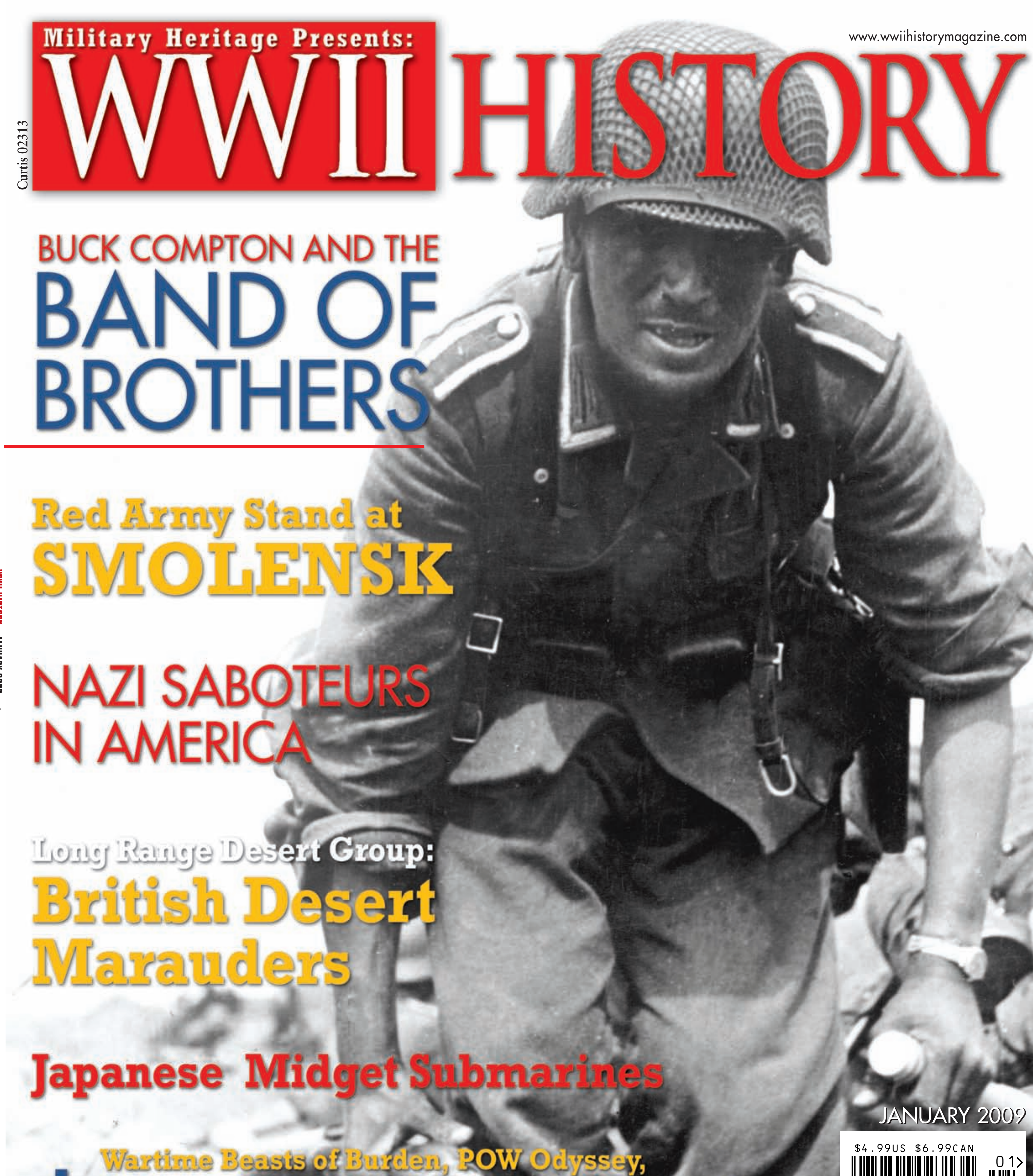

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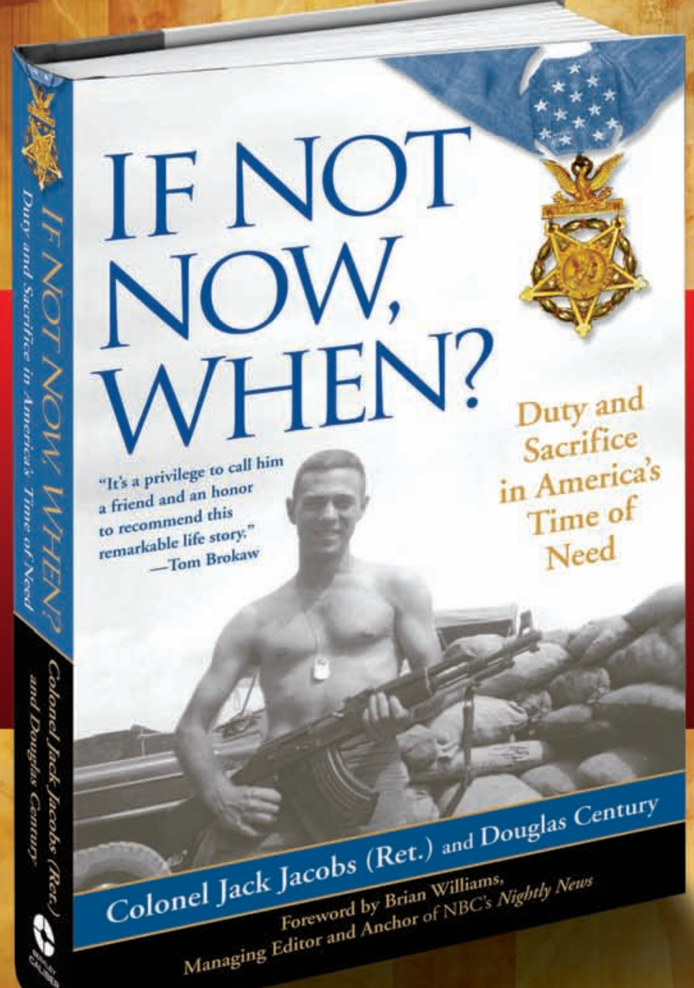

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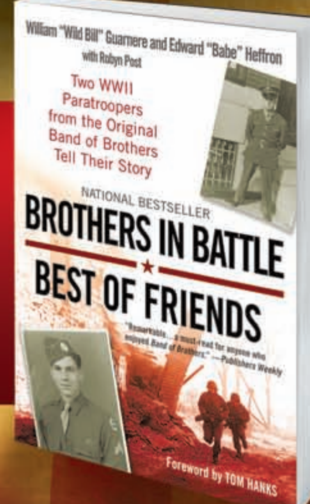

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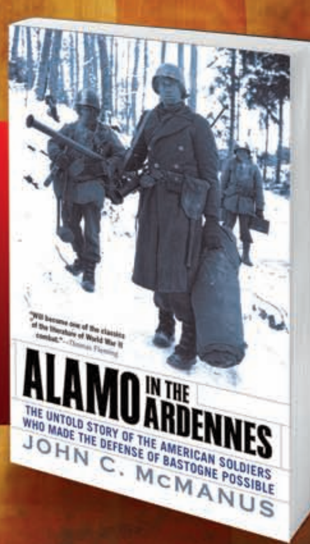

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WWII History (ISSN 1539-5456) is published seven times yearly by Sovereign Media, 453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170. (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage paid at Herndon, VA, and additional mailing offices. *WWII History,* Volume 8, Number 1 © 2009 by Sovereign Media Company, Inc., all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** ***or*** **write to** ***WWII History*** **Circulation, WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $4.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $21.95; Canada and Overseas: $35.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII History,* 453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170. *WWII History* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII History, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

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Editorial

The remains of three USS *Oklahoma* sailors have been indentified.

WHEN THE UNITED STATES WAS PLUNGED INTO WORLD WAR II AT PEARL Harbor on December 7, 1941, the largest loss of life occurred with the catastrophic explosion aboard the battleship USS *Arizona*. More than 1,100 sailors and Marines were killed in the blast. However, a few yards along Battleship Row, another tragedy was unfolding even before the destruction of the *Arizona*.

A second World War I-era battleship, the USS *Oklahoma,* had already been mortally wounded. Moored outboard of the USS *Maryland,* the *Oklahoma* was the focus of numerous Japanese torpedo bombers, taking three direct hits and quickly gushing oil from its fuel bunkers. As the battleship heeled over, two more torpedoes slammed into her hull. During the first seven minutes of the attack, the five torpedoes had sealed the fate of the *Oklahoma*. The 29,000-ton battleship took on water and began to capsize. Within 12 minutes, she had listed 150 degrees, her superstructure mired in the shallow water of the harbor and hundreds of her crew trapped below deck.

Some *Oklahoma* sailors were blown overboard by the force of the torpedo explosions. Still others who were fortunate to have been topside swam to the nearby *Maryland* or to Ford Island. For 429 of the *Oklahoma*'s crew, the hull became a temporary tomb. Some were rescued by workers cutting through the overturned steel of the ship's hull with acetylene torches. Others tapped on the hull for several days, hoping for rescue although none came.

On March 8, 1943, as part of a massive salvage operation at Pearl Harbor, 21 winches placed on Ford Island began the process of righting the *Oklahoma*. When the warship was once again upright, the remains of many of her dead were recovered. Submerged for 15 months, the bodies were badly decomposed. The fateful Sunday morning of the attack had been during peacetime, and the sailors were not required to wear their dogtags, which made identification extremely difficult.

As a result, many sets of remains were buried in mass graves marked simply "unknown." The *Oklahoma* was deemed too heavily damaged for repair and return to service. In September 1944, the battleship was decommissioned, and two years later its hulk was sold for scrap. En route to San Francisco under tow on May 17, 1947, it sank in heavy seas about 500 miles from Pearl Harbor. The dead were buried. The United States and its allies prevailed in the Pacific War. For some, the story had come to an end.

Half a century later, Ray Emory, a Pearl Harbor veteran of the cruiser USS *Honolulu,* visited the Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, popularly known as the Punchbowl. Located on the island of Oahu in the crater of an extinct volcano, the cemetery contains 600 graves of unknown casualties of the Pearl Harbor attack. Emory was deeply moved by the realization that so many of the dead had not been identified. He decided to do something about it.

Although the identification of individuals and the notification of families has been an arduous process, the effort has proven worthwhile. Last September, the remains of three USS *Oklahoma* crew members were positively identified through DNA analysis. Sixty-seven years after they died, Fireman 2nd Class Lawrence Boxrucker of Dorchester, Wisconsin, Ensign Irvin A.R. Thompson of Hudson County, New Jersey, and Ensign Eldon Wyman of Portland, Oregon, were unknown no more.

For nearly 20 years, Emory has worked to identify the remains of the unknown dead of Pearl Harbor. When he gathers enough information, he contacts the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), which is responsible for efforts to identify the remains of unknown American dead in all of the nation's wars. Today, those numbers total more than 80,000.

From World War II alone, thousands of names line the walls of "gardens of the missing." Many of these will never be found, and their remains will always be unidentified. However, thanks to Emory and the efforts of JPAC some families are finally bringing loved ones home.

Michael E. Haskew

Volume 8 ■ Number 1

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WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
453 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 20170

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Pearl Harbor Revenge

Dear Editor:

David Alan Johnson's article, "Pearl Harbor Revenge" (December 2008 issue) was interesting to read, as most books and articles on the Battle of Leyte Gulf focus primarily on Taffy 3's escort carriers, destroyers, and destroyer escorts trying to hold off Admiral Kurita's Center Force.

I found it ironic that one of the Japanese warships sunk was the destroyer, IJN *Yamagumo,* which sank the submarine USS *Sculpin in* the Gilbert Islands, just prior to the start of Operation Galvanic, on Nov. 19, 1943.

In his book, *Pigboats,* Theodore Roscoe describes the action by which *Sculpin* was depth-charged while attacking a Japanese convoy. Badly damaged, *Sculpin* battle-surfaced to shoot it out with the destroyer. With mounting casualties and taking numerous hits, the diving officer, Lieutenant G.E. Brown who had succeeded to command when the skipper, Commander Fred Connaway was killed, ordered her scuttled. Forty-two of *Sculpin*'s crew got over the side and were taken prisoner by the destroyer. One of them was immediately thrown back into the sea by his captors because he was badly wounded.

So the sinking of *Yamagumo* at Surigao Strait might be considered revenge for the crew of *Sculpin.*

Wallis R. Chapin
Kirkland, Washington

POW Escape in Arizona

Dear Editor:

"Escape into Arizona's Desert," (Top Secret, Dec. 2008) is very familiar to me. I have been a member of the "Papago Trackers" (PT) historical group for about 20 years. PT was founded to research and record the many uses of this huge municipal park which is in both Phoenix and Tempe, Arizona, and which abuts Scottsdale along much of its eastern boundary. For about a year, I have been the official spokesman for the PT as regards the POW escape. I have spoken to many groups, with audiences ranging from 50 to over 200; most are veterans' organizations, but I also tell many other organizations about the escape. I have all of the research material, pictures, interviews with escapees and notes taken by Lloyd Clark, a retired reporter for the *Phoenix Gazette.* Lloyd was the PT spokesman for many years and wrote about the escape as it happened. He traveled to Germany seeking more information, meeting with and befriending the leader of the escape, Jurgen Wattenberg. He became very well versed about the entire escapade and is the person primarily responsible for the reunion mentioned in the article.

Unfortunately, I must also point out some errors in this article: The earlier, major use of the park was as a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp from the early 1930s until 1942, when it was deactivated due to WW II. As a kid, I was all over the area—my father was the CCC camp commander in 1937 and again from January, 1941 until he was involved with the closing in 1942. After a short hiatus, the CCC camp became the POW camp. Although it was enlarged for its POW function, much of the necessary infrastructure was already there and ready for use.

Not a Spitfire!

The picture on page 32, purporting to be of the entrance to the tunnel, is actually the exit. The entrance was next to a coal bin inside the camp and had no plant growth around it—only dirt, pieces of coal and coal dust. (I have a picture of it.)After exiting the tunnel, the escapees slipped into the nearby Crosscut canal and waded south about three quarters of a mile to an area where they could change into civilian clothes and bury their muddy prison clothes. (Wading in the canal also left no tracks to be followed.) Only then did 22 of the 25 strike out across the desert toward the Salt, Gila, and Colorado Rivers.The others went into the hills Northwest of the camp and stayed in a cave.

It is unfortunate that the author and/or your editors did not devote more space to this story and less to "Breaking Down the Door," which was interesting, but 12 pages in length and too long. There are many more interesting aspects to the "Escape"—too bad they were not a part of the story. (They are well documented in the book *Faustball Tunnel,* which the author obviously used for research and in the material given to me by Lloyd Clark.)

Sorry to have to take you to task again, but this time some of the errors hit really close to home.

Lou Linxwiler
Mesa, Arizona

Spitfire Misidentification

Dear Editor,

The aircraft in the painting at the top of page 10 for the Ordnance article "The Superb Supermarine Spitfire" (December 2008 issue) is not a Spitfire. It is a Dewoitine 520 fighter built by the French and entered into service in January 1940. It was the latest French design and closely matched the Hurricane and Bf-109 in performance. It continued to fly with the Vichy French in 1941 and 42. Besides the profile of the aircraft in the painting identifying it as French, it has the French roundels of (in to out) blue-white-red, whereas the British roundels were red-white-blue.

Frank R. Shirer (US Army Retired)
Ft. Washington, Maryland

Dear Editor:

I really enjoy reading *WWII History*—good writing, diverse topics & fine graphics. Every once in a while, though, a clanger creeps in.

The December issue has a nice piece on the Spitfire by Sam McGowan, but someone has led him astray. Above the lead, there's an image that's identified as a British Spitfire, but in fact it's a French Dewoitine D.520. There are differences in contours to be sure, but the main giveaway is easy: the airplane is marked with blue-centered French cocardes, rather than the red-centered cocardes used by the RAF.

George Cully
Montgomery Alabama

We got over 30 letters pointing out our mistake in identifying the the plane in the above painting as a Spitfire. The source misidentified the plane and we didn't catch the error. Sam McGowan is is no way responsible; if he had seen the painting he would have set us straight. Thank you all for keeping us honest. We'll try to do better in the future.

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The Beast of Burden in War

Mules served in large numbers with U.S. Army forces during World War II.

IN THE WORDS OF A VETERAN OF THE CHINA-BURMA-INDIA THEATER, RETIRED Technical Sergeant Edward Rock Jr., [they] "served without a word of complaint or lack of courage. They transported artillery, ammunition, food, and medicine, and under enemy fire transported the wounded. Many of the CBI veterans are here today because a mule stopped a bullet or a piece of shrapnel meant for the GI. Mules fell in battle, mortally wounded, and we shed tears for them."

Pack mules indeed performed yeoman service in Asia and other theaters during World War II, hauling weapons and equipment as well as saving lives by carrying wounded off the front lines. They took the same risks as their human masters and too often they paid the ultimate price. A report on April 4, 1944, from one of the units of Merrill's Marauders described their sacrifice in detail: Japanese artillery fire had killed or wounded most of the unit's mules. The stench of the dead animals was so intense that the troops would not put the wounded ones out of their misery for fear of increasing it. The remaining animals also blocked enemy fire with their very bodies, one mule having 26 holes from a Japanese machine gun.

Mules are often mentioned as having been used by Allied forces for transport in difficult terrain, but rarely are the full details of their employment laid out. The hardy pack animals were vital to the troops fighting in the jungles of Asia and the mountains of Italy, and the soldiers loved them, particularly the mule skinners, those soldiers trained to use and care for the animals. The German army also made widespread use of horses and mules for transport. The Allies, however, had access to the vast automotive production capability of the United States, so their use of pack animals was on a relatively smaller scale. This vast supply of trucks was a major advantage. The war, however, was not limited to terrain accessible by motorized transport. When it came down to it, the mule was akin to a piece of equipment, like a 2½-ton truck, needed to take supplies into places no truck or even jeep could go.

Though mechanization was widespread, the past military use of animals was recent enough that there still existed men and a body of knowledge to gather and deliver the mules to where they were needed. At the start of the war, there were still a number of mule-equipped pack artillery and quartermaster units in the U.S. Army, along with the logistical facilities needed to provide animals to those units still using them. The Army Quartermaster Corps operated several remount depots at facilities such as Fort Reno, Oklahoma; Fort Robinson, Nebraska; and Front Royal, Virginia, to provide the mules, horses, and even dogs the Army required.

Mules entered military service at the remount depots and received training, initially for a period of about four months, although this was shortened during the war. Prospective mule skinners also received training at these depots. Once training was complete, the mules were ready for shipment overseas. Accompanied by groups of mule skinners, the animals were sent via train to a transshipment point at Westwego, Louisiana. There, they were loaded aboard ships dedicated to transporting animals. These ships, called "floating barns," carried the mules, handlers, and a three-month supply of fodder and water for the voyage to the combat zone.

One such ship was the converted Dutch freighter *Tjinegara*. It could carry 460 mules per voyage. The animals would be led up a loading ramp and taken to stalls below decks in the ship's holds. Stalls were seven feet long and two and a half feet wide, complete with water bucket and straw spread on the deck. Movable stalls were secured on the ship's top deck. These were placed on the dock by crane and the mules

Mules bred in Missouri, each loaded with four cartons of gunpowder, trek cautiously through the heights of an island guarding the approaches to the Panama Canal.

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Loaded with supplies for the U.S. 475th Infantry Regiment, mules and their drivers await orders to move out from an airfield in Burma on January 11, 1945. (All: National Archives)

loaded directly into them; then the entire stall was lifted onto the ship. Normally, about 5percent of the available stalls were set aside to isolate sick animals from healthy ones. All care of the mules was provided by the accompanying mule skinners.

At sea, the mules were subject to the same problems humans faced. They needed to get their "sea legs" just as a person learned to deal with the motion of a ship upon the open sea. Seasickness was also a common problem although the animals usually recovered with no trouble. The skinners would regularly move the animals to give them some exercise and relief from the ship's motion. In rough seas the hapless beasts would be tossed around in their stalls, suffering concussions, broken bones, and bruises. Veterinarians aboard ship treated the mules as best they could; those that died from sickness or injury were buried at sea.

Upon arrival at their destination, the mules would be offloaded. The animals often became uneasy about being led down the ramp, particularly if the ship was moving. A bell mare, a lead animal with a bell around its neck to make the other animals in a string follow it, would be used to guide them down the ramp. Unfortunately, some offloading sites were undeveloped, with no docks. In these cases, the ship would get as close to shore as possible before using winches to lower the mules to just above the waterline before dropping them into the water. From there the mules could simply swim the short distance to the beach, instinctively heading toward it. The mule skinners would then return to the United States for another voyage.

Tjinegara made a number of such voyages to Calcutta, India, to deliver its cargo of pack mules for the China-Burma-India Theater. On July 25, 1942, she was taking a load of horses to New Caledonia when the Japanese submarine *I-169* torpedoed and sank her. Other ships nearby rescued the crew, but her entire cargo of animals was lost. One other animal transport vessel, the *Jose Navarro,* was lost in the Indian Ocean on December 7, 1943. Five hundred mules went to the bottom with her.

After delivery to the combat zones, the mules were loaded onto trains and sent to units at the front. Once there, two primary users took advantage of them. The first was the Quartermaster Corps, organized into pack troops that used the mules to carry all manner of supplies to support frontline forces. The nature of fighting in places such as Burma often lacked definitive lines, meaning support units were often under fire themselves.

The second main employer of the mules was the pack artillery battalion. The M-1 series 75mm pack howitzer, developed during the late 1920s, was designed to be broken down into six loads, each light enough to be carried by one mule. Pack artillery units saw service on virtually all fronts during the war, but they are best known for their service in Italy, the Pacific, and the CBI. Last, mules were issued to individual formations that were serving in terrain where the mule was vital for transporting supplies.

The first American pack artillery units to see combat in World War II were those in the Philippines; they came under attack by the Japanese in the opening days of the conflict. The doomed U.S. and Philippine troops were soon forced to eat their hapless animals, and they finished the campaign fighting as infantry. The 97th Field Artillery Battalion (Pack) also saw early service, sent to New Caledonia in March 1942. Unfortunately, the unit was told that its mules would be furnished at its destination. When they arrived, there were no mules to be found. Eventually 350 animals arrived, carried by the *Tjinegara.* Almost a third of them were practically untrained, leaving the unit to break the mules in themselves. The 97th later went to Guadalcanal with their mules.

The mules really proved their value in the CBI with both British and American units fighting there. The famous British Brigadier Orde Wingate used large numbers of mules to supply his Chindit Brigade. Wingate's operations involved deep forays into enemy-held territory through terrain devoid of road networks. The mules proved ideal for carrying supplies in this environment. Often, these mules had their vocal cords cut to prevent them from braying and exposing British positions. During the second Chindit expedition in the spring of 1944, about 1,400 mules were delivered by gliders in order to carry supplies brought in by air.

Soldiers adjust the straps that secure a machine gun to the back of a mule for transport. Often, the mule was the most reliable method of resupply and evacuation of dead and wounded.

The most famous American unit of the CBI was the 5307th Composite Unit, also known as "Merrill's Marauders." Undertaking operations similar to those of the Chindits, it used large numbers of mules. Six Quartermaster pack troops were part of the unit, and mules were liberally issued to the rest of the unit as well to transport their own equipment and supplies. Each troop had about 300 mules and 75 men. Since conditions required that a soldier lead each mule, the pack troops kept about 70 mules and spread the rest to the rifle battalions. Each rifle company got 42 mules, 10 for the headquarters and weapons platoons, the rest to the rifle pla-

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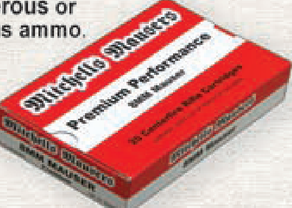

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toons. The battalion headquarters company used its mules to transport the heavy weapons, radios, and other gear it needed. Ten mules were set aside for the evacuation of casualties.

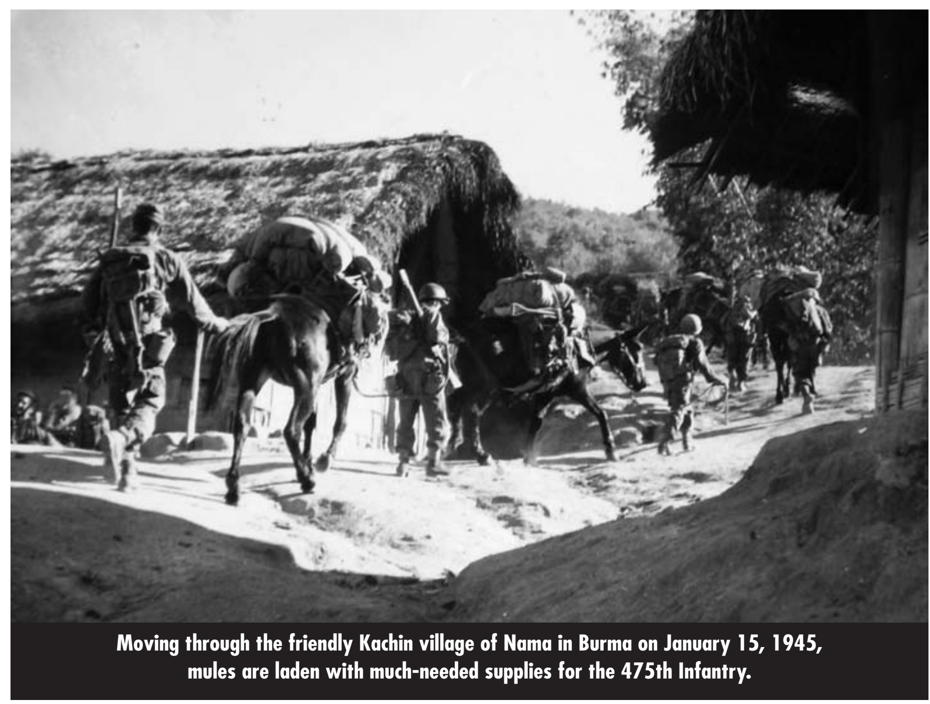
It took four mules to carry a heavy machine gun or mortar, one for the weapon itself, and the other three for ammunition. Efforts were made to take only necessary equipment to lighten the mules' loads as much as possible, and each mule generally carried spare horseshoes and a day's supply of grain. The animals also ate bamboo or banana leaves.

During campaigns the mules proved their worth time and again. Don L. Thrapp served with the Marauders and later wrote of his experiences with the pack mules during the fighting at Tonkwa against the Japanese. "They were zeroed in on our bivouac area at a river crossing, and their fire caused us some casualties in men and animals. One tree burst accounted for seven animals. Another shell cut between two mules … and burst about eight feet behind them, but injured neither."

The Japanese soon fell back, and Thrapp's unit moved near the abandoned positions. From there, the mules were used to pack supplies up to the forward areas, but efforts were made to keep them out of enemy artillery range since there was no way to replace lost animals. Chinese troops captured some pack animals from the Japanese and eagerly traded them to the Americans for various goods they could sell back home.

When the fighting in Burma ended, the mules and horses that had served there were ordered disposed of. Some were sick after their service in the fetid jungles of Southeast Asia and had to be destroyed. A farewell volley was fired for them. Others were sent to remount stations and shipped to Eastern Europe and the Balkans as part of the Lend-Lease Program. Others were sent to farms in the Philippines or China. More still went to the Chinese Army. Several years later, during the Korean War, a Chinese mule captured by American troops north of Seoul in May 1951 had its old U.S. Army brand still apparent.

The mountainous terrain of Italy also required the mule's services. For example, an infantry regiment needed 250 animals per day to keep it supplied. Many of the mules were obtained locally and were usually smaller than American-bred animals. Often this required modification to the pack equipment in order to fit the local animals or, instead, the equipment would be acquired locally. Remount depots were established on the Italian mainland and took these animals into service. Prices originally started at $80 for a mule but later rose to $250 on account of the high demand. Occasionally the need was so great that a mule might be bought even though it was only good for a single trip to the front with supplies.



Moving through the friendly Kachin village of Nama in Burma on January 15, 1945, mules are laden with much-needed supplies for the 475th Infantry.

One soldier of the U.S. 45th Infantry Division recalled driving up and down Italian roads commandeering every mule his detail came across. The Italian owner would be given a voucher he could redeem with the U.S. Army for later payment and the mule would be loaded aboard a truck and carried off whether the owner liked it or not. The soldiers later lived alongside these mules as they carried supplies to the troops at the front.

Normal army policy forbade the purchase of light-colored animals because enemy observers might spot them too easily. The extreme need, however, forced their commitment into service with disastrous results. German troops happily observed the too visible animals' movements and used them as references for artillery and mortar fire. To solve the problem, the Remount Service used a solution of potassium permanganate sprayed on the mules to dull their coats. The treatment remained effective for up to two months.

Remount Service troops also went forward and gathered captured enemy animals, putting them into Allied service if they were still healthy enough. German forces tended to use more horses than mules, but small numbers were recovered. The animals were concentrated at an Italian cavalry school at San Martino De Spino. Here, American troops became angry over the number of animals brought in with burns to either their hindquarters or their faces and necks. It was apparent to the soldiers that the Germans, in their haste to retreat and unwilling to leave their wagons to the advancing Allies, had simply set them on fire. The animals pulling the wagons or being led along behind them had not been freed first. U.S. troops quickly ended the poor creatures' suffering.

The Allies also made use of nine pack mule companies of the Italian Army after the Italian surrender. Goumiers, French colonial troops from Morocco that served in Italy, used mules extensively, and many photographs of these African warriors show pack-laden mules in the background. It was in Italy that the mules received perhaps their greatest compliment when Bill Mauldin featured them affectionately in several of his Willie and Joe cartoons. With the end of the war in Italy, the mules on hand were distributed to those Italians who had fought with or otherwise helped the Allies and to local farmers in general.

Mules filled an important niche in the Allied logistics network, particularly in areas where poor road systems limited wheeled transport. Many soldiers came to have great affection for them. Certainly they were relied upon heavily. After the war, mechanization eclipsed the mules and their accomplishments. Only a very few pack units were retained after the war. Despite some use in Korea, the last pack mule-equipped units in the U.S. Army were deactivated on December 15, 1956. □

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

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By Michael D. Hull

Saint in a Feldwebel's Uniform

Sergeant Anton Schmid gave his life providing aid to the Jews of Vilnius.

AFTER THE GERMAN ARMY'S INVASION OF RUSSIA IN JUNE 1941 AND THE capture of the historic Lithuanian city of Vilnius late that month, Abba Kovner and a group of friends took refuge in a Dominican convent on the city's outskirts.

Born in Sevastopol, Russia, Kovner had attended a Hebrew secondary school in Vilnius, a center of Jewish culture known as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." When he learned that the Germans were murdering Lithuanian Jews, Kovner, then aged 23, quickly formed a group of Jewish partisans.

Repeated short bursts of gunfire were heard coming from the village of Ponary, eight kilometers south of Vilnius. "Sometimes they would go on for hours, or sometimes it would be rounds of machine-gun fire," reported Jozef Mackiewicz, a Polish writer who lived in Vilnius. "This happened on different days, almost always in broad daylight. Sometimes on several days in a row, usually near dusk or morning."

Mackiewicz knew that mass slaughter was occurring, and he concluded that Ponary was "one of the biggest Jewish slaughterhouses in Europe." It was said that all Gestapo roads led to Ponary.

When Wehrmacht troops seized Vilnius on June 24, 1941, two days after the massive Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, they found about 57,000 Jews living in the city—a third of the population. Six months later, there would be only 20,000 left. The killings in Lithuania were carried out by so-called action groups of Einsatzkommando 3, led by SS Colonel Karl Jager and supported by Lithuanian troops, from July 2, 1941, onward. Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing squads responsible for carrying out the liquidation of non-Aryan peoples considered inferior by the Nazis in the occupied countries. The brutality of the Lithuanian troops toward the Jews matched that of the Nazis. Of the 57,000 Jews in Vilnius, only 16,500 were still alive by the beginning of December 1941. In six months, an estimated 38,000 Jews were exterminated while another 5,000 fled into the forests. By the end of 1941, more than half a million Jews had been slaughtered in the Baltic, White Russia, eastern Poland, and the Ukraine.

Colonel Jager reported to his superiors on December 1, "Today I can confirm that our objective to solve the Jewish problem for Lithuania has been achieved by EK 3. In Lithuania there are no more Jews, apart from Jewish workers and their families.... I consider the Jewish action more or less terminated as far as Einsatzkommando 3 is concerned. Those working Jews and Jewesses still available are needed urgently, and I can envisage that after the winter, this workforce will be required even more urgently.

"I am of the view that the sterilization program of the male worker Jews should be started immediately so that reproduction is prevented. If, despite sterilization, a Jewess becomes pregnant, she will be liquidated."

Kovner, who would later become a well-known poet in the new state of Israel after the war, recognized earlier than his friends that the massacres by the SS Einsatzgruppen were part of the systematic Nazi extermination plan—the so-called "Final Solution of the Jewish Question"—to rid Europe of Jews and other non-Aryans, and he was the first to call for armed resistance. On December 31, 1941, as a resistance

This street scene from the Polish ghetto in the city of Vilnius belies the tension that existed with the occupying Nazis. Vilnius had been a center of rabbinical learning in Europe before World War II.

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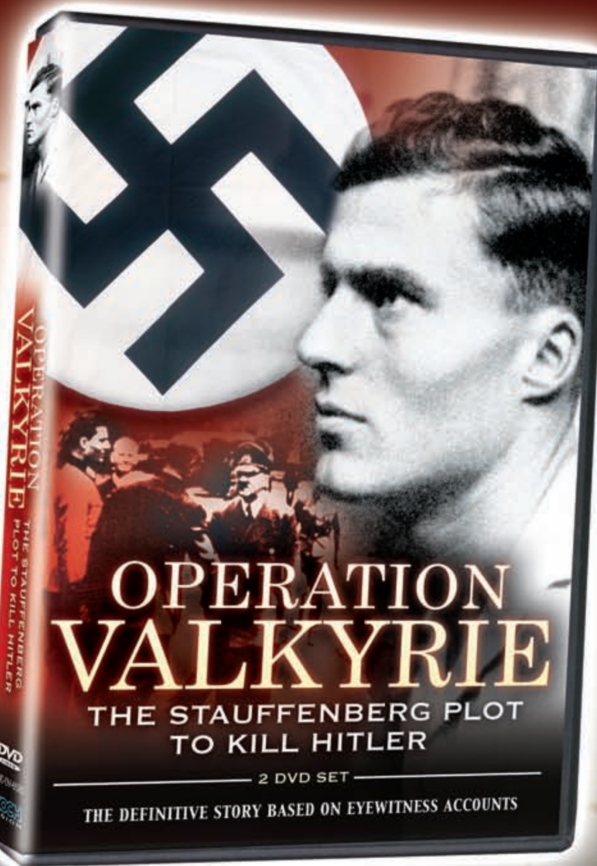

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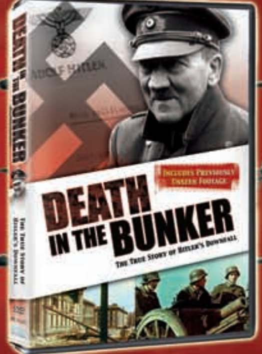

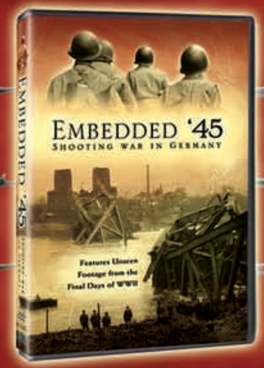

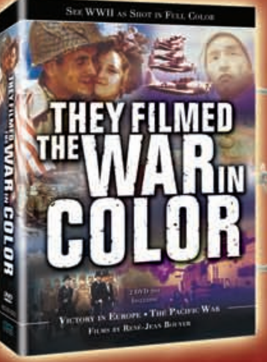

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group commander, he read aloud a manifesto in one of the partisan camps: "Hitler plans to kill all the Jews of Europe. The Jews of Lithuania are the first in line. Let us not go like sheep to the slaughter. We may be weak and defenseless, but the only possible answer to the enemy is resistance!" Critical of the older generations of Jews who had submitted meekly to the Nazis without a struggle, Kovner and his young comrades agreed, "It is better to die fighting like free men than to live at the mercy of the murderers."

