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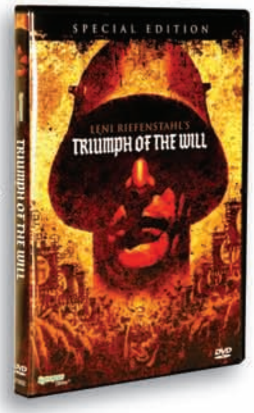
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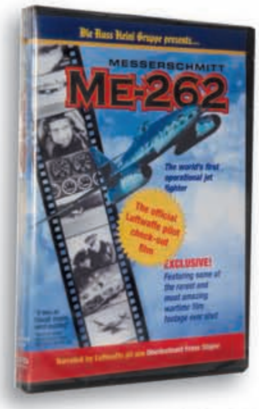
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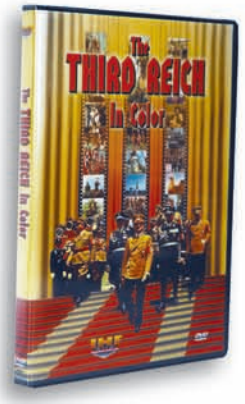
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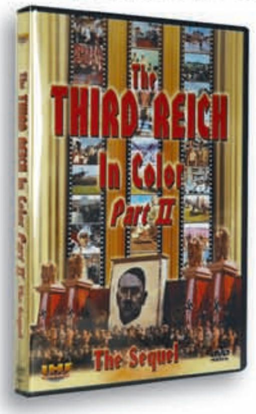
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Part 2 features more remarkable color footage, including: The Spanish Civil War, Invasion of Norway, Operation Barbarossa, Northern Africa, The War in the Pacific, The Invasion of Normandy, Wehrmacht in Retreat, Soviet Soldiers in Berlin, and Hermann Goering in Allied captivity. English commentary, color, 100 minutes.

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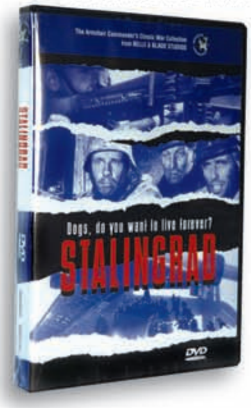
STALINGRAD
"DOGS, DO YOU WANT TO LIVE FOREVER?"


Dogs, do you want to live forever?
STALINGRAD

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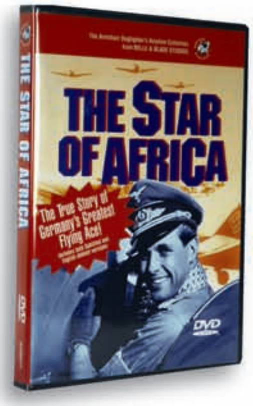
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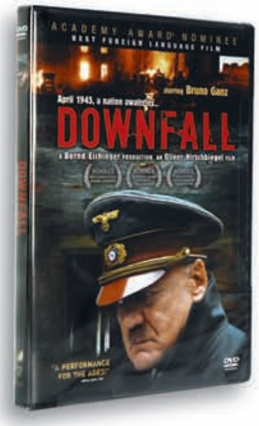
DOWNFALL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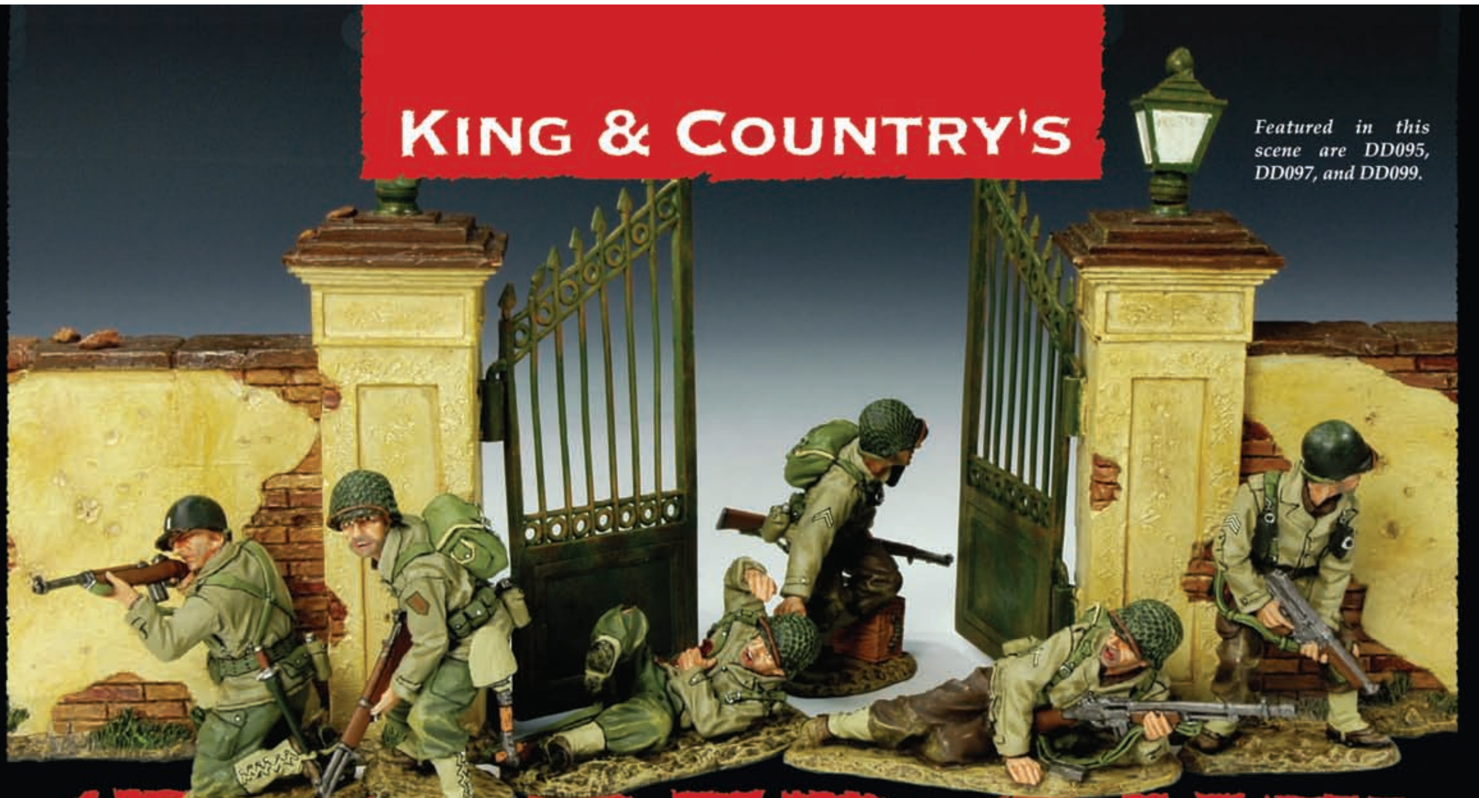

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Editorial

Pearl Cornioley led French Resistance Fighters.

WHEN PEARL WITHERINGTON CORNIOLEY DIED QUIETLY LAST FEBRUARY AT the age of 93 in a retirement home in the Loire Valley of France, some who thought they knew her well may have been surprised to learn that she had risked her life during World War II as an agent for the British Special Operations Executive (SOE).

The young woman, who had escaped from occupied France at the end of 1940 and made her way with family members to London, was determined to strike back at the Nazis. In September 1943, she parachuted into France and began a career of covert operations against the enemy. By 1944, she had assumed command of a network of resistance fighters in the Valencay-Issoudun-Chateauroux area. The efforts of the 1,500-fighter force she led were so successful that the Germans placed a bounty equivalent to one million francs on her head.

Although her training with the SOE had been somewhat unremarkable, it was noted in her file, which was made public by the British government after her death, that she was perhaps the most accurate with a rifle and pistol of any individual, male or female, to train up to that time. Prior to the German invasion of France on May 10, 1940, Pearl had become engaged to Henri Cornioley. After they were separated, Henri was taken prisoner by the Germans. He subsequently escaped, and the two were reunited when Pearl returned to France. Henri worked closely with Pearl, and eventually the couple reached London, where they were married in October 1944.

According to Pearl's file, she sometimes hid secret messages in the hem of her skirt. She worked as a courier, and even posed as a cosmetics salesperson. Her network of fighters was particularly active on D-Day and during the weeks that followed. Reportedly, the Germans sent a force of 2,000 soldiers to deal with the resistance network and subjected some of their positions to a 14-hour artillery barrage.

On June 11, four days after the landing, a lengthy battle took place, and while the resistance lost 24 fighters, the Germans suffered 86 casualties. Pearl's network eventually accounted for as many as 1,000 enemy soldiers. Resistance fighters also severed an important rail line from southern France to Normandy approximately 800 times, seriously delaying the arrival of German reinforcements to the area of heavy fighting. Cornioley personally was said to have taken charge of the surrender of 18,000 German soldiers. On several occasions, she survived brushes with death, moving through enemy lines, aiding downed Allied airmen, and once hiding in a cornfield as the Germans fired into the midst of the dense stalks.

Following the war, Pearl and Henri returned to Paris, where they found employment as a secretary for the World Bank and a pharmacist, respectively. They also raised a daughter named Claire. Pearl was recommended for the Military Cross but apparently did not receive the medal because she was a woman. Although she was to be honored as a Member of the British Empire (MBE), she declined that recognition. Her reason was simple. She had been recommended for the civilian version rather than the military one. She was said to have responded that her service during World War II had been anything but "civil."

Cornioley waited until 2006 to receive the coveted parachute wings that she had actually earned during the war. In 2004, Queen Elizabeth II visited Paris and conferred upon her the title of Commander of the British Empire (CBE). She was also awarded the French Legion d'Honneur. In 1997, her autobiography, *Pauline,* was published, and many believe that the story of her wartime exploits, including her romance with Henri, formed the basis for the novel *Charlotte Gray* by Sebastian Faulks, although the author has denied any link.

As the ranks of living World War II veterans diminish steadily, the passing of such a colorful figure as Pearl Cornioley is worthy of note. Further, it prompts the historian to wonder what future secrets will be revealed about other heroes as time inevitably marches on.

Michael E. Haskew

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Dispatches

Dear Editor:

In "Secret Agent Man," Peter Kross describes the outstanding British Mosquito plane as being "made of wood, which gave it tremendous speed and maneuverability." It was, indeed, made of wood, but that is not why it had very good speed and maneuverability. Those attributes were because it was endowed with outstanding engines and design.

The engines (there were two) were Rolls-Royce Merlins, some with over 1,700 horsepower each. In later versions, they were supercharged, which, with pressurized cabins, allowed very high altitude performance and gave this excellent aircraft speeds of over 400 mph. (Some were equipped with nitrous-oxide injection, which allowed short bursts of even higher speed.)

The De Havilland design, one of the most advanced for the time, was light partly because many Mosquitos had either very light armament or none at all and usually carried only two crew members. It featured large wing and control surface areas, which, with its very good power to weight ratio, made it able to out-maneuver most fighters of the period. The Mosquito was, without question, one of the very best aircraft of World War II. It is no wonder the Germans sent "Zigzag" to try to destroy the source!

Louis M. Linxwiler, Jr.
Mesa, Arizona

Dear Editor,

I was a child during WWII, spending summers in Westhampton, Long Island. The Thunderbolts used to fly over our beach, out to sea, from the nearby Suffolk County air force base, with guys learning to fly them. I enjoyed WWII, one of the few lucky people.

When I got drafted in 1958, we were using Garand M-1s at Fort Dix, Basic Training. I hit my target using it to throw a rifle grenade, and had a bruise on my shoulder for the better part of a year as a result. I suppose I wasn't holding the rifle right when I fired it.

To add my take to Sam McGowan's "Fateful Decision," killing civilians on purpose to save combatants lives is immoral. If we get nuked, your readers (any that are left) may come around to my point of view.

Philip Martin
via e-mail

Dear Editor,

On page 22 of your Aug./Sept. 2008 issue, there is a picture of two Bobbies and a German sentry on the island of Guernsey. The caption notes that "the Channel Islands were the only British territory to endure occupation by the Nazis during World War II."

The Channel Islands have never been part of the United Kingdom. They and their people are the remnant of the Dukedom of Normandy, from whence William the Bastard sailed to conquer England in 1066. This worked out well for William as he got to trade in his "the Bastard" moniker for "the Conqueror."

One might claim that Normandy proper has been occupied by the French for the last 800 years, though the odds of the Channel Islanders sending an invasion force in for D-Day the Sequel are at best slim.

The Channel Islands are "owned" by the Crown. When Queen Elizabeth visits the isles, her title is Duke of Normandy, a title passed down from William, independent of the British state. As Duke Elizabeth she wields much more power than as the figurehead monarch of the UK back in London.

This error in reference to occupied British territory occurs in every WWII history I have ever read, so it's completely understandable that it slipped by your excellent editorial staff. I only learned about it from a retired British officer I met in The Shepherds Tavern in London, which was a RAF hangout during the war.

What was even more interesting for me was that he invited me for lunch the next day, promising to show me a unique souvenir.

His forebears had served in the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812. He took out a wooden box and produced two spoons, a cup, and five buttons, all looted from the White House when the British burned it down. A letter from his sticky-fingered officer ancestor stated the buttons were ripped off one of President Madison's coats, the cup and spoons from the president's dining set.

This put a whole new perspective on war souveneirs for me. One doesn't usually think of America as a victim of this sort of thing. I can just imagine one of President Washington's set of false teeth on the mantel of some old line regiment's officers mess back in Old Blighty.

Mike Gordeuk
Garwood, New Jersey

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Found: *Rare Gestapo SS Rifle*

with Special History from WWII *!!*

The **German Gestapo SS**, headed by Heinrich Himmler, set up the infamous Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in upper Austria; and the adjacent Steyr factory, using select, skilled prisoner labor in an attempt to keep up with the need for war material, began producing ‘bnz’-marked Mauser K98k rifles for the German army by late 1940. The ‘bnz’ code was an attempt to conceal the source of the rifle. These ‘bnz’ rifles were of Superior Quality, because, fearing sabotage, the Gestapo SS imposed extraordinary quality control measures.

In 1943 Himmler set up a second rifle assembly line with even tighter controls at the Steyr factory to produce the Highest-Quality rifles for his elite SS troops. These special rifles were marked with an SS rune (ϟ) in addition to the Steyr ‘bnz’ code. Fortunately, the U.S. 8th, 9th and 15th Army Air Forces put an end to this special SS production in 1944.

That was **Over 60 years Ago**. *Never Again!* Meanwhile, lucky collectors have snapped up almost every one of the few SS rifles that were made. We were extremely fortunate to find a small number of ‘bnz’-marked rifles, and an even smaller number of the rare (ϟ) rune-marked SS rifles.

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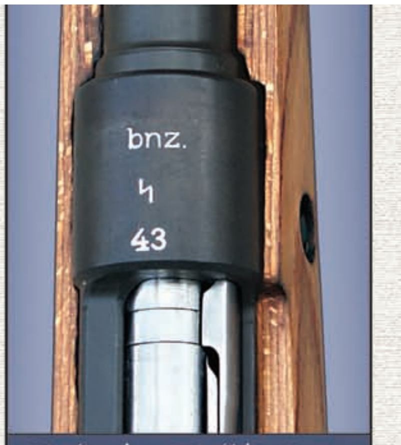

The ‘bnz’ and the ‘ϟ’ indicate this rifle was assembled by Gestapo prisoners for the exclusive use of the Elite SS.

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Letter of Provenance
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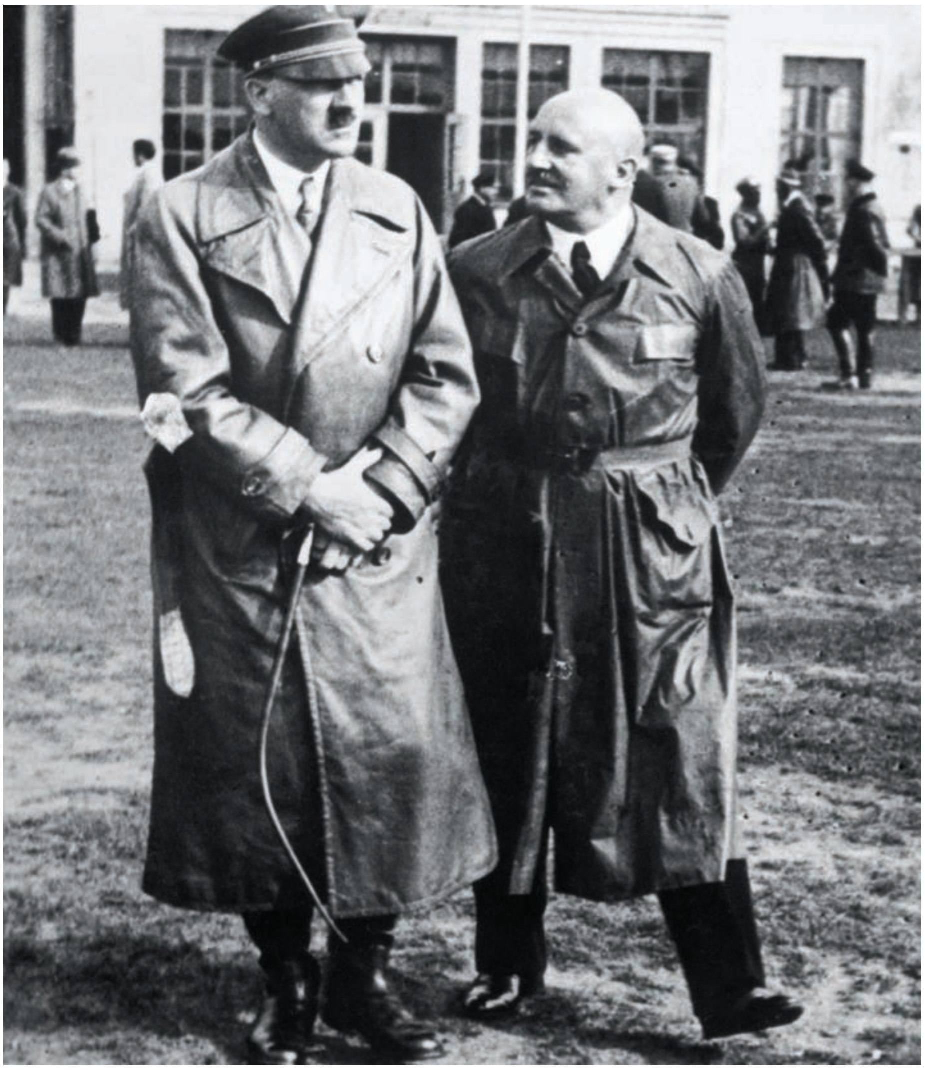
By Blaine Taylor



The Vilest Nazi?

Julius Streicher, who hanged himself with his pen, may well have been the most despised man of World War II on either side.

ON MAY 23, 1945, A JEEPLOAD OF AMERICAN GIs OF THE 101ST Airborne Division, commanded by Major Henry Blitt, pulled up in front of a Bavarian farmhouse near Berchtesgaden for a drink of milk. Speaking Yiddish, the Jewish-American major began a conversation with a bearded man whom he mistook for the farmer, addressing him as "papa."

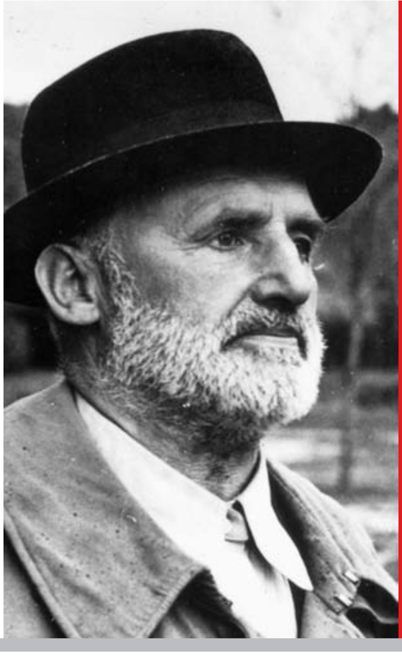
The man insisted that he was an artist and understood nothing about either politics or the just defeated Nazis, leading Major Blitt to declare, "But you look like Julius Streicher," whose warrant mug shot he had just seen. Startled, the "painter" blurted out, "How did you recognize me?" and thus it came to pass that the 59-year-old man with the shaggy beard, uncombed hair, blue striped shirt, and ragged trousers was arrested for being the accused notorious Nazi war criminal that he actually was. Ironically, the world's most infamous Jew baiter had himself been found out by a Jew.

Streicher, a former schoolteacher and holder of the coveted Iron Cross for his service in the German Army in the Great War, was also an honorary Nazi SA Storm Troop leader and former Gauleiter (regional leader) of Nuremberg and Franconia, as well as an elected member of the national Reichstag in Berlin.

He had been the all-powerful boss of Nuremberg, site of the massive Nazi Party congresses of 1927-1939, until he angered Adolf Hitler's number two man, Hermann Göring, in 1940 by suggesting that the latter's daughter was a test tube baby and not fathered by the "Iron Man" at all. Enraged, Göring insisted that Streicher be fired, and Hitler banished him from his high posts for the rest of World War II.

In the Allied prison at Nuremberg after the war, Streicher also soon established himself as the third most controversial prisoner, after Göring and Rudolf Hess, for his jailhouse antics. When the prison physicians asked him to undress for the standard physical examination, a female Russian interpreter stepped to the door and looked away, leading a leering Streicher to ask, "What's the matter? Are you afraid of seeing something nice?" Disgusted, the girl shivered in revulsion and remained turned away from him.

Nor was she the only one at Nuremberg to turn her back on the man who allegedly washed



TOP: Apparently immersed in deep conversation, Nazi Jew-baiter Julius Streicher walks close by Hitler's side during a pause in a series of meetings. This photo was discovered in Streicher's private files after the war.

LEFT: In an attempt to avoid capture by the victorious Allies, Streicher allowed his hair and beard to grow long. The effort was to no avail, and he was tried and convicted at Nuremberg.

(Right:© Bettmann/CORBIS; Left: National Archives)

VOL. CLVII....No. 30,000 The Stauer Times "It's About Time"

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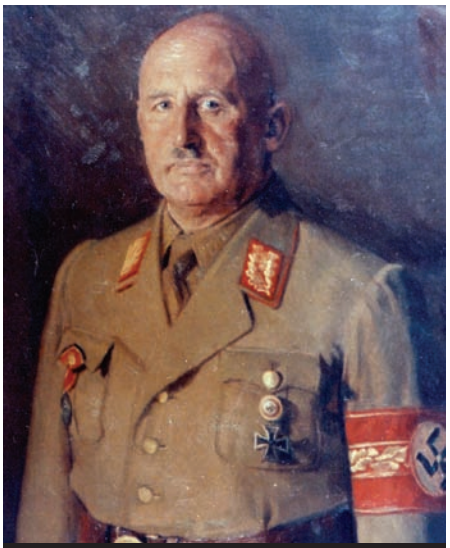
his face in his sparse cell's toilet bowl, the so-called "dirty old man" of the prison. Indeed, almost all of his fellow accused war criminals considered Streicher unfit to socialize with. He also rated the lowest on the prison-administered intelligence quotient tests, and even his own defense counsel wondered whether his lewd sexual perversions and rabid anti-Semitic writings and speeches did not in fact spring from a diseased mind.

The official psychiatric conclusion, however, was that, although he suffered from a neurotic obsession, he was not clinically insane and therefore was both mentally and legally competent to stand trial for his life. The guards despised him for calling out lewd remarks in the prison whenever a woman appeared, while his fellow Nazis recalled with disgust when, during his days in power, Streicher strutted about Nuremberg, whip in hand, lashing out at Jews and others and openly trying to seduce German women as well.

Former German finance minister and Reichsbank president Dr. Hjalmar Schacht told one of the prison doctors, "You just have to look at that worm Streicher on the stand and see the kind of man Hitler protected to the very end! Ugh! That man Hitler had no conception of decency and honor and dignity. He kept the criminal scum in power."



In this formal portrait, Julius Streicher wears the armband signifying the office of Gauleiter of Nuremberg-Furth and Franconia. Streicher's odd behavior was repulsive even to his fellow Nazis.

(U.S. Army Art)

Oddly, Streicher began his Nuremberg defense from the dock of the accused by denouncing his own attorney for not conducting his case along the lines that the defendant wanted.

He then launched into a self-defeating, bombastic oration, describing himself as the "fate-ordained apostle" of anti-Semitism. He said that when he first met Hitler, he envisioned the latter with a halo encircling his head. As the judges listened quizzically, his fellow defendants in the dock sat in embarrassed silence. Göring buried his head in his hands as if he were sick, while former grand admiral Karl Donitz shook his head. Alone among them, former interior minister Dr. Wilhelm Frick thought that Streicher had spoken well.

Aside from hurting his case by orations such as this, Streicher was also convicted by his own writings in his former newspaper *Der Sturmer* (*The Stormer*), in which his anti-Jewish opinions were given full-scale publication for all 12 years of the Third Reich, read and approved by Hitler himself.

The paper featured crude but vivid anti-Jewish cartoons, photographs, and articles that have been viewed as the very nadir of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda ever since. They formed the basis of the hate that later, in the view of the International Military Tribunal's justices, underlaid the gassings of 1941-1945. The world's media, though, dubbed Julius Streicher "the high priest of stupidity."

Both within the Third Reich and in the dock

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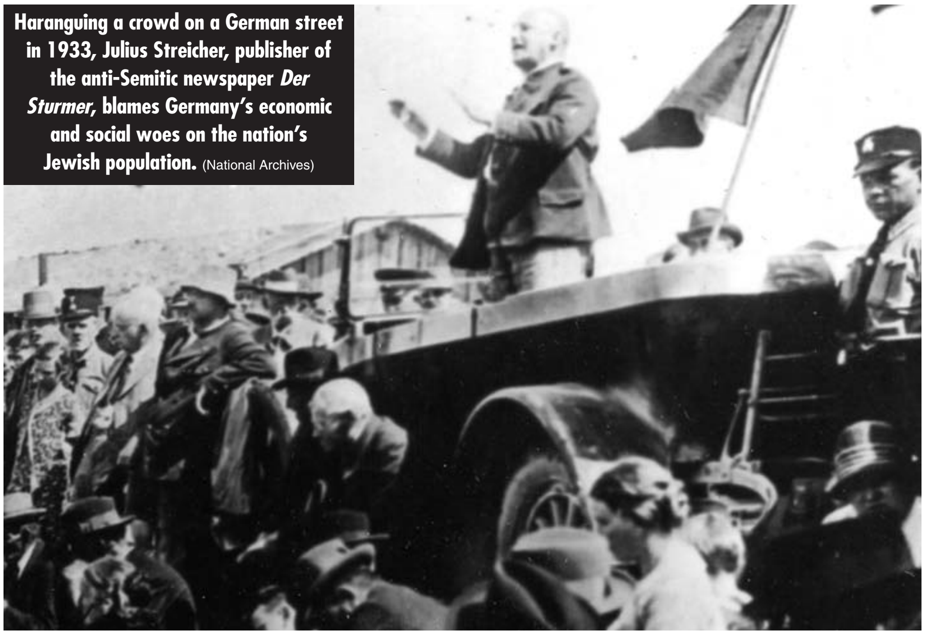
before his accusers, however, Streicher proudly accepted full responsibility for everything that appeared within *Der Sturmer*'s pages, including the special issues that were devoted entirely to alleged Hebraic ritual murders.

