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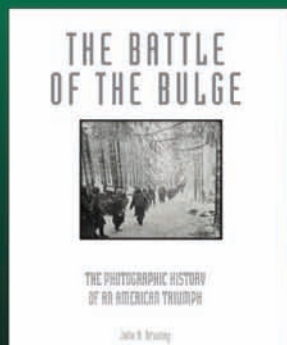
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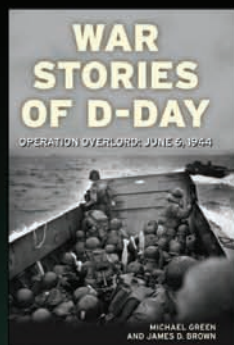
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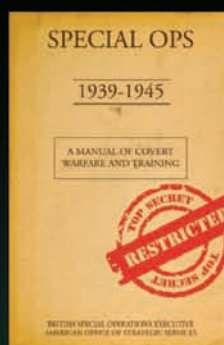
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Cover: A mortar squad is set up among the ruins of a house in St. Malo, France. The gunner is aiming the mortar while his assistant is ready to drop a high explosive round down the tube. Photo courtesy National Archives.

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## Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone With the Wind*, helped the town of Vimoutiers, France, to rebuild.

**AUTHOR MARGARET MITCHELL IS REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE “FIRST”** citizens of Atlanta. *Gone With the Wind*, her novel of the Old South and the perseverance of heroine Scarlett O’Hara, stands as a literary classic which spawned one of the most famous motion pictures of all time. Until recently, however, Mitchell was relatively unknown for a gesture of kindness toward a small French town devastated by World War II.

Although her generosity to the people of Atlanta has been documented, and others have been the recipients of her philanthropy, it was not widely known that she had been instrumental in the rebuilding of the town of Vimoutiers until last July when the Associated Press published a report. Mitchell, the report noted, had written a check to rebuild the town’s hospital and enlisted the aid of the Pilot Club International to assist in financing the reconstruction of the remainder of the town, which had been mistakenly destroyed by Allied bombing.

The plight of Vimoutiers came to Mitchell’s attention when a friend, Denis Barois, a veteran of the French Air Force who had trained in Georgia during the war and traveled to Atlanta to meet Mitchell, wrote a letter explaining the situation. Barois had previously written to the author to tell her how much he had enjoyed *Gone With the Wind*. The two became friends, and when the former pilot returned to France and married a young lady from Vimoutiers, he thought his famous American friend might be willing to help.

Barois and Mitchell had corresponded frequently, sending one another small gifts. Mitchell sent items such as toothpaste and color film, which were scarce in postwar France. Barois, in turn, sent lace, perfume, and French magazines to Mitchell.

When the author was made aware of the devastation in Vimoutiers, she quickly mailed a check for an amount that is now unknown but was then sufficient to rebuild the local hospital. According to Marie-Christiane Boullard, the sister-in-law of Barois and the director of the Vimoutiers Historical Society, the grateful townspeople made Mitchell an honorary citizen in July 1949.

Boullard’s father was the hospital’s administrator at the time, and in a letter to him dated July 27, 1949, Mitchell wrote, “Nothing that has happened to me before has ever pleased and touched me as much as this honor which you and the Municipal Court of Vimoutiers have paid me.” The letter goes on to express Mitchell’s hope to visit the French town; however, weeks after writing, she was hit by a car in Atlanta and died, aged only 48 years.

In May 2008, a full 65 years after the errant Allied bombs had destroyed Vimoutiers, Bill Troost, whose great uncle was Mitchell’s second husband, attended a ceremony in the town during which a plaque commemorating the generous donation was dedicated.

“The circle of life sometimes brings wonderful things,” Boullard told the Associated Press. “If my sister had not met this young pilot who had trained in the United States and met Margaret Mitchell, we might never have gotten help from the Americans to rebuild.”

Interestingly, the only mention of Mitchell’s quiet contribution to the rebuilding of Vimoutiers that is present at Atlanta’s Margaret Mitchell House museum is a brief notation in a timeline on the museum’s website: “Helped to rebuild French town of Vimoutiers after World War II.”

Mitchell was said to have had a deep respect for the members of the armed forces and to have often assisted efforts on their behalf. However, perhaps no other humanitarian gesture on the part of the author has gone by with so little previous fanfare. Mitchell may, in fact, have wanted it that way.

*Michael E. Haskew*

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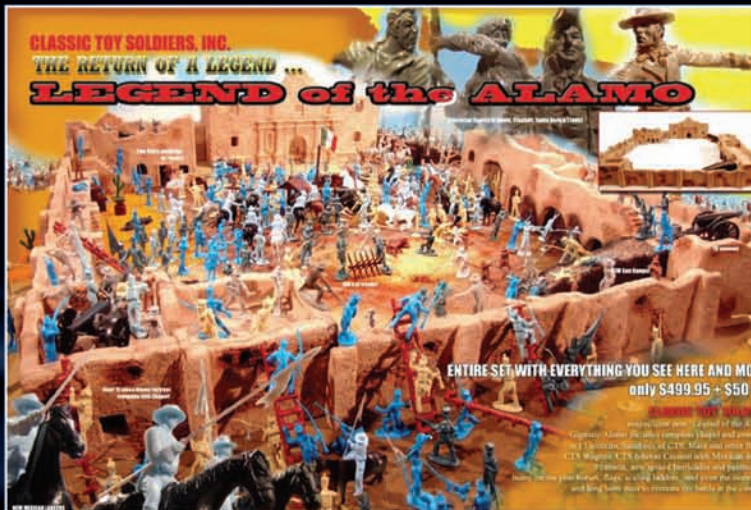
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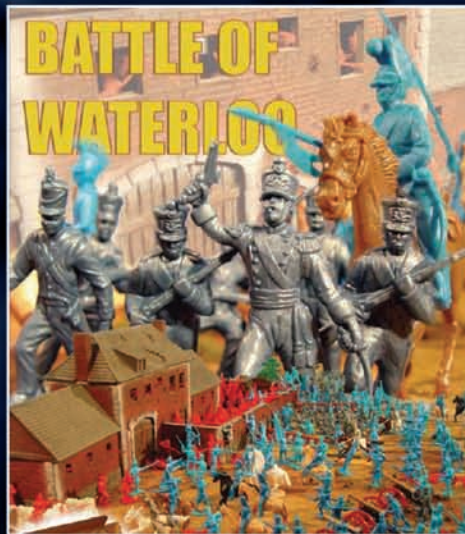
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## Keeping World War II Alive

Dear Editor,

This magazine is amazing! One of the best out there, and by far the most interesting.

I've had a fascination with World War II for years. Both my grandfathers served during the war, one in the Pacific Theater and the other in the U.S. Air Force as a navigator.

I absolutely loved the article, "Mosquitos on the Prowl" (November 2009 issue). I love hearing about the "secret" fights of our soldiers.

Thank you so much for making this magazine available, so that people all over and of all ages can read about our amazing heroes. Hopefully this magazine will keep this amazing time period alive for my whole generation.

Just curious: Are there any other teenage girls writing to the editor? Maybe I'm the first! LOL

Emmelia Ford, age 15  
South Canaan, Pennsylvania

*You are the first, Emmelia! We thank you for your high praise and enthusiasm and we hope you'll continue to enjoy the magazine.*

## Patton's Hammelburg Mission

Dear Editor:

Please allow a comment on British Major General Michael Reynolds's informative article on "Patton's End Run" (September 2009 issue), the most controversial portion being that concerning the ill-fated Hammelburg raid, where Patton attempted to liberate his POW son-in-law, John Waters. As so often is the case for stories about the crusty old tank commander, Reynolds readily chastises Patton for recklessness and showing favoritism to family in the raid, which failed rather thoroughly in its goal to free the war prisoners.

Yet I would ask MG Reynolds to look at a more complete picture. As they say, success has many fathers while failure is a bastard child, and such is surely the case with Hammelburg. What if the raid had employed the power of a full combat command, as Patton had desired? The record seems to show that the more timid General Omar Bradley prevented Patton from using the larger force, which may well have achieved the desired outcome (and also carried enough transport for the freed POWs). And what of the overall mission to liberate captive prisoners? While Patton may have been aiming for his daughter's husband, I would wager that a poll of all prisoners at Hammelburg would have yielded unanimous support for the mission. Raids to free POWs have been carried out in virtually all of the wars America has fought, and all with varying degrees of success. Commanders who authorize them are keenly aware of the tremendous boost in morale they bring for all troops, not just for those in captivity. Finally it needs to be noted that an important while unintended consequence of the raid was that the Germans, interpreting it wrongly as the

head of a main thrust, responded with no less than three divisions, allowing the U.S. Fourth Armored Division to then press forward over 100 miles into German territory.

Part of the tragedy of Hammelburg not pointed out by Reynolds is the tremendous toll that war brings not just to soldiers but to the families as well. Surely Patton was motivated by a father's strong compassion for his daughter, whom he had likely known was using alcohol to help her cope with the anxieties brought on by war. As grandson Robert Patton points out in his interesting book about the family, his Aunt Beatrice died at the age of 41 of heart failure likely associated with alcohol and the stress of yet another family separation while her career soldier-husband John Waters was deployed to the Korean War in 1952.

Col. James L. Spinelli, MD, US Army (Ret.)  
Columbia, South Carolina

## Bombing the Bombsight

Dear Sirs:

I am a first-time reader of your magazine, I knew nothing about the Norden Bombsight before reading the Ordnance section (September 2009 issue), and I have over 25 years of mechanical and electrical experience (I am presently an industrial electrician in a steel mill where my duties include installing, troubleshooting, and repairing computer-controlled machinery); thus, I am a perfect candidate to criticize this piece.

Let me tell you, it was the most opinionated and hypocritical junk I have read in years. Mr. Raoul Drapeau wasted much space using superfluous words such as "irascible" (twice!), blamed Norden for all the hype surrounding the device, then forgave Norden and blamed Ted Barth for same. Drapeau noted that the earliest device under demonstration gave 10 hits of 12 with different bombs (outstanding at the time, I'm sure), then denigrates the device for bad accuracy throughout the rest of the article. This while describing the less-than-ideal conditions that the operator worked under and the inaccuracies inherent because of that.

The entire article was ruined. If only the facts were given, it could have been half as long. But the rest was nothing more than what appears to be a confused, personal smear campaign for who knows what reason (apparently, someone on the editorial staff was in on it!). The article itself notes that no other power in the war had anything like it, and even Drapeau noted that "... the difficulties facing [Norden] were formidable."

What can the reader possibly come away with here? That Norden was a perfectionist who invented a bomb sight no one else had, who was unusually modest but it was his fault that the Norden Bombsight is legendary, that the super-secret device was incredibly complicated but it was junk because it was hard to maintain, and that while it worked great under test conditions, it must have been a huge boondoggle because bombardiers

couldn't hit anything while suffering noise, cold, fear, and evasive maneuvers!

Give us a break, will ya?!

I am a veteran WWII-era equipment restoration technician as well; Drapeau appears to have no hands-on technical experience whatsoever (he suggests a.c. motors for fine positioning control—if such technology existed which could be installed in an airplane, let's see an example).

What was available at the time was inherently low-tech by today's standards no matter how you look at it. I hope to God Drapeau's premier article will be his last in this magazine, and that whoever it was on the editorial staff who OK'd this garbage for publication will be monitored much more closely.

Ken Johnson  
Beaumont, California

*Ken Johnson points out that I cited that the Norden bombsight had a reasonable accuracy under demonstration conditions but then went on to denigrate its wartime performance, which was much worse. Apparently, he feels that this is an unfair comparison. But he also wrote that in the article, I pointed out why that was the case, with all the cold, noise, vibration, turbulence, exhaustion, poor visibility, fear and flak that both the bombardier (and bombsight) had to contend with. That's not an unreasonable comparison nor an unexpected difference.*

*Johnson seems to be most agitated about what he feels was a smear campaign against Norden. The message that he suggested that the reader would come away with, is close to what I intended; namely that Norden was a Swiss-style perfectionist who developed a clever and relentlessly promoted, but horrendously complicated device that stretched the manufacturing capabilities of the time, was extremely difficult to maintain and repair, and upon postwar analysis, proved to have an unimpressive accuracy record. Yet it was probably as accurate as any bombsight could have been at the time, considering the temperature, atmospheric pressure, and wind effects on any ballistic bomb. That isn't a smear, it's just the way it was.*

*And to his comment that "Drapeau appears to have no hands-on technical experience whatsoever..." I have a Master's degree in electrical engineering and have practiced hands-on engineering all my career.*

Raoul Drapeau

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## Thin Line of Air Defense

**Don McDonald and a relative few Royal Air Force pilots fought the Japanese to a bloody draw above the island of Ceylon.**

**IN THE 40 MINUTES BETWEEN 7:50 AND 8:30 AM, ON APRIL 5, 1942, ROYAL AIR FORCE** pilot Don McDonald experienced his air base being bombed in a Japanese surprise air raid that should never have been a surprise. He struggled to get his plane into the air as bombs rained down around him. He shot down a Japanese dive-bomber and crash-landed after his Hawker Hurricane was hit by fire from a Japanese Mitsubishi Zero. After all this, he drank iced tea in a plush hotel.

Although McDonald was flying with the Royal Air Force, he was a Canadian who first joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 14, 1940. He trained on a Fleet Finch and the North American Harvard and completed his flight training in April 1941. Rated a leading aircraftman, he was ordered to Halifax, Nova Scotia, for an overseas assignment. While traveling to Halifax, he received a telegram informing him that he had been promoted to pilot officer and that his pay would be raised from \$2.25 per day to \$6.25 per day, the equivalent increase of about \$10,467 per year to \$29,082 per year in current Canadian dollars.

**This Hawker Hurricane IIC of the RAF is similar to the aircraft piloted by Donald McDonald against the Japanese in Ceylon. INSET: Daring Canadian fighter pilot Donald McDonald prepares for takeoff in the cockpit of his Hawker Hurricane fighter.**

McDonald was sent to Scotland and posted to 59 Operational Training Unit in June 1941. He soon found he had some unlearning to do when he started training on the Hawker Hurricane. In the Harvard, the pilot could handle both the throttle and undercarriage controls with his left hand, but in the Hurricane Mk I the throttle lever was on the left while the undercarriage lever was on the right. This meant that when taking off, if the pilot held the control column in his right hand, he had to use his left hand to open the throttle. Once in the air, he would have to take the control column in his left hand and use his right hand to operate the undercarriage lever.

McDonald recalled that in his first days of training he saw his plane's wings dip as he changed hands

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and raised the undercarriage. He also recalled that many of his fellow trainees experienced the same problem.

In August 1941, McDonald was assigned to RAF 245 Squadron, stationed at Ballyhalbert, Northern Ireland. He soon learned to fly the Hurricane Mk IIB, a significant upgrade from the Hurricane Mk I. It carried a two-speed supercharger as well as a new and more powerful engine. A 1280 horsepower Rolls-Royce Merlin XX engine replaced the Hurricane I's 1030 horsepower Merlin II engine. While the Hurricane I carried eight .303-inch Browning machine guns, the Hurricane IIB was armed with 12 of these .303 Browning machine guns and also could carry two 250- or two 500-pound bombs.

McDonald quickly learned that flying the Hurricane IIB was not a trivial task. To get the feel of the supercharger, the student pilots were ordered to take their planes up to 15,000-16,000 feet but to turn on the supercharger at 13,000 feet. Climbing to 13,000 feet was no problem since the plane had a ceiling of some 34,000 feet, but when McDonald attempted to loop after turning on the Hurricane IIB's supercharger his plane would not pull back at the top of the loop but climbed straight up no matter what he did. His engine quit, and the plane fell into a spin. McDonald managed to restart the engine and recover control.

In September 1941, the squadron was transferred to Chilbolton, Hampshire, in southern England, from where it engaged in offensive sweeps across the English Channel. The squadron also provided air cover for convoys, sometimes flying in formation through heavy clouds. In September, the squadron was re-equipped with the Hurricane IIC, which was armed with four 20mm Hispano cannons as well as having bomb-carrying capabilities.

McDonald's comments about the plane's cannons were not enthusiastic. "You had the impression when practice firing them, that the Hurricane stopped from the cannons' recoil," he said. "If one side jammed—as they did—you would yaw violently off target."

On October 24, 1941, McDonald was posted to 30 Squadron, flying the Hurricane IIB, in the Middle East. He traveled with others through Freetown, Sierra Leone, and then to the Gold Coast (now Ghana); there an American pilot flying a Douglas DC-3 transported them to Khartoum in the Sudan. McDonald could make out the words "American Airlines" lightly painted over on the DC-3's fuselage.

At Khartoum, a BOAC flying boat took them to Cairo, and from there they traveled by land to an advance base near Sidi Barráni, an Egypt-

Canadian Department of National Defense



**Flight Lieutenant R.T.P. "Bob" Davidson led B Flight of RAF 30 Squadron, to which Donald McDonald was assigned in the Middle East.**

ian town 59 miles east of the Libyan border. On the trip, Don met Flight Lieutenant R.T.P. "Bob" Davidson, who had rejoined the squadron after serving with it in Greece and Crete. McDonald felt fortunate that he was assigned to Davidson's B Flight.

McDonald's group reached Sidi Barráni during a time of heavy fighting. German and Italian units attacking from Libya were engaged in seesaw battles with British, Australian, and other British Empire forces for control of North Africa.

The RAF had created a unique anti-aircraft system to protect its airfields. A string of rockets spaced about 40 feet apart were wired to a manned and heavily sandbagged sentry post. When enemy planes strafed the field, the sentry fired the rockets, which went up with chains trailing behind them. A parachute then opened and kept the chains in the air for a few minutes, hopefully long enough to entangle any enemy plane that flew through.

Because Sidi Barráni was near the Mediterranean, McDonald regularly flew on convoy patrol. This was dangerous not only because of enemy planes, but also because of anti-aircraft fire from the Allied ships the squadron was trying to protect. The naval gun crews were shooting first and questioning later. As an RAF squadron approached an Allied convoy, the squadron leader fired a Very pistol, a pistol that discharged colored signal flares, and sent up the identification colors of the day. Even with this, the RAF pilots were warned never to fly directly over a convoy.

In early February 1942, Bob Davidson informed the squadron members that they were being transferred to Singapore to fight the Japanese. "Woolworth-type aircraft, fixed undercarriages, fixed pitch propellers. It'll be a piece of cake," he commented on the enemy he expected to face in the air. Davidson was wrong. The Japanese Zero fighters were the first carrier-based fighters to outperform similar land-based planes. They carried drop tanks and retractable landing gear and were definitely not Woolworth-type aircraft.

McDonald's 30 Squadron flew to Heliopolis, a town some six miles northeast of Cairo. After checking into a hotel, the fliers went downtown to the local bars and nightclubs, where Davidson caused a stir. He had been given permission to grow a beard, and evidently some of the bars' and nightclubs' more hide-bound British clients were unhappy at seeing an RAF officer wearing a beard. In several places, these stuffier patrons put on their monocles and stared disapprovingly at the pilots.

However, the pilots held their own. They purchased monocles. When anyone put on a monocle and sneered at Davidson, the pilots put on their monocles and sneered back. From then on, 30 Squadron was known as the Monocle Squadron.

The squadron was moved from Heliopolis to Ismâ'iliya, a town on the Suez Canal. Equipment and personnel then sailed south to Port Sudan on the Red Sea and transferred to the aircraft carrier HMS *Indomitable*. The pilots of the *Indomitable*'s Fleet Air Arm Squadron looked on enviously. They flew the Hurricane I, as they were told that the Hurricane IIB was too fast to land on a carrier deck.

The squadron was to be sent to Singapore, which was under Japanese attack, but the city fell before its arrival. With Singapore captured, Ceylon was in critical danger. Sir Winston Churchill said: "The most dangerous moment of the War, and the one which caused me the greatest alarm, was when the Japanese Fleet was heading for Ceylon and the naval base there. The capture of Ceylon, the consequent control of the Indian Ocean, and the possibility at the same time of a German conquest of Egypt would have closed the ring and the future would have been black."

Therefore, 30 Squadron was redirected to Ceylon. When the *Indomitable* reached the island, the pilots were told they would take off from the carrier. This was interesting news since none of the pilots had ever flown from a carrier. The plan was for the pilots to clamp down their brakes and then rev up their engines. The brakes were then released as full power was applied. It

was hoped that the Hurricane would then shoot off the carrier deck and lurch into the air.

On March 6, the first planes were launched. Davidson went first; McDonald, his number two, was directly behind him. McDonald's stomach dropped as he saw Davidson's Hurricane go over the bow of the ship and then drop from sight. He breathed easier when he saw it climb into view.

All 24 planes of 30 Squadron reached Ceylon safely and landed at Ratmalana Airport, seven miles south of Colombo, the capital. The airport, almost on the shores of the Indian Ocean, had its runway doubled in length to accept both 30 Squadron and 11 Squadron, which flew the twin-engine, three-seat Bristol Blenheim light bomber. Several other units arrived or were placed on alert as the British struggled to shuffle together what was at best a makeshift defense. A newly constituted Hurricane 258 Squadron was readied. RAF Hurricane 261 Squadron was alerted, as were three Fleet Air Arm squadrons, Fairey Swordfish 788 Squadron and Fairey Fulmar 803 and 806 Squadrons.

However, nothing the British could hurriedly patch together matched the power of the attackers who moved against them: Japan's elite striking force, the First Air Fleet, which had devastated Pearl Harbor. It consisted of five



Donald McDonald stands beside an RAF aircraft clad in cold weather gear. After the war, McDonald participated in Operation Muskox, a Canadian military exercise in the arctic.

modern aircraft carriers, four battleships, and 14 other vessels. The Japanese were not to invade Ceylon but to destroy the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet, which the Japanese thought was still based there.

By April 4, 1942, the First Air Fleet was only 360 miles southeast of Ceylon when it was spotted by pilot Leonard Birchall of 413 Squadron. Birchall, who was the first of his squadron to arrive from the Shetland Islands, was piloting a Canadian Consolidated Canso PBY flying boat. He radioed a warning to Ceylon before his plane was shot down. The Japanese knew they had been discovered but continued with their plans, readying an attack for the following morning, Easter Sunday, April 5, 1942.

The Japanese planes took to the air before dawn. Their attack was led by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor. The raid included 36 Zero fighters escorting 36 Aichi D3A1 Val dive-bombers and 53 Nakajima B5N Kate attack bombers. An additional 180 Japanese planes were on alert should they be needed. The Japanese achieved surprise despite Birchall's warning. While 30 Squadron was on the alert, British radar was not.

McDonald later reported, "We stood at readiness from about 2 AM ... About 6 AM half of us went for breakfast, and we had just arrived back ... when we heard engines roaring overhead and looked up and saw formations of aircraft coming over the tops of large cumulous clouds. We later found that the radar shut

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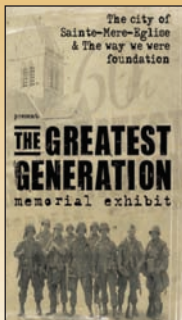
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down regularly on Sunday mornings for maintenance. Apparently no one alerted them....”

There may have been more incompetence than that. It was possible that what little radar the British had at Colombo was unmanned not because of maintenance but because of carelessness during a shift change. Also, the RAF Colombo Fighter Operations Command was apparently unaware of the range of the Zero or that it could carry drop tanks; they expected the attack the next day. To make matters worse, the standing order regarding the Ratmalana control tower was that the controller, on hearing unidentified aircraft, was to step onto the balcony and fire a red warning flare from his Very pistol. However, in his excitement, the controller discharged his pistol inside the tower. The flare bounced around, and no alert was given. Despite the fact the Japanese had been flying over Ceylon for about half an hour, 30 Squadron was caught on the ground.

Fuchida's main force roared over the airport on its way to the docks and the hoped-for destruction of the British Eastern Fleet, but some of his planes diverted to attack the airport. The Hurricanes of 30 Squadron were parked on the north side of the field. McDonald and other pilots jumped into a truck that sped them to their planes. When the truck arrived, McDonald saw Bob Davidson and another pilot taxiing across the runway as bombs started to fall around them.

One Hurricane was destroyed taxiing to the runway. Those planes that made it to the runway lined up in no particular order and took off in sections of two without the opportunity to operate as a squadron. The first heavy casualties of the Japanese attack included the native construction laborers working on the runway. They were used to planes taking off and the sound of guns. Nobody thought to warn them of a probable Japanese attack. They were caught in the open when the bombing began.

McDonald took off flying number two to Flight Sergeant Tom Paxton. He managed to gain height, but when he came out of a cloud he saw six to eight Val dive-bombers flying toward Ratmalana Airport. McDonald attacked the end bomber. The Hurricanes were carrying straight ball-type ammunition because a few weeks earlier the incendiary bullets in one of the Hurricanes had started to explode. The bullets had been left uncovered in the sun, and the explosions had been caused by Ceylon's intense heat.

Because of his ball-type ammunition, McDonald could not initially see if he was hitting the Val, but he suddenly noticed liquid pouring from under the dive-bomber's wing. At the same time two Zeros jumped him. To McDonald's surprise,

the Japanese pilots appeared to know exactly what they were doing. He remembered thinking, "These guys didn't come from Woolworth's." He knew his one chance of escape was to outlive the Zeros, but the Japanese fighters remained on top of him.

Bullets smashed into McDonald's engine; oil and glycol covered his windscreen. McDonald opened his canopy, and the slipstream yanked his goggles to the back of his head. He pulled them off and threw them away, realizing that he was flying over Colombo and away from the airport. He knew that without glycol his engine would quickly overheat and lock up.

McDonald realized he had to crash-land soon, so he determined to try for Galle Face Green, a long, wide stretch of grass that was bordered on the west by the Indian Ocean. He had to fly over the harbor to get to the green, and he heard the explosions of friendly anti-aircraft fire all around him. Some of the ship-board gunners were taking no chances; they shot at anything above them. McDonald throttled back on his landing approach. His instruments were completely covered with oil and glycol. He had no idea how fast he was going and later stated that his Hurricane "must have been going at a pretty fair clip because when it touched down, the air cooler below the cockpit was torn off."

When the Hurricane finally stopped, McDonald was surprised to see the air cooler bounce along and land beside the port wing. He climbed out of his damaged plane and was greeted by two senior British Army officers. The three men started walking toward the nearby Colombo Club but were stopped by a small car driven by an RAF officer. McDonald got in and was driven to the Galle Face Hotel at the south end of the green. The lobby was filled with excited people, many still in their nightclothes. A man came up to him and said, "You need a drink."

McDonald thought this was an excellent idea. The man quickly returned from the kitchen with a glass filled with an amber liquid that looked like Scotch whiskey. McDonald took a long gulp.

"What the hell is this?" he demanded.

"Cold tea," the man replied. It was just 8:30 in the morning. The hotel bar was closed.

The Japanese attack on Ceylon failed to destroy the British Eastern Fleet. Unknown to the Japanese, the British ships had been alerted and had moved to sea. The Japanese sank only an armed British merchant cruiser and an old destroyer.

There are conflicting figures on air losses. Including the Fleet Air Arm, the British may have lost between 25 and 37 planes. Five 30

Squadron pilots died in the action, and this is not disputed. One was Tom Paxton, who was badly burned and died on April 7. Paxton had shot down one of the two Zeros that attacked McDonald. He also confirmed that the Val McDonald hit crashed into the sea.

While figures on Japanese losses are also contradictory, 30 Squadron claimed 14 Japanese planes destroyed, six probably destroyed, and five damaged. This was part of a claim that a total of 19 Japanese planes were destroyed, seven were probably destroyed, and nine were damaged in air combat. Some historians dispute these figures, but if it is reasonable to assume the Japanese lost about 20 percent of their force, this would be a loss of 25 planes.

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**ABOVE:** Hawker Hurricane Mark I fighters sit at an airfield at Idku, Egypt. From this location, the Hurricanes were employed in the rare role of night fighter aircraft defending the port city of Alexandria. **LEFT:** Pilot Leonard Birchall of No. 413 Squadron, RAF, spotted Japanese naval forces southeast of Ceylon and confirmed the position of the enemy before he was shot down.

Thus, a meager, ragtag air defense was pitted against the most powerful air fleet in the world, and after the battle the Japanese fleet never returned to the waters around Ceylon. The allegedly invincible First Air Fleet received a bloody nose from the pitifully few planes the British scraped together. During the subsequent naval Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, those experienced pilots lost in the skies above

Ceylon were sorely missed by the Japanese.

McDonald survived the war, and in 1946 he served with Operation Muskox, a Canadian arctic military exercise. He left the Royal Canadian Air Force after this and spent many years working in the private sector. □

*Author Herb Kugel writes from his home in Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia.*

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## The Hidden Danger

| The German Army employed numerous types of land mines throughout the war.

**GERMAN LAND MINES WERE INSIDIOUS WEAPONS—KILLING OR MAIMING** thousands of Allied soldiers and civilians. In one incident toward the end of 1944, American soldiers came across nonmetal mines in Lorraine, France. In a single minefield they found 12,000 mines made out of Bakelite or wood, which made them impossible to locate with metal detectors. By 1945, the U.S. Army in Europe recorded that mines were responsible for 2.5 percent of combat fatalities and for 20.7 percent of tank losses.

German commanders considered the land mine a very effective defensive weapon and so went to great lengths to make extensive use of it. Minefields were used chiefly to cover defensive operations and retreats. In a static situation the Germans

regarded minefields as an element of frontline positions, laid out according to an overall mine plan developed in close conjunction with fields of fire. German doctrine for minefield location was modified during the war so that, instead of laying dense minefields in front of the main line of resistance, as had been the practice, mines were dispersed.

German engineers believed it necessary to survey the location of minefields and individual mines within the fields. They were instructed to choose reference points for minefields that could be identified easily, such as near a railroad grade crossing, at road intersections, or at the edge of a village.

In some instances, however, the Germans were forced to use guide wires and auxiliary fixed points. A type of auxiliary fixed point that proved practicable was the center of an equilateral triangle with sides 15 to 25 feet long. The corner points and the fixed point itself would be marked by stakes, rails, concrete or steel girders about three feet in length and connected with barbed wire. Such a fixed point could be reestablished easily after heavy shelling was received.