ABOVE: Sergeant Anton Schmid of the German Army gave his life to help the Jews of the Vilnius ghetto. RIGHT: SS Colonel Karl Jager led killing squads that committed numerous atrocities.

(ullstein-bild)

On September 6, 1941, the remaining Jewish population of Vilnius had been herded into two ghettos. Those considered capable of work or possessing useful skills were sent to one ghetto, and the rest to the other. The two groups were issued different identity cards. After a series of "selections" was made in the second ghetto, the victims were taken by truck or train to a wooded area beside the railroad tracks in Ponary. There, they were shot.

Meanwhile, a large number of Jews from the first ghetto in Vilnius were put to work by the German occupiers. Near the city's main railroad station was a camp where German Army replacements and stragglers awaited reassignment to new units. In the camp there were upholstering, tailoring, locksmithing, and shoe-mending workshops, and the Jews were assigned to labor duties in them.

In charge of the camp was an obscure yet remarkable man, quite unlike his hard, ruthless Wehrmacht comrades. He was mild, mustached Feldwebel (Sergeant) Anton Schmid of Company 2 of Landeschutzen-Bataillon 898. Born in modest circumstances on January 9, 1900, in Vienna, where his father was a postal worker, Schmid was trained as an electrician. He was drafted into the Austrian Army in July 1918, the last year of World War I, but was granted permanent leave a few months later.

He married a young woman named Stephanie, and they had a daughter, Grete. In 1928, Schmid opened a small radio and electrical appliance store in Vienna. After the German annexation of Austria in 1938, Schmid, a devout Roman Catholic sensitive to the sufferings of others, helped several Viennese Jews escape from Nazism to Czechoslovakia. In 1939, when World War II broke out, he received another draft notice, this time from Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht.

But Schmid was almost 40 years old, so he was not sent to the front lines. He regarded himself not as a career soldier, but as "a civilian in uniform." After bidding farewell to his wife and daughter, he was assigned to German Army support units in rear areas, first in Poland and later in the Soviet Union after the German invasion on June 22, 1941. By now a sergeant, Schmid

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arrived in Vilnius in the autumn of 1941.

Founded in the 10th century and made the capital of Lithuania in 1323, Vilnius is a commercial city with a railroad junction, industrial plants, and a dozen 17th-century churches. It is the seat of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox archbishoprics. Confirmed as Polish by the League of Nations in 1923, Vilnius was restored to Lithuania in 1939 and occupied by Soviet troops that year.

Schmid was shocked by what he learned of the mass killings in Ponary and was moved by the plight of the Jews in the Vilnius ghetto. He decided to secretly assist them. In a letter to his wife, he wrote, "You know how it is with my soft heart. I could not think, and had to help them."

He befriended a number of the Jewish partisans and the laborers in his workshops, including Kovner and writer Hermann Adler and his wife, Anita. Kovner expressed amazement at meeting a soldier in the German Army who was willing to aid Jews. Schmid hid the Adlers in the Wehrmacht building where he worked, and they acted as go-betweens, enabling the German sergeant to cooperate with the Jewish underground. Adler later testified to Schmid's heroic rescue efforts.

The former Vienna electrician quickly gained

Shown in the back row wearing dark clothing, Abba Kovner stands among members of the Nekama partisan group in the Vilnius ghetto.

the affection and confidence of the Jews, and, at great personal risk, slipped regularly into the ghetto. He smuggled food to starving families and carried bottles of milk in his pockets to give to mothers for their babies. He knew that thousands of Jews were hiding elsewhere in the Vilnius area and acted as a courier between them and their friends in the ghetto.

He carried bread, messages, and what drugs he could find, and even dared to steal German weapons for the resistance fighters. As Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal reported later, the mild sergeant became "a secret one-man relief organization." A survivor told Wiesenthal, "He did it out of the goodness of his heart. To us in the ghetto, the frail, quiet man in his *feldwebel*'s uniform was a sort of saint." Schmid never took any payment for his clandestine efforts.

A writer named Purpur, whom Schmid hid in his living quarters, asked him one day, "Isn't it reckless, risking your life like this?" Schmid replied, "We're all going to croak sometime. But if I get to choose between croaking as someone who killed people or someone who helped them, then I'd rather go out as a helper."

The sergeant aided the Jews for several tense months, from October 1941 to February 1942. He concealed many in the cellars of three houses in Vilnius that were under his supervision, often keeping more than 20 overnight at a time. Some of the Jewish partisans slept in Schmid's home and planned their activities there.

He saved the lives of 350 Jews by issuing them false yellow identification cards that indicated they were skilled in trades useful to the German occupiers. He also maintained contacts with members of the Jewish underground that was preparing for an uprising in the infamous Warsaw ghetto. He managed to release Jewish captives capable of work from the notorious Lakishki Prison and cooperated with leading figures in the underground, such as the colorful, audacious Mordecai Tenenbaum, who led Jewish resistance fighters in the northeastern Polish city of Bialystok. Schmid also sent Jews

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to ghettos that were more secure at the time—in Voronovo, Lida, and Grodno.

Hermann Adler reported that Schmid, with the aid of some German comrades he could trust, drove groups of Jews over long distances in his truck to Warsaw, where he was officially supposed to deliver German soldiers who had become separated from their units.

But it was only a matter of time before Sergeant Schmid's superiors were alerted to his humanitarian activities. The Gestapo became aware of the presence of many Jews from Vilnius in the Lida ghetto, and when some of them were arrested and tortured they revealed that they had arrived there with the sergeant's assistance. Schmid was speedily tried by the war court of the office of the Vilnius field commander and was sentenced to death on February 25, 1942.

The court files and judgment did not survive the war, but the formal charge was accepting bribes and also probably involved providing aid and comfort to the "enemy." Stephanie Schmid in Vienna was notified of the death sentence. She demanded information from the court but was fobbed off with formalities.

After the sentencing, Schmid wrote a poignant farewell letter to his beloved wife and daughter: "I must tell you what fate awaits me, but please, be strong when you read on.... I have just been sentenced to death by a court-martial. There is nothing one can do except appeal for mercy, which I've done. It won't be decided until noon, but I believe it will be turned down. But, my dears, cheer up. I am resigned to my fate. It has been decided from Above—by our dear Lord—and nothing can be done about it.

"I am so quiet that I can hardly believe it myself. Our dear God willed it that way, and He made me strong. I hope He will give you strength, too. I must tell you how it happened. There were so many Jews here who were driven together by the Lithuanian soldiers and were shot in a meadow outside the city—from 2,000 to 3,000 people at one time. They always picked up the small children and smashed their heads against trees—can you imagine that?

"I had orders (though I didn't like it) to take over the soldiers' retrieval unit ... where 140 Jews worked. They asked me to get them away from here. I let myself be persuaded—you know I have a soft heart. I couldn't think it over. I helped them, which was very bad, according to my judges. It will be hard for you ... but forgive me: I acted as a human being, and didn't want to hurt anyone. When you read this letter, I will no longer be on this earth. I won't be able to write you anymore. But be sure that we shall meet again in a better world with our Lord."

Sergeant Schmid was executed by a firing squad on Monday, April 13, 1942, shortly after penning one more letter to his wife: "My dear Steffi. I could not change anything, otherwise I would have spared you and Grete all this. All I did was to save people, who were admittedly Jews, from the fate that now awaits me, and that was my death. Just as in life I gave up everything for others.... Now I close my last lines, the last I can write to you, and send you my love.

"I kiss you both, and another kiss to you, Steffi, you are everything to me in this world and the next, where soon I will be in God's hand. Many kisses, love forever from your Toni." Anton Schmid was buried at the German military cemetery in the Anatol district of Vilnius.

The first public recognition of Anton Schmid's sacrifice came in 1945 when Hermann Adler, who owed his life to him, published a volume of poetry, *Songs from the City of Death*. In the preface, he wrote, "I remember also an obscure sergeant from Vienna, Anton Schmid, who was sentenced to death by firing squad by a German military court because he saved those who were being persecuted, and who now rests under a simple

wooden cross at the edge of the German soldiers' cemetery in Vilna [Vilnius]."

Although Adler's poems, written mostly in the Vilnius ghetto, received a prize from the literature commission of the city of Zurich, Switzerland, the saga of Sergeant Schmid did not enter the public consciousness in Germany for many years. The same held true of another book of poems by Adler, entitled *Ostra Brama* (the name of a church in Vilnius), in the eighth section of which he commemorated Schmid under the title, "A Friend's Sure Hand."

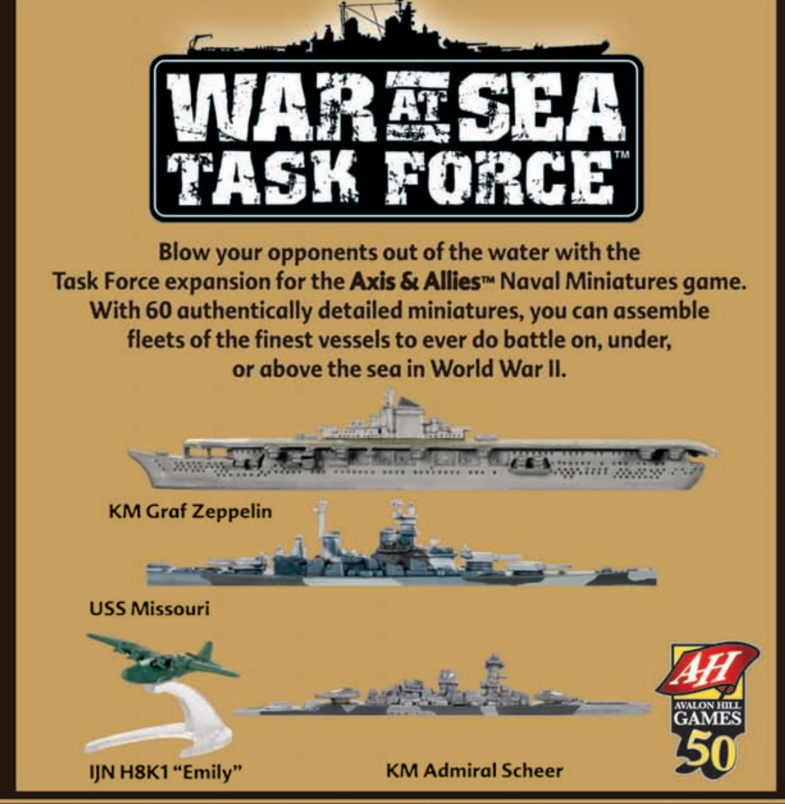
Eventually, Germans began to come to grips with the facts of their history during World War II—the bloody trampling of neutral nations, the enslavement of millions, the widespread genocide, and also the deeds of heroes who had resisted Nazi tyranny. In the 1960s, Adler was commissioned to write scripts about the tragic sergeant for a German television documentary and a radio program. Israel honored Schmid in 1967 as a "righteous Gentile" for sacrificing his life during the World War II genocide. A tree dedicated to him was planted on the grounds of the Yad Vashem memorial garden in Jerusalem, accompanied by an inconspicuous stone tablet inscribed "Anton Schmid—Austria." His widow was awarded a "Righteous Among the Nations" medal bearing the inscription, "Whoever saves one life—saves the world entire."

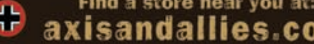
Partisan Abba Kovner stands with weapon in hand after the city of Vilnius has been occupied by the Soviet Red Army.

Nazi hunter Wiesenthal interviewed people who had been rescued by the gentle sergeant from Vienna and concluded, "Schmid was not the drill-sergeant type. He was a quiet man who did a lot of thinking and said very little; he had few friends among his army buddies." Of the only known portrait of Schmid, Wiesenthal observed, "It shows a thoughtful face, with soft, sad eyes, dark hair, and a small mustache." He was, said Wiesenthal, "a devout Catholic who suffered deeply when he saw other people suffer. He was a man of exceptional courage."

Finally, almost six decades after his heroic actions, Anton Schmid received official recognition in Germany. On May 8, 2000, the 55th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, the German Army base in the Schleswig-Holstein town of Rendsburg, which had been named for General Gunther Rudel, a veteran of both world wars, was renamed Feldwebel Anton Schmid Kaserne. At the dedication ceremony, Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping declared, "We are not free to choose our history, but we can choose the examples we take from that history. Too many bowed to the threats and temptations of the dictator, and too few found the strength to resist. But Sergeant Anton Schmid did resist…." □

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





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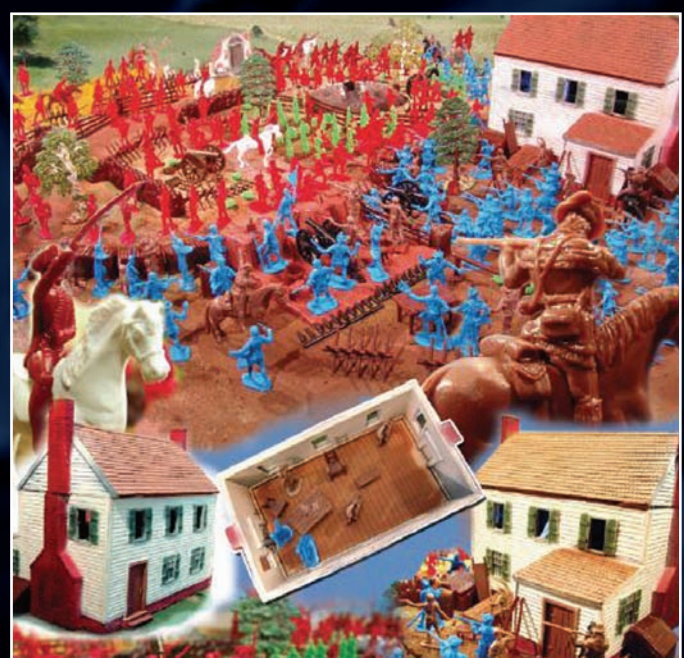

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Underwater Peril at Pearl

Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki failed as a midget submarine commander at Pearl Harbor but lived to tell the tale.

DURING THE EARLY HOURS OF DECEMBER 7, 1941, FIVE midget submarinesof the Imperial Japanese Navy waited to enter Pearl Harbor, the anchorage of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Their mission was to complement the attack of naval aircraft in dealing a crippling blow to the American naval presence in the Pacific. This ambitious plan failed. Only one craft survived, *HA-19,* along with one member of its two-man crew, Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki, who became "Prisoner No. 1" of the United States in World War II.

Sakamaki grew up in a tradition-bound Japanese culture that showed deep reverence for family, teachers, and Emperor Hirohito. He later explained, "We were taught, and we came to believe, that the most important thing for us was to die manfully on the battlefield—as the petals of the cherry blossoms fall to the ground—and that in war there is only victory and no retreat." So, he applied for admission to the Japanese Naval Academy at Etajima and became one of 300 chosen from 6,000 applicants. After graduation, he spent a year at sea, then was promoted to ensign and ordered in April 1941 to report to the *Chiyoda,* a converted seaplane tender, at the Kure naval shipyard.

ABOVE: When his midget submarine ran aground on the island of Oahu on December 7, 1941, Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki became prisoner of war number one of the United States. TOP: On October 19,1945, dozens of Japanese midget submarines that were never deployed during World War II are aligned in rows at the Kure naval base.
(All photos: National Archives)

Sakamaki had been chosen to take part in the development of a secret weapon, the midget submarine, and would join an elite group called the Special Attack Naval Unit. Cadets received training on the island of Ohurazaki, along with a theoretical education at the Torpedo Experimental Division of the Kure Navy Yard. Classes were also held on the tug *Kure Maru* and seaplane tenders *Chiyoda* and *Nisshin.* This intense training program, which was observed and monitored, caused some cadets to drop out and others to commit suicide. Only the finest survived.

Sakamaki and his fellow crewman, Warrant Officer Kiyoshi Inagaki, learned the ins and outs of their special craft. Each sub held two crewmen because of cramped space. The only entrance was through a 16-inch hatch in the conning tower. The Imperial Japanese Navy called these minisubs Ko-Hyoteki, but those attached to units used the mother sub's name, such as *I-24*'s midget. Paul J. Kemp says in *Midget Submarines* that these were "perhaps the most advanced midget submarines in service with any navy during the Second World War."

Built in 1938, these cigar-shaped minisubs stretched nearly 80 feet with batteries arranged along each side. They could travel at a speed of 23 knots surfaced and 19 knots submerged, but battery charges lasted only 55 minutes. None of the craft carried generators, so they required recharging by a tender or mother submarine. The torpedo room housed two 18-inch torpedoes, each with around 1,000 pounds of explosives in the warhead. The Japan Optical Manufacturing Company perfected a specialized 10-foot-long miniaturized periscope in secrecy.

In fact, great secrecy shrouded the entire project. The Japanese eventually produced over 400 vessels of four types in a special factory near Kure. Of these, around 60 Type A submarines, the type commanded by Sakamaki, were built. Only key commanders knew details. Dispatches called the craft Special Submarine Boats Koryu (dragon with scales) and other creative names to avoid revealing the true nature of the machines.

When the subs first arrived, one seaman recalled, "After we secured, a barge came alongside each submarine. The barges were carrying strange objects heavily screened by black cloth and guarded by armed sailors and police. The objects were hoisted onto the casing and secured in the cradles—still wreathed in their

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Beached on the island of Oahu on the morning of the Pearl Harbor attack, Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki's midget submarine was to become a war prize. The Japanese planned to attack Pearl Harbor with five midget submarines launched from the decks of large fleet submarines. Only one of the midget subs is known to have penetrated the defenses of the harbor.

coverings. We, the ship's company, were not informed what the objects were. It was only when we proceeded to sea for trials in the Sea of Aki that we learned what we were carrying. The morale on the submarine was incredible."

In mid-October 1941, maneuvers around islands in the Inland Sea shifted from mid-ocean strategies to invading narrow inlets at night. "When Captain Harada told us to pay particular attention to Pearl Harbor and Singapore," Sakamaki recalled, "we thought that one group would probably be used against Pearl Harbor and another group against Singapore." After crewmen graduated and received a 10-day leave, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet, spoke to them aboard the battleship *Nagato* and emphasized the importance of their secret mission against Pearl Harbor.

Five submarines, *I-16, I-18, I-20, I-22,* and *I-24,* were to carry midget submarines behind their coming towers. Each minisub would travel piggybacked to the large submarine's pressure hull with steel belts and was to be released while the mother ship was submerged, enabling it to avoid exposure to the enemy. Some officers opposed the daring plan to use midget submarines to attack American ships in the narrow confines of Pearl Harbor. Captain Hanku Sasaki, commander of the First Submarine Division, wondered if the big submarines could handle so much weight. "There was too much hurry, hurry, hurry," he criticized after the war.

Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, who led the air attack against Pearl Harbor, scoffed at the entire plan. Others thought the midget submarines rolled and pitched too much. Their conning towers were exposed, and they depended on mother ships for equipment and maintenance. Besides, the element of surprise, which was essential to the success of the air attack, might be compromised if the midget submarines were discovered.

Sakamaki's minisub was strapped to submarine *I-24,* which was a long-range reconnaissance type, 348 feet long with a 30-foot beam. Nine thousand horsepower enabled them to reach a surface speed of 22 knots. A telephone line from *HA-19*'s conning tower connected the two craft, and an attached cylinder between the boats allowed crewmen to stock supplies and make periodic equipment checks en route. On November 18, 1941, Sakamaki wrote home, "I am now leaving. I owe you, my parents, a debt I shall never be able to repay. Whatever may happen to me, it is in the service of our country that I go. Words cannot express my gratitude for the privilege of fighting for the cause of peace and justice."

The five I-class mother ships and their Special Attack Force minisubs left Kure and headed across the North Pacific to Pearl Harbor on a moonless night. They traveled slowly because of cargo and rough weather, running submerged during the day to avoid detection and surfaced during the evening, maintaining a distance of about 20 miles from each other. Commander Mochitsura Hashimoto, skipper of *I-24,* remembered many troubles during the ocean trip to Hawaii, including clogged pumps, defective valves, and gear malfunctions.

Once *I-24* nearly sank because of a stuck blow-valve, which was freed at the last moment. After surfacing, the crew found a crushed torpedo on Sakamaki's midget sub and worked all night to replace it with a spare. Hashimoto later said, "This operation may sound easy enough, but in fact, it was far from simple. The lack of space on the narrow upper deck made transporting something weighing over a ton to the after-end of the boat no mean task, say nothing of having to dispose of the damaged torpedo quietly over the side."

The five midget submarines were to be launched off the coast of Oahu where they were to quietly enter Pearl Harbor, navigate around Ford Island counterclockwise, and strike the U.S. battleships moored in the shallow water of the harbor. The minisubs were initially expected to attack between the first and second waves of the air attack. When the American battleships attempted to get underway and escape to the open sea, they might be crippled and clog the mouth of the harbor. "I was astonished and felt as if suddenly petrified," Sakamaki remembered of the moment the details of the plan were revealed to him. "The effect was like a sudden magic blow."

Although the plan called for the midget submariners to rendezvous with their mother subs to be recovered on December 8, 1941, about eight miles west of the island of Lanai, Sakamaki realized that the mission was suicidal. The midget submarines lacked battery power to travel such a distance after the assault.

Sakamaki said, "We were members of a suicide squadron. We did not know how we could ever come back." Rear Admiral Hisashi Mito, who commanded a division of submarine tenders, also remarked after the war that all minisub crewmen "were prepared for death and not expected to return alive." The name "Special Naval Attack Unit" was a euphemism for suicide attack in the Japanese language. These submariners predated later kamikaze attack units.

By the night of December 6, the mother ships neared Hawaii, and the flickering lights along Oahu's Waikiki Beach were visible. Landing lights at Hickam Field on Ford Island blazed. Jazz music floated from radios and bars. Everything appeared calm. The large subs fanned out within 10 nautical miles of Pearl Harbor's mouth and waited for the moment to launch their midget submarines.

Shortly before the launch, Sakamaki wrote a farewell note to his father, made a will, and cut the traditional fingernail clippings and lock of hair for the family altar. Then, he put on his uniform, a cotton *fundishi* (breech-cloth), leather jacket, and a white *hachimaki* headband. He and Inagaki also sprayed themselves with perfume of cherry blossoms, and both were now ready to die honorably according to the Bushido code of conduct for Japanese warriors.

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After loading their midget sub with everything from charts to tools and chocolate, Sakamaki scrawled in his log that the two sailors would go naked instead of wearing uniforms. He also wrote, "Today, I will shoulder one important mission, and diving into Pearl Harbor, will sink the enemy's warships. I was born a man in our country and the present daring enterprise is really the peak of joy. Disregarding the hardships and bitter dangers of the past year, I have trained and the time has come when I will test my ability here. These tubes [submarines] are the pick of our navy. Moreover, they are the result of the wisdom and skill of several tens of thousands of Japanese. In the present operation, the strength of the crew is even more prepared than the torpedoes and certainly we are all completely affected by a feeling of self-sacrifice."

A final test before launching, however, uncovered a gyro failure on the minisub. Inagaki made a frantic attempt to repair it—without success. So Sakamaki decided to steer by memory, use a magnetic compass, and rely on periscope checks for location, all foolish but heroic choices. When asked if he wanted to back out, he replied, "On to Pearl Harbor!"

Around 3 AM on December 6, Sakamaki and Inagaki squeezed into their black-hulled craft through the attached cylinder. Theirs was the last sub launched. Telephone lines were cut. Heavy steel clamps released. The sailors moved toward Pearl under their own battery power, but trouble shadowed their midget sub from the start.

During the launch, *HA-19* took a nose dive and nearly stood on its head. Sakamaki reversed the engines to slow down the descent, while Inagaki shifted ballast around and filled tanks with water to correct the trim. *HA-19*'s thin pressure hull would crack below 100 feet. It took hours to fix things, which set the nerves of both men on edge. Afterward, they ate rice balls and drank grape wine before raising the ship to check its location through the periscope. They had gone 90 degrees off course and were heading back out to sea.

"My hands were wet with cold sweat," Sakamaki recalled. "I changed the direction three or four times, hoping against hope that somehow the ship would get going where I wanted to go." But the tube would not head toward the harbor all night.

The sun rose on Sunday, December 7, and *HA-19* still remained outside the harbor's entrance. Looking through the periscope, Sakamaki saw several U.S. destroyers moving back and forth across the entrance to Pearl. He decided to run the gauntlet, but the sonar aboard the destroyer USS *Ward*, which had sunk one of the midget subs earlier in the morning, picked up Sakamaki's *HA-19* and dropped depth charges that shook it violently. Sakamaki lost his balance, hit the side of the conning tower, and lost consciousness.

"I came to myself in a short while and saw white smoke in my submarine," he later wrote in his memoir *I Attacked Pearl Harbor.* "I changed the speed to half gear and turned the ship around. I wanted to see if any damage had been done to the ship. My aide was all right. The two torpedoes were all right. So I got ready to try again to break through the destroyers." *HA-19* shot ahead. More depth charges came from the *Ward*. Sakamaki ordered another dive.

When Sakamaki later brought the minisub up to periscope depth, he saw columns of black smoke rising from inside the harbor. Ships were burning. The air attack had succeeded. This prompted him to head straight for the harbor, but the sub went aground on a coral reef, its bow lifting out of the water, propellers spinning in reverse. Most accounts say that the destroyer USS *Helm* fired shots at *HA-19,* which missed but knocked the sub loose, damaging one of its torpedoes. Sakamaki, however, said he was told later that a destroyer fired on the minisub, but he "didn't hear any loud explosions at all at the time."

The situation worsened. Gas leaks from the

batteries made both Sakamaki and Inagaki sick and dizzy. They had to move 11-pound ballast pigs from front to rear on the slippery flooded floor, suffering electric shocks and becoming exhausted from the hot and foul atmosphere. Temperatures reached around 135 degrees inside. They finally freed the minisub but found its torpedo-firing mechanism defective, which now left them weaponless.

Sakamaki wept at the thought of failure and decided to ram a battleship, turning *HA-19* into a manned torpedo. "I had set out for Pearl Harbor with the purpose of sinking a battleship," he later explained to a U.S. Navy intelligence officer. "Although we were able to reach the mouth of the harbor by creeping underneath your bombs falling like rain, our accident was fatal to the submarine. So we determined to proceed without hesitation on the surface of the water, dash into the harbor and climb the (USS *Pennsylvania*'s) gangway ladder. We hoped to leap onto the deck and die simultaneously with blowing up the enemy warship."

But this fanciful plan also backfired. Depth charges had disabled the tube's steering ability, and it spun around erratically. Interior air pressure rose to above 40 pounds. The sailors choked and gasped. Their eyes burned. Lurching made them dazed and weakened. Both seamen finally

Under construction at the Kure naval base in Japan, this midget submarine was not completed before the end of World War II. Ultimately, it was surrendered to the occupying Americans.

collapsed, and the craft drifted out to sea.

When Sakamaki finally awoke, he opened the hatch to get fresh air from the cool breeze and saw land. Initially, he thought he had reached the rendezvous point off Lanai. Instead, he was near Bellows Field on the eastern shoreline of Oahu. He tried to start the sub, but its batteries sputtered and went dead. *HA-19* then ran aground. The two Japanese sailors decided to set off an explosive charge in the after battery room and swim for it. Sakamaki lit the detonator fuse, and both jumped overboard.

"The water was cold," Sakamaki later wrote. "The waves were big. I could not move freely and I swallowed salt water. One minute. Two minutes. No explosion. I began to worry about the ship. The midget submarine had to be destroyed. I wanted to go back, but there was no strength left in me. Neither my aide nor I could shout to each other. Strength gradually went out of me. Then I saw my aide no more. He was swallowed up by the giant waves. I lost consciousness." U.S. soldiers later found Inagaki's body.

Before dawn on December 8, Lieutenant P.C. Plybon and Corporal D.M. Akui, serving beach duty near Bellows Field about 15 miles east of Pearl Harbor, saw someone swimming toward shore.

"At first we thought it was a big turtle, and then we could see his arms moving as he swam," said the lieutenant. Corporal Akui fired a rifle shot over the figure's head. Then Plybon waded into the water and seized Sakamaki, who was wearing only an undershirt and a g-string with 15 cents in Japanese currency sewn into a prayer belt. He dragged the dazed, 127-pound Japanese sailor to shore with the help of Corporal Akui. The Americans shackled his hands and feet, rolled him in an army blanket, and tied him up. Taken to a detention station and interrogated, Sakamaki became "Prisoner

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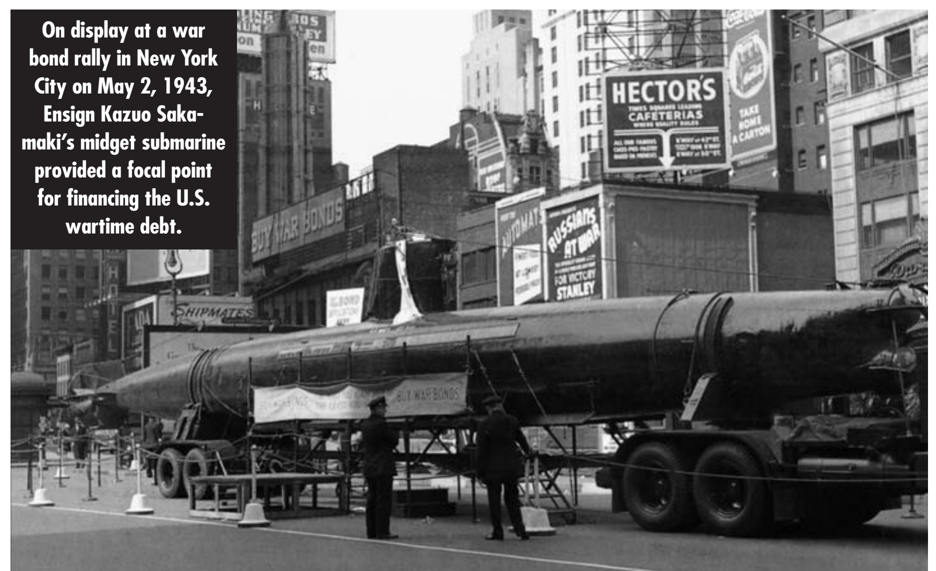

On display at a war bond rally in New York City on May 2, 1943, Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki's midget submarine provided a focal point for financing the U.S. wartime debt.

No. 1" of the Pacific War.

The humiliated Sakamaki asked only to commit suicide. "My honor as a soldier has fallen to the ground," he told American intelligence officers. "Due entirely to my inexpert navigation and strategy, I betrayed the expectations of our 100 million people and became a sad prisoner of war disloyal to my country."

Around 8:45 AM, lookouts spotted Sakamaki's submarine from an observation tower. It was beached on a reef about a mile from shore. A reconnaissance plane with two officers from the 86th Observation Squadron aboard flew out and made a sketch of the midget sub, which they gave to the squadron commander. Several Navy planes then dropped bombs around *HA-19* in an attempt to dislodge it from the coral reef. The commanding officer at Bellows Field contacted the Navy submarine depot, requesting that salvage specialists investigate the situation.

On the rainy morning of December 10, a crew from Pearl Harbor arrived to salvage the disabled minisub, eventually towing it to shore by attaching a cable to its conning tower. A young radioman named Charles L. Jackson was told by his chief to strip down, swim out the few yards, and take a look: "I didn't argue," he commented. "I quickly backed away, then swam to the side of the sub and pulled myself up near the conning tower. I looked back at the chief and he motioned to me to enter the boat. I opened the hatch and nearly fell off the side. The stench was so great, I took a few deep breaths, then climbed on top of the tower to let myself into the small opening of the hatch … As I looked around the darkened interior, I saw the communication gear on the starboard side, a navigation chart and instruments were on the port side."

Several others joined Jackson on the midget sub. "As I worked on dismantling the radio, the officer crawled forward to examine the torpedoes while the chief went aft into the battery compartment to examine the batteries and propulsion gear," he said.

During the search, Jackson found an official U.S. Navy chart of Pearl Harbor penciled in with positions of warships. This chart led a board of inquiry to believe that Sakamaki's midget submarine had actually entered the harbor and traveled around Ford Island before the attack. The theory was later discarded because ideographs gave no sense of the time element, notations seemed too neat and organized, and such a route presented execution problems.

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at the time of the attack, also reasoned, "It didn't make sense. They could see from the hills, so why risk a submarine going in there?… I would strongly discount anything except the most positive evidence that the Japanese were stupid enough to send a submarine in there merely for the purposes of observing."

Although experts first hoped to examine HA-19 on land at Bellows Field, they decided to dismantle the vessel into three sections and examine it at Pearl Harbor. A year later, on November 30, 1942, a bronze plaque on a stone base was placed in front of the post headquarters at Bellows Field to honor those men who helped capture Sakamaki and the Japanese minisub.

The curious tale of midget sub *HA-19* continued. Although it had suffered damage to the rudders, torpedoes, propellers, and bow net cutter, the vessel still remained in good condition and was outfitted as a traveling exhibit without periscope, motor, and most of its original equipment. Damaged parts were repaired with parts from a midget sub rammed in Pearl Harbor by the destroyer USS *Monaghan*. Electrical fixtures were installed, dummy batteries and motor added, and 22 small windows cut in the hull.

During the war, *HA-19* toured 41 states on a trailer, draped in red, white, and blue bunting, promoting the slogan "Remember Pearl Harbor." Millions bought war bonds and stamps to get a glimpse of the vessel and look inside. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt inspected it at Mare Island. The traveling *HA-19* raised enough money to repair all the ships damaged at Pearl Harbor during the brutal attack.

After the war, *HA-19* sat rusting at the Navy Pier in Chicago. It was later sent to a museum in Key West, Florida, and is now on display at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas.

The Japanese high command spread propaganda that one of the midget subs had sunk the battleship USS *Arizona,* which had actually been destroyed from the air. One book praised, "Dashing courageously into Pearl Harbor, they completed their task and then calmly awaited death. It came, and they faced it with smiles on their faces. When our thoughts dwell on their gallant deed and we recall their great act of sacrifice, how can we help but become overcome with the deepest feeling of emotion?"

Paintings and postcards romanticized the midget submarine sailors who lost their lives at Pearl Harbor, but Sakamaki is excluded from any mention. His image is not present in memorial artwork. The Japanese were aware that *HA-19* and Sakamaki had both been captured. Having failed in his mission and lived, Sakamaki had become an outcast.

Throughout the war in the Pacific, Japanese midget subs made meager contributions. The Pearl Harbor plan had apparently failed. Around 40 more minisubs failed to achieve any notable success at Guadalcanal, the Aleutians, the Philippines, Saipan, Okinawa, or Sydney, Australia. One, however, nearly made history when its torpedo narrowly missed the cruiser USS *Boise* in the strait between Negros and Siquijor Islands. Aboard the ship at the time was General Douglas MacArthur, commander of Allied forces in the South Pacific.

After the war, Kazuo Sakamaki married, wrote his memoirs, and eventually rose to become Production Chief of Toyota's Export Division in Nagoya. He later became president of Toyota in Brazil. He died on November 29, 1999, still remembered as "Prisoner No. 1" of the Pacific War. □

Dr. John Perry is a professor of English, Speech Communication, and Communication Arts at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas.

World's Most Valuable Timepiece Disappears

Back in 1933, the single most important watch ever built was engineered for a quiet millionaire collector named Henry Graves. It took over three years and the most advanced horological technique to create the multifunction masterpiece. This one-of-a-kind watch was to become the most coveted piece in the collection of the Museum of Time near Chicago. Recently this ultra-rare innovation was auctioned off for the record price of $11,030,000 by Sotheby's to a secretive anonymous collector. Now the watch is locked away in a private vault in an unknown location. We believe that a classic like this should be available to true watch aficionados, so Stauer replicated the exact Graves design in the limited edition Graves '33.

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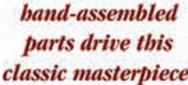

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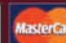

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By John W. Osborn, Jr.

Nomads of War

The Long Range Desert Group became legend while fighting a powerful enemy in an unforgiving climate.

"THE PROBLEM," A MEMBER SAID, "IS TO MAKE YOURSELF SO MUCH MASTER over the appalling difficulties of nature—heat, thirst, cold, rain, fatigue—that, overcoming these you yet have physical energy and mental resilience to deal with the greater object, the winning of the war."

