000 French troops were in Dunkirk itself or holding the ever-shrinking perimeter. Ramsay had only Dunkirk’s harbor and roughly a mile and a half of beach left for the evacuation; however, both of these sites were under continual air and artillery attack. He planned to lift another 25,000 troops under cover of darkness.

The last BEF evacuees were aboard ship by 11 PM. At 10:50 Captain Tennant loaded the last of his naval party onto a motor torpedo boat. Before leaving, he radioed Ramsay: “Operation Dynamo complete. Returning to Dover,” a message which was later abbreviated to the more triumphant “BEF evacuated.”

Alexander and Tennant toured the harbor and shoreline in a fast motor boat to make sure that not a single soldier remained to be taken off. Satisfied that there were none, they headed for England. The total number of men evacuated on June 2 was 26,256.

Once the BEF rear guard was lifted on June 2, there was a complete cessation of evacuation just prior to midnight. No ready explanation has been offered although numerous French troops remained in and around Dunkirk harbor. At 12:30 AM on June 3, Wake-Walker radioed Ramsay that there were four ships at the mole but no French troops on the planks. At 1:15 AM he signaled Dover, “Plenty of ships, cannot get troops.” After waiting past their scheduled departure times, the remaining ships sailed with no evacuees.

Ramsay ordered all his destroyers and many steamers to cross for embarkation attempts on the night of June 3. He believed there were approximately 30,000 French troops remaining for evacuation. Wake-Walker, supervising the crossing of the destroyers and steamers, was at the mole at 10 PM. These ships picked up the

last of a few small British parties that had remained ashore. On June 3, another 26,746 men, the overwhelming majority being French, reached the safety of England.

The evacuation was finally terminated in the early hours of June 4. The official tally shows 338,226 Allied troops brought out, 228,500 British and the rest mostly French. Records reveal that 243 ships were sunk. Gort lost 66,426 men, including 11,014 killed, 14,074 wounded, and 41,338 taken prisoner or missing. The BEF abandoned almost all its heavy equipment, including artillery, motor transport, and armor.

Churchill’s classic truism that “wars are not won by evacuations” remains important as it applies to Dunkirk, especially since it has been mythologized as a “miracle.” Churchill understood the unpreparedness of the Army now facing a possible invasion.

Montgomery further asserted, “The campaign in France and Flanders in 1940 was

as a fighting general. Despite bringing out the bulk of the BEF, Churchill did not favor him. In 1942, Gort was named governor-general of Malta, where he characteristically displayed tenacious courage. His career ended as high commissioner in Palestine and Trans-Jordan in 1945, and he died on March 31, 1946, just before his 60th birthday.

As summed up by historian A.J. Barker, “Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay, Flag Officer Dover, faced responsibilities which were to tax his knowledge, his energy, his ingenuity and above all his ability to persuade others that his decisions were the right ones.” Ramsay, who subsequently became the architect of the Royal Navy’s role in the Normandy invasion, died in a plane crash near Paris on January 2, 1945.

Captain Tennant resumed his command of HMS *Repulse*, which was sunk along with the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* by Japanese planes off the coast of Malaya on December 10, 1941. Tennant was promoted to rear admiral

National Archives



Following the evacuation of the BEF and other Allied troops from Dunkirk, German soldiers entered the shattered city and found large quantities of abandoned equipment. Here, a group of Germans relaxes amid the rubble of a Dunkirk street.

lost in Whitehall in the years before it ever began, and this cannot be stated too clearly or too often.”

One must remember that from May 24 to May 28, 1940, Churchill was waging a simultaneous political battle in London with Lord Halifax, his foreign secretary and adversary in the halls of government. The successful evacuation of the majority of the BEF was crucial not only for Britain’s morale but also for Churchill to remain in power.

For Gort, Dunkirk was the end of his career

and appointed to Ramsay’s staff in January 1944. He then went to work on the Mulberry artificial harbor project, which enabled a substantial amount of critical supplies to be brought ashore following the D-Day landings in Normandy in June 1944. □

Jon Diamond practices medicine and lives in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History and is currently working on a book about Field Marshal Archibald Wavell.

U.S. Marine Corps



Major "Pappy" Boyington indicates he has shot down three Japanese aircraft in this painting by Marine Corps combat artist Charles Waterhouse.

"One with the Air"

Although an alcoholic and troublemaker at times, Marine ace "Pappy" Boyington was a master pilot.

"YOU EITHER LOVED HIM OR HATED HIM," ONE FORMER MARINE SAID OF Gregory "Pappy" Boyington. "There was no in-between."

What kind of man was Boyington, who could assemble a group of young, inexperienced pilots and mold them into one of the most successful fighter squadrons in Marine Corps history? Yet, just a few months earlier, while serving with the famed Flying Tigers in China, he was reviled by the men who served alongside him.

The answer is not an easy one. In his new book, *Black Sheep: The Life of Pappy Boyington* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2011, 288 pp., photos, illustrations, notes, index, \$34.95, hardcover), historian John Wukovits takes a hard look at the troubled aviator's life.

Boyington's childhood was anything but a happy one. Born in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in December 1912, his father was a dentist and his mother played piano in music halls to

accompany silent films. The two fought constantly. His father, who possessed a violent temper, accused his mother of being unfaithful. They finally divorced, and Boyington's mother married a man named Ellsworth Hallenbeck, a bookkeeper for a saw mill. When their home was destroyed by a fire, Boyington's birth records were also lost. He would not discover his real name until he joined the Marine Corps.

Unfortunately, Hallenbeck had a dark side. Not only was he a heavy drinker, but some family members said that he may have sexually abused some of the children. There has never been any evidence to suggest that Boyington was a victim.

Boyington's escape was flying. After witnessing barnstormers at the county fairs, he was hooked. Although he struggled with the classroom instruction, he was "one with the air" when he was flying. He was commissioned a second lieutenant and attended Basic School in Philadelphia. He was then assigned to the 2nd Marine Aircraft Group in San Francisco.

Married with a child, Boyington's financial situation looked bleak until he learned about an all-volunteer group of American pilots being formed to fight the Japanese in China. Like the others, Boyington had to take a leave of absence from the Marine Corps to join the American Volunteer Group, as they were officially called.