Fixed points could also be reference points found on a map. Distances were measured in meters and azimuth readings were taken by compass.

The Germans believed it was advantageous to lay a continuous series of reference points 600 to 900 feet apart, through a division sector. These reference points would be used to determine the locations of ditches, trenches, obstacles, and pillboxes as well as minefields.

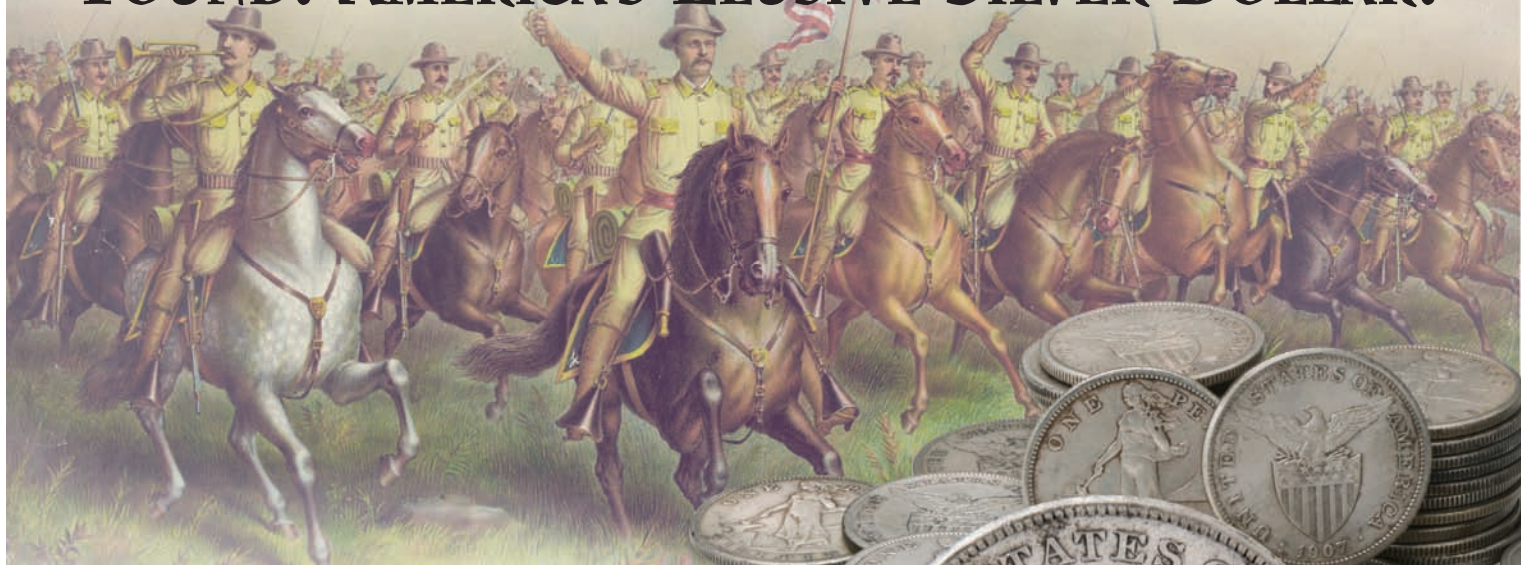
To assure the greatest possible effect, minefields normally were laid out in patterns, but there were exceptions to this practice in sectors where the Germans did not intend to undertake offensive actions. There, they dispersed the mines irregularly in the areas between defensive positions.

The main fields or belts of antitank mines were laid in a uniform pattern with a sprinkling of antipersonnel mines at the forward edge of the field. Both types of mines might be fitted with antilifting or antihandling devices intended to cause the mine to detonate if an attempt was made to remove it, and some of the antipersonnel mines would also have trip wires attached.

In turn, a number of antitank mines would be laid at the forward edge of an antipersonnel minefield to prevent armored vehicles from detonating the

A German soldier engaged in the mining of a field or road carries a pair of the deadly devices.

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**During the conquest of France in the spring of 1940, a German engineer posts a sign marking an area of safe passage through a minefield for advancing Wehrmacht troops.**

main belt of antipersonnel mines. In addition, the forward edge of minefields were often sown with explosive charges placed in wooden boxes fitted with pressure fuses. These acted as both antitank and antipersonnel mines and discouraged the use of metal detectors to locate the mines.

Forward of most fields, and particularly in front of clear lanes, mines might be found widely spaced or scattered at random in unmarked groups. Mines also were laid in lines running out at right angles from the forward edge of the minefield in order to damage vehicles moving along the field in search of lanes.

Pressure-type antitank and antipersonnel mines were laid in lines. For measuring distances, a mine-measuring wire 24 meters long was used, with meter increments marked off and with five-inch-diameter rings on the ends of the wire. This measuring wire, in addition to measuring the distance between fixed points, served to lay out right angles by staking out a triangle with sides of six, eight, and 10 meters, respectively. Spaces between mines were determined by reference to the marks on the wire and four rings on one end used to set rows.

The density of a minefield depended on the interval set between mines and the number of rows used. Clear lanes were left open for patrols to transit, and passage lanes for assault troops. New lanes were set periodically and old ones closed.

Mine belts were normally laid in sections of 80 by 105 feet. The sections usually were staggered, and, for extensive mine belts, combined in units of three or four to form forward or

reverse arrowheads, or echelons.

The Germans emphasized that minefields were to be covered by fire, although during a hasty withdrawal they often did not follow this principle. It was common for a minefield to have a listening post with two men at the rear edge; about 70 or 80 yards to the rear a covering party of four or five men was placed with one or two light machine guns.

When the Germans were conducting a hasty withdrawal, they usually laid a large number of small nuisance mines and minefields. These fields contained many different types of mines, which often were unmarked and showed evidence of being hurriedly laid. The lack of pattern uniformity made detection and clearing laborious and dangerous.

Mines were also laid close to or on roadways, on airfields and railways, and along telegraph and telephone lines. Hard-surfaced roads were usually avoided in the case of hastily laid mines, but khaki-painted antitank mines sometimes were placed on the surface at dips in the road in the hope that drivers would be unable to avoid them. The Germans also placed mines along the shoulders of a road opposite narrow places where drivers might have to swing wide to pass and at the entrances to defiles where they had to pull off the road to wait for vehicles moving in the opposite direction. Other places usually sown with antitank mines were turnouts, sharp bends, and well-worn wheel ruts.

The Germans attempted to make their mines difficult to detect. They buried them as much as 24 inches below the surface so that they would

explode only after a number of vehicles had compacted the earth sufficiently to set off the fuse. They placed explosives in wooden boxes to prevent discovery by mine detectors, and they made tire prints in the soil over the mine by drawing a detached axle and wheels over the mine.

They showed considerable ingenuity in setting antipersonnel mines randomly on the line of a possible enemy advance. Road demolition areas were sown with antipersonnel mines, and kilometer marker posts at points where drivers would have to dismount to read directions were similarly treated. Mines also were placed in ditches, often close to the tripwire peg of another mine.

Nuisance fields were closely spaced, occasionally so close as to cause sympathetic detonation. This was particularly possible when mines were laid with their pressure plates almost flush with the surface of the ground and only lightly covered with earth.

The Germans also set dummy minefields. These took various forms. In some cases a trip wire was laid to give the appearance of a minefield perimeter wire, with the usual lanes and the ground disturbed at regular intervals. Scrap metal, often dispersed with real mines, was placed in shallow holes to cause a reaction by

mine detectors. Dummy mines were often connected to live booby traps.

The Germans stressed the marking of minefields and attempted to mark them in such a manner that they could not be recognized by the enemy but could easily be found by their own troops. Initially, the methods of marking minefields were not uniform. The front edge of a field was often unmarked. Because of many accidents caused by friendly minefields, the Germans issued orders making proper marking mandatory.

Typical examples of markings included the placing of a single knee-high wire, use of cattle fencing, placing of empty mine crates, and signs. Marking stakes were also used to indicate minefields. The stakes were flat on one side for a length of about eight inches, with the flat surface painted red and the letter M (*Minen*) in black. Such stakes were used only on the friendly edges of minefields.

Signs were painted in red and white on boards or pieces of sheet metal and fastened to two stakes. The edges of minefields were indicated with signs marked with horizontal stripes. Edges of lanes through the fields were indicated by vertically divided signs, with the white portion on the side of the lane (safe) and the red portion on the side of the minefield (danger).

The reverse sides of the signs, the sides toward the enemy, were painted olive drab. If red paint was not available, the Germans substituted black and white signs. These were painted with the words *Minen* (mines), *Gasse* or *Gassen* (mine lanes), and *Entmint* (an area cleared of mines). Minefields were indicated by vertical lettering, dummy minefields with slanted letters. This distinction, however, was supposed to be made known only to German engineers because it was feared that other troops, if taken prisoner, might divulge the locations of dummy minefields.

The Germans were methodical not only in laying mines but in planning and recording minefield information. Mine plans provided technical details on one or more fields. A mine map showed all mine obstacles within a sector and their tactical significance, but without technical details.

A mine map usually showed the name of the obstacle (minefield) and designation of the unit that laid it, the name of the area in which the obstacle was located, a grid reference, the obstacle shown in a small sketch in red, the date the minefield was laid, and the name and rank of the officer or noncommissioned officer in charge of laying the field.

Data on the mines used included the number,

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**ABOVE:** Literally millions of mines were sown by the warring armies during the fighting in Europe. Here, German soldiers place antitank mines near defensive positions on the Eastern Front in 1944. **RIGHT TOP:** A German Tellermine, used against enemy tanks and armored vehicles, is shown in its carrying case. **CENTER:** An American paratrooper locates an antipersonnel S-mine 35 with an S.Mi.Z.35 pressure fuse. **BOTTOM:** The small but powerful antipersonnel Schü-mine 42 belies its sinister capability to disable the unfortunate soldier who stepped on the device, which was encased in wood and difficult to detect.



type, and fuse; whether the mines were dug in; the number of rows, and number of mines per row; any information about fences; and information about special features that distinguished the field.

Minefield type identification was indicated by colored lines drawn diagonally across the upper right corner of the mine map, identifying the type of minefield. A red diagonal line designated fields that could not be cleared because some or all the mines were booby-trapped; a yellow diagonal line designated fields that could be cleared by using data from a mine document; a green diagonal line designated dummy minefields; and mines taken up or exploded were marked in red. The number of the minefield plan and unit designation appeared on the upper right corner of the plan.

A drawing of the minefield was included, using a scale from 1:500 to 1:2,000. Other information included the shape and size of the field, its pattern, the location of booby-trapped mines, the location of survey points with azimuth and distances, the location and type of any warning fence, the location of front lines and fortifications, neighboring minefields, mine lanes, terrain features, and any special features.

Mine plans were provided to company or battalion command posts—with copies distributed to the engineer company that was in charge of the minefield, to the division, to the

army, and to a central file at Dessau-Rosslau. Engineers provided frontline troops with instructions or sketches with the approximate location and extent of minefields. These sketches, as a rule, did not contain details on types of mines or fuses or on minefield patterns. Army headquarters usually designated certain areas for fields of scattered mines. In such a case, mine reports took the place of mine

plans. Normally, mine reports contained the number of the order authorizing scattering of mines, the designation of the units scattering the mines, the name and number of the field containing scattered mines, the map location of the scattered minefield, the number of mines scattered by types and fuses, and the number and type of booby-trapped mines and kinds of booby traps.

The Germans entered the war with just two types of antitank mines and one type of antipersonnel mine. By the end of the war they had 16 different types of antitank mines and 10 types of antipersonnel mines, and they employed many different types of booby traps or improvised devices. From 1942 on they placed increasing importance on the mine as a weapon of attrition.

The S-mine (Schrappnellmine), also known as the "Bouncing Betty," was the best-known version of a class of antipersonnel mines referred to as bounding mines. When triggered, these mines were launched into the air and then detonated at about waist height. The explosion released a lethal blast of steel balls and steel fragments in all directions. Developed in the 1930s, the S-mine was used extensively during the war. It was designed for use in open areas against unshielded infantry. Two versions were produced, designated by the year of their first production: the SMi-35 and SMi-44. There are only minor differences between the two models. More than 1.93 million were produced.

French troops first encountered the S-mine in the German Saar in September 1939. The French nicknamed the mine "the silent soldier." Germany used the S-mine heavily during defensive operations later in the war.

The S-mine was a steel cylinder less than 13 centimeters (five inches) tall, without its sensor, and only 10 centimeters (four inches) in diameter. A steel rod protruding from the mine's top held the main fuse, where its trigger or sensor was attached. The SMi-35 had a central fuse, while the SMi-44 had an offset fuse. It weighed approximately four kilograms (nine pounds).

The main explosive charge of the mine was TNT; the propelling charge was black powder. The standard pressure sensor was ignited by a percussion cap.

The main fuse was designed to delay the firing of the propelling charge for approximately four seconds after the mine was triggered. The explosion of the propelling charge sent the mine upward into the air and activated three short-delay pellets between the propellant charge and the three detonators. These pellets delayed the mine's detonation long enough for it to reach a



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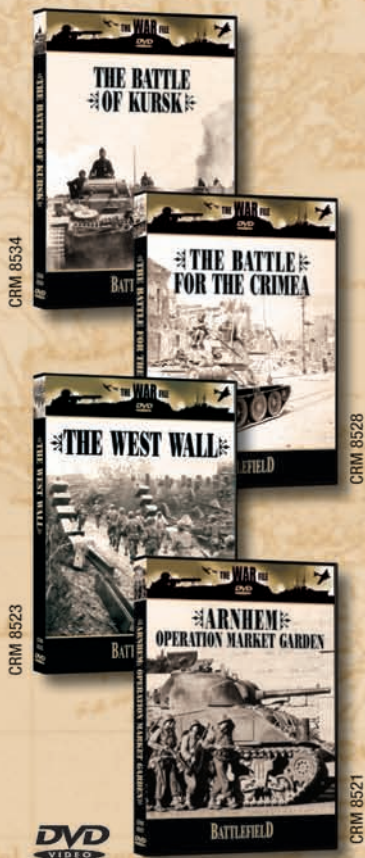
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specific height before exploding.

The standard pressure sensor was designed to activate if depressed by a weight of roughly seven kilograms (15 pounds) or greater. This was to ensure it was not set off by wildlife. A trip wire adapter for the mine used a shallow Y-shaped device and would trigger the mine if the trip wire was pulled away from the mine.

The S-mine was normally triggered by a three-pronged pressure fuse. It could also be modified to be triggered by a trip wire or could be triggered manually.

The time between triggering and ignition of the propelling charge varied between 3.9 and 4.5 seconds, depending on the age and condition of the mine. According to German documentation, the S-mine was lethal within 20 meters (22 yards) and could inflict casualties within 100 meters (110 yards). A common misconception about the S-mine was that it would not detonate until its victim stepped off the trigger. The mine would detonate whether the trigger was released or not. The most effective way to survive the mine's detonation was not to flee but to fall to the ground lying face down as quickly as possible.

The S-mine was constructed mostly of metal, so it could be easily located by metal detectors. The mine could also be detected through careful manual probing, a time-consuming process. It was important to probe at an angle that would not accidentally depress the pressure sensor.

Once an S-mine was discovered, disarming it was fairly simple. To prevent triggering while the mine was being planted, the pressure sensor featured a hole where a safety pin kept the sensor from being accidentally depressed. This pin was removed once the mine was planted. If the discovered mine was fitted with the pressure sensor, the personnel disarming it would slip a pin into this hole. If the device was armed with a trip wire or electrical trigger, this could simply be cut. The Germans were known to use booby traps to discourage this, so caution was advised. The mine could then be removed carefully from the ground and the sensor easily unscrewed.

The Schu-mine 42 was a model of an antipersonnel blast-type mine. It consisted of a simple wooden box with a hinged lid containing a 200-gram block of cast TNT. A slot in the lid pressed down on the striker retaining pin, and sufficient pressure on the lid caused the pin to move, releasing the striker that triggered the detonator. The mine was cheap to produce, and its wooden body made it difficult to detect.

The Glasmine 43 was another antipersonnel mine. To make the mine less detectable, the entire body was made from glass. Initially, only

mechanical igniters were used, but later models had chemical igniters. However, the Glasmine 43 was not produced in large numbers.

The Tellermine (or T-mine) was a German antitank mine developed between the wars. The Tellermine 29 was a round metal-cased antitank blast mine. It first entered service in 1929. Although replaced by later models, this model did see limited service, notably after D-Day in France, where Allied troops reported encountering it. The mine used a pressure or a trip wire fuse. It was also fitted with two secondary fuse wells that enabled the fitting of antihandling devices.

The Tellermine 35 (T.Mi.35) was used extensively during the war. The mine was made of sheet steel and had a slightly convex pressure plate on the top with a central fuse well. It also had a fuse well on the side and bottom for antihandling devices. For use on beaches and under water, the mine could be deployed inside an earthenware or concrete pot that acted as a waterproof jacket.

The Tellermine 42 (T.Mi.42) was a metal-cased antitank blast mine. Based on the Tellermine 35, it had an improved resistance to blast because it was smaller than the 35.

The Tellermine 43 was a circular, steel-cased, antitank blast mine. It was a modified version of the Tellermine 42 that used simpler production techniques. Between March 1943 and the end of the war, over 3.6 million Tellermine 43s were produced.

The Tellermine was designed with a circular casing rising toward the center, where a large, flat pressure plate was located. A rectangular metal carrying handle was fitted to the side of the mine. The pressure plate sat over the fuse well. At the bottom of the fuse well was a booster charge, surrounded by a doughnut-shaped main charge of 5.5 kilograms of TNT or Amatol. The mine had secondary fuse wells on the side and base to enable antihandling devices to be fitted. Additionally, it could be fitted with an antitampering device, detonating the mine if the pressure plate was lifted. The mine could also be fitted with a tilt rod fuse, screwed into to the side fuse well.

In contrast to the "dinner plate" mines like the Tellermine were "bar mines" such as the Riegel mine 43 or Sprengriegel/R.Mi. 43. Its long narrow body was designed to increase the probability of a vehicle triggering it. Made of steel, the mine had a thin, oblong shape (800 millimeters) and consisted of lower and upper metal trays and an explosive block of four kilograms of TNT. It used two fuses inserted into either end of the block although it could be used with an additional top pressure fuse. More

than three million were produced between 1943 and 1945. The mine was almost impossible to disarm since corrosion of the wires in the fuse made it sensitive to touch. In addition, the mine could be fitted with up to three antihandling devices.

Possibly the most advanced German antitank mine of the war was the minimal metal Topfmine. The Topfmine was a circular, minimum metal antitank blast mine that entered service in 1944. The mine was in a case made of compressed wood pulp, cardboard, and tar along with glass plugs and components designed to be undetectable by Allied mine detectors. Often the only metallic part of the mine was the detonator.

To enable the mines to be found by friendly forces, they were painted with a black sandy substance called Tarnsand. Allied forces found that although the mines were undetectable by Allied mine detectors, German mine detectors could locate them. After the war Tarnsand was discovered to be mildly radioactive, permitting the German mine detectors, which incorporated a simple Geiger counter, to locate them.

The Panzer-Stabmine 43 antitank mine, together with the Hohl-Sprung mine 4672 (hollow-charge jump mine), was the first mine to combine a shaped charge warhead with a tilt

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German airborne engineers place antitank mines on a dirt road in Italy near the towns of Anzio and Nettuno. Note that the mines are attached to cords so that they can be pulled from secure cover in the path of advancing Allied armor.

rod detonator. A Panzerfaust warhead was mounted in a metal holder on a wooden panel, which was buried with a rod protruding above

the ground.

When a vehicle passed over the mine, the rod was forced sideways, triggering a black powder charge at the base of the projectile, launching it out of the ground and into the belly of the passing vehicle. The 125mm warhead's 1.6-kilogram shaped charge could penetrate over 100mm of armor and was capable of destroying most tanks. However, the mine was not issued until January 1945, due to manufacturing problems. Only 59,000 were produced because it was felt that the warheads were better employed as antitank handheld rockets.

During operations in North Africa, many large minefields were put down as barriers. In time many of these locations went unmapped, and markers were lost or covered with drifting sand. Even today, the Red Cross estimates that over 27 percent of Libyan farmland is unusable due to World War II minefields. In Europe, minefield clearance is still being undertaken in the Netherlands and France. Although the war ended more than six decades ago, its legacy is still with us in the form of these deadly devices. □

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

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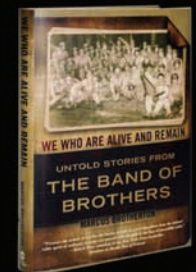


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## The Abwehr's Man in Havana

Heinz Lüning, a reluctant spy for the Third Reich, served as inspiration for British writer Graham Greene.

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suave, dapper James Bond, 007, license to kill, a hit with the ladies. The second is the serious, intelligent, complicated spies created by John Le Carre. Then there is Maxwell Smart, an ordinary kind of guy, not too bright, friendly enough, but not someone to be trusted to save the world.

During World War II, German Intelligence, the Abwehr, run by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, as shrewd a spymaster as there was, recruited a German of ordinary talent named Heinz Lüning as a spy and sent him to Havana, Cuba, as its agent in place. If Admiral Canaris had known what he was getting into when he sent the inexperienced Lüning to Cuba, he might have changed his mind. For Heinz Lüning, an imperfect spy if there ever was one, was not fit to be part of espionage, sometimes called the second oldest profession. He joined the Abwehr in order to get out of military service as well as to protect his family back in Germany. In the end, a tragic fate awaited Heinz Lüning—one that could have been avoided.

Lüning was born in Bremen, Germany, on March 28, 1911, to a German father and Italian mother. He was not a promising student and was not allowed to finish his classes in a secondary school that he needed to attend before being allowed to go to university. During these formative years, both his parents died, a blow that shook him badly.

Young Heinz was subsequently adopted by his uncle, Gustav, and his American wife, Olga. They lived in Hamburg where Heinz attended school before getting a job with Albert Schilling, an American businessman, at Clasen Berger & Co.

In 1936, Heinz was involved in a family scandal when he got his stepsister Helga pregnant. Heinz and Helga, now his fiancée, moved to New York City and were married on May 8, 1936. They lived with Olga's brother, Philip Bartholomae, who wrote a number of Broadway plays from 1911 to 1926. Shortly after their marriage, Uncle Gustav, the owner of the Dominican Tobacco Company located in the Dominican Republic, sent young Heinz there ostensibly to learn Spanish and to

bone up on his business skills. After their stay in Santo Domingo, Heinz and Helga returned to Hamburg where a son, Adolf Bartholomae, was born on November 16, 1936.

In the 1930s, just as the Nazis were beginning to take power, Heinz viewed Hitler and his National Socialists with contempt. He disliked the way Hitler was remaking Germany into a fascist state, and to that end, in 1937, he began citizenship status proceedings to return to the Dominican Republic to escape Hitler's new Germany.

From 1937 to 1941, Heinz worked for his uncle, who was the owner of the B. Schoenfeld Company, a general merchandising firm, as a sales representative. While working at Schoenfeld, he was tutored in Spanish in the hope that he might be able to resume his old life in the Dominican Republic. His teacher was Lola Ardela de Tajar, a native of Guatemala who had moved to Germany. In time, they would become good friends.

By 1939, Heinz had decided he did not want to join the German Army and serve as cannon fodder. While he contemplated what to do, his tutor suggested that he join the Abwehr in order to avoid military service. But how would he do that? His Uncle Gustav knew a man named Hans Joachim Koelln who had Abwehr connections. Koelln and Heinz met, and in January 1941 Heinz was introduced to Alfred Hartmann who worked in the Propaganda and Information Office. During several meetings at the B. Schoenfeld office, Heinz revealed that he spoke several languages, including English, Italian, some Portuguese, and Spanish. Hartmann was impressed with Heinz and asked if he wanted to join the Abwehr and take on an overseas assignment. Heinz agreed and was given the cover name of Lumann.

Heinz was now about to begin a new phase of his life, that of a trainee in the Abwehr. He was sent to the Abwehr training school located at Klopstockstrasse 2-8 in Hamburg. Unknown to him, his decision to join the Abwehr would ultimately seal his fate.

The Abwehr that Heinz Lüning joined existed from 1921 until 1944 and was in the capable hands of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, one of

Cuban President Fulgencio Batista (center) prepares to sign a declaration of war against Germany and Italy in December 1941. Batista was toppled by a communist revolution led by Fidel Castro two decades later.

Hitler's most controversial military leaders. Canaris was not wholly in support of Hitler's military endeavors and at one point in the war tried to make a separate peace with the Allies in the West. Canaris was able to run the Abwehr his own way,

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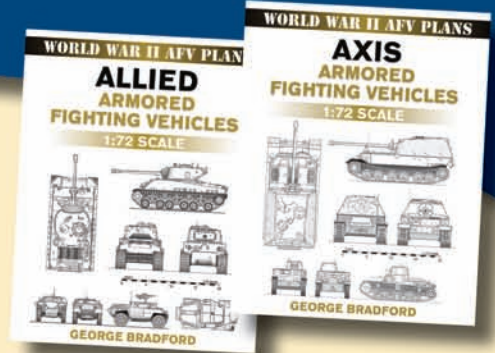
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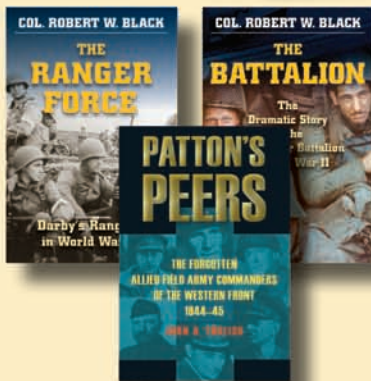
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out of the reach of Hitler's minions. Unfortunately, he eventually ran afoul of two of Hitler's most trusted aides, SS senior commanders Reinhard Heydrich and Walter Schellenberg.

With these two top Nazis breathing down his neck, Canaris lived on borrowed time. When a group of German military officers tried unsuccessfully to assassinate Hitler in 1944, Canaris was identified as one of those responsible. He was removed from office and ultimately hanged.

At the beginning of his training, Heinz was told where his posting would be. He would be sent to Cuba, not too far from the Dominican Republic where he had spent many good days. He was happy to be returning to the Caribbean, away from the horror that his homeland had become. At the Abwehr academy, Heinz was separated from the rest of his class and given individual training. The training session lasted six weeks, and he learned the basics of the espionage craft—wireless radio transmission, writing in secret inks, and Morse code. He was assigned a number, agent A-3779, a designation referring to the fact that he was trained at the Hamburg AST facility.

Alfred Hartmann was his main instructor, and while Heinz did some work correctly, he was generally a rather mediocre student. He did not know how to properly assemble and disas-

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Heinz August Lüning, Hitler's inept Abwehr spy in the Cuban capital of Havana, strikes a somewhat dejected pose at the door to his jail cell.

semble a radio, and while he was in Cuba he often could not find the proper parts to service his radio. Things got so bad that he had to rely on other means to send his messages to Europe, mostly by courier to dead drops in Spain and

other pro-German countries.

Days before leaving for Cuba, Hartmann gave Heinz his instructions. He was to find out as much as he could about Cuba and was further told not to associate with any people who were on the Allied side. He was given detailed instructions on how to write and send his secret messages. His original letters were to be in Spanish, and he would then write in English when sending his secret ink messages. He was instructed to sign his dispatches using first names that began with the letters M or R. To Hartmann's chagrin, Heinz had trouble writing in secret ink. He never mastered the ancient art, and his weekly messages were difficult to decipher because of his lack of competence in drafting his letters.

By now, the Abwehr had done all it could in training Heinz. On September 10, 1941, Heinz made his own travel arrangements to Cuba aboard the Spanish ship *Villa de Madrid*, departing Barcelona for Havana. He arrived on September 29, ready to be the Abwehr's man in the Cuban capital.

While living in Havana, Heinz went by the name of Enrique Augusto Lüning. He befriended a number of people whom he met on the ship, as well as an Abwehr officer named Ricardo Dotres. He moved into the Siboney

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1942. The war hangs in the balance, but Nazi Germany may soon have a weapon to tip the scales. A deserted island halfway between Denmark and Sweden holds a terrible secret which only two people outside the island know: Reichminister Albert Speer and Peder, an autistic Danish boy who is unable to tell what he has seen. *“Razor-sharp plot twists!”*

by *A.R. Homer*, author of

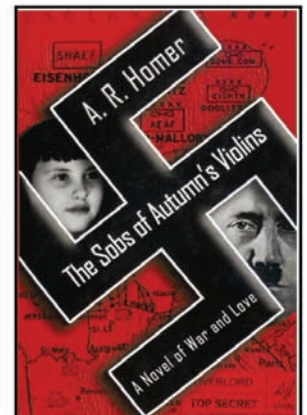
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Hotel, a cheap establishment whose only attribute was that it was located near the Wonder Bar, a boozy joint where he would spend a considerable amount of time, picking up women and getting drunk.

His cover in Havana was that of an expatriate Jew who had fled Europe. He had no contact with any other German agent in Havana. He worked alone, picking up conversations with anyone who would talk with him, be they sailors, barkeeps, acquaintances he would meet around the city, or prostitutes he hired for the night. He got most of his "intelligence" from reading the public press. It was information that could have been gathered by any freelance person the Abwehr might have hired off the street.

Since his radio rarely worked due to his lack of proficiency or dearth of available parts, Heinz sent most of his messages via air mail, which took a few weeks to reach Spain or Portugal. His cables were sent via Argentina, which had a large German exile community. Unknown to Lünig, as well as his German handlers, the British had an elaborate mail intercept station in Bermuda that read all letters en route to Europe. It was here that British intelligence agents were able to read and decipher Lünig's messages.

From reading these missives, they knew that a German agent was working in Havana, but they had no idea who he was or how large his espionage organization might be. After the British learned of the agent in Havana, they informed J. Edgar Hoover's FBI and the Cuban government that an unknown German agent was operating in their midst. Almost immediately, a search was initiated to find the mole, but it would take a long time before they had any success in locating him.