The men of the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) in the Middle East in World War II did this, and more. The LRDG had been variously described as "arguably the most dashing and successful irregular formation on either side in the entire war," and "probably one of the most cost-effective special forces in the history of warfare." It carried out some 200 missions across a desert the size of India, then through the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the Adriatic; in five years of existence, there were only five months when an LRDG patrol was not on an operation.

The Long Range Desert Group was created, literally, by accident. A collision in a British convoy in the Mediterranean Sea forced a troopship to dock at Alexandria, Egypt, for repairs. Among those deposited there was Major Ralph Bagnold of the British Army's Royal Engineers en route to a posting in East Africa.

A contingent of the British LRDG sets off on a perilous mission behind Axis lines in North Africa. The steel mats were used to extricate tires from soft sand, while the cylinders at the sides collected water should the radiator boil over.

(Library of Congress)

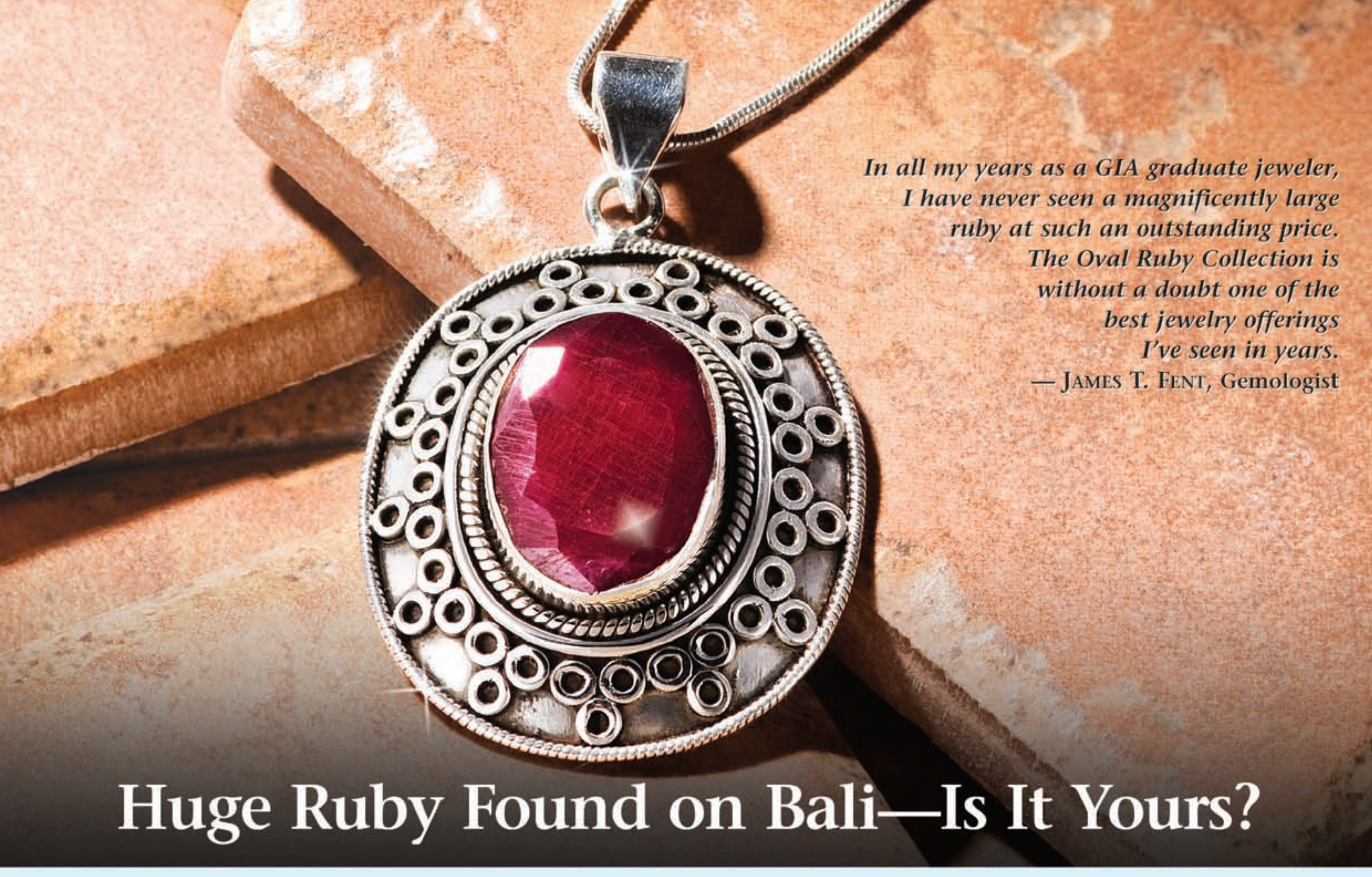
From 1925 to 1935, Bagnold had explored the Great Libyan Desert, 1,100 miles east to west, 1,000 miles north to south, as part of an international group that included the future central character of the novel and film *The English Patient,* Hungarian Count Laszlo Almasy. "Never in our peacetime travels had we imagined that war could ever reach the enormous empty solitudes of the inner desert, wailed off by sheer distance, lack of water and impassable seas of sand dunes," Bagnold remembered. "Little did we dream that any of the special equipment and techniques we had evolved for very long distance travel, and for navigation, would ever be put to serious use."

A notice about Bagnold in an Egyptian newspaper led to him being sent for by the British commander in chief of the Middle East, Sir Archibald Wavell. Bagnold recalled how Wavell "sat me in an armchair, and I told him what I thought was wrong. 'We ought to have some mobile ground scouting force, even a very small scouting force, to be able to penetrate the desert to the west of Egypt, to see what was going on. Because we had no information on what the Italians might be doing.' (The Germans had not yet intervened in North Africa.) He said, 'What if you find that the Italians are not doing anything in the interior at all?' I replied without thinking. 'How about some piracy on the high desert?' His rather stern face broke into a broad grin, 'Can you be ready in six weeks?'"

Bagnold was ready in just five weeks. For vehicles he chose Chevrolet trucks for their proven durability in the desert, though they got only six miles to the gallon out there. For equipment, he used a sun compass he had designed and army radios with a skip range of 1,200 miles. For his men he rejected death or glory daredevils and instead contacted old desert hands and recruited 150 New Zealanders (200 eventually served) for their toughness, even temperament, and being used to repairing trucks on their farms.

In its first operation, in August-September 1940, the Long Range Desert Group proved its worth and routed the skeptics as two units, one led by Bagnold, crossed 4,000 miles undetected, scouted and attacked Italian outposts, survived the paralyzing heat of the day and freezing cold of the night, then successfully rendezvoused. From then on until the end of the campaign at least one LRDG unit was always out on patrol.

An average LRDG patrol was



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ABOVE: On patrol in the desert in March 1941, a truck of the Long Range Desert Group traverses a sand dune. One LRDG trooper is manning the weapon of choice, a Vickers machine gun. RIGHT: Keeping alert to report enemy movements, a two-man LRDG team remains concealed behind Axis lines.

(Above: Australian War Memorial / Right: Imperial War Museum)

composed of 40 men in 10 vehicles (most of them carrying fuel, water, ammunition, spare tires, and food), lasted three weeks, and covered 2,000 miles. "The men of the LRDG patrols were quite a sight on their return to Cairo from a month's trip to Libya," wrote Saul Kelly in *The Last Oasis*. "Unwashed (for the water ration did not allow it), bearded, burnt brown by the sun and clad in ragged shirts, shorts, and sandals, they had the air about them of a bunch of wild-eyed Biblical hermits emerging from their sojourn in the Wilderness."

Survival depended daily on concealment. Trucks were camouflaged with scrub or nets. Then it was found that painting the trucks rose pink and olive green made them almost invisible from the air Patrols could simply stop at the sound of approaching aircraft and let them pass over.

Survival in crisis depended on ingenuity and sheer will. A cracked crankcase was repaired with a mixture of sand and chewing gum. When patrols did come under air attack, they would drive into sandstorms and even into the dust clouds kicked up by the exploding bombs being dropped on them. Trooper R.J. Morse, wounded and separated from his patrol, walked 210 miles until he was picked up.

But the heat was as dangerous an adversary as the Germans and Italians; the men of the LRDG had to endure temperatures of 120 degrees in the shade on just six pints of water a day. "You don't merely feel hot, you don't merely feel tired, you feel as if every bit of energy had left you, as if your brain was thrusting its way to the top of your head and you want to lie in a stupor until the accursed sun has gone down," an officer said.

Like explorers, the men of the LRDG had to find a way or make one. One of Bagnold's old desert hands, Captain William Kennedy Shaw, said, "You were in another world. A treeless, plantless, waterless, nameless world, almost featureless." Progress could be as little as four miles a day, tires deflated to keep the trucks from bogging down in sand. One of the few maps the LRDG had was captured from the Italians. "The mountains were all high, as became the dignity of Fascist Italy. Making our way anxiously toward an obviously impassable range of hills, we would find we had driven over it without feeling the bump," an LRDG officer said.

The Long Range Desert Group's operating three R's were reconnaissance, road-watching, and raiding. Underlying them was a fourth R. As military historian Brigadier Julian Thompson wrote, "They were utterly reliable. If they said they would arrive at an exact spot in the desert 1,000 miles away at a certain time, they almost invariably did."

General Bernard L. Montgomery, the hero of El Alamein, said that, but for the LRDG's probing of the Mareth Line in Tunisia, his attack "would have been a leap in the dark." The head of military intelligence in the Middle East considered the LRDG's surveillance of the Tripoli-Benghazi road—confirming intelligence reports of the strength of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps—to be its single most important contribution to the campaign. Of those nerve-wracking vigils, concealed and not daring to move, an LRDG man wrote, "You look at your watch at 11:00 and look again four hours later and it's 11:15."

The LRDG planted mines, ambushed convoys, and roared out of the night onto enemy bases and runways, machine guns blazing and blowing up fuel depots and aircraft, sometimes destroying or damaging dozens of planes in a single raid. "To the Italians, the raiders seemed to appear from nowhere, as if from a fourth dimension, and to disappear as rapidly," wrote Bagnold. One unit had simply driven up the open road to their objective past enemy vehicles. Since the Germans and Italians utilized captured British trucks no one paid them any attention!

The Germans conceded, "The LRDG plays an extremely important part in the enemy sab-

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MODERN WAR STUDIES

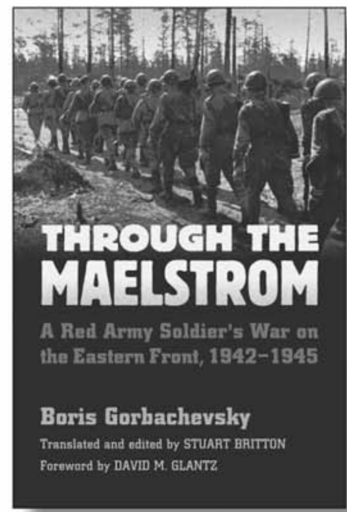
Through the Maelstrom

A Red Army Soldier's War on the Eastern Front, 1942–1945

Boris Gorbachevsky

Translated and edited by Stuart Britton

Foreword by David M. Glantz



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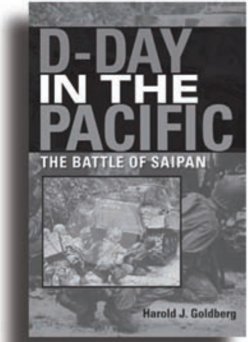

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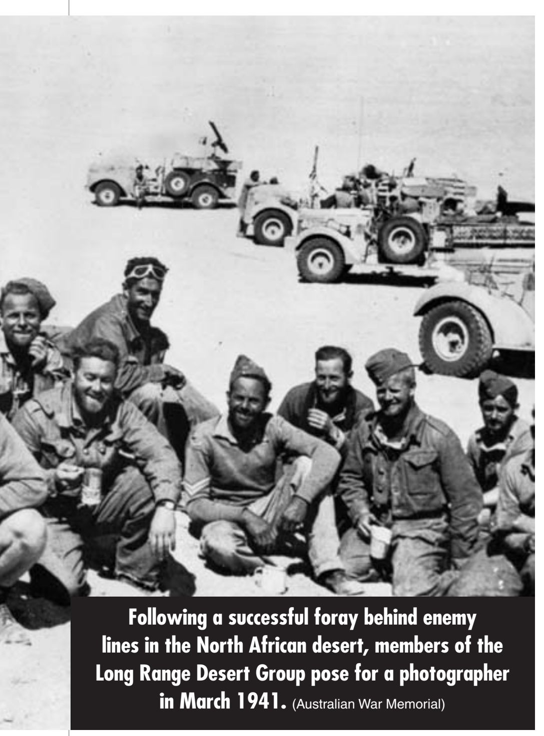
otage operation," and paid it the compliment of forming its own version led by Bagnold's old desert colleague Count Lazslo Almasy. Despite the curious use of his real name, the depiction of Almasy in *The English Patient* is entirely fictitious. He was an active Nazi who also happened to be homosexual. He died, not horrifically burned in an abandoned Italian villa in 1945, but of dysentery in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1951. In his memoirs, Bagnold only mentions Almasy as "a Hungarian desert enthusiast who had lately served on Rommel's staff."

The LRDG also guided other forces to their objectives, rendezvoused, then brought them out. It took Free French troops over 500 miles into the central Libyan desert to capture the Koufrah Oasis in January 1941, and it worked with the Special Air Service (SAS) on many operations, including leading them 1,200 miles to raid Tobruk in September 1942. One secret group the LRDG led to its objective was composed of German Jewish refugees from Palestine in Afrika Korps uniforms along with a supposedly defecting German prisoner. The mission ended in disaster. Only one survivor reached the rendezvous to report the German POW had betrayed the mission.

Driving out of the desert for the last time at the end of the Middle East campaign, an LRDG man said, "It's like saying goodbye to an old schoolmaster, who was very severe and frightening, but whom one knew one was very fond of." But the Long Range Desert Group's heaviest fighting and losses lay ahead.

Operating mainly as a commando unit, the



Following a successful foray behind enemy lines in the North African desert, members of the Long Range Desert Group pose for a photographer in March 1941. (Australian War Memorial)

LRDG went on to see action in Italy, Yugoslavia, Albania, and the Dalmatian islands. In a throwback to its surveillance role, it performed valuable coast watching as it searched for German convoys along the Aegean and Adriatic coasts; one patrol spent 17 days on the Greek island of Naxos evading a 650-man German garrison to report on German shipping in the harbor for the Royal Air Force to attack.

The LRDG killed 50 Germans at a roadblock ambush in Greece, 80 at another in Albania. But while the force had lost 16 killed and 24 missing and captured in the whole Middle East campaign, it had 41 killed in a raid on the Greek island of Levitas in October 1943, and a month later Bagnold's successor as LRDG commander, Jake Easonsmith, was killed and 50 were captured on the nearby island of Leros.

With the end of the war against Nazi Germany, most of the LRDG, though eligible for demobilization, volunteered for the Pacific. However, the offer was refused and the Long Range Desert Group was disbanded in August 1945. Ralph Bagnold continued his desert research, once having an uncomfortable meeting with Count Almasy at an experts' conference in Cairo. Bagnold lived to see the work that had been used for war put to another purpose. His study of desert sand was used by NASA in designing its Mars landing probe. □

John W. Osborn, Jr., is a resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He previously wrote for WWII History *on the Spanish Blue Division.*

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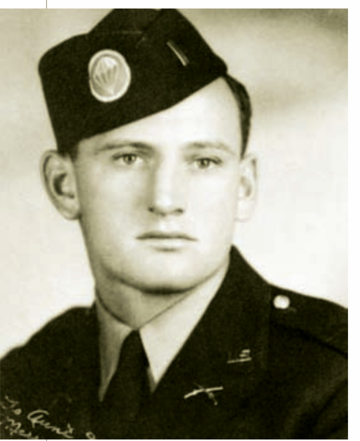
BY FLINT WHITLOCK

Thanks to the late historian Stephen Ambrose, his book *Band of Brothers,* and the HBO series of the same title, the legendary, extraordinary exploits of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), 101st Airborne Division, have become well known to a whole new generation.

And one of the most extraordinary men who served with that outfit is Lynn "Buck" Compton. His life story would make a great film or TV series in its own right. It has made for a great recently released book, *Call of Duty: My Life Before, During, and After the Band of Brothers,* written with Marcus Brotherton and including a foreword by John McCain.



To begin at the beginning, Compton was born in Los Angeles, California, on New Year's Eve 1921. As might be expected, the young man hated his first name. "My mother's father was from Lynn, Massachusetts," he said, "and named Lyndley in honor of the town, so that's where my name came from. But to me, Lynn was a girl's name and always will be."

He resolved to change it. Always a baseball fan, his favorite team was the L.A. Angels, a minor-league team in south Los Angeles. The team had a player named Truck Hannah, whose real name was James Harrison Hannah. Compton, at an early age, thought: "If he could have a nickname, why couldn't I? One day in grammar school, I rolled around in my head the name—Truck Compton. Sounded tough, but I also sounded like a copycat. How about Buck? That was close enough for jazz. It was settled—Buck Compton was my new name. I informed all my friends that Buck was the only name I'd answer to. That was OK by them—nobody wanted a friend who had a sissy's name."

Scrambling forward through a shower of earth and rock, American soldiers seek cover during Operation Market Garden. German artillery fire rains down from deadly 88mm multipurpose field guns. OPPOSITE: This portrait of the young Buck Compton was taken in the village of Aldbourne, England, just before Christmas 1943.
(National Archives / Opposite: Courtesy Compton family)

Laden with combat gear, American airborne troops await orders to stand up, hook up, and jump. These troops were the vanguard of the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. (National Archives)

Growing up in Los Angeles, he also became a movie fan and a young extra in several films, even appearing in a few scenes with up-and-coming child actor Mickey Rooney. Unhappy with Compton's efforts in the silent classic, *Modern Times,* star and director Charlie Chaplin fired him from the set. The Compton family lived a lower-middle-class existence during the Great Depression, and the loss of the meager movie extra income brought home by Buck was keenly felt. To take up part of the slack, he earned a few dollars a week as a caddy at a local golf course as well as a newspaper delivery boy.

Besides being an avid baseball fan, Compton developed into a standout player. After he entered high school, he continued to pursue his interest in the game, becoming the all-league catcher his senior year. He also went out for the football team where the coach, a brusque, demanding man, never settled for less than 100 percent effort. It was a lesson Buck Compton never forgot. "Coach Bert's voice helped push me through a lot of hard times, including the war years," he said. "His presence became a part of me. Whatever mud or snow we were in, if our ammunition ran low or we didn't eat for some time, Coach Bert was there. His voice ingrained its way into my head. I couldn't shake that booming voice if I tried."

In 1939, Compton graduated from high school and was offered a football scholarship to UCLA. But before he could enter college, tragedy struck; Buck's father, plagued by feelings of inadequacy and alcoholism, committed suicide.

Crushed by the loss of his father and struggling to comfort his distraught mother, Compton said his high school football coach became a "tower of strength" for him and helped him get through that difficult time. He related, "Coach Bert became an example of what it means to be truly strong. Even when life throws you down, somehow you get up and continue; if you can help others in the process, you do that then, too."

Compton then entered UCLA with his football scholarship but was required to work four hours a day on campus for 50 cents an hour. From 6 until 8 AM each day, he picked up trash, then attended class, then spent his afternoons at football practice, then had another two hours in the evening picking up trash again. "Hoo boy," he laughed, "I was really a big man on campus!"

During a meaningless game in his freshman year, while playing center, he was blindsided by an opponent with a block that nearly destroyed his knee. But he toughed it out and continued to play, albeit heavily taped up.

In his junior year, Compton went out for the UCLA baseball team and became the starting catcher (one of his teammates was Jackie Robinson). Compton was also named to the all-league team and later inducted into the UCLA Baseball Hall of Fame; he hoped that a major-league career was just around the corner.

While in school, Compton joined a fraternity. One of his fraternity brothers was Captain Dick Jensen, General George Patton's personal aide who was later killed during the fighting in North Africa.

At UCLA, Compton was also enrolled in the ROTC program. "I didn't know of anybody who was bothered by having to do two years of ROTC," he said. "Our education was being subsidized by the American taxpayers, so none of us considered it unreasonable to give a couple of years' military training in exchange for it. When I hear today of major state universities trying to bar armed forces recruiters on campus, that strikes me as unconscionable."

Although Buck Compton hoped to be playing major-league baseball when he graduated in 1943, life had other plans for him. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and other installations in the Pacific. Within days, the United States was at war with both Japan and Nazi Germany.

"After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor," Compton said, "the climate in America changed almost overnight. There was a lot of concern that the Japanese would follow up Pearl Harbor by bombing the United States

mainland. On campus, everybody's outlook suddenly got very serious. We all knew active duty lay ahead. The only question was which branch of service a guy would go into."

The war did not touch Compton immediately; he remained in school expecting to receive his draft notice any day. After playing against Georgia in the January 1943 Rose Bowl game (UCLA lost, 9-0), Compton received his induction notice; he was to report to the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. As he waited at L.A.'s Union Station for the train that would take him and several hundred other recruits eastward, Compton mused that everyone seemed to be feeling a sense of duty. "We had been waiting for our call, and this was it. It was our responsibility to go and fight," he said. "Young men heading off to war have no idea of the darkness that lies ahead. We certainly didn't, anyway. The atmosphere on the train bordered on a party."

The festive atmosphere vanished once the recruits reached Columbus, Georgia, on the outskirts of Fort Benning. Buck Compton was anxious to get into uniform, begin OCS, and prove that he had what it took to be an officer and a leader of men.

It would take a while. "Our status in Officers Candidate School felt strange," he said. "We were neither fish nor fowl. We weren't sworn in yet as soldiers, but we were officially on active duty with a unit. We didn't have rank yet, and we dressed like privates. It would take the full 90 days at Benning until we received our commissions." Finally, Compton and the others in his class received the gold bars of second lieutenants and eagerly anticipated their upcoming assignments.

As it turned out, Compton received orders directing him to report to the 176th Infantry Regiment, a component of the Virginia National Guard at Benning, where his duty each day was teaching a one-hour class in aircraft identification. The rest of his day was spent sleeping late, eating, relaxing, eating, going for a swim at the officers' club, eating, and just plain goofing off. If this was the Army during wartime, he was mightily bored by it.

Then one day Compton was assigned to play baseball for the regimental team. As the majority of major-league ballplayers were in the service, the regimental teams were quite good. "Nearly all baseball players were prevented from seeing combat," observed Compton. "The great Joe DiMaggio, as well as Hank Greenberg, the Tigers' star power hitter, were among the many ballplayers who asked for combat duty but had it denied."

Also at Benning was Bob Waterfield, who had been the star quarterback at UCLA when Compton was there. Waterfield was in the process of organizing an on-post football team and wanted Compton to be his assistant coach. At the time, Waterfield was married to the sexy movie starlet Jane Russell, and they lived in on-post housing. When out in the field on maneuvers, Waterfield even requested that Compton escort his wife to dances and parties.

Compton recalled that one day, when he was visiting the Waterfield quarters, "Bob seemed totally engrossed in the playbook he was mapping out, and I remember thinking that if I were married to Jane Russell, I'd never give football a second glance."

Compton continued to play baseball for the regimental team but was growing more discontented by the day. Although many soldiers would have given their eyeteeth for the privilege of playing baseball for the duration in a safe, cushy, stateside setting, he felt that there was a job to be done and a war to be won—and it would not be won on the baseball diamond.

Airborne veteran Lynn "Buck" Compton is shown in his catcher's gear while playing baseball for UCLA. Compton proved himself a fine athlete and later played minor league baseball. (Courtesy Compton family)

Knowing that the regimental commander would likely quash his application to transfer to another outfit, Compton learned that transfers were being automatically approved for anyone wanting to become a pilot or join the paratroops. He noted, "Flight training took a full year to make it up the ranks from cadet to pilot. I thought the war would be over in a year—we all did. But jump training only took a month." Compton put in for jump school.

"Overseas was where the action was. I wanted to be in the action. I wanted to win," said the ever-competitive Compton, who looked forward to learning how to leap out of airplanes.

The parachute school was right there at Fort Benning, where Compton and several hundred others, officers and enlisted men alike, were put through the rigorous, physically and mentally demanding challenge of airborne training.

For four weeks Compton gutted it out, determined to earn the coveted, silver-winged badge of a paratrooper. At last the course was completed and Compton received his wings. He was then assigned to the 515th PIR, which would soon become a part of the newly formed 17th Airborne Division at Camp Mackall, North Carolina.

Shortly after joining the 17th Airborne, Compton received new orders directing him to report to the 101st Airborne Division, which was already in training in England. One of Compton's former football teammates at UCLA had seen his name on a list of airborne officers, pulled a few strings, and had him sent to the 101st.

In December 1943, Compton and several thousand soldiers crossed the Atlantic on the former luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth*, which had been converted into a troopship. Once the ship docked in Scotland, Compton took a train southward to the small, picturesque English village of Aldbourne, where he found E Company, 506th PIR, commanded by 1st Lt. Thomas Meehan, encamped. They had been there since August 1942.

The officers of E Company were quartered in a large, two-story manor house located on Aldbourne's town square, while the enlisted men were housed in stables adjacent to the manor house and also in Quonset huts. It was cold, wet, and clammy. Heat and hot water were in short supply, but there were gripes aplenty.

Compton was taken to meet the 1st Platoon commander, 1st Lt. Dick Winters, and his assistant, Lieutenant Harry Welsh. Winters impressed Compton greatly. "He was from eastern Pennsylvania," Compton recalled, "and had grown up with a strict Mennonite background. He was a hard worker, serious, and had paid his own way through college." He had also earned his commission through OCS and had been one of the original members of Easy Company, surviving all the hell that Captain Herbert Sobol, the company commander at Camp Toccoa, Georgia, could dish out.

Compton's first job was as assistant platoon leader of the 2nd Platoon. He said, "This was it. This was why I quit playing baseball and volunteered to be a paratrooper." He also noted that his life would never be the same. The company was made up of about 150 sol-

diers, and the 506th PIR had nine companies, or almost 1,500 men. In total, with all of its organic units, the 101st Airborne Division had about 10,000 soldiers.

Second Lieutenant Buck Compton also discovered that it was difficult for a newcomer, especially a "90-day wonder," to be welcomed into the ranks of a proud, closely knit, and well-trained group of soldiers.

As only one-ninth of the regiment, E Company, noted Compton, "still comprised a stalwart and elite group of men. I doubt if anyone would ever describe E Company as 'average.' Throughout the course of the war, the unit encountered situations that required extraordinary bravery, as many units did. I am honored to be included in their ranks. But when I joined the unit in December 1943, it took me a while to feel like I belonged."

Like many second lieutenants, Compton quickly learned that it was the sergeants who did much of the "leading" in a platoon and company, and he was blessed with having some exceptionally fine sergeants, men such as Don Malarkey, Bill Guarnere, and Joe Toye.

Compton said that he would tell one of his NCOs what needed to be done, and the sergeant would make sure it got done. "I just sort of stood around and watched them perform. I never found any occasion to administer any kind of discipline or chew anybody out, the way some officers do."

He also ingratiated himself with his men by refusing to build barriers between himself as an officer and them as enlisted men; he enjoyed shooting the bull and playing poker with them. Lieutenant Winters disapproved of such fraternization, and he and Compton once got into a heated argument about such un-officerly behavior.

In the end, Compton realized the reason for such rules. An officer might be reluctant to order an enlisted "buddy" into carrying out a deadly mission but, as he said, "I've never found it easy to order anybody around. I'd rather ask someone for something than demand it. It was not in my nature to be anything other than myself. If I consider somebody a friend, enlisted man or otherwise, I don't hide it."

Compton's easygoing attitude is probably one reason why so many of his men grew to have such affection for him. One of his men, Edward "Babe" Heffron, said later, "Buck is not only one of the nicest men I've ever known, a very humble man, but out of all the officers in Easy Company, Buck was closest to the guys."

During the first half of 1944, training for the invasion of the European continent continued at an ever-quickening pace. Several practice jumps a week were scheduled, and the airborne troops rarely went anywhere at a walk. It was always double time. When they weren't jumping out of airplanes, the paratroops were on the rifle or grenade range, or the bayonet course, or improving their hand-to-hand fighting skills.

While training in England, Buck Compton broke an ankle, but it healed quickly and within a few weeks he was back taking part in maneuvers with the rest of his platoon. He knew something big was in the works; throughout the spring of 1944 huge swarms of B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers, on their way to bomb enemy targets, covered the sky above Aldbourne, and scuttlebutt was rife with speculation about the impending invasion of France. Compton could not wait for it to begin.

In May 1944, the division was alerted that the "big step-off" was imminent, and E Company was moved from Aldbourne to an encampment at Upottery Airfield near Devon on the southern coast.

"Tension grew in anticipation of what we knew would soon come," he recalled. "We went through days of extensive briefings, and were shown maps and sand tables and told to memorize everything we saw."

Their specific mission soon became clear. While over 150,000 seaborne troops were scheduled to hit five invasion beaches along the Normandy coast, three airborne divisions, two American and one British, would precede the beach landings and be dropped behind enemy lines to sow confusion, attack enemy positions from the rear, and seal off routes the Germans would likely use to smash into the flanks of the invasion sites.

The 101st Airborne's mission was to drop in the vicinity of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont, seize four causeways behind Utah Beach at the base of the Cotentin Peninsula, and prevent any German incursions into the invasion area where the 4th Infantry Division would be wading ashore.

The paratroops knew that if they failed, the 4th could be driven back into the sea. They also knew that if the 4th failed to secure the beachhead, there would be no rescue for the airborne divisions. So both the airborne and seaborne troops were vitally dependent upon each other's success. Delayed for a day by a major storm ravaging the English Channel, Operation Overlord got under way late on the night of June 5, 1944.

As troopships, support ships, and warships left their ports along the southern coast of England, the heavily laden airborne forces (each man carried between 70 and 100 pounds of equipment) were gathering at their airfields, climbing into hundreds of aircraft of the United States Army Air Forces Troop Carrier Command that would deliver them to hostile shores (it took two C-47s to carry one 40-man platoon), and taking off into the dark night.

The flight across the Channel was routine; the skies belonged to the Allies. About three-quarters of the way to France, Compton noted, "Our crew chief came back and took the door off the airplane, leaving a hole in the side."

As the first man in his "stick" of paratroopers, Compton shuffled to the doorway and looked out. The black sky all around was filled with transport planes in formation. Down below, the French coastline came into view. Then, as they crossed the beaches, "tracer bullets and antiaircraft started to appear," he said, "red, blue, and green tracers, spectacular and deadly against the night sky.

"As we neared our drop zone, the weather grew overcast, and more and more antiaircraft flak began to hit near our plane. Nothing ever hit our plane directly that I was aware of. Some flak I could see exploding outside the door in the fog bank. Mostly it was just a crackling sound. I had never met our pilot, so I knew nothing about him. I assumed he was on course and would slow down enough to let us jump. What else could I assume?"

"Out of all the horror of war, the guilt of survival is one of the things that haunts me most to this day. I will never know why I survived when so many others did not."

The red light near the door went on, signaling the men that it was time to stand up, hook their static lines to the steel cable that ran the length of the interior of the fuselage, and prepare to jump. Stomachs tightened as the antiaircraft fire became more intense. In other planes, Compton learned later, panic ensued as bullets and shells and shrapnel ripped through the thin aluminum skin and the unprotected bodies of paratroopers. Some troops bailed out over the water while others, their planes on fire, rode their craft down to a fiery end.

Suddenly, sooner than Compton expected, the red light went off and the green "jump" light came on. Operating on instinct born of endless training, Compton and his men moved quickly and threw themselves out into the black, blazing night. He hoped that they were somewhere over their drop zone.

The C-47's pilot had not, as Compton had assumed, throttled down. The plane was still rushing along at top speed.

The shock of the prop blast was more than Compton expected; it broke the plastic chin cup off his helmet and ripped the leg bag containing his carbine, mortar rounds, and extra equipment off his leg.

As he descended, Compton could hear the sounds of gunfire below but none came close to him. "I drifted into an orchard—some sort of enclosed field with hedges all around it. My landing was good, a two-footer. Everything was eerily quiet. A few cows mooed in the distance. I was completely alone." Compton did not find out until later that his company commander, Lieutenant Meehan, was killed when his transport plane was shot down.

While lying in the darkened field, Compton reflected that, except for his trench knife, a canteen, and a couple of grenades, he was completely without equipment of any kind. "Neither my first jump at Benning nor my first jump into enemy territory had gone anything according to plan. Nothing had been on schedule. Nothing had been smooth. What could possibly come next?"

He would soon find out.

The 101st Airborne Division's first combat jump had been part success, part disaster. Like its sister airborne division, the 82nd, units were scattered far from their intended drop zones. Vital equipment was missing. Officers and NCOs were lost, injured, or dead. Thousands of men had no idea where they were, or where the other men in their platoons were.

As Compton learned later, "Some paratroopers were shot on the way down, and some fell into land that had been flooded by the Germans and drowned. Some fell on trees, buildings, or antiglider poles."

The confusion did serve one good purpose. The Germans had little idea of the true scope and nature of what was happening. In addition to the widely dispersed paratroop landings, dummy parachutists had also been dropped by the Allies, giving the impression of a much larger airborne invasion than had actually

ABOVE: General Anthony McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne Division addresses a gathering of troops prior to the launching of Operation Market Garden in the skies over Holland. McAuliffe later gained fame at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. OPPOSITE: Shown in their camouflaged emplacements at the town of Ste. Marie-du-Mont, these German guns were attacked and silenced by troopers of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, on D-Day. Buck Compton was among the paratroopers who took out the guns that threatened Utah Beach. (Both: National Archives)

taken place. German commanders did not know whether to send their troops in one direction or another, or to just sit tight and wait for further orders.

While trying to get his bearings in the dark, Compton could hear gunfire off in the distance, could see tracers still criss-crossing the night sky, could hear the steady drone of aircraft engines delivering more paratroopers, could see the dim forms of men floating down from the sky.

"Theoretically," he said, "I should have been running into guys from my own platoon, but I wasn't even running into guys from my own division!"

Suddenly another airborne soldier landed about 20 yards away from him in the orchard; he was from the 82nd. The two of them headed out in the direction they were supposed to go: toward the beach.

As they walked, other stragglers from other outfits began joining them. They came across a lieutenant from D Company, 506th PIR, who had broken his leg upon landing. Seeing Compton without a weapon, he gave him his Thompson submachine gun and waited to be found by either American medics or German troops.

The ad hoc squad continued on. At times other American troops were added, and German troops, too, gave themselves up to the marching paratroopers. As the sky gradually lightened, the sounds of the battle coming from Utah Beach began to punch the air.

Compton remembered, "One shell from a ship flew in like a freight train and landed about 50 feet away from us. It thudded, shaking the ground, and stuck fast—a dud. If it had exploded, it would have killed us for sure."

Compton's group marched on, listening to the sound of the naval guns and outgoing German artillery becoming louder and more intense. Up ahead, taking cover beside a building, he saw Lieutenant Winters; Sergeants Malarkey, Guarnere, and Toye; and a handful of other enlisted men. Altogether the ensemble numbered about a dozen men. Compton breathed a sign of relief.

Pulling out a map, Winters told Compton that they were at an estate known as Brecourt Manor, about three miles west of Utah Beach. Suddenly, a battery of German 105mm guns began firing nearby, their rounds heading toward Utah Beach. Winters directed Compton to recon the area; Compton moved toward the sound of the guns while the GIs kept the Germans' heads down with machine-gun fire. He soon discovered the battery of four guns, connected by trenches, firing on the causeways the 4th Infantry Division was using to march inland.

Compton jumped into one of the trenches, aimed his borrowed Thompson at two surprised, well-armed enemy soldiers, and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. The firing pin was broken. The Germans prepared to fire.

At that moment, Sergeant Bill Guarnere, who without Compton knowing it had followed the lieutenant across the field and into the trench, blasted one of the enemy soldiers with his rifle. The other soldier scrambled out of the trench and began running away, but Compton lobbed a grenade at him.