After a long sea voyage, the fliers arrived in Burma, living in very austere conditions, before transferring to China to begin their training on the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, a single-engine fighter plane, under the auspices of Army Air Corps legend Claire Chennault. During those bleak, early days of World War II, immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the American public had little to cheer about, until Chennault's small band of daredevil pilots made the news. Because of their distinctive tiger's teeth insignia, designed by Walt Disney, the press started referring to them as the Flying Tigers. The name stuck.

Unfortunately, Boyington's tenure with the unit was not a rewarding experience. While in class, listening to a lecture on tactics, he embarrassed Chennault. The elder pilot never forgot.

To Boyington, flying escorts for bombers was mundane duty; he wanted to dogfight with Japanese Zeros to earn additional money for any plane he shot down. Unfortunately, it was his drinking and brawling that got him in hot water with Chennault, and it would eventually cost him the command of one of the squadrons. There is



You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Truth about the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement

Does it stand for Middle East peace or does it seek Israel's destruction?

Leaders of the effort to boycott, divest from and apply sanctions against Israel—the so-called BDS movement—say they stand for an “end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories,” “justice in Palestine” and “freedom for the Palestinian people.” But what are the real motives of BDS leaders—do they really want peace between Israel and the Palestinian people?

What are the facts?

While the BDS movement uses highly emotive language in their appeals for support—such as “ending repression” and “Israeli war crimes”—a closer look at the real motives of the movement reveals a more sinister goal.

First, note that the BDS movement focuses only on alleged war crimes and repression by Israel—and ignores real war crimes and tyrannical repression by other Middle Eastern nations and terrorist organizations. When Hamas and Hizbollah target thousands of rockets at Israeli civilian populations in violation of international law, BDS utters not a word of criticism, let alone a call for boycotts or sanctions. When Iran's government violently crushes peaceful protests and Egypt stifles its press and political opposition with a dictatorial hand, BDS is likewise silent. Why?

By singling out Israel for criticism and economic pressure, BDS employs a double standard—a hypocritical and dishonest tactic frequently used by anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hate groups.

The reason, as we'll see, is that the BDS movement is not really interested in alleged war crimes or repression. Rather its purpose is to delegitimize and then destroy Israel.

The second critical fact about the BDS movement is that while it masquerades behind words like “freedom” and “occupation,” one need only listen closely to its rhetoric to realize that these are code words for the elimination of Israel.

BDS leaders oppose a two-state solution—why? While the United States, Western European powers, Israel and the U.N. Security Council have embraced a “two-state solution” as the basis for peace in the Middle East, BDS leaders, such as Ali Abunimah and Omar Barghouti, are clear: They openly and outspokenly *oppose* a two-state solution. Why?

Because when BDS supporters talk about “the occupation of Palestine,” they refer not to disputed West Bank territories, but to *all* the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea—including all of Israel. When they talk about “freedom,” they don't mean freedom from security roadblocks, they mean freedom from Jews in their midst. When they talk about “occupation,” they mean *not* just Israeli

security forces in the West Bank, they also mean Israelis “occupying” the state of Israel.

The third telling fact about the BDS movement is that it consistently and vehemently opposes any efforts to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to work in peace and on peace. For example, BDS leaders advocate boycotting cultural exchanges between Israelis and Palestinian artists. They condemn educational cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian universities. Most revealingly, they *oppose peace talks* between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, calling them “collaborationist.”

BDS is not about “occupation.”

In short, BDS is not about peaceful coexistence or ending the “occupation” of the West Bank. Indeed, Omar Barghouti, a graduate student at Tel Aviv University and BDS founder, admits, “If the occupation ends . . . would that end support for BDS? No it wouldn't—no.”

Not only do BDS leaders admit this, but they implacably support the “return” of nearly five million *descendants* of Arab refugees who left during Israel's war of independence in 1947. In fact, most of these Palestinians are not truly refugees—fully 95 percent of them have never set foot in Israel.

Most importantly, the immigration of millions of Arab refugees' descendants to Israel would make Jews a minority in their own state. As President Obama has correctly noted, “The ‘right of return’ would extinguish Israel as a Jewish state, and that's not an option.” Yet destroying Israel by flooding it with millions of Palestinians is precisely what BDS leader Barghouti insists upon: “This (the right of return) is something we cannot compromise on.”

BDS's goal: “Extinguish Israel as a Jewish state.” BDS unequivocally rejects Israel's many peace offers—including numerous land-for-peace proposals supported by the United States—and rejects Israel's willingness to sit down to direct peace talks without preconditions.

Thus, the facts make BDS's intentions clear: Rather than being a movement that seeks peace and freedom, it is a movement motivated by an obsessive hate of Zionism and Jews and opposition to the Jewish state—one bent on fomenting strife, conflict and enmity until Israel is utterly defeated.

Rather than a movement that seeks peace and freedom, BDS is motivated by an obsessive hate of Zionism.

If you support peace between Israel and the Palestinians, if you support two states for two peoples—living side by side in cultural, social and economic harmony—please oppose the ill-intentioned BDS movement in your community. Speak out against hateful, one-sided campaigns to boycott Israeli goods, to divest from companies that do business with Israel and to enact sanctions against the state of Israel. This is not the path to peace!

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also evidence that Boyington had fabricated the number of kills he had while a member of the Flying Tigers.

One thing that Boyington did learn while serving with Chennault was his “innovative methods.” Although they hated each other, he would remember what he had learned and apply it when he commanded the Black Sheep Squadron.

Contrary to popular myth, the pilots of VMF-214, later called the Black Sheep Squadron, were not misfits or incarcerated in Marine briggs. They were young and inexperienced yes, a bit unconventional, like their squadron commander, but they were good. Under Boyington’s tutelage, he shaped them into one of the greatest fighting groups in the Marine Corps. Their weapon was the Chance-Vought F4U Corsair, a fighter the Japanese called the “Whistling Death.” Finally, Boyington had a plane that could match the Zero in aerial combat.