During the daily trial lunch breaks, Streicher's fellow defendants soon discontinued even discussing him and his case as they considered the topics beneath contempt and believed they gave all the rest of them a bad name. There was, however, at least one domain in which they all made common cause, and that was in their full denial of anything even remotely having to do with Hitler's Holocaust against the Jews, Gypsies, and other Nazi racial undesirables.

For his part, Streicher repeatedly said that even if he had read those things, he would not have believed them. He had spoken like Hitler about exterminating the Jews but had not meant it literally, he claimed.

Indeed, when the infamous atrocity film was shown to the court on November 2, 1945, Streicher watched it, immobile except for an occasional squint, while another in the dock recoiled and later asserted, "I don't believe that. Perhaps in the last days…." Sitting alone in Cell No. 25, Streicher called the film "terrible" without any feeling and asked the guards if they could not be quiet at night so that he could sleep.



Haranguing a crowd on a German street in 1933, Julius Streicher, publisher of the anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Sturmer,* blames Germany's economic and social woes on the nation's Jewish population. (National Archives)

The prosecution, however, quoted in open court Streicher's own words of 1925: "Let us make a new beginning today, so that we can annihilate the Jews!" Speaking to one of the prison psychiatrists on July 13, 1946, Streicher did admit, "There was no doubt that Hitler had ordered the extermination of the Jews, and had, as a matter of fact, expressed that intention before the war. Early in the war, he must have realized that he would have to die and decided to take the Jews with him. But that was no solution, because you would have to exterminate all the Jews, and there are still many Jews in all countries, so Hitler's idea of exterminating the whole race was obviously impractical."

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Prior to a commemoration of the failed Munich Beer Hall Putsch, Julius Streicher confers with fellow Nazi Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe, on November 9, 1937.

(Library of Congress)

The prosecution indicted Streicher for having preached the central ideology of the Nazi movement, the one article of faith that all the others really agreed on, namely that the Jews had been the main cause of the loss of World War I, and of the subsequent economic disaster that had befallen defeated Weimar Germany.

Who was Julius Streicher? Born on February 12, 1885, he was one of nine children in the family of a Swabian schoolteacher, the same locale that had produced Erwin Rommel. In the Great War, Streicher, too, was an infantry lieutenant and, like Hitler, served in the Bavarian Army, where, also like his future Führer, he was awarded both the first and second class of the Iron Cross. Following the lost war, Lieutenant Streicher returned to his own chosen profession of teaching in an elementary school.

By the time he became one of the first to join the embryonic Nazi Party, Streicher also had his own small band of anti-Jewish followers, all of which he brought with him into Hitler's thin ranks, a boon that his Führer never forgot. Streicher began his political career as a German left-wing socialist and then moved to the right, into the ranks of the Nazi labor movement that believed that the Jew was the ultimate symbol of rapacious German capitalism.

Streicher founded his own splinter party in 1920 that was based entirely on anti-Semitism and presented it as a gift to Hitler the following year. His extracurricular political activities got Streicher into hot water in his daily role as a schoolteacher, however, as he required the children in his classes to greet him with "Heil Hitler!" Before that salutation became mandated legally, he alienated his fellow teachers by accusing them of being anti-German and angered his superiors by taking sick leave to attend Nazi rallies.

On November 9, 1923, Streicher spoke to Munich street crowds during Hitler's abortive Beer Hall Putsch and marched with Hitler and Göring into the hail of police gunfire that ended it. In 1925, a grateful Führer named Streicher as a Nazi Gauleiter.

In 1928, the school commission brought charges against Streicher in the form of an 87-page report. Found guilty of conduct unbecoming a teacher, Streicher was fired from his post.

After Hitler was named to the chancellorship in 1933, there was, reportedly, virtually no limit to Streicher's importance in his home district of Franconia, despite his many party enemies in both Munich and Berlin.

When asked at Nuremberg why Hitler backed both his continued publishing of *Der Sturmer* and his political standing within the Nazi Party, Streicher replied, "Oh, well, you know that I marched in the front rank with him in the Munich putsch, and he never forgot that, and I remained faithful, too, while he was in prison. Even after I was kicked out [in 1940], he sent Goebbels and [Dr. Robert] Ley to visit me a couple of years ago to ask if I desired anything. So I told them [with a dramatic gesture], 'Tell my Führer that I desire nothing except to die beside him in case a catastrophe should befall the Fatherland!'" Streicher held the pose for a moment and then added, "And that impressed him no end."

In 1945, however, Streicher went into hiding instead.

Once accused in the German civil courts of rape, defendant Streicher was also sued several times for libel before the Nazis took office, and he also had to pay small amounts for damages. Sometimes, he was even sentenced to jail for a few days' duration.

In 1933, Streicher began taking his revenge on the Jews, even personally setting in motion the crane that destroyed Nuremberg's main Jewish synagogue. He was also a notorious thief of Jewish money and seized properties to benefit himself, not the party, and by 1940, these corrupt expropriations had reached such a level that Göring chaired a commission of investigation.

The immediate result was that Göring was able to return 63,938.92 reichsmarks to the vaults of the Reich, and it also emerged that Streicher had been a tax evader. Fired from his post as Gauleiter, Streicher was still permitted, however, to retain his editorial position at *Der Sturmer* until war's end.

It was not until he came before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and was convicted of "crimes against humanity" that he was threatened with death by hanging. That one count cost Streicher his life. Nazi radio producer Hans Fritzsche noted, "Well, they've put a rope around his neck after all."

In 1991, the late Nuremberg jurist and author General Telford Taylor gave as his reconsidered opinion that Streicher had, perhaps, been unjustly convicted and hanged for his writing alone. British writer Hilary Gaskins, quoting lawyer Daniel Margolies, said, "They had some problems with Streicher ... He did write terrible stuff, but you don't normally hang people for that. They scrounged around and found that he had killed somebody … Somehow, nobody wanted to acquit him."

Oddly, Streicher in 1945 was said to have boasted that he had his political rival, Nuremberg mayor and fellow Nazi Willy Liebel, murdered during the last days of the regime. Mayor Liebel had also been a deputy to Hitler's armaments minister, Dr. Albert Speer.

Just prior to his execution by hanging on October 16, 1946, Streicher stated in his cell that he actually admired the Jews for fighting, resisting, and sticking together: "Even if Hitler was living now, he would also admit that they are a spunky race. I would be ready to join them now in their fight! No, I am not joking!"

Did anyone have a kind word to say for Julius Streicher? His first wife, Kunigunde Roth, a brewer's daughter whom he married in 1913 and who bore him two sons, died in 1943. Early in 1945, Streicher married again, this time to his secretary, Adele Tappe, so that they could die together in Nuremberg in a projected last-ditch defense of the city in which they did not take part after all.

Adele's visits to the prison during 1945-1946 created a sensation, as everyone wanted to see what kind of woman would marry Julius Streicher. She testified on his behalf that he was a nice man, but the Allied prosecutors did not bother to cross-examine her. □

Blaine Taylor is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He has written numerous books and resides in Towson, Maryland.*

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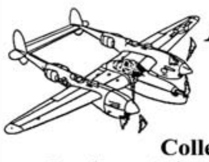

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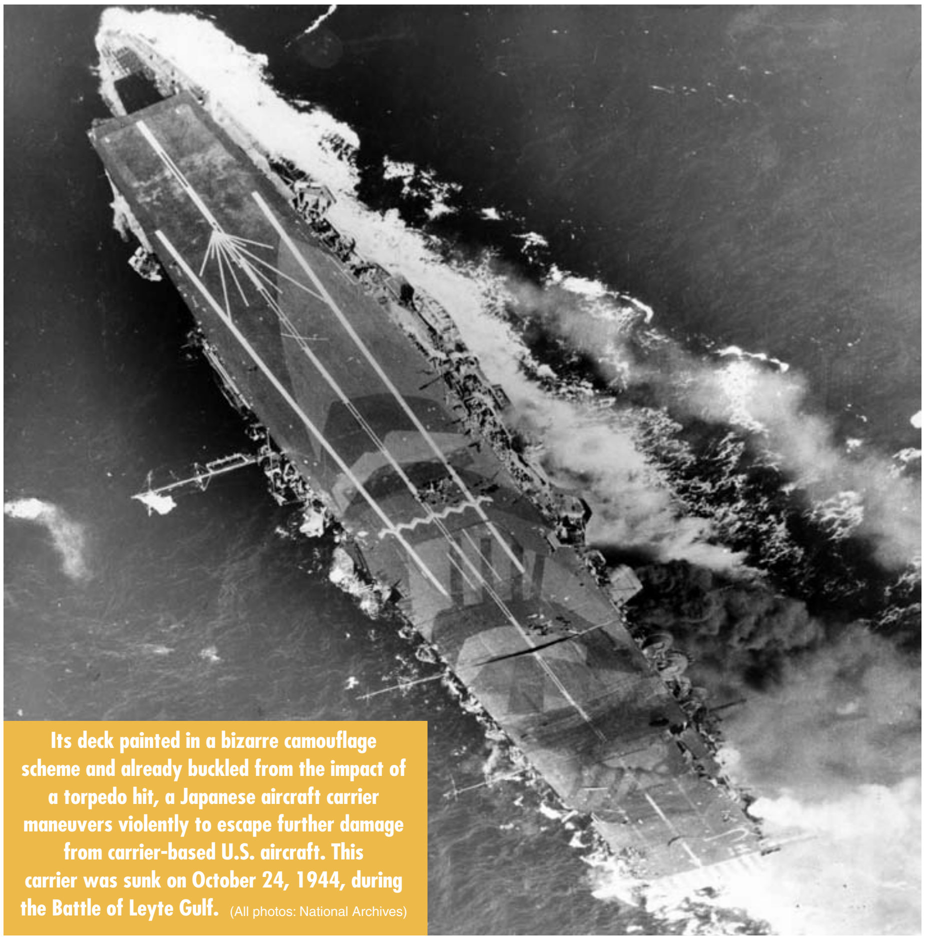

Its deck painted in a bizarre camouflage scheme and already buckled from the impact of a torpedo hit, a Japanese aircraft carrier maneuvers violently to escape further damage from carrier-based U.S. aircraft. This carrier was sunk on October 24, 1944, during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. (All photos: National Archives)

Carrier Construction Thwarted

Japan's ambitious plan to build aircraft carriers in wartime could not be supported by available resources.

JAPAN LACKED THE INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH NEEDED TO WAGE A WAR AGAINST the United States. Yet, Japanese military planners seldom considered the limitations to their nation's construction capabilities. One example is the Imperial Japanese Navy's June 30, 1942, plan for aircraft carrier construction. The loss of one light and four fleet carriers sunk and one badly damaged at the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway had shocked naval planners. Warship construction in June 1942 was already minuscule, yet the Navy laid impossible goals on an industrial base patently incapable of meeting expectations.

At the time, Japan was constructing a single, keel-up, purpose-built aircraft carrier. Kawasaki had laid down *Taiho* on July 10, 1941; she was the only carrier laid down in 1941 and the only ship of her class. That same year, the United States laid down five Essex- class carriers. *Taiho* was the only nonconversion fleet carrier laid down from 1941 onward by the Japanese versus 24 U.S. Essex- and Midway-class carriers laid down in the same period. *Taiho* displaced 29,300 tons and was Japan's only nonconversion, war-built fleet carrier that was similar to (actually bigger than) an Essex. The Japanese Navy commissioned *Taiho* on March 7, 1944.

Taiho exemplifies Japan's industrial capabilities. She was the only nonconversion fleet carrier commissioned during the war against 17 U.S. purpose-built fleet carriers. *Taiho* took 32 months to complete. *Essex,* laid down less than three months before *Taiho,* was commissioned in just 20 months. The Japanese Navy ordered two improved *Taiho* designs in 1942 but then cancelled both. Another attempt, the June 30, 1942, effort, resulted in plans for five modified *Taiho*s. The appearance of these ships in the order of battle was scheduled for 1947 (two ships) and 1948 (three ships), not an encouraging production program. They, too, were never laid down.

Regardless of actual performance, Japanese naval construction priorities in 1942 went to air strength, and that strength included aircraft carriers. There is quite a lead time in budgeting, planning for materials, and movement of materials to a shipyard before workers can lay a keel. It was not until late 1942 that Japan's carrier program went into high gear, spurred by Midway and the June construction plan. Yards began the first three semi-fleet carriers of the new Unryu class. The keels of *Unryu, Amagi,* and *Katsuragi* were laid on August 1, October 1, and December 8, respectively.

With a standard displacement of about 17,150 tons, the Unryu-class carriers were based on the prewar, two-ship Hiryu class, with improvements. The Unryu class fell short of the capabilities of both an Essex that displaced 27,500 tons standard and below the Japanese carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku* at 25,675 tons standard. Unryu-class carriers were similar in displacement to, but lighter than, the original Yorktown class of 19,872 tons. The Japanese did not really expect the Unryu class to perform as full-fledged fleet carriers; the Taiho class would do that. In accordance with Japan's post-conquest strategic defensive posture, Unryu-class carriers would be the core of anticonvoy strike groups supported by cruisers and destroyers.

These three Unryu-class carriers were the first of a mass production run. The Japanese originally expected to build *Unryu* and 15 more, but then settled on *Unryu* and 13 more, for a total of 14. The Navy planned to complete two in calendar year 1944, five in 1945, four in 1946, two in 1947, and one in 1948. Nine or more would be under construction during peak production. The plan to construct 14 Unryu-class carriers counted on a number of assumptions.

ABOVE: Japanese shipwrights work to construct a vessel in the bustling port city of Kobe. The Japanese effort to replace combat losses and keep pace with U.S. production of warships proved futile as the war dragged on. LEFT: The Japanese aircraft carrier *Amagi* lists sharply and has settled into the mire of Kure Bay in the wake of an attack by U.S. Navy planes.

Shipyards needed steel from imported raw materials. Industrial power had to come from Home Island oil, hydroelectric, and coal. The training base had to produce trained pilots, sailors, and mechanics. Aircraft manufacturers had to produce carrier aircraft. Shipyards needed skilled labor, yard space (there had better not be too much repair work to interfere), and ship power plants. Once completed, the ships needed oil and escorts. As with so many Japanese assumptions, all these failed to materialize.

The June 30 plan for 14 Unryu-class carriers suffered from a serious lack of reality. If planners really expected to build so many, completely excluding the demands of constructing ships of the Taiho class (one Taiho under production and five more planned), they needed 2.5 destroyers and 1.2 cruisers per carrier as escorts. Those ratios are based on the destroyer and cruiser escorts used per carrier at Pearl Harbor, Rabaul/Kavieng, Darwin, Indian Ocean, Coral Sea, Midway, the Aleutians, Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz, the Attu response of May 1943, and the September and October 1943 Eniwetok sorties.

A balanced 14-ship Unryu-class plan meant that the Imperial Japanese Navy needed 35 new destroyers and 17 new cruisers to arrive with the carriers from 1944 through 1947, all in addition to normal construction, to make good wartime losses. If one were to delete the unusually large cruiser and destroyer forces of May, September, and October 1943, and count only 1941-1942 averages, the Navy still would have needed 30 destroyers and 12 cruisers. During the entire war, Japan commissioned 31 destroyers, while the United States commissioned 365. The Japanese commissioned five light cruisers and no heavy cruisers, while the United States commissioned 46 large, heavy, and light cruisers.

In defense of the 14-ship Unryu plan, the Japanese might have assumed that existing escorts could protect the new carriers. As of June 30, 1942, the Navy had suffered few escort losses: only nine destroyers sunk and one converted to a target ship. They had accepted five from new construction, a net loss of five. Another nine were in port undergoing battle damage repair. Future destroyer production did not look good, just 11 over the next 12 months. The June 30 cruiser status looked better than destroyers, only one of 18 heavy cruisers lost, and none of the 17 light cruisers sunk. One of each was out of action for battle damage repair. Like destroyers, cruiser production forecasts for the next 12 months were very low, no heavies and just three light.

The first Unryu-class carriers could have used the escorts that had supported Coral Sea's *Shoho* and Midway's *Akagi, Kaga, Soryu,* and *Hiryu.* Escorts that had in 1941 and 1942 protected transport units, invasion forces, and occupation forces might be available in 1944 and later. Planners had to assume that those destroyers and cruisers were still afloat in 1944 when the first Unryu-class carriers appeared. One might also assume that more carriers would be sunk and under repair than escorts, such as *Shokaku,* damaged twice in 1942 and drydocked 20 weeks that year and 11 weeks into 1943. Therefore, escorts could shuffle between active carriers. All this assumed few escort losses, a very risky assumption indeed.

Planners briefly considered converting 13 heavy cruisers to light aircraft carriers. That would have removed them from the escort force and increased the need for new cruiser construction. Regardless of these possibilities, escort assumptions and strength both collapsed in late 1942 during the New Guinea and Solomons campaigns. By the time the Navy commissioned *Unryu* on August 6, 1944, the destroyer fleet had lost 56 ships, leaving them at 46 percent of their December 8, 1941, destroyer strength, including destroyers over 1,200 tons and not counting new Matsu-class destroyer escorts.

To overcome carrier engine production shortfalls and a lack of suitable power plants, the Japanese had to use turbines that had been built for canceled ships. The Navy turned to cruiser machinery for the Unryu class: engines developed for Mogami-class heavy cruisers. There were problems with this substitution. A shortage of parts even for cruiser engines meant that the third and fifth Unryu-class carriers ended up with destroyer turbines. Both ships thereby lost one-third of their planned power, and their maximum speed dropped by two knots. Where the Navy could have acquired power plants for five more Taiho-class carriers and the remaining Unryu-class carriers is a good question.

The Navy commissioned the *Unryu, Amagi,* and *Katsuragi* in the fall of 1944, too late to be of any use. *Unryu* did sortie on a logistics transport mission in December only to be torpedoed and sunk. The seventh, eighth, and ninth Essex-class carriers, *Hornet, Franklin,* and *Bennington,* were laid down on August 3, December 7, and December 15, respectively, dates similar to the first three Unryu-class carriers. The Japanese required 24, 22, and 22 months to lay

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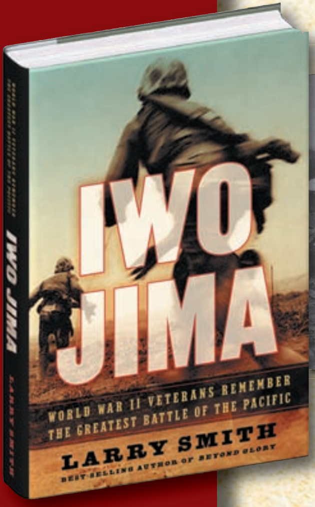
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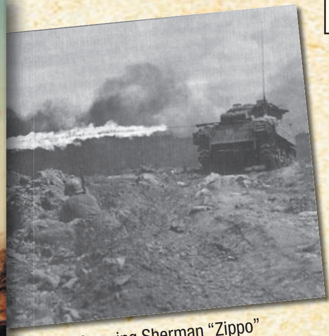

A flamethrowing Sherman "Zippo" tank burns a pillbox near the base of Mount Suribachi.

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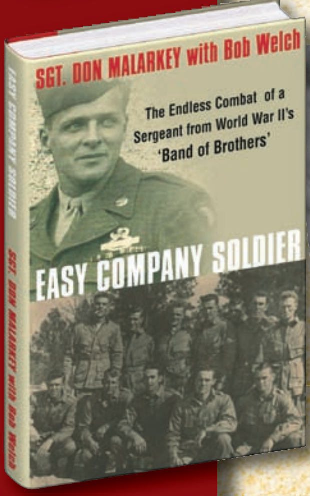
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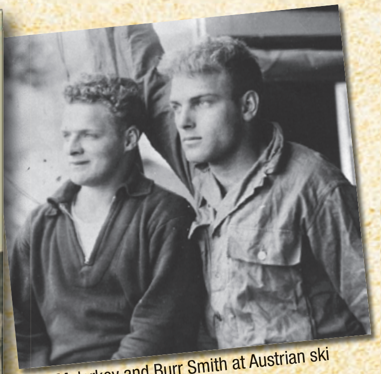

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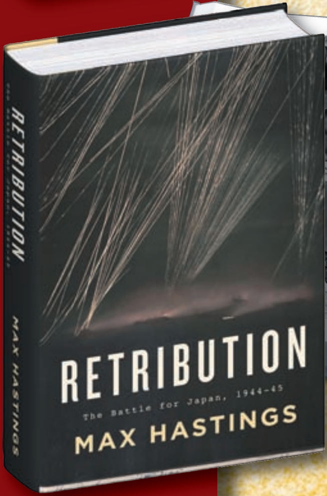
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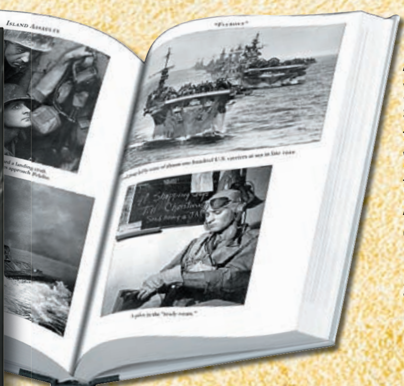

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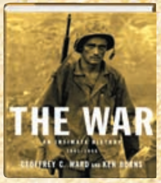

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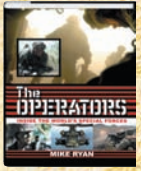
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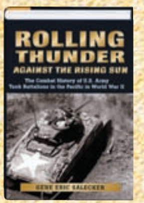
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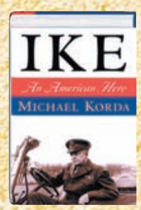
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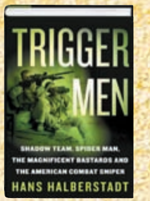
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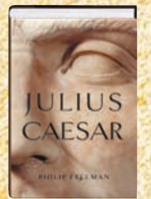
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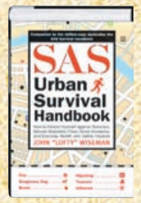
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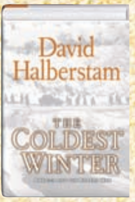
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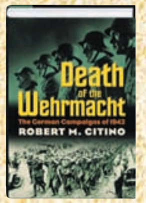
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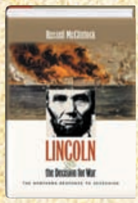

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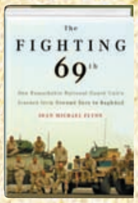
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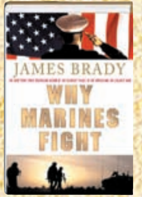
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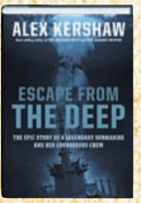
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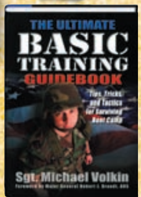
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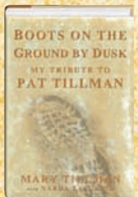
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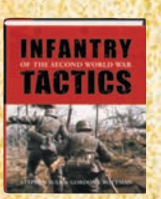
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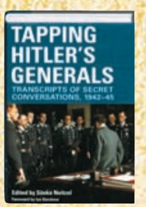
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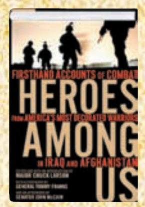
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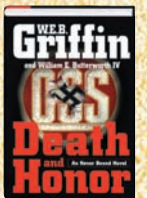
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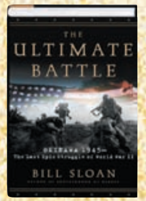
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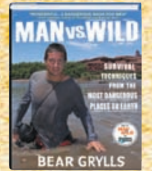
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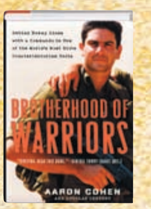
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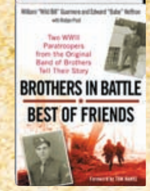
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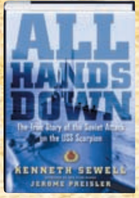
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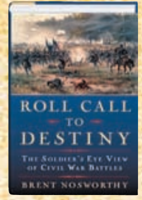
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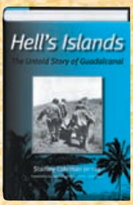
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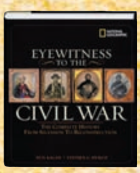
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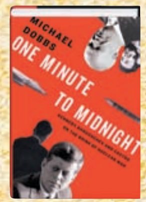
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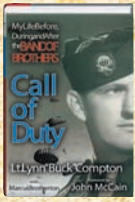
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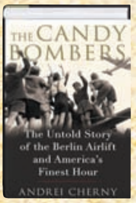
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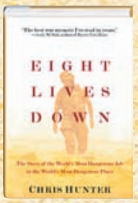
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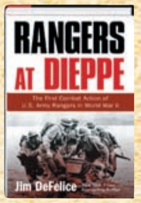
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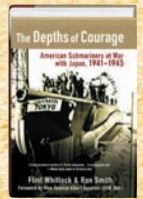
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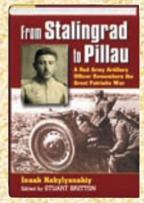
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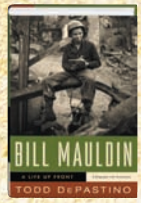
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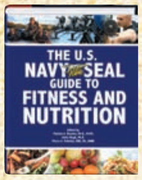
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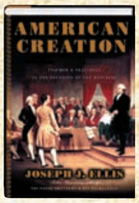
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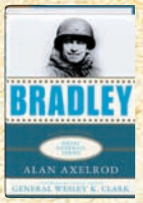
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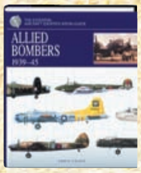
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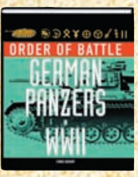
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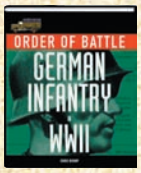
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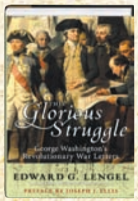
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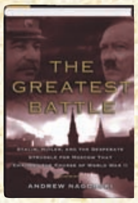
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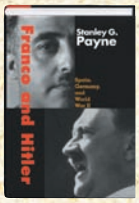
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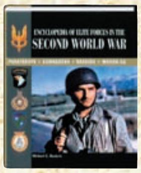
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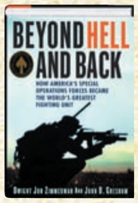
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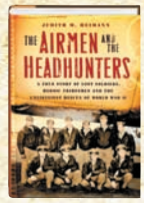
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In this aerial photograph, a Japanese aircraft carrier has been heavily damaged during an air raid by U.S. Navy planes on the great naval base at Kure. By the end of the war, most of the Japanese carriers sat idle in port due to a lack of aircraft and trained pilots.