"It detonated in the air right above the German's head, killing him instantly," he said. "That was my first kill. Ask me today what it's like to kill a man in combat and I don't say much. I have no idea who he was, what he did outside the war, or if he had a wife or family. You just don't think. A man is trying to kill you, and you either kill him first or be killed waiting to assess the situation. I doubt if the choice I made to throw the grenade was even conscious. A sense of duty had long since taken over. We knew what our orders were, and we followed through as best we knew how."

The battle for Brecourt Manor went on for hours, with both sides trading machine-gun fire. Compton said, "I don't remember when victory was at last declared at Brecourt. All the German guns were eventually destroyed, and Winters must have ordered a fallback to our original starting point. History has shown that troops landing at Utah Beach had an easier landing due in part to what was accomplished at Brecourt. I'm happy about that. If our actions saved any of our boys' lives, that's part of what we were there to do."

For his deeds at Brecourt Manor, Compton was awarded the Silver Star. It was only later that he discovered that the dozen Americans had taken on 60 Germans.

The days following D-Day were something of a blur for Buck Compton. He recalled surviving nearby grenade and mortar explosions without a scratch, but the exhaustion of combat has dimmed his memory of that period.

One painful incident stuck in his mind, however. He and a private were patrolling along a hedgerow and spotted two other soldiers skulking along another hedgerow about 50 yards away. Compton noticed that both were wearing German camouflage ponchos of the type usually worn by SS troops, and one was carrying a Mauser rifle.

Compton and the private opened fire, killing both men. It was only when they went to examine the bodies that they discovered the dead men were both Americans; why they were wearing German ponchos and carrying a German rifle Compton never knew, but the incident still disturbs him greatly.

"Out of all the horror of war," he said, "the guilt of survival is one of the things that haunts me most to this day. I will never know why I survived when so many others did not. When it comes to understanding any of this, I have long since given up trying."

One of the key cities in Normandy is Carentan, between Utah and Omaha Beaches. Whoever controlled Carentan controlled an important road network through Normandy. Both sides knew this, and the Germans were just as intent upon holding Carentan as the Americans were in taking it away from them. The tough German 6th PIR was securely entrenched in part of the city's outskirts—the part that American troops were ordered to seize.

The battle for Carentan began with an American artillery bombardment that lasted several days. Then U.S. P-38 fighters worked over the town from the air. With Lieutenant Winters

now in command of the cobbled-together E Company, the entire 2nd Battalion was ordered to make a night approach to Carentan, then was ordered to turn around and return to its positions.

The paratroopers, back in their foxholes, then began taking enemy artillery fire. After the shelling subsided, the battalion was ordered once more to advance into the city. Compton described the place as being "like a ghost town. It was a shambles—crumbled buildings, dead Germans lying all over. We walked down the main street and out the other side. I'd estimate we saw a dead body every 10 feet or less. Most of the bodies had been pretty well mutilated by our artillery. I didn't see any townspeople; they may have been hunkered down in their basements."

As they left the shattered city and reentered the rural area beyond, the paratroopers were sprayed with machine-gun fire. A pitched battle lasted a while, then some Sherman tanks arrived and silenced the enemy. E Company moved back into Carentan, where it stayed for a few days, awaiting new orders. But combat was finished for them. After a month in France, the 101st, along with the 82nd, was ordered to return to England to prepare for whatever new mission might emerge.

While other Allied units crossed the English Channel to take part in Operation Cobra, the breakout from Normandy, and the dash toward Paris, the airborne divisions enjoyed a more-or-less "normal" military life of training, training, and more training.

Interspersed with the training periods, though, was plenty of relaxation and leave time. The soldiers explored London and other sites on their days off, even being invited to dinner at the homes of Aldbourne residents who, in spite of rationing and wartime shortages, were more than generous to the young Yanks far from home.

Several times during that summer the division was alerted for combat jumps, but the missions were cancelled; the Allies were making such swift progress across France that the land armies had secured the intended drop zones before the airborne troops could be dropped on them.

It was not until September 1944 that the airborne troops, still encamped in England, received another assignment. This one was code-named Operation Market Garden and had been devised as a way of avoiding the fortifications along the Siegfried Line. The plan called for airborne troops to land behind the defenses, secure bridges over the Rhine River in German-occupied Holland, and make a lightning thrust into the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany. There was even hope and speculation that, if successful, Market Garden could end the war in Europe before Christmas.

For this bold operation, the normally cautious British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery detailed three British and Canadian airborne divisions to take the bridge at Arnhem. Simultaneously, the American 82nd Division would grab the bridge at Nijmegen while the 101st would assault and hold the crossing over the Wilhelmina Canal at Eindhoven.

Just as almost everything went wrong during the first hours of Operation Overlord but turned out right, almost everything went right during the first phase of Operation Market Garden but then went horribly wrong.

The initial parachute landings were flawless. There was little enemy fire, and Dutch civilians cheered the arrival of the Allies in their towns. But then the whole plan started to unravel. There were more German units in the vicinity than intelligence had accounted for. Some airborne units dropped into the midst of enemy formations and were cut to pieces. Radios did not work. The armored columns that were supposed to arrive to reinforce the lightly armed paratroops were late and were decimated. Airborne units were surrounded and cut to pieces.

In a fierce battle in a farmyard at the village of Hegel during the German counterattack, Compton was hit in the buttocks by a bullet. He was evacuated to an aid station in Eindhoven on the hood of a jeep.

Compton realized the mission was a costly failure: "When E Company jumped on that sunny day in September, we had 154 men. By the time Easy Company left for France in November, 88 days later, a third of the company was either dead or wounded."

After receiving initial medical treatment, Compton was sent back to a civilian hospital in Oxford, England, to recuperate. A little more than a month later he was back with E Company, now billeted in Reims, France. As he slowly regained his strength, the 101st continued to train for whatever new mission might come its way.

A hard winter hit northern Europe, the worst, some said, in more than a century. The Allied operation ground to a halt along the German border with Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. Everyone thought that they would just remain in place for the winter, try to stay warm, and then resume the offensive when spring came. It did not quite work out that way.

ABOVE: Operation Market Garden ended in a strategic defeat for the Allies attempting to strike the German industrial heartland, the Ruhr, through Holland. Here, a pair of 101st Airborne soldiers mans a defensive position at the "Island" in the division's zone of operations. OPPOSITE: Several of them arriving aboard a jeep, troopers of the 101st Airborne Division enter the important Norman town of Carentan on June 14, 1944. The fighting at Carentan was heavy, and the Americans withstood several German counterattacks. (Both: National Archives)

Adolf Hitler, with both his eastern and western fronts being squeezed by Germany's enemies, decided to gamble on one last throw of the dice. He launched Operation Wacht-am-Rhein, the biggest German offensive since Barbarossa, the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, in the middle of December 1944.

Hitler's goal was the capture of the Allies' chief supply port at Antwerp, Belgium, and to reach the city his troops would need to take the vital crossroads town of Bastogne, Belgium. The offensive would be known by the Allies as the Battle of the Bulge.

At first, the Germans' surprise assault succeeded brilliantly. Caught totally unaware, American forces were forced to give ground. Thousands of U.S. troops, many completely raw and without prior combat experience, were killed or captured, or they fled for their lives across snowy fields.

With their lines shattered, the Americans needed to bring in divisions from other sectors to plug the gaps; the 101st Airborne was one of those called upon. The division boarded trucks at Reims and spent more than a day trying to reach the front near Bastogne. All along the highway leading into Bastogne, Compton and his men encountered long lines of panicked, demoralized American troops retreating from the enemy.

Without winter clothing and low on ammunition, the 101st was thrown into the breach. The paratroopers marched to the east of Bastogne and were told to dig foxholes in the frozen earth. A dark, damp fog settled over their positions. The temperature plunged to below zero. Soon it began to snow. The sounds of German tanks could be heard. Sporadic small arms and artillery fire hit around paratroopers' foxholes, but the anticipated big attack failed to materialize.

The tension, though, continued day and night. Thanks to the cold and the noise and the German flares that lit up the dark sky, sleep was hard to come by.

Just before Christmas, the Americans got the word that Bastogne was surrounded by the Germans. Compton and his men went without shaving, without washing. He and many of his men came down with frostbite.

Compton recalled, "We were alone, out in the woods, surrounded, desperately low on supplies. We were in day-to-day survival mode. Build the occasional fire. Melt some snow. Find something to eat. Cook it in your helmet. Stay out of harm's way. Just do what you need to do to get through the day."

The Germans sent a demand to Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe, the 101st Airborne Division Artillery's commander, that he surrender his forces in and around Bastogne. McAuliffe's one-word reply has become emblematic of American fighting spirit: "NUTS!"

Then, two days before Christmas, the thick overcast that had kept Allied planes grounded finally lifted and the sun came out. American pilots hammered German formations from the air.

Yet the battle for Bastogne was not over. In fact, for Compton and his men, it had barely begun. In early January, a heavy German barrage shattered the trees in E Company's position and threw branches and red-hot shrapnel around in deadly fashion.

"Landing on us was the most shocking display of firepower I had even seen. It was absolutely merciless. You could feel the ground bounce. You could taste gunpowder in your mouth."

Compton said, "Very suddenly, broad daylight, really bad shelling started coming in—big, heavy stuff. Landing on us was the most shocking display of firepower I had ever seen. It was absolutely merciless. Shrapnel flew and shredded every which way. Bursts of dirt and snow exploded all over. You could feel the ground bounce. You could taste gunpowder in your mouth. For some time, all was complete chaos. Then the shelling stopped almost as suddenly as it began."

Compton's platoon area was a complete shambles of shattered trees, downed limbs, smoldering ground, blood, and bodies. "It's a terrible thing to see your guys like that," he said. "Death was everywhere."

Two of his NCOs, Guarnere and Toye, were badly wounded. Realizing that his portion of the front line would be unable to hold if the Germans launched a ground attack, Compton took off in a rage for the company command post in an effort to get medics and reinforcements to his position.

By this time, Winters had been promoted and reassigned to battalion headquarters. Taking his place as commander of Easy Company was a haughty lieutenant named Norman Dike; he and Compton had never got along, and Compton was furious that Dike was not at the company command post. Storming back to his platoon's position, Compton could not contain his emotions any longer and broke down sobbing at the loss of so many of his men—many of whom he had been with since Normandy. When it had gone into the line around Bastogne, Easy Company had had 120 men; now, only half that number remained alive and capable of fighting.

A short time later, perhaps thinking that Compton was reacting to the strain of battle, the 506th PIR's commander, Colonel Robert Sink, pulled him off the line and out of combat.

With frostbitten feet, Compton was evacuated to a hospital in a rear area, but he would not stay there. Somehow he managed to get back to his platoon; he wanted at least to say goodbye to his men. It was a short, bittersweet parting.

Marching out of Bastogne in triumph, soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division head for a badly needed rest. The Belgian crossroads town was vital to the Allied defense against the German Ardennes offensive, and the airborne troops held for days against severe attacks until they were relieved by General George S. Patton's U.S. Third Army. (National Archives)

By the time Buck Compton recuperated from his frostbite, the 101st Airborne was in Austria and the war was nearly over. A friend helped him get the job of running the Army's athletic programs for the GIs in Paris.

It was a cushy job, and there is no doubt that Compton's time in combat earned it for him. Yet, he was troubled that he had survived and so many others had not. "Survival seemed so implausible," he said, reflecting upon that time, "but some had made it to the end. I was one of the lucky ones."

In December 1945, Buck Compton came home from Europe. Discharged from the service, he returned to civilian life in California. But his military career had made a deep and lasting impression on him, and he joined the active reserves, retiring 20 years later as a lieutenant colonel. He reenrolled at UCLA to fin-

ish his college education, bought a used car with the money he had saved during the war, and even went out for the baseball team again. He looked up his old girlfriend, Jerry Star, and they married in May 1946.

Believing he had what it took to be a professional baseball player, he tried out for and made the AAA Pacific Coast League Spokane Indians. But his wife was not happy with his career choice. She pointed out that she wanted to live in Los Angeles, not Spokane, and the job paid only $300 a month. Reluctantly, he turned down the contract and looked around for something else to do. With school out for the summer in 1946, Compton landed a job with one of the movie studios as a laborer, but it was a dead-end job burdened by what he felt were senseless union rules.

One day a friend suggested that he apply to law school; a career in law was the furthest thing from his mind, but he decided to give it a go. Strings were pulled, and Compton soon found himself enrolled in Loyola University's school of law; the G.I. Bill paid for his tuition and some of his expenses.

But, as one door opened, another closed; Compton's wife left him, a not infrequent occurrence among returning veterans.

One day while in Los Angeles, Compton ran into an old acquaintance, Jack Colbern, a man who had umpired several of his baseball games at UCLA. He suggested that Compton apply for the police force, where his athletic talents could be put to use on the department's semi-pro baseball team.

Former Lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton (left) poses with actor Neal McDonough, who portrayed him in the 2001 HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers.* (Courtesy Compton family)

Intrigued by the idea, Compton applied, was accepted, and soon found himself on the force. For three months, while he underwent training, he also took night courses at Loyola law school and studied on weekends. In what little spare time he had, he played ball for the police team. He was also active in the Army reserves, spending one weekend a month and two weeks each summer drilling with an armored unit. It was a brutal schedule, but Compton loved it.

As soon as he graduated from the police academy, Compton was assigned to plain-clothes duty, an unheard-of first assignment in any police department today. He also switched his reserve military duty from armor to the Office of Special Investigations (OSI), a unit that had both criminal and counterintelligence functions, and was assigned to Maywood Air Force Base in Los Angeles County.

Continued on page 88

He enlisted in 1934. Except for those at Pearl Harbor, he was the first American casualty of the war. He spent the entire war as a prisoner and endured a prison "hell ship." He lost a brother in the Bataan Death March. Still with us today, he is upbeat and savoring life.

As a gunner on a Boeing B-17D Flying Fortress bomber returning to Clark Field in late morning, December 8, 1941, Technical Sergeant Michael Bibin came out second best in an air duel with a Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighter and was badly wounded. He spent the duration of U.S. involvement in World War II as a casualty of, and then a prisoner of, the Japanese. Michael Bibin became a prisoner of war first in the Philippines, then aboard a prisoner ship, and finally in Japan. He was 300 miles from Hiroshima when an atomic bomb detonated over that city. Although the Japanese killed some American prisoners of war near the end of the conflict, Mike Bibin was liberated when fighting ended August 15, 1945. He later retired from the Air Force as a captain.

Prisoner of War

BY ROBERT F. DORR

Michael Bibin was an early prisoner of the Japanese during World War II.

Approaching his 92nd birthday in 2007, Bibin remembered scrounging for garbage for nutrition in a Japan prison camp and spoke about his war.

RFD: Except for those killed and wounded at Pearl Harbor, you were the first American casualty of the war. Can you talk us through your military experience during the run-up to the war?

MB: I may be the last man who can speak from personal experience about being a mechanic on the Boeing P-12 biplane fighter. I was a career soldier. I was born in 1916 in Detroit of Serbian immigrant parents. My dad wanted me to make my career working in his butcher shop. My brother Frank and I ran away from home and entered the service at age 17 in February 1934. Frank—he was two years older than I—had taken high school ROTC. We joined the Army at Selfridge Field, Michigan, about 25 miles from our home. When we got there, we already knew how to do "squads left" and "squads right." We became aircraft armorers.

My next experience was with the armament section of 27th Pursuit Squadron. They had Boeing P-12Es, which were on the way out, wood and fabric biplane relics in a time of all-metal monoplanes.

We transitioned into the Martin B-10 bomber in the 5th Composite Group. We then went into Douglas B-18s in 1939. Frank and I trained together as bombardiers and gunners. The B-10 and B-18 had .30-caliber guns. I left Hawaii in 1940 and went to March Field, California. I was single. Frank had just gotten married and considered flying dangerous, so he returned to ground support as an armorer while I continued to fly.

At March they had B-17Cs and Ds. My squadron, the 93rd, had B-17Ds. These early versions of the four-engined bomber did not have tail guns. The B-17D had the bathtub under the fuselage—two .50-caliber M2 machine guns were there, pointing aft. The radio operator in the B-17D had two .50s above the bathtub. We had waist guns on the right and left. The nose was on the .30-caliber.

Frank and I were transferred to Luke Field on Ford Island near Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1937, and we actually worked on the P-12C, which was even older than the P-12A. I also worked on the Keystone B-6A biplane bomber and was trained as a mechanic, gunner, and bombardier. Frank and I were separated when I left Hawaii a year earlier than he did. Frank stayed until 1941, but not until December 7. We got together again when we arrived at Clark Field, Philippines, in 1941. Everybody was hearing that war was coming, and we thought it would begin at the place where we'd just arrived and not at the place we'd recently left.

RFD: American military brass did, indeed, expect a war to begin in the Philippines. Douglas MacArthur came out of retirement to command U.S. forces there and took a temporary demotion to three-star rank, even though he was a former Army chief of staff. The United States had an ambitious plan to have four heavy bomber groups, all equipped with B-17s, in the Philippines by April 1942.

The plan included having 142 heavy bombers in place by March 1, 1942. That would have been more than the Japanese could have handled.

MB: Yes, but those dates tell a revealing story. After all, that plan included me. The plan wasn't too little but it was too late.

We were in a tropical paradise where troops enjoyed sunshine, palm trees, and unspoiled beaches—and had little respect for the top brass. We viewed the Philippines as a place where old colonels went to prepare for retirement and ended the workday at 11:30 AM. Meanwhile, young captains and staff sergeants battled their bosses and tried to be ready for war. We didn't feel good about our leadership—a lot of this was before MacArthur came along, and I'll let others judge him—nor did we like our prospects if we were attacked before the buildup was completed.

One squadron commander wrote to his wife and said, "A troop of Boy Scouts flying kites could take these damned islands and not have one shot fired at them."

We had some old bombers, B-10s and B-18s, but the idea of the heavy, four-engined bomber was taking hold and we were beginning to receive B-17D Flying Fortresses in 1941. I was a gunner and bombardier in the 93rd Bombardment Squadron, which became part of the 19th Bombardment Group, commanded by Colonel (later Maj. Gen.) Eugene L. Eubank.

RFD: What happened that fateful day?

MB: There were 35 B-17s in the Philippines on the morning of December 8, more than enough to have a tremendous impact on the Japanese if properly used. I knew that. My pilot knew that. I was a waist gunner on a B-17 piloted by 1st Lieutenant Earl Tash.

The night of December 5, we'd left Clark Field for Mindanao and circled the islands looking for a rumored Jap ship. We landed at Del Monte Field near the pineapple plantation. On the morning of December 8, we were returning to Clark Field on Luzon. We arrived in the middle of the Japanese attack on Clark. I saw Japanese aircraft flying in several directions and American aircraft burning on the ground, sending plumes of smoke into the clear sky. Later, I learned that they destroyed 12 of the 19 B-17s at Clark before a single one of them could even warm up or taxi out. They also destroyed 34 of Clark's 92 P-40E Kittyhawk fighters, the only fighters in the islands that might have had a chance against the Japanese Zero if used properly.

Tash and the pilots of two accompanying B-17s decided to avoid Japanese fighters by flying in a wide circle around a volcano, about 30 miles west of Clark. I don't remember exactly how Earl described this to the crew over the

Exiting toward freedom, former Allied prisoners of war carry their belongings to waiting transportation as Japanese guards bow humbly. Thousands of Allied POWs were freed at the end of the war, but others met terrible fates aboard hell ships or were executed by their captors. OPPOSITE TOP: As a young member of the U.S. Army Air Corps, Michael Bibin poses in uniform at Luke Field, Hawaii, in 1935.

(© Hulton Deutsch Collection/CORBIS); Opposite: Courtesy of Michael Bibin

intercom. I was trained as a bombardier and gunner but was doing neither. I was busy scanning, wanting to warn the pilot if I saw anything he needed to know. The situation with the Japanese aircraft wasn't clear at all.

RFD: You're sharing the sky with the first wave of Japanese aircraft that launched the attack?

MB: That's right.

After we'd spent far too much time watching our shadow cross the slope of the volcano, Tash decided that the Japanese had finished their deadly work and had departed. He told us we would land at Clark. He ordered me to fire two red flares from a Very pistol so American troops on the ground would know our B-17.

It was a mistake. There was a second wave of Japanese planes. It began with two Japanese fighters making a slashing attack on our Flying Fortress from below. Here was where being an aerial gunner was supposed to make a difference. I was at the left waist gun position. I wheeled the gun around, knowing the Japanese fighters were below and behind us.

Our bomber was vibrating as Tash tried to push more speed out of it. The Japanese fighters opened fire. I leaned into my weapon, struggling for balance, but could not shoot at the Zeros without hitting the rear of our own aircraft. The closest Zero grew in size over the top of my gunsight. I was a split second away from pulling the trigger.

The next thing I knew, I was sitting on the floor on the other side of the fuselage, blood running down my face and my left arm numb and hanging limply at my side. The Zero had hit the side of the plane where my gun protruded. A round from the Zero had ricocheted off the gun's armor-plated shield and gone through my parachute harness. Fragments of it hit me in the right arm, right lung, and right eye. There was blood on the floorboards.

I believed, mistakenly as it turned out, that I was more disoriented than in pain, more flustered than hurt. We had come under attack from Japanese Zero fighters and I hadn't been able to hit them.

RFD: But one of your crewmembers did?

MB: This Zero lifted up and our radio gunner got him. The radio gunner was just behind the bomb bay. He had twin guns that fired strictly above our B-17. He let him have it and hit him from the nose to the tail. The Jap veered off. He was damaged. We don't know where he went—whether he went into the ocean or made it to his base or not.

RFD: So Tash didn't land at Clark Field after all?

MB: We went back to Mindanao. I got hit at 12:30 and we didn't land until 5:30. I lost a lot of blood.

When I got hit, it spun me completely around. I was facing the tail. I was on the other side of the ship facing the front. I laid down there. The copilot, 1st Lieutenant Keller, came back to help. The only thing he had was a big piece of gauze. I had a wound the size of a tennis ball. I passed out a couple of times and asked for water when I came awake. I lost a lot of blood. The Japanese shot out our ailerons. I was the only one hit, but because of the mess and the uncertainty of the Japanese intentions, Tash decided to return to Mindanao. One crewmember applied a dressing to my wound.

A B-17D Flying Fortress sits on the tarmac at Iba Field, Philippines, while visiting from Clark Field in October 1941 on the eve of war. The following month, the 19th Bombardment Group was formed. By the time the Japanese attacked in December, most of the 19th Group's B-17Ds had been repainted in a khaki camouflage scheme. RIGHT: The Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter dominated the skies above the Pacific early in World War II. Later American aircraft types surpassed the performance of the nimble Zero.

Another just looked at it, said, "Oh, God," and staggered off.

RFD: We know now that, except for those killed and wounded at Pearl Harbor, you were the first American casualty of World War II. How much were you aware of while Tash made the long flight back and landed at Del Monte?

MB: I remember somebody saying the Japanese had not attacked Del Monte. The flight surgeon called a stretcher bearer who took me out of the B-17D. "That's oil leaking out of the bottom of the plane," an officer said. "Hell no," somebody else said. "That's Bibin's blood." They set up a makeshift operating room. They had no blood plasma. They had no blood. They gave me black coffee for the shock. I still have a bad left shoulder and a bad arm. They had a corpsman watch me during the night.

I was still alive a week later when they took me to a Philippine hospital where an X-ray revealed that a shell fragment had lodged near my spine. Doctors removed the metal and put my useless left arm in a sling.

RFD: You never saw your brother again?

MB: Frank left Clark Field for the Bataan Peninsula where defenders gathered. By April 9, their food and ammunition were nearly exhausted. Frank was among 78,000 American and Philippine troops, most ill or wounded, who were forced to surrender.

The Japanese marched them 65 miles north to Camp O'Donnell. About 650 Americans and 5,000 to 10,000 Filipinos died, many of them clubbed, bayoneted, or shot. Frank survived the Bataan Death March but later succumbed to cerebral malaria and died on May 24, 1942. I didn't learn about it until a prisoner transferred to my camp from his months later.

RFD: You went from being wounded in U.S. custody to being a wounded prisoner. You said before the interview that your captors were "not nice guys." When did you decide that?

MB: On May 10, 1942, we were given orders from (General Jonathan M.) Wainwright's headquarters to surrender. At our location in Mindanao, our highest ranking officers were a couple of lieutenant colonels. We got into

trucks and drove almost to the beach. We were at a crossroad and saw a bunch of Japs coming up. They were the first we ever saw, close up.

This Jap held out his hand. He wanted a cigarette. I had a pack of Philip Morris. I shook one out of the pack and offered it to him. He snatched the pack instead. That's when I decided they weren't going to be nice. But it was worse than that. I watched them take a man out and have him dig his own grave. Then, they lashed him to a stake. A Japanese officer came over, held a pistol to his forehead, and shot him in the head. I never knew why.

They took us to what had once been a Philippine garrison. We had no idea that the Bataan Death March had taken place. It was not until November 1942 that I learned Frank had survived the Death March only to collapse and die afterward. An old master sergeant transferred to my camp from Frank's. He was a grizzled old guy who had fought in World War I. He told me about Frank.

RFD: The movie *Prison Ship,* released by Hollywood just after the war, didn't begin to show the true condition on merchantmen that carried prisoners of war to the Japanese Home Islands. What was it like?

MB: In June 1944, they transferred us American prisoners from Mindanao to Luzon, and then to Japan. For the first stage, they put 500 of us in the hold of a cargo ship for the trip within the Philippines from Mindanao to Manila. The ship remained at anchor for two weeks, then sailed to Manila where it was anchored for another two weeks in 130-degree heat. Many of those around me died. It's hard to think of anything else when all you want is a taste of water and to get away from the stench of urine and feces.

They took us off that ship and threw us into the Old Bilibid Prison. They segregated us. Some stayed in the Philippines. The men considered more able-bodied—that was me, despite complications from my wounds—were put aboard another ship to go to Japan as slave labor in mines, factories, and foundries. That was in July 1944. I was crammed inside this huge ship with a lot of guys. I never learned the name of my ship. The conditions on these "hell ships" were just what you're thinking. We never had sufficient water, food, or ventilation. The temperature was often above 100 degrees.

How tight were we? I slept and ate in a sitting position because there was no room to lie down. We worked out a system of taking turns standing so others could lie down. At one point during that journey, several of us broke out "God Bless America." The Japanese pointed submachine guns at us and we stopped.

On my ship, we had only two prisoners die, but that was unusual. Later, the Japanese put as many as 1,800 prisoners on one ship. The Japanese did not mark "POW" on the decks of these vessels so our own guys attacked and sank several. One of the worst prison ship disasters happened to the *Montevideo Maru,* which went to the bottom in July 1942 with 1,053 American prisoners on board. Only a handful survived.

Proudly wearing his postwar U.S. Air Force uniform with the retired rank of captain in 2006, Michael Bibin has often reflected on his perilous World War II experience.

We were crammed tightly together for our whole trip that took 90 days. They put us aboard in June, and we landed in September. Our ship stopped in Formosa for a week and a half. The only thing we were allowed to do was to go up to the deck to use a latrine that was in a box on the top of the ship. You went into the latrine, did your thing, and returned to the hold. After we left Formosa, we were attacked by an American sub off of Formosa. Down in our hold, we could hear a Japanese destroyer dropping depth charges. We were rooting for the Japanese destroyer because we didn't want to be sunk. As with so many aspects of that journey, we never learned any more. We arrived at a port in the westernmost Japanese island of Kyushu.

RFD: A lot of people don't realize that Japan runs east-west, not north-south. I guess you became something of an expert.

MB: No. I didn't. What port did we land at? Looking at a map that could be Kagoshima or Nagasaki, but I never really knew.

They took us by train to my first camp, located on Kyushu. The spelling I have for it is Yokaishu. We had 600 men in that camp, about 400 Americans, 35 Dutch (from Java), 50 British (from Malaya), and some others. We were forced to work in a foundry, processing brass into furnaces. I was there nine months. During that time, I got my neck broken. It was an accident. We were trying to move a piece of machinery, and the whole thing fell and hit me. I never learned my neck was broken until decades later.

After nine months, in May 1945, they moved me to another prison camp in Toyama. Again, I worked in a foundry, this time working with electric furnaces making chrome for aircraft. I was in an accident when a sledgehammer hit me in the face and smashed my nose all to hell. The military later fixed it in 1950. I was in camp having trouble with my nose and couldn't breathe very well.

The conditions of imprisonment in the Philippines were fair. In Japan, it was bad. We slept on wooden floors with a straw mat. Each man had three thin Japanese blankets of cotton, not wool. It was so damn cold in the wintertime that we all bundled up together in pairs, two of us cuddling together. We never changed clothes. We had only one outfit. I had one pair of pants, one shirt, and they were not warm. We were cold constantly. Each bay had a fire kit made of cement blocks; they gave us one sack of charcoal for two weeks to keep 40 men warm. Some guys found a way to steal potatoes from a warehouse, and that helped us to have something to eat.

RFD: You almost didn't make it to the end of hostilities in the Pacific on August 15.

MB: About August 1, we noticed that the Japanese teenaged kids around the camp were sharpening bamboo poles, to put a point on them. We asked, "What are those for?" They said, "To kill rats." Well, we didn't have any rats in the camp. I later learned those kids were ordered to use stakes to kill us. An imperial order was issued to kill American prisoners.

On August 7, a Japanese interpreter came running into camp and said, "Eighty thousand killed!" We were glad to learn that 80,000 Japanese had been killed but we didn't know what they had been killed by. He was talking about Hiroshima. We were preparing to return to work and the Japanese sergeant said, "Dismissed!" On September 5, the Japanese were still running things. The camp commander, a Japanese lieutenant, put us on a train and took us to the coast where we met American Marines.

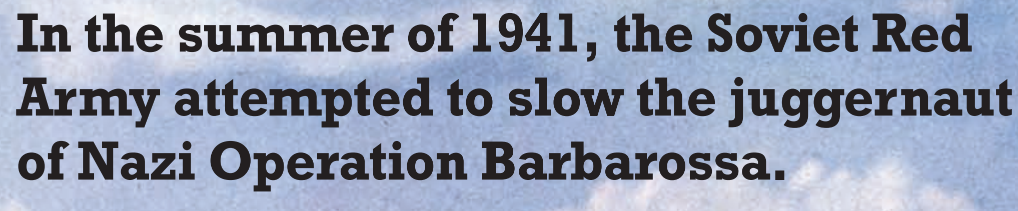
RFD: And then?

MB: I was repatriated to a hospital ship where I was deloused, fed, and promoted to master sergeant. When liberated, I weighed just 80 pounds. Returning to a normal diet, I gained 70 pounds in 90 days.

While stationed in Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1947, I married Lucile "Lou" Saxer. We're still married and have two sons. I was commissioned in the newly independent Air Force in 1950 and retired as a captain in 1963. We lived in several places, including Tahiti, but have settled in Coeur d'Alene in northern Idaho. □

Robert F. Dorr is an Air Force veteran, a retired U.S. diplomat, and author of the book Air Force One, *a look at presidential aircraft and air travel.*

Holding the



In the summer of 1941, the Soviet Red Army attempted to slow the juggernaut of Nazi Operation Barbarossa.

With the weather still favorable, the Nazi juggernaut rolls across the Russian steppes in the late summer of 1941. In this photograph, German soldiers advance with the cover of a Panzer II tank in September. OPPOSITE: General Heinz Guderian (left) and an unidentified German officer observe troop movements near a crucial bridge during the rapid Wehrmacht advance into Russia.

ullstein-bild

Line

BY VICTOR KAMENIR

National Archives

After crushing the first-line Soviet armies in brutal three-week cauldron battles at the border, the steamroller of German Army Group Center continued deeper into Soviet territory during the opening days of Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, which began on June 22, 1941.

The twin armored spearheads of Army Group Center were Panzer Group 2 under the command of General Heinz Guderian and Panzer Group 3 under extremely capable tank general Hermann Hoth. Their coordinated offensive on July 10, 1941, unleashed the Battle of Smolensk, a bloody struggle around the ancient Russian city that was to last two long months.

The city of Smolensk, long famous for its multitude of churches, occupied a strategically valuable "land bridge" on the way to Moscow. Known as the "Smolensk Gates" in Russia, the 45-mile wide neck of land between the headwaters of the Dvina and Dniepr Rivers was the traditional invasion route from central Europe into the heart of Russia. This road had been taken in the 17th century by the Polish Army, resulting in the capture of Moscow. In 1812, Napoleon fought a battle at Smolensk, burning the city to the ground.

at Smolensk

Now, this region of fertile agricultural land was once again the stage for a titanic struggle. Still reeling from its earlier unexpected defeats, the Soviet high command hurriedly deployed a string of armies to protect this vital sector of the front. It was imperative to hold Smolensk at all costs, buying the Soviet leadership time to mobilize and deploy new armies for the defense of Moscow.

To stem the tide of disasters, Soviet Premier Josef Stalin instituted draconian measures. On June 30, General Dmitriy M. Pavlov, whose Western Army Front was crushed by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center, was recalled to Moscow. Served up by Stalin as a convenient senior scapegoat for the series of disastrous defeats, Pavlov was relieved of command, court-martialed along with several of his senior deputies, and executed, according to various sources, sometime between July and September 1941.

In his stead, on July 2, Stalin dispatched the top Red Army commander, Marshal Semyon K. Timoshenko, to take charge of the Western Front. Timoshenko's reconstituted Western Front was created from second-echelon armies belonging to reserves of the high command. Spread out along almost 400 miles of front, from Idritsa in the north to Rechitsa in the south, were the Twenty-Second, Twentieth, Thirteenth, and Twenty-First Armies. Survivors of the Fourth Army, which had conducted a fighting retreat from the border, were being rallied and reorganized behind the Thirteenth Army in the area of Krichev.

Another two armies allocated to Timoshenko's command, the Sixteenth and Nineteenth, were moving up from the Ukraine by train and were disembarking at various railroad stations around Smolensk just as the Germans launched their offensive. However, the move from the Ukraine was a difficult one, conducted in a chaotic atmosphere of poor coordination, gigantic traffic snarls at railroad stations, and punishing German air attacks. As a result, many trainloads of troops and equipment arrived in the wrong locations, some rerouted far to the east owing to damaged railroad tracks. Some units disembarked without their leadership and equipment, and some headquarters arrived without troops to command.

Both sides were racing against the clock. The Soviet command was rushing forward newly created units as soon as they were mobilized, very often practically untrained and poorly armed and equipped. Lacking reserves and having an extensive front to cover, the Soviet armies were deployed in one echelon, without any significant defenses in depth. Most Soviet rifle divisions held front lines of up to 15 miles, more than double what was called for in prewar planning.

The majority of Timoshenko's forward rifle divisions were desperately short of specialized equipment such as radio and telephone sets, antitank artillery, transportation, and rear support services units. The drubbing that the Red Air Force received in the opening stages of the campaign and the lack of sufficient air defense artillery allowed the Luftwaffe to operate above the battlefield with virtual impunity. Most of the Red Army's mechanized assets were destroyed in earlier fighting, and tanks were in short supply to contain breakthroughs or to follow up counterattacks.

Both: National Archives

General Hermann Hoth commanded Panzer Group 3 of German Army Group Center during the drive against Smolensk in the summer of 1941.

Lieutenant General Ivan Konev commanded the Soviet 19th Army during the desperate fighting around Smolensk.

At the same time, a struggle over the character of ongoing operations was taking place within the German high command. Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler was preoccupied with the idea of not allowing the surrounded Red Army forces close to the border in the Byelostok and Minsk pockets to escape. He was demanding that the hard-charging panzer generals like Guderian and Hoth slow down, allowing infantry units to catch up and form a tight double ring around the surrounded Soviet troops. Further, during the first week of July Hitler began talking about halting the eastward advance once the vicinity of Smolensk had been reached and turning the panzers of Army Group Center north toward Leningrad and south into the Ukraine.

Another faction was strongly advocating continuing the rapid push to Moscow. Colonel General Franz Halder, chief of the German General Staff, while overtly paying lip service to Hitler's plans, tacitly encouraged carrying on the offensive. In his war diary, Halder wrote on June 29: "Let us hope that commanding generals of corps and armies will do the right thing even without express order, which we are not allowed to issue because of the Führer's instructions to Army High Command."