Before long, the Black Sheep Squadron was racking up impressive kills against the enemy. Newspapers quickly caught on and gave them quite a bit of press to raise the morale of a war-weary American people. Boyington’s count rose

rapidly, and soon he had tied pilot Joe Foss’s record of 25.

On January 3, 1944, while on a mission over Rabaul, Boyington broke the record, but was shot down and taken captive by the Japanese. For the next 20 months, he was held as a prisoner of war. When he was repatriated at war’s end, he returned stateside and was awarded the Medal of Honor and Navy Cross. He left the Marine Corps with the rank of colonel.

Boyington died in 1988. He was indeed a very complex individual. As the author points out, many of his men overlooked his weaknesses and focused on his strengths. They commented on “his quality of leadership,” but were saddened that he could not “reach the heights he could have,” except when he was in the cockpit of a plane.

Battle Yet Unsung: The Fighting Men of the 14th Armored Division in World War II by Timothy J. O’Keeffe, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2010, 336 pp., notes, photos, \$32.95, hardcover.

While much has been written of the fighting in Normandy and the bitter struggle at the Battle of the Bulge, little attention has been paid to the equally bloody combat endured by U.S. forces in southern France and Germany from



late 1944 until war’s completion.

One such unit that participated in the campaigns through the underbelly of France and into Germany itself was the 14th Armored Division, which landed in Marseille, France, in October 1944. As part of the Sixth Army Group, the “Liberators,” as they were called, marched northward, crossed the Rhine, and fought a series of pitched battles with the German 19th Army. The terrain could prove to be treacherous as the soldiers moved through the Rhone Valley, Alsace, and the Vosges Mountain chain in pursuit of the enemy.

After bitter combat in places like Gertwiller, Benfeld, and Barr, elements of the Sixth Army, which included the 14th Armored Division, cracked the German defenses and poured onto the Alsatian Plain before Christmas 1944.

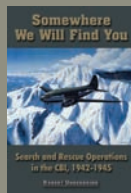
On December 17, the division penetrated Germany, running headlong into the seemingly impenetrable bulwark known as the Westwall or Siegfried Line. Unfortunately, due to the deteriorating situation in the Ardennes, the unit was ordered to withdraw and take up defensive positions while other Sixth Army units were sent to reinforce the beleaguered troops

Short Bursts

Somewhere We Will Find You: Search and Rescue Operations in the CBI, 1942-1945 by Robert Underbrink, Merriam Press, Bennington, VT, 2010, 258 pp., notes, bibliography, photos, \$19.95, softcover.

There was no doubt that flying over “The Hump,” a name given to the eastern portion of the 15,000-foot-high Himalaya Mountain Range sandwiched between India and China, was a perilous journey by air. With no navigational charts or radio communication, high winds and terrible weather, it was a pilot’s nightmare.

However, fly it they did. When the Japanese blocked the Burma Road, airlift was the only alternative. Crews from the 10th Air Force’s Air Transport Command performed yeoman’s duties to ensure that the troops were supplied.



Tragically, crews were lost while attempting to traverse this “Skyway to Hell,” as it was later referred to. In August 1943, the search and rescue operation received top priority—the hunt to locate downed airman was on—an extremely difficult task considering the terrain and the unforgiving weather.

Underbrink’s account brings long overdue recognition not only to American air crews, but also to the British military, civilians, and missionaries, and the indigenous tribes that inhabited the area.

The Secret War in the Balkans: A WWII Memoir by Lt. Col. Richard H. Kraemer, USAF (Ret.), Author House, Bloomington, IN, 2010, 244 pp., photos, illustrations, \$9.90, softcover.

It is indeed fortunate that retired Lt. Col. Richard Kraemer, USAF, is blessed with a good memory. He is

also very lucky to have kept his official flight records and personal flight log and diary to tell the story of yet another part of the war that has been kept under wraps for more than 60 years—the secret war in the Balkans.

As a member of the 60th Troop Carrier Group, Kraemer flew hazardous missions from March 1944 until the Normandy landing on June 6, to supply guerrilla groups fighting the Nazis in Yugoslavia and Croatia. During this time, the unit transported an estimated 7,000 tons of weapons and supplies that would prevent Hitler from moving 500,000 troops to the French coast.

By the heroic efforts of his unit and the clandestine operations of the underground, the author firmly believes that their actions assisted in the success of the D-Day landings and helped shorten the war. Their incredible record of more than 4,600 combat sorties certainly was instrumental in defeating Nazi Germany.

Victory in Defeat: The Wake Island Defenders in Captivity by Gregory J.W. Urwin, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2010, 480 pp., notes, index, photos, illustrations, \$38.95, hardcover.

It has always been the mind-set that being held captive by the Japanese in World War II was a harrowing experience. Survivors of the brutal Japanese death camps have gone on record explaining their near-death experiences at the hands of their Asian captors who valued honor over death and viewed prisoners of war as subhuman.

However, the defenders of Wake Island, which included civilians, have a different story. They were indeed fortunate to have had a camp commander who possessed a quality often thought absent in Japanese culture—compassion.

Sub-Lieutenant Shigeyoshi Ozeki was indeed a rare bird. So much so, three Marines from the Wake Island garrison returned to Japan to meet with him and express their gratitude

in the Ardennes.

This movement of units did not go unnoticed by the German high command. Realizing that they were in a vulnerable position, German Army Group G launched Operation Nordwind, the last major enemy counteroffensive of World War II. Soon, Task Force Hudelson, named after its commander Colonel Daniel Hudelson, found itself in a very precarious position. As many as five enemy divisions had surrounded the task force which, for the following week, fought continuously to delay the German juggernaut from advancing. Finally, reinforcements arrived and drove the panzer units back but not before the Liberators slugged it out with the enemy at the Battle of Hatten-Rittershofen. When the fighting had stopped, the 14th Division had lost 62 medium tanks. For outstanding bravery, the 14th received two presidential unit citations.

As the unit raced toward Berlin, it also freed an estimated 200,000 Allied prisoners of war. The author has done an incredible job in shedding light about an often neglected but important role this unit played in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Killing the Bismarck: Destroying the Pride of Hitler's Fleet by Iain Ballantyne, Pen & Sword

Books, South Yorkshire, England, 2010, 288 pp., notes, index, photos, \$50.00, hardcover.