During World War II, Latin America was the largest neutral area in the world. Refugees from all over Europe came there to escape the war. A large number were aliens from Japan and Germany, a potential fifth column to serve as agents against the United States. When the United States entered the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave intelligence jurisdiction over South and Latin America to the FBI. To circumvent this order, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), headed by General William "Wild Bill" Donovan, had to keep one step ahead of the resident FBI agents who operated in Latin America.

In the early years of the war, Latin America became one of the most highly developed areas of German espionage, rivaling Spain, Switzerland, and Sweden. Cuba had long historical ties with Spain, and its dictator, Fulgencio Batista, was a reluctant ally of the United States. The U.S. government saw in Batista someone who

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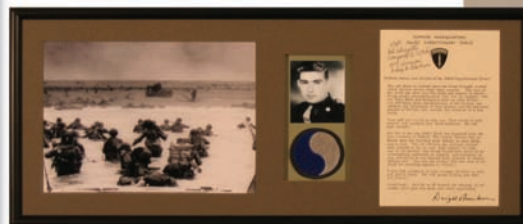
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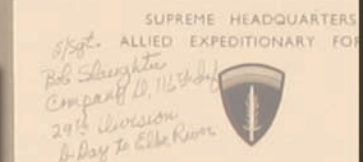
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would do Washington's dirty work in the Caribbean. Batista was a thug who ran Cuba as his own personal fiefdom.

The large British intercept station in Bermuda picked up the first of 44 intercepts of Lünig's letters on October 14, 1941. Lünig used the alias "Rafael Castillo" in Havana, sending his message to a "Mr. Mutz" in Lisbon, Portugal. The British censors used chemical inks to read the message.

With the initial discovery of a spy in Cuba, the Allied intelligence bureaus went into high gear to find him. The FBI was the responsible agency on the U.S. end, while the British SIS, Special Intelligence Service, used its own men to find the spy. In Havana, Batista ordered Manuel Benitez, the Cuban chief of police, to begin an investigation. Another official who was part of the probe was Mariano Faget, who served as the Cuban counterespionage chief in 1942. Faget was considered one of the most ruthless men in the police and had a penchant for brutality.

As the Allies began reading Lünig's reports, they knew that he did not have much of an intelligence value. He never sent real-time intelligence, and the material that he did send was out of date by the time it reached Europe.

What the Allies were most worried about, however, was the possibility that the unknown spy might send valuable information on the shipping traffic coming from the United States to Europe. The United States was now convoying Allied ships in large formations with vital military and other supplies to aid in the defense of Britain. This precious lifeline was on the verge of being stopped in its tracks by the stealthy German U-boats that were prowling the Atlantic sea-lanes, sinking scores of ships and threatening the very survival of Great Britain. By the end of 1942, the Germans had sunk an average of 14 ships for each submarine lost. Unknown to the Allied censors, Lünig was never responsible for any intelligence relating to the U-boat peril.

Lünig had a scare when an unknown man, presumably a Cuban agent, paid a visit to his apartment in January 1942. The man asked him if he was sending letters out of the country and whether he could identify to which countries he was mailing them. Lünig said he was writing to family in the United States. The agent got Lünig's attention by showing him an official British communiqué with the name "Luni" on it. The Cuban disclosed that he knew Lünig was a German citizen using a false Honduran passport.

During their investigation, the Allies knew that Lünig had sent his secret messages to Iberian safe boxes, using telegrams, cables, and regular

mail to his contacts in Argentina, Chile, Honduras, and the United States. The British designated their file on Lünig "The Havana Secret Writing Case-Mutz Series." The FBI used the designation called "Mutz Secret Writing Case."

While plying his secret trade, Lünig earned a living as the owner of a women's clothing store in Havana, along with being a ship broker, neither of which paid a good salary. His fate was sealed by a mistake of his own doing. In 1942, when a British censor intercepted a message sent by Lünig using his real name and address in Havana, U.S., British, and Cuban officials all believed that their spy was part of a larger network that was feeding vital intelligence to the Abwehr and decided to close him down.

Captain Faget and his men searched Lünig's room and found his broken radio transmitter, materials used to build and repair his radio, chemicals used for secret writing, his correspondence, and other spy paraphernalia. Lünig was formally arrested on August 31, 1942, and decided it was in his best interest to cooperate fully. The only real, positive intelligence that came out of the Lünig case was when under interrogation, he reported on a large-scale German spy ring located in Chile.

Manuel Benitez announced the arrest of Lünig and told the eager press that they had captured one of the most important spies of all time, an obvious lie. Spruille Braden, the U.S. ambassador to Cuba, told President Batista that the United States was not pleased with how Lünig was arrested, and U.S.-Cuban ties were strained.

Lünig's trial was nothing but a sham. U.S., British, and Cuban officials knew Lünig was not a master spy. In fact, they realized he was just the opposite—an inept, low-level operative. He never posed a threat to the Allies, who needed a scapegoat for the loss of shipping off the Cuban coast. It was also politically expedient to execute a spy who might outwardly appear to be a major threat to the security of the Western Hemisphere.

Lünig was executed in late 1942. His body was buried in the Colon Cemetery in Havana. Later, Graham Greene, noted author whose wartime duties as he served with Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in World War II included reading the Lünig file, used the unfortunate ne'er-do-well as a character in his book *Our Man in Havana*. □

*Peter Kross is a frequent contributor to WWII History. His books include Spies, Traitors and Moles: An Espionage and Intelligence Quiz Book, and The Encyclopedia of World War 2 Spies. His next book, Target Fidel, was due for publication in the fall of 2009.*

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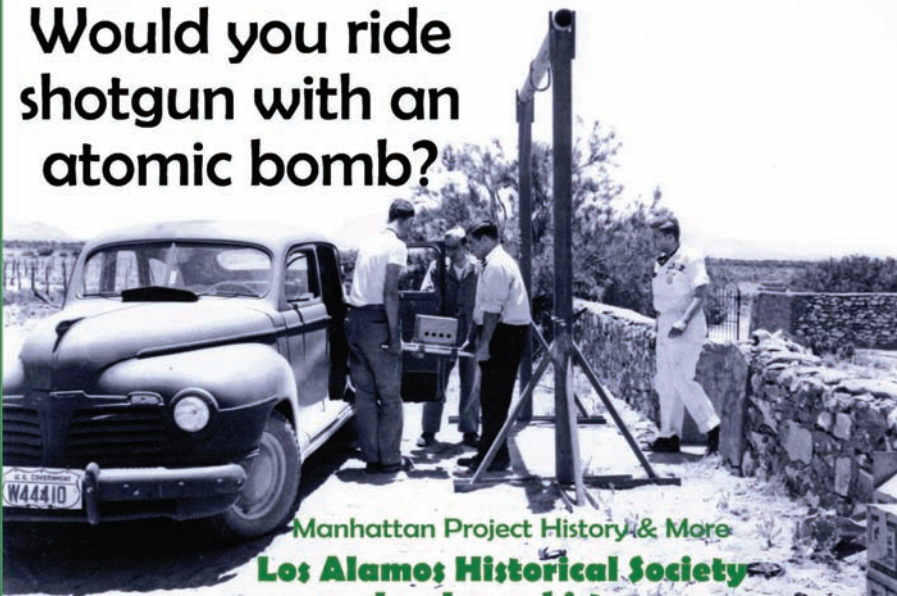
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## A Curiosity of War

| The Third Reich's treatment of black soldiers was harsh, in keeping with its doctrine of racial superiority.

**ON MAY 13, 1940, THE GERMAN ARMY INVADED FRANCE, CROSSING THE RIVER** Meuse at Sedan. Upon France's capitulation, the Franco-German armistice was signed on June 22, and a portion of France was placed under German occupation, with the remaining area ostensibly left to its own, with the Vichy collaborationist government in control.

When the Germans surprised even themselves by conquering France in six weeks, they were confronted with a somewhat unanticipated problem of coping with thousands of prisoners, among them a large number of colonial conscripts from Algeria, Morocco, Senegal French West Africa, and even some from French Indochina.

While the Germans considered the Senegalese and Moroccan soldiers fierce fighters, the Third Reich, in its racial war, classified blacks as subhuman and many were executed upon capture. Others were worked to death in Nazi construction projects or died of abuses suffered in concentration camps.

**ABOVE: Pausing for a photo of his "trophy," a German motorcycle trooper looks into the camera.**

**His wounded prisoner, a French colonial soldier, one of thousands pressed into the war from West African colonies, bleeds from multiple wounds.**

**RIGHT: A German soldier has singled out a captive from French Indochina.**



This treatment of blacks was foreshadowed in 1936 when the Germans reoccupied the industrial area of the Ruhr Valley. They were faced with the problem of racially mixed children, the result of French colonial troops stationed in the Rhineland following World War I. The area had been ceded to the French in 1923 when the Germans defaulted on their war



# How I Found The Gold Coin That Never Was

*And how readers can take advantage of my major gold discovery!*

by Nick Bruyer

Over a thousand years ago my Viking Warrior ancestors raided the coast of England in their great longships, striking terror into the hearts of their victims. But some of them stayed and settled on the Isle of Man, situated between England, Ireland and Scotland. It was during a visit to this ancient Isle that I stumbled onto something amazing—a precious piece of history that you can own and pass down through generations of your own family as a gold treasure of lasting value.

## The Gold Coin That Never Was

As president of an international coin distributor, GovMint.com, I knew that the Isle of Man has its own legal tender coins. So I made a journey to the mint to meet the Mint Master. I was lamenting the fact that there was no gold coin commemorating their Viking heritage, when he told me that such a coin had been authorized, but never minted. The Twentieth Noble was to be struck in 99.99% fine gold. When I asked why it had never been minted, he didn't know. The Mint's official archives did not give a reason, but they revealed a startling fact.

## I Seize a Golden Opportunity

The archives revealed the Government had given the Mint Master the authority to strike the Viking Gold Nobles *at any time*. When I asked if the Mint would strike them now, he agreed, but only if I would purchase the entire mintage. I could hardly believe my good fortune—it was like a dream come true.

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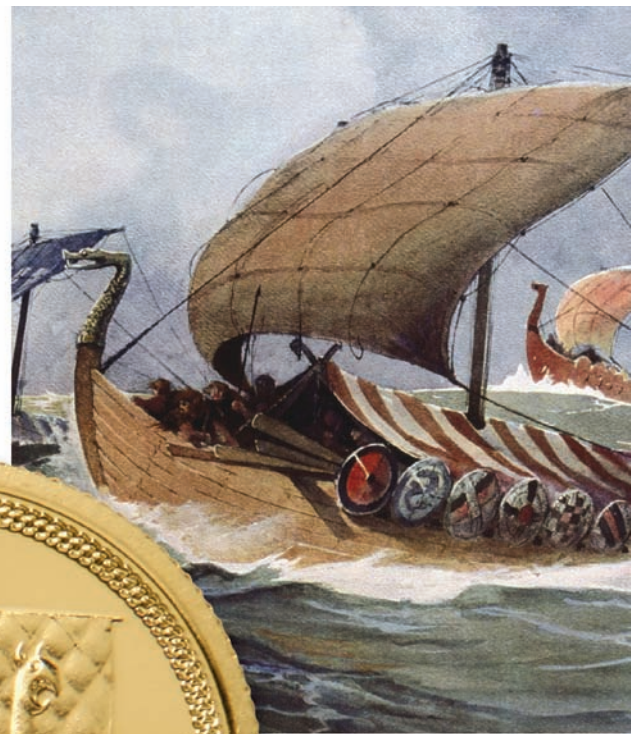
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**From a throng of marching prisoners, one colonial soldier glares at the camera and in turn the German behind it. The Germans differentiated between the lighter skinned North Africans and the dark skinned West African soldiers.**

reparations payments mandated by the Versailles Treaty. Virulent propaganda characterized the black soldiers as rapists and the spreaders of venereal diseases.

When the Germans annexed the area and

reoccupied it, they discovered some 800 children who were the offspring of the black colonial soldiers. Hitler's fledgling Nazi Party used the opportunity to blame the Jews for allegedly importing blacks into the area to contaminate

German blood. The children were rounded up and "relocated" while many of the older progeny, called "Rhineland bastards," were forcibly sterilized to "cleanse" German soil.

A number of German soldiers' snapshots that survived the war focus on the French colonials. Often the Germans seem amused by their captives and with smiles show them off to the camera as "souvenirs." Other German soldiers photographed with colonial prisoners stare at them with unbridled malevolence.

The Nazi agenda of biological racism found general assent throughout the German population and eventually transferred to the treatment of those black POWs who came under the domination of the Third Reich. In this world view, the German aryan stood at the zenith, all others were beneath them in descending order beginning with the Nordic Scandinavians followed by the western Europeans. Far down the Nazi hierarchy were the Slavs and below them the blacks, who were surmised to occupy the obscure boundary between human and primate.

Jews were not even included in this breakdown of racial distinctions. The delineation emphasized the Nazi viewpoint that Jews lacked even a connection to the inferior races but existed as a separate "anti-race." While there was no formalized Nazi program for the sys-

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The photographer has written a notation on the reverse of the photo that reads "Senegalschutze in Gefangenschaft—Oktober 1940." It translates to "Senegalese trooper in captivity—October 1940," the photo taken several months after the German victory and signing of the armistice with France.

tematic elimination of black peoples, they were subjected to sterilization, medical experimentation, incarceration, brutality, and murder.

While few Germans outside large cities had ever seen a black person, anti-black racism had developed in Germany's African colonies to the extent that the Reichstag, or German parliament, enacted legislation banning mixed black and white marriages in the colonies. This racism was imported to Germany after World War I by German colonialists who returned to the Fatherland after control of those African colonies was revoked by the Treaty of Versailles. Both before and after World War I, some Africans had emigrated to Germany where they would eventually become victims of the Third Reich.

In his post-*Mein Kampf* writings, Hitler, a veteran of World War I, often expressed his anti-black attitudes hand in hand with his anti-Semitic pronouncements. For example, he wrote in 1928, "...as France declines in her own people's power, this state proceeds to the opening up of her reservoir of black people. Thus a danger of unimaginable proportions

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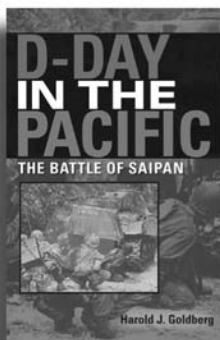
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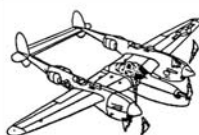
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**ABOVE:** A group of black soldiers has been harnessed to a wagon while another group digs ditches. In one instance, 1,000 French Army Senegalese soldiers, after being used as factory slave labor, were executed. One soldier takes a chance by giving the German salute. **BELOW:** A German officer smiles for the camera as he shows off his curiosity of war, French colonial soldiers. Most Germans had never seen a black person although they were designated among the *untermensch* or sub-humans along with Jews and Slavs.

draws near for Europe. The idea of French Negroes, who can contaminate white blood, on the Rhine as cultural guards against Germany is so monstrous that it would have been regarded as completely impossible only a few decades ago. Surely France itself would suffer great harm through this blood-pollution....”

German laws went into effect prohibiting mixed black-white children from attending universities and excluding them from most occupations, including military service. Just as Hitler ordered a moratorium on overt anti-Semitic activities during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, 18 black athletes on the U.S. team were “allowed” to compete.

Much to Hitler’s displeasure, Jesse Owens won four gold medals and became the star of the XI Olympiad while other black athletes also stepped onto the podium to receive medals. After the Olympics ended, the Third Reich again targeted those, including blacks, whom it deemed undesirable. The following year, the Gestapo was searching out “mixed” individuals for sterilization while others were funneled into experiments or simply disappeared.

Even some African American civilians were interned during the war, including jazz singer Valaida Snow and artist Josef Nassy. Jazz itself was characterized in Germany as a black cultural and racial threat, even though swing music was very popular with young Germans and members of the SS formed swing bands made up of prisoners in concentration camps. As Germany ignored the Geneva Convention, American black servicemen faced horrific treatment in concentration camps and at the hands of their captors. Among these were U.S. Merchant Marine sailor Lionel Romney, who was sent to Mauthausen, and pilot Lieutenant Darwin Nichols, who suffered in a



Gestapo prison.

While estimates of French military deaths during World War II range from 40,000 to 120,000, the number of French Colonial soldiers killed or executed by the German military is unknown. Some estimates run as high as 10,000, while thousands of others succumbed in POW camps.

While many spent years as prisoners, those who came under the authority of Vichy France were often sent to protect French interests abroad against the foes of the collaborationist government. By 1943, the *tirailleurs*, or colonial riflemen, were again utilized by Charles de Gaulle’s Free French forces, fighting for the liberation of Europe. □

*Author Paul Garson is a resident of Los Angeles. He recently published the book *Album of the Damned, a compilation of insightful photographs from the Third Reich.**

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# Epic Convoy Under Fire

THE ORDEAL OF THE PEDESTAL CONVOY SAVED THE ISLAND OF MALTA AT A TREMENDOUS PRICE.

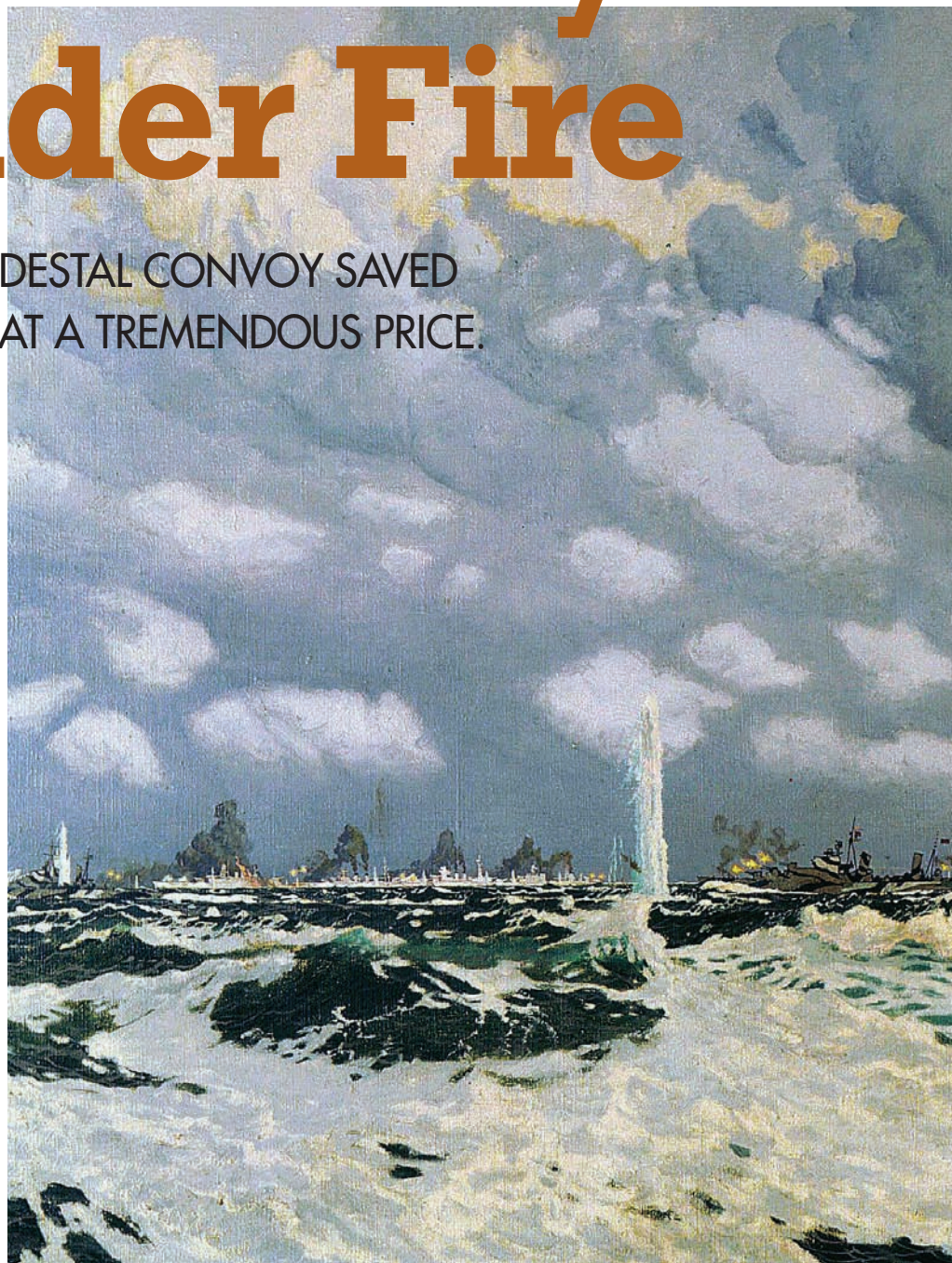
BY MICHAEL D. HULL

LOCATED 58 MILES SOUTH OF SICILY IN the Mediterranean Sea, the rocky, 122-square-mile island of Malta was the hinge upon which all Allied operations in the Middle East turned during the first half of World War II.

Torpedo bombers and submarines operating from the British crown colony and naval base maintained the only effective striking force against Axis convoys to North Africa. In the summer of 1942, only 40 percent of German supply ships were reaching Tunisia to nourish Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps and his Italian allies.

Malta was a strategic linchpin and, therefore, a prime target of the enemy. For the bitter years of 1940-1942, German and Italian bombers bludgeoned the island in a vain effort to pound it into submission, but the defenders—British troops and the staunch Maltese islanders—fought the longest epic defense action of the war. The tiny garrison never exceeded 25,000 fighting men, a few squadrons of Royal Air Force Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane fighters, and two flotillas of Royal Navy submarines.

Almost daily, the enemy bombers and fighters bombed and strafed Malta and its installations, while anti-aircraft batteries fired back and the islanders took shelter in limestone tunnels and caves. It was a desperate time. Almost every building on the island was destroyed or damaged, and the soldiers and airmen rarely left their trenches and air raid shelters, ready at any hour for the dreaded arrival of enemy para-



The Art Archive/Imperial War Museum

chute and glider-borne invaders.

Malta held on defiantly as the free world watched, but the situation became increasingly critical. Failing to overwhelm its defenders, the enemy clamped a tight blockade around Malta. As the island's resources ran low, the question of relief challenged Allied planners. In the first half of 1942, only one merchant ship in seven was

able to breach the blockade. There was a slender lifeline. British minelaying submarines based in Alexandria, Egypt—HMS *Cachalot*, HMS *Porpoise*, HMS *Rorqual*, HMS *Osiris*, HMS *Urge*, and others—were able to steal through with modest cargoes of medical stores, kerosene, armor-piercing shells, powdered milk, gasoline, and mailbags. But it was not enough.



**This painting graphically illustrates the relentless German and Italian attacks that took a heavy toll in shipping and lives as the Pedestal convoy made its arduous trek to Malta. The ordeal of the tanker *Ohio* was one of epic heroism. INSET: Italian motor torpedo boats such as this made repeated attacks against the Pedestal convoy and its escorts.**



Hardship and shortages beset Malta's defenders. The civilian population was subjected to tight rationing, subsisting on only 16 ounces of food a day. Fighter planes were forbidden to taxi to and from runways in order to conserve fuel. They were towed by trucks. Antiaircraft batteries were limited to 20 shells or four ammunition belts a day, according to caliber.

Malta had to be kept in the war somehow. The Germans and Italians were determined to knock it out. Between March and June 1942, no Allied ships reached the island. Each convoy making a relief effort was massacred by enemy planes and submarines. That July, with the outlook grimmer than ever, General John V. Gort, the governor of Malta, sent a signal to

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "Estimate food and petrol stocks will be exhausted by August 21 in spite of severe rationing. Hesitate to request further naval sacrifices, but cannot guarantee Malta's safety after this date without further supplies."

The message from Gort, a much-decorated hero of World War I and the 1940 Dunkirk



All photos Imperial War Museum unless credited otherwise

evacuation, was an understatement of the island's plight.

Hastily, the British Admiralty planned a desperate attempt to beat Lord Gort's deadline and save Malta—a large relief convoy code-named Operation Pedestal. It would be the most powerful convoy yet attempted, with a heavy fleet escort of battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, and destroyers shepherding 13 merchant ships and a tanker. On this complex operation—the most dangerous Allied convoy yet undertaken—depended the survival of Malta and, indirectly, the fate of millions.

The heavy escort was to be provided by two venerable sister battleships, HMS *Nelson* and HMS *Rodney*, each displacing 34,000 tons and armed with nine 16-inch guns and a dozen six-inchers. Vice Admiral Sir Neville Syfret flew his flag in *Nelson*, as flag officer commanding what was called Force Z. With him would go a squadron of three aircraft carriers—the new HMS *Indomitable*, the 1939-built HMS *Victorious*, and the aging HMS *Eagle*. Commanded by Rear Admiral A.L. St. George Lyster, carrying his flag in *Indomitable*, the three flattops mounted 46 Hurricanes, 10 Grumman Martlets (Wildcats), and 16 Fairey Fulmars of the Fleet Air Arm to provide fighter cover.

With this main escort would be three fast anti-aircraft cruisers—HMS *Charybdis*, HMS *Phoebe*, and HMS *Sirius*—and 14 destroyers. Providing close escort to the merchantmen were

the heavy cruisers HMS *Nigeria*, HMS *Kenya*, and HMS *Manchester*, and the anti-aircraft cruiser HMS *Cairo*, comprising Force X and led by Rear Admiral Sir Harold Burrough. The mission of this force, supported by 11 destroyers, was to cover the convoy through to Malta after Force Z had turned back to the Skerki Narrows, between Tunisia and southwestern Sicily.

In a separate operation from Pedestal, the carrier HMS *Furious*, with a destroyer escort, was to fly off 38 Spitfire fighters as reinforcements for Malta. Backing up the fleet were two oilers with a corvette escort, a deep-sea rescue tug, and a salvage vessel. All in all, it was the largest naval operation to be set in motion in the Mediterranean.

The fast merchant ships carrying 42,000 tons of food, flour, ammunition, and other supplies to beleaguered Malta were the *Port Chalmers*, in which the convoy commodore Royal Navy Commander A.G. Venables flew his pennant; *Santa Elisa* and *Almeria Lykes*, American-owned and -manned general cargo ships; *Wairangi*, *Waimarama*, and *Empire Hope* of the Shaw Savill Line; *Brisbane Star* and *Melbourne Star* of the Blue Star Line; *Dorset* of Federal Steam Navigation Co.; *Rochester Castle* of the Union Castle Line; *Deucalion* of the Blue Funnel Line; *Glenorchy* of the Glen Line; and *Clan Ferguson* of the Clan Line. The 14th cargo vessel, and arguably the most important because she was carrying desperately needed aviation fuel, was the new, 14,000-ton tanker *Ohio*.

**A Hawker Sea Hurricane fighter and a Fairey Albacore torpedo bomber sit on the aft portion of the flight deck of the aircraft carrier HMS Victorious. The carriers HMS Eagle and HMS Indomitable are visible astern. Four torpedoes from a German U-boat sank HMS Eagle during the Pedestal convoy's run to Malta. INSET: Captain Dudley Mason commanded the tanker Ohio during the Pedestal convoy and was hailed for his skill during the difficult passage.**

Owned by Texaco Oil Co., she had been loaned to the British for a special convoy. *Ohio* was manned by volunteer British seamen and commanded by Captain Dudley W. Mason of Eagle Oil & Shipping Co. of London. The tanker's ordeal in the Mediterranean would be hailed as one of the maritime epics of World War II.

Although no attempt was to be made to pass a second convoy through from the eastern end of the Mediterranean as had been done before, a cover plan was devised whereby Admiral Sir Henry Harwood would mount a dummy operation from Alexandria in company with Admiral Sir Philip Vian from Haifa, Palestine. The idea was to confuse waiting German and Italian naval and air units, whose commanders knew that the British would make another attempt to relieve besieged Malta. A total of five cruisers, 15 destroyers, and five merchantmen would sail as if bound for Malta, and then, on the second night out, disperse and turn back. It was hoped that this would tie down some of the enemy forces.

Meanwhile, Air Vice Marshal Keith Park on

Malta was to hold in readiness a torpedo bomber strike force in case the Italian Fleet might be tempted to leave its major base at Taranto. Park, a distinguished fighter group leader in the 1940 Battle of Britain, would keep the rest of his air strength, 130 fighters, for support of the Pedestal convoy. Six Royal Navy submarines from Malta were to patrol west of the island in case Italian warships tried to interfere in the area of Pantelleria, while two would prowl to the north of Sicily.

Even as the Pedestal ships were loaded and crews mustered in Scotland's River Clyde, the enemy waited in the Mediterranean. German and Italian bombers, dive-bombers, and torpedo planes were lined up on the airfields of Sicily and Sardinia along with fighters and reconnaissance aircraft. About 70 planes were on alert as a reception committee for the British convoy. Eighteen Italian submarines and three German U-boats were on patrol off Malta and between Algiers and the Balearic Islands; German E-boats and Italian motor torpedo boats lay in wait off Cape Bon, Tunisia, where a new minefield had been sown, and three heavy and three light cruisers along with 10 destroyers were ready to intercept the Pedestal convoy south of Sicily.

As the convoy ships assembled in the Clyde, Captain Mason, the lithe, 40-year-old skipper of the tanker *Ohio*, briefed his crew in the petty officers' mess. "We sail this afternoon," he said quietly. "Our destination is Malta; you all know what that means.... *Ohio* is the only tanker. We

shall have to fight with 13,000 tons of high-octane fuel aboard. Now is the time for anyone who wants to back out to say so. I must warn you that if you choose to go ashore, you will be kept in custody of the naval provost marshal until the operation is over. Secrecy is essential."

He paused, and there was no movement from his tense crew members. Holding a letter from the Admiralty, Mason continued, "Before you start on this operation, the First Sea Lord and I are anxious that you should know how grateful the Board of Admiralty are to you for undertaking this difficult task. Malta has for some time been in great danger. It is imperative that she be kept supplied. These are her critical

**"MALTA HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN IN GREAT DANGER. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT SHE BE KEPT SUPPLIED. SHE HAS STOOD UP TO THE MOST VIOLENT ATTACKS FROM THE AIR THAT HAVE EVER BEEN MADE. HER COURAGE IS WORTHY OF YOU. WE WISH YOU GOD SPEED AND GOOD LUCK."**

months, and we cannot fail her. She has stood up to the most violent attacks from the air that have ever been made. Her courage is worthy of you. We wish you God speed and good luck."