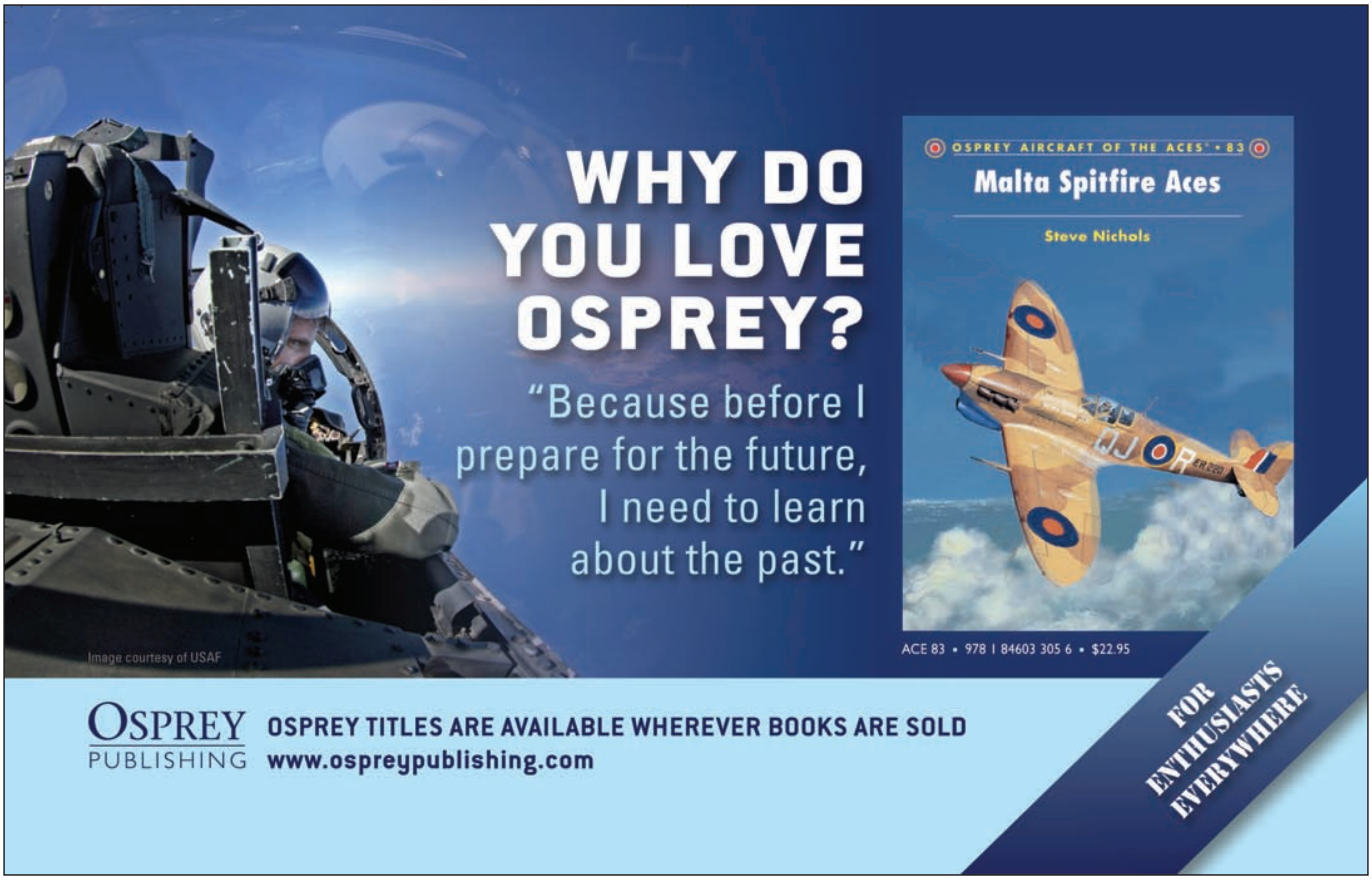
down, launch, and commission *Unryu, Amagi,* and *Katsuragi.* The United States took 16, 16, and 20 months for *Hornet, Franklin,* and *Bennington,* each of which displaced 63 percent more than an Unryu.

Considering these six specific carriers and not counting other Essex-class carriers under construction, the Japanese built 25.2 tons of Unryu-class carriers per day, and the United States built 52.1 tons of Essex-class carriers per day. U.S. shipyards built twice as much tonnage each day and delivered each ship 24 percent faster. The United States sustained similar construction efforts over the course of the war, whereas Japan did not.

So, from mid-1942 to early 1944, Japan could bring into service only three fleet carriers, *Junyo, Hiyo,* and *Taiho,* all laid down before war began, the first two of which were conversions from ocean liners rather than purpose-built. Shipyards laid down or converted more carriers, launched them, and commissioned them during the war. For example, the light carriers *Chitose* and *Chiyoda* were converted from seaplane carriers, but all too late. Japan built no light or escort carriers from the keel up during the war.

There is more to building an aircraft carrier than shipbuilding. Early in 1943, the military realized it had to drastically expand pilot training to a level three times the current structure. The Japanese wanted to do three things: increase the numbers of replacements going to units engaged in combat, build up the training base, and accumulate a reserve of pilots for future operations.

The Navy increased its training air groups from 15 to 48. The first part of the pilot requirement came from the optimistic need to man up to six Taiho-class carriers, up to 16 and later 14 Unryu-class carriers, carrier conversion *Shinano,* up to four hermaphrodite battleship conversions, one cruiser conversion to a light carrier (*Ibuki*), the conversion of heavy cruiser *Mogami* into an aircraft cruiser, and the light carrier conversions *Chitose* and *Chiyoda.* There were also three 1943 escort carrier con-



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versions planned, *Kaiyo* and *Shinyo*, both completed, and *Brazil Maru*, sunk before conversion. The Japanese actually used their escort carriers most frequently as aircraft transports, so those ships did not often need pilots.

A second part of the pilot requirement came from plans to activate the First Air Fleet of over 1,600 authorized aircraft with two air flotillas, the 61st and the 62nd. A third part of the requirement came from simply maintaining the current strength of land- and carrier-based air groups as well as pilots for seaplane carriers and light and heavy cruisers. In mid-1942, the pilot training program might have looked achievable. No new fleet carriers were expected to come on line until 1944 with *Taiho*. But no one had foreseen the severity of pilot losses soon to come.

Most of these training air groups operated from 52 bases in Japan, while two bases were in the Philippines, five bases on Formosa, and five bases in the Singapore area. The critical bottleneck in training pilots and crewmen was inadequate training equipment. Training bases had low priority for the issuing of Japan's limited number of aircraft.

Training aircraft were in short supply and often of poor quality. Any delays or shortfalls in aircraft production seriously affected training units. The Japanese increased fighter production 171 percent from 1941 to 1942 and 143 percent from 1942 to 1943. They increased bomber production by 66 percent and 72 percent during those same two years. The production of trainers, however, increased only 46 percent in 1942 and 32 percent in 1943. The Japanese had established their production priorities, and trainers were well down the list.

An aircraft carrier of the Imperial Japanese Navy is seen underway as aircraft fly in the distance. Losses in carriers, planes, and pilots were irreplaceable for the Japanese, while U.S. strength continued to increase steadily.

Instructors had too many students to manage them effectively. The urgency to train pilots overwhelmed the curriculum. Veteran naval ace Saburo Sakai recalled in early 1943, "We couldn't watch for individual errors and take the long hours necessary to weed the faults out of a trainee." The decision to press for quantity over quality meant that poorly trained fliers graduated to combat units. "We were told to rush men through, to forget the fine points, just teach them how to fly and shoot."

Thus, aside from the problems of actually building aircraft carriers in the numbers projected, the Japanese could never have built escorts or trained enough fliers, mechanics, and armorers to operate with them. The last gasp of naval air power afloat occurred in June 1944, at the Battle of the Philippine Sea, before the first of the Unryu-class carriers was commissioned.

The Japanese war effort was so unbalanced and so crippled by industrial and managerial weaknesses that the June 30, 1942, aircraft carrier plan was little more than a feverish reaction to Coral Sea and Midway. The fever would ultimately break. The five-Taiho program was cancelled. The 14-Unryu program ground to a halt after six hulls had been laid and launched, three ships commissioned, and one of those three deployed as a transport. □

John W. Whitman is the author of Bataan: Our Last Ditch—The Bataan Campaign, 1942. *He is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and a holder of the Combat Infantryman's Badge. He resides in Alexandria, Virginia.*

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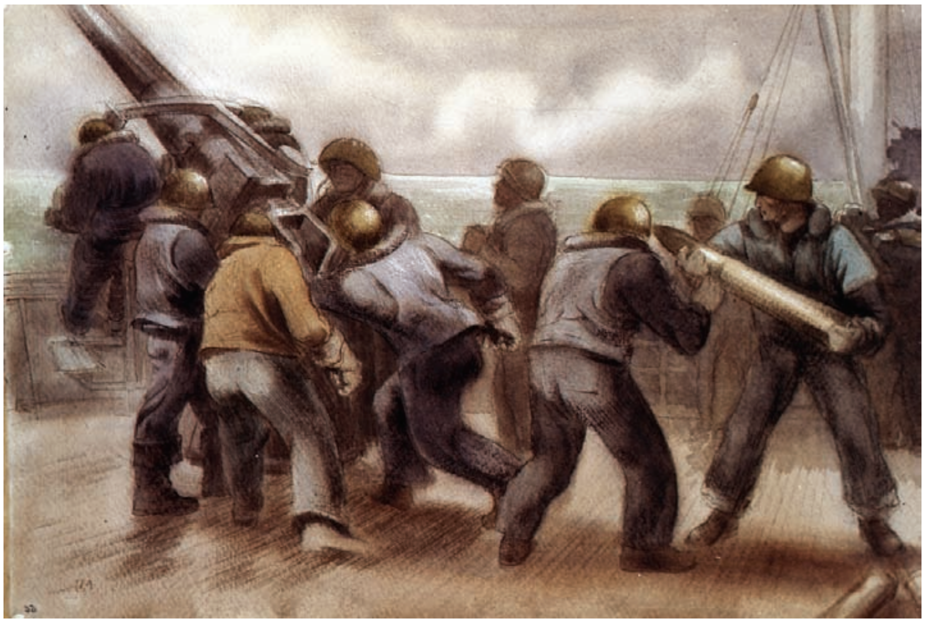

Hazardous Duty with the Naval Armed Guard

Assigned to protect merchant sailors, these members of the U.S. Navy were unsung heroes of World War II.

THEY HAVE BEEN CALLED "THE OTHER NAVY," THE "NAVY'S STEPCHILDREN," and perhaps most fittingly, "the forgotten Navy." Officially, however, they were the Naval Armed Guard or more simply the Armed Guard (AG). Often mistaken for members of the Merchant Marine, the Armed Guard was a special branch of the U.S. Navy assigned to defend merchant ships against enemy attack. Its history is one of the most dramatic of World War II, fraught with danger, suffering, heroism, and staggering casualty rates. Yet, as one veteran wrote, "The Armed Guard hasn't had as much publicity as the average two-headed calf gets."

Formed in World War I, when German U-boats first prowled the Atlantic, the Armed Guard proved its worth protecting merchant ships. From U.S. involvement in 1917 until the Great War ended, U-boats attacked 227 American merchant ships. The AG repulsed 191 of these attacks, with a loss of only 36 ships. Perhaps most remarkable, throughout the war not a single American troopship guarded by the AG was lost to U-boats. Even with this extraordinary record, when the war ended, so did the need to arm merchant ships; and the Navy deactivated the Armed Guard.

With Europe's descent into war in 1939, U-boats again menaced the Atlantic. Although President Franklin Roosevelt promised to keep the United States out of the war, he decreed the country should be the "arsenal of democracy." His decision to allow American merchant vessels to deliver war material to England meant these ships would be in harm's way. This led to debates on how to best protect these ships. Some suggested arming merchant ships as a means for the mariners to defend themselves. Others feared that such an action might lead to more aggression by the Germans.

This debate was largely irrelevant since the Neutrality Act of 1939 made the arming of merchant ships illegal. Even so, the training of Navy gunners for service aboard merchant ships had already begun at naval armories, and on April 15, 1941, the Naval Armed Guard was officially reborn.

Increased U-boat activity from April through September 1941 gave President Roosevelt justification for the U.S. Navy to escort convoys. The U-boat attacks on the destroyers *Greer* and *Kearny,* the sinking of the destroyer *Reuben James,* combined with increased losses of American merchant ships led Congress to repeal Section 6 of the Neutrality Act that prevented arming merchant ships. With this legal hurdle removed, the Navy opened the first Armed Guard training center on September 17, 1941, at Little Creek, Virginia. Even though AG training had started in early 1941, Congress did not officially authorize the Armed Guard or the arming of merchant ships until November 1941.

While Roosevelt promised to keep America out of the European conflict, Navy gunners were being placed aboard American-owned merchant ships, including those under Panamanian registry. In the words of the chief of naval operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark, "The Navy is already in the war in the Atlantic, but the country doesn't seem to realize it."

After Pearl Harbor, the increased need for gunners aboard merchant ships resulted in the opening of additional AG training facilities at Gulfport, Mississippi, and San Diego, California. The camp at Little Creek, unable to handle the influx of new recruits, was relocated to larger Camp Shelton, Virginia.

For those recruits assigned to the AG, the first questions often asked were, "What the hell is the Armed Guard? Are they going to have us guarding a building or something?" A few knew the role of the AG, and they "wanted to go anyplace but the Armed Guard." Those who did not know soon learned, and they would have agreed with AG veteran Robert Baxter's assessment: "We were sitting ducks. We had a one-way ticket, and we weren't going to be coming back." Even their comrades in the fleet called those assigned to the AG "fish food." One young ensign, it was said, shot himself after learning he had been assigned to the Armed Guard rather than accept condemnation to death. While the story was fictional, it illustrated the fear of serving in the Armed Guard.

The men in the Armed Guard knew the odds were against

ABOVE: In this bleak painting by American combat artist Mitchell Jamieson, members of a Naval Armed Guard contingent load and fire the forward deck gun aboard a merchant ship in pitching seas.

(Naval Historical Center)

them, and many believed theirs was indeed a suicide mission. Representing this were two signs posted at a training center. The first declared, “Ready—Aim—Abandon ship!” The other, playing on the signal “Sub sighted, sank same,” read, “Sub sighted, glub, glub.”

In telling the history of the Armed Guard, one must not overlook the disappointment of the men upon receiving this assignment. A majority would have agreed with AG veteran Tracey Corder when he said, “I felt that the Navy had cheated me.” In the regular Navy, ships went hunting the enemy, and when the enemy was brought to bay, the two engaged each other in combat. These young gunners had dreamed of serving aboard warships, not on a slow “rust bucket” that ran from the enemy and let the escorts do the fighting.

Some may wonder why the merchant crews were not utilized as gunners. The Navy did attempt to train the mariners in the months before Pearl Harbor and set up gunnery instruction centers at major Atlantic ports, but few cared to take the training. From the Navy’s perspective, it was either use the AG or have no one trained to protect the ships. In defense of the merchant crews, it should be noted that most mariners learned to assist the gunners. Many became ammunition passers, and some learned to man the guns should the Navy crews become incapacitated. In the duel between the SS *Stephen Hopkins* and the German raider *Stier,* Cadet/Midshipman Edwin O’Hara singlehandedly manned the deck gun after the Navy crew was killed and fired the last five shots of the battle.

Initially, training for the Armed Guard was limited and hampered by a lack of guns. At one gunnery school, there was a single outdated gun for every 500 men. Corder recalled that at Gulfport gunners were sent on an armed pleasure yacht to get a feel for the guns. Although they trained on the 3-inch deck gun and the 20mm rapid-fire guns, they did not get to shoot at targets until they were at sea.

Even officers’ training was lacking. One officer recalled his gunnery training amounted to an instructor pointing at two guns and saying, “This is a 4-inch gun and that is a 3-inch, and if you don’t believe it you can get a ruler and measure them.”

With the great need for experienced officers in the fleet, the sailors of the AG frequently had to make do. A man could be made a gunnery officer simply because he had some college and a little boating experience. Armed Guard veteran Zed Merrill noted that, if a seaman first

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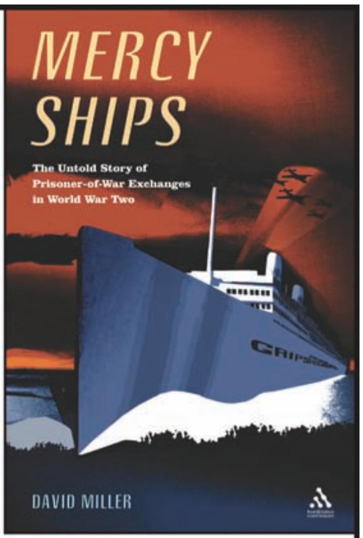
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ABOVE: During gunnery practice at sea in September 1943, Naval Armed Guardsmen learn the finer points of operating the 4-inch deck gun aboard a merchant ship. Virtually unknown outside the Navy itself, Armed Guardsmen provided some measure of defense against enemy attack. RIGHT: Three Naval Armed Guardsmen, their nonregulation hair and beards prominent, pose for a photo while on leave. Duty in the Armed Guard was acknowledged among the sailors as quite hazardous. (ABOVE: Naval Historical Center / RIGHT: Author's Collection)

class admitted experience with hunting weapons, he could find himself in charge of a gun crew. Although Navy regulations required that an ensign or lieutenant (j.g.) command the crew, it was not uncommon to have a chief gunner's mate or a gunner's mate in charge, especially early in the war or with a small AG contingent.

All that changed as the war progressed. Officers began receiving lengthy and advanced training. Lieutenant Robert Ruark of the U.S. Naval Reserve wrote in a wartime article for the *Saturday Evening Post,* "When the AG officer takes a ship today, his skull is bulging with fire control, gunnery, seamanship, communications, navigation, convoy procedure, aircraft identification, first aid, and simple surgery." Training for the gun crews also improved. While Corder received only five weeks of gunnery training in 1942, Bob Galati spent 18 weeks in gunnery school in 1943 with an additional five weeks of advanced school in Little Creek, Virginia.

After training, the new gunners were assigned to one of three Naval Armed Guard centers: Brooklyn, New York; New Orleans, Louisiana; or Treasure Island (San Francisco), California, where members of the AG would wait until assigned a ship. These centers were combination barracks, medical facilities, clothing depots, and schools for additional training. A man's mail, records, and pay came through his assigned center.

If a sailor had been disappointed with his assignment to the Armed Guard, he was typically even more dissatisfied with his ship. Often the first ship assigned to a new Armed Guardsman was a rusted old freighter or tanker. Several wondered if their antiquated ships were even seaworthy. One AG officer remembered his first ship as "filthy dirty ... the decks were caked with rust and most of the gear was rusty and tossed all over the decks." A pile of garbage left on the deck was "beginning to crawl," and the jumble of air hoses, fire lines, and electric cables made him feel as if he had "stepped into a junk yard full of serpents."

Not all ships were in such disrepair. Another AG recalled his as being "designed for comfort, to bend and give with the tall waves, not to slam down and break her back against them." Instead of being covered in rust, she had "fine rich wood in her paneling and pure bright brass fittings." Although his ship showed signs of a hard life, "she carried herself with pride."

Armed Guard personnel served on every type of merchant ship that sailed, from cargo ships, to tankers, to troop transports. One gun crew even found itself aboard a ship designed to haul mules. Besides tankers, the majority of AG personnel were assigned to the new Liberty ships. A Liberty was slow, averaging 11 knots, had no armor plating or graceful lines, but easily handled 7,176 tons of cargo in its holds, and more on deck. For all its shortcomings, the Liberty ships proved to be tough and durable, surviving tropical storms and Arctic gales.

By February 1942, Navy gunners could be found aboard American and Allied merchant ships as well as those of occupied nations. Ralph Dunwoodie, a signalman in the AG, served on Canadian and British ships in which he was the only American serviceman aboard. Because of the limited number of AG crews early in the war, however, American ships had first priority, followed by Panamanian, French, and British.

In the beginning, the armament for merchant vessels was a hodgepodge of small-caliber machine guns and antiquated relics from previous conflicts. Some deck guns even dated back to the Spanish-American War. All ships carried machine guns, and for some that was the only defensive weaponry aboard. Early in the war many had only .30-caliber machine guns, weapons suited more for the battlefield than for combating aircraft and submarines. One gunnery officer recalled that the two .30-caliber machine guns aboard his ship still had tripods for field use.

Another gunnery officer described the first time his crew fired their old gun at an enemy submarine. No one knew if the sub was hit, for as soon as the gun was fired, "[We] were all too busy grappling with our own wreckage and testing our arms and legs for broken bones. The weapon's thunderous concussion tore down stanchions, smashed the glass on the engine room telegraph dials, shattered a clock in the galley, blew radiator pipes from their fittings, broke shaving lotion bottles in five cabins, smashed 10 drinking glasses in the saloon, splintered the carpenter's work bench, knocked out two door panels, ripped the door off the galley stove, and blew four pies out of the oven."

Some ships even sailed without weapons. A few went to war with large poles protruding over the railings and painted to appear as guns. One ship lowered its booms along the deck to give the impression of possessing enormous cannons. As the war progressed and American industry gained a solid war footing, newer and better weapons were issued to the Armed Guard, such as .50-caliber machine guns, rapid-fire 20mm Oerlikons, and 5-inch dual purpose (surface and antiaircraft) deck guns. However, the shortage of adequate weapons was not solved until early 1945.

Regardless of the weapons aboard, AG personnel were trained to engage the enemy until "the decks are awash and the guns are going under." Only after taking every opportunity to destroy the enemy could they abandon ship. Often they were the last to leave a sinking ship and they did so knowing that another convoy ship would not stop to pick them up, lest it too fall victim to the enemy.

The average Armed Guard detachment comprised 27 men, including six petty officers, a coxswain, two gunner's mates, two signalmen, and a radio operator. On larger crews, a boatswain could also be included in the ranks. Armed Guard officers had the unenviable task of maintaining naval discipline, creating an effective gun crew, and establishing a working relationship with the ship's master and merchant crew.

Unlike on the ships of the fleet, no medical personnel were assigned to the AG. Occasionally a pharmacist's mate might be aboard, but most medical problems were taken care of by the AG officer and whatever remedies he could find in his medical chest. Should a serious medical problem arise, a doctor from an escort ship might be sent over. If that was not an option, the patient had to wait until his ship reached port.

Aboard ship, the merchant and Navy crews had separate sleeping and eating quarters. Part of the Navy crew had their quarters amidships, divided between port and starboard; the remainder had quarters on the stern. For those in the aft quarters, there was the constant vibration of the ship's engine and propeller shaft with which to contend. In heavy seas, the stern would come out of the water and vibrate violently as the exposed prop chopped at the air.

Armed Guardsmen did not always meet naval dress codes when they were at sea. Beards were common and, for those on long voyages, occasionally shaggy hair—at least by 1940s standards. The men learned that the best way to dress was not always the Navy way. Climate dictated what a man should wear to keep comfortable and alive. In warm waters, dungarees were the standard clothing, but it was common to see men in shorts, sandals, short-sleeve shirts, or even shirtless.

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During the convoys to Russia, men dared not go outside without extra protection. Gunner's Mate Roland Smith recalled that standard outerwear for the North Atlantic was a heavy fur-lined parka and fur-lined overall-type pants in addition to heavy gloves, an alpaca fleece-lined hat, face mask, and fur-lined goggles. Underneath, men would pile on whatever warm clothing they could find, including jackets, sweaters, wool pants, and thermal underwear. Howard Long remembered wearing special boots made from a type of rubberized canvas because the extreme cold caused leather boots to crack. Beneath these boots, men wore heavy felt bootees that came almost to the knees.

Regardless of the climate, the AG was constantly on alert for submarines. Unfortunately, all too often the first indication the gun crew had of a submarine was the white phosphorus wake left by a torpedo as it plowed toward their ship. Even if the gunners did get a chance to fire on a sub, hitting it could be difficult. Usually the only target a submarine offered was a periscope, which, according to one AG veteran, looked like a post sticking out of the water. Hitting such a small target at long range was difficult. As long as the submarine stayed underwater, it had a distinct advantage over the guns of the AG. Should an overconfident submarine commander think he had an easy victim and attack on the surface, however, he quickly realized how efficient the AG gunners were.

While submarines posed the greatest threat to the Armed Guard, aircraft were a close second. Gunners were not overly concerned about enemy planes while far at sea, but closer to land the danger of air raids increased. Still, unlike subs, there was generally some type of warning of approaching aircraft, either visually or from the drone of the engines.

Should an enemy aircraft attempt to strike a convoy, it would have to fly through a wall of antiaircraft fire as the Armed Guard opened up with everything they had. As Lieutenant Ruark noted, "Sixty or eighty ships armed with Oerlikons and 3-inchers can toss up a screen of flack that a hummingbird couldn't get through."

Such a point is illustrated by an attack on convoy MKS-21, hit by some three dozen German planes near Almeria, Spain, on August 13, 1943. Although the Germans launched several torpedoes, only one found its mark. The AG gunners were more effective and downed an estimated 15 planes. German aircrews rescued from the sea complained about the intense antaircraft fire from the convoy and blamed it for their lack of success.

Armed Guard gunners in the Pacific also gave a good account of themselves. During the landings at Guadalcanal, the crew of the SS *Nathaniel Currier* successfully fought off an attack by Japanese planes. The ship's master wrote to the commanding officer of the AG center at Treasure Island regarding the gunners' actions: "It is my belief that the reason we sustained no casualties or damage was the volume and accuracy of the barrage put up [by the AG crew] ... Seabee battalions in the Cactus-Ringbolt area repeatedly asserted that they had never seen a merchant ship put up such a volume of fire as this ship did."

ABOVE: Aboard the merchant ship SS *O.M. Bernuth,* members of the vessel's Naval Armed Guard operate a 4-inch deck gun. At times, the sailors were called upon to defend against air attacks, enemy warships, or submarines. BELOW: A combat-ready Naval Armed Guardsman is shown wearing his life vest and a radio headset used for communication between gun stations aboard his ship. (Both: Author's Collection)

In the battle for the Philippines, the AG endured massive air raids in addition to repeated kamikaze attacks. At Leyte, over 120 merchant ships fought off repeated air assaults; five ships were lost and many damaged. Nevertheless, the Armed Guard was credited with the destruction of more than 120 Japanese aircraft. In statistical terms that meant for every ship lost 24 Japanese planes were shot down. Victory belonged to the AG at Leyte, but it cost 164 of their own.