When Prime Minister Winston Churchill received the awful news that the battlecruiser HMS *Hood*, flagship of the Home Fleet, had been sunk by the German battleship *Bismarck*, he was sickened and infuriated. He quickly issued orders to naval officials in a terse statement that needed no further explanation, "Sink the *Bismarck*!"

That order spurred a hunt that has become legendary over the years. Several days later, when biplanes from the aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal* spotted the massive vessel steaming toward friendly waters, they fired torpedoes, with one of them causing damage to the ship's rudder. Because she was forced to reduce speed, British warships finally caught up to her. In the ensuing sea battle, nearly 3,000 shells were reported to have been fired at the *Bismarck*, but only a few actually penetrated her heavy armor. For two hours, the ship was pummeled by the British, until she finally went under.

Ballantyne, however, has obtained fresh material to bring a whole new perspective to the chase and eventual sinking of the *Bismarck*. He tells the story from the British side, including eyewitness accounts from officers and crew members.

Another fascinating aspect to his book is Appendix 1 titled "Busting the Myths?" Here, the author attempts to answer questions that some historians have been asking for years. Could the *Bismarck* have surrendered? Could they sink her by gunfire? The Royal Navy's Dark Secret? These are just a few of the intriguing queries that readers will surely find interesting.

As far as what really sunk the *Bismarck*, Ballantyne writes that undersea explorer David Mearns's expedition concluded that "together with the torpedoes, the British guns punched enough holes in the German battleship to take her down regardless of efforts by her own sailors, whom it was claimed had really sunk *Bismarck* by setting off scuttling charges."

The author has written an excellent account of the short-lived operations of the *Bismarck*. Despite knowing the outcome of the events on May 27, 1941, he has still managed to pen a suspenseful narrative that will keep readers on the edge of their seats.

Surface and Destroy: The Submarine Gun War in the Pacific by Michael Sturma, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2011, 260 pp., notes, photos, \$29.95, hardcover.

Whenever the image of a submarine comes to mind, people conjure up thoughts of underwa-

for "his decency and kindness."

It is indeed strange that the Japanese were so cruel and unforgiving in some internment camps and then displayed great care in others. However, as the author puts it, the defenders of Wake Island "were in the right place at the right time."

Blitz Spirit compiled by Jaqueline Mitchell, Osprey Publishing, Long Island City, NY, 2010, 208 pp., photos, \$14.95, hardcover.

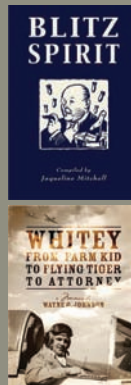
On September 7, 1941, the skies over London were filled with nearly 900 German fighters and bombers. The Nazi air armada rained bombs upon the city that afternoon and later that evening. Caught unprepared, more than 400 Londoners were killed and another 1,600 wounded. The Blitz had begun. For the following nine months, German aircraft swooped down upon English cities in an effort to get the island nation to buckle. However, Adolf Hitler underestimated the will and determination of the British people.

This wonderful little book offers a glimpse into another era, depicting how the government and, more importantly, the English people, managed to survive one of the longest sustained bombing campaigns in military history.

As Prime Minister Winston Churchill later said, "Let it roar, and let it rage. We shall come through."

U.S.S. Serene, AM-300, Memoirs of a World War II Minesweeper Crew by Darwin D. Horn, Cambria Publishing, Lomita, CA, 2010, 242 pp., photos, \$25.00, hardcover.

Enlisting right after graduation from high school, Darwin Horn entered the U.S. Navy when America was in the midst of World War II. He was assigned to the minesweeper USS *Serene* as a diesel mechanic to assist in maintaining the vessel's engines.



Horn served on the *Serene* for more than a year, participating in some of the largest amphibious assaults of the war: Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Philippines. At war's end, the *Serene* took part in clearing the mines that encircled Japan, China, Formosa, and Korea, which were laid by the enemy in anticipation of an invasion.

Researching the career of the *Serene*, Horn was amazed to discover that she was later transferred to the South Vietnamese Navy during the Vietnam conflict. On January 19, 1974, she was sunk by Chinese communist forces near the Paracel Islands.

"A very sad ending to a once very gallant little ship," wrote Horn.

Whitey: From Farm Kid to Flying Tiger to Attorney by Wayne G. Johnson, Langdon Street Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, 454 pp., photos, \$18.95, softcover.

There is no doubt that the harsh, rural childhood of Wayne "Whitey" Johnson certainly prepared him for the even tougher realities of war. Eleventh of 14 children, Johnson wrote, "We were poor and didn't know it."

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, Johnson enlisted in the Army Air Corps the following day and eventually was trained to fly the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk and the North American P-51 Mustang. Surprisingly, Johnson was assigned to China and became a member of Claire Chennault's famed Flying Tigers. The Minnesota native participated in the successful raid over Shanghai that destroyed nearly 100 enemy Zeros, most of which never left the ground.

Johnson went on to have a rewarding career as an attorney, serving two cities for more than 50 years. He remained active in the aviation field and received numerous accolades, including having an airport named in his honor. Chennault would have been proud. □

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ter vessels, silently patrolling the waters hundreds of feet beneath the ocean, searching for the enemy. Armed with torpedoes, they would lock in on an enemy ship and hopefully send her to the bottom. It was an impersonal style of warfare. The submarine would maintain its anonymity and quietly sail away from the scene.

However, in this book, the author depicts another side of submarine combat that is rarely discussed—the gun war. Prior to World War II, deck guns were considered unnecessary, especially in the Pacific. By 1943, naval officials realized that armament for the deck of subs was becoming essential, especially toward the end of the war.

Manning deck guns was a dangerous job on a sub. Sailors would be called upon at a moment's notice to rush through the hatches, man their weapons, and meet the enemy face-to-face. Numerous times they engaged junks, sampans, sailing boats, and schooners, attempting to transport supplies.

Here, the war became personal. As Seaman Ignatius "Pete" Galantin, a crew member of the USS *Sculpin*, observed, "How different, how personal was war when the target was flesh and blood instead of steel."