Mason, shy but firm, and a veteran of several naval actions, left the mess to prepare for getting underway. The convoy formed up outside the Clyde on the afternoon of Sunday, August 2, 1942, and set course southward for the British bastion of Gibraltar at the western end of the Mediterranean. The ships steamed in three parallel columns, and the crews were told their destination on the first morning at sea. Additional Oerlikon and heavier antiaircraft guns had been mounted on the freighters'

decks, and the Royal Navy and Maritime Regiment crews underwent constant exercises.

*Ohio* was fourth in line in the starboard column. Mason paced the bridge, fearful of what lay ahead. Based on the fates of previous Malta convoys, he knew that as many as a dozen of the 14 ships would probably not reach the island. A camp bed had been set up on the bridge for Mason, but it would be seldom used in the grim days ahead.

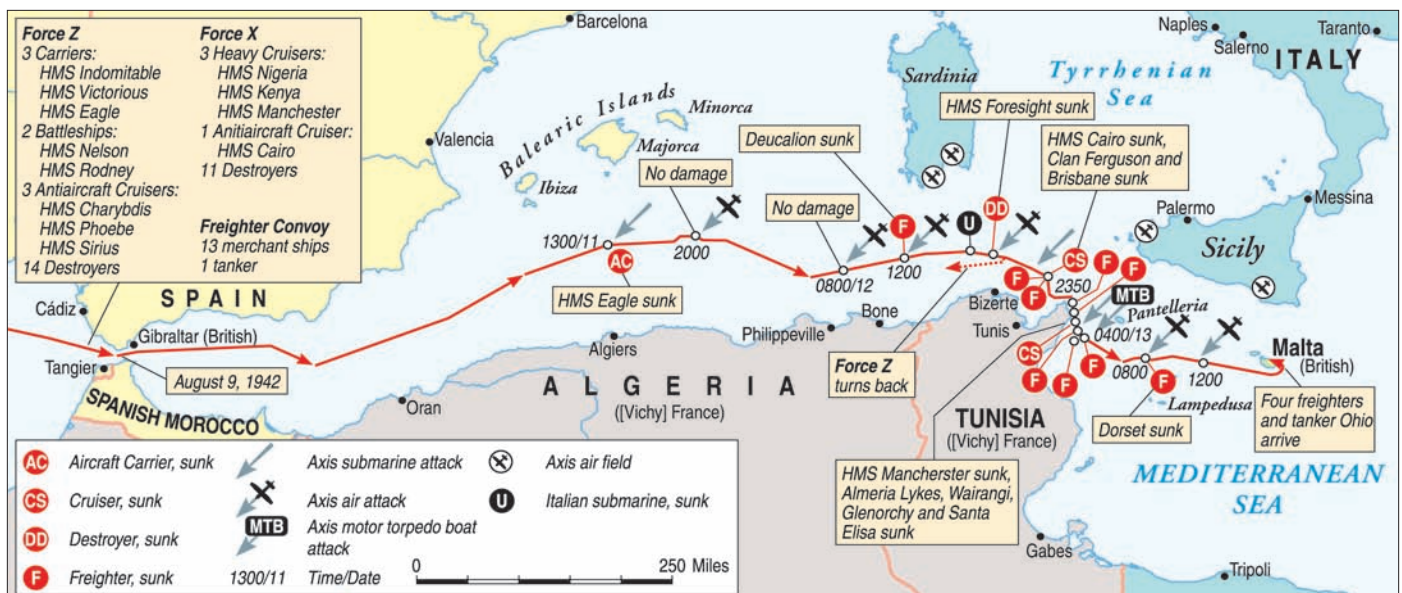
The Pedestal ships forged southward into the Bay of Biscay, where U-boats and Focke-Wulf bombers prowled. It was feared that the convoy would have to run a deadly gauntlet, but there were only occasional skirmishes, which were swiftly dealt with by Royal Navy escorts. There

was no serious threat to the convoy, yet.

At dawn on Sunday, August 9, the convoy wheeled from the Atlantic through the Gibraltar Strait and into the warm Mediterranean. Nine destroyers hugged the convoy on either beam and up ahead, while close astern three more destroyers shepherded the carriers *Illustrious* and *Eagle*. Well ahead on the horizon steamed four cruisers with attendant destroyers, while, far out on the port beam, five cruisers and six destroyers screened the carriers *Indomitable* and *Victorious*. It was an impressive display of naval might.

Tension mounted on the bridges and decks of all vessels as Admiral Harold Burrough flashed

**Following its passage through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Pedestal convoy was under almost continuous attack for days. Those merchant ships that survived, however, provided much needed sustenance for the embattled island of Malta.**





**LEFT: An Italian SM-79 Sparrow torpedo bomber looses its torpedo against a ship of the Pedestal convoy on August 12, 1942. Although the SM-79 appeared somewhat ungainly, it proved an effective weapon in both the torpedo and dive-bomber roles.**

flight deck crewmen perished, and the rest of her 1,160-man complement was rescued by destroyers and the fleet tug *Jaunty*.

Flying at 100 feet above the water, Italian torpedo bombers swept in to attack the convoy. On the *Ohio*'s bridge, Captain Mason watched in horror as the leading ship in the port column disintegrated under the impact of two hits. Mason's quartermaster struggled to keep the laden tanker steady as torpedoes straddled her, some no more than 10 feet away. The convoy's gunners fired back tirelessly at the raiders, and the enemy's first

**RIGHT: Depth-charged and rammed by British warships, the Italian submarine *Cobalto* wallows with heavy damage and appears to be sinking. Coordinated attacks by German and Italian forces ravaged the convoy, but the attackers suffered substantial losses as well.**

an ominous signal from his flagship, the cruiser HMS *Nigeria*: "All ships to action stations until further notice!"

During the convoy's first day in the Mediterranean, the enemy kept out of sight. There were false alarms and brief bursts of gunfire from tense anti-aircraft crews aboard the ships. The second day passed in the same way, with the gunners testing their weapons, eating hurried meals, and maintaining vigilance.

Dawn on the third day, Tuesday, August 11, came calm, sunny, and deceptively serene. Then, Captain Mason of the *Ohio* and hundreds of other men throughout the convoy stiffened when they heard the faint rhythm of aircraft engines. As Mason trained his binoculars on tiny silver specks 20,000 feet above, the serenity was shattered rudely and swiftly. Bombs screamed down, and a merchant ship astern of the *Ohio* vanished behind a curtain of flame, cordite, and water splashes. A stick of bombs fell across the gap between *Ohio*'s bows and the stern of the ship ahead as the attack intensified.

The carriers swung into the wind to launch their fighters, and the combined guns of the convoy blasted a reply to the enemy. Two near misses to port drenched the tanker's bridge, and Mason fought back an urge to take avoiding action. He was under strict orders to maintain course and speed unless his vessel was directly threatened.

Meanwhile, an Italian submarine made an unsuccessful attack on the carriers, and German and Italian reconnaissance planes located the convoy. The ordeal of the Pedestal convoy was underway. The 24 British destroyers and



the cruiser HMS *Cairo* took on fuel from the three-tanker supply force, while, south of the Balearic Islands, the carrier HMS *Furious* flew off 37 Spitfires for Malta and was then met by the reserve destroyers *Keppel*, *Malcolm*, *Venomous*, *Wolverine*, and *Wrestler* for the return journey to Gibraltar.

A German U-boat, *U-73*, commanded by Lieutenant Helmut Rosenbaum, stalked the convoy and succeeded in diving undetected beneath the destroyer screen. Shortly after 1 PM on August 11, he loosed a salvo of four torpedoes at the carrier *Eagle*. All four struck, and a huge hole was blown in the port side of the gallant ship, which had dispatched 183 Spitfires to Malta during the past year. Her squadrons of fighters, ready for takeoff, cascaded overboard as *Eagle* toppled on her side. The aging flattop—launched in 1918 as a Chilean battleship and completed as a carrier in 1923—sank in eight minutes. Two hundred and sixty pilots and

assault was beaten off, but not without losses. Meanwhile, the British fought back desperately. Ten RAF Bristol Beaufighters and 16 Hurricanes raided Italian air bases in Sardinia.

The convoy sailed on, waiting for the next attack to develop. It came in the late afternoon when 80 torpedo bombers, more than 200 Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive-bombers, and a covering force of 100 fighters came in from all directions. The ships' gunners opened up again, and the carriers *Victorious*, *Indomitable*, and *Illustrious* flew off every available fighter to meet the new threat. Captain Mason watched the Stukas break formation and scream down in almost vertical dives. Bombs and torpedoes plastered the convoy, and the *Ohio* was the principal target. The tanker moved sluggishly as bombs fell ahead, astern, and on either side of her. Miraculously, the *Ohio* emerged unscathed from the inferno.

The enemy planes headed for home, and the Pedestal convoy was left in peace for half an

hour. The welcome respite was all too brief, and the third attack of the day came without warning as 100 Stukas plummeted suddenly on the convoy. The ship ahead of the *Ohio* erupted in roaring flame, while a cloud of dive-bombers descended on an ammunition freighter opposite *Ohio* in the port column. She exploded with a huge flash that seared Captain Mason's face 300 yards away. There were no survivors.

**The evening of August 11 closed in.** Against the glow of the setting sun, the sky was black with bursting shells interlaced with streaming tracers. The scorecard for the furious day was not encouraging. Eight enemy bombers, 12 torpedo bombers, and 26 Stukas had been shot down, but the convoy had lost a carrier, two destroyers, and three freighters. Six Fleet Air Arm fighters had failed to return.

At midnight, the raiders returned—36 German Junkers Ju-88 and Heinkel He-111 bombers. The ships' anti-aircraft crews sprang into action again, and the carriers launched their fighters without pretense at blackouts. A great moonlit air battle raged in the deep blue high above the convoy, and the raiders were driven off shortly before dawn. The scorecard showed some improvement for Pedestal. Another merchantman had been sunk, but four enemy bombers had been shot down and two U-boats claimed as destroyed. Aboard the *Ohio*, the chief engineer reported to Captain Mason, "Leak in port side of engine room, sir. Near miss blew in some rivets. We are shoring up now."

August 12, the fourth day of running the deadly gauntlet from Gibraltar to Malta, dawned serene and calm as the remaining eight merchant ships forged on with their escorts. The destroyer HMS *Wolverine* rammed and sank an Italian submarine attempting to attack the returning carrier HMS *Furious*, and a Short Sunderland flying boat bombed and damaged another Italian submarine.

The convoy battle resumed about an hour after dawn with the arrival of 19 Ju-88s from the north. The merchant ships dodged bombs and torpedoes while destroyers hunted U-boats and the carriers threw up a canopy of gunfire. Through it all, the *Ohio* butted slowly forward between near misses. Six planes were downed and the rest driven off. At midday, the convoy was again assaulted, this time by 98 Italian and German bombers and torpedo planes. The transport *Deucalion* was damaged and left behind with the destroyer HMS *Bramham*. Two Italian bombers hit the carrier HMS *Victorious*, but their armor-piercing bombs rebounded from her armored deck.

During the afternoon of August 12, enemy submarines were repeatedly repelled by the destroyers *Tartar*, *Zetland*, and *Pathfinder*. Later that afternoon, 29 Stukas scored three severe hits on the carrier HMS *Indomitable*, which was then unable to operate aircraft. Fourteen Italian torpedo bombers crippled the destroyer HMS *Foresight*, which later had to be sunk by HMS *Tartar*. After a pause at dusk, two Italian submarines sneaked in close to the convoy, scoring hits on the cruisers *Cairo* and *Nigeria* and the *Ohio*. *Cairo* had to be abandoned, and *Nigeria* turned back with three destroyers.

While her exhausted, sweating gunners were collapsed at their stations, two torpedoes struck the *Ohio* near the bow on the starboard side. She staggered under the shock as part of the main deck gave in, her steering gear broke down, and communications between the bridge and the engine room were severed. But the engines turned, and Captain Mason sighed with relief. Soon, however, even this was denied. The engine room became silent, and the

**British Army gunners man a 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun aboard the freighter *Melbourne Star*. The Bofors guns were actually part of the ship's cargo but were used to augment its close-in defenses.**

wrecked generators darkened the tanker. As night fell, the enemy pursued the convoy while the *Ohio*, drifting helplessly further astern, was left alone. There was no time to waste on crippled ships.

At dawn on August 13, patrolling enemy planes sighted the tanker and attacked her continuously throughout the fifth morning. Shortly after noon, two destroyers raced back from the convoy. HMS *Ashanti*, Admiral Burrough's flagship, ranged alongside the *Ohio*. Over a loudspeaker, he hailed Captain Mason, "What are your chances of rejoining the convoy?" Mason, having no loudspeaker, gave a laconic thumbs-down signal. "Sorry about this," the admiral shouted. "We wanted you to get through most of all. Now I must get back to the convoy and report your position to the rescue ships. Good luck!" The destroyers departed at full speed, leaving *Ohio* alone to face whatever lay ahead.

The convoy, meanwhile, received another pasting from the air. Thirty Ju-88s bombed the transports *Empire Hope* and *Glenorchy*, and seven He-111s forced the *Brisbane Star* to halt. An Italian submarine torpedoed and damaged the cruiser HMS *Kenya* and the freighter *Clan Ferguson*, and another Italian submarine fin-



ished off the *Empire Hope*. Several hundred miles away in the eastern Mediterranean, the second half of the Pedestal attempt to relieve Malta failed. Admiral Vian's convoy of eight merchantmen was forced to take violent evasive action to avoid the full might of the Italian Fleet. Five freighters were sunk by planes and a sixth torpedoed. The other two were so damaged that they were beached on the North African coast.

On August 13, in a desperate bid to distract enemy attention from Admiral Burrough's battered convoy, the cruisers *Arethusa* and *Cleopatra* and the destroyers *Javelin*, *Kelvin*, *Sikh*, and *Zulu* bombarded enemy installations on the island of Rhodes. But the attacks on the convoy continued as Italian motor torpedo boats swept in 15 times in four hours. They severely damaged the cruiser *Manchester*, which had to be abandoned, and sank the crippled freighter

*Glenorchy* and the *Santa Elisa*, *Almeria Lykes*, and *Wairangi*.

Throughout the afternoon of August 13, the crew of the listing *Ohio* toiled to restore her power. Around 4 PM, she began to vibrate with a familiar throb, and her propellers turned. Ragged cheers broke out from the weary crewmen. The engines held, Captain Mason ordered full speed ahead, and the tanker pursued the convoy at 17 knots. That night, the cruiser *Charybdis* and destroyers *Eskimo* and *Somali* joined the convoy as reinforcements.

At daylight on August 14, the sixth morning of the operation, the *Ohio* caught up with the convoy and resumed her station in the starboard column. She was greeted by the sirens and hooters of her fellow merchantmen and escorts, but Captain Mason was stunned at the pitiful depletion of the convoy. An hour later, the enemy air attacks resumed. He-111s, Ju-88s, Ju-87s, and Italian SM-79 torpedo

bombers sank the transport *Waimarama* and scored hits on the transports *Dorset*, *Port Chalmers*, and *Rochester Castle*.

The sole tanker in the tiny fleet was not spared. A crippled Stuka smashed into the *Ohio* and exploded on her foredeck, starting fires. Crewmen rushed to heave the burning plane over the side as a bomb hit the afterdeck, killing 10 gunners. Two more bombs straddled the tanker, lifting her out of the water. She dropped back on one side, threatening for a moment to capsize. By the time the *Ohio* and her blackened crew had recovered, the engines had gone silent again. Once more, she was wallowing astern of the convoy.

The tanker's engineers went to work again, and, through some miracle of mechanical ingenuity, got the engines started after two hours' effort. The *Ohio* moved forward at four knots an hour. At noon on August 14, the port boiler blew up and wrecked the main deck aft of the bridge. The *Ohio* stopped, and then the starboard boiler also exploded, killing a dozen engineers and six deck hands fighting the fires. The tanker was a blackened shambles by now.

Overwhelmed, Captain Mason grabbed a signal lamp and sent a message to the nearest ship for relaying to the destroyer HMS *Asbanti*: "Unable to proceed further. Can remain afloat for only a few hours. Can you help?"

Admiral Burrough responded by dispatching two destroyers to take the tanker in tow, and for the next six hours the three ships fought off air attacks while trying to pass towlines to each other. Dusk brought synchronized attacks by Italian motor torpedo boats and bombers. When six of the enemy boats raced toward the *Ohio* to finish her off, the destroyers broke off towing operations to intercept. One of them ran into a torpedo intended for the tanker, blew up, and sank in seconds. The other destroyer drove off the motor torpedo boats with her guns, picked up the survivors of her sister ship, and drew alongside the *Ohio* again.

Her captain shouted, "I'll stay with you and radio for more help." Half an hour later another destroyer arrived to circle the tanker as protection against the torpedo boats.

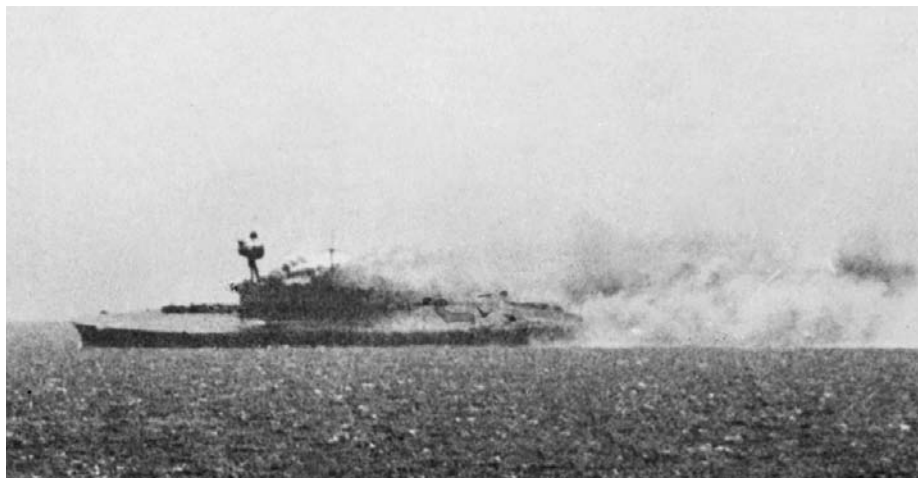
The *Ohio* was in sorry shape as she limped along, low in the water. Half of the crew was dead and 10 seriously wounded. Other wounded crewmen helped to keep the few remaining batteries firing. Captain Mason, who had gone for several nights without sleep, was exhausted. If his crippled ship could make it into the Grand Harbor at Valletta, it would be a miracle, but he never gave up hope.

He was preoccupied when he suddenly heard the high-pitched whine of a falling bomb. He

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**ABOVE:** The moment of impact is captured as a torpedo from the Italian submarine *Axum* strikes the port side of the tanker *Ohio* on August 12, 1942. The *Ohio* endured numerous bomb and torpedo hits to deliver its cargo of fuel to Malta. **BELOW:** Aflame from multiple torpedo hits and listing heavily, the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* is in its death throes. Launched in 1918, the elderly warship sank in minutes on August 11, 1942.



knew instinctively that it would hit the *Ohio*. A second later, it crashed through the superstructure behind the bridge, exploded in the engine room, and blew a 15-foot hole in the port side. Mercifully, it was above the water line. The attacks continued. Throughout the night of August 14, the tanker and her two attendant destroyers fought off one torpedo boat attack after another. The shattered tanker was lower in the water, but help was on the way.

After the surviving merchantmen—*Melbourne Star*, *Port Chalmers*, and *Rochester Castle*—had arrived safely at Malta, met by seven minesweepers, Admiral Burrough dispatched his Fleet Air Arm fighters to shield the lagging *Ohio*. The two destroyers on each side of the tanker passed wire hawsers to each other under her keel in order to keep her afloat.



The *Ohio* no longer floated; she was resting on a jury-rigged network of wires. The bizarre threesome plodded on toward Malta. When Burrough's cruiser squadron steamed past on its way back to Gibraltar, the admiral signaled, "Only three ships got through with provisions and ammunition. They need you to survive. RAF are making final sorties with exhausted fuel today and tomorrow. All Malta awaits your arrival. God bless you. I am proud to have sailed with you."

The *Ohio* and her two shepherds were approaching Malta at last, but the enemy did not give up. German fighters swarmed overhead and clashed with the Fleet Air Arm umbrella, while bombers dived yet again. A near miss carried away the *Ohio*'s rudder and blew a hole in her stern. Water poured in, and she settled even lower, dragging down the destroyers under her weight.

The situation improved at 8 PM on August 14, when Malta was sighted. Tugs sailed out to assist the three ships, and Captain Mason gained the respite for which he had prayed. Confident that the *Ohio* was sinking rapidly, the enemy called off their attacks. That night, the tanker and destroyer crews, aided by the tugs, struggled to keep the *Ohio* afloat by passing more hawsers beneath her.

When dawn broke on August 15, the *Ohio*



**ABOVE:** The deck of the tanker *Ohio* shows the scars of battle inflicted when a German aircraft was struck by British fire and crashed into the large tanker. **LEFT:** Battered but unbowed, *Ohio* approaches the harbor at Malta after enduring horrific damage and casualties at the hands of Axis attackers.

The vessel is supported by the destroyers HMS *Penn* and HMS *Ledbury*. After her cargo of fuel was offloaded, the *Ohio* was sunk outside the harbor. **FAR LEFT:** During the night of August 13, 1942, a British cruiser fires on marauding Italian motor torpedo boats, which have dashed into the midst of the Pedestal convoy to launch torpedoes. The intrepid Italians did manage several hits during the course of their attacks on the slow convoy.

was only a mile outside Valletta harbor. It was the Maltese national holiday, the Feast of Santa Marija. On the island, thousands of civilians mingled with British soldiers, sailors, and airmen on the quaysides. On rooftops and both sides of the craggy harbor entrance, they silently watched the miracle of deliverance—the *Ohio*'s survival and their own. Fussed over by the tugs and accompanied by the destroyers *Penn*, *Ledbury*, and *Bramham*, the smoking, wallowing tanker took an hour to cover the last mile.

As her battered bows passed between the outer moles of the harbor, the silence ashore was broken by a faint cheer. Then the applause swelled, drowning the thunder of guns fired in salute. Union Jacks and handkerchiefs were waved, turning the quayside crowds into a mass of heaving color. A military band played "Tipperary," the "Beer Barrel Polka," and other wartime hymns of hope. Aboard the *Ohio*, Captain Mason paused from helping to keep

the fires under control, gave a faint smile, and wept unashamedly. His grim prediction about the convoy's fate had proved accurate.

While the stricken tanker was being nudged alongside the harbor's oil wharves, signals to Mason poured in. Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, "Splendid work; well done," and a message from the Admiralty in London read simply, "Well done, *Ohio*." Lord Gort spoke for the islanders themselves: "We are all so happy to see you and your fine ship safely in harbor after such an anxious and hazardous passage. You have saved Malta."

The *Ohio*, whose decks had been awash for a long time, was berthed alongside the sunken auxiliary tanker *Plumleaf* at the Parlatorio Wharf. As her cargo of 13,000 tons of aviation gasoline was unloaded that day, the *Ohio* began to settle on the bottom. It had been a close thing. On the evening of August 15, the commander of the RAF fighters in Malta reported to Lord

*Continued on page 81*

# Fighting on the Face of

The grueling battle for Fort Driant proved a formidable task that stymied the U.S. Third Army at Metz.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

BEFORE RETREATING FROM FORT DRIANT, PRIVATE TOM Tucker lit the fuse on 6,000 pounds of explosives. “We pulled the fuse lighter and took off,” recalled Tucker. As he raced toward the bottom of the hill, he suddenly hit the ground rolling. His helmet fell off, and he lost his rifle. “I thought I had been shot.”

A retreat was not what Lt. Gen. George S. Patton envisioned when he planned his attacks east of Paris. He wanted to cross Germany’s Rhine River as the fall weather closed in, not fight a brutal slugging match around the French city of Metz. After the brilliant breakout from the Normandy beachhead in August, Patton’s Third Army found itself stalemated by fuel shortages, stiff resistance, strong enemy defenses, and a lack of air cover. Gone were the days of racing in all directions and liberating huge swaths of French soil from German control. The Allies’ fuel crisis of September had been resolved, but it gave the German Army time to reorganize.

The key to the defenses of the city of Metz was Fort Driant, an ancient fortress that had been integrated into the French Maginot Line. It functioned more as a beached battleship than a fort, boasting four batteries, each with three cannons. Two of the batteries housed 100mm guns, and two others housed 150mm

howitzers. The trapezoid-shaped fort covered more than 350 acres and sat atop a steep hill overlooking the Moselle River. The whole area bristled with machine-gun nests and mortar trenches, connected by tunnels to the main fort.

Driant’s battery fire killed Americans and frustrated bridge-building efforts on the Moselle. If Patton wanted to plunge ahead, he would first



Kevin Hymel

**ABOVE: Slowly being reclaimed by Mother Nature, today the entrance to Fort Driant lies abandoned. RIGHT: Shown during the war, the battle-scarred entrance to Fort Driant bears mute testimony to the violent clash of opposing armies.**



# the Moon





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have to neutralize Driant. That job went to the U.S. 5th Infantry Division—the Red Diamonds.

“It was like the face of the moon up there,” recalled Tucker, an engineer with B Company, 7th Combat Engineer Battalion, attached to the 5th Infantry Division. Tucker had served with the division through the hedgerow fighting in Normandy and the race through Avranches, Orleans, Chartres, and Reims.

“We had relatively light resistance during the race across France—Driant was different,” said Tucker. One attack had already been repulsed, and the division was gearing up for another on October 3, 1944. To

support the attack, engineers who had already advanced beyond the Moselle were called back

**An aerial view of Fort Driant offers some perspective on the difficult terrain, which complicated the task of the American troops assaulting the fortifications.**

for a vital mission.

“We were sent back across the Moselle to help put together snakes, which were like bangalore torpedoes,” Tucker recalled, “but, because they were so big, had to be pushed forward by tanks. When we

arrived, someone had put a head on the snake to keep it from plowing into the mud. There was

## A RETURN TO FORT DRIANT CONJURED UP VIVID MEMORIES.

Tom Tucker has returned to France a number of times since World War II. He first visited in 1990 with a group of 5th Infantry Division veterans and their wives, retracing the division’s path during the war. One of his fellow travelers told him that Fort Driant was off-limits because of unexploded ordnance and because French soldiers trained there. He would need special permission from the mayor of Metz if he wanted to go there.

Tucker, who wanted to explore the area and find his old foxhole, acted. “I came home and fired off a letter to the mayor, who gave me permission.”

On Tucker’s second trip, in 1991, he and his wife were greeted by a French engineer who was in charge of the old forts in the area. Tucker suspected he was an ordnance veteran since he was missing some fingers. The guided tour was still disappointing since Tucker could not recognize any landmarks. “I still was not too oriented and had trouble finding the

S barracks. To this day I get lost,” he said.

Finally, on a trip in 1992 Tucker found his old foxhole. Elizabeth Gozzo and Didier Burki, members of the Thanks GIs Association, who are erecting a monument to the soldiers who fought in the area, escorted him around the fort, making sure he did not stray onto dangerous ground.

“I kept looking for my foxhole and found it on top that little ridge,” he recalled. Tucker jumped into the hole and began orienting himself to what was around him 48 years earlier. He posed for some pictures with his new friends and his old home.

After Tucker headed back to the United States, Burki dug into the foxhole, hoping to find some mementos to send to Tucker. Instead, he found 10 unexploded German antipersonnel mines. Fortunately, they were all deactivated, but the incident left everyone a bit shaken. Decades later, Fort Driant is still a deadly place. □



a welder there welding it while we stuffed it full of explosives.”

The attack commenced as planned, but Tucker and his squad's work was in vain. Under cloudy skies, the 5th Infantry jumped off at noon, spearheaded by the snake-pushing tanks. Soon one tank lost its snake, while two tanks broke down. By the time the infantry reached the barbed wire surrounding the fort, all the snakes had become either detached or had been discarded.

Nevertheless, while Sherman tanks fired over their heads, the men charged the German defenses and headed for two concrete barracks, designated S and R. They captured both but found themselves dueling with hand grenades against Germans who had infiltrated R. The Americans soon realized that the barracks were connected to other parts of Fort Driant.

Tucker arrived on the battlefield the next day aboard a tank. “They took the crew out of the tank. We were crammed in for the ride up the hill. I couldn't get out of there fast enough,” he said. A soldier then directed the engineers where to go. Tucker appreciated the guidance, since he could not get his bearings. “It was black up there,” he remembered.

Napalm runs by planes of the XIX Tactical Air Command had burned the ground. Artillery and small-arms fire had torn up the green fields, leaving a muddy, cratered landscape. Because of the intense fire, only tanks could bring supplies to the front lines, churning up the fort's muddy slopes.

Heavy fighting continued in the tunnels underneath Barracks S and R. Tucker spent the day keeping the fighting men supplied by running munitions into the tunnels. It was just the first day of what would become a very long week. Tucker would spend the next six days running supplies, pulling sentry duty, and blasting the Germans in subterranean tunnels, all dangerous duty.

As a supply runner, Tucker off-loaded ammunition, water, and food from tanks and stored them in Barracks S. “We spent a lot of time going in and out, off-loading supplies for the entire battalion,” he remembered. “The injured needed a lot of water. We had about 570 casualties.”

The air was constantly alive with artillery rounds and small-arms fire. “There was a lot of noise, but you get so used to it that you can't define it,” Tucker confessed. Other bypassed German forts in the area fired on Driant. Despite the heavy fire, Tucker was too busy to duck. “I was always on the move, I never hit the deck.” Most heavy rounds sounded the same except for the dreaded 88mm guns. The

weapons made a cracking sound while other German guns boomed. “It didn't make a difference what they were firing at us, but we could always tell the 88s.”

During one of Tucker's trips out of the barracks, he saw a German tank and made a dash for it. “I got out of there as fast as I could,”

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Tucker commented. Today, his fellow Red Diamonds are convinced he saw a Sherman tank, but Tucker is adamant. “There is a big hole in the S Barracks that I'm sure was made by that German tank's cannon.”