Aside from submarines and aerial assaults, Armed Guard gunners also had to defend against surface attacks. Surface actions for the AG were not classic naval duels; rather they were defensive actions against hit-and-run raids by enemy torpedo boats or surfaced submarines. Additionally, there were the occasional surface raiders with which to contend. These ships, often disguised to look like neutral merchantmen, would unleash their deck guns, torpedoes, and in some cases torpedo boats against unsuspecting Allied merchant ships.

The number of merchant ships lost to these raiders can never be known for, as a postwar report stated, "Several ships went out independently and were never heard from again. They may have been torpedoed, suffered marine casualty, or [been] sunk by ... armed surface raiders."

For the men of the Armed Guard and the Merchant Marine, no voyage was as dreaded as the Murmansk run to Russia. Arctic storms, lack of escorts, continuous U-boat attacks and raids by German planes from Norway and Finland made the Murmansk run a horrific nightmare that drained a man mentally and physically. One AG veteran remembered, "It was light 20 hours a day ... We were on the guns for 36 hours at one stretch, ate and slept right on the gun decks ... One day nearly 100 planes hopped us...."

The slaughter of convoy PQ-17 in July 1942 is a classic example of what the AG faced trying to reach Russia. Starting on July 4 and lasting for several days, U-boats, torpedo planes, and bombers hammered the convoy almost incessantly. Although the ships fought valiantly, only three merchant ships were armed with 3-inch guns, the rest with .30- and .50-caliber machine guns. The Navy gunners remained at their stations for over 28 hours without relief and suffered from exhaustion. When the survivors of PQ-17 straggled into port, only seven of the original 33 had reached their destination.

On the Murmansk run, if the enemy was not trying to sink a man's ship, then the weather was. One sailor remembered that while the North Atlantic could be beautiful, it could also "be the meanest, most treacherous old bitch on the face of the earth." Another recalled gales that "shrieked down without warning as though they had been lying in wait for the chance to tear a ship apart."

Veterans of the North Atlantic learned that ice could be as much a hazard as the enemy. Ice formed on the guns and had to be broken off with axes and picks. Howard Long recalled that while he was in Murmansk his ship's guns froze, forcing the crew to take cover and wait out an air raid. William Schofield wrote of encountering a surfaced U-boat during a gale with freezing rain and sleet. The crews of both vessels raced for their guns as the range narrowed. Much to the shock of each crew, their guns were frozen solid with ice. In exasperation, the two crews simply stared at one another until they drifted from sight.

Despite their contributions to the war effort and the heroism in combating the enemy and the elements, some writers have disparaged the men of the AG. According to one account, they had "minimal education" and were assigned to the AG because they could not "qualify for anything else." It was as if they could never be real sailors. The only thing not real was the description. Many went on to become successful businessmen and public servants. One became a governor, another a state supreme court judge, and one gunner transferred to the Army and rose to the rank of general.

During the war, the fleet often sought out AG gunners for their ability to accurately judge distance and speed of a target simply by eyeballing it. Yet, regardless of the initial shock at being assigned to the AG, the hazards, and the lack of glory, most did not want to leave the Armed Guard. Some gunner's mates did not try for a higher rating because it might require transferring to the fleet. The majority of Armed Guardsmen would probably agree with Tracey Corder when he said, "I guess I developed an affinity for those old rust buckets."

By the end of the war, 1,810 Armed Guardsmen had given their lives in the line of duty. They met the enemy "oftener [sic] and on more widely divergent fronts than any other branch of our fighting forces," commented one observer. Some died quick deaths when their ships exploded from torpedoes or bombs. Many burned to death in the inferno of a blazing tanker. Others died slow deaths in lifeboats or on rafts in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic or under the blazing tropical sun.

The motto of the Naval Armed Guard was "We Aim to Deliver!" In the end, they more than lived up to it. For their valiant service, the AG received 8,033 decorations or commendations. Armed Guardsmen also received commendations from the governments of Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Five destroyer escorts, one destroyer. and a transport were posthumously named for Armed Guardsmen. Today at Armed Guard reunions, their motto can still be seen, but with the proudly added boast, "We Delivered!" □

First-time contributor Russell Corder is a former university professor and resides in Pleasanton, Kansas.

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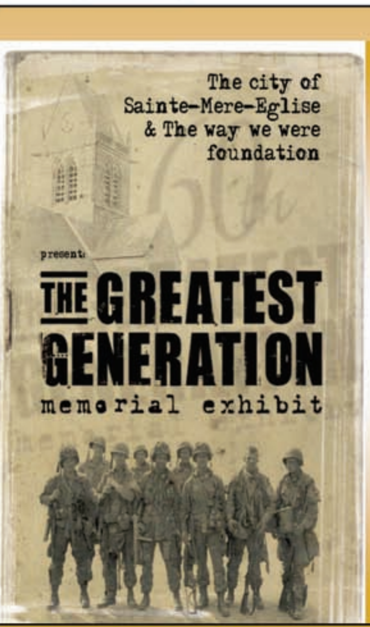

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By Dennis Whitehead

Some of the thousands of prisoners taken during the spring offensive of the Allied Fifth Army in Italy in 1945 gaze from behind a temporary enclosure of barbed wire. These were some of the lucky ones, as German casualties mounted during the last days of the war.

(All photos: National Archives)

In the Shadow of Sunrise

As the end of World War II neared, a German officer began secret negotiations with the Allies to surrender forces in Italy.

ON THE MORNING OF FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 1945, THREE MEN GATHERED AT A TABLE in L'Espadon of the Ritz Paris over a breakfast of coffee and croissants. News of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt the day before was, of course, foremost on everyone's mind. The man at the center of attention in this group was William Donovan, director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) from Washington, D.C. The man to whom Donovan was listening was the London station chief, William Casey.

The third man, unable to sit still awaiting his turn to speak, was Bern station chief Allen Dulles. Casey was apprising Donovan of the Allied successes in the European Theater. The war was ending in Europe, but no one was certain just how long the Nazis would continue to fight.

No sooner had Casey wrapped up his presentation than Donovan's attention turned to Dulles, the primary reason for his visit to the European continent. As Casey would write of the meeting in his final book, *The Secret War Against Hitler,* "… all hell had broken loose at SHAEF. Bedell Smith [General Walter Bedell Smith, Chief of Staff to General Dwight D. Eisenhower] had called Col. Russ Forgan, who had just replaced [David] Bruce as OSS Chief in Europe, on the carpet in Paris. Back in Washington, an angry Admiral Leahy [William Leahy, chief of staff to President Roosevelt] had summoned Donovan to the White House to demand an explanation of just what Dulles was up to in his dealings with the Germans in Italy and Switzerland."

Dulles also heard of the angry cables Roosevelt and Churchill had received from Stalin about Dulles's negotiations with the Germans, known as Operation Sunrise. According to Casey, Dulles was both outraged and embarrassed by the reactions his activities had triggered.

The British Eighth Army had launched the first phase of the Allied offensive in Italy, moving northward along the Adriatic coast. The American Fifth Army came unstuck from the Italian mud and was preparing to fight its way along Italy's central Apennine ridge. The Yugoslav forces of Josip Broz Tito were pushing from the northeast, and French forces from the northwest. Italian partisan groups were filling voids on the battlefield, harassing the Germans and holding wide areas of the Alpenvorland (northern Italy-south Tyrol). The German army in Italy was being forced through a funnel toward the Brenner Pass and, perhaps, a mountain fortress, or Alpenfestung, in Gauleiter (regional leader) Franz Hofer's Alpine fiefdom where the stage would be set for the final Götterdämmerung.

Frantically, the German high command in Italy was pressing for peace as best it could, under the best terms it could muster. There was no Alpine fortress, although the Allies were unaware of this, and German hope was sinking as rapidly as the Allies were closing in. The Nazi war machine was disintegrating, and its leaders in the field were panicking. Confidently, the Allies held fast to the tenet of unconditional surrender, although they feared a furtherance of the battle into the Alps. From the German peace mission, Operation Wool, and the British plan of Operation Crossword grew Allen Dulles's Operation Sunrise.

SS Obergruppenführer (Lieutenant General) Karl Friedrich Otto Wolff was the German point man for Sunrise. With the expulsion of the Mussolini government in July 1943 and the subsequent German retreat northward into the cuff of the Italian boot, Wolff's control of the elite SS troops in northern Italy made him an ideal partner in the negotiations. Wolff held onto a belief that Germany could survive without surrender, but he did sense that the end was near. He wanted to strike the best deal he could for himself and for his troops. The first meeting between German and Allied representatives took place on March 3, 1945, in Lugano, Switzerland.

For the next two months, talks between Wolff and Dulles and their intermediaries proceeded in starts and fits. The Allies' insistence upon unconditional surrender and the Germans' hope for an alliance against the Soviets constantly stymied the talks. Orders to stop and then start kept the talks on an uneven pace. Fear of reprisal haunted the German negotiators, who were breaking their oath of allegiance and stealing the glory from Nazi officials with inflated dreams of their role in the postwar future.

On April 20, two significant events occurred, the better known being a Joint Chiefs of Staff cable from Washington to Dulles ordering him to immediately cease all contacts with the Germans in Operation Sunrise. The other, lesser known occurrence was an order for Dr. Bruno de Angelis to appear in the Milan office of General Fiori Masini, military commander of the partisan Comitato nazionale di liberazione alta Italia (CNLAI). De Angelis had been operating as an intelligence source for the CNLAI, supplying information from his business travels between northern Italy and Germany. De Angelis had complete freedom of movement in the conduct of his business between the two countries as a representative of two Italian petrochemical companies. A lawyer and fluent in German, de Angelis moved smoothly across borders and among factions. Now, General Fiori was asking de Angelis to report to the provincial capital of Bolzano to organize both military and political preparations for the postwar period. His primary assignment was to ensure the quick and seamless transition of the Bolzano government into Italian hands.

Bolzano, the largest province in the Trentino region, was unique in its German-language majority with ties that were closer to Austria and its culture than with the Italian nation it had been legislated into in 1919. During Mussolini's reign, Fascism was dominant in Italy. In Bolzano, the Allogen (German-speaking population) aligned themselves with the Nazis. De Angelis was faced with a delicate balancing act

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between the German majority, both militarily and linguistically, and the Italian nation that needed the natural resources and industry of the province.

Arriving in Bolzano, de Angelis soon learned of the negotiations between the Germans and Allies. Hearing that Tyrolean Gauleiter Franz Hofer was playing a prominent role in the talks prompted de Angelis into quick action. He had to find a way into the process on behalf of Italy and block Hofer's Austrian ambitions.

Using his business contacts, de Angelis approached Friedrich Schwend, ersatz SS major headquartered in Labers Castle in nearby Merano, Italy. Schwend led a panzer corps that, rather than employing tanks in its tasks, used Fiat trucks. As a top-secret purchasing operation for the Reichsicherheitsamt (RSHA—Office of Reich Security) on behalf of the Wehrmacht, the Volkssturm, RSHA Intelligence (Amt VI) and Berlin higher-ups, Schwend used the counterfeit British pound notes produced in Operation Bernhard for currency. With tens of millions of fake British pounds and a network of agents across Europe and the Near East, Schwend was a man who knew the right people in the right places.

Schwend connected de Angelis with Wolff, who had earlier employed Schwend in his dealings with Dulles. At the time, Schwend represented the Austrian alliance of Hofer, Vienna SS chief Wilhelm Hoettl, and SS General Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner trying to hold sway in the Sunrise negotiations. Unfortunately for Schwend, the Kaltenbrunner-Hofer line had frayed in Sunrise, so Schwend's liaison, former German consul general to Los Angeles Georg Gyssling, was coolly dismissed under order from Dulles. Gyssling never saw Dulles.

The arrival of de Angelis on Schwend's doorstep seeking to initiate negotiations on behalf of the future Italian government renewed Schwend's hope to be a part of the action and to "build a bridge to the future," as he saw it.

Schwend knew they had to act quickly as the American 10th Mountain Division had entered the Po Valley and was already racing toward the Alps. Verona fell on the same day that the 88th Infantry crossed the Po River. Soon, all passes through the Alps would be in Allied hands.

In preparation for any eventuality, de Angelis requested that the partisan forces of Commandante Franco in Belluno speed toward Bolzano. The local volunteers were undermanned and underarmed. Allied air forces were prevented from making airdrops of arms into much of the region, given the concentration of German forces. As of May 1, 1945, the Giovane Italia partisan group operating in the Bolzano and Merano areas, commanded by Gino Beccaro, was 800 men strong with only 70 weapons among them, and only some 30 men operating in Merano.

On June 16, 1945, Italian partisans gather at a soccer field in the Friuli District of Italy near Venice. The partisans had been instructed to turn in their arms, and they complied—reluctantly in some cases.

CNLAI leader and future mayor of Bolzano Dr. Sandro Bonvicini reached an accord with Fascist troops in Bolzano to peacefully transfer their weapons to the partisans. Partisan Colonel Passerini was assigned the task of preparing a constitution for the postwar province of Bolzano. De Angelis convened a peace committee in Merano, including Gyssling and the honorary Swiss consul in Bolzano, Albert Crastan, to draw up the surrender terms for presentation to Wolff.

Earlier that day, Benito Mussolini had been captured and executed at Giulino di Mezzegra on Lake Como under orders from CNLAI headquarters in Milan. The bodies of Mussolini and his mistress were transported to Milan where they were hung by their feet for the world to see. The end was drawing closer—minute by minute.

In Switzerland, Lt. Col. Victor von Schweinitz, chief of staff for the commander of German forces in Italy, General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, and SS Sturmbannführer (Major) Eugen Wenner were ordered to proceed to the Caserta, Italy, headquarters of Supreme Allied Commander for the Mediterranean, British Field Marshal Harold Alexander, and secure the Allies' signatures on the instrument of surrender. The envoys would travel to Italy from Switzerland via France to avoid Wolff's predicament the night before when he was surrounded by partisans near Lake Como and almost captured. It took a daring rescue by OSS agent Donald Jones in the early morning hours of April 27 to save Wolff, and Sunrise, from disaster.

On April 28, Wolff returned to Bolzano where he attended a meeting at the Alpenvorland headquarters of Gauleiter Hofer. From 2 PM to 7:30 AM, von Vietinghoff, his chief of staff General Hans Röttiger, German ambassador to Italy Rudolph Rahn, and Gauleiter Hofer joined Wolff in his presentation of the latest Sunrise events. Wolff emphasized to Hofer that his dream of a postwar mountain enclave was entirely out of the question. To say the least, Hofer was deeply disappointed. Rather than employing political strategy, Hofer demanded that all troops in his territory, both the Austrian Tyrol and Alpenvorland, be placed under his control. This demand was met with vehement opposition from all present. A particularly heated argument raged between Hofer and Röttiger regarding realistic terms of surrender. In the end, Hofer would set out to strike his own deal.

De Angelis presented his terms, entitled, "Act of unconditional surrender of the headquarters of the troops and of the German services south of the boundary of the Brenner," to Schwend for conveyance to Wolff. These called upon the Germans to surrender to Allied troops and partisans "no later than 0900 hours of the day 29 April." Those found not in compliance would be regarded as rebels. Weapons dumps and warehouses were to be handed over and the German military had to immediately evacuate Bolzano and Merano. The local CLN would then assume control, with assurances of the well-being of the Allogen. These were very bold terms from a man whose armed forces were vastly outnumbered and outgunned by German troops and the local Allogen. They were rejected upon receipt.

In spite of the rejection, an invitation to continue at Wolff's Bolzano headquarters was extended to de Angelis by way of Schwend, with one twist. Did de Angelis have radio contact with General Mark Clark's 15th Army Group headquarters? The Germans wanted the presence of a representative of Clark with whom they could negotiate, and if de Angelis could facilitate this, then negotiations would be reopened. Knowing that the OSS Mission Norma, located in Villa di Legno, had a radio, de Angelis answered in the affirmative. Hearing this, Schwend promptly gave the green light to further talks. Unaware of the fate of von Schweinitz and Wenner in Caserta, the Germans wanted to open a second channel, this one to Clark, just in case the Sunrise contact with AFHQ and Alexander failed.

At 9 PM, the delegation of Gyssling, Crastan, de Angelis, Sandro Bonvicini of the Bolzano CLN and Mr. Nazari of the Merano CLN chapter met with SS General of the Police Karl Brunner (Polizeiführer für die Operationszone Alpenvorland). The negotiations lasted all night with Brunner standing his ground firmly and vehemently, at the same time buying time for Wolff's emissaries to return from Caserta. Finally, at 5 AM on April 29, General Brunner agreed to sign the terms of surrender hammered out through the night, with the proviso that Clark agree to send a representative.

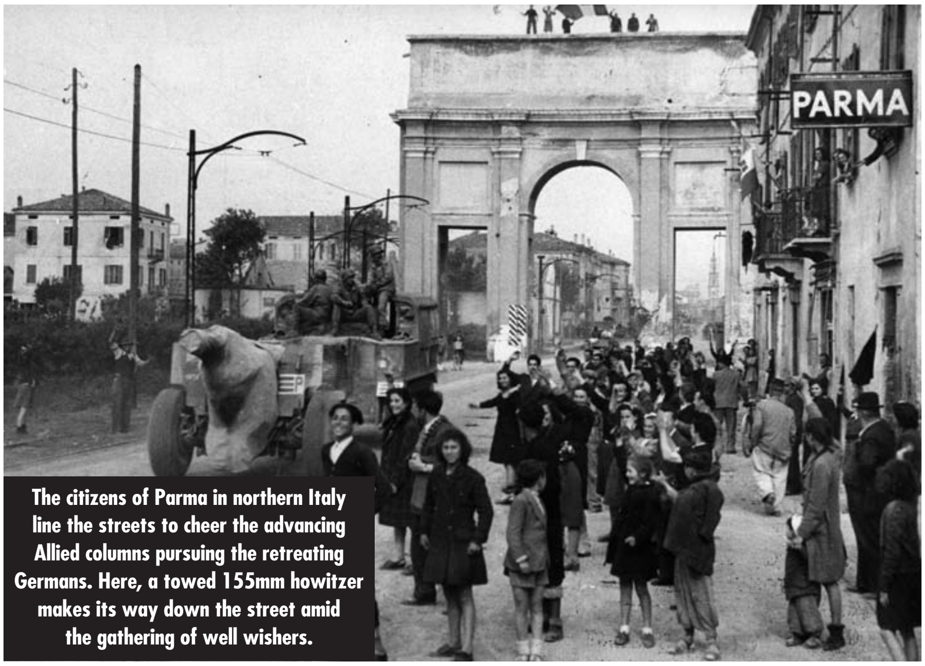
De Angelis added the handwritten note: "The hostilities are suspended on both sides while waiting for the decision of Gen. Clark."

At dawn, de Angelis drove with Commandante Franco to Mortidolo to find the OSS undercover Mission Norma stationed in the area. They wanted to transmit the urgent message to Clark's headquarters. De Angelis met "Captain Sandro" (nom de guerre of OSS Captain Cristoforo de Hartungen), head of Mission Norma, who agreed to send the message, but a malfunctioning radio prevented the transmission. De Hartungen returned to Bolzano with de Angelis and Franco to find a replacement radio. Arriving in Bolzano at 8:30 PM, they began transmission eight hours later using the radio of OSS Mission Franconia. Nearly every hour, the German command sent couriers asking whether Clark had answered. Likewise, every hour Mission Norma repeated its message to headquarters.

This continued for days, periodically interrupted by fighting and German patrols. A typical message read: "We have reached agreement in principle to guarantee immediate control of Bolzano and Merano by the CLN in collaboration with the Allogenous [Austrian] population avoiding conflicts … Suspension of hostilities until the arrival of General Clark's plenipotentiary. We believe that he can negotiate the surrender without condition of the army in South Tyrol …The aim of our initiative is to avoid absolutely a conflict between the Italian and Allogenous population. We believe that we are succeeding but the presence of your plenipotentiary is indispensable. Reply urgently."

Silence.

Word had spread quickly through the local populace that the Germans had surrendered. Jubilant crowds took to the streets of Merano where, on the morning of April 30, the Wehrmacht opened fire on an unarmed crowd of celebrating Italians, killing 15 and wounding 20. De Angelis later placed responsibility for this action at the feet of General Brunner. A fanatical Nazi, Brunner took part in many crimes against partisans and civilians, including the deportation of Jews from the Alpenvorland. Never convicted of war crimes, Brunner died in 1980.


The citizens of Parma in northern Italy line the streets to cheer the advancing Allied columns pursuing the retreating Germans. Here, a towed 155mm howitzer makes its way down the street amid the gathering of well wishers.

A basic acknowledgment finally arrived, and then on the night of May 2, Clark responded with instructions to begin breaking all German resistance and to occupy storehouses and German positions. This gave de Angelis pause since this did not appear to be an appropriate response to their repeated cables, but he proceeded to order partisan units into action. During May 3, partisan groups attacked and disarmed isolated German patrols, including a confrontation with a group of SS soldiers unloading goods from a warehouse in the Bolzano industrial zone. The skirmish that erupted left approximately 80 casualties on each side.

Also, on May 3, an SS column was attacked in Predazzo, just south of Bolzano, by partisans who took 67 prisoners. When the Germans requested information on the whereabouts of the SS troops, the CLN reported that the partisans had attacked the column in retaliation for their burning down several houses and killing 27 Italians.

In the absence of a clear response from Clark, de Angelis, von Vietinghoff, and Wolff signed an agreement to evacuate the industrial zone and place it under the patrol of joint partisan-German patrols. This, at least, brought peace to the industrial sector of Bolzano.

An official Army communiqué trumpeted: "Troops of the Fifteenth Army Group have so smashed German Armies in Italy that they have been eliminated as a military force." Some 120,000 Germans had been taken prisoner since the April 16 offensive started.

For the Allied troops, military actions were winding down but issues of administration were rapidly taking their place. It was important for the Allies to enter northeastern Italy as quickly as possible. Large numbers of German soldiers, many of them detached from their units and not under regular discipline, were roaming the countryside. Thousands of Italian partisans, not all under proper control or carrying weapons for the right reasons, could be found everywhere. There was urgent need for a new law and order in the Alto Adige.

Nervous negotiators on both sides anxiously awaited the return of Wolff's emissaries from Caserta. A radio installed by Dulles in Wolff's headquarters malfunctioned, temporarily cutting contact with Caserta. Von Schweinitz and Wenner were delayed by a circuitous route from Caserta to Bolzano. All shared genuine fears that they could fall into the hands of Kaltenbrunner or be intercepted by Hofer. There also was the danger of capture by the American 7th Army that was closing in on Innsbruck from the north.

Finally, the emissaries arrived in Bolzano at 3 AM on May 1. Exhausted by the 32-hour journey that began by air from Caserta to Switzerland, from which they drove all night to Austria where they spent part of the following day and the entire night eluding friend and foe.

The emissaries, like Dulles and his Sunrise collaborators, had no notion of events that were occurring in Bolzano that threatened both Sunrise and the de Angelis negotiations, separate of one another, with thunderous collapse.

On the morning of April 30, Field Marshal

BELOW: Representing General Karl Friedrich Otto Wolff, an SS major disobeys direct orders from Hitler and signs documents to surrender German forces in Italy. Other officers, both Allied and German, are clustered around the signer. LEFT: Seated on the right side of the large table, five high-ranking German officers representing General Heinrich von Vietinghoff meet with Allied officers at 15th Army Group headquarters in northern Italy to discuss logistical issues related to the surrender of German forces.

Albert Kesselring, former commander of the German Army in Italy but promoted only two days before to commander in chief of all German forces in the south, including the Army Group Südwest, relieved his successor von Vietinghoff and Chief of Staff Röttiger of their commands. Evidently, Hofer, frustrated by the direction of Wolff's negotiations and infuriated by von Vietinghoff not informing him of his agreement with the partisans, betrayed the entire Sunrise enterprise to Kesselring and Kaltenbrunner. By relieving von Vietinghoff and Röttiger, Kesselring had effectively removed Wolff's two principal collaborators in his Sunrise efforts. Kesselring let Wolff know that he had referred the matter to Kaltenbrunner in Berlin, and, as Kaltenbrunner was in control of the Gestapo Sonderrollkommandos Begus and Skorzeny (Special Gestapo T Forces), Wolff knew his life was in peril.

Only three and a half hours after the emissaries' return, Röttiger, Moll, Dollmann, and Wolff gathered to hear von Schweinitz and Wenner's report. Now they had the added complication of determining which measures could be taken in the wake of von Vietinghoff's removal to assure that the terms could be met on the following day, May 2, at 1200 hours Greenwich mean time. New commander in chief Schultz and his chief of staff, General Wentzel, had already advised Wolff that they would not issue orders to the army group to cease fire without the specific approval of Kesselring.

Wolff later wrote in his narrative to Dulles aide Gero Gaevernitz, "We decided that the only possible course of action was to prevent Schultz and Wentzel [from interfering] with any orders which we might issue for the cessation of hostilities." With the agreement of his fellow conspirators, Wolff placed Schultz and Wentzel under arrest, and, in the absence of von Vietinghoff, Röttiger was placed in command. To prevent Schultz's staff from alerting Kesselring or the German high command, telephone communications between Bolzano and Germany were cut off.

At 9:30 PM, an impatient message from Field Marshal Alexander arrived. He demanded an immediate response as to whether the surrender would take place on the date and at the hour stipulated in the instrument of surrender. Wolff's immediate reply was to ask for one more hour. Alexander had no idea how tenuous Wolff's hold on his command was at that moment.

Schultz and his aide were soon released and, along with Wolff, they tried reaching Kesselring, but he was traveling. Kesselring's chief of staff, General Siegfried Westphal, also was unwilling to independently issue cease-fire orders without Kesselring's permission.

At 10:00 PM, without word from Kesselring or Westphal; Herr, Lemmelsen, Wolff, and others decided to issue the cease-fire orders independently, telling troops to lay down their arms at the agreed-upon hour.

At 11 PM, word of Hitler's death reached Wolff's headquarters. Wolff and his companions felt this would ease the situation since officers no longer were bound by their oath of allegiance to Hitler.

This would not be the case.

At 1:15 on the morning of the 2nd, less than 13 hours until the surrender was to take effect, Kesselring issued an order for the arrest of von Vietinghoff, Röttiger, Kempf, von Schweinitz and a Captain Altenpohl. Looking out from their underground shelter, Wolff saw heavily armed officers of the army group posted at the main exits.