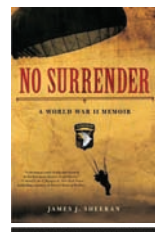
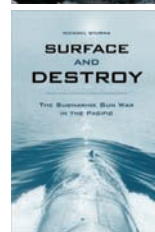
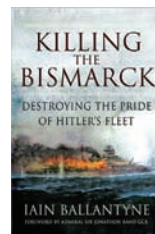
Naval historian Michael Sturma has penned an intriguing book on a virtually unknown aspect of a submariners' war—coming to the surface to encounter the enemy—and meeting him in close quarter combat.

No Surrender: A World War II Memoir by James J. Sheeran, Berkley Caliber Books, New York, 2011, 320 pp., \$25.95, hardcover.

A combat veteran's personal memoirs always make for exciting reading—especially when the individual was a paratrooper who jumped with the 101st Airborne Division on D-Day, was captured, escaped, and then found himself a member of the Maquis—the French Underground fighting against the Nazis.

Such a man was James Sheeran. Although dyslexic, he had an incredible memory that could recall every detail of his astonishing adventures during the war. The New Jersey native, full of that "Screaming Eagle" fighting spirit, could not fathom sitting out the entire conflict as a prisoner of war.

Sheeran and several of his comrades made their escape from a German POW camp. They dodged enemy patrols and finally found themselves in a barn to be befriended by a local. For



four months, before finally being reunited with his unit, he fought alongside French Underground fighters. Sheeran also participated in the ill-fated Operation Market Garden in Holland and the fighting at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

Years after the war, Sheeran would return to France and meet his French comrades. They swapped stories, and he was given his old lunch box, which he had carried with him into combat and left behind. That lunch box meant the world to him.

Sheeran went on to have a successful career in politics, serving two terms as mayor of West Orange, New Jersey. He was appointed a Chevalier of the Order of the Legion of Honor. Sadly, he passed away in 2007, but his heroic exploits will live on with the publication of his book.

Cry Havoc: How the Arms Race Drove the World to War, 1931-1941 by Joseph Maiolo, Basic Books, New York, 2010, 512 pp., notes, index, photos, \$35.00, hardcover.

At the conclusion of the "war to end all wars" in 1918, Europe was in a shambles. Four years of bloody, trench-style combat had depleted and ravaged the countryside. One would think that after enduring such a horrifying and climactic event, the European nations would be sick of war and band together to establish a lasting peace. Unfortunately, such was not the case.

In *Cry Havoc*, the author traces the escalating arms race that engulfed not only Europe, but Japan as well. With the failure of the 1932 World Disarmament Conference in Geneva, countries, chiefly Germany and Japan, continued a military buildup that would eventually plunge the world into yet another global conflict.

The author contends that Hitler was losing the arms race. He had originally wanted to declare war on the Soviet Union with Italy and Great Britain as his allies. That scenario never came to fruition. Instead, he started a world war that he could not possibly win.

"As economic historians have shown, the decisive wealth gap between Germany and its enemies was even wider than most contemporary experts believed," writes Maiolo. "In retrospect that makes Hitler's decision to venture into an unwinnable war even more astonishing. That the economic lightweights Italy and Japan followed that path too is doubly astonishing." □

of the resistance already committed and two more reliable local policemen recruited, Leigh-Fermor and Moss had a final party of 11.

Akaumianos procured German uniforms for Leigh-Fermor and Moss so they could wave down Kreipe's car while posing as sentries. The first three attempts to kidnap the general failed when he unexpectedly returned before dark. A fourth attempt was thwarted by rain. Finally, at 9:30 PM on April 26, 1944, the lookout spotted Kreipe's oncoming car and pulled a wire running several hundred yards ahead to set off an electric bell and alert Leigh-Fermor and Moss to get into position.

"Suddenly," Kreipe recalled a quarter century later, "a red light appeared in front of us, approximately on the bend. The chauffeur asked: 'Shall I stop?' We were accustomed to traffic control patrols, and I answered, 'Stop!' As the car drew to a halt two lance corporals in German uniform stepped forward. One, Leigh-Fermor, demanded to see my travel document; as I did not have one—it was not normally required—I said: 'Don't know about that!' 'In that case, the password, please!' Then I did something foolish. I got out of the car and said: 'What unit are you? Don't you know your general?' (The car was showing the appropriate pennon and standard.) Leigh-Fermor, in his German soldier's disguise, said: 'General, you are a prisoner of war in British hands.'"

Kreipe was thrown to the ground, bound, and gagged while his driver, Sergeant Albert Fenske, was knocked out. As the men of the resistance dragged Fenske away into the hills, Leigh-Fermor, Moss, and Akaumianos squeezed into the front seat while Paterakis and Tyrakis piled on top of Kreipe in the back, holding a knife to his throat.

Wearing Kreipe's cap, Leigh-Fermor saluted past 22 sentry posts. When they were far enough away, the party split, Moss and Paterakis to march Kreipe to their hideout in the Ida Mountains, Leigh-Fermor and Tyrakis to leave the car on the coast to make the Germans think the kidnap party had been evacuated by sea.

To spare the people of Crete from punishment, Leigh-Fermor left a note with the car: "TO THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES IN CRETE. Gentlemen, your Divisional Commander, General KREIPE, was captured a short time ago by a BRITISH raiding force under our command. By the time you read this he will be on his way to Cairo. We would like to point out most emphatically that this operation was carried out without the help of CRETANS or CRETAN partisans

and that the only guides used were serving soldiers of HIS HELLENIC MAJESTY'S FORCES in the Middle East, who came with us. Your General is an honorable prisoner of war and will be treated with all the consideration owing to his rank. Any reprisals against the local population will be wholly unwarranted and unjust. *Auf baldiges Wiedersehen!*"

He added a postscript: "We are very sorry to have to leave this beautiful car behind." As further proof, he left a British commando beret, cigarettes, and an Agatha Christie paperback.

The Germans were not fooled, and soon 30,000 troops were scouring the island threatening reprisals while search aircraft flew overhead. One patrol came within a mile of the party's cave.