Tucker served as a sentry in several locations on Driant. While at a bunker south of Casement



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**Bombs dropped by P-47 fighter bombers of the Allied XIX Tactical Air Command pummel Fort Driant. ABOVE: Thomas B. Tucker, B Company, 7th Combat Engineer Battalion, 5th Infantry Division, is shown in uniform in December 1944. TOP: Hugging the bank of the Moselle River in eastern France, American soldiers await the impact of German mortar shells during the bitter campaign to bring the war to German soil.**



P, he stayed in a foxhole a few yards from the entrance. “We could not stay there during the day because it was under enemy observation.”

Tucker stayed in the bunker during the day and crept out to the foxhole at night. For three nights, he and his foxhole partner, Chuck Risser, listened for any noise. Unable to use their rifles for fear of giving away their position, they tossed hand grenades at any sound in the pitch black. The result: “We probably killed every field mouse on that hill.”

While on duty one night, Tucker received word that two platoons of Red Diamond infantry would pass by his position, so he knew not to throw grenades. A bit later, the men silently crept passed him. “Boy, they were quiet.” But their professionalism made little difference. Soon after passing Tucker, the entire group disappeared. “They made it to a flat field and either got captured or killed,” he explained. “There are still men missing from that fight.”

To rout out the Germans, the 5th turned its focus on the tunnels connecting the barracks and casements to the main fort. Steel doors and iron gates barred entry, and the tunnels were narrow, allowing only two men to pass through, an easy target for the Germans. The only way to take the tunnels was to blast the Germans out. The Americans built barricades as close to the doors or gates as possible, then rotated teams of engineers forward to place charges.

“When it was my turn, we wormed our way down the tunnel,” recalled Tucker. “Then we sneaked up to the door and placed the explosives as close as possible to it.” It was danger-

ous work; the Germans had cut slits in the doors for covering fire where even a ricochet could kill a man in the confined space.

Once the explosives blew, the men attacked. The bludgeoning tactic was slow but effective. Tucker said, “We had to rotate the men because you couldn’t breathe in there. You could do a lot of damage

**Following their occupation of Fort Driant, soldiers of the U.S. 5th Infantry Division rest and clean their weapons in the former machine shop used by its previous occupants, battle-hardened German troops.**

with Composition C—which could cut a railroad track in half with just a small amount.” The only problem was that the Germans simply retreated to the next steel door in the tunnel. Another team would enter the tunnel and repeat the maneuver.

The enemy also took to blowing up sections of Driant. While engineers were working on the tunnel between Casement P and Barracks R, the Germans set off an explosive so big that it cracked the top of the tunnel, uplifted the earth, and blew out part of Casement P.

“The Germans had built a brick wall, put the explosives in it, and built another brick wall to contain the explosion,” explained Tucker. “There were bricks everywhere, and it even killed several Germans.” One of Tucker’s friends was injured so badly from the explosion that he was mistaken for dead. “He was lying in a pile of dead when a medic walked by and happened to see him move.” The medic pulled the surviving soldier out of the pile and began administering to his injuries.

As a testament either to French engineering or the intensity of the battle, Tucker admits he never heard the explosion. “We were down in a bunker southwest of Casement P and never felt anything. You get so used to the noise that you didn’t pay much attention.”

Total casualties from the explosion were unknown. “There was great speculation on our side,” Tucker mused, “because nobody really got to the spot until after the war.”

The entire time Tucker was on top of Driant he never saw a single airplane, but he did not

## THIRD ARMY CROSSED THE RHINE IN MARCH 1945.

Tom Tucker was one of the first men from Patton’s Third Army to cross the Rhine River, the last natural barrier to the heart of Germany. Although the U.S. First Army had already captured an intact bridge over the river at Remagen, there was still a rivalry between Patton and British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery to cross next. Montgomery was supposed to make the next crossing in a complex operation utilizing ground and airborne troops. Patton simply used ad hoc tactics to push the 5th Infantry across.

On the night of March 22, 1945, with no artillery preparation or air cover, assault boats of the 5th Infantry began their quiet crossing near Oppenheim. “This kind of came as a surprise, but everything was so well prepared for us,” recalled Tucker. Although his unit was spearheading the attack toward the river, he assumed there would be a pause to get organized for the crossing. Instead, he commented, “They brought up a row of trucks filled with assault boats. It was really a simple thing, just like basic training.”

Tucker and another engineer packed themselves into one of the first boats with the infantry. “Our orders were to get the infantry to the east bank, then push our boat back into the river and let it float downstream.”

To prevent beached boats from blocking follow-up waves, the engineers were ordered to push as many boats back into the river as possible and then gather up the rest of the engineers who landed and pile into a single boat to return. Although the crossing was unevenful and drew no enemy fire, Tucker remembered, “We swore not to push our boat into the water.”

Instead, once the infantrymen scrambled onto the shore, Tucker and his fellow engineer simply got back into their boat and paddled back across. “We figured we had a perfectly good boat. I

mind. “It probably would have killed more Americans than Germans,” he related.

The fighting foreshadowed what was coming in the Pacific, where Japanese soldiers learned to remain in their fortified bunkers and extract as many casualties as possible in places like Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Despite all the heavy German fire, Tucker never spotted the enemy. When he did fire at enemy positions, it was basically as covering fire. “But that’s how it was up there, we were only on the surface,” he said. “We never took the fort.”

As for food, Tucker and his comrades ate nothing but K rations, dry foods such as crackers, and chocolate bars. “Other forms of food were too bulky for delivery up to the fort,” he added. Tucker was so busy however, that he has no recollections of ever dining. “I don’t remember eating and I don’t remember going to the bathroom—but I know I must have done both.” As for relieving themselves, the men designated a corner of the S Barracks as a bathroom. Relief was a bit harsher for men on sentry duty: “Maybe you could get out of your foxhole or use your helmet,” he said.

The Americans had a toehold on the southwest corner of Driant, but the Germans made life miserable. Other sections of the fort fired onto the American-occupied corner. Tucker and the men of the 5th took 50 percent casualties in their exposed positions, while the Germans were safe in well-protected bunkers.

The Germans were able to fight the Red Diamonds to a stalemate during intense close

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combat. Water and ammunition were running low for the Red Diamonds while the dead piled up. The tunnels beneath the barracks were choked with fumes from explosions. The men were spent and had little to show for their efforts. Finally, word came down to pull back, but the engineers made a dramatic exit. Tucker and his comrades had one surprise left for the Germans. He noted, “We blew up the barracks on the way out.”

The engineers laid 6,000 pounds of explosives in the bunkers, shelters, and tunnel entrances in

and around Barracks R and S and set them to explode at different times. Tucker and his squad were given a choice. They could either ride a tank down the hill or they could run. The memories of being packed like sardines into a tank a week earlier had their effect. They all chose to run. Once the main fuse was lit, Tucker and his comrades took off down the hill.

**A battered casement of Fort Driant is explored by two U.S. soldiers. The capture of Fort Driant proved to be a difficult task for the Americans and frustrated their flamboyant commander, General George S. Patton, Jr.**

It was then that Tucker tripped on some barbed wire and went down hard. Without pausing, he gathered up his helmet and rifle and kept running. “I felt like I was running a 500-yard dash in five seconds,” he remembered.

As he reached the bottom of the slope, Tucker did not hear any explosions. “I was interested in getting out of there and didn’t pay any attention to it.” Surprisingly, the Germans never fired on the sprinting engineers. “I’m not sure they could really see us from where they were.”

Finally, Tucker and his comrades reached the safety of the forest just beyond the slope. “We were now at the same place where we had started.” And so was Patton’s Third Army. The Rhine River would not be breached for another five months. □

*Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is the writer-editor of The Salute, the newsletter of the U.S. Army’s Freedom Team Salute, a program that thanks Army veterans and people who support soldiers.*



**Soldiers of the U.S. Third Army take to their boats and prepare to paddle across the Rhine to the heartland of Germany.**

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never knew what happened to those other boats.”

Once the two returned to the west bank, Tucker’s entire squad was ordered north to help the U.S. Navy. Upon arriving at a dock area, Tucker and his comrades saw a group of sailors lowering a Landing Ship Tank (LST) into the water with a large crane. “We were surprised the Navy was there,” he commented, “and the Navy was surprised they were so far away from the ocean. They did a lot of grumbling.”

Patton’s troops beat Montgomery across the Rhine by one

day. Patton celebrated the victory by stopping on a treadway bridge his men had built and relieving himself into the river.

“The pause that refreshes...” The general told the troops around him. News of the crossing made it around the world. In Washington, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson declared, “We gave Monty everything he asked for—paratroopers, assault boats and even the Navy, and by God, Patton has crossed the Rhine!” □



# *The Heroic Flight of* **Torpedo Squadron 8**

THE PILOTS OF Bombing Squadron 6 could not believe what they were seeing on the morning of June 4, 1942. The squadron was about 150 miles northwest of Midway atoll when good visibility allowed the dive-bombers from the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* to make out three Japanese carriers almost 20,000 feet below. The light tan flight decks clearly stood out against the backdrop of the deep blue sea. A fourth carrier stood off in the distance.


Most remarkable was the absence of any Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter planes. At a time when the squadron expected to be swarmed

by Zeros, none were present. Descending to an altitude of 15,000 feet, the airwaves lit up with the voice of Lt. Cmdr. Clarence McClusky. The air group commander gave final orders to his squadron leaders. "Earl Gallaher, you take the carrier on the left and Best, you take the one on the right. Earl, you follow me down."

McClusky immediately banked his Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bomber sharply to the right. He began a 70-degree dive toward the Japanese ships below and into history. The dive-bombers were not the first American carrier-based planes to attack the enemy flattops. Three squadrons

of torpedo planes had already made low-level attacks. The first torpedo squadron to find the carriers had been Torpedo 8.

Torpedo Squadron 8 was created in 1941 to become part of an air group for the new carrier USS *Hornet*. Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron was selected to lead the new squadron. A native of Fort Pierre, South Dakota, he was an experienced naval aviator. Graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1924, he joined the fast-growing field of naval aviation, earning his wings in 1927. Waldron immediately set out to organize his squadron.



In the painting *Requiem for Torpedo Eight* by Gil Cohen, the crews of the squadron's Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo bombers ready for takeoff from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* on June 4, 1942.

Decimated during their attacks against Japanese aircraft carriers, the sacrifice of the brave air crewmen was not in vain. BY JOHN DOMAGALSKI

The squadron's executive officer, Lieutenant Harold Larsen, became Waldron's second in command. Waldron told him of the difficult task that lay ahead. "We're getting fresh, green kids," he said. "We've got to make fighting men out of them and we may not have much time."

Among the pilots assigned to the squadron was Ensign George Gay. A native Texan with little experience, Gay reported for duty shortly after flight school. Like all members of the new squadron, Gay would soon endure long days of training, both in the classroom and in the air. In the months that followed, Waldron and

Larsen molded their group of inexperienced pilots into a functioning squadron.

Torpedo 8 was equipped with the Douglas TBD Devastator, which at the time represented the U.S. Navy's frontline torpedo plane. Once considered a modern aircraft, the bomber was obsolete by the start of the Pacific War. The combination of light armament and slow approach speed made the Devastator an easy target for both Japanese fighter pilots and antiaircraft gunners.

The squadron was slated to be among the first to receive the Devastator's replacement, the

Grumman TBF Avenger. Fresh from the assembly line, the new planes were expected to arrive any day. Waldron hoped that he would not have to go into battle with the old Devastators.

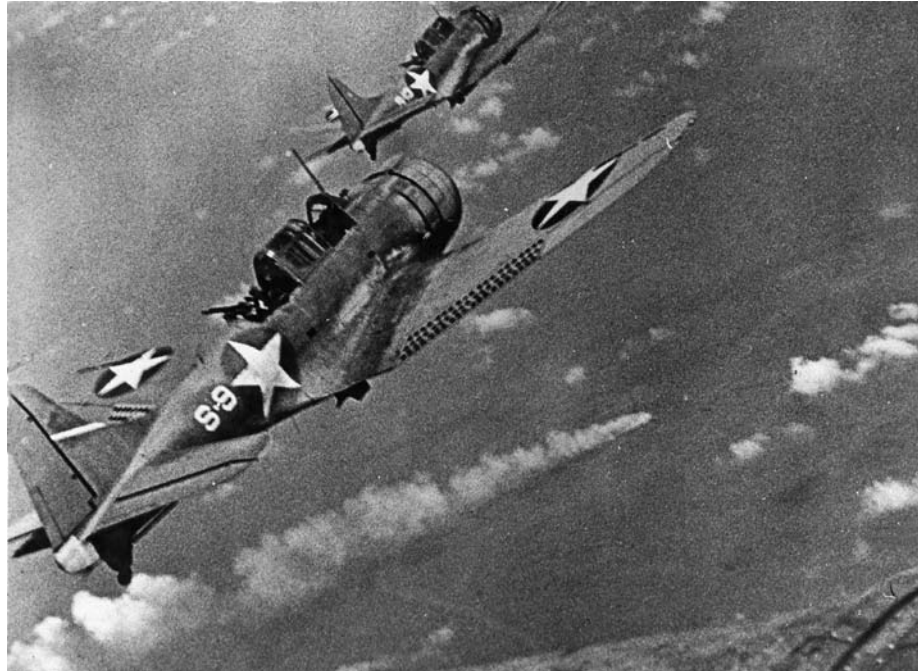
Twenty-one new Avengers arrived in March 1942, just as the squadron was preparing to depart for the Pacific aboard the *Hornet*. Waldron ordered Larsen to stay behind at Norfolk with a detachment of men to begin training in the new planes. Taking those whom he considered to be his best pilots, Waldron headed west with the Devastators.

Although now in a combat zone, Torpedo 8

did not see any action immediately. In April the squadron accompanied the *Hornet* on her famous mission to launch Lt. Col. James Doolittle's air raid on Japan. The planes saw no action on the voyage. Just weeks later, American and Japanese naval forces clashed in the South Pacific. The Battle of the Coral Sea was the first true carrier battle in history, but neither the *Hornet* nor Torpedo 8 participated in the fight. The squadron would have to wait for June to meet the enemy.

Indications of a major Japanese move eastward toward Midway atoll began to appear

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**U.S. Navy Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bombers bear down on their targets during the Battle of Midway. Following the ill-fated torpedo attacks on the Japanese aircraft carriers, the dive-bombers were virtually unmolested in their assault and set three Japanese carriers ablaze within a matter of minutes.**

before the American naval intelligence community in early 1942. Japanese war planners, particularly Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, chief of the Combined Fleet, viewed an attack on Midway as a means to achieve the dual goals of extending their defensive perimeter eastward and drawing the American carriers into a decisive naval battle. Located only 1,135 miles from Pearl Harbor, the threat to Midway would compel the U.S. Navy to come out and fight.

Japanese naval planners believed that the Americans would commit major naval units in Midway's defense once the attack began. To maintain the element of surprise, the Japanese planned a diversionary attack on the Aleutians, a barren archipelago off the western tip of Alaska.

By late May, the Japanese Combined Fleet was moving east with a massive naval armada of over 200 ships. Spearheading the attack was a force containing four large fleet carriers. The flattops were under the command of Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor. The force would approach Midway from the northwest to launch air attacks against the island and lie in wait for American ships to respond.

To the west lurked a powerful force of battleships and cruisers, with Yamamoto himself aboard the super battleship *Yamato*. The actual

invasion force, under Admiral Nobutake Kondo, would approach the target island from the southwest.

Owing to the benefit of superior naval intelligence and code breaking, American admirals at Pearl Harbor were able to develop a strategy to defend Midway. The intelligence provided a reasonably accurate assessment of Japanese intentions, force composition, and estimated time of arrival. It was now up to search planes from Midway to deliver the specifics on the approaching Japanese fleet.

*The Hornet and Enterprise, along with accompanying escort ships, weighed anchor from Pearl Harbor late in the morning on May 28 and headed for a rendezvous point northeast of Midway. The urgency of the departure meant that the first group of new Avengers scheduled to arrive from the United States did not appear in time to go to sea with the *Hornet*. Waldron's worst fear had been confirmed. His squadron would have to go into battle with the old Dev-*

*astators. A third carrier, the *Yorktown*, was operating northeast of Midway by June 1.*

Waldron did his best to get his men ready for battle. He instructed the pilots on tactics and told them what to expect from the Japanese. George Gay recalled the constant training and preparations. "We could almost look at the back of [Commander] Waldron's head and know what he was thinking, because he had told us so many times over and over just what we should do under all conditions."

Leading the *Hornet's* air group was Commander Stanhope Ring. A Massachusetts native, Ring had graduated from the naval academy in 1923 and earned his wings four years later. However, time spent in administrative positions may have left him lacking the skills needed for the leadership position for an air group. He was not particularly popular with the carrier's pilots.

Attacks against enemy ships during the impending battle were planned to be well coordinated among the dive-bombers, fighters, and torpedo planes that composed the *Hornet's* air group. Ring told his squadron commanders that he planned to keep the planes together to attack the Japanese ships as one large formation, with the bombers coming down from high above while the torpedo planes approached at almost wave-top level. However, he would be keeping the fighter planes at a high altitude close to the dive-bombers in the belief that the upper level planes would be attracting the attention of Japanese fighters.

The arrangement was different from the tactics used by other air groups during the recent Battle of the Coral Sea. In that engagement the fighters were divided to provide cover for both the bombers and torpedo planes.

Waldron vehemently disagreed with the plan and argued that his torpedo planes needed some fighter protection in order to successfully press home an attack. He had hoped to follow the Coral Sea tactics. On the eve of the battle, the issue was not clearly resolved. It would not be long before Torpedo 8 would confront the enemy.

During the morning hours of June 3, a long-range PBY Catalina flying boat on patrol sighted the approaching Japanese invasion force almost 700 miles southwest of Midway. Heavy bombers flying from Midway attacked the transports later in the day but scored no hits. That night a foursome of torpedo-equipped PBYs conducted an attack on the invasion fleet, damaging one ship. No carrier planes participated in the actions.

It would not be until the early morning of June 4 that the Japanese carrier force was

located. At 5:30 AM, a search plane spotted the carrier force about 200 miles northwest of Midway and radioed a contact report. The Japanese had already launched a large formation of planes to attack Midway. A second search plane spotted the airborne attackers and provided a warning.

In the *Hornet's* ready room, the men of Torpedo 8 were up early to prepare for battle. Settling down into their comfortable chairs for briefings, the pilots found a memo from Lt. Cmdr. Waldron. His message concluded: "My greatest hope is that we encounter a favorable tactical situation, but if we don't, and the worst comes to the worst, I want each of us to do his utmost to destroy our enemies. If there is only one plane left to make a final run-in, I want that man to go in and get a hit. May God be with us all. Good luck, happy landings and give 'em hell."

The men went about their preflight routine of reviewing charts, maps, and data as officers provided them with the most up-to-date information on the forming battle. The teletype machine soon came to life bringing word that some Japanese ships had been located. However, there was no confirmation on the enemy carriers. Then came a report that enemy planes were en route to attack Midway.

Finally, information came that the Japanese carriers had been sighted 180 miles northwest of Midway. An estimated future position for the enemy carriers was soon established on the basis of reported location, course, and speed. The squadron leaders used the information to plan an attack route.

"This is it," Waldron told his men. Speaking of the impending battle, he continued, "It will be a historical and, I hope, a glorious event."

The loudspeaker soon crackled, "Pilots man your planes."

Before heading out, Waldron told his pilots, "We will strike, regardless of the consequences." He also intimated that he could be changing course mid-flight. "Just follow me and we'll get there," he added.

All of the squadron commanders were then ordered to report to the bridge. The hastily assembled meeting was held under the direction of the *Hornet's* commanding officer, Admiral Marc Mitscher. The leaders of the dive-bomber and fighter squadrons were in attendance along with Ring, Waldron, and other officers. The gathering represented Waldron's last opportunity to garner some fighter protection for the flight. The leader of the fighter squadron, Pat Mitchell, agreed with Waldron. He tried to convince Mitscher to let some fighters cover the torpedo planes but he was not successful. The fighters would be staying up high with the dive-bombers.

With the fighter issue settled, Ring told his commanders that he was planning to fly westward to locate the Japanese carriers. Waldron voiced his disagreement and proposed an alternate course taking into account that the Japanese ships might have turned north. The heated argument was settled when Mitscher directed all of the

squadron commanders to follow Ring's course.

En route to his plane, Waldron dropped into the charthouse to say goodbye to the *Hornet's* navigator, "I'll take them in. You can count on us."

The first planes to launch were the *Hornet's* dive-bombers at 7:02 AM. Soon it was time for the 15 torpedo planes to take flight. For some of Torpedo 8's pilots, it was the first time flying with a live torpedo. Within half an hour, the attack group of 35 dive-bombers, 15 torpedo planes, and 10 fighters was heading out to find the Japanese carriers. Strike groups were also launched from the nearby *Enterprise* and *Yorktown*.

As the air group left the carrier, the torpedo planes stayed low while the faster bombers and fighters gained altitude. Early in the flight Waldron broke radio silence to continue his argument with Ring about the course to the Japanese carriers. A short time later Waldron turned his torpedo planes away from the rest of the air group. Before long the torpedo squadron was alone, separated from the rest of the air group in which it was to make a coordinated attack.

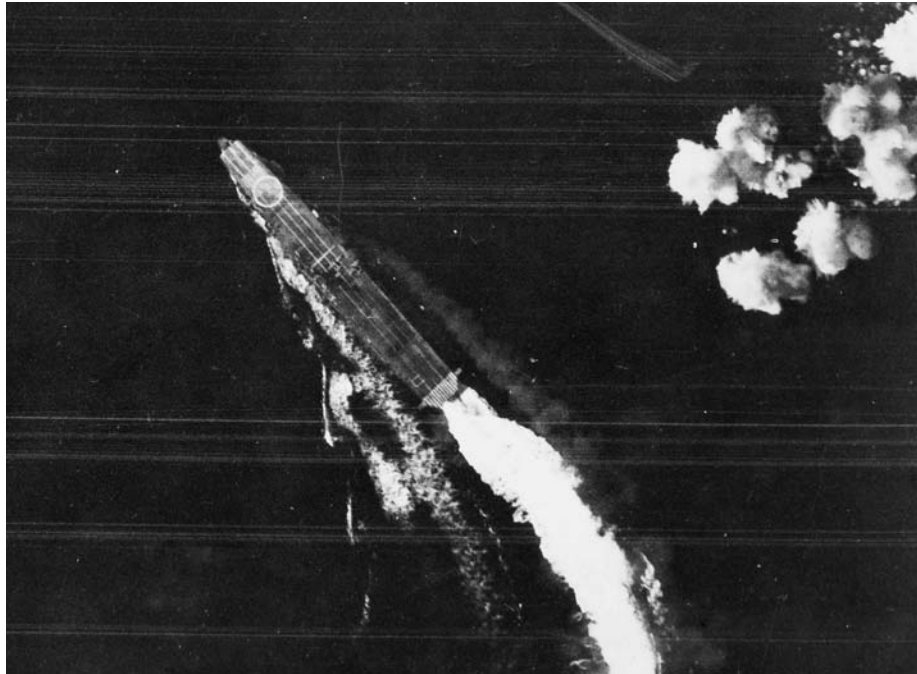
The Devastators flew in two divisions, the first of which contained four sections of two planes each. The second division had two sections of two planes and one section of three. Waldron took the lead, while Ensign Gay flew in the last position of the second division.

An hour into the flight a plane suddenly appeared behind the squadron. Waldron's voice quickly came across the airwaves, "There's a fighter on your tail." The plane did not close on the torpedo bombers. It was a Japanese search plane from the

**Its flight deck crowded with aircraft, the USS *Hornet* is seen on the afternoon of May 15, 1942, two weeks prior to the Battle of Midway. The *Hornet* survived the Midway action but was lost in the Solomons at the Battle of Santa Cruz. INSET: Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron led Torpedo Squadron 8 during its heroic effort against the Japanese carrier force at Midway.**

Both: National Archives





**ABOVE:** The Japanese aircraft carrier *Akagi* maneuvers violently to avoid bombs from aircraft of the American 41st Bomb Squadron during the Battle of Midway. *Akagi* was later sunk by carrier-based dive-bombers. This photograph was taken from one of the attacking planes. **BELOW:** A Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo bomber of Torpedo Squadron 6 from the carrier USS *Enterprise* releases its payload during exercises on October 20, 1941. By the time of the Battle of Midway, the Devastator had already become obsolete.



cruiser *Tone*. The scout sent a radio message back to the carrier force, “Fifteen enemy planes are heading toward you.”

While the American planes were heading toward the projected position of the enemy carriers, a Japanese search plane sighted the *Yorktown*. Shortly after 9 AM, Nagumo’s carrier force changed course to the northeast. The Japanese admiral was making preparations to attack the *Yorktown*. As a result, the Japanese ships would not be at the position expected by the American fliers. Waldron had guessed right.

As the search continued for the Japanese carriers, Waldron decided to change formations.

The squadron shifted into a long scouting line, an arrangement that allowed a wider field of vision for searching but left the torpedo planes spread out. Almost an hour later, at about 9:25 AM, smoke was sighted on the horizon.

With good visibility, the pilots were able to identify three enemy carriers surrounded by a strong escort of cruisers and destroyers. Waldron had taken his squadron directly to the Japanese carriers. George Gay spotted one carrier that appeared to be on fire. While the Japanese ships had been attacked by land-based planes from Midway earlier in the morning, no carriers were hit and none were damaged at that time. Among

the attackers were six of Torpedo Squadron 8’s new Avengers that had just arrived at Midway from the mainland via Pearl Harbor.

Upon sighting the carriers Waldron immediately radioed the enemy’s position and called desperately for the other squadrons from the *Hornet*. “Stanhope from Johnny One... Requesting coordination time... Stanhope from Johnny One!” However, the remaining squadrons were nowhere near, having already turned south. Torpedo 8 was the only squadron from the *Hornet* that would find the Japanese on this morning.

The message was possibly picked up by a PBY, but there was no reply and there is no record of it being received by any of the other attack squadrons. The torpedo planes would soon be attracting the attention of Japanese fighters. Waldron now had to make a critical decision—strike immediately unescorted, or wait for other squadrons to arrive to make a coordinated attack. He decided to attack and wiggled his wings to signal his decision to the rest of the group. The squadron immediately joined up in attack formation and dropped to 60 feet. Moving the planes close together allowed for concentrated fire from the rear guns.

Approaching the carriers from the east, Waldron headed for the southernmost flattop. Noticing strong anti-aircraft fire some distance ahead, he switched to the centrally located carrier. The target was about 16,000 yards away when Japanese fighters suddenly appeared. As many as 30 Zeros swarmed at the torpedo planes from above and behind. One Devastator on the left side of the formation immediately went down in flames.

Waldron was overheard on the radio asking his rear gunner, Horace Dobbs, if it was a torpedo plane or fighter that went down. A radioman in another plane miles away picked up Waldron’s faint words as the battle ensued, his radio microphone apparently stuck open. “Watch those fighters! ... My two wingmen are going into the water....”

Waldron’s plane was hit shortly afterward and began to head toward the ocean with the left fuel tank ruptured and on fire. George Gay’s rear gunner, Bob Huntington, spoke into his intercom, “Let’s go back and help him, sir.”

But there was no help to give. Waldron was last seen standing up trying to get out of the cockpit as his plane was going down. The plane hit the water, burned briefly, and disappeared beneath the waves.

While the fighters attacked from above and behind, Japanese anti-aircraft gunners were also now taking aim at the torpedo planes. Among the screening ships that opened fire were the

cruisers *Chikuma* and *Tone*. Both ships fired their main batteries, hoping to either score a direct hit or create water splashes to interfere with the approach of the low-flying planes. Six torpedo planes are believed to have made it past the cruisers.

In what seemed to be a matter of only a few minutes, five of the remaining torpedo planes were shot down. George Gay was the only pilot of Torpedo Squadron 8 left to press home the attack. Huntington's voice soon came across the intercom, "They got me, sir." A quick look back confirmed to Gay that his rear gunner was dead.

Gay believed that he was approaching the carrier *Kaga*. Historians have since determined that he actually attacked the *Soryu*. The target carrier was now making full evasive maneuvers and was in the midst of making a hard turn to starboard. Gay now turned his plane to face the ship's port bow. Braving heavy antiaircraft fire and as many as five approaching enemy fighters, Gay dropped his torpedo at a range of about 800 yards.

"I dropped the torpedo and was fortunate enough to get away from the antiaircraft fire, although everything was shooting at me," he later recalled. The Devastator flew directly over the carrier and passed off the ship's stern as the pilot caught a brief glimpse of planes on deck and antiaircraft gunners feverishly turning their guns to resume fire on his plane. Gay thought he heard the explosion of his torpedo striking the target. However, no Japanese carrier was hit by a torpedo during the morning attack.

The lone Devastator was suddenly rocked by a series of hits as five approaching Zero fighters were in a line taking turns firing on the defenseless torpedo plane. Machine-gun bullets and cannon shells exploded as they hit the plane. One shell, possibly a 20mm, flash burned Gay's left leg. Almost simultaneously a shell fragment struck his left hand and a bullet hit his upper left arm. With the rudder control and ailerons destroyed, the Devastator was out of control. It pancaked into the ocean about a quarter mile behind the carrier.

Hitting the water caused the hood to slam shut over the cockpit. Gay began to panic. "I couldn't hardly get it open," he later said. "That's when I got scared." He was able to get out as the plane quickly disappeared below the surface, leaving only the tail briefly exposed.

A small deflated rubber boat, still in its bag, and a black seat cushion floated past. Having heard the stories of Japanese planes machine-gunning downed pilots in life rafts, he decided not to inflate his raft. With a firm grip on the bag, Gay inflated his life jacket and hid under the seat cushion. Meanwhile, on the airwaves

National Archives



**Ensign George Gay, the lone survivor of Torpedo Squadron 8, smiles at an attending nurse while recovering in a hospital at Pearl Harbor. Gay died in 1994.**

above, the Zero flight leader reported, "All 15 enemy torpedo bombers shot down."