Wolff said of those nervous, early morning hours: "The situation was now so tense that I ordered the seven tanks which were at my disposal to be lined up in front of my headquarters." He also ordered 350 SS officers and men to be armed and ready to defend the headquarters against an attack by German forces.

At 2 AM, Kesselring telephoned Wolff to sternly reprimand him for two hours, during which Wolff implored Kesselring to support the cease-fire. Finally, at 4:30 AM on May 2, Kesselring relented, giving his approval for the cessation of hostilities in northern Italy. Shortly thereafter, von Vietinghoff was reinstated to his command.

At noon on May 2, hostilities in northern Italy came to an end.

Wolff explained to Berlin that he had prevented a "Communist uprising" that would have established a "Soviet republic in northern Italy."

Although Alexander had signed the instrument of surrender presented by von Schweinitz and Wenner on the 29th and de Angelis had his truce, it remained for General Mark Clark to host the formal ceremony on May 3 in which von Vietinghoff representative Lt. Gen. Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin surrendered the remaining Axis forces in Italy.

With major military operations ended, civil affairs moved to the front of the line. In Bolzano, de Angelis met with Röttiger and Wolff to discuss final terms and the important matter of bringing peace to the industrial zone of the city. At 11:30 AM, de Angelis, Wolff, and von Vietinghoff signed an agreement to clear the industrial zone of Bolzano and, two hours later, signed the transfer of provincial administration to the CLN and Italian government.

De Angelis later wrote, "In the afternoon of 3 May all of Bolzano was beflagged and the CLN, seated in the Palace of the Government, began its work of organization. A message by me was transmitted on the day of the 4th [and] gave news of the passage of the administration of the territory to the CLN and invited Italians and Allogens to collaborate fully and actively with the work of common reconstruction."

The first American patrols arrived on May 4, and on the following day the American command made its appearance in Bolzano. Instead of the anarchy the Allies had predicted in 1944, particularly in postwar Bolzano, the Americans found a tense situation well under the control of the local Italian CLN officials in cooperation with the German-speaking majority. The general reception for the Americans was cool from the Allogen population, in stark contrast with the joyous greetings in the south. Sensing hostility to outside control, the Allied Commission decided to forgo its plans for implementation of Allied military governments in many areas of the Alto Adige in favor of local CLN administration.

When American troops finally arrived in Bolzano, they found warehouses teeming with just about any merchandise to be thought of, including pianos and Fiat cars. There were bales of silk stockings, warehouses of liquor, 5,000 commercial radios, 1,000 tons of food, and millions in Italian currency. Champagne flowed freely. A sign that hung over a bar of the 87th Infantry Regiment read: "Champagne Free! Beer 20 Cents. Only you wealthy guys drink beer!"

The author of a July 1945 report, "The Army Goes on a Treasure Hunt," for the Fifth Army's finance division, felt confined by the format of a "dry report" and told the reader that "we leave it to your imagination or if you wish to your postwar time to tell you of the thrilling chases over the mountain passes and into dark caves, and searching through safes, etc., etc., for the treasure of the Nazi and the Fascist!

"So, the treasure hunt goes on over the Dolomites—the Brenner—the Bergamo and the Carnic Alps—up and down the lakes—in caves. The score rolls up and up and it is billions we talk of now—not millions—and platinum and gold and jewels and moneys of every country—not the paper money either—gold sovereigns—double eagles—napoleons—gold marks—and even barrels of silver which may go to make silver nitrate for the Medical Department or some other prosaic task."

From the end of fighting to May 13, Bolzano was appropriately described as "one of the most fantastic situations that has grown out of the German surrender." Wehrmacht soldiers sped around in convertibles with their girlfriends, inhabited restaurants and cafes, and lived in houses and hotels while GIs slept in tents, leaving them to wonder in response to a questionnaire: "What the hell's cooking—who won this war?"

A member of the 86th Mountain Infantry remarked: "We fought the war and they're celebrating the end of it." According to an Associated Press report from Bolzano, "groups of fifteen or twenty local youngsters—obviously holdovers from the Hitler Youth—goose-stepped down the main streets in the early evening singing 'Hitler Is My Führer' and the 'Horst Wessel Lied.'"

It amused the watching German soldiers and shocked the Americans. An American investigator found in a German military hospital "enough rifles, machine pistols, hand grenades and small mortars in one cache to fill a two and one-half ton truck." A time bomb went off in the battalion headquarters at Colle Scaro, a former Gestapo headquarters, wounding 22 American soldiers four days after the German surrender.

Ted Ryan of the OSS Caserta station described the scene in Bolzano as he and Dulles aide Gero Gaevernitz arrived for meetings with Wolff and von Vietinghoff on May 9: "It was a peaceful scene, rather like lunchtime at the MGM Studios … A bronzed lad in khaki Afrika Korps shorts, balanced on the handlebars of his

Continued on page 72

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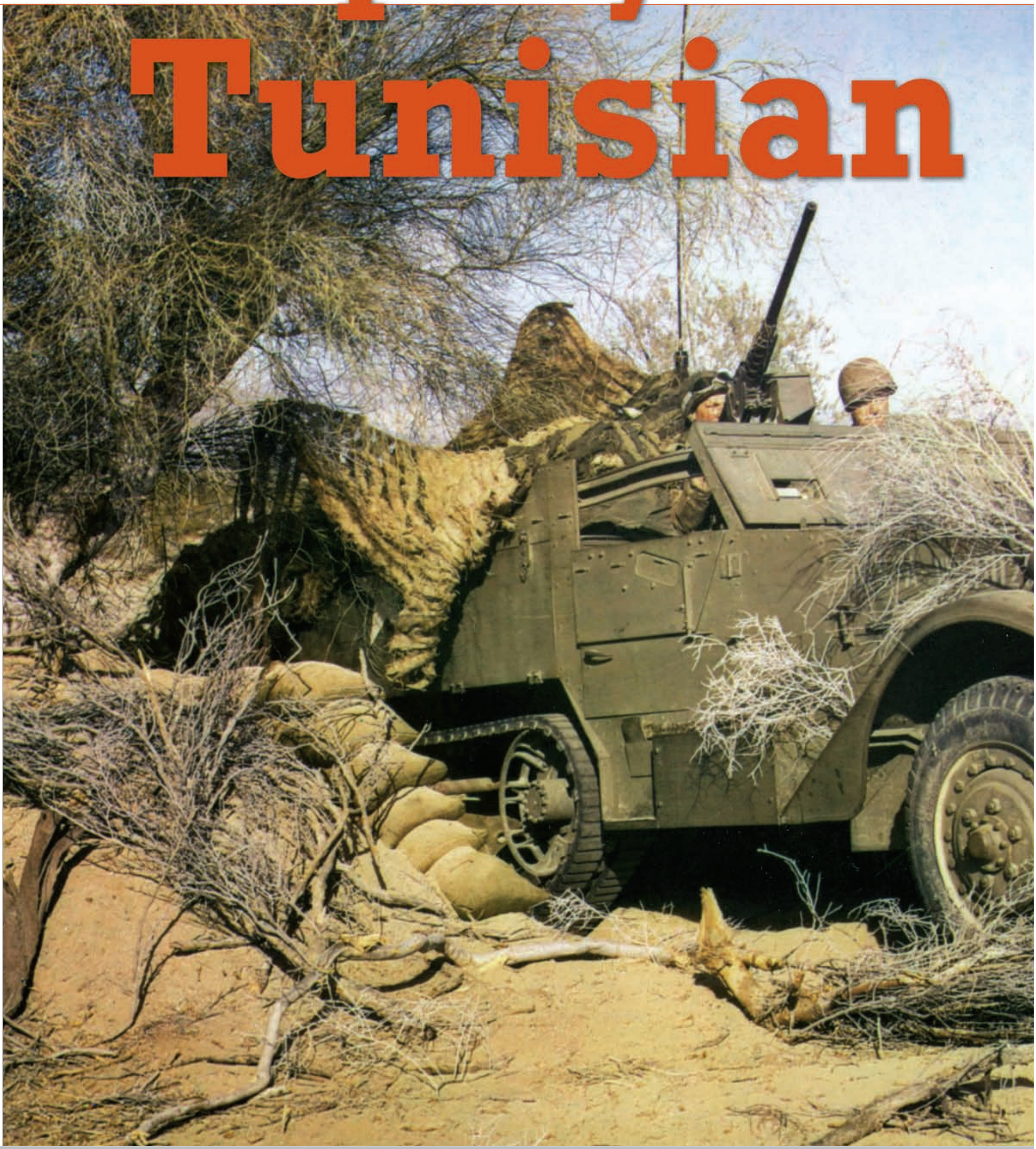
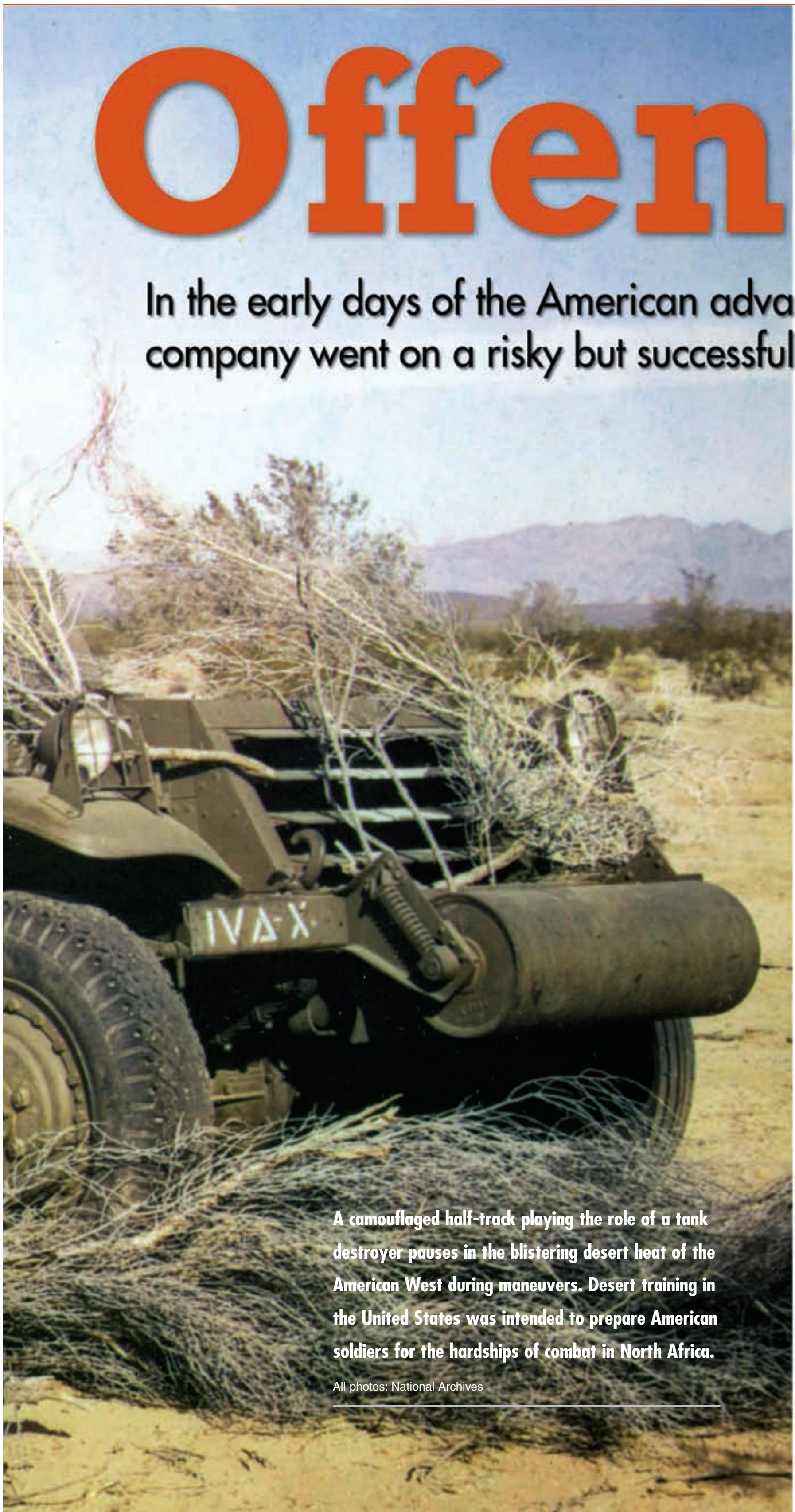
Company B's Tunisian



Offensive

In the early days of the American advance into Tunisia, a tank destroyer company went on a risky but successful offensive—virtually alone.



A camouflaged half-track playing the role of a tank destroyer pauses in the blistering desert heat of the American West during maneuvers. Desert training in the United States was intended to prepare American soldiers for the hardships of combat in North Africa.

All photos: National Archives

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

For the United States Army, the long road to Germany began in the mountainous deserts of Tunisia in mid-November 1942. Earlier in the month thousands of GIs had come ashore in the Vichy French territories of Morocco and Algeria. After the brief fighting with French troops ended and a political settlement had been reached, the Americans turned their attention to the east, toward the Germans and Italians. On May 13, 1943, those enemies would capitulate, ending the North African campaign. Although their British allies were seasoned veterans of the desert war, the roughly six-month period between landing and surrender would be a tough one for the U.S. forces. The newly resurgent U.S. Army was taking its first, tentative steps into the realm of modern warfare.

These soldiers had courage, ingenuity, and motivation. What they lacked was experience in ground combat against a battle-hardened, mechanized opponent. Mistakes were made and blunders committed. The GIs learned as they went and suffered accordingly, though they were fast learners. It is actually a testament to them that their first bloody lessons didn't break them; in a few instances, their perhaps naïve boldness paid off in victory.

A sterling example of such victory is the two-day offensive of Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion. Part of the first tank destroyer unit to see combat in North Africa, it garnered an impressive tally of enemy tanks knocked out, prisoners seized, and ground taken. What makes this feat even more astounding is that it did so without any support from its higher headquarters; no infantry, armor, or artillery support; and no intelligence whatsoever. The company commander, Captain Gilbert A. Ellman, called it the "absolute absence of any information on the enemy forces." Nevertheless, Company B was ordered forward to carry out its mission.

ABOVE: Early in the war in the North African desert, half-tracks armed with 75mm cannon served as tank destroyers and mobile artillery. Here, medical personnel rush to the aid of a soldier who has been wounded in combat with Axis forces. BELOW: American soldiers prepare to load and fire a half-track-mounted artillery piece during the North African campaign. Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, won a hard-fought victory against the battle-hardened Germans during the desert conflict.

Company B was organized along the standard lines of a tank destroyer company of the time. It contained three platoons, each with two sections of two tank destroyers each, for a total of four per platoon and 12 per company. Two platoons were "heavy," equipped with the M3 tank destroyer, basically a half-track mounting a 75mm Model 1897 cannon (the famous French 75 of World War I) adapted as an antitank gun. A shield was mounted on the cannon to protect the crew from small-arms fire. The other platoon was classified as "light," using the M6 tank destroyer, a three-quarter-ton truck that mounted a 37mm antitank gun in the bed, also with a thin armored shield.

Earlier in November, an order had been issued to replace the light tank destroyers with the larger, more effective M3s. That order came too late for the units going to North Africa, and they deployed with their M6s, which had only been intended as training vehicles rather than for combat use. Each platoon also had a headquarters section, a two-gun antiaircraft section, and a 12-man security section meant to protect the tank destroyers from enemy infantry. During the company's mission, it also had a reconnaissance platoon attached from the battalion recon company.

Developed as a response to the whirlwind victories of the German blitzkrieg tactics used so effectively earlier in the war, tank destroyer doctrine of the period dictated that units would block enemy armor penetrations by quickly moving to the point of the breakthrough and using their firepower and mobility to stop the attacking tanks. This doctrine proved flawed in the face of actual German tactics, which were not simple tank attacks but combined arms assaults, with tanks acting in concert with infantry, artillery, antitank guns, and aircraft. It also assumed that field commanders, unschooled in tank destroyer doctrine, had the necessary communications links set up to warn of an enemy breakthrough and could clear jammed rear-area roads for their movement when needed and that a unit of self-propelled guns could simply sit around waiting for such an attack during combat operations.

None of these assumptions proved realistic, and it was the failure of the last assumption that resulted in Company B's attack. As the U.S. Army moved into Tunisia, it felt its way along, hoping to seize territory and population centers as quickly as possible. This required units with mobility and speed.

By doctrine, Company B had been organized to destroy enemy armor and nothing else, but it did have some hidden strengths. While its tank destroyers were stopgap designs hurriedly placed into service until a more ideal design could be produced, the company did possess a large amount of firepower. Though lightly armored, all its guns were indeed mobile, and the security sections each platoon possessed could double as infantry in a pinch, at least in the view of those unschooled commanders. The tank destroyer men themselves were equally eager for a mission, even one that went against their training.

And so it was that Captain Ellman received his orders to take the town of Gafsa on November 22, 1942. His company had just arrived in the area of Feriana, some 47 miles northwest of Gafsa, during the night of the 21st. The previous six days had seen the company moved 1,000 miles from Oran, Algeria. The attack was ordered for dawn. Ellman prepared his unit, refueling and loading ammunition. When finished, the men were able to rest for only a mere half hour before proceeding to the targeted town in a night road march.

Gafsa lies in central Tunisia and is a road junction for routes east to Sfax, southeast to El Guettar and Gabes, and north to the various towns around Kasserine, soon to become famous for the American defeat there. An oasis and a French barracks were located at Gafsa. Ellman had no idea whether anyone even occupied the town, though it was a good bet someone was there. For this first attack, two Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighters were to strafe the town before Company B's assault. Accompanying the tank destroyers was a pair of ancient French armored cars.

The captain organized his company with the two heavy platoons leading the attack, with the light platoon and its vulnerable M6s kept in reserve. Ellman's account states he had two platoons of M6s, rather than the normal one. Possibly they were attached from another company of the 701st Battalion. There was no cover on the approach to the town, so speed was a key. According to Ellman, "We made the best of a bad situation."

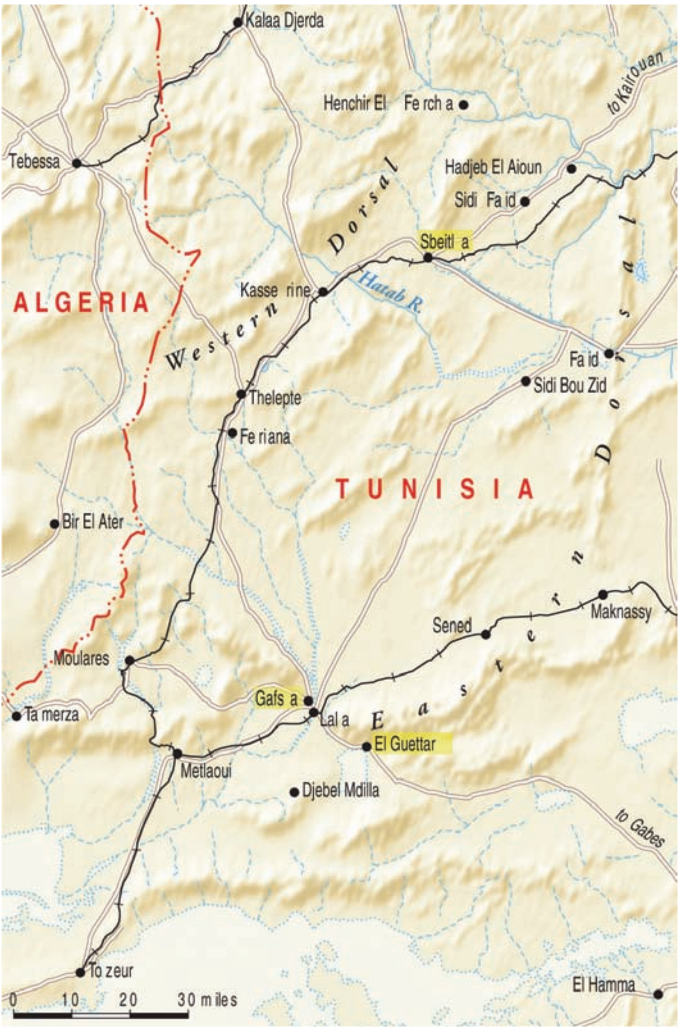
The P-38s roared overhead, their cannons and machine guns blazing as they strafed the town's defenders. Company B attacked right on the heels of the fighters, hoping to deny the defenders any time to recover from the aerial assault. The first objectives were two clusters of buildings outside Gafsa itself, on each side of the road leading out of town toward the west and Feriana. One platoon moved to each and immediately began to take fire from German snipers. In response, the tank destroyers began hitting the occupied buildings with 75mm high-explosive rounds. Most of the buildings collapsed after one hit. Continuing past these ruined structures, the two platoons ran into a line of trenches that had been thrown across the road and continued to each side of it. The two French armored cars stayed on the road as they advanced. Both opened fire on these trenches.

This time Ellman and one platoon paralleled the road to the south to avoid mines and advanced directly on the town from the west. The other platoon was sent on a flanking maneuver to the north. Sniper fire continued from the town itself as the tank destroyers moved past the entrenchments. Both of the armored cars, still moving along the road, hit mines. The resulting explosion blew all four wheels off one vehicle, and both were disabled.

Careful to skirt the minefield, Ellman and the accompanying platoon entered the town. Once there, a youthful French civilian approached the GIs and volunteered to show them where the German positions were. Ellman readily agreed, and the boy lived up to his word. As before, high-explosive rounds and machine gun fire answered the German snipers, and the town's defenders were quickly overwhelmed. The Germans had armed some 300 Arabs to assist in the defense of the town. These men fled into the oasis and groves in and around the settlement, where the Americans had to round them up and disarm them. After a few hours of combat, Gafsa had fallen.

Ellman now took stock of his situation. There were several roads leading to enemy-held territory, so he positioned tank destroyers at each of them to guard against counterattacks. Word of this expected counterattack came just after noon. A German armored column had been spotted moving toward Gafsa from the southeast along the road that led to El Guettar and Gabes. It was quickly decided that Gafsa was not the place to meet a German armored attack because of its terrain, which was not advantageous for a defensive fight. At 2:30 PM, the company advanced toward El Guettar, hoping to find suitable terrain for a defense.

"We hoped to be able to pick our ground and surprise the tanks," Ellman wrote. He placed his attached reconnaissance platoon in the lead with a heavy platoon behind it. His command group followed with the second heavy platoon behind it. The light platoon brought up the rear.



Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: In this captured Axis photograph, Italian soldiers are seen rushing forward at the front in Tunisia on May 6, 1943. LEFT: Desert warfare was in some ways akin to war at sea. Small but deadly encounters were commonplace across the arid expanse, similar to the experience of the soldiers of Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion in the vicinity of Gafsa. BELOW: Following a bitter battle, the town of Sbeitla, Tunisia, burns furiously, while a nearby ammunition dump, also hit during the fighting, erupts in a giant column of smoke and flame.

ABOVE: During a reconnaissance mission, U.S. soldiers pause near El Guettar to report on potential enemy targets by radio. Artillery personnel are on the other end of the line, ready to plot map coordinates for an upcoming barrage against German positions. OPPOSITE: An Allied armored car races past the hulk of a German Mark IV panzer destroyed in earlier fighting. Losses in armor, both Allied and Axis, were tremendous during the desert war.

This formation would prove an effective one for Company B throughout its fighting in North Africa.

The Americans covered the roughly 10-15 miles to El Guettar without contacting the enemy. The recon platoon continued through the town to scout the road eastward as the tank destroyers reached its western edge. As the recon vehicles crested a small hill on the eastern edge of town they received a shock. Spread out in front of them was the enemy armored column, its tanks on a second rise farther down the road. The American scouts beat a hasty retreat as the enemy opened fire. One jeep driver turned too quickly, and his jeep flipped over, throwing him and his two comrades into a ditch. They had to crawl back to the town but arrived safely.

The recon troops informed Ellman of the enemy contact, so he sent one platoon to the left of the road and one to the right through the town's oasis. The light platoon was sent to the south to skirt around the Chott El Guettar, a salt lake outside the settlement. From there it could protect the company's flank.

The German force contained 10 tanks, and these now proceeded to flank the town to their own right, directly into the path of the heavy platoon Ellman had sent around to his left. The two forces met, and first blood went to the Americans, whose gunners quickly knocked out four opposing tanks. Such heavy losses inflicted so rapidly compelled the German tankers to retreat the way they had come. Ellman's group arrived at the eastern edge of the oasis just as the six remaining enemy tanks went past on the road. The GI gunners fired a number of 75mm rounds toward the enemy tanks, but they all succeeded in getting past. Though they did not know it at the time, the tank destroyer men had damaged several of the tanks, which were found a few days later, out of fuel.

It was now 1700 hours. With darkness approaching, the men of Company B reformed and went back to Gafsa, hoping for some time to work on their vehicles and get some rest. Unfortunately, it was not to be. As the unit rolled into Gafsa, the men found they had been selected for yet another difficult task. Some 120 miles north of Gafsa lay the town of Sbeitla, which had been occupied by French troops. Earlier in the day, the Germans had reportedly captured the town along with a large cache of supplies and two companies of French infantry. Apparently Company B's successes had earned it a reputation as a force that could get the job done. The French commander now wanted Ellman to take his men to Sbeitla with a vague order to "do something about it." Ellman later wrote that such vague commands were normal during the early days in Tunisia, particularly for the tank destroyer units.

The situation was again daunting. Just getting to Sbeitla required another night road march through an area where the front lines were still fluid. At the end of that march, Company B would again have to attack an enemy force of unknown composition and strength, which had been allowed some time to prepare its defenses. Still, the tank destroyer company was the only unit available to do the job, so the men topped off their gas tanks and started back to Feriana, which they reached at about midnight. The light platoon had been left behind to help defend Gafsa. Ellman and his troops got two hours of sleep before starting the final 76 miles of their journey to Sbeitla.

A lost American jeep may have been used by the Germans

WHEN COMPANY B, 701ST Tank Destroyer Battalion was advancing through El Guettar, its attached reconnaissance troops came barreling over a rise on the east side of the town and straight into contact with an approaching tank force. These recon troops used both jeeps and motorcycles to search out the opposing force. On this occasion one of the jeeps tried to turn too quickly and flipped over into a ditch. The three soldiers manning the jeep were unharmed but now in full view of 10 Axis tanks. Quickly they scuttled back to safety using the ditch for cover, leaving behind their jeep, which was abandoned after the fight as B Company moved back toward Feriana after its victory at El Guettar.

It was not the last the men of the 701st would see of their lost vehicle, however. Because American jeeps were prized for their reliability and toughness, the Germans made use of captured ones when they could, as both sides often did with captured weapons and equipment during the desert war. Apparently this is what became of the jeep the scouts had been forced to leave behind. It apparently reappeared in enemy hands during later fighting.