Kreipe would later admit that "after the brutal kidnapping, my treatment was on the whole correct." He was certainly luckier than his driver Sergeant Fenske. When the resistance men turned up at the cave, he was not with them. They claimed he had died from his head injury, but it later came out that just a few miles from the scene they had cut his throat.

The first attempt to evacuate Crete was a near disaster. Just a few hours' march from the beach, a Cretan messenger intercepted the party to report that German soldiers searching for

Both: Library of Congress



ABOVE: Dressed in German uniforms prior to executing the plan to kidnap German General Heinrich Kreipe, British Captain Stanley Moss (left) and Major Patrick Leigh-Fermor are pictured in the mountains of Crete. **BELOW:** General Kreipe (center) is shown talking with Leigh-Fermor (right) of the British SOE following his kidnapping.



National Archives



After the kidnapping of Kreipe, the Germans scoured the countryside for the commander of their forces on Crete. Kreipe was spirited off the island and eventually landed in a POW camp in Canada.

Kreipe had unwittingly occupied the site. They marched back into the mountains to shelter in shepherds' huts, while Leigh-Fermor sought an SOE radio operator to get new instructions.

A new beach site was radioed from SOE Cairo, and the final march to it turned into a triumphal procession with hundreds of partisans and peasants cheering along the mountain path and Kreipe swaying uneasily on his mule. After 17 nerve-racking days on the run, at 11 PM, May, 14, 1944, the escape launch appeared. A unit of the British Special Boat Service commando unit landed to help fight their way off the island. The commandos were not necessary, however, and the party left Crete undetected.

On arrival in Egypt, the strain of the lengthy mission finally got to Leigh-Fermor, and he collapsed. He was decorated with the Distinguished Service Order in his hospital bed.

The Germans in the end took no reprisals. A resistance leader on Crete said, "Everybody felt taller by two centimeters. Out of 450,000 Cretans, 449,000 claimed to have taken part."

Obviously less happy was Lieutenant General Kreipe (his promotion had come through the day after he was kidnapped). On his way to three years of captivity in Canada, he complained, "For a whole fortnight I had no clean handkerchief unless I first washed it in water!" □

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He previously wrote for WWII History on the British Long Range Desert Group and Polish General Wladislaw Anders.

FRANCHISES OLD AND NEW

Ubisoft adds *Cliffs of Dover* to its *IL-2 Sturmovik* line-up while Slitherine starts a potential series with *Panzer Corps*.

IL-2 Sturmovik: Cliffs of Dover

The last game in 1C's *IL-2 Sturmovik* series, *Birds of Prey*, was a real treat in 2009, as illus-

trated in our own head-to-head clash with *Heroes Over Europe* (both titles published by Ubisoft). While the latter certainly wins out in the more forgiving world of arcade-style shooting, *IL-2* takes one wing of that approach and adds the flair of real-

ism to the proceedings. Microsoft Flight Simulator this is not, but the latest iteration, *IL-2 Sturmovik: Cliffs of Dover*, looks to take that balance between white-knuckle shooting and proficient piloting to new heights.

For this particular round—at least at the time of this writing—console owners will have to sit things out and slide over to their PC if they want to test their mettle against the first major campaign fought entirely by air. Missions in *Cliffs of Dover*, which center on the Royal Air Force, are based on the narratives of various pilots, adding an extra layer of history to the already heavily researched sorties. That's really *IL-2*'s bread and butter, after all. Everything from the placement of radar stations and ports to various military installations and other elements of the environment of the time have been reproduced with the care of an obsessed miniature replica maker.

It's true that the series has always skirted the line of simulation in a way, but *IL-2* can still be pretty intimidating for those unfamiliar with flight games of this type. My first experiences with *Birds of Prey* mostly ended in tears, as my wings were quickly clipped and the ground came spiraling upward in a matter of moments. *Cliffs of Dover* has a few safety nets—at least in the interest of preparation—for pilots who aren't yet confident enough to take on missions that could shape the fate of our world. The biggest no-brainer is the option to fly in a WWII trainer plane with a computer-controlled instructor; pick up the ropes of the cockpit instruments before using them to take on the forces of the Luftwaffe and Regia Aeronautica.

Once comfortable, players can command over 25 aircraft, from the Spitfire and the Hur-



ricane to the Messerschmitt Bf-109. Even after the campaign is a fading blip on the radar, the multiplayer should keep things alive for some time. With allowance for up to 128 players across both preset and customizable modes, we'll ideally be flying the unfriendly skies in heated battle against one another until the next *IL-2 Sturmovik* (or a worthy competitor) comes along to shake things up again.

Panzer Corps

If everything goes the way developer the Lordz Games Studio is hoping, then this year will be host to something really special for fans of strategy games. *Panzer Corps* is a turn-based title that takes the bulk of its inspiration from one of the most influential and adored entries in the genre, *Panzer General*. Published in 1994 by Strategic Simulations Inc.,

there hasn't been a game in the series since that quite matched *Panzer General*'s particular level of quality and resulting adulation.

Panzer Corps isn't exactly a sequel, reboot, or whatever you'd like to call it, but Lordz are very open about the kind of strategic legacy they're attempting to build on with their game. Lead Developer Alex Shargin posted a developer diary earlier this year on Slitherine Software's site, and had a lot to say about *General* and the way they've gone about designing *Corps*. One choice quote succinctly summarizes their approach: "While we are big fans of *Panzer General* (PG) and believe that it was one of the greatest strategy titles of all time, there is no point in cloning it 15 years later. After all, if anyone wants to play PG, he can pick up a copy of the original game and play it under DOSBOX. So instead, our goal is to create a new



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game, which would fix most of PG's problems/annoyances and add more new features and possibilities, not present in any games in the PG series."

The principles they're using to keep steady footing on this ambitious path include that of the "easy to play, hard to master" style of simple but deep gameplay. This is good news for players who tend to find the majority of PC strategy titles intimidating, if not impenetrable. Heck, I'll lump myself in this category most of the time, as it's often the initial dipping of the toes that can make or break the strategy experience. Lordz are hoping most players will be able to jump right into the game, pick up the ropes, and then gradually develop their skills over time. A method like this should also appease the more hardcore veterans of the genre, who will still be faced with a very hefty title to master.