Guderian, in his turn, clearly saw that speed was of the essence: "It would be some 14 days before our infantry could arrive on the scene. By that time the Russian defenses would be considerably stronger. Whether the infantry would then be able to smash a well-organized river defensive line so that mobile warfare might once again be possible seemed doubtful.… I was so convinced of the vital importance and of the feasibility of the task assigned me, and at the same time so sure of the proved ability and attacking strength of my panzer corps, that I ordered an immediate attack across the Dniepr and a continuation of the advance toward Smolensk." General Hoth was also in support of continuing the drive on Smolensk.

Planning his attack against Smolensk, Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge, in overall command of both panzer groups, intended to fracture the Soviet Western Front and annihilate the bulk of its forces in familiar cauldron battles. The northern sector of von Kluge's area of operations was characterized by extensive marshlands, small rivers, and wooded terrain not favorable for panzer operations; therefore, the emphasis would be toward the south, where more open terrain was well suited for far-ranging panzer maneuvers. The epicenter of the German attack was concentrated against the area of the Vitebsk–Orsha–Mogilev line.

The capture of Smolensk called for a typical pincer movement, skirting the city from north and south and linking up east of it, in the Yartsevo–Yelnya area. The XXXIX Motorized Corps, belonging to Hoth's Panzer Group 3, was to strike from Vitebsk to Demidov and, from there to Yartsevo. The XLVII Motorized Corps from Guderian's Panzer Group 2 was to attack from Tolochin, where Napoleon had his headquarters in 1812, to Orsha and then to Yelnya. Advancing on the right flank of Guderian's group, his XLVI and XXIV Motorized Corps were to form a smaller pocket around Mogilev and then push southeast to Roslaval.

The weakness of the German plans lay in the fact that supply lines were getting seriously overstretched and the supporting infantry armies marching on foot, the Ninth Field Army for Hoth and Second Field Army for Guderian,

were over 60 miles behind their fast-moving mechanized brethren. This would soon play a significant role, allowing many of the Soviet units bypassed by German motorized corps to slip away to the east.

German plans were slightly delayed when on July 6 Timoshenko launched a determined attack against Panzer Group 3 from the Vitebsk area toward Lepel, utilizing the V and VII Mechanized Corps. However, the poorly coordinated Soviet attack went in with virtually no reconnaissance and ran into prepared German antitank positions. During the grinding three-day battle, the two Red Army mechanized corps were savaged in large part by a combination of vicious Luftwaffe air attacks and the direct fire of antitank artillery. Counterattacking the reeling Soviet formations on July 9, Hoth's 7th and 18th Panzer Divisions punched a hole between the Soviet Twentieth and Twenty-Second Armies and captured Vitbesk.

Timoshenko, lacking ready reserves to plug the gap between the two armies, was forced to commit the closest units of the 19th Army, without their having a chance to reorganize after a difficult move from the Ukraine. On July 10, Lt. Gen. Ivan Konev, commander of the Nineteenth Army, counterattacked with two available divisions, the 220th Motorized Rifle and 162nd Rifle. The 220th, despite being composed largely of barely trained recruits, conducted itself well and even fought to the east side of Vitebsk. However, it sustained prohibitive losses on its first day of combat, with one of its regimental commanders killed.

The 162nd Rifle Division fared much worse, initially making some progress, but falling back very soon. Maj. Gen. Aleksandr V. Gorbatov, deputy commander of the XXV Rifle Corps, approached Vitebsk and encountered groups of Red Army soldiers streaming eastward in disorder. Gorbatov and his staff officers were able to halt groups of retreating men and begin digging astride the Vitebsk–Smolensk road. Leaving behind several of his officers to continue rounding up and reorganizing stragglers, General Gorbatov rushed to the original positions of the retreating 501st Rifle Regiment, less than two miles to the west. To his horror, Gorbatov found the positions completely abandoned, save for three men. One of them was the regimental commander, a Colonel Kostevich, accompanied by his chief of staff and a corporal serving as a radio operator.

Gorbatov later wrote, "When I asked the regimental commander: 'How did you manage to get to this situation?'—he, helplessly motioning with his arms, replied: 'I understand the gravity of what happened, but could not do anything; therefore, we decided to die here, but not to retreat without orders.' There were two Orders of the Red Banner on his chest. But, recently called up from reserve, he spent many years out of the army and, apparently, completely lost leadership skills. True, he was quite capable of dying without abandoning his post. But who would benefit from that? It was embarrassing to look at his pathetic appearance.

While realizing that returning the regiment to its previous positions was out of the question, I invited the officers to come with me, loaded them up in [my] car and took [them] to the regiment. I pointed out to Kostevich a position for his observation post, advised him how to best deploy his battalions and fire support assets … In the woods, to the right of the highway, I found the corps' artillery regiment and discovered that its guns did not have prepared firing positions and commanders of the regiment and [its battalions] did not have observation posts."

Unfortunately, the panic was beginning to spread through many units of the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Armies. Lt. Gen. Konev discovered complete chaos near Rudnya, a small town between Vitebsk and Smolensk: "A disorganized stream was moving toward us—vehicles, wagons, horses, columns of refugees with many soldiers among them. Everyone was in a hurry toward Smolensk. It was absolutely impossible for us to drive to Vitebsk. The road was completely choked. I decided to [use my]

ABOVE: In July 1941, German tanks assemble for the crossing of the Dniepr River. The summer rains have begun to turn dirt roads into muddy quagmires. As the fighting wore on, the terrain began to slow the German advance. BELOW: The soggy ground was an equal opportunity impediment. A group of Russian tanks lies mired in the mud of the Russian steppes at Tolotschin. Unable to maneuver, the armor of both sides was sometimes rendered impotent. (Both: National Archives)

On the move during the fighting at Glosoff, German soldiers quickly follow a tank that has just crossed a small stream. The Germans were challenged by rainy weather and lengthening supply lines as they moved deeper into Russia. (National Archives)

staff officers to put the things on the road in order, gave instructions to stop all military personnel, form up infantry units, separate artillerymen, tankers and send everybody back to Vitebsk. To my surprise, even tanks were moving from Vitebsk to Rudnya—several heavy KVs and several T-26s. Especially strange was to see the retreating new tanks. Three KV tanks were moving to Rudnya, allegedly for repairs. Literally threatening them with guns, sticking revolvers into drivers' hatches, we stopped these tanks, which, by the way, turned out to be operational; we took them under control. In this manner we managed to collect by evening almost a battalion of infantry, a battery of 85mm air defense guns, and a battery of 122mm guns."

Despite the best efforts of senior Soviet officers, during the next several days, Hoth's divisions steadily pushed the Nineteenth Army east and encircled the right flank of the Sixteenth and Twentieth Armies north and west of Smolensk. On the same day, Guderian's XLVII Motorized Corps, skirting the city to the south, came close to linking up with the northern pincer and completely surrounding the two Soviet armies. The beleaguered Nineteenth Army and survivors of V and VII Mechanized Corps barely managed to hang on to one Dniepr River crossing near Solovyevo village, approximately 10 miles south of Yartsevo, holding open a lifeline to their comrades at Smolensk.

Launching his attack across the Dniepr River on July 10, General Guderian established several vital bridgeheads on the east bank, striking at the junction of the Soviet Twentieth and Thirteenth Armies south of Orsha and prying apart the flanks of both armies.

A bitter fight flared up for Orsha, defended by units from the Soviet Twentieth Army. Especially distinguishing themselves were the 73rd Rifle Division under Colonel A.I. Akimov and 1st Proletarian Motorized Rifle Division under Colonel Yakov G. Kreitzer. This latter division initially belonged to the VII Mechanized Corps but was diverted south prior to VII Corps' ill-fated attack and was spared destruction along with its parent unit. The 1st Proletarian Division, stationed in one of Moscow's suburbs, was the Red Army's showpiece and experimental unit. It was constantly kept at near full strength and was usually given new equipment and tactics to test. Colonel Kreitzer served almost his entire career in this unit, progressing from platoon leader to division commander and, unlike many of his fellow officers, enjoying the complete trust and confidence of his men.

As a curious side note, many well-known Moscow athletes were sent to this division upon mobilization. In addition, Lieutenant Rueben Ibarruri, son of exiled Spanish Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri, served in this unit until

The Katyusha multiple-launch rocket system became famous in combat on the Eastern Front.

The fighting at Orsha saw the first battlefield use of the Red Army's experimental battery of BM-13 multiple-launch rocket systems. Later in the war, these fearsome weapons were lovingly nicknamed Katyusha (Little Kate) after a popular wartime song.

The development of these weapons began well before the war, in 1938, with a small trial run of 40 systems built by the time of the German invasion. The prototypes of BM vehicles had mounted launchers at right angles to their long axes; however, this proved very unstable and the launch rails were remounted lengthwise.

The command staff of the first field battery, headed by Captain Ivan A. Flerov, included two civilian advisers to train the crews, A.I. Popov, one of the creators of the launch platform BM-13, and D.A. Shytov, one of the developers of the M-13 round. The first battery consisted of nine launch systems in three firing platoons, a fire direction platoon with one 122mm howitzer for fire correction, an ammunition platoon, a transportation platoon, a POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants) platoon, and a medical detachment. One volley of this battery delivered 112 132mm M-13 rockets with high explosive or fragmentation rounds. The highly mobile battery numbered 44 trucks, allowing the transport of 600 rounds of ammunition and enough fuel, POL, and food for at least three days of operations.

The first application of the Katyusha's firepower was directed at Orsha's railroad station. While not intended for pinpoint accuracy, the new weapon system delivered a devastating amount of fire over a wide-area target, destroying several trains and causing significant German casualties. The success of its first combat deployment kicked the production of BM-13 systems into high gear, and close to 10,000 systems of all types were produced by the end of the war. In addition to the original BM-13 models, there were multiple variations of 81mm BM-8 systems, some of them mounted on jeeps, and heavy BM-31 launchers for 310mm rockets. The special place of the Katyushas in the Soviet arsenal earned them the official title of Guards Mortars. The Germans called them Stalinorgel, meaning Stalin's Organ.

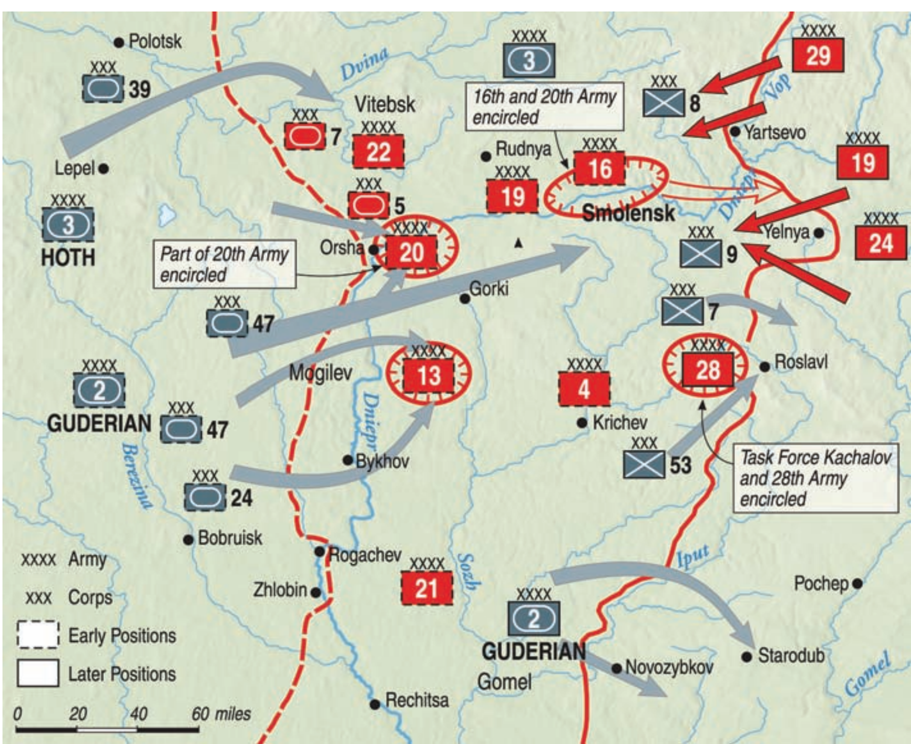
In the early stages of the war, the Soviets took great pains to

being wounded in subsequent fighting.

On July 11, as Colonel Kreitzer was preparing his division for a counterattack the next day, he was seriously wounded in his right arm during an air attack and taken to the rear. The next day, before Kreitzer's division had a chance to attack, its neighboring LXIX Rifle Corps was hit hard by combined German air and panzer attacks and withdrew, jeopardizing the flank of the Moscow division. Despite the best efforts of its defenders, Orsha was completely surrounded on July 14.

After holding the defenses of Orsha for several days, the units trapped within the small pocket, spearheaded by the 1st Proletarian Motorized Division, fought their way clear before the German ring had a chance to solidify. Unable to retreat east, survivors of the division, now numbering only 1,500 men plus some from the LXIX Rifle Corps, turned south and joined the defenders of Mogilev, also surrounded.

Mogilev, encircled since July 12, was held by parts of the Soviet Thirteenth Army, in particular the LXI Rifle Corps under Maj. Gen. F.A. Bakunin. Attempting to relieve pressure on Mogilev, the Twenty-First Army launched an attack on July 13 led by its LXIII Rifle Corps under Lt. Gen. Leonid G. Petrovskiy. In a spirited advance, Petrovskiy's men crossed to the west side of the Dniepr River, recaptured Rogachev and Zhlobin, which had been lost on July 9, and continued moving to Bobruisk. The German command had to shift valuable reserves to slow the Soviet offensive. Even though much pressure was taken off Mogilev's



German armored thrusts advanced to quickly surround Russian units, executing giant pincer movements and trapping thousands of Red Army soldiers. (Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN)

defenders, the LXI and LXIII Corps could not link up and Bakunin's command remained trapped inside Mogilev.

On July 27, survivors of the LXI Rifle Corps and the 1st Proletarian Division fought their way out of the encirclement and linked up with the main Soviet forces. Not all the Red Army men were able to make it out of Mogilev. Some stragglers became stranded in the city when the last bridge was destroyed by their retreating comrades. Surrounded Soviet soldiers fought for another day before being hunted down among the ruins, killed or taken prisoner. Colonel Yakov Kreitzer soon rejoined his men, and the 1st Proletarian Division was rebuilt with new soldiers and proud traditions. Colonel Kreitzer himself survived the war and rose to high rank in the Red Army.

safeguard these weapons, with the immediate security of Katyusha batteries provided by detachments of NKVD (secret police) troops. In cases when a launch vehicle became disabled and retrieval was impossible, it was blown up in place to deny the Germans an intelligence coup. Battery commanders were responsible with their lives for the destruction of disabled launch vehicles. Just such a fate befell Captain Ivan Flerov's battery. Caught in a cauldron at Vyazma in October 1941, with his vehicles immobilized by marshy terrain and out of ammunition, Flerov ordered them blown up. When fewer than a third of the battery's soldiers made it out of the encirclement alive, Captain Flerov was not one of them.

West of Moscow, a salvo of Soviet Katyusha rockets explodes in a wall of flame and smoke. The rockets proved to be formidable weapons. Fired by launchers mounted on trucks, they were highly mobile as well. (ullstein bild)

Katyushas were inexpensive and uncomplicated to produce and easily mounted on many platforms, initially including only trucks but quickly progressing to tanks, tractors, armored trains, and even small naval vessels. Later in the war, many Lend-Lease tanks, which the Soviet specialists did not consider to be up to the task of armored warfare on the Eastern Front, were used as mounting platforms. However, American Studebaker two-and-one-half- ton trucks were highly regarded for their off-road performance, and thousands of them were used as mounting platforms for Katyushas.

The end of World War II did not end the Katyushas' service. Thousand of them were exported to Soviet client states during the Cold War and were built in several countries under license. American forces faced them during the Korean War and decades later in Iraq. □

Artillery belonging to German Army Group Center fires toward the distant enemy at Smolensk on July 13, 1941. One Wehrmacht soldier mans a machine gun in support of the artillerymen. (ullstein bild)

When Guderian struck at the junction of the Soviet Twentieth and Thirteenth Armies on July 10, his attack was so determined that it pushed the bulk of Lt. Gen. P.A. Kurochkin's Twentieth Army to the northeast of Orsha and to the north side of the Dniepr River. While the panzers bypassed Smolensk on the way to Yartsevo, elements of the 29th Motorized Division broke into Smolensk from the south and began digging out the stubborn defenders block by block. The German attack was executed with such speed that Soviet commanders did not have a chance to organize proper defenses of the city.

The city of Smolensk is divided roughly in half by the Dniepr River, which flows east to west in this area. By nightfall on July 15, the Germans were in possession of the southern part of the city. As the bulk of the city's defenders, mainly from the Sixteenth Army, retreated to the north side of the river, the commander of Smolensk garrison, Colonel P.F. Malyshev, ordered the inter-city bridges blown up.

The commander of the Sixteenth Army, Lt. Gen. Mikhail F. Lukin, began frantically organizing defenses on the north side of the river. With the war less than four weeks old, Lukin had already distinguished himself as a skilled commander. When the war started, Lukin's army was in the process of being transferred by train to the Ukraine from a Siberian military district. As his first trainloads began unloading at Shepetovka, Lukin, like Konev, received orders to divert his army north into Belarus, where the Soviet forces of the Western Front were being crushed.

However, an unexpected breakthrough by German Army Group South at Ostrog threatened Shepetovka, a vital railroad center and site of a major Red Army supply and ammunition depot. As the senior commander on the scene, Lukin hurriedly put together a scratch force consisting of parts of two of his divisions and whatever other units he could find. He held the line for several desperately needed days until a rifle corps relieved him.

Now, as Smolensk burned around him, Lukin ordered his men to occupy positions at the water's edge to discourage German attempts to cross the river during the night and establish beachheads. Lukin's attempts to shift his troops from the northern edge of the city to the river were hampered by having to navigate the city streets amid burning buildings and German shelling. It was too late. On the morning of July 16, the Germans renewed the attack, and even though Lukin's men fought tenaciously the German 29th Motorized Division was in complete possession of Smolensk by that evening.

Also on this day, Senior Lieutenant Yakov Dzhugashvili, commander of an artillery battery in the VII Mechanized Corps, was captured east of Vitebsk. Yakov was Stalin's son by his first wife, Ekaterina Svanidze, who died in 1907 from tuberculosis. Yakov and Stalin did not get along well, with Yakov often bearing the brunt of Stalin's insults and angry tirades. Later in the war the Germans proposed to exchange Yakov for Field Marshal Freidrich Paulus, captured at Stalingrad in 1943. Stalin turned down the offer, allegedly stating: "I do not trade lieutenants for field marshals." Shortly thereafter, Yakov committed suicide in a POW camp by charging the wire. He was shot dead by a German guard.

Hearing of the loss of Smolensk, Stalin flew into a rage, accusing Marshal Timoshenko and his staff of cowardice and defeatist spirit. The specter of the fate of Col. Gen. Pavlov was fresh in Timoshenko's mind.

Without giving them pause, on July 17 the Soviet Marshal ordered Lt. Gen. Konev and his Nineteenth Army to retake Smolensk. At the same time, orders were transmitted to the two armies in the Smolensk pocket to continue their attacks. While the Twentieth Army fought northwest of the city, Lukin's Sixteenth Army attacked east toward the Nineteenth Army. As the fighting raged across Smolensk, the majority of the ancient city was turned to ruins. On July 19, Lukin's men managed to capture a toehold in the northwest part of the city. In bitter house-to-house fighting amid the rubble of destroyed buildings, a precursor of things to come at Stalingrad, the Germans were completely pushed out of the northern part of Smolensk by the end of July 25.

In addition to Konev's army, Timoshenko and the Soviet high command organized five task forces to take control of units that retreated to the line of the Dniepr and Vop Rivers, as well as some reserve units arriving at the front. After a short preparation, four of these combat groups, each numbering several infantry and tank divisions, were committed to the fight directly east of Smolensk, while another one, under the command of Lt. Gen. V.Y. Kachalov, formed around his Twenty-Eighth Army and operated farther south, west of Roslavl. A separate task force of three cavalry divisions was formed under Lt. Gen. Oka I. Ogorodnikov, a hero of the Russian Civil War, in order to conduct a deep raid into German rear areas.

The experiences of Maj. Gen. Konstantin K. Rokossovsky characterized the desperation with which the Soviets attempted to restore the situation at Smolensk. Arriving in Moscow on July 17 fresh from fighting in the Ukraine, Rokossovsky was placed in charge of one of the task forces, a group of two or three tank divisions and one rifle division. He was to pro-

ceed with all haste to take charge of the allocated formations in addition to being given permission to round up and take control of all units he encountered on the road from Moscow to Yartsevo.

However, he left the capital with only a handful of people: "The General Staff gave me two trucks mounting quad air defense machine guns with crews, a radio truck and a small group of officers," he remembered. Several days later, his combat group absorbed the survivors of the VII Mechanized Corps, with the command element of the destroyed corps becoming Rokossovsky's headquarters staff.

The newly created combat groups jumped off on July 23, and they immediately ran into determined German opposition with the furthest progress being roughly 12 miles. The intensity of the fighting is illustrated by the experience of the 101st Tank Division in Task Force Rokossovsky, which lost 140 of its roughly 170 tanks during the four days of fighting on July 18-21. Gorodovikov's cavalry fought its way to the area of Bobruisk by July 24 at tremendous cost.

ABOVE: Two Red Army soldiers lie dead, one still holding his Mosin-Nagant rifle. Soviet frontier guards frequently fought delaying actions with heroic bravery, but almost all were killed by German bombers. LEFT: Moscow citizens cheerfully dig antitank ditches. (Both: National Archives)

Characteristically, the Germans counterattacked. On July 29, the German panzers from two groups linked up at the Solovyevo crossing. They destroyed the pontoon bridge and captured the west side of the river. The Soviets doggedly fought on, however, and retained control of the eastern end of the river crossing, preventing the Germans from gaining a foothold on the east bank.

Farther to the south, Kachalov's task force, built around the bulk of his Twenty-Eighth Army, was almost completely surrounded on July 26 by several German formations, including the 2nd SS Division Das Reich and the Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland. In a desperate attempt to fight clear of the encirclement, Lt. Gen. Kachalov was killed. Following on the heels of the retreating Russians, the Germans captured Roslavl on August 3.

The fight in the small area between Smolensk and Yartsevo turned into a slugfest, with both sides suffering horrendous casualties in the process. On July 30, after paying a high toll in men and equipment, Rokossovsky's task force broke through to the two beleaguered armies at Smolensk. By this time, divisions of Sixteenth and Twentieth Armies were down to less than 2,000 men each. In addition to the Solovyevo crossing, Rokossovsky's troops established another crossing farther north, near Golovino village, and the units from the 16th and 20th Armies began pouring through.

Instead of an organized Soviet withdrawal, the scene turned into a chaotic rout, with people desperate to escape literally storming the bridges. The first to escape were the rear support units, often abandoning valuable equipment and vehicles. Over the next several days, however, relative order was restored and the bulk of the survivors from the Sixteenth and Twentieth Armies crossed to the east bank of the Dniepr, abandoning the smoking ruins of Smolensk.

The retreat was accomplished under continuous German shelling and bombing. When the pontoon bridge at Golovino was destroyed, heavy equipment was routed to the Solovyevo crossing, while infantry and some horse-drawn artillery continued fording the Dniepr River, which was fortunately only two to three feet deep in this area.

Despite the majority of their men fighting bravely, the Soviet commanders had to constantly contend with breaks in morale. Rokossovsky later wrote, "To my great sorrow, about some things I do not have the right to remain silent; there were many instances of cowardice by the soldiers, panicking, desertion and self-mutilation to avoid having to fight. At first, the so-called 'left-handers' appeared, those who would shoot through the palm of their left hand or shoot off the thumb, or several fingers. When this came to light, the 'right-handers' appeared, doing similar things, but on the right hand. Sometimes mutilation was mutual: two men would shoot each other's hands. A law was soon passed, allowing the use of the highest measure of punishment (the firing squad) for desertion, avoidance of battle, self-mutilation and insubordination in combat situations."

As the fighting at Smolensk raged, the Soviets were making the best use of the time bought at such a high price. Two more defensive lines were established east of Smolensk on the road to Moscow, manned by four newly created armies, the Twenty-Fourth, Twenty-Ninth, Thirtieth, and Thirty-First, plus the Twenty-Eighth and Thirty-Second Armies united into the Reserve Front under General Georgy Zhukov.

More than 300,000 civilians were put to work digging extensive earthworks, which consisted of tank traps, trenches, ditches, and other obstacles. Among those sent to work on fortifications was 18-year-old Moscow student Yev-

geniy Bessonov. He recalled hard work under difficult conditions, often being strafed and bombed by German aircraft: "We worked 12 hours a day and, unaccustomed to physical labor, would become very exhausted. We would fall asleep as soon as we touched our 'bed' made from hay or straw, prepared mainly in barns. We dug antitank ditches, trenches along river banks, foxholes, and set up wire obstacles. In some instances we would repair railroad tracks after bombing and clear them of destroyed boxcars. But our main occupation was digging antitank ditches."

Despite the Soviet propaganda claims about the widespread and enthusiastic support of the civilian population toward the war effort, Bessonov and his friends often experienced a lukewarm response from the locals. He remembered, "Food was poor and insufficient, and the village population was not distinguished by kindness. Our foreman, who arrived with us from Moscow, had to conduct talks with residents … about helping us at least with potatoes. Sometimes it helped." One woman told Bessonov, justifying her refusal, "What am I going to feed the Germans when they get here soon?"

As more units arrived at the front, Zhukov began committing reserve armies into the fight east of Smolensk. Heavy fighting flared up at Yelnya, which was captured by the Germans on July 19. A salient penetrating eastward into the Soviet lines presented a convenient jump-off position for further German offensive efforts to the north, northeast, or southeast. The Soviet Twenty-Fourth Army contained the salient and with constant attacks did not allow it to expand, although the German position could not be eliminated by the Twenty-Fourth Army alone.

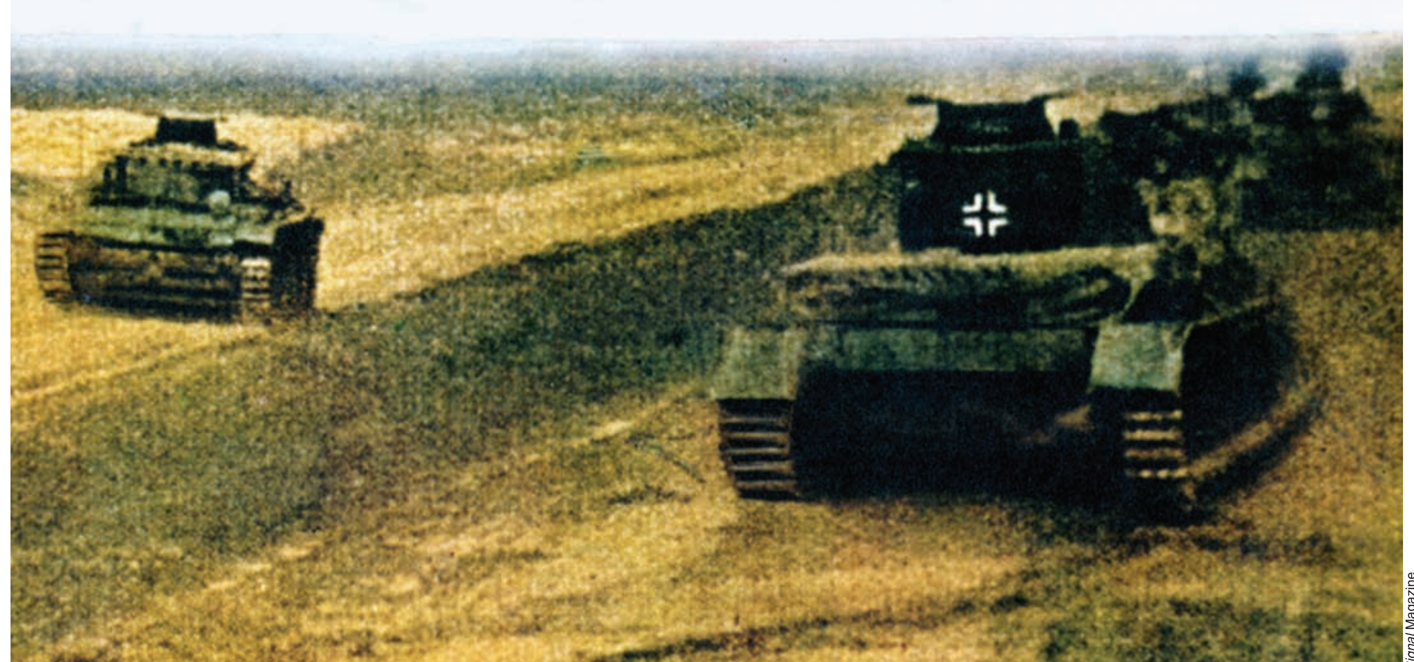
By this time, German infantry formations were beginning to catch up to their mechanized units, taking over the duties of containing Soviet counterattacks and reducing the Smolensk pocket. This freed panzer and motorized divisions to conduct more effective maneuvers. As a result, the 7th Panzer Division captured Yartsevo on July 22.

On August 29, following up on the successes of the Twenty-Fourth Army, Timoshenko ordered the newly arrived cavalry group of Colonel Lev M. Dovator into the gap. This two-division task force was to conduct a raid into the rear areas of German forces around Yartsevo. Leaving behind all of his artillery and support elements, Dovator launched his raid with the two cavalry divisions numbering 3,000 riders and 24 machine guns. After raising hell behind German lines for 10 days and covering almost 200 miles in extremely difficult roadless terrain, Dovator's group fought its way clear and rejoined the main body of the Western Front.

Commander of the Twenty-Fourth Army, Maj. Gen. K.I. Rakutin, was allowed to call off his attack at the end of the third week of August and was given reinforcements to prepare for a more substantial attack. Rakutin's plan called for a two-pincer offensive to link up west of Yelnya. Even though he gathered 60,000 men in seven divisions for the offensive, Rakutin's force included only 35 tanks. Having less than a week to prepare and lacking sufficient armor, General Rakutin was short of the means to rapidly exploit any breakthroughs. In addition, the Twenty-Fourth Army lacked communications assets, air support was minimal, and many replacement soldiers had not finished even basic training. Only the artillery was plentiful and well supplied.

Rakutin's attack began at 7 AM on August 30, preceded by a massive artillery barrage. The central sector had only a supporting role, while the north and south wings executed the main offensive. Despite massive artillery fire and the heroic efforts of the infantry, the Soviet forces initially did not make any headway north of Yelnya and achieved only some local successes on the southern face of the salient.

THE SOVIET FORCES RECEIVED HELP FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER WHEN HITLER BECAME CONCERNED WITH THE OVERALL PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN.



Signal Magazine

Tanks of Panzergruppe Kleist travel beside a dusty track that would turn into a quagmire by the fall. The nonexistent roads took a severe toll on men and machines.

The German Army lost momentum at Smolensk, but the Soviets paid a high price in slowing the enemy. More than 600,000 Red Army soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured. In this painting titled *After the Battle of Smolensk,* artist Roman Feldmeyer shows Russian prisoners streaming toward captivity. (U.S. Army Art Collection)

Rakutin relentlessly drove his men forward, however, and on September 5 the Twenty-Fourth Army fought its way into Yelnya. During two days of street fighting, the town was cleared. The entire Yelnya salient was cleared of Germans by September 9.

The fighting around Yelnya marked an important date in the history of the Red Army. Since the beginning of the war, Stalin had wisely chosen to portray the fight against Hitler not as a struggle of two political systems, but as a battle for the survival of the Russian people. He revived the images of famous Russian commanders from centuries past, such as Suvorov, Kutuzov, Nakhimov, and others. Yelnya saw the rebirth of Russian Guard formations, elite units disbanded after the communist takeover in 1917. Two divisions of the Twenty-Fourth Army were the first to be renumbered into Guards divisions, the 100th and 127th into, respectively, the 1st and 2nd. By the end of September, two more divisions of the Twenty-Fourth Army were retitled into Guards.

The Soviet forces received help from an unexpected quarter when Hitler became concerned with the overall progress of the campaign. The success of Army Group Center was not matched by Army Groups North and South, which were beginning to fall behind schedule in the face of determined Soviet resistance. Especially bothersome for the Germans was the Soviet Fifth Army under Maj. Gen. Mikhail I. Potapov of the Southwestern Front. This army established itself at the easternmost edges of the extensive wooded and swampy area known as the Pripyat Marshes. Its location and active operations threatened both the right flank of Army Group Center and the left flank of Army Group South.

To stabilize the situation on the far-flung wings of the invasion, Hitler effectively ordered Army Group Center to go on the defensive on July 31, while turning Hoth's panzer group north and Guderian's south. But first the German high command called for a two-week halt in order to refit and reinforce its frontline formations, particularly panzer and motorized divisions. Without their panzer support, the infantry of Army Group Center conducted mainly local operations of tactical scope. Still, with very minor panzer participation, the German Ninth Field Army successfully trapped and largely destroyed the Soviet Twenty-First Army in the area of Gomel and the Twenty-Eighth Army in the area of Roslavl in early August.

This diversion of German resources was instrumental in allowing Zhukov and Rokossovsky to liquidate the Yelnya salient and bought the Soviets time to stage resources and prepare defenses for the struggle for Moscow. However, the significance of the Battle of Smolensk lies in the fact that it forced the Germans to modify Operation Barbarossa, signaling the end of the rapid German advance.

The price the Soviet people paid for this respite was prohibitively high. While German losses were approximately 80,000 men, the Red Army suffered over 600,000 casualties, including almost 400,000 men taken prisoner. The fighting strength of five Soviet armies was destroyed, and they had to be reformed practically from scratch. A month after the Battle of Smolensk, seriously wounded Maj. Gen. Mikhail Lukin was taken prisoner during the disastrous campaign at Vyazma. With his right arm partially paralyzed and his right leg amputated at the knee, the tenacious general survived the war in Nazi captivity. He returned to the Soviet Union after the war and was briefly reinstated in the army before medically retiring in 1947.

Three bloody years later, Zhukov, Konev, and Rokossovsky came through this area again, this time pushing the German Army westward. In a reversal of fortune, they were instrumental in the destruction of their old nemesis, German Army Group Center. □

Victor Kamenir, a former U.S. Army sergeant, was born in Ukraine. He is now a police officer in Hillsboro, Oregon.

The sinking of the gunboat USS *Panay* on China's Yangtze River in December 1937 brought the United States and Japan closer to war.

BY ERIC NIDEROST

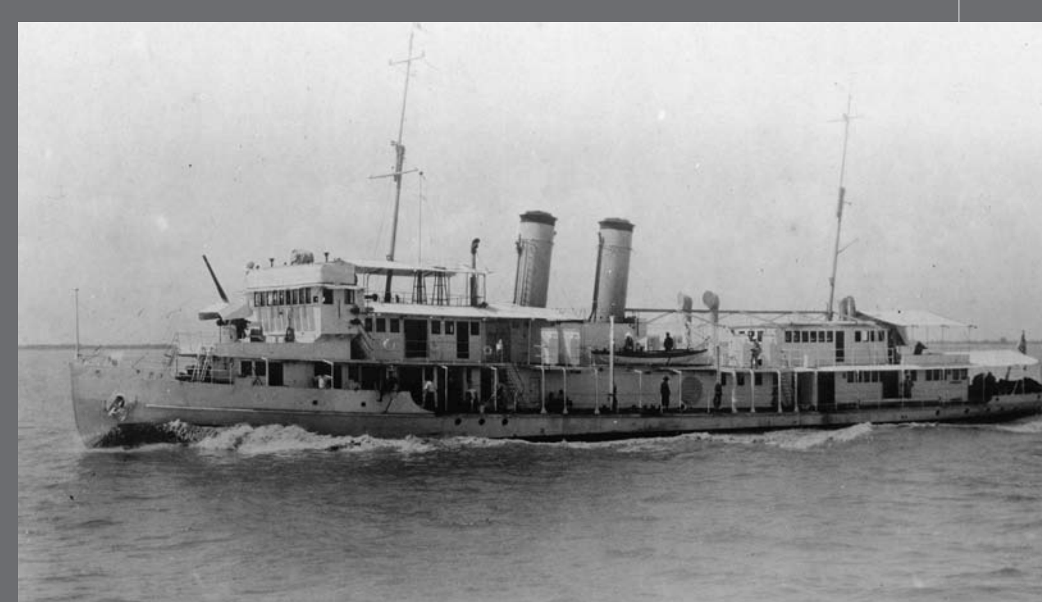
FIRST STEP ON THE Road to War

Around 10 o'clock on the morning of December 13, 1937, *New York Times* correspondent Hallett Abend received an unexpected visitor: Rear Admiral Tadao Honda of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Abend was in Shanghai covering the Sino-Japanese War that had been raging since the previous July and, although unexpected, this visit was not entirely out of the ordinary. The American was in the International Settlement, a foreign enclave of the city that was ruled by a largely Anglo-American Municipal Council not subject to Chinese law.