From his view in the water Gay observed the flight operations aboard a nearby carrier that was landing planes. A cruiser also passed nearby but did not seem to notice him. A short time later a second cruiser began to close on his position, but it turned away at the last minute, apparently following a predetermined patrol line. Nursing his wounds, Gay recalled pulling a bullet out of his left arm and putting it in his mouth for safe keeping.

"Maybe I wanted a souvenir," he later said. "Anyhow, I lost it before long."

A short time later American dive-bombers suddenly appeared over the fleet and came screaming downward. The carriers immediately began evasive maneuvers, but it was too late. Direct hits caused thunderous explosions and started massive fires on the two carriers that were still within Gay's view. Both ships burned fiercely and belched smoke as they moved off into the distance. Japanese planes occasionally circled overhead, apparently looking for a place to land. Later a destroyer moved alongside one of the stricken carriers, apparently to take off survivors.

Later in the afternoon a destroyer came closer to Gay's position than any other ship. He hid behind the seat cushion to escape detection. "If there had been anybody aboard that I knew, I could have recognized them as they went by," he recalled of the tense moment. The destroyer passed by. As the sun began to set and twilight slowly came over the ocean, Gay cautiously inflated his life raft. "Maybe a little earlier than the wise," he later said.

During the night the downed pilot was able to observe several glowing areas just over the horizon. These most likely represented the burning hulks of the Japanese carriers and the searchlights of the escort ships. Closer to dawn, in the same general direction, three large explosions were heard in rapid succession. By dawn the ocean was littered with debris. A heavy coat of oil could be seen in some areas. Abandoned black Japanese life rafts, void of any sailors, drifted about. Several hours later a Navy patrol plane on the outbound leg of a search mission from Midway swooped down low to investigate an oil slick and spotted Gay's bright yellow raft. Acknowledging the sighting, the PBV continued on with the mission but returned during the early afternoon.

The seaplane touched down and pulled near Gay's raft. The port-side bubble window then slowly opened, and out popped a sailor's head. "Seen any Jap planes lately?" he asked. When Gay replied that he had not, the sailor continued, "Good. Let's get the hell out of here." George Gay was rescued by the seaplane almost 30 hours after being shot down, the sole survivor of 15 Devastator crews of Torpedo Squadron 8.

In the aftermath of Torpedo 8's heroic attack, two additional torpedo squadrons located the Japanese carriers. Shortly after 9:30 AM, Torpedo Squadron 6 from the *Enterprise*, under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Eugene Lindsey, attacked without fighter cover. At about 10 AM, Torpedo Squadron 3 from the *Yorktown* attacked under the lead of Lt. Cmdr. Lance Massey. His escort group of six Wildcat fighter planes had been overwhelmed by Japanese Zeros.

Like Torpedo 8, these squadrons staged heroic attacks, suffered terrible losses, and scored no hits. Of the 41 torpedo planes that participated in the attacks, only six survived. Like Waldron, squadron commanders Lindsey and Massey were killed in action.

At about 10:20 AM, Bombing Squadron 6 and Scouting Squadron 6 arrived from the *Enterprise* and dove toward the carriers *Kaga* and *Soryu*. Almost simultaneously, dive-bombers from the *Yorktown* attacked the carrier *Akagi*. Within five minutes all three Japanese carriers were burning as a result of direct bomb hits. The great battle once envisioned by the Japanese had now turned into a decisive American victory.

The importance of the torpedo attacks on the outcome of the battle cannot be underestimated. The brave assaults caused the Japanese fighter cover to be pulled out of position and antiaircraft gunners to focus on the low-level attackers. The evasive maneuvering needed to defend against the

*Continued on page 80*

# Italy's North African Misadventure

WAS THE ITALIAN ARMY SIMPLY A POOR FIGHTING FORCE OR DOOMED FROM THE START BY CIRCUMSTANCE? BY WALTER S. ZAPOTOCZNY

WHEN MOST PEOPLE think of the Italian Army in North Africa during World War II, they tend to believe that the average Italian soldier offered little resistance to the Allies before surrendering. Many believe the Italian Army, as a whole, performed in a cowardly manner in North Africa.

The reality is not so simple. The question remains as to whether the Italians were really cowards or actually victims of circumstance. While the Italian soldier's commitment to the war was not as great as that of the German soldier, many Italians fought bravely. The Italian Littorio and Ariete Divisions earned Allied admiration at Tobruk, Gazala, and El Alamein. The Italian Army played a significant role as part of the German Afrika Korps and made up a large portion of the Axis combat power in North Africa during 1941 and 1942. In the interest of determining how the Italian Army earned the reputation that it did, it is necessary to analyze why and how the Italians fought.

In 1940, it appeared that German successes in Poland, France, and Norway would end the war. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was concerned that Italy might lose its share of the spoils. On June 10, 1940, he declared war on Britain and France. He was sure that France and Britain would soon surrender and did not believe Italy would have to do much fighting.

Mussolini wanted to occupy the French and British colonies in Africa and seize control of the Suez Canal from the British. In August 1940, he ordered attacks on British positions in East Africa and Egypt. Troops from the Italian colony of Ethiopia invaded British Soma-

Imperial War Museum



**General Annibale Bergonzoli commanded the Italian X Army, which was soundly defeated by the British in North Africa. This photo was taken shortly after his capture in 1941. OPPOSITE: In this somewhat romanticized newspaper engraving, Italian forces advance across the desert in the Cyrenaica region of Libya. The engraving appeared in the Italian media in September 1940.**

liland and quickly overran its garrison made up of mostly conscripted natives.

At the same time, other Italian troops began to move westward from Ethiopia into Sudan to seize the upper Nile Valley. They quickly captured Kassala and Gallabat, while more Italian troops moved south to capture Moyale, in the northern part of the British colony of Kenya.

Buoyed by their successes, the Italians prepared to march from Libya across northern

Egypt to seize the Suez Canal. The youngest elements of the Italian Army were indoctrinated to consider themselves invincible because they were Italians and Fascists. They were taught that their enemies were inferior and would be easily defeated. Mussolini repeatedly refused offers of assistance from Hitler during this period, convinced that his forces could vanquish the British.

On September 13, 1940, Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, commander of the Italian Army in North Africa, began his advance into Egypt, hoping to make a quick dash to the Suez Canal. He commanded a 236,000-strong army supported by a powerful air force. Yet, behind the overwhelming numbers facing the British were glaring weaknesses that not even Graziani's Fascist confidence could overcome.

The Italian Tenth and Fifth Armies in Libya marched on foot, while the British rode in trucks. Two of the six Italian divisions were Black Shirt militia outfits, clad in fancy black uniforms, but poorly trained soldiers. The main characteristic of Italian tactics was a lack of flexibility. They had remained attached to one principle, which consisted of the concentration of the greatest mass possible for whatever task lay ahead of them.

In addition, Italian divisions were reduced from three regiments to two. This created more Italian divisions but weakened their strength. Further, the Italian forces relied on poor, obsolete equipment. Armored cars dated back to 1909. The L3 tank mounted only two Breda machine guns. The underpowered and thinly armored M11 tank was no better. Its 37mm



*W. W. ...*

gun could not traverse. The heavyweight M13 tank packed a 47mm gun but crawled along at nine miles per hour. None could match the British Matilda tank with its 50mm armor and 40mm gun. Italian troops were short of antitank guns, anti-aircraft guns, ammunition, and radio sets. Artillery was light and ancient.

**Italian infantrymen carried the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, an 1881 model, which suffered from low muzzle velocity. Their Breda machine guns were clumsy to operate and jammed easily. On the other hand, the British troops used the reliable .303-caliber Lee-Enfield rifle and the very good Bren and Vickers machine guns.**

The Italians also had problems in the air. While they could sortie 84 modern bombers and 114 fighters, backed up by 113 obsolete aircraft, they were completely outclassed by the British Hawker Hurricane fighter aircraft. Furthermore, the British Army, which had trained for years in the Egyptian desert, was much better at maintaining its equipment under the extremes of the arid climate.

Four Italian divisions and an armored group under General Annibale Bergonzoli advanced slowly toward Egypt, across a hostile landscape in temperatures of up to 122 degrees Fahrenheit. They succeeded in covering only 12 miles a day. Historically, the Italian Army was struc-

**Under cover of an artillery barrage, its shellbursts heaving clouds of sand and dust into the air, Italian troops advance toward British positions in the Western Desert in December 1940.**

tured for deployment in the mountainous terrain found in Italy and its immediate neighbors. Graziani's army as a whole was not trained for desert warfare, and the heat and sand took a toll on men and equipment.

British General Archibald Wavell's forces, which were distracted in French West Africa, offered little resistance, and the 23 March Black Shirt Division occupied Sidi Barrani on September 16. The Italians were now 60 miles inside the Egyptian border. Despite the superior Italian strength, the British attacked on

December 9. General Richard O'Connor led two divisions, the 7th Armored and 4th Indian, in the attack, supported by the 7th Royal Tank Regiment.

and arrived in Sicily in late December 1940. The Germans operated against Allied shipping and patrolled the sea-lanes between Italy and Libya. However, by mid-February 1941, having not yet received the ground support he requested, Graziani's Italian forces were overrun and 115,000 men surrendered.

### **The Italians could not stop the British Matilda tanks. Taking advantage of the rigid Italian tactics, poor leadership, and equipment deficiencies, they dashed through, surprising Graziani.**

The Italians could not stop the British Matilda tanks. They quickly found a gap in the Italian defenses. Taking advantage of the rigid Italian tactics, poor leadership, and equipment deficiencies, they dashed through, surprising Graziani. The main British force raced for the coast at Sidi Barrani, while detachments slashed at the rear of the Italian units.

The Italians did not have the flexibility to deviate from their formations. While individ-

ual soldiers fought bravely, within two days nearly 40,000 Italians surrendered. The rest of Graziani's force retreated westward toward Libya. The average Italian soldier began to have serious doubts as to his army's invincibility, and a lack of confidence in Italian leadership reached crisis level.

The devastating British offensive of December 1940 had led to a series of severe reversals. Therefore, the Italian high command requested German assistance. The Luftwaffe's X Fliegerkorps was ordered to Italy from Norway



National Archives

Afrika Korps was formed five days later. General Erwin Rommel commanded German forces in North Africa and, for the sake of diplomacy, was directed to serve under General Italo Gariboldi, who had succeeded the defeated Marshal Graziani as the Italian commander in North Africa.

Immediately after his arrival at Tripoli on February 12, 1941, Rommel began organizing the defense of Tripolitania, in western Libya, and making plans for offensive actions. The Italian Ariete and Trento armored divisions arrived from Italy. The Ariete was composed of 6,949 men, 163 tanks, 36 field guns, and 61 antitank guns. Motorized infantry consisted of the 101st Trieste Division and the 102nd Trento Division. The semi-motorized infantry contingent included the 17th Pavia Division, 25th Bologna Division, and the 27th Brescia Division. Like the motorized formations, these units had two regiments of infantry. The infantry divisions consisted of the 55th Savona and the 60th Sabartha.

The Italians introduced the more modern M-13/40 tanks, grouped in motorized units and not thrown together like Graziani's tanks during his offensive. They also utilized their first company of armored cars. To erase the poor performance of some obsolete artillery, the Italians introduced the use of self-propelled guns in close support and in antitank attacks by "massing" the artillery. The Ariete Division began to use the 90/53 antiaircraft gun, which was capable of piercing 100mm of armor at 1,000 yards. Rommel had at his disposal 100,000 Italian soldiers, 7,000 Italian trucks, 1,000 Italian guns, and 151 Italian aircraft.

**Rommel's orders were to assume a defensive posture and hold the front line.** Finding that the British defenses were thin, he quickly defeated the Allied forces at El Agheila on March 24. He then launched an offensive which, by April 15, had pushed the British back to Salum, capturing all but Tobruk, which was encircled and besieged. During this drive, he also managed to capture two British generals, Richard O'Connor and Sir Philip Neame.

Gariboldi tried to restrain Rommel, insisting that any further moves would be in direct violation of orders. Rommel ignored him, stating, "I decided to stay on the heels of the retreating enemy and make a bid to seize the whole of Cyrenaica at one stroke."

Benghazi, Libya, fell on April 3, and El-Mechili was taken the next day. By April 11, the Axis forces had bypassed Tobruk and reached Bardia, Sollum, and the Halfaya Pass. Rommel attacked Tobruk on April 14 but was repelled

National Archives



**Marching toward the front in Libya, goose-stepping Italian Black Shirts stomp through the streets of the city of Benghazi. Mussolini's Fascist troops suffered from inferior or obsolete equipment as well as poor leadership.**

by the British. The Allies, under the command of British General Claude Auchinleck, launched Operation Crusader on November 18, 1941. All the territory gained by Rommel was recaptured, with the exception of garrisons at Bardia and Sollum. Most significantly, the Axis siege of Tobruk was relieved. The front line was again set at El Agheila. Panzer Group Afrika was redesignated as Panzer Army Afrika on January 30, 1942.

After pausing to replenish and reorganize his forces, Field Marshal Rommel launched an attack against Gazala in late May 1942. Rommel personally led elements of Panzer Army Afrika, the Afrika Korps, the Italian XX Motorized Corps, and the German 90th Light Afrika Division in a flanking maneuver around the southern end of the British lines, trusting to the enemy's own minefields to protect his flank and rear. Under German leadership, the Italian X Corps pinned the Allied troops down with a frontal attack, and the Italian 101st Motorized Division Trieste attacked the fortified "box" at Bir Hacheim from the west while the Italian 132nd Armored Division Ariete, on the left flank of Rommel's sweep, attempted to seize it from the rear.

The front line ran south from the coastal town of Gazala, west of Tobruk, to the oasis of Bir Hacheim. The British forces were surprised but fought well, inflicting heavy casualties on the German forces and cornering them. Finding himself trapped between a minefield and the British defenses, Rommel was on the verge of surrender. On May 29, the Italian Trieste Division cleared a path through the center of the Gazala line. Rommel managed to break through the Cauldron area and overwhelm the British defenses. The British counterattack was confused and useless, easily defeated by the Italian and German forces who then continued

toward Tobruk.

This campaign had seen the Ariete Armored Division fight as a single entity for the first time and had demonstrated that it could be a formidable force in the right circumstances. It had stopped the British 22nd Armored Brigade in its tracks from defensive positions at Bir el Gubi. It had kept the 1st South African Brigade out of the fight for extended periods simply by its presence, and it held its own in the face of considerable harassment from various British armored formations throughout the fighting. It captured a vital position from tough New Zealand troops almost without firing a shot and helped its German allies to destroy the 2nd New Zealand Division.

The Ariete Armored Division's performance had been impressive at many levels, and it is arguable that it made a more positive contribution to Axis success than the Germans at a number of points during the fighting.

This was a significant change from the Italian Army of 1940.

The Afrika Korps and the XX Italian Corps, with the assistance of the Luftwaffe, began to assault Tobruk on June 20. Throughout that day, 150 bombers flew 580 sorties.

"They dived on the perimeter in one of the most spectacular attacks I have ever seen," wrote Major Freiherr von Mellenthin, Rommel's intelligence officer. "A great cloud of dust and smoke rose from the sector under attack while our bombs crashed into the defenses... the entire German and Italian artillery joined in with a tremendous and well-coordinated fire."

As soon as the Italian engineers cleared a path



**ABOVE: Following the Battle of Sollum, smiling Italian soldiers greet the recently arrived General Erwin Rommel, who gained lasting fame as the commander of the Afrika Korps and later committed suicide rather than stand trial for his part in a conspiracy to assassinate Hitler.**

through the mines that the Tobruk defenders had planted, German and Italian infantry engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the Allied troops. Tobruk fell to Rommel on June 21.

Throughout July, Axis forces hammered at the British Eighth Army, which had abandoned its positions and retreated east to the El Alamein line. By this time, the combat power of Panzer Army Afrika comprised 66 percent Italian personnel, 57 percent Italian tanks, 57 percent Italian artillery, and 55 percent Italian aircraft. Even with impressive numbers, the differences between the German and Italian soldiers were becoming apparent.

German Field Marshall Albert Kesselring, who rose to command of Axis forces in the Mediterranean, provided a postwar evaluation of operations in North Africa, concluding of the Italians: “They seemed to have a garrison mentality, and, in fact, much of their training was done in garrison—a totally inappropriate practice for exposing troops to the hardships of the battlefield. Their training remained superficial, without having reached a satisfactory level. The Italian soldier was not a soldier from within. The Italian soldier cannot be compared to the German soldier. There was a lack of contact between the officers and the men. The officers enjoyed rations equivalent to their rank while the common soldier survived on minimal rations.”

The differences between the German soldier and the Italian soldier were obvious to many.

While the Germans conveyed discipline and order, the Italian soldier was seen to be happy-go-lucky and disorganized. Many Italian soldiers performed well, while others seemed to lose their enthusiasm for the war.

On August 31, Rommel, impatient to break through the El Alamein-El Qattara line and move on the Suez Canal, launched an attack against the Alam Halfa Ridge. He committed the German 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions and the Italian Ariete, Littorio, and the airborne Folgore Divisions. The Italian infantry advanced through the British minefields the entire day as a sandstorm raged. During the nights of August 31 and September 1, the Germans and Italians were the targets of heavy British bomber and fighter attacks.

On September 2, the British pushed the Axis forces back. By September 6, owing to fuel shortages, Rommel decided to withdraw his forces. During this time, the German-Italian armored formations were beginning to suffer severe supply shortages.

Kesselring expressed disappointment with the Italian Navy and its effort to protect precious supply convoys in the Mediterranean. “Victory cannot be expected where action is governed by fear of losses,” he lamented.

On October 23, 1942, the second battle of El Alamein began. Rommel’s Panzer Army Afrika comprised the Afrika Korps, Panzer Army Afrika Troops, the Luftwaffe II Fliegerkorps, Italian X Corps, Italian XX Motorized Corps, Italian XXI Corps, which included eight Italian divisions, and the Italian 5 Squadra, Regia Aeronautica.

The attack on German-Italian lines started with over 800 heavy guns firing at the German and Italian positions. The infantry attacked as

the shells pounded Rommel’s lines.

Many Italian units demonstrated bravery in the face of the Allied advance. One of those units was the III Battalion, 61st Infantry Regiment, commanded by Captain Attilio Caimi. Uncertain of the situation in the darkness and with about 350 men equipped with six heavy machine guns, 18 light machine guns, and four 81mm mortars, the Sicilians maintained a curtain of indiscriminate shell and machine-gun fire along the western side of Miteirya Ridge, successfully delaying the efforts of British sappers to clear Axis minefields.

Units within the 102nd Trento Division performed quite differently under enemy fire. At about 4 AM on October 24, the Allies had overwhelmed the remnants of Captain Manasserì’s II Battalion, 62nd Regiment. One company continued to resist for some time. Another was observed to be in full flight, screaming, “Front kaput!” as they encountered American-built Sherman and Grant tanks.

Several units of the 102nd Trento Division, including the antitank gunners of Captain Vigano’s Sardegna Grenadiers and Captain Alberti’s 51st Engineer Battalion, were reported to have fought well. The 102nd Trento Division artillery of Colonel Randi’s 46th Artillery Regiment had also waged a brave fight against superior Allied artillery. However, when it came to withdrawal in the face of overwhelming odds, the Sicilians of the 62nd Infantry Regiment tended to become disorganized. The better trained and led German 382nd Grenadier Regiment, on the other hand, was able to stage short, orderly withdrawals, maintaining the integrity of its battalions in the face of heavy attacks.

Opposite the 25th New Zealand Infantry Battalion and the South Africans of the Capetown Highlanders, Captain Caimi’s III Battalion, 61st Regiment continued to hold along Miteirya Ridge. With the loss of the 11th Company, III Battalion, 61st Infantry Regiment, Captain Caimi’s battalion had been reduced to about 19 officers and 340 men equipped with six 47mm antitank guns, seven 20mm antitank rifles, six heavy machine guns, six light machine guns, and four 81mm mortars.

Second Lieutenant Eithel Torelli, who was described as “bold, merry, and refreshingly outspoken,” was assigned to Captain Caimi’s 12th Company. The lieutenant’s attitude epitomized that of many of the Italian soldiers. He described the situation as follows: “At three o’clock, it was our turn. The bombardment stopped when the sun rose, and the breeze cleared the smoke and dust. The enemy infantry were a few hundred yards distant. We were firing away with our automatic weapons all

morning, but things got a bit hot for us when they began to find the range with their mortars.

“On the flat stretch to the north there must have been about a hundred tanks. Our mortars got four of them and set them on fire. In the evening, we established communications among ourselves and exchanged news and opinions. I made the usual report to the captain, and we cracked a few old jokes; but it was obvious that we were both worried.”

Throughout the night, the Italian II and III Battalions, 61st Infantry Regiment had resolutely defended their positions against the heavy but uncoordinated attacks British attacks. In the process, the Italians had suffered more casualties. The 10th Company of III Battalion, 61st Infantry Regiment was overpowered, with 250 Italians captured.

Describing the events of the morning of October 25, 2nd Lieutenant Torelli wrote: “Toward morning the fighting began again, shortly after sun-up we witnessed a terrible hand-to-hand struggle over on our left. The German 5th/382nd was completely annihilated. Their C.O., a lieutenant, was one of the last to fall; we could pick him out easily enough because of his great height. The enemy got to within 200 yards of our position, but our mortar fire was too much for them and they beat a retreat. At 9 AM, a soli-

**BELOW: Weighed down with bags of sand to afford better traction in the desert, Italian tanks move forward near the Qattara Depression during the advance to El Alamein in the autumn of 1942.**

ullstein bild



tary Stuka circled overhead, then dived on us, and let go its bombs. A short while after the incident enemy tanks infiltrated behind our positions and captured the remains of the 10th Company, the assault platoon and the H.Q. So our

losses, and he became convinced that the main thrust of Montgomery’s attack would be near the Mediterranean. The British and New Zealand infantry attacked south, and Rommel was taken by surprise. Across from the 25th

**“The Italian soldier was at a disadvantage compared with us ... He was neither equipped nor prepared for war against a European opponent armed with the most modern weapons.”**

battalion was now reduced to the 12th Company and the remnants of the 9th.

“A tank came toward us with a man head and shoulders out of the turret brandishing a machine gun. Then it about-turned and made off. The boys turned the 47mm completely around, 180 degrees, but allowed the tank to get away. This was returning cowardice for cowardice if you like; but there were a hundred or more tanks roundabout. Three of the men, whose dugout was in pretty shaky condition, asked if they could come in with me; so there were four of us. The enormous superiority of the enemy tanks was getting them down a bit.”

The battalion commander, Captain Caimi, collected the scattered remnants of his headquarters company and counterattacked, reoccupying his battalion headquarters position.

Rommel’s Afrika Korps had suffered great

New Zealand Infantry Battalion and the South Africans of the Capetown Highlanders, the Italian III Battalion, 61st Regiment continued to hold its ground along Miteirya Ridge even after experiencing heavy losses. Rommel put tank against tank, but he was hopelessly outnumbered. On November 4, 1942, Rommel began his long retreat to Tunisia.

General Siegfried Westphal, who served as Rommel’s chief of staff in North Africa, seemed sympathetic to the Italian performance in North Africa. “The Italian soldier was at a disadvantage compared with us as far as weapons, equipment, and other imponderables were concerned,” wrote Westphal. “He was neither equipped nor prepared for a war against a European opponent armed with the most modern weapons, because the Fascist regime had

*Continued on page 81*



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AMERICAN SOLDIERS SATISFIED THEIR CURIOSITY ABOUT GERMAN EQUIPMENT BY EXAMINING CAPTURED ENEMY WEAPONS. SOMETIMES THE WEAPONS WERE TURNED ON THEIR FORMER OWNERS.

# Captured Weapons

BY KEVIN HYMEL



All Photos: National Archives



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1. A paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division tries out a German half-track motorcycle, known as a *kettenkrad*, in Carentan, France.

2. Sergeant Oakly M. Rath holds a captured German *Sturmgewehr 44* in front of a chateau in Salins, France.

3. Soldiers from the First Infantry Division examine rifles and *Panzerfausts* left behind when the Germans were forced out of Schoppen, Belgium in January 1945.

4. Turning the enemy's own 88mm gun on them, a soldier loads the notorious weapon with a shell inscribed "Made in Germany" and prepares to fire across the Rhine River.

5. Americans fire a captured German mortar toward enemy positions.

6. Americans try out a German antitank weapon in Ceppagna, Italy, in January 1944.



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1. Soldiers of the 5th Armored Division examine a German V-1 suicide bomb.

2. A soldier repaints a captured German vehicle which will then be used by the U.S. Army's 28th Division in Saint Manvieu, France.

3. To insure these captured German weapons won't be used again, a soldier of the 10th Armored Division breaks them against a tree, March 7, 1945.

4. Three soldiers laden with captured weapons and ammunition head for a pit near Gurzenich, Germany, where they will have an opportunity to test fire the weapons.

5. Captured German rifles taken by the 11th Armored Division are examined by American soldiers, March 13, 1945, in Andernach, Germany.



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BY ADAM LYNCH

THE AMERICAN EFFORT TO NEUTRALIZE THE BIG JAPANESE AIR-SEA base at Rabaul on the island of New Britain in the South Pacific was heating up, and 18-year-old aviation radioman John Kepchia was about to feel the heat.

After 33 missions, the U.S. Navy airman from Greensburg, Pennsylvania, was becoming painfully aware of the almost daily routine. Early morning awakenings; monotonous breakfasts of mutton, powdered eggs, and powdered milk; dangerous bombing missions into Japanese-held island bases; and, if luck held, a return home.

Although Kepchia always had the same kind of pre-mission apprehension that everyone else felt, by the time the big Grumman TBF Avenger started in on its bomb run and Kepchia began firing his rear-facing .30-caliber machine gun at ground targets to suppress antiaircraft fire, he always said he “never had time to be scared.”

On the morning of May 21, 1944, in his tent on the island of Bougainville, Kepchia had been shocked awake by the frightened voice of Chief Petty Officer “Matty” Mathewson shouting, “Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!”

In the half light Kepchia saw turret gunner Dick Lanigan from St. Louis, still lying on his cot pointing a .38-caliber revolver at Mathewson. Lanigan, like everyone else, was getting edgy. Many Japanese troops still remained in the mountains ringing the Allied base, and they often tried to infiltrate the U.S. compound at night. So, Lanigan slept with his handgun. As Mathewson shook him awake, Lanigan cried out, “What’s the matter with you, Chief? You want to get killed? I thought you were a Jap!”

The two crewmen walked across the plywood tent deck into the humid morning air. Their pilot, Ensign Donald D. Atkiss from Philadelphia, known to the men as “Dee-Dee,” joined the crew at briefing where they learned the target for the day, the well-defended Vunakanau airstrip at Rabaul.



# Hell on New

The 18 TBF Avengers of Torpedo Squadron 305, carrying the identification Stone-2, would each be loaded with four 500-pound bombs. They would join six Royal New Zealand Air Force TBFs from Squadron NZTB 30. The intelligence officer told the crews that if they were shot down they should try to locate a friendly native who could take them to Australian coastwatcher Captain John Murphy in

the southern half of New Britain.

At 7:50 AM, the 24 planes began lifting off Bougainville for the nearly two-hour flight to New Britain. There were no aborts, and at 9:45 the first plane in the group headed down toward the target.

“Dee-Dee peeled off to the left and pushed over at 9,500 feet,” remembered Kepchia. “Antiaircraft bursts started showing at 6,000

feet. On the run-in, Lanigan was firing his .50-cal. turret gun as far forward as possible. I was on my knees, facing the rear, firing my stinger gun. Even with a limited view through the aft bottom window, I could see the faces of Japanese gunners trying to shoot us down. Suddenly, I heard our ship taking hits. I felt a sharp pain on the top of my head and noticed blood on my hands when I wiped my face. My compart-



Naval Historical Foundation

# Britain

ALLIED POWS SUFFERED  
TREMENDOUS HARDSHIPS  
BUT MANAGED TO SURVIVE  
IN CAPTIVITY AT RABAU.

ment filled with smoke, and my eyes were burning terribly.”

Atkiss called flight leader Lieutenant Vance Vorndam: “1 Stone-2; This is 18 Stone-2. We’re hit in the engine and on fire... We’re going down!” In his excitement, Ensign Atkiss had given the wrong aircraft identification. He, Lanigan, and Kepchia were actually in 22 Stone-2. Even so, Atkiss kept his cool.

Moments later they hit the jungle. Kepchia says he had just fastened his straps when the rugged Avenger ploughed into the trees, slid over the ground, and careened to a stop. “I sat there in the sudden silence trying to regain my wits. We had survived!” Lanigan was still in his turret but on his back. Kepchia kicked out his escape hatch cover, ran up over the wing to the cockpit, and flipped on the electric switch so

**U.S. Navy combat artist Standish Backus created this haunting, surreal image titled *Recent Guests of Japan* when he came upon a group of former prisoners of war being processed by their liberators in the Japanese city of Yokohama.**

Dick could rotate his turret. Then he gently shook his still inert pilot.

Kepchia and Lanigan carefully lifted Atkiss out of the cockpit and set him down in the high



**Left to right, former POWs Jim McMurria, Al Quinones, Joe Holguin, Escoe Palmer, and John Kepchia pause after several weeks of food, rest, and medical care following their liberation. Fellow prisoner Joe Nason was still too weak to stand for the photo.**

grass. The pilot was in great pain. Suddenly they heard the sound of an airplane.

They had gone down several miles south of the target, and Vorndam, risking more anti-aircraft fire, had turned back after the group had formed up to start home to look for them. He flew the route the downed plane had taken, but there was no circling. They watched the flight leader join up with his departing squadron on a straight heading back to Bougainville, and knew they were truly alone.

The men hoped to somehow elude Japanese search parties and eventually make contact with coastwatcher Murphy. It was a slim hope. Kepchia and Lanigan carried Atkiss between them in a crude sling rigged from a parachute harness but were soon gasping and out of breath. Atkiss urged them to leave him, but his crewmen refused. In the distance they heard Japanese patrols moving through the trees, spraying the underbrush with machine-gun fire. Local natives had been pressed into helping with the search, and the three airmen spotted them first.

When they approached the natives, the airmen were told that the Japanese were too many and that there was little hope of eluding them.