Panzer Corps comes loaded with 400 unit types across 19 unit classes, and 17 types of terrain to diversify the campaign's 26 scenarios. The various levels of victory and defeat in *Panzer Corps* carry with them the possibility of branching out along different paths of the campaign tree, and core units that stick around for the ride gain experience and the ability to be upgraded with new technology as their availability permits. That's where the strong RPG component—another one of the development principles—comes into play. As experience, awards, and aces are added to individual units, battles that seemed entirely uphill at first will eventually become surmountable.

One of the most interesting aspects of the game comes packaged in its multiplayer. Anyone wary of twiddling their thumbs while waiting for their opponent to figure out what s/he wants to do next can rest easy knowing that Lordz have thought all of this through properly. One needn't even be online at the same time as their opposition to keep a game going, and multiple wars can be waged simultaneously. Why stare at the screen (and your watch) until the next shot volleys when you can switch attention to another game and make some moves there? There's also a tournament system in development for those ready to take their cunning to an even higher plane of competition.

As for those intent on fighting from all sides of the war—like Allied or Pacific Theater campaigns, for instance—will have to wait a bit for expansions and sequels, should *Panzer Corps* prove successful. As of right now Lordz are confident that this is the beginning of a new series, so there's no better time to get situated in whatever fancy would-be general's chair you're rocking and start training for future battles. □

easy company

Continued from page 59

krank." Mauser realized she was afraid he would rape her, but he just left. He walked outside and saw a man running from the house to the barn. "I said, 'Let him go, the war's over.'"

Mauser reported that there was nothing in the house.

Mauser then went to an officers' barracks and began rifling through drawers and came away with two swastika flags. "What the hell am I going to do with these?" he thought, but took them anyway. He gave one to Eddie Sabo. Another soldier desperately wanted the other one. Mauser offered to sell it to him for \$100. "He couldn't say yes fast enough."

The division ended the war in Austria, where life became routine. Mauser had enough points to go home, so he was not worried about being sent to Japan. He was shocked to hear about the atomic bombs leveling Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but he cheered the end of the war.

Mauser shipped home and arrived in Boston in October 1945. He had no girlfriend to return to in Illinois, but he met a girl named Irene at the local bowling alley. "One Sunday I went to church and I said, 'Irene would you like to go out for dinner and show?'" They married the next year.

Despite the happy marriage, Irene never wanted Mauser to talk about his experiences with Easy Company. "My wife hated war." Mauser agreed and never attended any of the unit's reunions. He once tried to get her to watch the miniseries *Band of Brothers*, but she fell asleep during the first episode.

When Irene passed away in 2008, Mauser began revisiting the past. He reunited with his buddies and returned to Europe twice as a guest of Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours. He was treated as a celebrity everywhere he went and was thanked by locals who survived the war.

When asked today about his most distinct war memory, Mauser quickly recalled the crash of plane 66. "I knew all 18 on board. That lives with me today."

Note: Edward Mauser passed away in his home in Omaha, Nebraska, on January 21, 2011. When he heard that Major Dick Winters had passed away 11 days earlier, he commented, "He's leading the way for me ... one last time." □

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is the Research Director for Sovereign Media and author of Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It. He also leads tours of Patton's battlefields for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours.



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omaha beach

Continued from page 41

The 115th's advance and attack on St. Laurent-sur-Mer did not go as planned. Although the 1st Division had marked a few lanes through the minefields below the bluffs, the men of the Blue and Gray did not trust them, and progress was painfully slow. Lt. Col. William Warfield's 2nd Battalion did not start its attack on the village until late afternoon. Even then, naval gunfire fell short, causing a number of casualties in the battalion, and the attack, despite the support of four Shermans of the 741st Tank Battalion from the 1st Division, ground to a halt.

Slappey gave orders for the 2nd Battalion to break off the action and link up with the 1st Battalion. The latter had reached an area south of St. Laurent-sur-Mer near the Formigny road at about 6 PM after running into snipers and mortar fire, which killed its commanding officer, Lt. Col. Richard Blatt. Major James Morris took command. Major Victor Gillespie's 3rd Battalion still had not reached the St. Laurent-sur-Mer-Colleville-sur-Mer road when darkness fell shortly after 10 PM.

On arrival in the les Moulins sector in the mid-afternoon, Dutch Cota found the resistance there still strong enough to block any vehicular movement, and by this time the beach had become heavily congested with vehicles. Elements of the 81st Chemical Battalion, three engineer battalions, naval fire control parties, advance elements of artillery units, medical detachments, antiaircraft units, and even a British RAF group had all started to come ashore before 8 AM, making it difficult if not impossible for the Shermans trying to support the infantry. Indeed, half-tracks, jeeps, and trucks all found themselves on a narrowing strip of sand without any exits opened through the impassable shingle embankment. It was one huge traffic jam. Enemy artillery and mortars had easy targets.

Cota also found that although the 3rd Battalion of the 116th, less M Company pinned down on the beach in the 1st Division's sector, had reached the high ground east of the les Moulins draw, its attempt to move south had been blocked by Germans in and near St. Laurent-sur-Mer. It made less than a kilometer's progress during the rest of the day, mainly because small enemy machine-gun detachments in well-prepared positions covered the open ground over which it had to advance to its assigned assembly area west of the village. By last light, the bulk of the 3rd Battalion, the command group, and a few remnants of the 2nd Battalion were therefore

still at the head of the les Moulins draw. They were unaware of the presence of the units of their sister regiment, the 115th, only a kilometer away to their southeast.

General Gerhardt, commander of the 29th Division, had come ashore during the mid-afternoon and set up his command post in an old quarry in the Vierville draw, but until Dutch Cota met him early that evening he had no real idea of the whereabouts of his two regiments ashore. Cota briefed him as best he could, although even he was not fully aware.