More than two months later, in February 1943, the men of the 701st were fighting at Sidi Bou Zid when an unknown party began transmitting on their company radio net. The

The company used the same formation as before, but with a few modifications to increase its security. The tank destroyers were staggered to each side of the road so each would have a field of fire to the front in case of another engagement like the one at El Guettar. The scouts of the reconnaissance platoon were sent forward and told to be particularly thorough. One M3 of the lead platoon was sent with the scouts so it could support them in case of enemy contact. Its alert crew kept a round in the chamber of its 75mm gun, ready to fire at a moment's notice.

So disposed, Company B moved northeast, no doubt tense with expectation and fear at the idea of meeting another advancing enemy or, worse, passing one in hiding to find themselves ambushed or cut off. As they moved, the recon platoon checked every likely enemy hiding place for lurking Axis troops or tanks. Any buildings, wooded areas, even clumps of bushes were inspected. After a few hours with no enemy spotted, the unit reached the town of Kasserine. The locals told the Americans that the enemy had reached the town but then fallen back toward Sbeitla.

This increased the tension even more because it meant they were almost sure to find the enemy ahead. Pressing on, the scouts came upon a roadblock some five miles outside Kasserine. Stones had been piled on the road in the saddle between two hilltops. It was a good spot for the enemy to mount a defense to delay any advance on Sbeitla. The recon troops moved cautiously forward, probing for the expected enemy ambush, but found nothing. Inexplicably, the roadblock was not defended or even booby-trapped. The stones were moved off the road, and the company continued on its way.

Visibility grew poor as rain began to fall. After proceeding another 10 miles, the tank destroyer group came to a wrecked bridge that had once spanned a deep canyon. There was no apparent way across. The recon platoon fanned out and soon discovered another crossing point. The men of Company B knew from their maps that they were close to Sbeitla now, approaching from the southwest.

The maps were wrong, however. The road actually came into town from the northwest, a fact the GIs discovered only when the recon jeeps crested the rise of a north-south ridge and found Sbeitla spread out in front of them. An orchard was situated on the western edge of the town, extending from the south side of the road. An old Roman arch was located north of the road at the edge of the settlement. In the distance, another road led out of Sbeitla to the northeast, crossing a large wadi. No fire greeted the jeeps at the rise or as they proceeded toward the orchard. As the Americans later learned, the Italian troops in the town were fortuitously having a meal when Company B arrived. Either they had not bothered to post sentries or those posted were not alert.

The Americans' luck could not last, though. Just as the approaching GIs began to make out the forms of camouflaged tanks, trenches, and machine gun pits in the orchard, an Italian tanker spotted the Americans and sounded the alarm. The 47mm guns of the Italian medium tanks began to spit shells at the jeeps, and machine guns joined in. The American machine gunners replied, and a fierce firefight developed as the rest of the company now raced to the aid of the scouts. The reconnaissance platoon leader's half-track, still up near the rise, used its heavy .50-caliber machine gun to cover the jeeps as they pulled back. The attached tank destroyer then opened up with its cannon right over the heads of the men in the jeeps.

Ellman again decided to split his force by platoons, dividing the recon jeeps so they could use their machine guns to support the tank destroyers. One platoon flanked to the left, taking a position at the end of the ridge and opening fire on the orchard. The jeep's machine gunners fired on the enemy tanks surrounded by the trees. This had a double effect. It kept the enemy tankers buttoned up in their tanks, reducing their visibility, and it marked the posi-

Continued on page 73

speaker was using the correct frequency but not the correct radio call sign. Instead, the man identified himself with an older call sign that had not been used since the fighting at El Guettar. As the company commander, Captain Gilbert A. Ellman, listened, he heard the speaker trying to direct one of B Company's platoons toward a certain area. Ellman immediately thought it was a trick. He knew the men of his company and he did not recognize this voice; it had an accent that was "not quite right."

Ellman listened a little longer and then decided he had had enough. He got on his own radio and told the German to get off the air. Eventually the man did stop transmitting, and Ellman later learned that the speaker had been trying to lure one of his platoons into an ambush. Knowing the German habit of using any captured equipment that suited them, he was sure this was the missing jeep with its radio. The Germans had obviously continued to monitor the radio and found the old call sign somewhere on the jeep.

A month later another tank destroyer battalion, the 601st, battled an enemy armored force using an American jeep to ferry ammunition to its tanks. This was in the area of El Guettar. By this time German troops had no doubt experienced numerous opportunities to capture American vehicles, so there was no way of knowing whether this was the 701st's missing recon jeep. Still, the episode highlights the Germans' battlefield experience and willingness to use every trick in the book against their opponents. □

Caring for the

The U.S. Army Medical Corps coped with thousands of wounded soldiers during World War II.

BY GLENN BARNETT

For centuries wounded soldiers of every nation were responsible for much of their own care. Medical attention was primitive and often not a high priority for military planners beyond the officer corps. Sick and injured men had to find their own way home from distant battlefields. Armies of peasant conscripts commanded by an insensitive royalty were unprepared to adequately care for and transport men who were mutilated in war. Wealthy nobles who could afford it often brought their own doctors to the battlefield to treat their maladies. The common soldier died where he fell.

Amputations, if performed at all, were unspeakably primitive. Gangrene and disease were passively accepted as inevitable. Surviving veterans who were blinded or deafened or traumatic amputees spent the rest of their lives as charity cases begging alms from passersby.

All that began to change in the 18th century when better medications combined with swifter transportation became available. Great strides in care for the wounded evolved out of the Crimean War and American Civil War. The effort was led by caregivers such as Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, and Walt Whitman. Horse-drawn ambulances and regular military hospitals with modern equipment were among the innovations.

By World War I, motorized ambulance service whisked casualties from the front to treatment centers with trained staff. Railroad lines carried them in relative comfort to rear-area hospitals, and steamships brought wounded Canadians and Americans safely home across the waters in a relatively short time. But the advances in medical science in World War II were an exponential leap in the saving of lives and the comfort and recovery of wounded soldiers.

World War II began abruptly for the United States on a quiet Sunday morning in Hawaii. Like all other branches of the military, the U.S. Army Medical Department had to swell its ranks quickly to meet the challenge of total, and global, war.

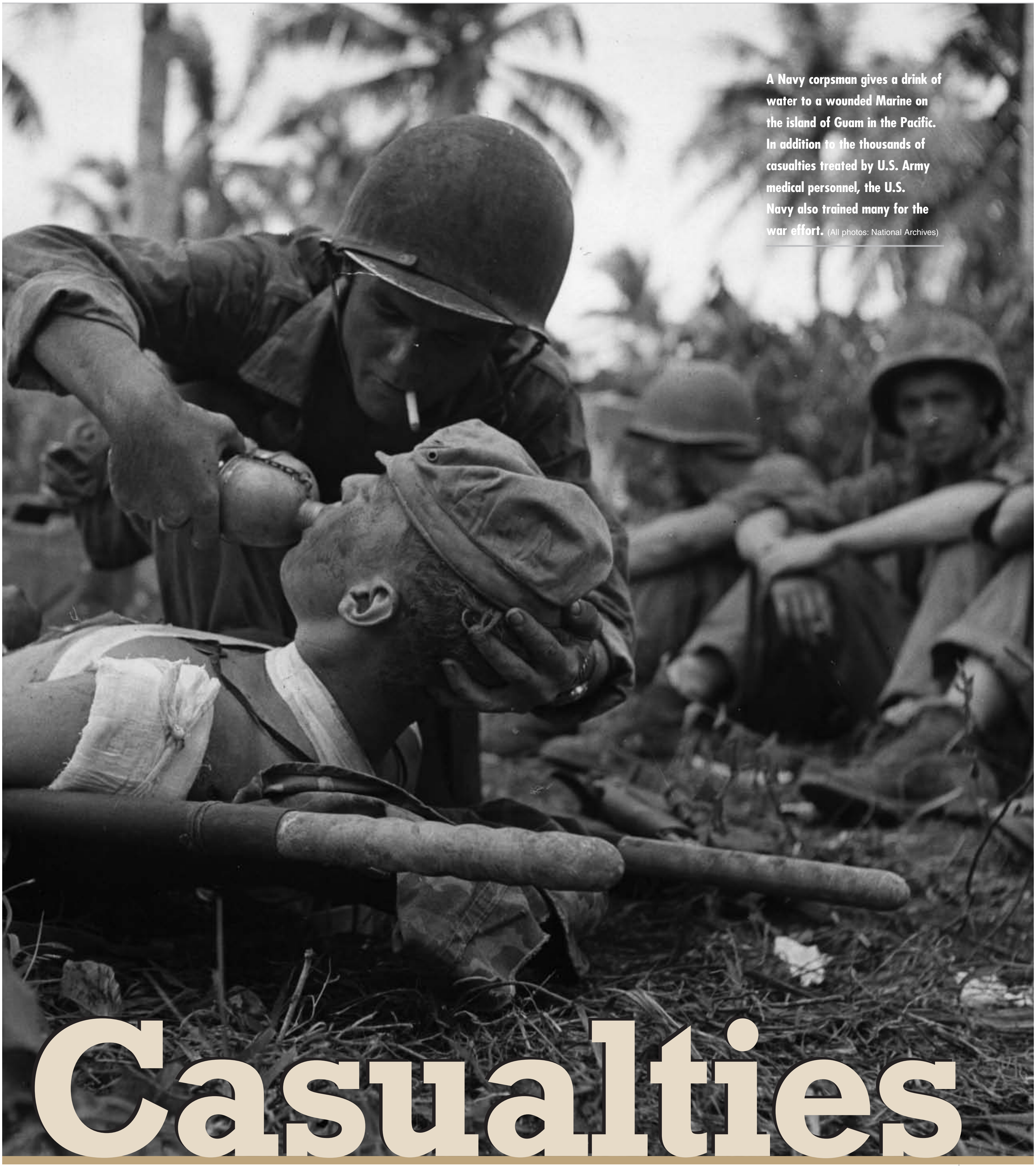
Unlike the fighting branches of the military, not just any recruit or draftee qualified for this highly technical service. Trained medical personnel were needed, and lots of them. Under the taciturn direction of Surgeon General Norman T. Kirk, the department grew rapidly. From a peacetime Army that boasted only 1,200 doctors, the department eventually enlisted as many as 50,000 physicians by the end of the war in Europe. For the first time in history, 83 of the Army's doctors were women.

In addition, 15,000 dentists wore the Army uniform. Two thousand veterinarians treated the injuries of pack animals and oversaw their slaughter for food. The number of nurses in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) rose from 1,000 to 52,000. By June 1944, all nurses were commissioned as officers. The department also enlisted 1,500 dietitians, 1,000 physical therapists, and 18,000 administrators.

In addition to the enlisted professionals, thousands of regular GIs served as medics, litter bearers, and ambulance drivers. Men often volunteered for these duties on the basis of religious beliefs or pacifist sentiment. The number of men needed for the Army reflect but do not include the parallel growth of medical personnel needed by the Navy.

Added to the department's herculean task was the fact that at the outbreak of war it owned few medical instruments. Most of that equipment had been made in prewar Germany. No new shipments could be expected. A whole new manufacturing base had to be created in the United States to make the thousands of instruments and medications that would be needed.

Some creative Army dentists found that by baking little balls of acrylic resin and painting them to specification they could make artificial eyes that were lighter, stronger, and safer than the German-produced glass eyes.



A Navy corpsman gives a drink of water to a wounded Marine on the island of Guam in the Pacific. In addition to the thousands of casualties treated by U.S. Army medical personnel, the U.S. Navy also trained many for the war effort. (All photos: National Archives)

Casualties

The Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) of the Korean War depicted in the movie and television series is the Army medical unit of the popular imagination. But the genesis of MASH was born of necessity in the hostile jungles of New Guinea in World War II. They were originally called Portable Surgical Hospitals (PSHs).

These spartan PSH tents were set up to accommodate major surgery, sometimes so close to the front that they were under fire from the enemy. They retreated or advanced rapidly with the fortunes of war. A staff of a fully equipped PSH could disassemble and load tents, equipment, and personnel onto waiting trucks within two hours. When trucks proved unavailable or impracticable, pack mules or porters were used. PSHs were flown over the Owen-Stanley Range with the troops to participate in the battle of Buna. PSHs proved so successful that they were duplicated in every theater of war where Americans fought and they were an important link in the human chain that carried wounded soldiers from the battlefront back to the home front.

The front line of the whole medical operation was known as the aid man or medic. The medic was not a trained physician, but he had extensive Army training in first aid. During boot camp the medics were sometimes subjected to ridicule by their gun-toting fellow grunts, but things changed in combat. Then the lowly medic was universally beloved by the soldiers.

The medic was the guy who lanced and patched up the blisters. He gave aspirin for head colds and watched over the purity of his unit's drinking water. Cartoonist Bill Mauldin called him "the private soldier's family doctor." In combat he was the one expected to come to the rescue of his wounded comrades under fire. The pained cry of "Medic!" brought him on the run. It was the rapid response of the medic and his litter bearers under hazardous conditions, administering first aid, applying tourniquets, injecting pain-killing morphine, and rushing a casualty from the front to the rear hospitals that was responsible for saving many lives.

Mauldin chronicles one story about the medics in his book *Up Front.* The story centers on the combat badge that distinguished a frontline fighting soldier from the rear-echelon troops. It was a symbol of honor that earned a man his $10 a month combat pay, and the troops took pride in wearing it.

In one of those incidents that angers soldiers in wartime, these badges—and the extra pay they denoted—were taken away from frontline medics. The rationale was that under the conditions of the Geneva Convention medics were not to be frontline combat soldiers. The decision was ostensibly made for the medics' own safety. Or so they thought. There was an immediate uproar from the troops. It came not so much from the medics as from their GI friends whose lives they had saved and in whose care they were entrusted.

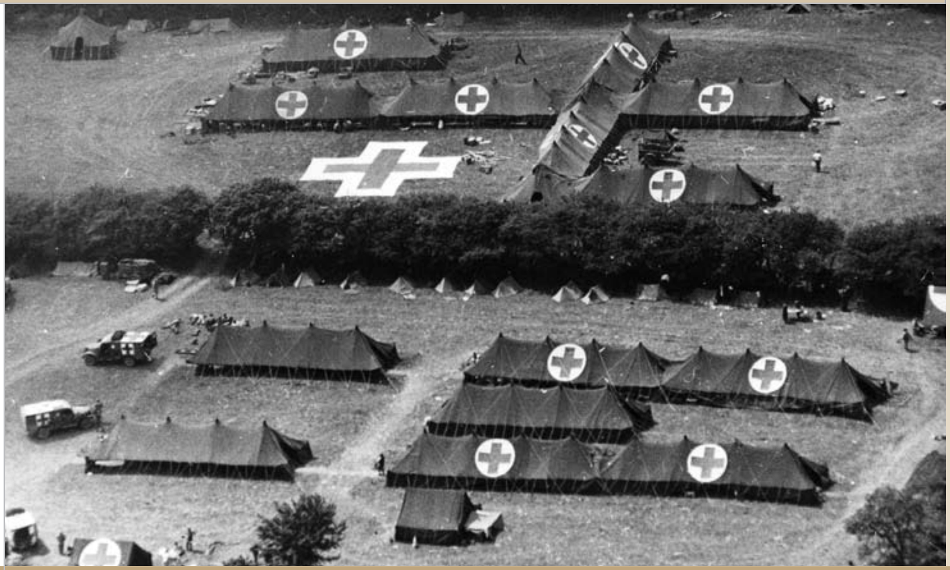
One soldier offered the ultimate threat, "Wait'll Ernie Pyle hears about this!" The generals got the message, and the combat badges were soon restored to the medics.

No one could fault the bravery of the aid man. By the end of the war five medics in the European Theater were awarded the Medal of Honor. Hundreds more won Silver and Bronze Stars.

Ideally, the system of medical treatment was set up so that frontline medics would be able to treat a wounded man where he fell. This usually consisted of a shot of morphine to prevent him from going into shock, some sulfa powder to keep his wounds from getting infected, and a rapid bandage to stop the bleeding.

Then stretcher bearers were called forward to carry the patient from the field to a battalion aid station perhaps a kilometer behind the lines. At the aid station more thorough first aid could be administered, a diagnosis made, and a seriously injured man stabilized. From there,

THESE SPARTAN PSH TENTS WERE SET UP TO ACCOMMODATE MAJOR SURGERY, SOMETIMES SO CLOSE TO THE FRONT THAT THEY WERE UNDER FIRE FROM THE ENEMY.



ABOVE: A prisoner is given medical care by medics of the U.S. 10th Mountain Division near Bologna.
LEFT: Clearly marked by large red crosses atop its tents, a U.S. Army field hospital has been erected on the Cherbourg Peninsula in France during the summer of 1944. The distinctive markings were placed for easy visual recognition from the air.

Soldiers wounded by shrapnel from German artillery shells receive treatment from medics of the U.S. 10th Mountain Division during the Fifth Army drive toward the Italian city of Bologna.

the wounded were carried or transported farther back to a collecting station that sorted out the more serious casualties for the PSH (if available) or sent the wounded to a clearing station that consisted of 12 doctors and 96 enlisted men.

The clearing station was far better equipped than the frontline medics, and major medical surgeries could be performed in sanitary conditions before the worst cases were sent to an evacuation hospital some 12-15 miles behind the lines. From there, the seriously wounded were shipped to a general hospital as near to the home of the individual soldier as possible.

Other patients stayed in the evacuation stations while they recovered. In these cases the staff tried to make the hospital as therapeutic as possible. Correspondent Raymond Clapper reported from the 171st Station Hospital in Port Moresby, New Guineaa: "Bright flowers are planted in gardens all around the hospital tents. Many of the boys are sent seeds from home ... Patients work a 5-acre garden ... Colonel Wilkinson [the commanding officer] picked a 15-pound watermelon outside his tent."

Of course it was not always possible to be this organized, but it was a giant step for soldier care and comfort over any previous war. The mortality rate of wounded soldiers dropped from 8.1 percent in World War I to just 3 percent in World War II. During the Civil War the mortality rate had been as high as 25 percent.

Even more impressive than battle wound survival was the decline in noncombat deaths. The death rate from pneumonia fell from 24 percent to 6 percent between the world wars. This advance in medical capabilities was largely credited to new drugs and medications that, combined with rapid treatment, helped end the scourge of many diseases.

It turned out that only 585 U.S. soldiers died of disease out of 918,298 men treated. The odds of survival improved as the war progressed. In 1943, one in 700 military malaria patients died. By 1944, the figure was one in 14,000, an impressive record considering that nearly eight million American soldiers were involved in the conflict.

World War II was the war of the "miracle drugs," and they were widely used. In the jungle areas, men threatened by malaria lined up daily for their dose of atabrine, even though it turned their skin a sallow shade of yellow. By the 1940s, atabrine was thought to be more effective than quinine for malaria patients.

Sulfa drugs were also extensively used to prevent infection by medics and doctors on every front. Penicillin shots were given routinely for the least little sniffle. Morphine was almost automatically administered to a battle-injured man from little syrettes, a kind of one-time-use syringe that held half a gram of the painkiller. Many deaths due to shock were prevented by this battlefield expediency, and more than one GI became addicted to the drug.

The art of making blood plasma from whole blood had been perfected. It was much easier to store and ship plasma than whole blood, and plasma went everywhere the Army went. But

An American surgeon and his attending orderlies perform surgery on a wounded Chinese soldier in the recently liberated Chinese city of Kwelin. This operation is taking place at a Portable Surgical Hospital, a facility established in close proximity to the front lines.

there were side effects from haste and unknown factors. Unlike whole blood, the plasma could be pooled, and soon hepatitis found its way into the entire supply. Army doctors quickly learned from their mistakes. In mid-war, after thousands of hepatitis cases, the plasma program was scrapped in favor of the now common blood bank. Civilians at home lined up to give blood for the boys overseas.

After the war, the use of the pesticide DDT was banned for its disastrous ecological side effects. However, it was used extensively during the war to combat insects and their diseases. Contemporary literature called DDT a "miracle drug," and everyone sang its praises. Soldiers had their heads dusted with it to kill lice and other vermin. It was used everywhere in the world for mosquito abatement. The liberal use of DDT was even credited with stopping a typhus outbreak in Naples in January 1944, and it saved perhaps thousands of military and civilian lives. In a very real way, World War II doctors and soldiers thought of this cornucopia of drugs and medications as a giant advancement in the science of medicine. The worry about side effects did not enter the picture until the crisis of war was safely over.

As the scope of the war was worldwide, the Army Medical Department had to maintain duplicate operations in every theater. In the South Pacific, beginning in New Guinea and in the subsequent island-hopping campaigns the medical authorities were as much if not more concerned with disease-bearing bacteria,

Two Army surgeons scrub up in preparation for a surgical procedure at a first aid station. Although significant advances were made in the treatment of casualties during World War II, conditions were often spartan.

"WHITE SHEETS AND WOMEN": THE ARMY NURSE CORPS

In October 1944, Army nurse Lieutenant Frances Slanger of the 45th Field Hospital somewhere in Europe wrote a letter to *Stars and Stripes,* the Army newspaper, to express her admiration of the American soldier. She dealt with their injuries, serious and slight, every day.

She wrote, "You GIs say we nurses rough it. We wade ankle deep in mud. You have to lie in it. We have a stove and coal ... In comparison to the way you men are taking it we can't complain, nor do we feel that bouquets are due us. It is to you we doff our helmets ... It is a privilege to receive you and a great distinction to see you open your eyes and with that swell American grin, say, 'Hi-ya, babe!'"

It was a sweet letter of appreciation to the soldiers made especially poignant because Lieutenant Slanger was killed by a German artillery shell the day after she wrote it.

This story, related by author Stephen Ambrose in *Citizen Soldiers,* expresses the mutual admiration between the wounded soldiers and the nurses who attended them throughout the war. The job was not without danger. Seventeen army nurses were killed in combat situations, and many more were wounded or contracted disease during the course of the war.

The initial enthusiasm of the women who enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps after Pearl Harbor soon tapered off. The lack of new nurses meant that the veterans became overworked. To boost enlistment, the Army did what it could to improve conditions and incentives. Overall command of the corps was entrusted to Colonel Florence Blanchfield, who soon led an organization of 52,000 nurses serving on every front. By June 1944, all nurses of the corps were commissioned officers. They were entitled to retirement pensions and equal pay. The government also provided a free education to nursing students back home. The value of female nurses in combat had been proven once and for all, and the government was committed to insects, and mosquitoes than they were with enemy bullets.

Jungle rot was a GI-inspired name used to include a variety of terrible and mysterious fungal skin diseases that soldiers contracted in the dense rain forests that covered tropical islands. Malaria, dysentery, typhus, and a number of other ailments sidelined more soldiers than did the whole Japanese Army. But battle casualties were high enough, and Japanese soldiers were subject to the same debilitating jungle diseases as Americans. The Japanese did not typically have access to care of the quality available to U.S. soldiers.

A single battle illustrates the effectiveness of the Army Medical Department. In the battle for Saipan, American combat casualties amounted to 3,000 killed and 13,000 wounded. Of the wounded, 5,000 were eventually returned to their units.

From each amphibious campaign more was learned about how to treat wounded men in battle, evacuate them to the beach, and remove them immediately to waiting hospital ships for major surgery if needed.

In the Pacific, valuable service was rendered to the Army Medical Department by island natives who carried supplies and equipment, labored tirelessly as litter bearers, and guided troops through the trackless jungle.

Supplies for the eastern Burma operations had to be flown over the "Hump" of the Himalaya mountains. Guns, ammunition, food, and gasoline all vied for space with medical supplies in crowded planes.

From Chinese airfields the supplies were loaded onto trucks and driven in long convoys down the northern section of the Burma Road and finally loaded on the backs of Chinese coolies and pack mules to reach the front. Wounded soldiers moved in the opposite direction once the precious cargoes were unloaded.

An Army doctor sets up a life-giving flow of intravenous plasma for a wounded G.I. in the relative safety of a dugout on a Pacific island.

In Burma, the same jungle diseases that tormented the soldiers in the South Pacific afflicted the fighters on both sides. Temperatures could reach 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. One infantryman said, "You couldn't tell where the sweat ended and the rain began." Field hospitals were set up along the Burma Road. They improved in quality as the returning trucks drove farther north. As always the rule was that the farther a wounded soldier was from the front, the better the medical facilities.

Volunteer surgeons were flown to remote jungle bases by the ubiquitous Piper Cub aircraft to treat casualties of Merrill's Marauders in Burma. On the return trip out of the jungle, the planes could accommodate one casualty each. Evacuation by air was typically reserved for the most seriously wounded. After Merrill and his men captured the Japanese airfield at Myitkyina, Dr. Gordon Seagrave, who later wrote the book *Burma Surgeon,* served the medical needs of the Marauders by flying into the thick of the fighting along with 10 of his personally trained Burmese nurses.

When Dr. Seagrave arrived at Myitkyina, the Marauders controlled only the airfield. Japanese troops still held the surrounding jungle and fired on the airfield at will. There were no tents to shelter the wounded, so Dr. Seagrave ordered that parachutes be stretched over poles to provide his nurses and patients some relief from the hot tropical sun and the frequent rains. The parachutes he commandeered had been used in supply drops to the beleaguered Allied troops, and each was brightly colored to designate its contents. Although the colors gave away his hospital's position, Dr. Seagrave figured that the Japanese already knew where they were. Shade was more important than camouflage.

When wounded men were ready for evacuation from eastern Burma and China, they were flown over the Hump in specially designated Douglas DC-3 aircraft staffed by women known as air-evacuation nurses. These women were reportedly chosen from among prewar airline flight attendants who had experience in remaining at ease in all kinds of flying conditions. Medical training was secondary.

The Pacific Theater held many dangers for medical personnel. The famed Red Cross symbol used by all doctors and medics was not one that the Japanese regularly treated with respect.

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corps service and expansion.

In New Guinea, a group of patients came into the 171st Station Hospital after a long stretch in the jungle. One of the weary, dirty soldiers was overheard exclaiming to a nurse, "Gosh! White sheets and women!"

Nurses landed at Omaha Beach in Normandy on June 10, four days after the initial assault. They waded ashore with their hospital units and went right to work treating the hundreds of men who had suffered wounds in battle.

A story that is yet to be written is the service of the 479 African-American nurses who served in the corps. As pioneers of inclusion, these women struggled for respect. They were subject to quotas, and they were not allowed to care for wounded white American soldiers. In an interesting twist, a unit of 63 black nurses was assigned to treat injured German soldiers at a hospital in England.

By war's end, over 17,000 Army nurses had seen service in the European Theater, and thousands more in the Pacific. Even away from the front lines, a nurse's situation could be dangerous. On April 25, 1945, the hospital ship *Comfort* was struck by a Japanese kamikaze. Twenty-nine people were killed, including six nurses.