"We pushed on for another 45 minutes and came to a clearing where we stopped, exhausted, frightened and running out of options. We smoked our last cigarettes and waited for the Japanese," remembered Kepchia.

On that same afternoon, just 30 miles north on New Britain, a small group of American prisoners and one Australian were struggling through another long day. The Japanese called the prisoners "Horrios," among whom starva-

tion, disease, lack of medical treatment, and Japanese brutality were taking a vicious toll. They were held in a camp operated by the Rabaul Sixth Field Kempei-Tai, Japanese military police. The commanding officer, Colonel Satoru Kikuchi, had an extensive staff plus a cadre of guards whose personalities ranged from vicious and cruel to fairly benign.

The original six cells at Kempei-Tai headquarters at Rabaul were about nine feet by 18 feet with wooden bars. Each cell held as many as eight prisoners. Later, as more prisoners were brought in, more space was required and additional buildings were used. The Horrios (mostly airmen) had been told repeatedly that any attempt to escape would be followed by execution. Some prisoners, after only a few months of captivity, getting only a handful of rice a day, rapidly lost weight and will. They became severely depressed and literally waited for death. Others, even longtime prisoners, called on inner strength and somehow kept battling.

On this day, Air Force B-24 Liberator bomber pilot Lieutenant Jim McMurria, from Columbus, Georgia, now in his 16th month of captivity, eagerly accepted his small ball of rice and four ounces of watery soup. Obtaining food was a constant challenge. From time to time a guard might throw some leftover fruit or pickles or banana peel into the compound, but the normal food rations were not enough to sustain life. However, the more imaginative

prisoners discovered they could bargain for food or cigarettes by occasionally treating the guards to fanciful storytelling. The stronger prisoners on outside work detail could sometimes steal a bit of food.

Some learned to create a careful relationship with a guard, which could lead to an occasional piece of coconut. There were predictable instances of plotting and scheming among the prisoners and guards that resulted in extra food for some at the expense of others. Those prisoners who failed to improvise or adapt often failed to live.

McMurria looked around at his emaciated and depressed group of fellow prisoners. The tall pilot and his crew, part of the Fifth Air Force's 90th Bomb Group based at Port Moresby, New Guinea, had been shot down on January 20, 1943, while on a reconnaissance mission. It was his 20th, and McMurria's lone plane had been jumped by more than 20 Japanese Zero fighters. After a running gunfight with two engines out, McMurria ditched his Liberator in the water. The big plane broke in two and sank, but eight of the 10-man crew got out. With the help of friendly natives, the men avoided capture for about three months. Their luck ran out on the little island of Catavar, where a squad of Japanese soldiers burst out of the underbrush shouting and threatening to shoot.

The crew was taken by boat to the Rabaul camp. By now, McMurria was one of only 30 POWs remaining of 60 once held there. In November, four of McMurria's crew and four other prisoners, picked for no discernible reason, had been shipped to Japan where they survived the war on work details.

By the summer of 1944, the prisoners were seeing firsthand the increasing number of American bombing raids against Rabaul. But even if the war came to a successful end, the prisoners wondered about their fate. Would the Japanese execute them? Would they be transported to Japan? Would they ever see home again? Malaria and malnutrition led to beriberi and scurvy. Testicles became grossly swollen. Faces and ankles became puffy. Dysentery plagued them. The days dragged by as the survivors watched their friends dying at the rate of one a month.

As American raids against Rabaul continued, the Japanese commander forced the prisoners to move out of their crude cells for a time and into a cave dug into a hill that served as an air-raid shelter. It was 40 feet long, only four feet wide, dark, and wet. The prisoners were handcuffed to each other in pairs.

McMurria said, "When we completely filled the cave a large blanket was fastened to the

entrance permitting no view to the outside nor light to come inside. We stood and stood unable to sit down in the cramped quarters while the raids continued for two more days without letup. We were fairly safe from the bombs but in a terrible sanitary mess and had been given no water for over 48 hours. We managed to soothe our parched throats by gradually inching out to the front of the cave and chewing on the rain drenched blanket covering the cave. After three full days and nights of standing in the cave without food or water, the attacks on Rabaul leveled off and we were called outside and allowed to sit down.”

Of those POWs already in the camp on the day Kepchia, Lanigan, and Atkiss were shot down, six would survive to the end of the war. Kepchia would be the seventh survivor from the camp and the only one from his aircraft to make it. In addition to McMurria and Kepchia, the final survivors included Lieutenant Al Quinones, a P-38 Lightning fighter pilot from Mesa, Arizona, shot down on his first mission out of Port Moresby in November 1943, and Lieutenant Joe Holguin, from the barrios of Los Angeles. Talking together in Spanish was a valuable morale boost for them. Holguin was a navigator aboard the B-17 Flying Fortress bomber “Naughty but Nice,” which went down on June 25 that year on a 43rd Bomb Group mission to Rabaul from Port Moresby. Holguin was the only member of his crew to

Kepchia Collection



parachute out alive, but was severely injured when he came down into trees.

The other three survivors were Lieutenant Joe Nason, a U.S. Navy dive-bomber pilot from Westborough, Massachusetts, who was also captured in November 1943 on his first mission; Sergeant Escoe Palmer, a gunner aboard a B-25 Mitchell bomber, from Gainesville, Georgia; and Australian coastwatcher John Murphy who, unknown to the American forces, had been captured in November 1943.

Meanwhile, Kepchia, Atkiss, and Lanigan were about to become the latest American prisoners brought in. Their capture would come in that humid jungle clearing where they had been awaiting the inevitable. When the Japanese search parties finally spotted the Americans they ran toward them with fixed bayonets.

“I had decided to shoot rather than be run through, but an English-speaking officer yelled at us, ‘Raise your hands you damn fools or these soldiers will kill you!’” remembered Kepchia. “They yanked my gun out of its shoulder holster, but Lanigan had hidden his pistol in his boot top and when they found it they knocked him down and hit him with their rifle butts. Our captors marched us through the jungle for several hours with natives carrying

Nason Collection



**ABOVE:** Shown during a break in their training regimen, this group of airmen includes Japanese prison camp survivor Joe Nason in the first row, third from left. Nason recorded a message to his family that was broadcast on Radio Tokyo. The message confirmed that he was alive after his family had been advised he was declared dead. **LEFT:** Crewmen of the ill-fated aircraft TBF-22, which was shot down by the Japanese, included, left to right, Radioman John Kepchia, pilot Lieutenant Don Atkiss, and gunner Dick Lanigan.

Dee-Dee in a makeshift stretcher. Finally, we were shoved into a deep trench where they gave us water but no food. We spent the night there, bloody, scared, and wondering if we were going to be shot.”

The next day, the trio joined the dwindling number of Horrios at the POW camp at Rabaul. When brought in, the three newcomers were shocked to see the emaciated condition of the prisoners. Kepchia said they “were just skin and bones and looked like Zombies.” As the days went by, the new arrivals also began to lose weight rapidly, and to add to their misery, bombing attacks on Rabaul by American forces were increasing.

“B-24’s attacked Vunakanau and Lakunai air

bases with 500-pound bombs,” remarked Holguin of an October 1944 raid. “This was one of the most frightening experiences because Lakunai was only a mile or two from the camp. We could hear the roar of the engines and the firing of the anti-aircraft batteries. But the most frightening sound was the swishing noise of the falling bombs. We were sure this would be our last day on earth.

“We survived, but on November 2, attacks on Rabaul renewed with full fury. The first wave of B-25s approached at low level, hedge-hopping right over our camp with guns blazing and engines at full throttle. Empty bullet casings fell on the tin roof of our cells as they roared by. Once again we believed the end to our wretched existence had come.”

Of the seven POWs who would still be alive

at the end of the war, Navy pilot Nason appeared to be the least likely to make it. His 6-foot-3 body had dropped from 220 pounds to less than 85. Quinones and Murphy, also captured in late 1943, had remained in much better shape. Nason was ill most of the time. He became withdrawn and depressed, huddling under an old horse blanket.

The Japanese guards watched him sinking and shouted, “Horrio, you next die!” Surprisingly, Nason did not die, but his family, because of a series of inaccurate official telegrams, believed him to be already dead.

Nason’s SBD dive-bomber, from Squadron VC-38 based at Munda Point, New Georgia, in the Solomon Islands, had been hit by anti-

aircraft fire over Bougainville on his first combat mission. He bailed out and avoided capture for five days by hiding in the jungle.

On October 9, 1943, his mother, Mrs. Lucy Nason, got a U.S. Navy telegram at her home in Westborough saying that her son was officially listed as missing in action but probably dead since he had been seen hanging limply in his chute while descending into an antiaircraft barrage. A few months later, on March 15, 1944, Mary Elizabeth Ostendorf also got a telegram from the Navy. It read, "It is with deep regret we inform you your fiancé, Lt. Joseph Nason, previously listed as missing in action, must now be declared dead as of 23 October, 1943."

Then came the bombshell! A little over one month later, on April 29, Mary Elizabeth received a letter from Mrs. Marion Wagner of Berkeley, California. Mrs. Wagner had been listening to her shortwave radio when she heard a broadcast from Tokyo featuring a program called "Humanity Calls." She heard a voice

Australian War Memorial



**The only Australian POW at Rabaul, Captain John Murphy (left) stands with fellow prisoners aboard the destroyer HMAS Vendetta after their release.**

identified as that of prisoner of war Lieutenant Joe Nason of Westborough, Massachusetts, with a message for Mary Elizabeth Ostendorf: "Dearest Mary ... If you receive this letter it will indeed be an act of God. Just as it is an act of mercy that I am alive now. The Japanese people are caring for me adequately. I love you and

miss you more than ever."

Nason had made the recording at the invitation of the Japanese but never seriously thought it would be heard back home. A few weeks later, on May 24, Joe's father, Noah Nason, got a letter from the U.S. Navy saying that the same broadcast had been picked up by a listening facility on the West Coast and Lieutenant Joseph Nason was apparently alive. Not until the flier came home did he learn his message had actually gotten through.

Kepchia, Lanigan, and Atkiss now found themselves trying to stay alive in an inhumane and brutal South Pacific prison camp. They were the last three Americans brought there. A few days after arriving, Kepchia was taken for interrogation before the senior Japanese interpreter, Shigero Tsukahara, who spoke fluent English. The prisoner described the scene.

"I was brought into a small hut containing two chairs and a table on which were a bowl of fruit, a pack of cigarettes, a glass of water and a map and pencil. I was told to sit down. Tsukahara asked 'You have been treated well?'

## MEMORIES OF CAPTIVITY RESONATE WITH RABAU VETERANS.

Today, in conversations with those men still alive and in reading their memoirs, it is obvious they remember each other and events of their days as prisoners of war in different ways. Some are still extremely bitter toward the Japanese. Yet, Joe Holguin's daughter married a Japanese man, and Holguin made repeated friendly trips to Japan. Holguin also returned to New Britain in 1982 and, incredibly, located his crashed B-17. Holguin died in 1994.

John Kepchia stayed in the Navy for six years, retired with a disability pension, and entered the United States Postal Service. Married and the father of two children, Kepchia is retired and lives with his wife Elizabeth in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

Joe Nason, after a long recovery, returned to Massachusetts, married Mary Ostendorf, and became a corporate attorney. In 1967 he and Mary also visited Japan, but Nason said it made him "uneasy and claustrophobic." In 1977 the couple spent time in the South Pacific as volunteers in the Peace Corps and even returned to Rabaul because, he said, "I could not forget the courage of all those who stood bravely in the face of evil."

Jim McMurria went back to Columbus, Georgia, married his Mary Frances, and became a successful businessman and banker in Georgia and South Carolina, with children and grandchildren. In conversations with McMurria he reflected the satisfied demeanor of a genuine "Southern gentleman." McMurria has since passed away.

Escue Palmer became a civil engineer after the war, married, and began a family. However, according to Jim McMurria, he had an unhappy life, divorced, and died in 1978 without ever having any contact with his fellow former prisoners.

Al Quinones returned to Mesa, Arizona, and to his wife Grace, stayed in the Air Force for a few years, continued his education, and went into teaching. True to his humanitarian instincts, Quinones finished his career working with disadvantaged Indian children in the southwest. Quinones died recently.

Incredibly, John Murphy was court martialed by his own Australian Army

Nason Collection



**During an expedition into the New Britain jungle in 1982, former POW Lieutenant Joe Holguin locates the remains of his Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber, nicknamed "Naughty But Nice," which was shot down decades earlier.**

on charges of collaborating with the enemy. One of those who testified against him was Captain Yamada of the Rabaul Kempei-Tai. However, upon close examination of what some believed were trumped up charges, Murphy was found innocent with "complete vindication" and reunited with his wife Marjorie. Murphy later returned to New Guinea, where he served in a number of governmental positions. He died in 1997.

Other than a reunion in 1982 in South Carolina, arranged by Jim McMurria, and which Al Quinones did not attend, the survivors had little or no contact with each other.

Historian Peter Stone says 20 men of the 6th Field Kempei-Tai were tried and sentenced at the Rabaul war crimes trials. Several died by their own hand. Colonel Satoru Kikuchi and Doctors Hirano and Fushita received no sentence. □

“There I was with a black eye, broken nose, swollen and cut lip and this guy had the guts to ask me if I had been treated well. I had a smirk on my face when I answered ‘Does it look like it, Mr. Tsukahara?’ He replied, ‘You must realize that you are very fortunate you were not captured by the Japanese Army or Navy.’

“They would have tortured you, questioned you and then bayoneted you or beheaded you!’ I brought up the Geneva Convention and was told, ‘The Japanese Government did not sign the Geneva Accord and we do not abide by any rules except our own.’

Australian War Memorial



“I was handed a large map of Bougainville and told to mark where U.S. troops and anti-aircraft guns were positioned. I made marks all over the map. Tsukahara called in some guards, and I was hit and kicked. I fell to the floor and was kicked again while on all fours. I finally was allowed to get up and was again told to mark the positions. I chose different random sites and was again punished. I couldn’t have given him the positions if my life depended on it and by now I was sure that it did. I kept making new marks until they were apparently satisfied because they smiled and gave me a drink of water and a cigarette.”

It was shortly after capture that Kepchia says he received the first of several “medical injections.” The Japanese told him it was to keep him healthy, and although Kepchia struggled to avoid the shots, guards tied him to a chair.

“I was given a shot in my right shoulder and then another in my arm. I felt a hot sensation starting at the roots of the hair on my head. I slid to the floor and later seemed to be floating on air. I was taken back to the truck and returned to where Atkiss and Lanigan were. Atkiss had apparently been treated by a doctor, and his chest pain seemed less severe.”



**ABOVE: A stretcher-bound Joe Nason is carried to a waiting aircraft, while Joe Holguin stands at center and prepares to board the plane.**  
**LEFT: An emaciated Private John Kepchia recovers from the ravages of disease and starvation in a hospital at Jacquinot Bay.**

Inevitably, the harrowing conditions led to quarreling, bickering, and even outright fighting among the POWs although their weakened condition kept that to a minimum. Some men became close to each other while developing bitter relationships with others. The most controversial prisoner was Murphy. A territorial administrator in New Guinea before the war, conversant in Japanese, fluent in native dialect and pidgin English, Murphy volunteered to serve as a coastwatcher for the Allies. Unfortunately, he and his party were soon discovered after being landed by submarine on New Britain.

**Murphy, the very man Kepchia, Lanigan, and Atkiss** were told to locate if shot down, was himself a prisoner of the Kempei-Tai. There is no disagreement among the survivors that Murphy was a strong but domineering type of man. His knowledge of local geography, language, and customs; his nerve; and his crafty personality in dealing with the guards and other prisoners often worked to help. But some thought him selfish and resented his bullying leadership.

In early 1944, Major Saiji Matsuda became executive officer of the camp. Although he allowed occasional prisoner benefits, as the year wore on, weaker prisoners continued to die at an alarming rate. In February about 20 POWs had been taken to Japan. That left 50, but almost immediately that number was

reduced again. On March 4, 26 Americans and 5 Australians were taken to Talili Bay for transportation to nearby Watom Island. They died during an American strafing attack. After the war, the Japanese claimed they were all killed by American fire, but other POWs charge at least some of the victims were executed by the Japanese in retaliation for the raid.

By the end of June 1944, only 20 prisoners remained at the Rabaul camp. Many of those who died were actually new arrivals who had been prisoners for a relatively short period of time but were unable to adjust to disease and the lack of food and medicine. And yet, for at least some of the wretched men still alive, there was an improvement in their condition.

In July, Matsuda was replaced by Warrant Officer Tarataro Matsumoto. The Japanese seemed to finally accept that the war was not going well for them, and a slightly less brutal atmosphere settled over the camp. Even so, the dying went on and by August only 11 men were left. Quinones, as he had done from the beginning, constantly cared for the sick Horrios as best he could. Palmer continued to endlessly describe the plots of the countless Western movies he had seen, and Nason hung on in suspended animation. Allied air raids against Rabaul had tapered off, and although the prisoners could not know it, Rabaul had been isolated and bypassed by American forces. There would be no invasion.

Conversations between Horrios and guards became less hostile, and the men even staged a small but sad Christmas observance. The prisoners remembered Christmases past and tried to believe they might yet see home again.

As 1945 began, the stronger prisoners were

*Continued on page 82*

## Two weathered warbirds take flight in this aerial double header.

### HEROES OVER EUROPE

After maybe five minutes of playing Ubisoft's *Heroes Over Europe* for the Xbox 360 and Playstations 3 (reviewed), I had the sudden urge to run to my computer, hop online, and see whether or not some offshoot of Factor 5 was behind the game's development. It immediately reminded me of their *Star Wars* flight games—like *Rogue Squadron* and *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*, released for Nintendo 64 and Gamecube, respectively—putting emphasis on ease of play, and turning the skies into the smooth-as-silk shooting gallery they should be.

I ended up being incorrect, which may be a good thing considering the quality of Factor 5's most notorious title, 2007's dragon-flying monstrosity of a four-letter word, *Lair*. Rather, *Heroes Over Europe* comes from Australian developer Transmission Games, which received accolades for the game's predecessor, *Heroes Over the Pacific*. *Pacific* garnered more than just praise in its home country, taking home Australian Gamer of the Year and PC Game of the Year in 2005 courtesy of the Game Developer's Association of Australia.

Spending some time with *Heroes Over Europe* makes it clear that Transmission knows what they're doing when it comes to bringing flight to consoles, a truly loaded undertaking. With little exception, the controls are a no-fuss affair, eschewing painstaking realism in favor of an arcade experience, and without sacrificing much of the intensity expected of more rigid simulations.

*Heroes* follows pilots out of America, England, and New Zealand, each with their own story told through a combination of voice-over and static artwork. It's a bit minimalist, for sure, but it's welcome if the alternative would be drowning the player in personal stories that, let's face it, most of us would find less than mildly interesting. The actual setup for each of the missions comes in the form of newsreel footage, complete with "we can do it" and



"old Jerry has surely seen the last of his days" narration. It all sets the tone nicely, with missions punctuated by a painting of an enthusiastic fly girl and the bum-ba-bum of victory trumpets.

The amount of time between training and the actual performance of death-defying aerial acrobatics is impressively brief, which allows the developers to throw the player into more hectic situations at an earlier stage without making anyone want to pull out their hair. The first time *Heroes* really struck a chord with me was somewhere high above the docks of Dover. Storm clouds raged in the background as a mighty fleet of bombers flew ever closer to vital Allied targets. As I pulled back hard on the pitch, flying right into the heat of the bombers' rear gunners and their supporting wingmen, the music hit a crescendo and cap-

tured the moment perfectly.

If I have one beef with *Heroes*, it's the sheer volume of missions that center on protecting something from being destroyed. Whether it's a fleet of U.S. vessels, or a radar tower that relays crucial enemy information well ahead of time, these tasks tend to play out the same each time, though my own personal dislike of them really stems from my experience with this type of mission across my gaming history. I guess one could say I'm more concerned with offense than defense, causing this particular call of duty to be met with an unenthusiastic grumble.

That said, they're unavoidable within the game's context, so their inclusion is more easily forgivable here. These missions are also lenient enough as far as how much weathering a target in need of protection can take before all is lost, so staying in the sky and maintaining a steady clip of downed enemies leads to a sure-fire victory in most cases. Variety also picks up later on, with some missions including search and destroy objectives like dropping torpedoes in choppy waters to the satisfying crunch of a sinking ship.

There are a lot of little touches that make *Heroes Over Europe* special; something more than just another entry in a long-standing line of digital aviators. Things like "ace pilot takedowns"—maneuvers that allow you to focus, zoom in, and down an enemy in



one single, engine-smoking shot—bring it into territory of its own. The battle can also be taken online with up to 16 people, something that should convince players to stick around at least a little longer after the end of the main campaign. If you're more interested in simply having a good time and getting that World War II ace pilot feeling without the fuss of stringent simulations, *Heroes Over Europe* soars above the competition nicely.

### IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

*IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey* for the Xbox 360 and Playstation 3 (reviewed) is the other hand to *Heroes Over Europe's* blazing fast experience. While it's not exactly on the opposite end of the spectrum, this 505 Games-published title does travel further into the realism of flight, with options that can either lessen or increase the frustration of it all.

*IL-2 Sturmovik* has a fairly celebrated history as far as combat flight simulators go. The series first appeared on PCs in 2001, and it remains the longest flight series to still have developer support for the original, with patches and planes being added to this day. The latest entry in the series, *Birds of Prey*, spreads its wings a little farther, though, reaching across both major consoles (with apologies to Wii owners), as well as Nintendo DS and Playstation Portable.

The theaters of war represented throughout the missions are the Battle of Britain, Stalingrad, Berlin, Sicily, and Korsun. Having played *Heroes Over Europe* just prior to popping this one in, there's obviously a lot of evenly treaded ground between the two, at least as far as locales are concerned, though *IL-2* brings with it a slight increase in visual clarity. The draw distance alone is impressive, with the land sprawling as far as the eye can see while ground battles rage below.

*IL-2* is noticeably more demanding from the get-go and has an added element of realism, especially when compared to *Heroes Over Europe's* style of flight. In the actual campaign, however, things can be tweaked for a less strenuous experience. It doesn't make the controls less finicky, but it does make for a series of flights that aren't as aggravating, thanks to the option



of unlimited retries and the initial Arcade difficulty setting.

It still takes some time to really get your wings and feel comfortable enough to zip through the air confidently. I found the actual pitch and rudder controls to be a little unwieldy, and they remained so for long enough to make me feel as if I was doing something completely wrong. The targeting system is really handy, though, and once you begin to maneuver in concert with it and dance around the sky against the increasingly thick threat of enemy fighters, concerns with falling violently from great heights start to dissipate.

It's interesting that both the developers behind this and *Heroes Over Europe* opted for an unobtrusive approach when it came to the HUD (heads-up display). The volume of on-screen clutter can be adjusted, but it mostly consists of your handy radar and a speed/altitude indicator. Though I didn't end up using it much, I really appreciate the fact that *IL-2* offers multiple camera angles, from the default third-person to a detailed cockpit view, and more depending on which craft is currently in play.

The overall presentation may be a little dry, but this is definitely going to be a pleasure for the more sim-oriented player, warts and all. Like *Heroes*, *IL-2* offers 16-player online play, so it really does come down to the nitty gritty differences between the two if there's only room for one set of wings on your shelf.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Combat flight sims are typically more at home on PC, which is further cemented by the grumbling of displeasure that surfaced once PC play-



ers found out that *Birds of Prey* wouldn't be seeing release on their platform of choice. Despite all the complications inherent in translating the genre to home console, both Gaijin Entertainment (*IL-2*) and Transmission Games (*Heroes Over Europe*) have done an admirable job in making things work.

For those who want to hop right in a plane and start feeling like a pro sooner than later, there's a strong case for you in the arcade bogey-blasting of *Heroes Over Europe*. That would be my personal choice, if pressed to decide between the two. *IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey* should satisfy the more meticulous; those who don't mind a slightly more arduous build to proficiency.

Either way, it's pretty amazing that there are two competent World War II flight games available for consoles at the same time, neither feeling like the bumbling and rushed products they easily could have been. Grab on to this rare opportunity and take off on your excursion of choice, because who knows when it's going to come around again. □



National Archives



Yet, with the assistance of the Western allies, Germany was eventually able to right itself and take its place among the civilized nations.

Bessel's *Germany 1945* is an extensively researched and masterfully written portrait of that shattered nation's emergence from catastrophe, astutely portraying the defeated land's own sense of victimization after the war, despite the crimes it had perpetrated. While some may question Germany's seeing itself as the victim instead of the perpetrator of some of the worst crimes in recorded history, the author says that there is no doubt that such an inward view helped it recover from the devastation of war and become the strong, stable nation it is today.

As the dust jacket copy says, "Authoritative and dramatic, *Germany 1945* is groundbreaking history that brilliantly explores the devastation and remarkable rebirth of Germany at the end of World War II. Bessel's startling narrative depicts perhaps the most important transition in modern times: from the worst outburst of violence in human history to a period of relative peace, prosperity, and civilized behavior. Ultimately, it is a success story, a story of life after death." Very highly recommended.

## Life After Death

Author Richard Bessel documents Germany's defeat and vilification and its rebirth as a world power in his new book, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace*.

**AUTHOR RICHARD BESSEL'S LATEST BOOK IS, WITHOUT DOUBT, A MONUMENTAL** work that goes in depth to chart Germany's progress from a flattened, vilified foe to a bulwark in Europe's efforts to resist Communist expansion and takeover.

The last months of the war were by far the bloodiest and most agonizing as the unrelenting, pitiless Allied pounding, from east and west and above, bludgeoned Nazi Germany into a smoldering, nearly unrecognizable mass. In January alone, as many as one million people died violent deaths.

Nor did the cessation of fighting in May bring respite for the German people. In *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (Harper, New York, 2009, 544 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$28.99), Bessel describes an infrastructure that had been totally destroyed, along with law and order and all of the human services. Acts of vengeance inflicted by the armies of the conquering nations also contributed to Germany's complete moral, physical, and spiritual collapse. Looting, rape, starvation, and disease were the four horsemen of the Apocalypse that confronted the surviving Germans at the end of the war.

An old couple digs through the ruins of Dresden to sort out usable bricks and stone. Many Germans devoted their free time to task of salvaging their cities after the war.

*The Bloody Triangle: The Defeat of Soviet Armor in the Ukraine, June 1941*, by Victor J. Kamenir, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, 2009, 322 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$30.00.

Ask just about any history buff in the West to name a famous tank battle in the Soviet Union, and the answer will almost invariably be "Kursk."

While the Battle of Kursk in July and August 1943 was the largest clash of armor in history (7,600 tanks, over two million men) and resulted in a victory for the Soviets, an earlier tank battle took place shortly after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, with a decidedly different outcome.

Just two days after Operation Barbarossa stunned Stalin and the world, 650 German panzers and 180 assault guns and tank destroyers were battling against overwhelming odds:

1,500 Soviet tanks in a huge, roughly triangular area of approximately 1,800 square miles of difficult terrain between the northwestern Ukrainian towns of Lutsk, Dubno, and Bordy. It was an area that would become infa-

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## Mr. Netanyahu's Offer (II)

### Are the objections of the Palestinians justified?

In our previous *hasbarah message* (#117, "Mr. Netanyahu's Offer [I]"), we told of the Netanyahu's government's willingness to allow a Palestinian state to arise alongside Israel in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and in Gaza. Not surprisingly, he attached certain conditions to this offer, all of which the Palestinians totally rejected. The objections that we discussed previously referred to the "settlements," the demilitarization of the new state, and the "return of the refugees."

#### What are the facts?

In addition to those conditions mentioned above, Mr. Netanyahu's offer of a state for the Palestinians in the "West Bank" and in Gaza included two further requirements: One, that Jerusalem remain the undivided capital of Israel and two, that the Arabs recognize Israel to be the Jewish state.

**An Undivided Jerusalem.** Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israel defense forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Muslim city were rarely if ever asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side-by-side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Muslim Arabs declared their desire to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city into Arab possession.

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city to Israel in the Six-Day War. It has now gained currency by dint of constant repetition. Basis of the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, the Temple Mount, sacred to both Muslims and Jews. But Jerusalem has for centuries been the capital of the Jewish people and has been the capital of Israel since its founding. It is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible. There is not a single mention of it in the Koran.

**Israel is the State of the Jews.** Mr. Netanyahu insists that Israel be recognized as the Jewish state. But such recognition is obviously only a formality. Israel was established as the Jewish state by the Balfour Declaration, by the League of Nations, by the United Nations, by the consensus of the world, and by the facts on the ground. The reason that the Muslims do not wish to recognize Israel as a Jewish state is that it would supposedly prejudice the rights of the Muslims and perhaps members of other religions who live in Israel. But that is nonsense. Regardless of what it is called, everybody understands that Israel is indeed the State

Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life and Jewish yearning for over 3,000 years. There is no reason why it should not remain the undivided capital of Israel. And, of course, Israel is a Jewish state. Everybody understands that, whether the Muslims do or do not wish to accept it. Here is another chance for the Palestinians to have their own country and to live in peace and in prosperity alongside Israel. But chances are overwhelming that, once again, they will reject the outstretched hand that is being offered.

of the Jews, and so do the over 1 million (approximately 20% of Israel's population) Muslims that live in Israel as full citizens, with all the rights and privileges of their Jewish fellow citizens. Nobody seems to object that, for instance, Iran designates itself as an "Islamic Republic." For the Muslim world to recognize Israel as the State of the Jews would simply be recognizing reality.