By last light on June 6, C Company of the 116th, the 5th Ranger Battalion, and A, B, and C Companies of the 2nd Ranger Battalion were defending the solid stone buildings on the western edge of Vierville-sur-Mer. Colonel Canham's regimental command post and elements of the 1st and 2nd Battalions were about one kilometer southwest of the center of the village, and C Company of the 121st Combat Engineer Battalion was holding the Chateau Vaumicel. The 9th Squad, 3rd Engineer Platoon had breached the concrete wall at the bottom of the Vierville draw at 5 PM, and the rest of the company had cleared enough of the remaining obstacles to allow vehicles to move into the village by nightfall. The tanks of the 743rd Tank Battalion went into bivouac 100 meters west of the village at about midnight. Sixteen Shermans had been lost, and one was disabled.

In the St. Laurent-sur-Mer area, elements of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 116th were at the head of the les Moulins draw, which was still barred by enemy resistance in the old strongpoints. The 1st Battalion, 115th Regiment was a kilometer south of St. Laurent-sur-Mer by the road to Formigny, the 2nd Battalion a kilometer southeast of the village, and the 3rd Battalion 1,500 meters to the east.

In the case of artillery, all but one of the guns of the 111th Battalion supporting the 116th had been lost, and none of those of the 110th, due to support the 115th, had been landed. The commanding officer of the 111th, Lt. Col. Thornton Mullins, was wounded soon after leading his advance party ashore, and he died a few hours later. Five self-propelled guns of the 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalion had been lost in the morning, but the rest of the battalion had come ashore during the afternoon and one battery had moved inland at 6 PM to support the 115th Regiment near St. Laurent-sur-Mer.

The American losses on D-Day were horrendous. The 116th Regiment alone suffered 1,007 casualties: 247 killed, 576 wounded, and 184 missing. Sadly, the peacetime system of recruiting complete companies from specific towns and areas led to some tragic consequences. Bed-

ford, Virginia, a village of only some 3,000 people, lost 23 men on D-Day, with 22 of them, including three sets of brothers, in A Company, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry.

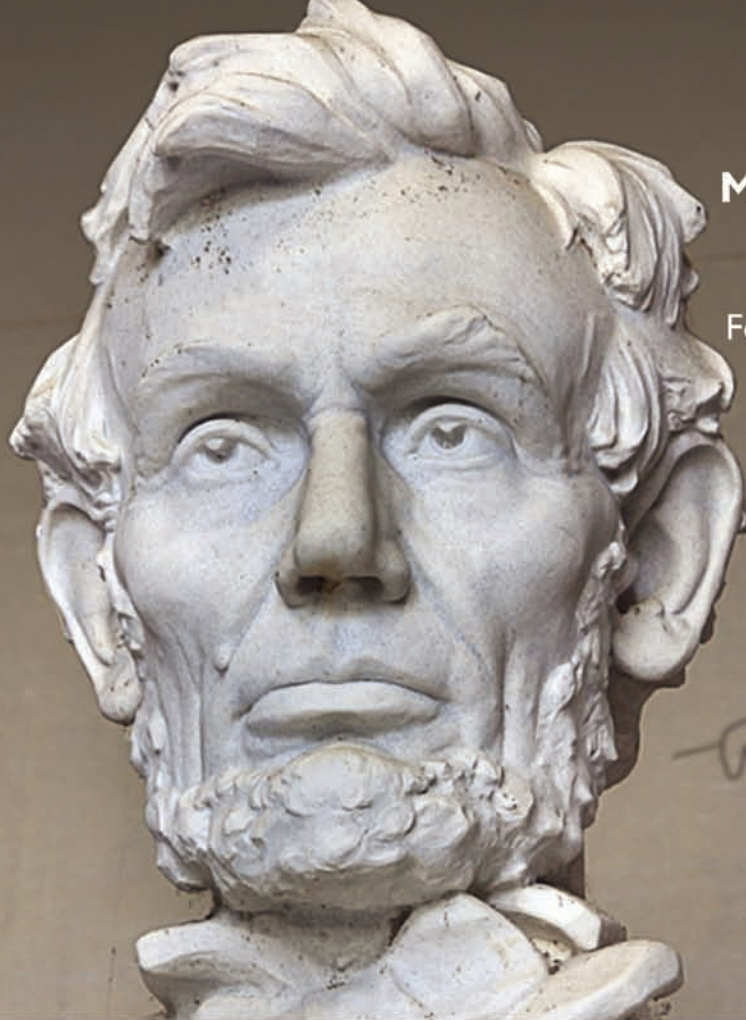
A number of historians have criticized the American plan for the Omaha landings. They say that the assault craft were launched much too far out to sea and that the initial attacks were directed head-on against the German strongpoints rather than at the more weakly held areas between these strongpoints. While it is certainly true that the longer than strictly necessary run-in to the beach caused difficulties with navigation and led many units to land much farther to the east than planned, the second accusation is quite simply wrong.

No companies were directed head-on at the strongpoints, but Omaha was the most strongly defended beach on the Normandy coast, and the interlocking structure of the German defenses ensured that wherever the Americans landed they would come under both direct and indirect fire. Suggestions that the Americans should not have landed on Omaha at all ignore several basic facts. First, their mission at this stage of the campaign was to clear the Cotentin Peninsula and capture the port of Cherbourg. Second, it was militarily unacceptable to leave a gap of more than 40 kilometers between Utah Beach and the Canadian and British beaches in Normandy. Third, it was the only possible landing site between Utah and those beaches.

In summary, it has to be said that the performance of the majority of the untried and unbloodied American soldiers on Omaha Beach on D-Day was exceptional, and in the case of some of the leaders of the Blue and Gray, notably Dutch Cota, Charles Canham, Sidney Bingham, and Berthier Hawks, outstanding. Many junior officers and NCOs, like Captain Lawrence Madill of E Company, Lieutenants Anderson of L and Hendricks of G, and Sergeant William Norfleet of D Company, to mention but a few, displayed qualities of great leadership and bravery.

It is not surprising that the Stonewallers won 23 Distinguished Service Crosses, 10 Silver Stars, and 100 Bronze Stars on this day. Brig. Gen. Cota, Colonel Canham, and Major Bingham were among those who were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. □

Author Michael Reynolds is a retired major general in the British Army. He is a veteran of the Korean War and the former director of NATO's Military Plans and Policy Division. Since retiring from the Army, he has written numerous well-received books on the subject of World War II.



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