During the Battle of the Bulge, the field hospitals were filled beyond capacity. The 77th Evac Hospital came under attack from artillery and enemy planes that strafed the hospital tents. Two dozen nurses were wounded. Despite the carnage of the last major German offensive, nurses and hospital personnel were able to put up some Christmas decorations and distribute gifts of books, fresh fruit, and candy to their patients.

Sometimes humor helped to ease the fatigue. Stephen Ambrose tells the story of an Army nurse who read the chart of one wounded soldier and remarked with surprise, "How on earth did you ever get shot with two arrows?"

The indignant patient, a full-blooded American Indian, replied, "That's my name, not my injury!"

It is impossible today to think of an Army hospital without nurses. During World War II, Army nurses proved that they could perform their tasks anywhere under any condition.

Japan had not signed the Geneva Convention before the war and did not feel obligated to abide by the international rules of conduct toward medical personnel.

The easily recognized red and white emblem of the International Red Cross was no guarantee of safety. Medics and litter bearers were killed and maimed on every front. American medical crews quickly learned to smear mud over the red and white symbol emblazoned on their tents, helmets, and trucks to prevent themselves from being more of a target than they already were. In New Guinea, American doctors attached to the PSHs were given target practice with M-1 carbines when some of their noncombatant colleagues were killed by the enemy.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACED BY THE ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT WAS THE BUILDUP FOR THE BATTLE ON THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY.

German soldiers usually respected the corpsmen and the Red Cross, but not always. Medics were killed all over Europe. Allied soldiers, however, were not always scrupulous with German Red Cross men either, and many of them fell in combat to American bullets.

Captured doctors of both sides were put to work by their enemies. There were many cases of German doctors who had been taken prisoner working on Americans and captured American doctors given German wounded to care for. As a rule, captured physicians were treated as respected colleagues by their counterparts. One American doctor reported that he and German physicians freely taught and learned different medical procedures from each other. The American medical corps generally provided the same care to wounded German prisoners as to Allied casualties.

During the North African campaign, the threat of disease was not as severe as it was in the Pacific. Still, desert insects, snakes, and bugs could be just as dangerous as their jungle cousins. Medical corps personnel learned a great deal in North Africa while treating combat casualties, and they utilized that knowledge during the fighting in Europe.

The Italian campaign brought new lessons and refinements to standard medical procedures. A dentist invented a way to keep a soldier's neck in traction by using a plate that fit the roof of the mouth and then was tied off to the stretcher. This saved time for the frontline doctors who previously had to immobilize an injured soldier in a cast before moving him to the rear.

In any war venereal disease can become a major problem. Signs and lectures warning the troops about the curse of VD were common but never completely effective. In Italy, as elsewhere, special prophylactics stations were set up by the medical department to distribute condoms to the men. These stations were refereed to as "pro stations." However, when the Army Public Relations Office (PRO) set up shop in Italy to accommodate the growing number of civilian press who wanted to cover the war, its acronym PRO confused more than one soldier who walked into the Public Relations Office seeking condoms.

Perhaps the biggest challenge faced by the Army Medical Department during the war was the buildup for the battle on the beaches of Normandy. Heavy casualties were expected during Operation Overlord. All the experience and lessons learned in the amphibious landings of the Pacific as well as in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy were applied during the planning of the largest invasion the world had ever seen.

In England, 97,400 hospital beds were designated for casualties. In total, accommodations for 196,000 patients were prepared. Eight thousand doctors and 10,000 nurses were tapped to care for the wounded. There were 800,000 pints of blood plasma stockpiled. As many as 600,000 doses of penicillin were readied for the invasion, with another 600,000 to be ready during the month following the June 6, 1944, landings. Fifteen hospital ships and 50 dedicated Red Cross airplanes capable of carrying 18 severely wounded men on cots were prepared. Landing craft were often laden with wounded for the return trip to England after disgorging their cargoes of supplies and vehicles on the beaches of Normandy.

Overall, the plan worked, but there were difficulties at times. The carbon monoxide of vehicle exhaust often permeated the tank decks of transports when wounded men were brought aboard and laid down where tanks had rested so recently. The walking wounded were sent on deck, weather permitting. Rough seas were a factor in the weeks after D-Day, and storms tossed men who were already in pain.

When the transports reached English waters, patients were usually transferred to smaller craft and landed on empty beaches so that the wounded would not have to disembark at the main ports, which could add to the confusion at the overworked docks. It was considered important to have only outbound traffic at the

His head bandaged, a wounded Marine on the island of Rendova in the Solomons receives continuing care at an aid station near the front line.

Medical personnel of the U.S. 35th Infantry Division carry litters of wounded soldiers toward the rear near the snow-covered town of Lutrebois, Belgium.

crowded port facilities, which were overflowing with men and material headed to France.

The returning wounded were carried onto the smaller boats, which then headed for a beach landing where ambulances and medical personnel would be waiting. The ships bringing wounded often had to wait for the proper tides before landing. In the early days of the invasion, it could take as long as 14 hours for a man to reach a hospital in England. From England, wounded American and Canadian soldiers sailed home aboard specially designated and fully equipped hospital ships that could carry up to 500 men each. The ships housed complete operating and surgical facilities.

Medics arrived in Normandy on D-Day, right along with the troops. By D+1 field hospitals were being set up on the beach. By June 10, the first nurses arrived, and in early July fully staffed surgical tent hospitals in Normandy were capable of performing 15 surgeries at once.

Although casualties from the invasion of Europe were not as high as feared, there were still thousands of them. Alongside battle casualties, field hospitals often found themselves treating cases of "psychoneurosis" or battle fatigue. Rest and care restored most of these patients to their units, but a few men suffered more severe mental disability and were sent home to hospitals for long-term care.

The surgeon general commented, "There is nothing mysterious about psychoneurosis. It does not mean insanity. It is a medical term used for nervous disorders. It manifests itself by tenseness, worry, irritability, sleeplessness, loss of self-confidence or by fears or over-concern about one's health ... Some of our most successful business and political leaders were psychoneurotic."

As well prepared, equipped, and manned as the field hospitals were they could be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of casualties produced by modern warfare. An officer of the 171st Station Hospital remarked, "Four days after we were given this real estate (in Port Moresby), which was covered with high kunai grass, we had 500 patients."

In Bastogne, during the Battle of the Bulge, the aid station of the 101st Airborne Division became a field hospital with no way to evacuate the wounded. The hard-pressed corpsmen soon ran out of morphine, plasma, and bandages. These had to be air dropped into the enclave. A call went out for surgeons, and some hearty volunteers flew into Bastogne by glider to perform emergency operations.

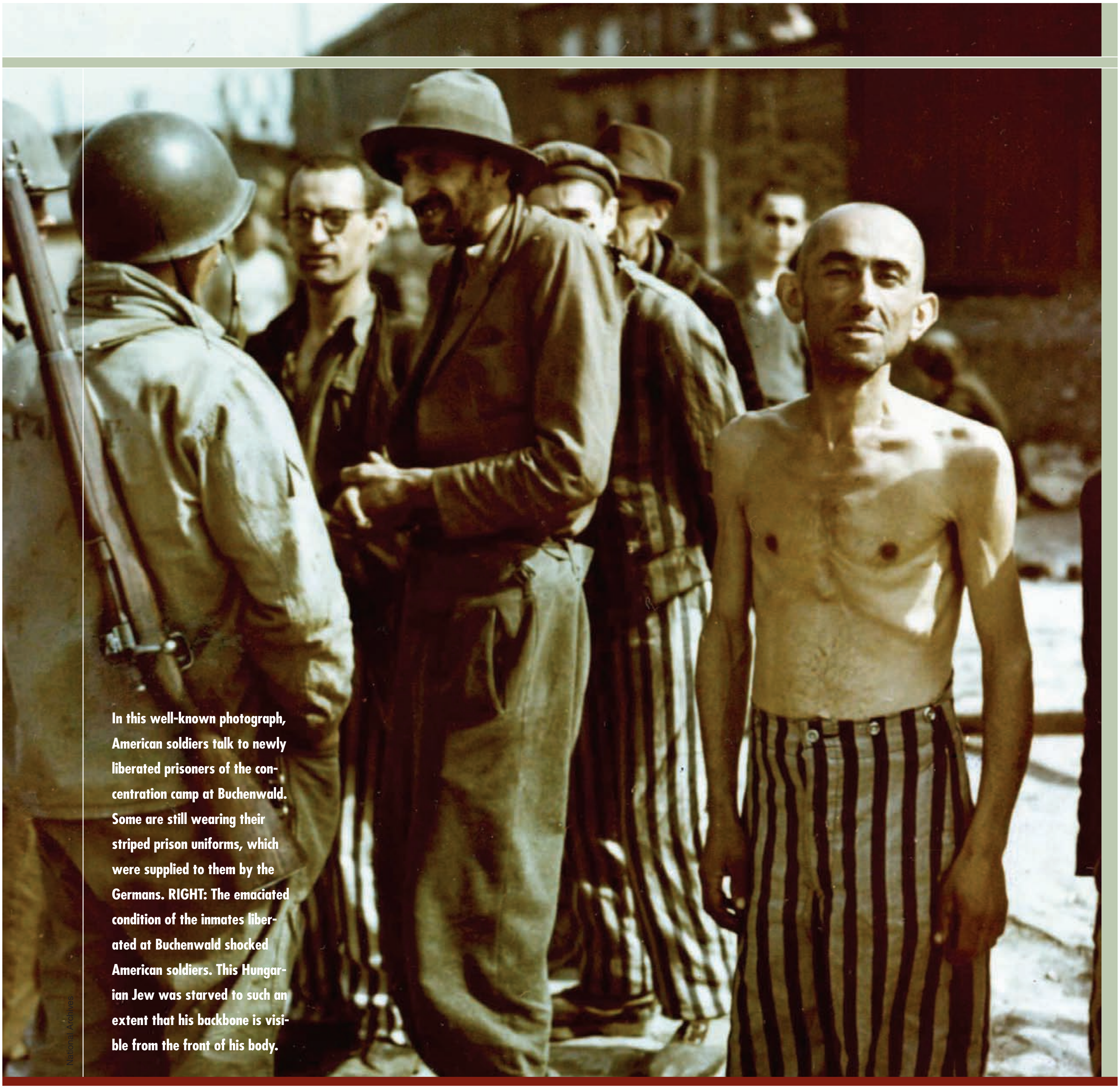
Throughout the Battle of the Bulge, soldiers on both sides suffered terribly from the cold of the winter offensive. Trench foot was more common than combat wounds. The 77th Evac Hospital was equipped for a maximum of 750 patients. During the Bulge it received twice that number.

The final link in the chain of wounded men flowing back from the front was the arrival home. The Army Medical Department did not see its job as complete when severely wounded men arrived stateside. Men newly blind, deaf, or with loss of limb needed rehabilitation. Hospitals and vocational programs were set up and staffed for the thousands who required additional help in retraining for civilian life.

Today, the programs of the Veterans Administration are taken for granted and even expected for wounded soldiers. They were innovations of the 1940s, and thousands of men went through rehabilitation.

A curious duality exists in the military mind. On one hand increasingly destructive methods are being devised to kill and maim soldiers and civilians; on the other, great strides in military medicine are being made to save lives. If the Army Medical Department has a legacy, it is that the advancement of patient care and rapid response to injury have also improved peacetime medical care. □

Glenn Barnett is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *His father was commanding officer of the 23rd PSH in New Guinea.*



In this well-known photograph, American soldiers talk to newly liberated prisoners of the concentration camp at Buchenwald. Some are still wearing their striped prison uniforms, which were supplied to them by the Germans. RIGHT: The emaciated condition of the inmates liberated at Buchenwald shocked American soldiers. This Hungarian Jew was starved to such an extent that his backbone is visible from the front of his body.

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» HORRIFIC

DISCOVERY at Buchenwald

The hilltop compound near Weimar was one of the Nazis most notorious concentration camps until its liberation on April 11, 1945.

BY FLINT WHITLOCK

When Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, the world changed forever.

Not only was Hitler determined to pay back Germany's enemies for his country's defeat during the Great War, but he was also determined to rid Germany and the rest of Europe of persons whom his twisted Aryan ideology believed were "inferior" or "subhuman."

Almost immediately upon assuming power, Hitler and his minions began instituting a policy of imprisoning personal and political opponents in special holding centers known as *Konzentrazionlagern*—concentration camps, or "KL" for short.

At first, abandoned factories, warehouses, and even castles were used to incarcerate the Nazis' enemies—Communists, Social Democrats, dissidents, and anyone who dared to speak out against the government and its policies. Soon others were added to the list of prisoners—outspoken priests and pastors, men guilty of shirking work, even vagrants. The camps initially were to be "re-education centers," where those who held anti-Nazi views would be taught how to think "correctly."

The first camp built specifically to hold these persons was constructed in March 1933 at a small Luftwaffe airbase at Nohra, a tiny farming village near Weimar, in the rabidly pro-Nazi state of Thuringia. Consisting of just a few buildings that could hold only 250 prisoners, the camp was soon overflowing; a better and larger solution needed to be found.

SS head Heinrich Himmler directed SS General Theodor Eiche to devise a more capacious camp, which he did at Dachau, a Munich suburb. Here, adjacent to the sprawling SS compound, dozens of barracks sprang up, surrounded by an electrified barbed wire fence and a high wall to keep out the prying eyes of the neighbors. Here, too, were special facilities for the mistreatment of inmates, and a crematorium for the mass disposal of corpses that, given the harsh treatment and torture, the medical experiments on live subjects, the rampant diseases, and the starvation rations, were becoming more numerous by the day.

It was not long before Jews, Gypsies (also known as Sinti and Roma), Jehovah's Witnesses, and others also found themselves being arrested without charge and transported to the growing number of camps. Using Eicke's "Dachau model," additional camps were created. By the time the war ended, there would be hundreds of main and subcamps, mostly slave-labor camps (Buchenwald, for example, had 174 subcamps).

It was also the concentration camp system that drew little protest from German citizens that emboldened the Nazi regime to go to the extreme and create the death camps—places of mass extermination, primarily but not exclusively of Jews.

In July 1937, the first buildings of Buchenwald began to be erected atop the Etterberg hill, which dominates the otherwise flat landscape around Weimar. Long a favorite spot for picnickers who enjoyed the views from the Bismarck Tower on the hill's southern slope and the baroque stateliness of Anna Amelia's palace

National Archives

on its northern side, the Etterberg held a special place in the hearts of the locals. Atop the hill, it was said, the great German poet and playright Goethe spent many hours beneath the shade of a towering oak tree composing some of his most famous works, including *Faust*.

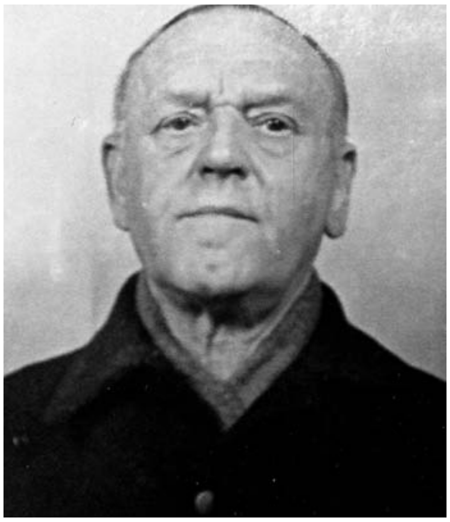
For centuries Weimar was the cultural capital of Germany and had even been selected as the nation's seat of government following the end of World War I. But Weimar was also a hotbed for right-wing radicals who hated the weak but democratic regime. It was perhaps inevitable, then, once Hitler took power, that the Etterberg hill would become a place to incarcerate enemies of the Nazi state.

The word "buchenwald" means "beech forest," and the Etterberg was a heavily wooded place that abounded with wild game—a favorite hunting ground for generations of nobility.

Late on the morning of July 15, 1937, a convoy of trucks carrying 149 carpenters and other craftsmen—all of them political prisoners—came up the hill from Weimar; the men were immediately put to work by the SS construction chief.

Much work needed to be done. Over the years, Buchenwald's inmates would be involved in grading the camp streets; laying water and sewage lines; and constructing barracks, latrines, administrative offices, guard towers, fences, storehouses, barracks for the guards, homes for the officers and administrators, garages, an indoor riding arena, theater, troop casino, dog kennels, falconry area, a zoo for SS families, an inmate infirmary and library, troop hospital, shooting ranges, depot for building materials, a brothel, and, most chillingly, a gatehouse with a sinister wing known as the Zellerbau or "bunker"—an inmates' prison that contained a number of tiny cells where prisoners often would be tortured in the hours before their scheduled executions.

Buchenwald's first commandant was an SS Standartenführer (Colonel) by the name of Karl Otto Koch. He had already impressed Himmler and the Nazi hierarchy in 1934, when he became commandant of Sachsenburg, a concentration camp located in an abandoned four-story textile mill near Chemnitz. There he caught Heinrich Himmler's eye as someone unafraid to carry out even the most chilling orders. Between 1934 and 1937, Koch held a number of different posts at a variety of concentration camps, including Esterwegen (near Hamburg), Lichtenburg (in Prettin, near Wittenberg), and at Dachau. He then became commandant of the Gestapo's notorious Columbiahaus prison and torture chamber near Berlin's Tempelhof airport and at Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen, in a Berlin suburb. At these camps Koch learned how to bend men to his will and how to apply the most extreme forms of mental and physical torture, all the while gaining a reputation within the SS as a sadistic, ambitious administrator, unrestrained by a moral compass or human decency. He surrounded himself with like-minded lieutenants and a like-minded wife.



ABOVE: An expressionless Hermann Pister, the second and final commandant of Buchenwald, was photographed by American military police following his capture. TOP: Otto Koch and his wife, Ilse, the infamous couple that presided over much of the death and misery at Buchenwald, posed for this photograph in 1937. Frau Koch was known as the "Bitch of Buchenwald." (Both: National Archives)

In 1936, while commandant of the Sachsenhausen camp, Koch met 30-year-old Margarete Ilse Köhler, a secretary at the Reetsma Cigarette Company in Dresden. Not a great deal is known about her early life or the circumstances of her meeting Koch. What is known is that she was born in Dresden to Eduard and Anna Köhler on September 22, 1906, preferred to be called Ilse, and avoided high school but instead attended a trade school, where she acquired stenographic and secretarial skills; her first job, in 1922, was as an apprentice in a book store. She joined the Nazi Party in 1932 (party membership number 1,130,836)—one of the very first women to do so.

Fascinated by uniforms, the red-haired Ilse exclusively dated members of the SS and SA, so it was only natural that she fell in love with a grandly uniformed SS colonel, even though he was round-faced, balding, stocky, nine years her senior, and divorced with two sons. After a courtship lasting a few months, she and Koch, whose star was on the rise within the strange world of concentration camp administrators, were married on May 25, 1937, in a traditional SS wedding ceremony with all the ritualistic trimmings. She would bear him three children. In August 1937, the Kochs moved from Sachsenhausen into new quarters at Buchenwald, where he set up his practice of sadism and brutality, the likes of which, he was sure, would delight his superiors and, at the same time, enrich his own bank account.

While the prisoners at Buchenwald were brutalized, starved, and made to live in squalor, the Kochs lived in high splendor at Villa Koch. Their cellar was full of wine and foodstuffs. They also took frequent vacations and ski trips. Karl used every opportunity to embezzle from the camp and the prisoners to enrich himself. Parties and orgies, too, were often held at Villa Koch in which alcohol flowed abundantly and marital fidelity was forgotten by both Ilse and Karl and others in attendance.

Ilse Koch was, initially, one of seven SS officers' wives at Buchenwald, but she was not the type who made friends easily. By all accounts, Frau Koch who, from later photographs, can best be described as "dumpy," was vain, cruel, cold-blooded, sadistic, degenerate, and power hungry—even more so than her husband. Some reports even characterize her as nymphomaniacal. Many other labels were pinned on her: the "Commandeuse of Buchenwald," the "Witch of Buchenwald," and, most alliteratively, the "Bitch of Buchenwald." Despite her later denials to the contrary at her war crimes trial, Ilse Koch seems to have involved herself in many aspects of the day-to-day operation of the camp, including selecting tattooed prisoners to be killed and their decorated skin made into gruesome household objects such as lampshades and photo album covers. The matter of tattooed prisoners and the use of that skin is one that will be forever linked with Buchenwald and Frau Koch.

Kurt Sitte, a German physician who was imprisoned atop the Etterberg, told a postwar U.S. Senate subcommittee that he had been detailed to work in the pathological department and was well acquainted with the matter of tattooed inmates. He said, "Tattooing for our collection had to be colorful, not in other ways particularly interesting; but we had to have stocks of this material. There were many visitors the SS brought to the camp, and they used to be thrilled when they saw these skins in the pathology department among the other exhibits. Therefore, we always had to have a hundred or so of these tattoos in our collections, and among them, if possible, many of the obscene motifs.

"I do not think there is anything fascinating [about tattooed skin] for a normal functioning brain; though, it was fascinating for these people, the SS. Our SS officers and guards always wanted to see these skins when they came to the pathology department. Frequently they brought visitors to the camp, led them around, and we had to explain what we were doing; how the skins were made, and they always stayed long with this collection."

Dr. Sitte was convinced that the SS's interest in tattooed skin was strictly for ornamental, not scientific, reasons. "You would not need hundreds and hundreds of such skins for research purposes," he told the senators.

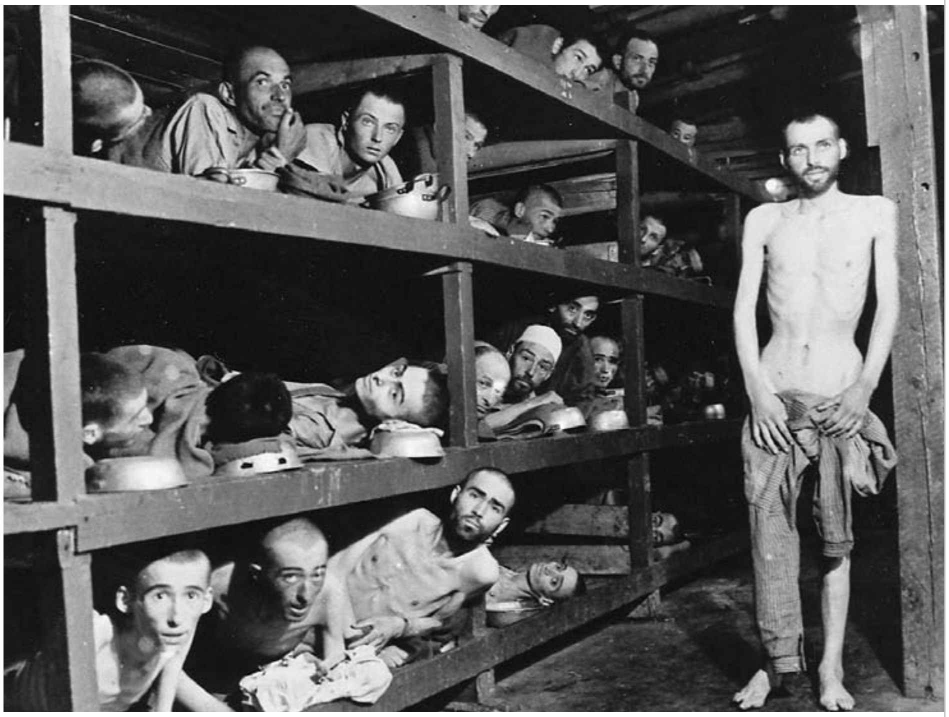
Koch's underlings were just as cruel as their master. One of them was the camp's chief jailer, 23-year-old Hauptscharführer (master sergeant) Gerhard Martin Sommer, who had previously served under Koch at Sachsenhausen.

Sommer had a favorite torture—tying prisoners' wrists together behind their backs and then hanging them a few inches off the ground from cell bars, stanchions, or the limbs of trees until their arms became dislocated. This punishment earned him the nickname "the Hangman of Buchenwald." When this particular form of punishment was carried out against groups of prisoners in the woods around the camp, the screams of the unfortunates were so intense that the other inmates soon gave the sound a name—the "singing forest."

Among all the sadists at Buchenwald, and there were countless numbers, no one could approach Sommer in terms of cruelty. His office in the camp jail, known as the bunker, held various instruments of torture that would have seemed appropriate during the Spanish Inquisition, along with instruments of death—needles he used to inject air and carbolic acid into the veins of his victims.

Sommer seems to have had a special dislike for clergymen and went out of his way to abuse them on the slightest excuse, or even none at all. For example, after learning that an inmate priest had heard another Catholic's confession, he beat the priest to death.

» Among all the sadists at Buchenwald, and there were countless numbers, no one could approach Sommer in terms of cruelty.



This interior view of a barracks at Buchenwald reveals the stifling confines of the sleeping area. Some of the prisoners use their food bowls as pillows. Disease spread rapidly in such close quarters and accounted for many deaths. (National Archives)

If Sommer had a rival for the title of most hated and feared, it was the camp adjutant—an Obersturmführer (First Lieutenant) named Heinrich Hackmann. As Koch's right-hand man, Hackmann was given free rein to personally administer any type of punishment he wanted on any inmate for any reason.

The stories told of Hackmann's cruelty are legion. On one occasion, he noticed spittle on the ground, a violation of one of Koch's sacred rules, and forced the nearest inmate to lick it up. Hackmann was especially fond of pouncing on inmates during roll call and punching them or striking them savagely with a leather whip he constantly carried.

At times the entire camp was made to witness beatings and hangings. For beatings, a special wooden table known as a *bock* was used, and for hangings a portable gallows, with ropes enough for five, was set up near the gatehouse. Such demonstrations told the inmates that even petty violations of camp rules would be met with the harshest punishment.

The Nazis learned early on that prisoners needed to be kept busy at hard labor in order to prevent rebellions and escapes, and soon a granite quarry was opened at Buchenwald in which almost the entire inmate population was set to work. The backbreaking labor of chopping blocks of stone was hard enough, but the SS guards and their Kapo assistants (ordinary prisoners, mostly hardened criminals, made into supervisors and given power over the other inmates) were not content with simply working the inmates to exhaustion. Many a poor soul was whipped or beaten when he could not work fast enough to please his overseers, and deaths occurred daily in the quarry—some accidental, some intentional.

A large group of Buchenwald inmates huddles around an open cooking fire while an American soldier observes. Some inmates had been starved for such prolonged periods that their overconsumption of food following liberation became fatal. (National Archives)

Tales are told of heavy carts full of rocks being pushed up a steeply graded track only to be pushed back down at breakneck speed until they derailed or crashed into inmates working at the bottom, or of prisoners being shot or pushed off the lip of the quarry, or of prisoners being held in the branches of a bent sapling at the surface, which was then allowed to spring upright like a catapult, launching the helpless man to his death on the rocks below.