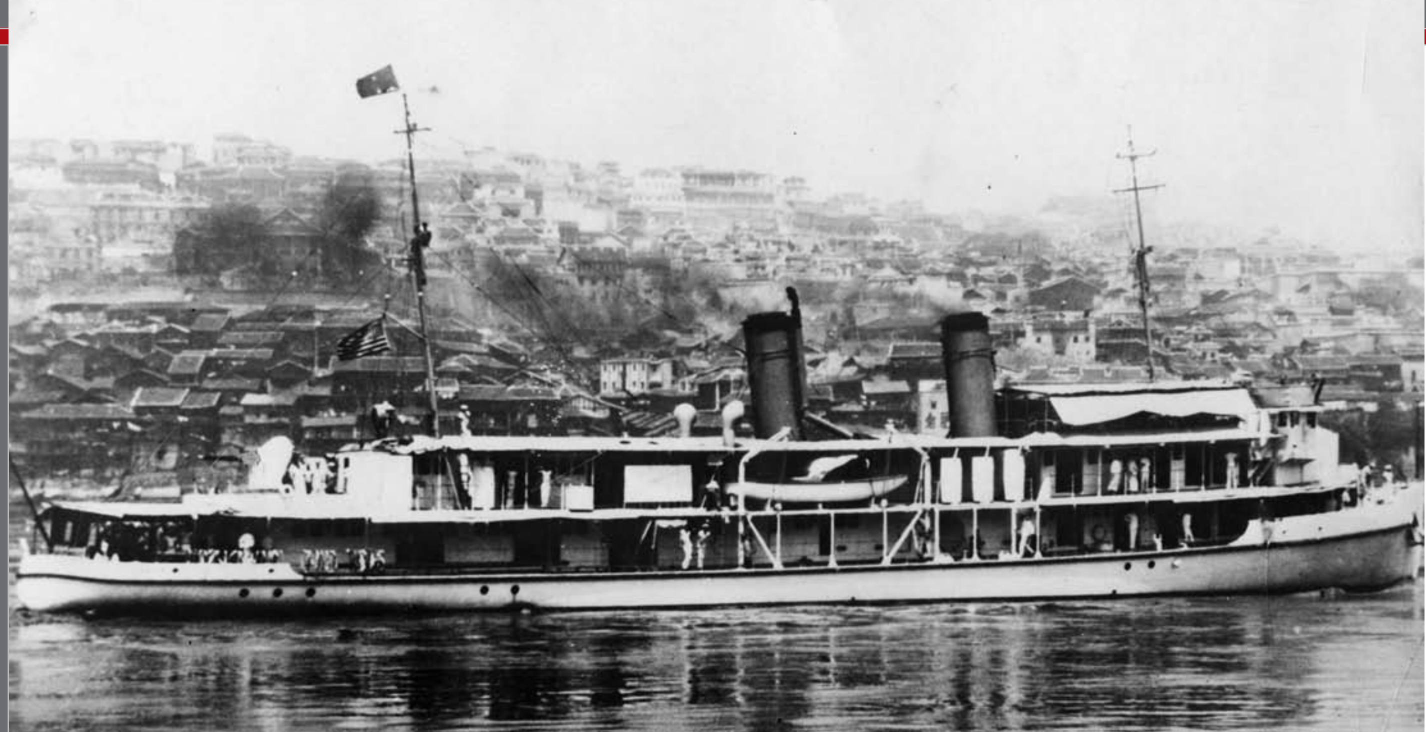
As a journalist from a neutral country, Abend was well known to both Chinese and Japanese authorities, but it was soon clear that this visit was anything but a social call. Honda, who was a naval attaché with the Japanese embassy, appeared agitated, even nervous, as he breathlessly begged Abend to accompany him back to the *Idzumo,* a Japanese cruiser moored in the Whangpoo (now Huangpu) River. It seemed that Vice Admiral Kiyoshi Hasegawa, commander of the Japanese Third Fleet, wanted to see him on a "matter of grave importance."

Scenting a story, Abend piled into Honda's car for the short drive to the Honkew District. While technically part of the "neutral" International Settlement, Honkew was strictly a Japanese preserve, so much so it was nicknamed "Little Tokyo." The American and his nervous companion alighted in front of the Japanese consulate, not far from where the *Idzumo* was moored.

Abend was quickly ushered into Admiral Hasegawa's cabin, where he found his erstwhile host talking with Rear Admiral Teizo Mitsunami. After the usual courtesies were exchanged, Hasegawa came right to the point. "I'm afraid," he confessed, "that we have sunk the *Panay!*" The *Panay* was a United States Navy gunboat, part of the Yangtze River Patrol whose primary mission was to safeguard the lives and property of Americans along China's great waterway. For the next 20 minutes or so,



ABOVE: The ill-fated U.S.Navy gunboat *Panay* plies the waters of a Chinese river near the city of Woosung.
LEFT: A landing party of the Imperial Japanese Navy, armed with rifles, fixed bayonets, and light machine guns, guards the direct approach to the bridge leading to the Kiangwa area of the Chinese city of Shanghai.
(Both: National Archives)



Abend pressed the two Japanese officers for details but was frustrated in his attempts to get at the truth.

The two Japanese naval officers seemed to follow a script as they expressed formal apologies and mouthed veiled hints that the Japanese Army, not Navy, was responsible for the *Panay*'s demise. "But who," insisted Abend, "ordered the bombing of the *Panay*?" It is a question that resonates to this day, even after the passage of more than 70 years.

The Yangtze River Patrol was an outgrowth of China's turbulent history from the 1840s to World War II. China was helpless giant, weak and powerless in the face of foreign domination and internal dissension. In the 1920s and 1930s China's plight reached its nadir. Bandits swarmed though the countryside, terrorizing peasants and plundering with savage abandon. Warlords vied for power, carving out private fiefdoms in defiance of the central government, which was weak, often corrupt, and divided.

In the late 1920s Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) fought a series of bloody campaigns against the Chinese Communists under Mao Tse-tung. With China literally tearing itself apart, ultranationalists in the Japanese military sensed an opportunity to enlarge Japan's empire. In 1931, the Japanese seized the northern Chinese province of Manchuria and renamed it Manchukuo. The last emperor of China, Henry Pu Yi, was installed as the puppet ruler of an "independent" Manchukuo, but few in the international community were fooled by this clumsy window dressing. Manchukuo was a puppet of the Tokyo government.

ABOVE: The U.S. Navy gunboat *Luzon,* with the American flag plainly visible, provided refuge to the U.S. Ambassador to China and other embassy personnel during the Japanese aerial onslaught against Nanking. LEFT: Hours before his vessel was sunk in a claimed case of mistaken identity, Lieutenant Commander James J. Hughes, skipper of the gunboat USS *Panay,* puts ashore in a launch on December 12,1937. RIGHT: General Shunroku Hata, left, commander of Japanese forces in China, visits with Rear Admiral Henry E. Yarnell, commander of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, aboard an American vessel. When the gunboat *Panay* was sunk by Japanese planes, the government of Japan issued a formal apology and paid $2.2 million in reparations. (Above and Right: National Archives; Left: U.S. Navy)

The USS *Panay* (*PR-5*) was one of six new gunboats that were specifically designed for China service. The *Panay* was built by the Kiangoan Dockyard and Engineering Works in Shanghai. Named for an island in the Philippines, *Panay* slid down the ways on November 10, 1927, and was formally commissioned on September 10, 1928.

The gunboat's main battery consisted of two 3-inch, 51-caliber guns with telescoping sights. They were high-angle guns that could readily silence most opposition that the boat was likely to encounter along the river's muddy shore. They were complemented by eight 30-caliber machine guns that were paired amidships. Mounted on armored shields that could swivel, the machine guns were of World War I vintage but still highly effective if manned by trained naval personnel.

Panay escorted American merchant ships up and down the river and provided sanctuary for American citizens when needed. The political situation was so confused at times that it was hard to tell who was the enemy—communist partisans, rogue nationalists, warlord troops, or simply disgruntled bandits cheated of their prey. But bullets have no political allegiance, and Navy men, nicknamed "river rats" or "old China hands," responded in kind when the lead began to pepper the decks.

In 1931, Lt. Cmdr. R.A. Dyer, then skipper of the *Panay*, reported, "Firing on gunboats and merchant ships have [sic] become so routine that any vessel traversing the Yangtze River, sails with the expectation of being fired upon." Dyer laconically added, "Fortunately, the Chinese appear to be rather poor marksmen and the ship has, so far, not sustained any casualties in these engagements."

By 1936, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had effectively united most of the country under the banner of the Nationalist Party. He still looked on the communists as a greater threat than the Japanese. Adapting an old Chinese proverb, he said the Japanese were only "*xuan jie zhi ji,*" a

"disease of the skin," while the communists were "*xin fu zhi huan,*" a "malady of the heart."

But Chiang was kidnapped by warlord General Chang Hsueh-liang in December 1936, and was presented with an ultimatum that he find common cause with the communists against the Japanese. Some wanted Chiang killed, but others, notably Communist Party leader Chou En-lai, argued the generalissimo should be spared. He was the one figure who had enough stature to unite the whole country in an anti-Japanese crusade. Chiang was spared, and he readily agreed to a "united front" against Japanese aggression.

These complex political wranglings were not lost on the Japanese military, which realized that a united China might jeopardize their dreams of empire. They quickly engineered the "China Incident" around Peking (Beijing) in the summer of 1937, which quickly blossomed into a full-scale war.

Fighting started around Shanghai in August. Because the International Settlement and the French Concession were major enclaves of Western power, Chiang brought in his best troops to make a stand at the great city. Britons and Americans in particular would have "ringside seats" in the coming contest, and it was hoped a heroic defense would soften neutrality and cause the West to intervene on the side of China.

It proved a vain and forlorn hope. Many Americans, particularly American missionaries, were genuinely sympathetic to the Chinese cause, but the cares of the Depression, plus a nagging feeling that the United States had been "tricked" into World War I, bred a powerful isolationism that was almost impossible to overcome.

Admiral Harry E. Yarnell, commander in chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, did not care too much for power politics or the niceties of diplomatic protocol. His duty was to protect American lives and property in China, and he was going to do all in his power to accomplish that goal. His request for the heavy cruisers *San Francisco, Tuscaloosa, Quincy,* and *Vincennes* was flatly turned down as too provocative by the U.S. State Department, but on September 19 the 6th Marine Regiment arrived at Shanghai to bolster the International Settlement's defensive perimeter.

The 6th Marines joined the 4th Marines, a regiment that had been posted in Shanghai since 1927, and together they formed Brig. Gen. John C. Beaumont's 2nd Marine Brigade. Leathernecks took up positions all along the International Settlement boundary, especially along the vulnerable south bank of Soochow (Suzhou) Creek. Miles of barbed wire were strung, sandbags stacked, and machine-gun emplacements manned.

The U.S. ambassador, Nelson T. Johnson, was in Nanking (now Nanjing), roughly 145 miles northwest of Shanghai, carefully monitoring events. Nanking was the capital of China at the time, the political heart of the nation. Johnson was an "old China hand" who spoke the Mandarin dialect and had served in various diplomatic posts since the early 1900s. He favored the Chinese cause and advised against invoking the various neutrality acts that were on the books. If the United States officially recognized that a state of war existed between Japan and China, these laws would forbid giving aid to belligerents.

Roosevelt was genuinely sympathetic to China, but the president was a pragmatist who wanted to protect his own country's interests.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt never recognized the Sino-Japanese War, which enabled the United States to sell arms to China—some $9 million worth in 1938 alone. Roosevelt was genuinely sympathetic to China, but the president was a pragmatist who wanted to protect his own country's interests. Strict enforcement of the neutrality laws would have cut off Japanese trade as well. In September 1937, for example, the Japanese contracted for 500,000 tons of American oil. Such deals were always welcomed in an America still ravaged by the Depression.

On September 19, the Japanese announced that Nanking would be bombed the very next day. Because the bombing raid was going to be a heavy one, the Japanese wished to warn foreign nationals to avoid third-party casualties. Any neutral who persisted in staying on did so at his own risk. Ambassador Johnson took the Japanese at their word and evacuated the American embassy personnel to the gunboat USS *Luzon.*

The *Luzon* was anchored in the middle of the broad Yangtze River, presumably out of harm's way, though stray bombs were always a danger. Johnson and the embassy staff waited for "hell to descend," but the appointed time came and went without incident. On the morning of September 21, as Johnson prepared to return to the embassy, he was interrupted by the mournful wail of air raid sirens. Japanese bombers filled the sky, their deadly payloads unleashing a rain of death and destruction.

Johnson and his staff watched helplessly as Nanking was pummeled without mercy and without constraint. Buildings were transformed into gutted shells, and black coils of smoke rose into the air. When the all clear was sounded, the American ambassador went ashore only to find his actions had sparked new controversy. The Chinese felt he had run away, and missionaries and other like-minded Americans agreed, feeling the ambassador was too afraid of offending the Japanese.

Johnson was a career diplomat with a thick skin who took little offense at the allegations. His primary mission was to protect Americans living and working in China by maintaining a

strict impartiality. Above all, he was to avoid situations that might lead to war with Japan. The potential bombing of the U.S. embassy and the loss of lives among American diplomatic staff might well trigger just such a war. Though no coward, Johnson had felt the evacuation was justified under the circumstances.

Shanghai fell in mid-November 1937, after a hard and bloody three-month battle. The Japanese, who had expected an easy victory, were furious at their perceived loss of face. The battered but unbroken Chinese armies withdrew up the Yangtze Valley, quickly followed by Japanese forces in close pursuit. Chiang Kai-shek held a series of high-level meetings to discuss the Japanese advance. Should Nanking be defended or abandoned? The generalissimo's advisers were deeply divided, but in the end it was decided the city would be defended, if only to uphold national honor.

The Chinese Army was in disarray, filled with raw recruits hastily conscripted to replace the seasoned soldiers lost in Shanghai. Chiang Kai-shek was nothing if not a realist, so he gave orders for Chinese government officials to pack up and leave the city. A temporary capital would be established in Hankow, about 400 miles upriver from Nanking. If Hankow was threatened, then the government would move again to remote Chungking (now Chongqing).

Ambassador Johnson boarded USS *Luzon* on November 21, 1937, for the journey to Hankow. There was little he could do under the circumstances; Chinese government officials were leaving in droves, and Nanking would soon be a battleground. Most of the embassy personnel were evacuated, but a skeleton staff remained behind under Senior Second Secretary George Atcheson, Jr. Other embassy members who remained on duty included Second Secretary J. Hall Paxton, military attaché Captain Frank Roberts of the U.S. Army, and embassy secretary Emile Gassie.

The *Panay* was designated a station ship, there to provide both a radio link to the outside world and a place of refuge should the need arise. Indeed, many Americans were still in the city, including newspaper and magazine journalists, businessmen, teachers, and missionaries. The *Panay* was for them as well as for diplomatic staff. The Chinese government finally informed the American embassy that the situation had seriously deteriorated. It was time to close the embassy and evacuate the remaining personnel.

All American citizens were strongly advised to leave Nanking; if they remained they would do so at their own risk. Once *Panay* sailed, they would be on their own. By Saturday, December 11, there were about 13 civilian refugees aboard, including four members of the embassy staff, four American nationals, and five foreign nationals. Some Americans elected to stay—people like missionary W. Plumer Mills and surgeon Dr. Robert Wilson of the Nanking University Hospital. They were to become witnesses of the infamous Rape of Nanking, where some 300,000 Chinese died at the hands of bestial Japanese troops.

ABOVE: Boatswain's Mate Ernest Mahlmann and another crewman of the gunboat USS *Panay* fire a deck-mounted gun at the attacking Japanese planes on December 12, 1937. The attack was so sudden that Mahlmann did not have time to put his pants on before rushing to his battle station. LEFT: A Japanese bomber dives on the gunboat USS *Panay* during the attack on December 12, 1937, which sank the small vessel. This photograph was possibly taken by *New York Times* photographer Norman Soong. (Both: U.S. Navy)

About 2 o'clock in the afternoon of December 11, the Japanese staged a major bombing raid

on Pukow, just across the river from Nanking. *Panay*'s skipper, Lt. Cmdr. James J. Hughes, decided to move up the Yangtze when some bombs landed perilously close to the gunboat. *Panay* moved about a mile upriver to the San-Chia-Ho anchorage. A cluster of ships anchored there, including two British gunboats, a couple of steamers, and three American Standard-Vacuum Oil tankers. There were also smaller auxiliary craft hovering around the larger vessels like ducklings around their mother.

The San-Chia-Ho anchorage soon came under Japanese artillery fire, so it was decided that the Anglo-American convoy would travel an additional 13 or so miles upriver to a safer location. As they proceeded up the Yangtze, Japanese artillery shells continued to rain down from nearby shore batteries. The barrages were wild and inaccurate, but after two miles of such treatment all aboard were on edge.

Apparently the artillery fire was ordered by a Colonel Kingoro Hashimoto, one of those rabid ultranationalists that infected the Imperial Japanese Army like a plague. Hashimoto was only a colonel, but he had powerful connections within the military and had been one of the instigators in a series of Japanese political assassinations the previous year. A strong advocate of Japanese conquest, he chafed under civilian rule and hoped that a war with the United States would give the army a completely free hand in China.

Sunday, December 12, 1937, was a clear and sunny day, the bright azure sky giving a feeling of calm and security. The morning reverie was rudely interrupted by Japanese artillery fire at about 7:30 AM. Hughes had to find a safe berth for both his gunboat and the oil tankers and auxiliary craft that looked to him for protection. When Hughes notified the British gunboats he was going farther upriver, they strongly advised him to stay put. He politely rejected the idea.

The *Panay* got underway at about 8:25 AM; it was followed by the three Standard-Vacuum Oil Company tankers. The vessels, named *Mei Ping, Mei Hsia*, and *Mei An,* had many Chinese crew members who were understandably apprehensive. Japanese troops might stop the convoy and board at will. The Japanese were unpredictable; they might take it into their heads that the Chinese sailors were soldiers in disguise and shoot them all.

That same morning HMS *Ladybird* was hit by shells from Japanese shore batteries. The British gunboat was damaged and had one sailor killed and several wounded. The shelling was evidently Colonel Hashimoto's doing. He appeared determined to provoke an international incident.

Unaware of what was happening to the British, the American convoy steamed upriver without incident. Suddenly Japanese soldiers were spotted along the shoreline waving flags. It was a signal to stop, so the convoy hove to as ordered. A Japanese launch filled with armed soldiers soon appeared and made its way to the *Panay.* Once alongside, a samurai sword-carrying officer clambered aboard, followed by two armed soldiers. This armed intrusion was a breach of etiquette, but Commander Hughes chose to ignore it.

Lieutenant Sesyo Murakami wanted to know where *Panay* was going and the character of its mission. He also wanted Hughes to disclose the whereabouts and movements of any Chinese troops he might have encountered en route. The American officer said nothing, reminding Murakami that the United States was neutral. Murakami also wanted to search *Panay* and the tankers for Chinese soldiers trying to escape Nanking. Hughes politely but firmly refused permission. Shifting gears, Murakami became almost friendly, asking Hughes to come ashore for a courtesy visit. *Panay*'s skipper declined the offer.

The convoy was allowed to proceed unmolested and at about 11 AM found a good anchorage off the entrance to Hohsien Channel. The spot was about 28 miles upriver from Nanking. The Yangtze was fairly wide there, a veritable moat to safeguard the convoy from Japanese intrusion. Or so it seemed. Hughes radioed his position to the U.S. consulate in Shanghai, which would relay the information to Japanese authorities.

The *Panay* was a sparkling white, but her twin smokestacks were a contrasting buff color. There was little or no wind, so its large American ensign hung limply at the mainmast gaff. The ship was well marked, however, by large American flags painted on the tops of her upper deck awnings. It was getting near lunchtime, so passengers and crew began to relax and turned their thoughts to food. The ship's galley produced a hearty lunch, and after a big meal many decided it was time for an afternoon nap.

Eight crew members from *Panay* were given permission to visit the tanker *Mei Ping,* where they drank beer and generally enjoyed themselves. Captain Roberts went over as well, less for the beer than to hear the 1 o'clock Shanghai broadcast from the ship's radio.

The day was unusually warm for December, and people sought places to sleep off the big lunch. Norman Soong, a Chinese-American news photographer who was working for *The New York Times,* found a likely spot for a snooze but made sure his fully loaded camera was at hand. Chief Boatswain's Mate Ernest Mahlmann took off his clothes and stretched out in a storeroom below decks. His regular CPO berth had been commandeered by one of the passengers, but Mahlmann could sleep almost anywhere.

Earlier that morning, Colonel Hashimoto was busily engineering a plan that would ultimately end in the damaging of British gunboats and the sinking of the *Panay*. The Japanese Army lacked planes in the area, so it had to rely on the services of various naval aviation units. Hashimoto knew that there were standing orders forbidding attacks on river traffic for fear of hitting neutrals. To overcome that obstacle the colonel reported that his troops had spotted 10 Chinese troop ships fleeing Nanking.

The Japanese Navy took the bait at once. The Navy pilots had been bored and frustrated over the lack of targets. Now they were presented with a great opportunity. An attack force was hastily assembled from the 12th and 13th

TOP; A near-miss from a Japanese bomb detonates in the water near the stranded oil tanker *Meiping,* which was also sunk by the marauding Japanese. The compensation paid by Japan supposedly covered the loss of the gunboat USS *Panay* and three tankers. ABOVE: Its decks awash, the *Panay* begins quickly to slip beneath the waters of the great Yangtze River. Although the Japanese claimed that the unprovoked attack on the gunboat was a mistake, the vessel was clearly identifiable as American. (Both: U.S. Navy)

Air Groups. The 12th Air Group contributed nine fighters and six dive-bombers for the effort. The 13th Air Group's Lieutenant Shigeharu Murata led three Mitsubishi type 86 level bombers to the mission, while Lieutenant Masatake Okumiya had six dive-bombers.

The Japanese were so eager to come to grips with the enemy that little thought had been given to a precise attack plan. In fact, Okumiya and Murata were friendly rivals, each almost desperate to win a coveted unit citation for his men. The dive-bombers flew at about 12,000 feet, the level bombers 1,500 below them in a V formation. The level bombers got to the target first and quickly unleashed their payloads.

The *Panay*'s lookout spotted the Japanese planes, dark shapes standing out in bold relief against a cloudless sky. It was 1:37 PM, Sunday, December 12, 1937, and within moments all hell was going to break loose. Commander Hughes and Chief Quartermaster John Lang went to the bridge to see what was going on. Several of the journalists on board had also heard the lookout's cry and came outside to have a look. If they scented a story, they got more than they bargained for.

Hughes was astonished. The Japanese planes were headed toward the *Panay* and its little band of tankers and auxiliary vessels. Were they going to actually attack? It was impossible! But before Hughes could react, the first Japanese bomb hit *Panay* just forward of the bridge. The force of the blast picked the commander up and threw him against a pilothouse wall, causing him to momentarily lose consciousness. This bomb was one of 18 that were initially dropped by the level bombers.

When Hughes came to, he immediately realized the ship was badly hurt. The bridge was wrecked, the foremast was down, and the radio room a total loss. The forward 3-inch gun, one of two such guns that made up the *Panay*'s main battery, was completely smashed. Hughes himself was in pretty bad shape, with white-hot pain coursing though his body when he tried to move. His hip was fractured.

A second bomb soon completed the work of the first, lacerating what remained of the radio shack and toppling the foremast stump into the water. Since Hughes was incapacitated by wounds, tactical command now shifted to the ship's executive officer, Lieutenant Arthur "Tex" Anders. The XO was badly wounded by shrapnel that was lodged in his throat. The raw, bloody wound made speech impossible, so Anders wrote orders on bulkheads and on a chart. Anders's hands and fingers were badly cut, so the scribbled notes were often daubed with his own blood.

Though surprised by the sudden attack, *Panay*'s crew responded with coolness and professionalism. Chief Malhmann ran up on deck and manned one of the ship's machine guns. The vintage Lewis was soon spitting lead at the Japanese planes, the doughty chief pausing to take careful aim after each burst. Nobody seemed to notice, last of all the chief himself, that he still had no pants on!

The civilian journalists aboard the *Panay* were far from idle. When the attack began, *New York Times* photographer Norman Soong was napping on deck, his jacket rolled up for a pillow. He was rudely awakened by the rain of Japanese bombs that exploded all around him. Drenched with river water from the near misses, Soong started snapping pictures at great risk to his own life.

Norman Alley of Universal and Eric Mayell of Fox Movietone News were also busy recording the event with newsreel cameras. They managed to get some dramatic footage, including bomb detonations and close views of silvery Aichi D1A1 biplane dive-bombers swooping down. Alley and Mayell seemed to have charmed lives, but not everyone was so lucky.

Italian correspondent Sanro Sandri was hit in the eye by a metal fragment as he followed Alley up a ladder.

Panay's defense was hampered by the loss of the forward 3-inch gun. The stern gun was not able to fire because it was blocked by the awning structure. The ready ammunition lockers were empty since no attack had been anticipated. Once the aerial assault began, it was too late to bring ammunition from below decks. To do so would have meant opening the hatches—an unwise move that would have compromised the ship's watertight integrity.

At the moment, however, any debate on the ship's watertight integrity was moot. *Panay* was badly damaged and taking on water. Still bravely giving orders on the smashed bridge, the bloodied Lieutenant Anders wrote a directive for the ship to get underway and beach itself. This was impossible because an oil line was cut and *Panay* could not raise steam.

In the meantime, the Japanese planes from the 12th Air Group joined the attack, their attention focused on the oil tankers. The hapless trio was anchored near the *Panay,* the *Mei Ping* only about 100 yards on the gunboat's starboard side. The ships immediately got underway, hotly pursued by Japanese dive-bombers. The *Mei Hsia* tried to render assistance to the *Panay* en route, but it was waved away. The gesture was appreciated, but the idea of a highly combustible oil tanker right alongside did not cheer the hard-pressed Navy crew.

Eventually, *Mei An* was beached on the northern bank, while *Mei Hsia* and *Mei Ping* secured a spot on the Kaiyuan pontoon on the southern shore. Ironically, there were Japanese soldiers stationed at Kaiyuan, and once the tankers reached their position they too were in the line of fire. The brown-clad soldiers frantically waved Japanese flags, but their countrymen refused to break off the attacks. Several soldiers were killed or wounded by friendly fire, and the tankers were destroyed.

Hughes knew he had few options. The ship had no power and was taking on water fast. There were many wounded. Hughes himself was in great pain, his face blackened by smoke and soot. At about 2 o'clock he gave orders to abandon ship. The gunboat's two sampans started to ferry wounded to the north shore, and gratings were tossed into the river as a kind of life-preserving flotation device. The Japanese attack was winding down, but the sampans were strafed as they tried to reach shore, resulting in more casualties.

Hughes protested when he was put into one of the boats for the trip to shore. They might be hundreds of miles from the sea, but Hughes wanted to uphold the time-honored tradition that a ship's master be the last to leave a stricken vessel. It was approaching 3 o'clock, and the *Panay* was in its death throes. She was going down by the head, with some compartments flooded with water up to six feet deep. The forward decks were awash; it was now only a matter of time.

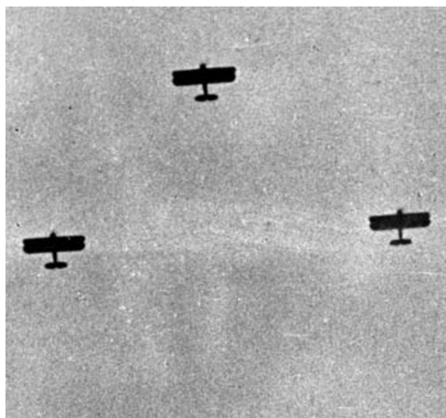
Ensign Denis Biwerse was the last man to officially evacuate the ship, but Chief Mahlmann and Machinist Mate First Class Gerald Weimers went back to fetch sorely needed stores and medical supplies. As they left, a Japanese launch filled with soldiers machine-gunned the *Panay,* boarded her, then departed the scene. At 3:45, the *Panay* rolled to starboard and sank in about 80 feet of water. The gunboat was the first American naval vessel to be sunk by aircraft in combat conditions.

The survivors had no food, few supplies, and little medicine. About a dozen men were seriously injured, including the *Panay*'s skipper, and many more sustained minor wounds. The nights were bitingly cold, and the survivors had no shelter and inadequate clothing. At least one crewman was in shock. The bright spot in this litany of gloom was the fact that the doctor aboard, Lieutenant Clark Grazier, was unhurt.

Virtually all the *Panay*'s officers were badly wounded, and the crisis demanded active leadership. Under the circumstances Hughes delegated Captain Roberts to lead the surviving party. He had a working knowledge of Chinese, which was also a decided plus.

Second Secretary Paxton was sent to summon help; he was accompanied by Radioman First Class Andrew Wesler and a Chinese messboy named Wong. Wong was there to hedge their bets because he was fluent in the local dialect, and the Chinese might not understand Paxton's Mandarin.

Why didn't the dive-bomber pilots see the American flags that were displayed at several points?



LEFT: Following the attack that sank his ship, Lieutenant Commander James J. Hughes of the *Panay* lies seriously wounded. Numerous military and civilian casualties were sustained aboard the *Panay* during the attack, and Japanese planes reportedly strafed survivors in the water. RIGHT: In a photo taken from the window of the *New York Times* bureau in Shanghai, three Japanese bombers are seen during one of numerous raids on the city. The Japanese attack on China was ruthless and devastating and was roundly condemned by the United States. (Both: U.S. Navy)

The survivors were now hiding in the reed-choked marshes that lined the banks of the Yangtze. There was a need to take cover because Japanese intentions were still unclear. They might want to kill the survivors to finish the job. One sailor, ship's storekeeper Charles Ensminger, had died during the attack. Lieutenant Charles Hulsebus and Italian journalist Sandri died of wounds later. Captain C.H. Carlson of the tanker *Mei Hsia* also was killed, which brought the total number of fatalities to four.

Paxton, who had a badly injured leg, rode on a local farmer's horse, a sorry nag that plodded along with an uneven gait. Eventually, the party reached Hohsein, where there was a telephone. Paxton hired a rickshaw to go to Hankow, while Wesler, who was nursing an injured ankle, mounted the horse and returned to the survivors to tell them the news. Wesler also

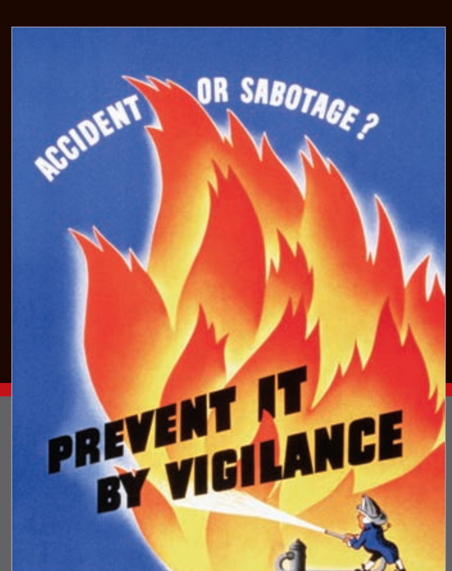
Continued on page 86

Hoover and the Nazi Saboteur

Did FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover cover up the events that led to the capture of German agents in the U.S.?

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON

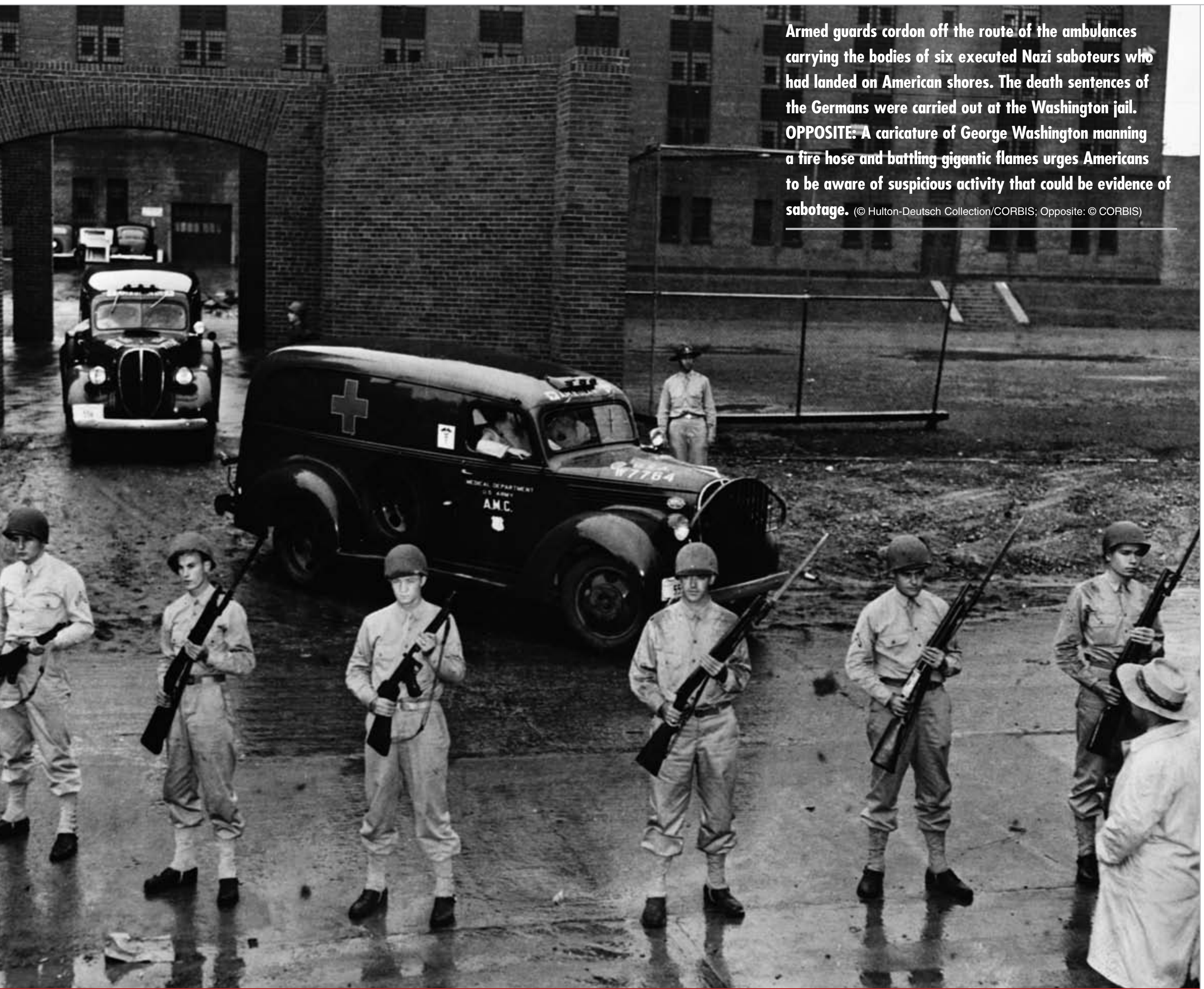
GEORGE DASCH COULD NOT EVEN SEE THE shore when he stepped onto the U-boat's narrow deck. All he knew was that the submarine was somewhere off the coast of Long Island, New York, but he had no idea exactly where. In a few minutes, he would be going ashore in a rubber boat, along with three other men who had also been trained as saboteurs.