It has to be clear to every student of modern history that the Palestinians, if that were their real goal, could have had

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**"Here is another chance for the Palestinians to have their own country... Chances are overwhelming that, once again, they will reject the outstretched hand...."**

---

their own state since at least 1937, following the Peel Report. There have been many opportunities since. The most important of those was the 1948 decision of the United Nations to partition the country west of the

Jordan River into a Muslim and a Jewish state. The Jews eagerly accepted the proposal, which the Arabs utterly rejected and instead invaded the nascent state of Israel with the armies of five of their countries. There have been many other opportunities since, all of which the Muslims have rejected. One must come to the unhappy conclusion that to create a state is not the ultimate goal of the Palestinians. The ultimate goal always has been and continues to be the destruction of the state of Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu's offer of allowing a Palestinian state to be created and to exist along Israel is a most generous offer. No parallel can be found in the annals of world history. It is abundantly clear that the "conditions" accompanying Mr. Netanyahu's offer are more than reasonable. Surely, after decades of open hostilities and the recent bitter example of Gaza, it should go without saying that the newly formed state should be totally and reliably demilitarized. It should be clear that the "settlements" – about 300,000 Jews in a sea of over 3 million Arabs – cannot be an obstacle to peace, since the over 1 million Arabs living in Israel are not considered a problem. It should be clear that the "refugees," which have swelled from the original 650,000 to allegedly more than 5 million, should be settled in the newly to be formed state of Palestine.

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mous as “the Bloody Triangle.” Yet, despite the disparity of numbers, it was the German forces that eventually prevailed, throwing back Soviet counterattacks and inflicting heavy casualties. The Soviet high command wanted to know: How did this German victory come about? How badly did it shake the confidence of the Red Army and the Soviet civilian population? Could the Germans be stopped?

The Soviets learned invaluable lessons from the defeat, lessons they would use to ultimately defeat the seemingly unbeatable German Army in the coming years.

Author Victor Kamenir, a frequent contributor to *WWII History* and an expert in Russian military history, has put together an incredibly detailed account of this action primarily from a Soviet point of view. It is destined to stand as *the* definitive work on this savage battle.

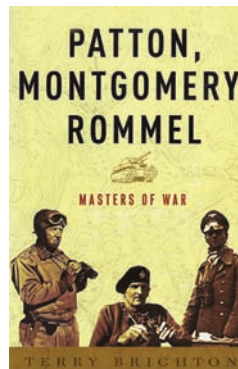
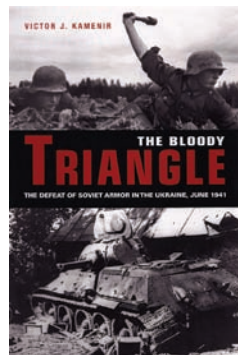
*Patton, Montgomery, Rommel: Masters of War*, by Terry Brighton, Crown Publishers, New York, 2009, 432 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$30.00.

Terry Brighton, curator of the Queen's Royal Lancers Museum in England, has masterfully welded together a compellingly readable triple biography of three of World War II's most charismatic and enigmatic commanders.

After combing the archives in England, Germany, and the U.S. for previously untapped primary resource material, Brighton applied his own critical eye to come up with a fresh interpretation of how these three masters of war sought the fight, despised the politics, and captured their own glory and places in history.

All three, it must be said, were arrogant publicity seekers who were always looking for a fight, but perhaps it was this desire for the spotlight that helped them achieve greatness on the battlefield. And their explosive, antagonistic relationships with each other, either as ally or enemy, rivaled the ferocity of their armored contests in determining the conduct and outcome of the war.

Some of the questions Brighton explores are: Did Monty always try to steal the thunder from Patton or vice versa? Was Patton anything like



actor George C. Scott's portrayal of him in the classic 1970 film? How would the fortunes of war have changed had Rommel had all the tanks he wanted and needed?

This is a fascinating book that any student of history and leadership will savor. Highly recommended.

*Kamikazes, Corsairs, and Picket Ships: Okinawa, 1945*, by Robin L. Rielly, Casemate, Philadelphia, 2009, 435 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$34.95.

During the long and intense struggle for the island of Okinawa in the spring of 1945, it was the American radar picket ships that warned the naval commanders when a massive swarm of Japanese kamikaze pilots and planes was on its way to wreak havoc on the assembled warships standing guard over the amphibious forces coming ashore.

The U.S. fleet and its accompanying air power that took station off Okinawa were of gigantic proportions; the Japanese could rely only on wave after wave of suicide pilots willing to die in order to inflict critical damage and perhaps reverse the tide of war.

While losses in the U.S. fleet, including damage to ships such as the aircraft carriers *Enterprise* and *Intrepid*, have been well covered, there has been less information published about the terrific battle waged by these Japanese marauders against the radar picket line, the fleet's outer defense.

Of the 206 ships that served on radar picket duty at Okinawa, 29 percent were either sunk or damaged by Japanese air attacks, making theirs the most hazardous naval surface duty in World War II.

The story of this no-holds-barred battle is told in Robin Rielly's new book, *Kamikazes, Corsairs, and Picket Ships*. Entire squadrons of kamikaze were blasted from the sky by U.S. Navy, Marine, and Army fighters maintaining a combat air “umbrella” over the fleet. Shipboard gunners, too, took their toll of enemy planes that managed to slip through this umbrella. Once the Japanese pilots realized that their efforts to strike the capital ships were futile, they turned their attention and their fury against the

first floating targets they saw, the radar picket ships.

With a crisp, engrossing narrative, Rielly puts the reader right onto the blazing decks and into the cockpits of the attackers and defenders during one of the most hard-fought engagements of the entire war.

*The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*, by Robert M. Edsel, Center Street Press, New York, 2009, 460 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$26.99.

In our previous issue, we reviewed *The Venus Fixers* by Ilaria Dagnini Brey, an account of how Allied art experts worked to save the irreplaceable art treasures of Italy from the ravages of war. *The Monuments Men* is of a similar vein, but with an expanded scope—all of Europe.

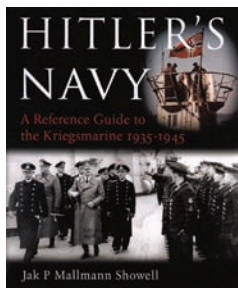
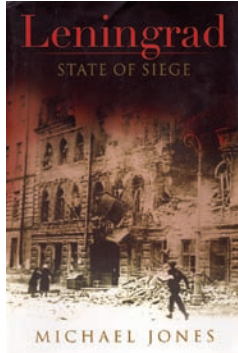
As the world now knows, in addition to their other crimes against humanity the Nazis were also ruthless plunderers of art from private collections, galleries, museums, churches, everywhere. Men such as Adolf Hitler and Hermann Göring had immense personal collections of art stolen from an entire continent. In Hitler's case, much of the art was put on display for the edification of the public at the House of German Art in Munich.

Another group of men and women, usually working anonymously, toiled tirelessly to prevent these treasures from falling into enemy hands or, worse yet, from being damaged or destroyed by the horrific bombing, shelling, and urban fighting that ravaged Europe's cities. They were known collectively as "the Monuments Men."

Author Robert Edsel has done a masterful job of pulling this little-known story of selfless heroism together and documenting the efforts that went into saving many of mankind's most important artistic achievements.

Drawn from 13 different nations, the men and women who made up this unique unit (The Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section) were volunteers with expertise as museum directors, curators, art scholars and educators, artists, architects, and archivists.

Initially, the job of this group of unarmed soldiers was to mitigate combat damage to struc-



tures such as churches, museums, and other architectural monuments. As the war progressed and the German border was breached, their focus shifted to locating movable works of art and other cultural items stolen or otherwise missing.

As the author confesses in the foreword, due to the length of the work, he was unable to include the Monuments Men's activities in Italy. Happily, Ilaria Dagnini Brey's *The Venus Fixers* fills in that gap nicely. Together, these two books should be considered a "set" for anyone who wants to know more about this fascinating chapter of history.

*Leningrad: State of Siege*, by Michael Jones, Basic Books, New York, 2009, 322 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$27.95.

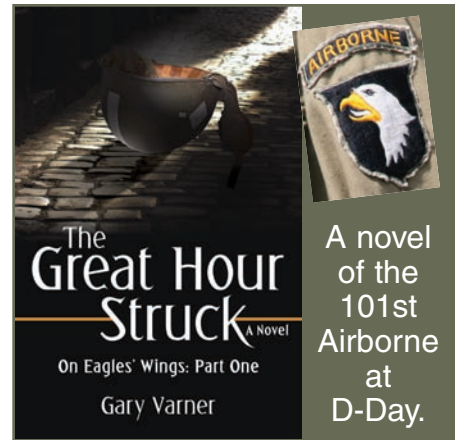
Few cities have ever undergone the kind of relentless assault that Leningrad endured for 872 days. No matter how hard the German Army tried to smash the city and its combined military and civilian resistance, the stronger the resistance became.

Battered, starved, frozen, and thought to be many times at the end of their rope, the defenders of Leningrad fought off one attack after another, endured one more horrendous, unceasing artillery barrage or aerial bombardment. By the time the Germans gave up and retreated in January 1944, a million people in Leningrad lay dead.

Michael Jones has captured all the horror, heartbreak, and courage in this impressive work. Drawing on newly uncovered diaries, eyewitness accounts, and other sources, Jones presents stories of both an honorable and shameful nature—the looting, cannibalism, and despicable acts by criminal gangs in the shattered city.

He also explores the immense psychological strength on which the citizens drew to survive the unprecedented onslaught. At the height of the siege, for example, an extraordinary live performance of Shostakovich's magisterial Seventh Symphony seemed to profoundly strengthen the city's will to survive. When the surrounding German troops heard the concert's radio broadcast, one Wehrmacht soldier remarked, "We began to understand we would never take Leningrad."

*Leningrad: State of Siege* is a work of



A novel of the 101st Airborne at D-Day.

"...eloquent and captivating... The parachute and combat scenes are vivid and graphic and this story will put you in the action in a surprisingly effective manner. ...it's doubtful that any other fiction writer will be able to surpass the quality of this book in a similar project."

— Mark Bando, Author of *101st Airborne: The Screaming Eagles in World War II*

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## Short Bursts

***Soldier from the War Returning: The Greatest Generation's Troubled Homecoming from World War II***, by Thomas Childers, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, 2009, 340 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, \$26.00.

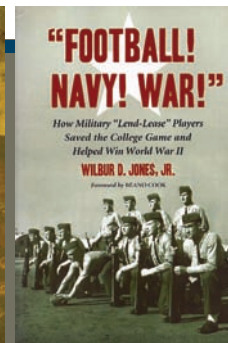
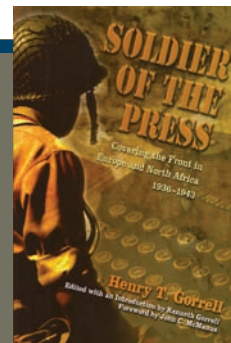
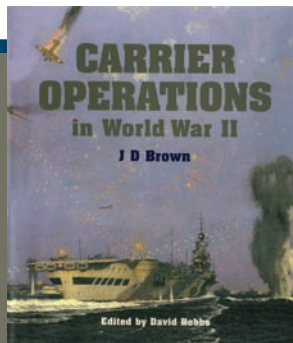
A common myth today is that the World War II soldier came home flushed with victory, married his sweetheart, got a job, bought a home, had kids, and lived happily ever after. Such a storybook ending, unfortunately, was far from the reality, as author Thomas Childers poignantly makes clear in *Soldier from the War Returning*.

With acute sensitivity, Childers interweaves the intimate stories of three families, including his own, with a decade's worth of research to paint a dramatically different picture of what the war did to many of the surviving veterans.

Drawing on interviews, diaries, oral histories, and government documents, Childers reveals the true human cost of the conflict and its postwar trauma. In 1946, for example, 10,000 American veterans a month were being diagnosed with psychoneurotic disorders, then called "battle fatigue" (today known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD). The result was alcoholism, unemployment, anxiety, and other psychological manifestations, and widespread homelessness, leading to a spike in domestic violence, abuse, and a skyrocketing divorce rate.

Describing this dark underbelly of victory could become maudlin or coldly clinical in lesser hands, but Childers's prose is literate and hauntingly beautiful, even novelistic at times.

***Carrier Operations in World War II***, by J.D. Brown,



Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2009, 304 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, \$72.95.

This exhaustive and authoritative work, according to the foreword, "gives a clear view of every [British and American] carrier operation in World War II for the first time and accurately lists ships, air squadrons, locations and activities, highlighting both the strategic and tactical value of naval operations in the first war in which it played a major part."

Indeed, so complete is Brown's work that it could have been titled *Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Carrier Operations in WWII—and Then Some*. There are charts, graphs, and hundreds of photos, some of the never-before-published variety, that describe in fine detail what Britain's and America's flat-tops were doing in every theater of action.

A Royal Navy veteran, J.D. Brown was head of the Royal Naval Historical Branch before his untimely death in 2001. At the time of his passing, he was working on this, the final volume of his trilogy that detailed carrier operations in World War II. From the incomplete manuscript and handwritten notes, Brown's good friend and naval aviation expert David Hobbs completed the work. Brown's book can truly be considered the "Bible" of carrier operations.

***Soldiers of the Press: Covering the Front in Europe and North Africa, 1936–***

***1943***, by Henry T. Gorrell, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 2009, 314 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, \$34.95.

Other than Ernie Pyle, Richard Tregaskis, Andy Rooney, and Edward R. Murrow, most of the war correspondents of World War II are a largely forgotten bunch. And yet, they were usually found in foxholes at the front or flying above the battlefields or storming a beachhead or standing aboard warships with their typewriters and note pads, braving everything that the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines were experiencing just so their readers back home would know what their sons and fathers and boyfriends were doing.

Along comes a book by former United Press correspondent Henry "Hank" Gorrell that covers the period from the bloody Spanish Civil War in 1936 until North Africa in April 1943, and plunges the reader into the heat of battle while revealing the dangers felt by the war reporters of that bygone era. He accurately tells us what the war looked like, sounded like, smelled like, felt like.

What makes Gorrell's account even more special is the fact that his son, Kenneth Gorrell, discovered the original manuscript in a family attic. It is presented here in its entirety for the first time after 60 years, and remarkable it is.

***"Football! Navy! War!" How Military "Lend-Lease"***

***Players Saved the College Game and Helped Win World War II***, by Wilbur D. Jones, Jr., McFarland, Jefferson, NC, 2009, 277 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, softcover, \$35.00.

In his highly entertaining book, Jones, a retired Navy captain, chronicles the experiences of some of America's top college football players as they enlisted to fight for their country while still playing the game they loved.

During the war, the military and colleges joined forces, fielding competitive, racially integrated teams to prepare men for combat. Many of the games were played before huge crowds. This book relates the Department of the Navy's role in preserving the game and national morale through the "Lend-Lease" of officer candidates, including scores of All-American stars and professionals such as Charley Trippi, Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch, Glenn Davis, Doc Blanchard, Otto Graham, Charlie "Choo-Choo" Justice, Verne Gagne, Frankie Sinkwich, coach Paul Brown, and many others.

It was not all fun and games, however, as Jones points out. "Six hundred thirty-eight active players served in the armed forces, and 69 were decorated. Twenty-one lost their lives: 19 active or former players, an ex-head coach [Marine lieutenant Jack Chevigny, Chicago Cardinals, at Iwo Jima], and a team executive."

immense power that will help readers gain a new appreciation for the remarkable courage of people in wartime. Don't miss it.

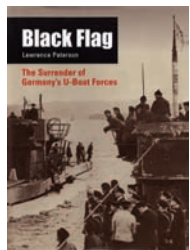
*Hitler's Navy: A Reference Guide to the Kriegsmarine, 1935-1945*, by Jak P. Mallmann Showell, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2009, 224 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, hardcover, \$69.95.

Showell's handsome, lavishly illustrated, oversized volume brilliantly captures the scope of the German Navy during the Third Reich. Crisp color and black-and-white photos, accompanied by detailed text and numerous charts, provide the reader with a fascinating inside look at all aspects of the Kriegsmarine and how it went from being the world's most modern and formidable seagoing force to its woefully underutilized state by the middle of the war.

Here are spectacular views and data of the famous German warships—the *Bismarck*, *Scharnhorst*, *Graf Spee*, the carrier *Graf Zeppelin*, plus a host of submarines and lesser-known ships—along with the bases that sheltered them and the shipyards that built them. An added bonus is an extensive section on German naval uniforms, badges, insignia, and small-arms weapons.

Truly an outstanding reference work that belongs on every naval enthusiast's bookshelf.

*Black Flag: The Surrender of Germany's U-Boat Forces*, by Lawrence Paterson, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, 2009, 196 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$30.00.



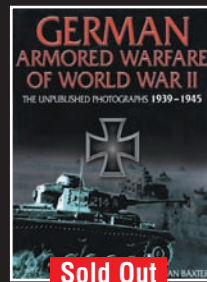
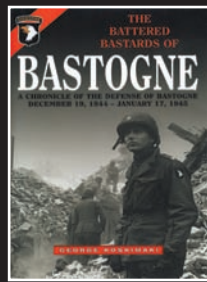
A fine companion piece to Showell's work is Paterson's in-depth look at the ignominious end of the once-mighty and mightily feared German U-boat fleet.

In May 1945, Nazi Germany surrendered to the Allies against whom it had fought for the previous six years. Over the course of the war, the German submarine force had waged war in four oceans and five seas, wreaking havoc on Allied military and civilian vessels alike.

On the eve of surrender, German U-boats were spread in bases from France to Norway, where cadres of submariners fought on in ports that defied besieging Allied troops to the bitter end. At sea, Admiral Karl Dönitz's men still operated on a war footing around Britain, the U.S. coasts, and as far away as Malaya.

Following the agreement to surrender, these large formations needed to be disarmed, corraled, and returned to port, a tense, often dan-

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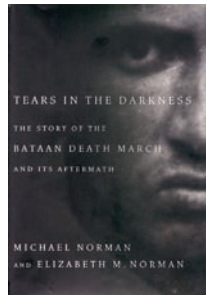
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gerous proposition for the sometimes inferior captors. For many Allied personnel, it was their first glimpse of the dreaded U-boat menace, and neither side knew exactly what to expect. In some cases, there were unsavory incidents, and worse.

One of the last but most dramatic acts of the naval war, the story of exactly how the surrender was handled, has never been treated at length before. Naval expert Paterson uncovers much new material about the process itself and the ruthless aftermath for both the crews and their boats.

*Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath*, by Michael Norman and Elizabeth M. Norman, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York, 2009, 464 pp., photographs, index, hardcover, \$30.00.

During the first four months of 1942, American, Filipino, and Japanese soldiers fought what was to become America's first major land battle of World War II, the struggle for the tiny Philip-



pine peninsula of Bataan. The brutal fight ended with the surrender of 76,000 Americans and Filipinos, the single largest defeat in U.S. military history. Thousands of them died of disease, infected wounds, or were murdered by their captors during their long march into captivity.

Although it reads like a novel, *Tears in the Darkness* is all fact, based on the life of Ben Steele, a young cowboy and artist from Montana who joined the Army to see the world and ended up a prisoner on the infamous Bataan Death March.

In the end, his is a story that goes beyond survival during one of the darkest periods in American military history, a story of how one man's abiding humanity sustained him.

Juxtaposed against Steele's story and the sobering tale of the death march and its aftermath are the heretofore untold accounts of a number of ordinary Japanese soldiers who struggled to maintain their own sense of humanity while carrying out their superiors' inhuman orders. □

## Squadron 8

*Continued from page 55*

torpedo planes may have prevented the Japanese carriers from launching additional fighter planes. All levels of the Japanese air defense network were either out of position or unprepared to meet the subsequent dive bomber attacks.

In his official report on the Midway action, Mitscher praised the efforts of his torpedo squadron. "This squadron is deserving of the highest honors for finding the enemy, pressing home its attack, without fighter protection and without diverting dive bomber attacks to draw the enemy fire." However, Mitscher's endorsing of Stanhope Ring's fighter arrangement and course may have greatly contributed to the demise of the torpedo planes.

In the aftermath of the battle, all 15 of the pilots who participated in the June 4 attack of Torpedo 8 were awarded the Navy Cross. The rear gunners received the Distinguished Flying Cross. On April 5, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt awarded Torpedo Squadron 8 the Presidential Unit Citation. Praising the heroic attack, the citation concluded, "The loss of twenty-nine lives, typifying valor, loyalty, and determination, was the price paid for Torpedo Squadron 8's vital contribution to the eventual success of our forces in this epic battle of the air."

Almost 300 people gathered at the Federal shipyard in Kearny, New Jersey, on the morning of March 26, 1944, to witness the launch of a new U.S. Navy destroyer. Shortly after 11:30 AM, the USS *Waldron* slid down the ways and into the Hackensack River. Sponsored by Nancy Waldron, the ship was named in honor of her late father, John. For the next 29 years the warship served with distinction during three wars. It provided a fitting tribute to the memory of a great American hero.

Upon his rescue, George Gay was taken to Midway and was immediately transferred to a Pearl Harbor hospital. His story soon made headlines around the world. He went on to tour the United States as a decorated war hero.

Eventually returning to the war zone, Gay was assigned to Torpedo Squadron 11 and flew 21 combat missions from Henderson Field on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons. After the war he had a 30-year career in civil aviation flying for Trans World Airlines. George Gay passed away on October 21, 1994. It was 52 years after his 29 comrades had met their heroic fate near Midway. □

*John Domagalski is a graduate of Northern Illinois University and a resident of the Chicago area.*

## GIL COHEN: AVIATION ARTIST

Gil Cohen's interest in aviation began when he was a boy during World War II. He would spend hours watching the various types of aircraft flying over his home in the Philadelphia area and was able to identify them with ease. This early passion, combined with his love of history and painting, led to a brilliant career as an artist, illustrator, teacher, and historical painter.

Cohen graduated from the Philadelphia College of Art (now the University of the Arts) in 1953, then spent two years in the Army, stationed outside Frankfurt, Germany, during the height of the Cold War.

*Gil Cohen: Aviation Artist* (Boston Mills Press, \$49.95 hardcover) provides an excellent overview of the artist's career, including samples of his book and magazine covers and many of his aviation and historical paintings. The reader is given insight into the inspiration and concept for each painting as well as the process that went into creating the work. Pencil sketches that served as the basis for many of the paintings are included as well.



Cohen explains in the Introduction: "What I wish to convey in this book are my thoughts on picture-making and how I attempt to arrive at the most effective composition, including the use of tone, lighting, and color in order to produce a work that captures the emotion of a specific emotion in time."

Cohen paints with complete accuracy and detail, but what sets him above other military artists is his portrayal of the people who fought in the wars. The faces show the emotion appropriate to the scene, whether it be the horror of death or pride in service and accomplishment. We are transported to the scene through these faces.

*Gil Cohen: Aviation Artist* holds great appeal for history buffs and art enthusiasts alike. And for aspiring artists it is both a teaching tool and an inspiration. This stunning coffee table book should be on the top of everyone's holiday gift list this year.

Note: Turn to page 50 to see Cohen's *Requiem for Torpedo Eight*.



## pedestal convoy

Continued from page 43

Gort that he could now mount unlimited combat sorties for two months.

Meanwhile, a fourth crippled merchantman, the *Brisbane Star*, had reached the island. A total of 32,000 tons of food, ammunition, and other supplies was offloaded, enough to sustain the island bastion for about 10 more weeks. The matériel landed was not enough to release the islanders from their near-starvation rations (1,500 calories a day), but it was sufficient to keep Malta going. The Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy had saved Malta. It did not mean the end of the island's siege, but the costly Operation Pedestal enabled strategic Malta to stay in the war. Malta's fall would have nullified Allied plans for the invasion of North Africa in November 1942.

Admiral Syfret reported, "Tribute has been paid to the personnel of His Majesty's ships; but both officers and men will desire to give first place to the conduct, courage, and determination of the masters, officers, and men of the merchant ships. The steadfast manner in which these ships pressed on their way to Malta through all the attacks, answering every maneuvering signal like a well-trained fleet unit, was a most inspiring sight."

The First Sea Lord reported to Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, commander in chief of the British Mediterranean Fleet, who was then in Washington, "We paid a heavy price, but personally I think we got out of it lightly, considering the risks we had to run, and the tremendous concentration of everything ... which we had to face."

Among the decorations awarded to survivors of Operation Pedestal, Captain Mason was given the George Cross, Britain's highest award for a noncombatant, in recognition of his heroism and seamanship. Twenty-three of his sailors and gunners were also decorated. On April 15, 1942, King George VI had awarded the George Cross to the "brave people" of Malta for their "heroism and devotion," the only time in history that an island has been given a medal.

Malta never forgot Operation Pedestal and the *Ohio*. In 1946, crowds cheered and bands played as the rusty hulk of the tanker was towed out of the Grand Harbor for the last time. While a remembrance service was conducted for those who died in the convoy, she was sunk in the waters she had plied during one of the naval epics of World War II. □

*Frequent contributor Michael D. Hull resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

## italian army

Continued from page 61

neglected the armed forces. The Army was particularly at a disadvantage in respect of tanks, antitank equipment, artillery, and anti-aircraft defense. A considerable portion of the Army's guns was still composed of the booty collected on the collapse of Austria-Hungary in the autumn of 1918. Their wireless posts were not in a position to transmit or receive while on the move. There were no field kitchens, and the rations were insufficient. Their industry was not equipped to meet the requirements of the armed forces during a war of long duration.

"It was therefore incomparably more difficult for our allies than for us. This has unfortunately not always been taken into account when judging their achievements. At any rate, I am convinced that we would also have been unable to achieve more success with out-of-date and inadequate arms and equipment."

While the average Italian soldier was not quite so enthusiastic about the cause as Mussolini was, once the reality of the task became clear, they performed well as part of the Afrika Korps and Panzer Army Afrika. In the end, Rommel suffered many of the same problems as Graziani did earlier. The lack of transport and supplies and an enemy that had air superiority and almost limitless supplies were too much to overcome.

While the Italian Army was defeated easily in early 1941, the army commanded by Rommel was much more formidable and proved that with proper leadership and equipment the Italian soldier was up to the task. The early Italian defeats helped create the reputation that, to this day, defines the Italian Army's performance in North Africa. The grueling conditions of the desert, the lack of equipment, and the lack of preparation for the venture did nothing to instill the Italian soldier with duty to a distant dictator. The fact that tens of thousands of Italians chose, voluntarily, to join with the Allies later in the war and fight the Germans in the equally inhospitable terrain of their homeland is often overlooked.

The fact that the average Italian soldier chose not to lay down his life in pursuit of Mussolini's dream of conquest is cause for reexamination of the question as to whether the Italian Army in North Africa was a cowardly lot or a victim of circumstance. □

*Author Walter S. Zapotoczny is a graduate of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy and has written numerous military papers and operations documents. He resides in Hershey, Pennsylvania.*

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## POWs

Continued from page 71

allowed to start a garden. Murphy and McMurria invented a cigarette rolling machine. Guards would bring them tobacco leaves they had stolen from a native garden. The enterprise allowed for the trade of food for cigarettes. Joe Holguin was given a decrepit little sewing machine and by repairing guard uniforms was able to barter for precious food.

Despite these small improvements, the situation remained critical. Disease was still rampant, and through that summer nine more prisoners had died. Among the 11 now left there were bets as to who might be next. Despair and bickering increased. One day Kepchia began bitterly arguing with his pilot Atkiss about how and why they were shot down. The argument escalated, and Kepchia advanced on Atkiss with clenched fists. Holguin intervened; Kepchia stopped, began to cry and retreated, shaking his head. The Horrios were reaching the limit of their endurance.

Then, overhearing bits of conversation among the guards and by asking careful questions, the Horrios learned Germany had been defeated and that American airpower was bombing major Japanese cities. They knew the end of the war could not be far away, but they were well aware their physical and mental conditions were rapidly deteriorating. Two more men had died and now, at this critical time, one of the cruelest events occurred.

On July 19, Dr. Einosuke Hirano, attached to Eighth Army Headquarters, paid a return visit to the camp. In the middle of April, he had taken blood samples from 10 prisoners ostensibly for malaria research. Five of them, he believed, had immunity to malaria, and to prove it he ordered the five injected with blood from five Japanese soldiers who were suffering in varying degrees from malaria. The five, taken in order, were Atkiss, Lanigan, Nason, McMurria, and Holguin. Each returned with a piece of fruit and a cigarette. Within two days all five were shivering and then burning with fever.

On the night of July 29, Lanigan died. In the early morning of the next day Atkiss expired while the indestructible Nason lay in a semi-coma for several days.

Warrant Officer Matsumoto approached the cells, and McMurria raged at him. "First you shot me down, then you exposed me to bombing raids by my own people. You have starved me and denied me the medicine we need and still you have not been able to kill me. Kill me if you wish but use your rifle. That would be more honorable than dying of disease or neglect!"

Matsumoto replied that he had tried to stop the medical experiments but that headquarters had ordered Dr. Hirano to proceed. Holguin says Matsumoto then slipped him a few packages of quinine, which he gave to himself, McMurria, and Nason. About a week later came the first hint that a dramatic change was about to occur.

On August 7, the seven prisoners had noticed unusual activity in the camp. The guards gathered in small groups, talking urgently and pointing to the POWs. Holguin says one of the guards told him, "The Americans are destroying the cities of Japan. Tokyo has been burning for days. American soldiers may soon invade Japan." The guards and the Horrios did not yet know that atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9.

But the camp commanders knew. On August 16, 1945, Warrant Officer Matsumoto paid the prison shack an unexpected visit in the middle of a tropical downpour. In broken English, the commander informed the prisoners that the war was coming to an end. The cell doors were unlocked. Within the hour, Major Matsuda, now back at Rabaul, invited the men to come out. The seven men squatted on the ground outside the shack.

In a bizarre scene, the sudden outpouring of emotional release touched prisoners and guards alike. Suddenly, abundant rice, candy, fruit, and condensed milk were there for the taking. Guards and Horrios actually embraced and laughed and cried together. The prisoners even poured sake into their rice. The next morning, hung over but happy, the seven survivors were told by Major Matsuda that they were no longer prisoners.

There were still days of frustration waiting for transportation and the inevitable logistic delays, but on September 7, 1945, the seven boarded the Australian corvette HMAS *Vendetta* and started the first leg toward home. Nason had to be carried on a stretcher, and Kepchia was too weak to walk without help.

Kepchia said, "You would have thought we were a bunch of relatives leaving on a long trip. We were hugging each other and the guards were hugging us and shaking hands with us. We had to be totally nuts but we were so very happy. I shall never forget those we left behind." Somehow, against all odds, the seven had survived. □

*Author Adam Lynch has also researched the escape and evasion efforts of civilians, which led to the safe evacuation of numerous downed Allied airmen in Europe. He resides in Monroeville, Pennsylvania.*

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