It was just about midnight on June 12, 1942, and the Abwehr (Nazi Germany's intelligence agency) hoped that Dasch and his three men, along with another four-man group to be put ashore on the coast of Florida, would be able to destroy factories of the Aluminium Company of America (ALCOA) located in the United States. The ALCOA plants supplied the American aircraft industry with much of its metal for manufacturing fighters, bombers, and other airplanes for the military forces and were considered well worth the risk and expense of a sabotage operation.

But Dasch knew something that the others did not—he had already decided that he was going to make the sabotage operation fail, even before he met the other men assigned to Operation Pastorius, the code name given to the sabotage mission. He and the other men had taken an accelerated course in the practical aspects of sabotage—how to make fuses, how to make incendiary bombs, the most efficient way of blowing up railway lines and bridges—at Quenzsee, the Abwehr's sabotage school not far from Berlin. Because he had made up his mind that he was going to derail Operation Pastorius, however, Dasch found it very difficult to pay attention to the training program.

His motives for wanting to undermine Operation Pastorius were fairly simple. Dasch had lived in the United States for 19 years, from 1922 to 1941, and had served in the U.S. Army. He felt a very strong emotional attachment to his adopted country, and he married an American girl, Rose Marie Guilli. For most of these 19 years Dasch lived in New York City, where he worked as a waiter. Although Dasch was not entirely happy as a waiter—he thought that tipping was demeaning—he and his wife were happy enough until his mother arrived from Germany in 1939. Mrs. Dasch was anything but happy when she found out that her son was only a waiter; she and her husband had sent their son to a good school and expected him to have a much better job than that, especially in the "land of opportunity." As



Armed guards cordon off the route of the ambulances carrying the bodies of six executed Nazi saboteurs who had landed on American shores. The death sentences of the Germans were carried out at the Washington jail. OPPOSITE: A caricature of George Washington manning a fire hose and battling gigantic flames urges Americans to be aware of suspicious activity that could be evidence of sabotage. (© Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS; Opposite: © CORBIS)

far as she was concerned, waiting on tables was a menial job, on the same level as sweeping floors.

Mrs. Dasch insisted that George return to Germany and get a better job. Her brother Adolph was a senior chemist at the huge I.G. Farben conglomerate in Ludwigshafen; he could get George a good job there. Everything was booming in Hitler's new Germany, she said, and the Nazis would leave him alone if he minded his own business.

After listening to his mother's line of persuasion for several weeks, Dasch decided to go back to Germany. By the time he filled out all the necessary papers and left New York, the war had started. There was then no direct travel between the United States and Germany. Dasch went by way of Japan, China, and Russia, which took six weeks. He finally arrived in Berlin in June 1941. His wife Marie would follow a few weeks later, by a different route aboard a neutral ship.

Hitler's Germany was not the place that Mrs. Dasch had described, at least not to Dasch's way of thinking. After living in the United States, Nazi Germany was hard and restrictive, and Dasch did not like either the restrictions or the life. But he realized that getting out of Nazi Germany would be next to impossible. The Gestapo watched everybody and would arrest Dasch if he tried to make any attempt to return to the United States.

A minor government official named Walter Kappe discovered that Marie's ship had been stopped by British warships and that she had been taken to Bermuda for internment, where she would spend the rest of the war. Kappe also persuaded Dasch to work for his radio monitoring station in Berlin, where he would translate radio broadcasts from the United States. Translating broadcasts for Kappe was better for Dasch than working for the Farben conglomerate; for one thing, it would make him exempt from serving in the German Army.

After about six months as a radio monitor and shortly after Germany went to war with the United States, Kappe offered Dasch another job—taking part in a sabotage operation in America. Dasch jumped at the chance of returning to the States, but he had no intention of going through with any sabotage. As far as he was concerned,

he owed it to his adopted country to wreck the sabotage plot. He had enjoyed his 19 years in America and hated living in Germany. He regretted listening to his mother's advice. If he could find a way to destroy the Nazi sabotage scheme, it would be his way of repaying the debt he owed to America. As an American, he felt it was the least he could do.

In February 1942, Dasch was officially transferred from his radio monitoring job to the training phase of Operation Pastorius. Later, Dasch found out that the project was named for Franz Daniel Pastorius, the first German immigrant to come to America in the 1700s. At Quenzsee, all of the men assigned to the operation attended lectures and demonstrations on the handling of explosives. Every one of the men had lived in the United States for a number of years. Two were U.S. citizens. In May, the men were taken on a field trip to I.G. Farben factories, which were very similar to the ALCOA plants they were being sent to destroy. The Farben officials went out of their way to be as cooperative as possible with the saboteur trainees.

"We were shown the various bottlenecks existing in each plant," explained Ernest Burger, a member of Dasch's four-man group. The simplest way of shutting down production, the men were instructed, would be to destroy a high tension tower that supplied the plant's electricity. A tower in the middle of a forest or woods, miles away from the plant, would be best—the saboteurs would be less likely to be to be seen, and it would take more time for a crew to find and repair the tower. By that time, any aluminum sitting in electrolytic baths would have solidified into one solid, useless block of metal.

The Farben engineers estimated that it would take between eight and 10 months to repair the damage. The American aircraft industry would have lost a considerable percentage of its aluminium supply during this time and would have no choice but to cut back on production of all types of planes for the armed forces. The ALCOA plants at Massina, New York; Alcoa, Tennessee; and East St. Louis, Illinois, were the main targets for the two Operation Pastorius groups. Other objectives were also assigned, including the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad's Horseshoe Curve at Altoona, Pennsylvania; the Hell Gate Bridge in New York; and the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Newark, New Jersey. Low-priority "nuisance" targets, such as lockers inside rail and bus stations and New York department stores, were also assigned. Discretion as to which targets to sabotage first would be left to the leaders of the two groups.

George Dasch was the leader of his group, which included Burger, Richard Quirin, and Heinrich Heinck. The four men were to be put ashore by U-boat on Long Island. The second group, led by Edward Kerling, included Herbert Haupt, Werner Thiel, and Hermann Neubauer. They would land on the coast of Florida. Dasch and Kerling were to meet in the Grill Room of the Hotel Gibson in Cincinnati on July 4, 1942, the date set by Walter Kappe. At the meeting, they would discuss the choice of objectives. Dasch suspected that the choice of July 4 was Kappe's idea of a joke.

When training ended, it became evident that departure for the United States was now only days away. There were several important details that had to be taken care of before the men could leave Germany, however. One major item was a new identification and cover story for each of the men. Dasch became George John Day, born in San Francisco in 1900—before the earthquake and fire—so that he could claim that his birth records had been destroyed in the fire. Edward Kerling became Edward J. Kelly, also born in San Francisco before the earthquake. Dasch always thought that Kerling looked like an Irish bartender, which was the reason behind this particular cover name.

Everyone had to have new papers—passports, draft cards, Social Security cards—to go with their new names. American slang was also drilled into the men, including phrases like "get lost" and "beat it," which never would have been

WARNING from the FBI

The war against spies and saboteurs demands the aid of every American.

When you see evidence of sabotage, notify the Federal Bureau of Investigation at once.

When you suspect the presence of enemy agents, tell it to the FBI.

Beware of those who spread enemy propaganda! Don't repeat vicious rumors or vicious whispers.

Tell it to the FBI!

The nearest Federal Bureau of Investigation office is listed on page one of your telephone directory.

ABOVE: The empty beach at Ponte Vedra, Florida, was the location where German saboteurs led by Edward Kerling were put ashore by the submarine *U-584.* This stretch of coastline was essentially unpatrolled, and the Germans were not detected there. INSET: Crates of explosives carried ashore by the German saboteurs who landed in Florida are shown after their discovery. Without assistance from those who participated in the operation, the FBI would probably never have located the cache. RIGHT: An FBI poster blares a warning to the general population of the United States against the efforts of German or Japanese spies and saboteurs. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover used the incidents of German saboteurs landing to advance his own career.

(Above: FBI; Inset: National Archives; Right: © CORBIS)

picked up in any conversational English class. The latest copies of *Time, Newsweek, Life,* and other American magazines were also delivered to Quenzsee and read avidly—especially the advertisements for things like whiskey and cigarettes, which were all but impossible to get in Germany. American pop tunes were also played, including records by Glenn Miller, Harry James, and Jimmy Dorsey. By the end of their training course, the men were as Americanized as anyone in Nazi Germany could hope to be.

On May 20, the men were notified that they would be leaving Berlin within 48 hours. Two days later, they boarded a train for the submarine base at Lorient, France, on the Bay of Biscay. Edward Kerling's group sailed first, aboard *U-584*. Dasch and his three men squeezed through the hatch of *U-202* on May 26. They took over $80,000 in cash along with them, as well as assorted fuses, detonators, and blocks of plastic explosives.

The trip across the Atlantic in *U-202* lasted 17 days. As leader of the group, Dasch at least had the privilege of going to the bridge for some fresh air once in a while. Burger, Quirin, and Heinck spent most of the crossing cooped up in the forward torpedo room with the rest of the crew. A few days after leaving Lorient, the rubber raft that would put the four men ashore was taken out and inflated to make sure that it worked and then stowed below again. Dasch also met with the other men to discuss the landing and what to do with the explosives. Everything they brought with them, except the money, was to be buried on the beach. Later, after more specific plans had been made regarding targets and objectives, they would come back and dig everything up.

Dasch was still not exactly sure what he was going to do to make Operation Pastorius fail. He thought of going to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or possibly the police, or maybe some high-ranking military officer. There was also a question of timing. Should he go to the authorities immediately or wait a while to make certain that Kerling and his men had come ashore in Florida?

On June 12, *U-202* reached the coast of Long Island. The boat submerged and spent the daylight hours in 100 feet of water at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Burger had made comments that seemed to suggest that he might be an anti-Nazi as well. If Burger was with Dasch, it would be a great help—if nothing else, he would at least have someone in whom he could confide. But Dasch was determined to put an end to Operation Pastorius, with or without Burger's help.

At about midnight, the U-boat surfaced and headed toward the beach at dead slow speed until it touched bottom. The boat's captain decided to use the electric motors instead of the diesel engines—the battery-powered motors were much quieter. Wearing Navy work clothes, Dasch and his men, along with two members of the U-boat's crew, loaded the crates of explosives into the rubber raft. Finally, the six men climbed in and paddled toward the shore. It took several minutes to make their way to the beach, but Dasch was relieved to be back in the United States. It was his first time on American soil in over a year.

ABOVE: German saboteur George Dasch, who believed his information revealing the German landings would be gratefully received, appears in this photograph to be perplexed at the turn of events. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reportedly took advantage of the situation to further his own reputation and that of his agency. BELOW: Mobster Louis "Lepke" Buchalter is led into federal court handcuffed to J. Edgar Hoover. Buchalter was convicted of murder and executed. (Above: FBI; Below: Library of Congress)

While the others unloaded the raft, Dasch took a walk up the beach. After a short time, he saw "a boy in an American sailor's uniform" walking toward him. His instructions on dealing with intruders were short and to the point—kill them and send the body back to the U-boat. "You bring the bodies back," the captain told him, "and we'll feed them to the fish when we get out to sea again."

Dasch deliberately disobeyed orders.

The "sailor" was Coast Guardsman John Cullen, who was making a routine beach patrol from the Coast Guard station at Amagansett. Cullen thought Dasch was a fisherman who had run aground and invited him and his companions to spend the night at the station—it would be a lot warmer and drier than waiting on the beach until sunrise.

Dasch's response came as a complete surprise. "Look here, boy, I can't tell you what's going on just now," he said. "This is a matter for Washington." He then asked Cullen how old he was and advised him to do exactly as he was told if he ever wanted to see his father and mother again. Dasch also gave Cullen some money he had in his pocket and asked Cullen to shine his light in his face "so that you'll recognize me when I have you called in Washington."

Thoroughly frightened, Cullen ran back up the beach toward the station to report the incident. When the money was counted, it came to $260. Dasch had saved Cullen's life and had also taken the first step toward revealing the plot.

The six men buried the crates on the beach along with their work uniforms. As soon as they finished their chore, the two U-boat crewmen took the rubber raft back to *U-202,* and Dasch, Burger, Heinck, and Quirin changed into civilian clothes. Dasch left a shovel sticking upright in the sand as a marker to make the crates and uniforms easier to find. He did not know it, but Burger had also left a couple of markers of his own—in plain sight, he left a half-filled bottle of German brandy, a packet of German cigarettes, and a German Navy rating's cap, complete with swastika insignia.

Dasch, Burger, Quirin, and Heinck walked off the beach and made their way to the Amagansett rail station with quite a bit of difficulty—every town along the entire Eastern Seaboard was completely blacked out. They managed to find the station in the dark largely by luck. From Amagansett, the four men took a train to Jamaica, Queens. At Jamaica, they split up. Heinck and Quirin went off on their own, while Dasch and Burger took a train into Manhattan.

Dasch knew the city very well from prewar days and showed Burger some of the sights, including Radio City Music Hall. He did not

determine Burger's state of mind regarding Operation Pastorius until their second day in the United States. Both had registered at the Governor Clinton Hotel, Dasch under his cover name George John Day. He called Burger into his room and asked him point blank about his feelings toward sabotaging American factories and railways.

Burger's reply took Dasch completely by surprise. He thought that Dasch was an American agent and went on to say that he only became involved with Operation Pastorius to get away from the Gestapo. He had already been arrested by the Gestapo on trumped-up charges and was afraid that they might lock him up permanently if he stayed in Germany. Reporting the sabotage operation to the FBI sounded like a good idea to Burger.

Six of the German saboteurs appear pensive in their FBI mug shots. They include, top row left to right, Hermann Otto Neubauer, Edward Kerling, and Werner Thiel, and bottom row left to right, Heinrich Harm Heinck, Richard Quirin, and Herbert Hans Haupt. (All: FBI)

Dasch called the FBI's New York office from a telephone booth while Burger waited outside. The conversation did not go the way Dasch thought it would. He told the agent who answered the telephone, Dean McWhorter, that he had a "message of importance" and asked him to identify himself. McWhorter refused, which rattled Dasch and made him defensive—at Quenzsee, everyone had been told that the FBI had been infiltrated by German agents. Dasch said that his name was Franz Daniel Pastorius and that he and three other men had come ashore from a German submarine the day before. The agent assured Dasch that he would contact Washington and relay his information to FBI headquarters.

Actually, Agent McWhorter did not do anything. He dismissed Dasch as a crank and made the remark, "Yesterday Napoleon called." For the record, he wrote a memo noting that Frank Daniel Pastorius telephoned and that he would be going to Washington on Thursday or Friday to discuss an important matter with J. Edgar Hoover. The note was then filed away and forgotten. This would not be the last time that Dasch was misled by the FBI.

After his telephone conversation with McWhorter, Dasch seems to have lost all track of time. He became involved in a marathon card game with some of his old waiter friends from before the war, a session that lasted a day and a half. It did help to calm his nerves. Dasch later said that he took a train to Washington on June 17, although records show that he did not leave until the 18th. He was either so involved in the game that time got away from him or so nervous that he forgot what day it was.

At about 7 PM on June 18, Dasch arrived in Washington and went straight to his hotel, the Mayflower. Burger stayed behind in New York, waiting for something to happen. About 20 hours earlier, Kerling's group of saboteurs had landed on the Florida coast. *U-584* delivered Kerling, Thiel, Haupt, and Neubauer to Ponte Vedra, on the Atlantic coast a few miles from Jacksonville. The four men had come ashore completely undetected. They buried their crates of explosives on the beach, just as Dasch and his men had done, and headed inland. The four men went their separate ways unimpeded.

After a night's sleep, Dasch telephoned the U.S. Government Information Service. The girl who answered the telephone asked him the nature of his business; Dasch explained that he had a statement of military and political value to make. The young woman was not at all surprised by this reply and suggested that he get in touch with Colonel H.F. Kramer of the Army General Staff. Dasch telephoned immediately, but the colonel was not in his office. He left a message with Kramer's secretary, who promised that the colonel would return the call as soon as he returned. After waiting half an hour with no word from Colonel Kramer, Dasch's nerves got the better of him. He telephoned the FBI.

Dasch told the agent who answered the telephone essentially the same thing he had told McWhorter in New York, that he was the leader of four men who had landed in the United States via U-boat. He also referred to his telephone conversation with McWhorter, but the agent, Duane L. "Pie" Traynor, had no idea what Dasch was talking about. Traynor told Dasch that if he had something to report, he could come over and do it in person. Dasch did not know where the FBI offices were, so Traynor sent a driver to pick him up.

After telling his story to the FBI, Dasch probably wished that he had waited for Colonel Kramer. Nobody believed his story. He told Traynor and another agent that he and three other men had come ashore in a rubber dinghy on the coast of Long Island and that he had been sent to disrupt America's light metals industry. The two agents just looked at him with blank expressions.

Dasch had brought his expense money with him, a bag containing $84,000 in cash. Nobody bothered to examine the bag. Since he was getting nowhere, he opened it and dumped its contents all over the table. Traynor and his colleague were startled, to put it mildly, by the stack of $50 bills that cascaded onto the floor.

The second agent picked up the money, looked at Dasch, and asked, "Is this stuff real?" Dasch assured him that it was.

When the federal agents finally decided to listen, they made up for their initial skepticism. They began asking Dasch questions in an interrogation session that went on for eight days. His testimony was taken down by stenographers working in relays, and it ran nearly 300 pages.

Dasch was questioned on topics besides Operation Pastorius. Among the things he was asked about were other sabotage campaigns against both the United States and Britain. One topic he could discuss at length was the spy school at Quenzsee, as well as Abwehr training methods. Naval Intelligence had questions about the submarine base at Lorient and what he had observed about U-boat operations while crossing the Atlantic aboard *U-202*.

More important to the FBI was information about the other Pastorius agents. Information supplied by Dasch was essential in the capture of the other men in his group. Burger was in

his room in the Governor Clinton Hotel, right where Dasch said he would be. Heinck and Quirin were both arrested in Manhattan, Quirin in front of a tailor's shop, and Heinck after he left a delicatessen.

Dasch's assistance also resulted in the tracing and ultimate arrest of Kerling and Thiel. He had given detailed descriptions of both men, which proved invaluable. They were apprehended in Manhattan. The last two Pastorius saboteurs were picked up on June 27, just 10 days after they landed in Florida. Neubauer and Haupt were arrested in Chicago. Although Dasch had not known their exact whereabouts, he did provide descriptions of the two as well as possible destinations for them. He gave the FBI a place to start looking.

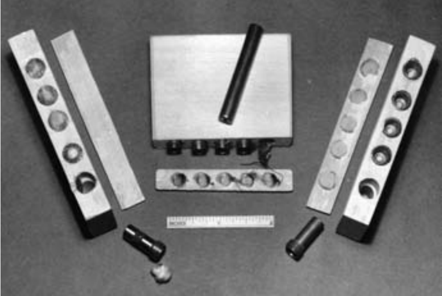
Without Dasch's assistance and later that of Burger, the FBI would probably never have arrested any of the Operation Pastorius agents, at least not until they had blown something up. Sabotage had already been committed in the United States. The Hercules Power Plant in Kenvil, New Jersey, was blown up by saboteurs on September 12, 1940. The FBI never found out who had caused the explosions, which rattled windows a mile away. There were other instances of sabotage as well, but the FBI classified most of these as "industrial accidents."

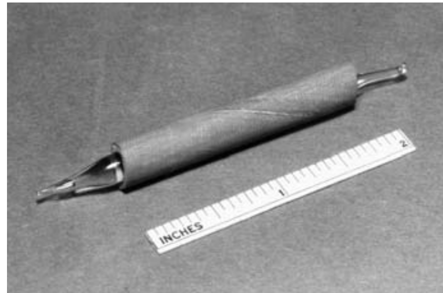
After his arrest, Kerling led federal agents to the place at Ponte Vedra where the explosives had been buried. Kerling watched as the boxes were dug up. With this, and the arrest of all Operation Pastorius agents, the FBI had everyone and everything connected with the sabotage operation in its custody.

Now that the sabotage operation had been totally destroyed, Dasch worried that the Gestapo would somehow find out that he had been responsible and would arrest his mother and family in Germany. Federal agents assured Dasch that his role in the breakup of Operation Pastorius would be kept a secret. In fact, he was told that the Bureau wanted the Abwehr to think that the sabotage plan had been discovered by the FBI alone, without any outside help.

This was absolutely true. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was not about to share credit with Dasch or anybody else. In fact, he was prepared to do everything possible to keep Dasch's vital role an absolute secret—from the public, from the news media, and even from President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Agent Traynor and his colleagues asked Dasch if he would continue to cooperate with them, even though the other men were in custody. Some of the men were refusing to answer questions. Apparently, they thought that Dasch was still at large. If they could see for themselves that he was behind bars as well, they would determine that the game was up and might be more willing to talk. This made sense to Dasch, and he agreed to play along.





The contents of boxes buried by the German saboteurs on Long Island. Included (top) wooden blocks used to conceal detonators, center, a capsule of sulfuric acid enclosed in a rubber tube for protection, and bottom, crates that contained TNT, coal bombs, and fuses. (FBI)

Dasch was taken to New York on June 28, the day after Haupt and Neubauer were arrested in Chicago. At the Federal Court Building Dasch was placed under formal arrest, although no one informed him that he had been arrested. He was given a prison uniform and photographed with a prison number. All this was part of an act to convince the other men, he was told. Finally, he was led past the cells of the other Pastorius men, except Burger, so that they could see him, and was put in a cell by himself. FBI agents assured him that everything would be all right.

While he was alone in his cell, Dasch happened to look through the opening in the door. He saw a guard reading a copy of the *New York Daily News.* On the front page he could read the headline: CAPTURED NAZI SPY. Underneath the headline was his own photograph. Dasch said that when he saw the photo he "broke into a cold sweat" and did not sleep all night.

The next morning, Dasch met with three FBI agents, including Pie Traynor and T.J. Donegan, the head of the New York office. Dasch demanded to know why the newspapers were given his photograph and were allowed to call him a Nazi when the FBI had promised that nothing like that would happen. This took everyone by surprise. Donegan barked, "How the hell do you know that?"

Traynor stepped in and told Dasch that everyone knew what a great service he had done but that he would have to be put on trial with the other men if he was serious about fighting the Nazis. Traynor was convincing. He had another request as well. He wanted Dasch to plead guilty. This would lead Berlin to think that he had been captured along with the others. In the name of J. Edgar Hoover and Attorney General Francis Biddle, Traynor promised that within six months of the trial, "you will be freed with a full presidential pardon."

Dasch reluctantly agreed to plead guilty, even though he insisted that he was not guilty. What nobody bothered to tell him was that he would be committing public suicide by saying that he was guilty. Whether he pleaded guilty or was found guilty, the charge of sabotage carried the death penalty in wartime.

Dasch had an uneasy feeling about everything he had seen and heard since he had gone to the FBI. Three or four days after he had seen his picture in the *Daily News,* his uneasiness turned to alarm. He was formally charged with attempted sabotage, espionage, and conspiracy. There were other minor charges as well. Dasch was also informed that he and the other seven men would be tried by a military tribunal instead of a civil court. He asked a guard to send for Donegan to explain. Donegan curtly told him that he had nothing to do with the military tribunal or with the agreement he had reached with Pie Traynor. Dasch was outraged, and shouted that he wanted a lawyer and that he now refused to plead guilty. Donegan did not even bother to reply; he walked out of Dasch's cell and slammed the door behind him.

Trying civilians under the rules of a court-martial was unusual, but it was legal. The last civilians to be tried by a military tribunal had been the conspirators in President Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865. A military tribunal would make things much more difficult for Dasch—and easier for J. Edgar Hoover.

Under military law, the accused is presumed guilty until proven innocent.

J. Edgar Hoover lied to President Roosevelt about what had taken place between Dasch and the FBI. "The leader of the group, George Dasch, was apprehended by Special Agents of the FBI on June 22, 1942 at New York City," Hoover wrote in a memo to the president. Actually, Dasch had not been apprehended at all—he had turned himself in to the FBI in Washington, D.C., not New York, and it was on June 18, not June 22. Hoover would continue to lie to the president and everyone else about George Dasch and his role in destroying Operation Pastorius.

Along with everyone else, President Roosevelt believed Hoover. Roosevelt had approved the military trial largely because of what Hoover had told him. Roosevelt asked an aide, "What should be done about the men—should they be shot or hanged?"

On Saturday, July 4, Dasch and the other seven men were moved from New York to the District of Columbia jail. The trial began four days later, in Room 5235 in the Department of Justice Building. The case against Richard Quirin, Heinrich Heinck, Edward Kerling, Herbert Haupt, Werner Thiel, and Hermann Neubauer was fairly straightforward. They had no real basis for their defense. Haupt and Quirin insisted that they had no intention of performing any acts of sabotage but could produce no evidence to support their claim. Kerling and Heinck said more or less the same thing, but they could not back up their stories either. Thiel protested that he had been coerced into becoming part of Operation Pastorius by the Nazis. Neubauer said that he had only been following orders.

Four of the German saboteurs, captured and on trial for their lives, listen attentively during the proceedings. Pictured from left to right are Werner Thiel, Richard Quirin, an unidentified U.S. soldier, Hermann Neubauer, and Edward Kerling. (FBI)

Both Dasch and Burger based their defense on the fact that they had gone to the FBI voluntarily and that their information had been directly responsible for the breakup of the sabotage plot. They had a good deal of evidence to support this argument. Pie Traynor and even J. Edgar Hoover himself could have testified that Dasch's help had been invaluable.

As the trial progressed—it would last 24 days—Dasch was becoming convinced that the proceedings were anything but fair and unbiased. His defense counsel, Colonel Carl Ristine, did not call any of the character witness that Dasch suggested, people who had known Dasch before the war and could testify that he had always been a loyal American. Colonel Ristine also did not call Pie Traynor to ask him about the full presidential pardon that Dasch was to receive. Dasch did not think that Colonel Ristine cross-examined the prosecution's witnesses as thoroughly as he should have done.

When Coast Guardsman John Cullen was on the witness stand, Biddle asked a number of incriminating questions regarding what Dasch had said and done on the beach at Amagansett. The objective was to make Dasch seem menacing and offensive—a foreign national coming ashore illegally from an enemy submarine. But Ristine's cross-examination only concerned itself with proving that Dasch did not attack Cullen, which the Coast Guardsman freely admitted. He might have shown that Dasch had gone out of his way to call attention to himself and that he allowed Cullen to take a good look at him.

The questions that Colonel Ristine asked did no damage to the prosecution's case at all and did not help Dasch. To Dasch, it seemed that his attorney "had little intention of trying to break down this damaging testimony." Throughout the trial, Ristine's cross-examinations had been described as "cursory" even by the prosecution.

Toward the end of the prosecution's case, an event took place that convinced at least one other person that Dasch's suspicions of an unfair trial were correct. Second Lieutenant John Murdock, the officer in charge of the radar station at Montauk Point, Long Island, was called to testify. On the morning after the landing at Amagansett, Murdock had been asked by the officer in charge of the Coast Guard station to drive down from Montauk to take a look at the boxes of explosives that had been dug up. Now the prosecution wanted to ask him about what had happened at Amagansett, and what he had seen and heard.

German U-boats may have attempted other landings on U.S. shores.

The Operation Pastorius landings were not the first instances of U-boats putting German agents ashore on the Atlantic coast of the United States. There had been at least one other landing before Operation Pastorius, and there would be at least one afterward.

On April 14, 1942, two months before *U-202* surfaced off the coast of Long Island, the destroyer USS *Roper* discovered *U-85* running on the surface off the coast of North Carolina near Cape Hatteras. The U-boat did not crash-dive, which came as a surprise to Roper's captain, Commander Hamilton W. Howe. Instead, the submarine's captain changed course several times and fired a torpedo at the destroyer from his stern tube. Commander Howe closed with the submarine at a speed of 20 knots and began firing his 3-inch forward mount and 50-caliber machine guns at 300 yards.

After *U-85* had been hit by a 3-inch shell and 50-caliber machine-gun fire, the captain decided to scuttle the boat. The seacocks were opened, and the crew began jumping overboard as the submarine settled by the stern. Commander Howe wanted a confirmed kill and dropped 11 depth charges on the boat as it sank. The barrage shattered the boat and killed every man in the water.

When the bodies, 29 of them, were recovered, some of the dead were wearing civilian clothes. When their pockets were examined, they were found to contain quite a bit of American currency, as well as Social Security cards, draft cards, and other documents needed for living and working in the United States. Commander Howe had broken up an attempt to land German spies or saboteurs in North Carolina.

The reason behind the U-boat's mysterious behavior now became clear. If the submarine's captain had crash dived with his men and the German agents still on deck, most of them would have drowned. Over the years, everything about the sinking of *U-85* was made public except the fact that the submarine was trying to land civilians. That information was not released until several years after J. Edgar Hoover died.

No records exist to prove whether this was the first U-boat attempting to land saboteurs on U.S. soil, but it certainly was not

At one point, Murdock was asked if he had seen any sign of a German submarine on the night of the landing. When Murdock replied that nothing had shown up on radar, the questioning officer got excited. He wanted to know the range of the radar set at Montauk, which was a highly classified subject.

Murdock, who described himself as a "brand new second lieutenant," was surprised by the question. Because it involved disclosing top secret information, he was not sure if he should answer and asked for instructions. The judges did not hesitate in telling Murdock to answer the question. The range was about 150 miles.

Murdock had been in the Army long enough to realize that such information would not normally have been given in front of eight men on trial unless there was no chance that any of them would be seeing the outside world again. Had there been any possibility that George Dasch would be found not guilty, he knew that he would never have been ordered to give away such closely guarded information in his presence.

As soon as he was ordered to answer the question, Murdock knew that none of the defendants would be acquitted. The verdict was already in.

Dasch did not do anything to help his own case. He was highly strung and very nervous by nature, but at the trial his nerves were almost uncontrollable. His answers on the witness stand rambled and were frequently so badly phrased that they made no sense at all. When Attorney General Biddle asked why he had not contacted the FBI immediately after landing, Dasch said that he had three reasons. He only gave two, and only one of these—he was a "mental and nervous wreck"—made any sense. Replies to other questions were even less coherent. He also argued with Colonel Ristine, acted up, according to one source, and "created unpleasant situations." Hoover, who attended every day of the trial, was well satisfied with Dasch's conduct.

Burger remained calm throughout his questioning. He gave clear and straightforward reasons for turning against the Nazis and for undermining Operation Pastorius. He had been falsely jailed by the SS and was bitter about being left in prison by his so-called friends in the Nazi party. Attorney General Biddle seemed satisfied with Burger's answers, which served to confirm that George Dasch was not a Nazi and had thoughts about opposing the sabotage operation as far back as Quenzsee.

The questions and testimony went on until July 27, 1942, when the trial finally came to an end. All eight men were sentenced to death. But

Continued on page 90

At the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., Room 5235 was converted into a courtroom for the trial of the Operation Pastorius conspirators. The generals of the military commission that presided are at the rear, while Attorney General Francis Biddle and the prosecution staff are on the right and defense attorneys are on the left. Behind them are the defendants. (Library of Congress)

the last. The final landing took place on November 29, 1944, when *U-1230* put two would-be German spies ashore at Frenchman's Bay on the Maine coast. The two men were Erich Gimpel, a German who had worked as an agent in Peru for several years, and William Colepaugh, a flighty young American infatuated with Nazi Germany but with no background in espionage. Their assignment was to find out as much as possible about the Manhattan Project, the U.S. effort to develop the atomic bomb, as well as to gather technical information on American shipbuilding and aircraft manufacturing.

The two men were rowed to shore by crew members; both were wearing civilian clothes. They were spotted by the son of the county deputy sheriff as they made their way to the nearest rail station, and the FBI was notified, but FBI agents were not able to locate the two. Gimpel and Colepaugh took a train to Manhattan, where they rented a flat and Gimpel built a shortwave radio.

Young Billy Colepaugh had an attack of conscience shortly afterward. Colepaugh faced a dilemma. He wanted Germany to win the war but did not want the United States to lose it. He went to the FBI and turned himself in, along with Erich Gimpel. Both men were in custody by December 30, 1944.

National Archives

Gimpel and Colepaugh arrived in the United States too late in the war to help the German cause, even if Colepaugh had not gone to the FBI. Both men were tried for espionage, found guilty, and sentenced to death by hanging. The war ended before the sentences could be carried out, and both men spent years in prison.

There may or may not have been other landings, but it is a reasonable possibility that others did take place. The FBI denies this, but J. Edgar Hoover had the power and influence to cover up any incident that might possibly have tarnished his image. □

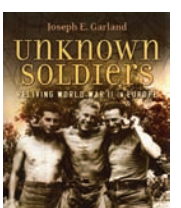
By Mason B. Webb

Surrounded by a multitude of followers at a parade in 1938, Adolf Hitler enjoys his power over 80 million Germans.
(Library of Congress)

A Megalomaniac's Lust for Power

Kershaw's biography of Adolf Hitler probes the depths of the Führer's twisted personality.

FEW MEN HAVE HAD AN IMPACT ON WORLD HISTORY EQUAL TO THAT OF ADOLF Hitler. His megalomania resulted in the deaths of millions and redrew the map of Europe. Even today his influence is still being felt. And, although scores of books have been written about the man, few writers have captured the total personality as completely and penetratingly as has Ian Kershaw in his monumental ***Hitler: A Biography*** (W.W. Norton, New York, 2008, 1,056 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $39.95, softcover).



Drawing on previously untapped sources and reexamining previous information, Kershaw, a professor at the University of Sheffield and the acclaimed author of numerous best-selling books of history, shows how Hitler's troubled childhood and youth built the foundation for his lust for power.

Kershaw then skillfully weaves the reader through Hitler's personal failures in Vienna and his growing hatred of Jews, his service in Kaiser Wilhelm II's army in World War I, his postwar ambitions to change Germany's destiny and seek revenge for the humiliating provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and the remarkable events that propelled him to the position of the most powerful man in Europe.

The author then brings the tale full circle by recounting Hitler's at first stunningly successful launching of the war and then the disastrous handling of military operations that led to the Third Reich's destruction.

The book, a one-volume edition of Kershaw's earlier two-volume set, is being hailed by critics as "masterful," "a masterpiece," and "the definitive biography of Hitler in our time," and we wholeheartedly agree. A better, more complete portrait of the man is unlikely ever to be written.

Unknown Soldiers: Reliving World War II in Europe, by Joseph E. Garland, Protean Press, Rockport, Mass., 2008, 496 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover.

As a soldier with the 45th Infantry Division, one of the most battle-hardened outfits in the U.S. Army, Joe Garland saw a lot of action. As a fine writer, he describes a great deal of what he and his platoon went through on the battlefields of Italy, France, and Germany. But, in spite of the fact that he has written more than 20 books, it took him over 50 years to finally put those experiences into words.

Suffering from "writer's block" he later attributed to then-unknown post-traumatic stress disorder (it was called "battle fatigue" then) as well as "survivor's guilt," Garland struggled to convert the scribbled notes he had begun in 1943 into a full-blown manuscript. Only after he started hunting down old buddies and began interviewing them did the book start to take form. It was worth the wait, for he deftly describes his transformation from callow youth, eager for battle, to a grizzled, disillusioned veteran.

As Garland writes in his opening paragraph, "Cold, gray and miserably rainy, New England was awash in the dregs of winter as I boarded the train from Boston's North Station with a mixed crowd of collegians for the hour's ride to the Army's induction center at Fort Devens. I was a Harvard junior of twenty on loan to my country, playing cool but nervous, poised on the brink of the Second of the Worst Wars, and about—not to be pushed—but to leap."

Another sample of his finely wrought prose, recounting a night in a foxhole a year later at Anzio: "I was temporarily with Nye's crew ... and I took over O'Keefe's geometrically carved

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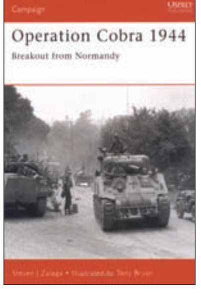

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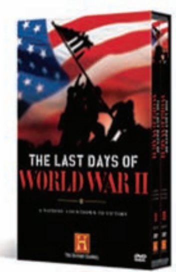

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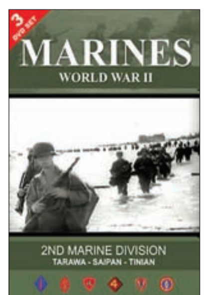

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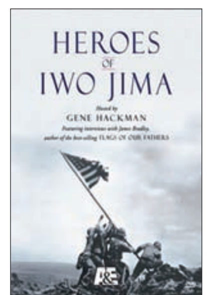

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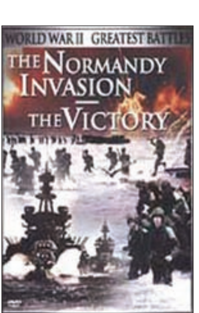

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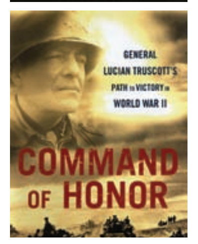
hole (he had the instincts of a mining engineer). My first night I was awakened by the tiny feet of a smallish rat scuttling nervously across my face, reconnoitering, no doubt, such a motionless body in such a neat grave."

Garland goes on to recount, sometimes using his own notes written from the time, official records, or interviews with his buddies, his musings on life, death, war, and the human condition.

One reviewer called *Unknown Soldiers* a "masterpiece" while another said it is an "incredible journalistic monument." It is all those things. And more.

New Georgia, Bougainville, and Cape Gloucester, by Eric Hammel, Zenith Press, Osceola, Wisc., 2008, 168 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover.



In his latest pictorial history of U.S. Marine Corps campaigns in the Pacific, acclaimed historian Eric Hammel has assembled hundreds of never-before-published photographs in a volume that graphically depicts the horrors and difficulties of jungle warfare.

Although American Marines had defeated Japanese forces during six months of grueling combat on Guadalcanal and its neighboring, festering islands, more hard fighting lay ahead in the Solomons if American forces were to neutralize Dai Nippon's powerful naval base at Rabaul. The battles of New Georgia, Bougainville, and Cape Gloucester, which were a vital part of that campaign, would turn out to be some of the toughest tests for the Marines in the entire war and would prove the mettle of "the few and the proud."

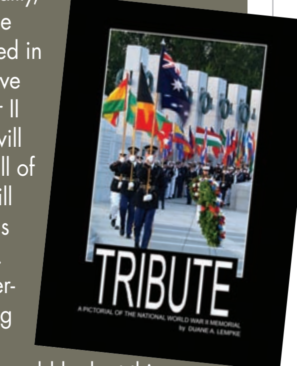
While Hammel's narrative is enlightening and compelling, it is the remarkable photos that grab and hold our attention—lines of troops slogging through knee-deep mud, corpses twisted in the agony of death, young faces of Marines filled with hope, fear, and determination. Rarely has one book so dramatically and graphically captured the human side of combat.

As Hammel has written, "There lies within this volume the largest collection of photos of Marines in the Solomons and Bismarcks that has been published to date, or maybe ever will be published."

Hammel's work is a fitting tribute to the men who endured unimaginable conditions to wrest these key islands away from a resourceful and determined enemy. He is to be commended for another superb achievement in documenting the legacy of the Leathernecks.

TRIBUTE: A Pictorial of the National World War II Memorial, by Duane A. Lemke, Tribute 4 Foundation, Alexandria, Va., 2008, 316 pp., $49.95, 9 X 12" hardcover.

The World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated on May 29, 2004. Photographer Duane A. Lemke, himself a 31-year veteran of the U.S. Army, was at the dedication. "As I attended the dedication ceremony on Memorial Day 2004, I realized that this very popular memorial represents more than words and 20th-century architecture. Physically, it is so much more than cut, constructed granite, sculptured bronze, selected quotes, and splashing water. After watching the faces of the WWII veterans, their spouses, and widows in attendance, I saw satisfaction and closure. As they moved around the site and reflected, the memorial became a part of them, and they became a part of the memorial's living history." Lemke was so inspired and moved by what he saw that he decided to put his skills as a photographer and writer to work to create the ultimate record of the memorial and its visitors. The result is a stunning volume of over 600 photographs of every aspect of the memorial at all times of day and in all seasons. An entire section is dedicated to the visiting veterans and their families as they toured the site. The inspiring photographs are bordered in white and rest on all-black pages. To maintain control of the project and its high quality, Lemke self-published the book and had it printed in Hong Kong. If you have visited the World War II Memorial, this book will bring you instant recall of its beauty, and you will see a number of things you missed at the site. The World War II veterans waited a very long time for this memorial and any one of them would look at this book with pride. It is much more than a tourist's guide to the memorial; it is a celebration of all those who served their country in the war. To order a copy of the book, go to www.TRIBUTE4foundation.com, e-mail TRIBUTE4found@aol.com, or write to TRIBUTE 4 Foundation, 7424 Salford Court, Alexandria, VA 22315. Add an additional $10.05 for shipping and handling, for a total of $60.



Command of Honor: General Lucian Truscott's Path to Victory in World War II, by H. Paul Jeffers, NAL Caliber, New York, 2008, 326 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover.

Ask anyone to list the great American generals of all time and the name of Lucian K. Truscott is likely to be noticeably absent. That is probably because Truscott was neither brash nor arrogant, nor a publicity hound wasteful of men's lives. He was, however, tough, resourceful, and entirely devoted to the men under his command—all qualities that made him one of the greatest generals of his (or any other) generation.

H. Paul Jeffers, a renowned journalist with over 70 books to his credit, has crafted an outstanding biography of this often overlooked American hero. According to Jeffers, the Texas-born, leather-jacketed Truscott, despite his sometimes gruff manner, was an extraordinarily loyal, humble man who led his troops from the front and fought the enemy with a tenacity and resourcefulness that made him one of the most respected commanders in the U.S. Army.

After serving in the cavalry corps during World War I, Truscott rose to the fore in World War II as he formed the first American commando units—which would soon become known as the Rangers—and then commanded the 3rd Infantry Division in brutal combat in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy before being tapped to command VI Corps following Major General John P. Lucas's perceived failure at Anzio.

After the Anzio breakout and subsequent capture of Rome, Truscott then led VI Corps during Seventh Army's swiftly successful invasion of southern France during Operation Dragoon in August 1944. So well did he conduct operations that he was chosen to command the newly formed XV Army. It was then back to Italy to take charge of Fifth Army following Mark Clark's promotion.

Following the destruction and surrender of German forces in Italy and the American victory in Europe, Truscott went on to command the U.S. Third Army in the months after Germany's capitulation.

A contemporary of his once said that Truscott was the general who "combined all of the best traits of Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton without any of their flaws."

Command of Honor is as appealing and honest as the general himself—a story of service and sacrifice by a man who lived for duty, honor, and courage during a time that demanded nothing less.

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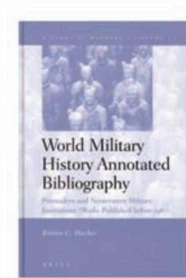

Barton C. Hacker

- November 2004
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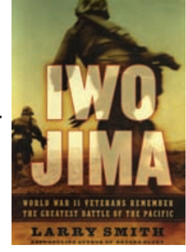
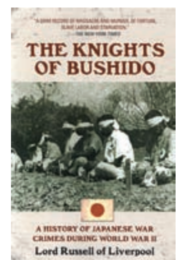
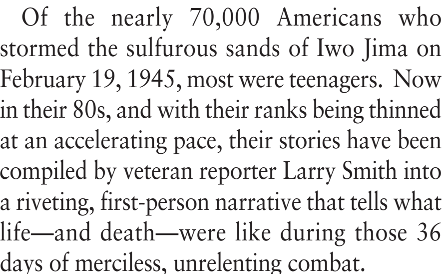




Iwo Jima: World War II Veterans Remember the Greatest Battle of the Pacific, by Larry Smith, W.W. Norton, New York, 2008, 345 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, $24.95, hardcover.

Of the nearly 70,000 Americans who stormed the sulfurous sands of Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945, most were teenagers. Now in their 80s, and with their ranks being thinned at an accelerating pace, their stories have been compiled by veteran reporter Larry Smith into a riveting, first-person narrative that tells what life—and death—were like during those 36 days of merciless, unrelenting combat.



Pulling no punches, the nearly two dozen veterans Smith interviewed paint a portrait in words of horror and heroism beyond measure, sparing none of the hardship or glory of their deeds.

The battle itself was a nightmare. The Japanese, as most people now know, were burrowed into miles of underground tunnels and had every foot of the island zeroed in for their machine guns, mortars, and artillery. No retreat was possible, so a battle to the last man was inevitable. Even while dying, enemy soldiers pulled the pins to grenades and pressed them under their bodies so that they would kill Americans who came to check if they were still alive.

When the smoke finally cleared, some 28,000 combatants lay dead, including 6,821 Americans. It was the Marine Corps' deadliest battle of all time.

Yet, doubtless because of the price paid, Iwo Jima remains to this day perhaps the most famous and celebrated of all Marine victories, an iconic symbol of devotion to duty and the price of freedom.

Although the battle of Iwo Jima is one of the best-known of all World War II battles, Smith and his interviewees bring a fresh perspective to its telling. Because of the unsparing descriptions of the fierceness of the fighting, Smith's *Iwo Jima* is a hard book to read—and an even harder one to forget. Highly recommended.

The Knights of Bushido: A History of Japanese War Crimes During World War II, by Lord Russell of Liverpool, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2008, 335 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $14.95, softcover.

Undoubtedly, many Americans, when they hear the words "war crimes" and "atrocities," think only of the Nazis and their terrible deeds while tending to forget, dismiss, or be altogether ignorant of what was taking place in Asia and the Pacific. While the Japanese may not have wiped out millions of people in exter-

WWII HISTORY MAGAZINE

Third Annual Book of the Year Awards

Once again there was a surfeit of outstanding books related to World War II—so many that the editors of *WWII History* had a most difficult time choosing the best of the best. The nominees for the award are:

- *No Simple Victory,* by Norman Davies (reviewed March 2008)
- *The Greatest Battle,* by Andrew Nagorski (reviewed March 2008)
- *Down to the Sea,* by Bruce Henderson (reviewed May 2008)
- *Ike: An American Hero,* by Michael Korda (reviewed May 2008)
- *15 Stars,* by Stanley Weintraub (reviewed July 2008)
- *The Ghost Mountain Boys,* by James Campbell (reviewed September 2008)
- *Hell in the Pacific,* by Gordon Rottman and Derrick Wright (reviewed November 2008)
- *Hitler,* by Ian Kershaw (reviewed in this issue)
- *Unknown Soldiers,* by Joseph Carland (reviewed in this issue)

And the winner is … *No Simple Victory.* With surgical precision, Norman Davies dissects the common perceptions of World War II and forces readers to reconsider what they think they know. As the book jacket says, "Powerfully argued, compellingly written, and devastating in its conclusions, Davies's reexamination is a powerful reminder that until we have established the real answers to basic factual matters concerning the Second World War, we cannot pass judgment on wider issues."

mination camps, their treatment of conquered peoples, as well as doctors, nurses, and prisoners of war, was no less egregious, no less horrific, no less criminal.

Documenting many of the Japanese atrocities is Edward F.L. Langley, the second baron of Liverpool, in his new book, *The Knights of Bushido*. Basing his book on evidence and documents produced at various war crimes trials, and from testimony given by eyewitnesses of atrocities to war crimes investigation commissions set up after the war by the Allies to bring the criminals to justice, Lord Russell has created a stunning indictment of Japanese soldiers and officers who perverted the warriors' code in their brutal treatment of helpless captives.

As Lord Russell writes in the preface, "I regret that it has been necessary to include so much that is unpleasant, but it would have been impossible to have done otherwise without, at the same time, failing to achieve the whole aim of the book, namely to give a concise but comprehensive account of Japanese war crimes. Nevertheless, for every revolting incident which has been described, a hundred have been omitted."

With powerful text and photos not for the squeamish, *The Knights of Bushido* makes for uncomfortable, but vitally important, reading.

A Magnificent Disaster: The Failure of Market Garden, The Arnhem Operation, September 1944, by David Bennett, Casemate, Drexel Hill, Penn., 2008, 286 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover.

Considered one of the worst military disasters of the entire war suffered by the British and Americans, Market Garden, the ill-conceived brainchild of the usually overly cautious Field Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, Operation Market Garden led to the deaths and capture of thousands of Allied troops.

Since its first publication in 1974, Cornelius Ryan's *A Bridge Too Far* has stood as the definitive account of Market Garden, the Allies' grandiose attempt to seize several key bridges over the Rhine River in Holland by airborne and glider troops in September 1944.

But, as fine a book as *A Bridge Too Far* was, *Magnificent Disaster* author David Bennett had long felt that Ryan's work told only part of the story. Bennett asserts that the Ryan book "is extremely weak on the strategic background and objectives of Market Garden" and that it "fails to convey the fact that Market Garden was an operation by all of Second Army, not just of XXX Corps; the operations of VIII and XII Corps are not even mentioned!"

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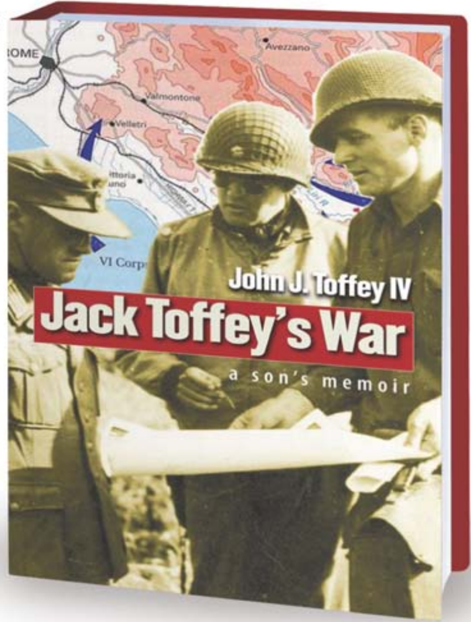
—Andy Carroll, editor of the *New York Times* bestseller, *War Letters*



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Simulation Gaming

By Eric T. Baker

Burut adds an online death match mode to **Ubersoldier II.**

One of the signs of how many games devoted to the first person portrayal of the in the trenches, down the rifle sight experience of combat in World War II there have been is that Ubisoft is now releasing **Brother's in Arms Hell's Highway**, a big-budget, multiplatform (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) game that recreates the Allies' defeat by the Germans in Operation Market Garden. As a general marketing tenet, game companies like to make games where the player ultimately wins; famously, only General Montgomery could characterize Market Garden as victory.

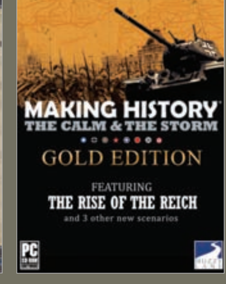
The game is both first-person and squad-based in that you control your character and up to three squads of AI guided soldiers. Like other squad-based games, you direct the squads by pulling up the tactical map and marking where you want them to go. You can also send move and attack commands while in the first-person view. The tactical map can be improved by moving your character to one of the lookout points on each scenario. It is technically possible to simply run and gun the enemy in many situations, but the intent of the game is that one squad is used to pin the enemy (the mark over their heads changes when they are pinned) while the others flank and kill them.

As in other *Brothers* games, there is a real effort to put you into the time and place of the battle. Actual veterans of the campaign were interviewed and historical records were consulted at length. At the same time, the designers want a game that will hold the attention of teenagers, so the "cinematic" aspects of the game that tell the story of the unit while you are fighting through the levels includes some *Matrix*-y scenes of heads exploding and bodies being torn apart as well as scenes of befriending civilians who later meet grim ends at the German's hands.

This installment of *Brothers* has been a long time coming and the art work looks like it was begun for less powerful systems than the ones it is now on. The trade-off is that the extra time has given to the game play and the AI and the cinematic elements have a polish and smoothness that many current gen games lack. We seem to still be generations from AI characters that will fight as well as human ones, but your squad mates in this game are as likely to go where they are meant to go and fight who they are meant to fight as any in this genre. The designers of this game wanted to make you a part of this heartbreaking campaign and with only a few glitches, they succeeded.

Making History the Calm and the Storm Gold Edition from Muzzy Lane Software for the PC is a turn-based strategy game set in the World War II era. By design, however, it is not tied to any particular historical path or event of the war. This is a game that has units representing Bulgarian cavalry and Turkish infantry, just in case you should want to play the era from the point of view of either of those nations. It's not easy to play China so skillfully that it ends up building jet fighters and overrunning India, but it is certainly possible.

Despite being on a computer, the feel of *Making History* is that of a board game. You micromanages cities and territories for resources, production, military units, and diplomatic relations. Various starting scenarios come with the game and there is a built- in editor that allows you to make your own, or you can join the game's community and download ones created by other players. This title is a long way from the multimillion dollar budget of *Brothers*, but it does a good and interesting job with what it has. □



operation, Bennett has gone back to the original primary written sources while relying less than Ryan did on oral histories.

The result, not surprisingly, is a truer and more complete presentation of the entire operation. In his detailed consideration of logistics, communications, intelligence, and military culture, as well as leadership and tactical enterprise, David Bennett supplies some intriguing conclusions in this, his first book-length work. A "must read."

An Army in Skirts: The World War II Letters of Frances DeBra Brown, by Frances D. Brown, Indiana Historical Society Press, Indianapolis, Ind., 2008, 264 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $27.95, hardcover.

During World War II, over 150,000 women served in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC). Strongly opposed by some in Congress who disliked the idea of women in uniform, ridiculed by some critics as the "Petticoat Army," and derided by others as being nothing more than a large group of "loose women" who could march in step, the WAACs (as well as their counterparts in the Air Corps, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard) performed valuable services, not the least of which was freeing up more men for combat duty.

The service and contribution of these women has gone largely ignored, but Frances DeBra Brown has gone a long way in rectifying that oversight. As she says in the preface of *An Army in Skirts,* "Those who had signed up for training had been warned that their work would 'be no picnic for glamour girls".... Some had a personal stake in the war, as they were the siblings of men in the service and widows of soldiers, sailors, and Marines killed at Pearl Harbor and Bataan. They tackled their training with enthusiasm, prompting one grizzled sergeant to declare that the women recruits learned 'more in a day than my squads of men used to learn in a week.'"

A talented writer and artist (in addition to dozens of photos, the book is sprinkled with her sketches and watercolors), Brown, through her letters to friends and family, provides the reader with a breezy yet detailed look at life in the WAACs—from training in Georgia and assignments in South Dakota, Florida, London, and Paris—and a life that nearly ended during the German "buzz bomb" raids on London.

Chock full of interesting details and written in a lively style, *An Army in Skirts* is highly recommended. □

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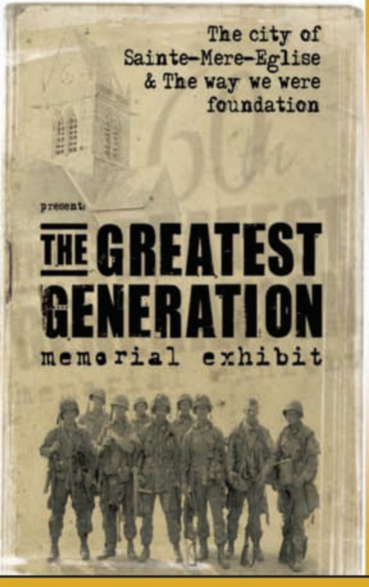

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Road to War

Continued from page 69

brought Chinese bearers along to help carry the wounded. The next three days were touch and go for the ragged, pain-wracked survivors. They hid from circling Japanese aircraft, not knowing these planes were actually performing search-and-rescue duties.

The local Chinese were poor villagers for the most part, and though they were somewhat fearful of Japanese retaliation they freely gave all they had. *Panay* survivors gratefully ate rice and drank cup after cup of bitter tea. After three days of fear and hardship, the survivors were picked up by the *Ladybird* and *Panay*'s sister gunboat, USS *Oahu*. They eventually reached Shanghai, where they were debriefed by Admiral Harry E. Yarnell aboard his flagship, the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta*.

President Roosevelt was outraged when he heard of the Japanese attack on *Panay*. Secretary of State Cordell Hull was scheduled to meet with Japanese Ambassador Hirosi Saito at 1 o'clock, so the president lost no time in sending a memorandum to Hull that expressed his dismay in no uncertain terms. The note, typed on White House stationery and dated 12:30 PM, December 13, 1937, did not mince words. Secretary Hull was instructed to tell the Japanese ambassador "that the President is deeply shocked and concerned by the news of indiscriminate bombing of American and other non-Chinese vessels on the Yangtze."

The memo further expected that the Japanese government render "full expressions of regret and proffer of full compensation," and that "methods guaranteeing against a repetition of any similar attack in the future" be established. The memo was initialed "FDR" in a bold hand. Roosevelt held a series of cabinet meetings to discuss the issue. There had to be some way of curbing Japanese aggression in Asia. He secretly contacted the British government and suggested a joint naval blockade of the Japanese Home Islands. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain rejected the idea out of hand. Chamberlain disliked Roosevelt personally, felt the New Deal was a farrago of half-baked economic theories, and considered the Americans to be totally unreliable. If political push came to diplomatic shove, the prime minister felt the Americans might well leave Britain holding the bag.

The Japanese government moved quickly to avert any possibility of war with the United States. Formal apologies were publicly expressed, and on April 22, 1938, the Japanese government paid $2,214,007.36 as settlement for the *Panay*, the loss of the three tankers, personal losses, and casualties. These gestures did much to placate Congress and American public opinion. Some of the more isolationist politicians wondered why the U.S. military was in China in the first place. If all American forces were withdrawn, there would be no repetition of the *Panay* incident.

Roosevelt knew that in 1937 the United States was not prepared for war with Japan. The British had rejected any joint punitive action, and isolationism was still a powerful force within American society. It was a bitter pill, but the Roosevelt administration decided to accept the Japanese apology and later financial compensation.

There was one problem, however. Norman Alley of Universal had shot a lot of film during the attack, and some sequences showed Japanese dive-bombers flying just a few hundred feet above their intended victims. Roosevelt personally asked Alley to delete about 30 feet of the most incriminating footage just prior to its public release into American movie theaters. Those crucial 30 feet of film exposed Japanese claims of ignorance as lies and thus were too inflammatory. Alley granted the president's request.

Many years later, Commander Okumiya wrote an account of the *Panay* affair that claimed that he and his squadron did not recognize the American gunboat. Okumiya insisted that the Japanese pilots thought they were attacking fleeing Chinese ships loaded with enemy soldiers. That may well be, but troubling questions remain. Why didn't the dive-bomber pilots see the American flags that were displayed at several points? Even if they did not see the flags on their initial run, why weren't the Stars and Stripes spotted as the attack progressed?

The ultranationalists within the Japanese military were unrepentant. If anything, men like Colonel Hashimoto were disappointed that major hostilities had not broken out between the United States and Japan. Rear Admiral Mitsuzawa, commander in chief of the Japanese Imperial Naval Air Forces in China, was relieved of command and sent home. Admiral Hasegawa also accepted responsibility, though there is no evidence he was involved in any way. Colonel Hashimoto was also sent home, but this was window dressing and involved little real disgrace. It was said that Hashimoto was a member of the secret Black Dragon Society, a group of hardcore nationalists who actively worked for the establishment of Japanese hegemony in Asia.

The Japanese people were not sympathetic with their military, and the American embassy

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in Tokyo was flooded with expressions of regret and sorrow. Tokyo schoolchildren contributed $10,000 in pennies for a *Panay* victim relief fund. A young Japanese woman even cut off her hair as a gesture of repentance and mourning and gave the tresses to the American ambassador. The ultranationalists in the Army and government were unmoved by these popular gestures; they were determined to establish Japanese hegemony in Asia as almost any cost.

The *Panay* incident marked a significant turning point in U.S.-Japanese relations. Before *Panay,* the Roosevelt administration was mildly pro-Chinese but too preoccupied with domestic affairs to resist Japanese aggression. After Panay, American foreign policy took steps, halting at first but gradually gathering momentum, to actively oppose Japanese conquest of Asia.

The isolationists responded by trying to introduce the so-called Ludlow Amendment to the Constitution. If adopted, this would have required a nationwide referendum before the nation would go to war. The one exception would be if American soil were actually invaded. Roosevelt lobbied hard to defeat the measure, which was rejected by the House of Representatives on January 10, 1938.

Roosevelt's response was both public and private. He privately explored ways to freeze Japanese assets in the United States, but these probes were premature and came to nothing. In February 1938, the venerable Plan Orange was dusted off and revised to include a possible naval blockade of the Japanese Home Islands. Plan Orange, which formulated U.S. strategic objectives in the Pacific in the event of war with Japan, had been around in various forms since 1919.

On a more concrete, public level Roosevelt enthusiastically supported the Vinson-Trammel Naval Expansion Act, a $1.1 billion expansion of the United States Navy that would increase America's two-ocean fleet by 69 vessels over 10 years. The most important part of the measure, at least in retrospect, was the increase of the nation's aircraft carrier force. New carriers like *Yorktown* and *Enterprise* were going to play a significant role in the Pacific War to come.

The *Panay* incident was the first step on the long road to war. It was as if the loss of the gunboat awakened a somnolent Roosevelt administration, raising awareness that Japan was just as great a threat as Hitler's Germany. The embattled group of "river rats" aboard *Panay* had not fought in vain. □

Eric Niderost is a college professor in Hayward, California.

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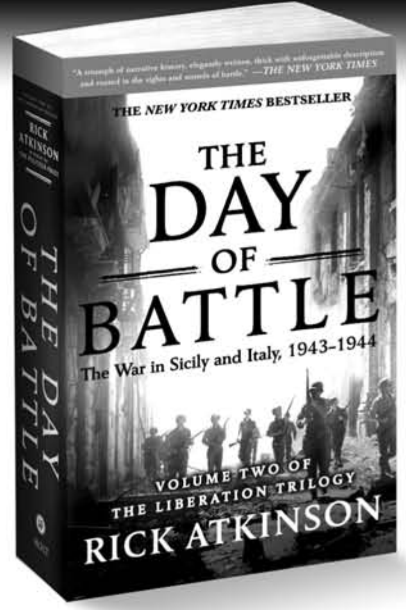

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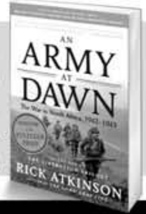

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Call of Duty

Continued from page 47

He noted, "I loved my job with the police department. I've always been very fortunate—not everybody gets to work at what they like to do."

Although he really had no time for dating, one day his uncle who worked at a movie studio fixed Compton up with a young lady who worked as a secretary there. Her name was Donna. The two of them hit it off perfectly from the first date, and they were married in October 1947. They had two daughters, Syndee and Tracy, and their marriage would last a lifetime.

Despite his very full schedule, Compton noted, "Donna hung in there and never complained once about the life we were leading. She always had a smile. If I lived another 80 lifetimes, I could never say enough good things about her."

In June 1949 Compton graduated from law school and passed the bar exam, but he stayed on with the police department. He was transferred to the Detective Bureau, an assignment he called "some of the grimmest work I would ever encounter."

After less than a year with the bureau, he was transferred to the Central Burglary Division, an assignment he thoroughly enjoyed for the next two years. With his law degree in hand, and through the connections he was making doing police work, Compton left the force in 1951 and was hired as a deputy district attorney for Los Angeles County, the first ex-police officer in L.A. to make such a switch. In this capacity, over the next two decades he found himself involved in a number of high-profile cases, but none more so than the trial of Sirhan Sirhan, the man who shot presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy in June 1968 at L.A.'s Ambassador Hotel.

Compton said, "The senator lived until the early morning hours of June 6, 1968. Ironic for me—June 6 would always be D-Day in my mind. Twenty-four years earlier, June 6, 1944, I had parachuted into Normandy."

He also noted, "Because the crime happened in their jurisdiction, the LAPD was the primary investigative bureau responsible for the case." Compton was put in charge of the investigative task force.

The massive investigation went on for months, and an insurmountable mountain of assembled evidence built up. Theories that the gunman was part of a larger conspiracy were shattered by the careful investigation by Compton's team. On January 7, 1969, seven months after the assassination, the case went to trial. Fifteen weeks later, the case was handed to the jury, which came back with a guilty verdict; Sirhan Sirhan was sentenced to death in the gas chamber.

"We had won," said Compton, "but I felt anything but triumphant. Justice was done. Sirhan Sirhan killed Senator Kennedy. Under laws established by a civilized society, a killer received the justice he deserved." In 1972, however, California abolished the death penalty and Sirhan's sentence was changed to life imprisonment.

In 1970, California Governor Ronald Reagan appointed Buck Compton to the position of Associate Justice of the California Courts of Appeal.

"I was ecstatic," he said. "I never dreamed I would be offered such a position. It was very rare for someone who hadn't served at a lower level such as Superior Court to go directly to the Courts of Appeal." As far as he knows, he is the only ex-police officer ever to sit on the Appellate Court in California, if not the whole country.

He remained on the bench hearing appeals and writing opinions until he stepped down in 1990 at age 68. He and Donna then moved to the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington State and built a home to which they retired; their two daughters lived nearby. Sadly, in 1994 Donna developed serious medical problems and passed away suddenly. Compton was devastated.

"I only cry at three things: the death of my father, the love I have for America, and the memory of Donna," he said. The island house became too lonely for him and so he moved in with his daughter Tracy and her family in their home on the mainland. Life, however, still held new opportunities for Compton.

In the early 1990s, he was interviewed by historian Stephen Ambrose for a book he was writing about E Company, 506th PIR; it was entitled *Band of Brothers*. The book became a best seller.

Then, after the stunning success of Steven Spielberg's 1998 World War II epic *Saving Private Ryan,* which did much to rekindle public interest in World War II, plans were made to turn *Band of Brothers* into a 10-part miniseries for HBO. Along with several other E Company veterans, Compton became an unofficial technical adviser for the series, often conversing with and giving tips to actor Neal McDonough, who played him in the film.

Although he was not totally pleased with the artistic license that was taken for dramatic purposes, Compton realized that certain scenes had to be invented or reality altered for the sake of viewer impact. He was pleased, however, with all the attention and recognition that the book and series focused on the members of his old unit.

"The only downside," he said, "is that not

everybody who deserved recognition got it. The starting point of Easy Company was about 150 guys, maybe 200, while we were in combat in Europe. A lot of them did some pretty brave things and suffered a lot of hardship. Many were wounded and killed. All kinds of guys did as much as or more than I did, whose names were never heard of or mentioned.

"That's not anybody's fault. It would be simply impossible, if you were in Ambrose's spot, to write a book that mentioned everybody. The book and the series had to be limited in scope. But I can understand that there are guys who feel left out. Like, Why is Compton mentioned and not me? I don't know the answer to that. But I hope people will take it that we were representatives of combat soldiers everywhere."

In thinking of other "combat soldiers everywhere," Compton acknowledged that there is a certain amount of "glamour" that attaches to paratroopers "due to the fact that we jumped out of airplanes. But we didn't have it as hard, for instance, as the guys in the 1st or 4th or 29th Divisions, who were grinding it out day after day in Europe, many of whom were not pulled back from the line to England after 30 days like we were. Or beyond that, the poor guys who served in the Pacific. I wouldn't have traded with the guys in the Pacific for anything. None of them got the recognition we did."

Living today in Anacortes, Washington, Compton is a volunteer for the Skagit County Republican Party headquarters, gives a variety of lectures, and even has a radio commentary program.

Compton also remains fiercely proud of his military service, yet sincerely humble. When thanked for his service, he replies, "I spent three years on active duty, saw some combat in Europe, and suffered a minor wound. I got back in one piece and had the luxury of having a great family life and a rewarding career. I consider three years and a wound a small price to pay for the privilege of being born in America. The people to whom we all must pay our respects and honor for their service are those who gave life and limb in performing their duty."

As he closes the story of his life, Buck Compton leaves the reader of his new book with one final thought: America is still the land of unlimited opportunity. "You can have anything or be anything you want in this country if you put your mind to it," he says. "Don't let anybody take that away from you." □

Denver-based Flint Whitlock, author of several books on World War II, is a former Army paratrooper, and is working on a book about the D-Day airborne assault.

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Continued from page 77

Biddle recommended leniency for both Dasch and Burger because they had given information to the FBI. President Roosevelt listened to Biddle and reduced the sentences of both men. Dasch's sentence was commuted to 30 years in prison; Burger was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Roosevelt's reduction of the two sentences both astonished and angered Hoover. Up to that time, everything had gone his way. Even though Dasch would not be executed, he would still be in prison. Hoover would do his best to make certain that no one would hear his story. Hoover never seemed to be troubled about Burger, probably because Burger was always so passive.

As it turned out, the six condemned men were neither shot nor hanged. At the District jail, the electric chair had replaced the gallows in the 1930s. On the morning of August 8, 1942, they were escorted to death row, one at a time, and then to the execution chamber about 100 yards away. The exact order in which the men were executed was kept secret, but it was customary at the District jail to perform multiple executions in alphabetical order.

This meant that Haupt was first. "Haupt was seated in the electric chair at one minute past noon," a witness later wrote. After Haupt, it was Heinck, Kerling, Neubauer, Quirin, and finally Thiel. Each execution took an average of 10 minutes and 30 seconds. The entire procedure, from first to last, took one hour and three minutes. It was considered the fastest multiple execution on record.

Dasch and Burger were transferred to the federal prison at Danbury, Connecticut, to begin serving their sentences. Dasch was moved to several other prisons during the next few years, including Atlanta, Georgia; and Leavenworth, Kansas. He was refused permission to have any connection with the outside world. He was even refused a pencil, in case he should write down his testimony and somehow smuggle it out of prison.

Hoover got everything he wanted out of Operation Pastorius. He received the recognition he was looking for and was acclaimed a national hero for rounding up eight enemy saboteurs within days of their landing in the United States. President Roosevelt even authorized a bill for an "appropriate medal of honor" for Hoover.

Newspaper and magazine accounts praised Hoover and vilified Dasch. Burger was usually left out of these accounts, or mentioned only in passing. To make certain that writers used the FBI's version of Operation Pastorius when they were researching an article, the FBI produced a five-page press release called "George Dasch and the Nazi Saboteurs." In this account, the Bureau implies that Dasch gave evidence against the other men only after he had been "taken into custody" and had been thoroughly interrogated by FBI agents.

This release does admit that Dasch turned himself in to the FBI, but only because his group had been discovered on the beach by Coast Guardsman John Cullen. "Perhaps he thought the whole project so grandiose as to be impractical," the release read, "and wanted to protect himself before some of his companions took action on similar doubts." In other words, it implied that Dasch went to the FBI only because he was afraid that his companions would turn on him first.

Hoover did such an excellent job of covering up Dasch's role and circulating the FBI version that it endured for years. In spite of his efforts, however, staff reporters at *Newsweek* magazine got wind of Dasch's actual role in the sabotage plot. Hoover found out that *Newsweek* had the story and tried to keep it from being published. He did not kill the story but managed to have it heavily censored. The story appeared in *Newsweek*'s November 12, 1945, edition, and reported that Dasch and Burger were directly responsible for defusing Operation Pastorius. It did not mention Hoover's attempts to persuade Dasch to plead guilty to sabotage or mention Hoover in any negative manner.

In 1948, both Dasch and Burger were released from prison on a pardon from President Harry S. Truman, which is customary for imprisoned spies and saboteurs when a war comes to an end. Both men were also ordered to be deported to Germany. As soon as J. Edgar Hoover found out about the pardon, he had both men rushed out of the country so quickly that neither Dasch's American-born wife nor his attorney knew anything about what had happened until Dasch was on his way to Germany.

Throughout the rest of Dasch's life, he always expected that he would receive some sort of pardon that would clear him of his conviction and allow him to return to the United States. He died in 1992, at the age of 88, still expecting that someone in Washington would undo what J. Edgar Hoover had done. □

David Alan Johnson resides in Union, New Jersey. This article is an excerpt from his forthcoming book, BETRAYAL: The True Story of J. Edgar Hoover and the Nazi Saboteurs Captured During World War Two, *published by Hippocrene Books.*

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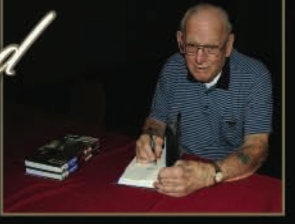

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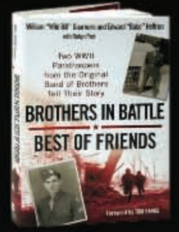

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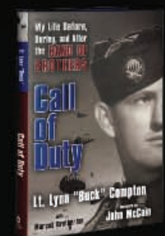

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