In time, two factories were built at Buchenwald to supplement the work that was going on in the quarry—work that never ceased. One was known as Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke GmbH (German Military Equipment Works, Inc., abbreviated DAW, an SS-run enterprise formed in 1939), which made rifles, panzerfausts (antitank rocket launchers), and other weapons, while the other, which opened in early 1943, was created for the assembly of gyroscopes intended to be installed in Wernher von Braun's V-2 rockets. The rocket-testing facility at Peenemunde and the underground manufacturing works at Nordhausen, along with a camp known as Mittelbau-Dora, all made extensive use of slave labor from Buchenwald. Inmates from the camp were also drafted to work in various other German industries, including the Krupp steel works in Essen.

In 1943, Buchenwald, along with many of the other camps, became a site for gruesome medical experiments conducted on live patients by Nazi doctors. Poisons were tested on live subjects, as were various pathogens such as typhus. Some inmates were intentionally wounded and their injuries allowed to become infected so that various types of treatment could be tried on them.

If the victims did not die during the experiments, they were killed so that their bodies could be autopsied. The internal organs of some of the victims from these experiments were preserved in jars at Buchenwald's pathology department in the "name of science."

One of the major problems within the concentration camps was endemic typhus, a louse-borne disease that not only affected the prisoners but could easily spread to the guards, administrators, and the nearby civilian population. Shortly after the camp was opened, a large tank of delousing solution was installed. Whenever a transport of new prisoners arrived, they were ordered to strip naked and line up to have all their body hair shorn. The hair was collected and used for stuffing mattresses.

One prisoner at Buchenwald recounted the barbering ritual: "My barber started by placing clippers on my forehead and running them to the base of my neck. Five strokes and the job was done.... With dull clippers, underarm, genital, and anal hair were also removed, leaving us nicked and bleeding. From here we were led to a pool filled with creosote and ordered to get in. I groaned with pain; every nick and cut stung like hell."

A typical day in the life of a Buchenwald inmate began at, or before, dawn when the prisoners were rousted out of their bunks with shouts from their barracks chiefs known as *Blockälteste*. The inmates scrambled to the latrine and washroom, where they were allotted only a few minutes to take care of their personal business. There, a pitifully weak stream of cold water was all the men could use to wet their faces and perhaps splash onto their stinking bodies.

Once the morning ablution was finished, it was off to the mess hall, where thousands of famished men, their stomachs growling audibly, fought over the meager scraps of food provided to them by their masters. It was a stretch to even call it food, for rarely was it fit to feed even barnyard animals. One small loaf of sawdust laced bread might be divided among five or more men, each one thinking the man next to him received a slightly larger slice than did he; fights over a scrap of bread broke out often. A lukewarm cup of ersatz coffee or tea and a bowl of thin, nearly inedible soup usually made from grass and turnips was ladled out. On rare occasions, if the SS men were feeling generous, there might be a small piece of sausage, which was often rotten and made from "condemned" meat.

The inmates then rushed back to their barracks to sweep them clean and ensure that every bed was made and every bunk was perfectly aligned. If anyone had defecated in his bed during the night (a not-uncommon occurrence, given the high incidence of dysentery), the bed had to be scrubbed clean. And if so much as one piece of straw was found on the floor or one bunk was out of alignment, beatings by the Kapos would be meted out to the innocent and guilty alike.

Then the entire population of each barracks double-timed to the Appellplatz, or roll-call square, adjacent to the main gate, running a gauntlet of Kapos and guards with rubber hoses who lashed out at them as they dashed past. Anyone who tripped and fell to the ground was subjected to a real beating. Guards with weapons at the ready watched over the square from their towers.

Roll call was a twice daily exercise in terror and intimidation. At the Appellplatz, where inmates from all of the barracks were gathering, prisoners too weak or ill to run were carried by their blockmates, and it was common for the SS man in charge of the roll call to beat any inmates claiming to be sick. Inmates too ill to work (and an inmate needed to be near death to be excused from work details) reported to the infirmary, a place of horror from which very few inmates ever returned alive.

There was always much pushing and shoving by the Kapos and their assistants to align the rows perfectly, just the way the SS liked them.

Every man had to stand stiffly at attention and look straight ahead, his fingers straight, his thumbs lined up with the seams of his trousers, no matter if the day was warm and sunny, windy or rainy, or if it was freezing and snowing fiercely. Anyone who moved, coughed, sneezed, talked, urinated, or collapsed from the ordeal was beaten savagely.

From loudspeakers came the command "*Mutze ... ab!*" (Caps off). The prisoners had to whip off their striped cotton caps with military precision and hold them against their right pant leg. Anyone slow in obeying the order could count on a beating with rubber hoses by the Kapos. The next order—"*Mutze...auf!*" (Caps on)—was similarly scrutinized. Again, slowness in executing the command would bring verbal and physical harassment.

> If anyone died during the night, that person's corpse had to be present, for no one was allowed to be officially declared dead until after the evening roll call.

As getting thousands of persons to perform this cap-off, cap-on maneuver with military precision was virtually impossible, it was repeated over and over again until everyone—thousands of sick, starved, and brutalized men—performed in unison, like a well-rehearsed drill team.

SS sergeants then counted the men assembled from each barracks. When the counting was finished, the scraps of paper on which the numbers had been written were gathered up and taken to the gatehouse, where SS men added up the numbers. Only during this time were the prisoners allowed to relax from their rigid postures. At this point the inmates were told to stand easy.

If the numbers were not correct, and seldom were they correct on the first count, the roll was retaken. This process, in every type of weather, normally took hours. The camp administration had a fetish for accuracy. If anyone died during the night, that person's corpse had to be present as well, for no one was allowed to be officially declared dead until after the evening roll call.

After the morning counting, announcements, beatings, and hangings were concluded, the assembled group quickly broke down into their work groups, or *Arbeitskommando,* to begin another 12-hour day of deadly, backbreaking labor. Some prisoners worked in the quarry or on construction projects, others at administrative duties, while still others performed groundskeeping tasks. Other Kommando headed off to the laundry or the sanitation detail to clean out the latrines or the crematorium or infirmary or to work on a road-building project, or to their jobs as servants within SS households, or to some other make-work project the SS had dreamed up to keep the prisoners occupied and degraded.

At noon, work stopped for 30 minutes for lunch. The noon meal usually consisted of ersatz coffee or tea and a watery bowl of soup flavored with grass, turnip greens, or decaying vegetables. Then it was back to work until evening.

One of only a few female prisoners at Buchenwald, Princess Mafalda was the second daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy. (National Archives)

And so it went—first at Dachau, and then at all the other camps—the daily, dehumanizing routine never varying, a process that not only turned the inmates into automatons but also made it possible for the SS to regard the prisoners as less than human and thus permit the guards and administrators to mistreat them without feeling guilt or compassion.

At the end of the day, all prisoners were required once again to report to the Appellplatz and submit to another long, mind-numbing roll call. Once evening roll call was concluded, the prisoners were marched off to dinner. The evening meal was again the odd soup and perhaps some sort of salad made of moldy greens. Occasionally, as a form of group punishment for the transgressions of a few, the entire prisoner population of the camp would go without any food for an entire day.

Hunger reigned supreme. Romek Wajsman, 14 years old when he was locked up in Buchenwald, spoke for everyone when he said, "In the camps we used to fantasize of having enough bread and butter."

Because word of Koch's embezzlements and other administrative irregularities at Buchenwald (not connected with the mistreatment of prisoners) had reached higher ranks, Karl Otto Koch was secretly investigated by the SS. He was transferred to a new camp, Majdanek, near Lublin, Poland, in September 1941, but after only a few months he was arrested by the SS and placed on trial. Found guilty, he was imprisoned and was eventually shot by an SS firing squad at Buchenwald on April 4, 1945.

On December 20, 1941, a new administrator arrived to take command of Buchenwald, 56-year-old Oberführer (Senior Colonel) Hermann Pister. Although Pister was just as hard as Koch, he was not the sadist his predecessor had been. Life for the inmates continued to be difficult, however, and thousands continued to die from disease, starvation, and overwork.

Buchenwald was almost exclusively a camp for men and boys; only a handful of women were ever held there. One of the few was Princess Mafalda Maria Elisabetta Anna Romana of Savoy, one of the daughters of Italian King Victor Emmanuel III. Her husband, Philipp of Hesse, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, was a German nobleman and Hitler's art agent in Italy. But, as Hitler pressured Mussolini to crack down on the Italian Jews and ship them to the death camps in Poland, Mafalda became more vocal in her opposition to the Hitler regime, causing her husband to fall out of favor with the Nazis. Believing she was working against him, Hitler made plans to do away with Mafalda, calling her "the blackest carrion in the Italian royal house." In September 1943, she was arrested and sent to Buchenwald, where she lived in one of the VIP homes outside the barbed wire.

Princess Mafalda was not the only politically important prisoner at Buchenwald. An area known as the Fichtenhain Special Camp and its adjacent isolation barrack located between the SS barracks and the Gustloff-Werk II also held a variety of men, women, and children who were not allowed to mingle with the general concentration camp population.

French politicians, especially, were "guests" of the Nazis at Buchenwald. Léon Blum, a Jew and the former premier of the French Popular Front government from 1936 to 1938, was imprisoned here after the French Free Zone was occupied by the Germans in November 1942, following the Allied invasion of North Africa. Other members of the French government held at KL Buchenwald included Édouard Daladier (prime minister in 1940); Georges Mandel (the last minister of the interior before the fall of France in 1940); and General Maurice Gamelin (commander in chief of French and British forces in 1940). Also incarcerated atop the Etterberg were Reserve Division General Andre Challe and his son; Professor Alfred Balachowsky, director of the Pasteur Institute; and a Mssr. Clin, director of the National Library of France.

Following the liberation of Buchenwald, an inmate shows two American soldiers the prison gallows. A number of inmates were executed using this instrument of death. (National Archives)

> "I have never felt able to describe my emotional reaction when I came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency."

Here also was kept Dr. Rudolph Breitscheid, former chairman of the German Social Democrat Party, and his wife. In the cellar of one of the SS troop barracks was a special row of cells known as the SS detention area, where the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was kept. Later evacuated to Flossenbürg, Bonhoeffer was hanged on April 9, 1945, just days before the camp was liberated.

KL Buchenwald did not discriminate when it came to the nationalities of its prisoners. Buchenwald also held as inmates Anton Falkenberg, head of the Copenhagen police; Petr Zenkl, the former mayor of Prague; British Wing Commander Forest Yeo-Thomas; and a former prime minister of Belgium, Paul-Emile Janson, who died at Buchenwald in 1944.

The Nazis were particularly hostile toward writers and intellectuals who did not toe the Nazi Party line—even if they were foreigners. Leon Jouhaux, recipient of a Nobel Prize in literature, was imprisoned at Buchenwald, as were other French writers, including Jean Améry and Robert Antelme. Held, too, were the German author Ernst Wiechert; Ernst Thälmann, the leader of the KPD (German Communist Party); and Curt Herzstark, an Austrian and the father of the pocket calculator. Konrad Adenauer, the former mayor of Cologne, was also jailed atop the Etterberg; he would be the first postwar chancellor of West Germany. Two children who would grow up to be famous authors—Elie Wiesel and the Hungarian Imre Kertész—were also inmates at Buchenwald.

The pathology lab at Buchenwald was the scene of many grisly experiments conducted on inmates their Nazi captors considered subhuman. Ilse Koch was said to have possessed macabre souvenirs of some of these procedures, such as colorful tattoos removed from the unfortunate subjects. (Photo by the Author)

Other formerly prominent individuals who spent time at Buchenwald included General Friedrich von Rabenau, implicated in Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg's July 20, 1944, attempt to kill Hitler (von Rabenau was executed April 15, 1945, at Flossenbürg). Also included in custody was the wife of Generaloberst (Colonel General) Franz Halder, Hitler's former chief of the general staff, suspected of involvement in the plot. Halder himself was arrested and later held at Flossenbürg and Dachau.

When the Nazis could not arrest their enemies, they often arrested the family members of their enemies. Ten members of von Stauffenberg's family were held in the isolation barracks, as were industrialist-turned-Hitler-opponent Fritz Thyssen and his wife. Also jailed was the sister of anti-Hitler German diplomat Hans Bernd Gisevius, who had been involved in the July 20 plot and had fled Germany for Switzerland.

Although Buchenwald was not a POW camp, from time to time captured enemy soldiers were held there. After the July 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union, approximately 7,000 Soviet POWs were incarcerated at Buchenwald—and virtually all of them were executed.

In 1944, the Germans had captured a group of 37 British and French SOE (Special Operations Executive—the British equivalent of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, or OSS) operatives and confined them in Buchenwald. Accusing them of being spies, the Germans hanged 17 of them.

A group of 168 Allied airmen was also held at Buchenwald. One of them, a Royal Canadian Air Force bombardier named Art Kinnis, shot down over France on July 8, 1944, recalled, "We knew that our group must become very united and that we must make sure that the powers that be realize that we are all aircrew of the Allies, and that what is now happening to us is against the Geneva Convention."

The Canadian also recalled that life at Buchenwald was not all suffering; the one bright spot was music. Kinnis said that one of his most pleasant surprises was hearing the camp's symphony orchestra and jazz band playing English and American pieces. "Music is one language that requires no translator, and the evenings we spent listening to some very highly rated [European musicians] were exceedingly pleasant. The conductor had the reputation of playing before royalty, before his capture. How we loved to hear his rendering of 'Tales from the Vienna Woods' or 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring,' and many other lovely creations. A Russian choir there was as good as you could hear anywhere. The mere fact that you could not understand one word drifted into the background, as one was carried into the world of music. This little haven of sound was possibly the only pleasant side of Buchenwald."

The intervention by a Luftwaffe general in October 1944 enabled the Allied airmen to be transferred to Stalag Luft III, near Sagan, Poland, after two months at Buchenwald.

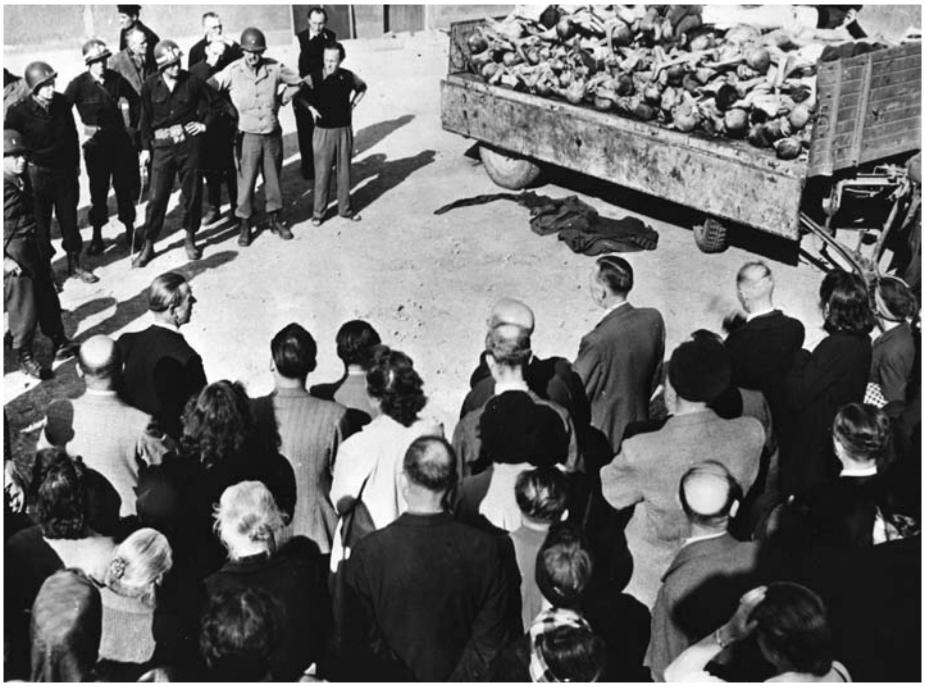
However, while the Allied flyers were still at

Buchenwald the American Air Force mounted the only bombing raid of the war against the camp—actually against the Gustloff-Werk II—on August 24, 1944.

So successful was the raid that the entire factory was obliterated and production of the V-2 gyroscopes was halted. Unfortunately, many inmates working in the factory, along with their overseers and guards, also perished, as did SS family members living in quarters nearby.

Princess Mafalda, too, was one of the victims of the air raid. The home in which she was being held collapsed upon her and, despite the efforts of SS doctors to save her, she succumbed to her injuries.

Perhaps the most symbolically important damage was done to the Goethe Oak. An incendiary bomb had set it alight, and it was later cut down. An old German prophecy said that the nation would exist as long as the Goethe Oak stood.



German civilians are forced to view the stacked bodies of dead Buchenwald inmates following the liberation of the camp. Some of the residents of nearby towns asserted that they were completely unaware of the atrocities taking place so close to their homes. (National Archives)

As the war continued to go badly for the Germans, more and more inmates from camps in the East (including Auschwitz) that were threatened by the approach of Soviet armies were shipped to Buchenwald. Soon the camp atop the Etterberg was bulging with thousands of additional prisoners. The primitive, already overworked sewage system was pushed beyond capacity, and the meager rations became even more meager. Disease was rampant, and the camp had gone well beyond what might be called a humanitarian crisis. Still, the trains full of sick and starving prisoners, now mostly Jews, continued to arrive daily at Buchenwald's railroad yard.

In early 1945, the war was quickly coming to an end for Nazi Germany, but Buchenwald continued to overflow with thousands more inmates from other camps. Himmler, hoping to save his own skin, sent directives to the various camps, telling the commandants to open the gates and send the prisoners on death marches into the countryside.

General George S. Patton's U.S. Third Army was approaching from the west but, almost incredibly, neither Patton, General Omar N. Bradley (commanding the U.S. Twelfth Army Group), nor Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower, was aware of the existence of the death and concentration camps; no camp was marked on the military maps the Allies were using. And, although American newspapers had regularly reported on the atrocities committed against Jews and other "undesirables" in Europe since 1933, no plans or training had been instituted by the U.S. Army to prepare the GIs and their officers for what to do in the event a camp was discovered. As a result, the Americans closing in on the camps were totally unprepared for what they found in April 1945.

The first camp uncovered by the Americans was Ohrdruf, a slave labor camp stocked with inmates from Buchenwald, 30 miles west of Buchenwald. Brig. Gen. William M. Hoge, the 4th Armored Division's commanding officer, had split his command and sent Combat Command B (CCB) to the city of Gotha and Combat Command A to Ohrdruf. The 355th Infantry Regimental Combat Team of the 89th Infantry Division was attached to CCB.

On April 4, 1945, the 4th's CCB and the 89th's 355th Infantry broke through the gates of the Ohrdruf camp and discovered a horrific scene almost beyond description: thousands of dead, nude, and emaciated bodies scattered around the camp, each one showing signs that he had been shot at close range. In some of the foul barracks GIs also discovered hundreds of sick inmates on the verge of death. A funeral pyre with the charred remains of uncountable numbers of victims smoldered nearby. The rest of the inmates had been marched back to Buchenwald at the approach of the Americans.

Higher headquarters was quickly informed, and Patton, Bradley, and Eisenhower would tour the camp and witness its horrors firsthand on April 13, their jaws firmly set in anger. Bradley wrote in his memoirs, *A Soldier's Story*, "Third Army had overrun Ohrdruf ... and George [Patton] insisted we view it. 'You'll never believe how bastardly these Krauts can be,' he said, 'until you've seen this pesthole yourself.'"

In his 1948 best-selling memoir *Crusade in Europe,* Eisenhower wrote, "I saw my first horror camp. It was near the town of Gotha. I have never felt able to describe my emotional reactions when I first came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency. Up to that time I had known about it only generally or through secondary sources. I am certain, however, that I have never at any other time experienced an equal sense of shock."

But on April 4, the existence of Buchenwald was still unknown to the Americans about to stumble across it. A week later, the southern column of Combat Team 9, the advance element of Maj. Gen. Robert W. Grow's 6th Armored Division, ran into enemy resistance at the village of Hottelstedt, about two miles northwest of Buchenwald.

As the brief firefight ended, the GIs were astounded to see a group of emaciated men in striped uniforms coming down the road from the direction of a heavily forested hilltop, waving their arms wildly and jabbering in a strange tongue.

When the men could be calmed down and an interpreter found someone who could speak Russian, the Yanks heard a fantastic tale—tens of thousands of political prisoners were just up the road at a terrible place known as Buchenwald. After the sounds of battle emanating from Hottelstedt had been heard, said the Russians, a secret resistance group inside the camp had revolted against their guards and taken over the camp.

Captain Robert J. Bennett, commanding the southern column, sent the battalion intelligence officer, Captain Frederic Keffer, ahead in an M-8 armored car along with three men (one of whom was fluent in German) to scout the situation. Several of the Russians rode along atop the M-8 to guide the Americans to the camp.

Clearing the screen of trees, Keffer and his party came across an astonishing sight, a huge camp with scores of barracks and thousands of men, all of them skeletal in appearance and some armed with German weapons, behind a barbed wire enclosure. A wild cheer of joy greeted Keffer and his German-speaking sergeant as they entered the encampment.

Suddenly, Keffer found himself lifted off the ground by a score of hands and carried around "on the shoulders of the crowd like a conquering hero." Keffer said, "What an incredible greeting that was. I was picked up by arms and legs, thrown in the air, caught, thrown again, caught, thrown, etc., until I had to stop it, I was getting so dizzy. How the men found such a surge of strength in their emaciated condition was one of those bodily wonders in which the spirit sometimes overcomes all weaknesses of the flesh. It was a great day!"

Keffer was pulled and pushed through the crowd toward a building where he met some of the leaders of the prison underground who were now in control. "I told them I would radio for medical help and for food, and I requested them not to let the former prisoners, if they could help it, wander far outside the camp and possibly unwittingly interfere with our military progress. Then I managed somehow to return to the scout car, give all the food we had to the camp, and drive back to our main column [at Hottelstedt]." At 5:35 PM, the Yanks left Buchenwald; the camp was now under the complete and sole control of the inmates.

Returning to Hottelstedt, Keffer told Bennett what he had found and requested that food, water, and medical help be dispatched to the camp as soon as possible. Bennett radioed higher headquarters of the discovery of Buchenwald. The electrifying news that 21,000 sick and starving prisoners were still alive atop the Etterberg (some 24,000 had been evacuated a few days earlier and either put on trains to other camps or sent on death marches to wander the countryside) but needed an enormous amount of help—and quickly—was passed up the line. In short order, mobile hospitals and field kitchens were dispatched to Buchenwald.

The prisoners at Buchenwald had been waiting years for this day. A secret "international committee," headed mostly by incarcerated communists from several nations, had squirreled away weapons made from parts stolen from the on-site armaments factory or purchased clandestinely from bribed guards. The overriding fear was that, once the SS knew that the Allies were about to uncover Buchenwald, they would massacre all of the inmates.

Photo courtesy of Leslie Keffer Rego

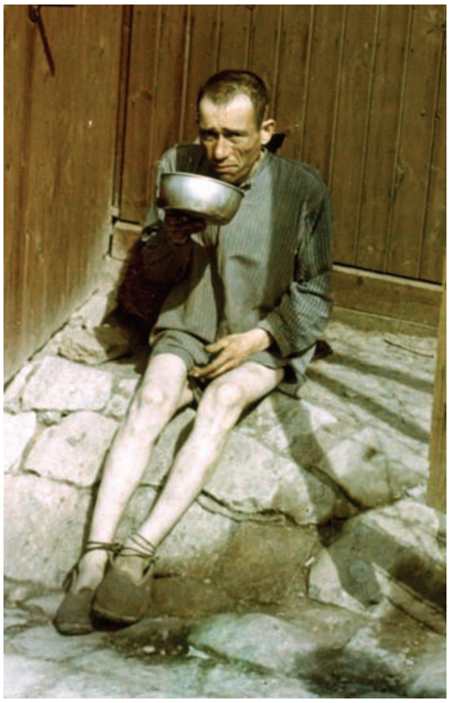

National Archives

Photo courtesy of Robert Clary

ABOVE: A pitiful Buchenwald inmate lifts a food bowl to his frail mouth, hardly seeming to comprehend that freedom has come at last. For many, the end of the nightmare had come too late. RIGHT TOP: On April 11, 1945, Lieutenant Frederick Keffer (right) commanded the first unit of American soldiers to enter the gates of Buchenwald. RIGHT BELOW: Robert Max Widerman, imprisoned at Buchenwald as a teenager, took the stage name Robert Clary and later became a star of the television series *Hogan's Heroes.*

A former prisoner noted, "Only a limited number of inmates were aware of the planned uprising, but the SS, in some way or another, had learned of the existence of the camp's 'underground.' However, they were never able to find out who the leaders or members of the underground were."

One of the inmates, Max Feuer, recalled that the prisoners had been arming themselves since 1943. "We expected to defend ourselves," he said. "We counted now that the guards will try to exterminate the camp. For this moment we were prepared to fight the guards."

When firing was heard in the direction of Hottelstedt, the leaders of the international committee knew that the Americans were nearby and sprang into action; weapons were handed out (in addition to their smuggled weapons, the now-free inmates broke into the guards' armory and grabbed 1,500 rifles, 18 light machine guns, four heavy machine guns, and 180 Panzerfaust antitank weapons) and rushed to their preassigned stations around the camp.

A very brief firefight, lasting no more than 15 minutes, broke out between guards and armed inmates. Most of the guards fled with inmates in pursuit. One hundred and twenty guards and other personnel were rounded up that day and brought back to the camp, where they were kept under armed guard in a barracks. They were later turned over to the Americans.

One of the inmates, a French teenager named Robert Max Widerman (he would later change his name to Robert Clary and be one of the stars of *Hogan's Heroes,* a television situation comedy set in a World War II POW camp), who had already been in Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen, recalled the day of liberation: "We tore off our shirts and waved them.... Inmates hugged each other, jumping up and down, dancing, laughing with tears running down their cheeks, and shouting with incredible joy. Those too ill and weak could only smile; they understood what was happening. It was almost impossible to fathom that this day had actually arrived, that our miseries had come to an end, that we had survived."

After the arrival of the Americans, the heavy mantle of death had been lifted off the camp as if by magic, transfiguring the grim, monochromatic landscape into a bright and hopeful vision. Robert Max Widerman noted, "Flags from all European nations had appeared, flying from the tops of the barracks. The whole camp took on a different tone. There was constant laughter, mixed with the eerie feeling we had of believing without believing what had just happened to us. The GIs [later] distributed food—things we hadn't seen for years, and in large quantity. The tragedy is that many survivors died from overeating food too rich for them after such a long time of starvation."

Over the next few days, as medical teams worked to stabilize the survivors, streams of GIs visited the camp and could not comprehend what they saw.

It is curious that American soldiers and officers have professed a definite lack of knowledge of the camps and the persecutions that had been taking place in Europe since 1933. None of the officers or men of the advancing American units in 1945 apparently knew anything about the Nazi concentration camps they would soon encounter. As a consequence, the soldiers were completely unprepared psychologically for the experiences that would haunt them for the rest of their lives.

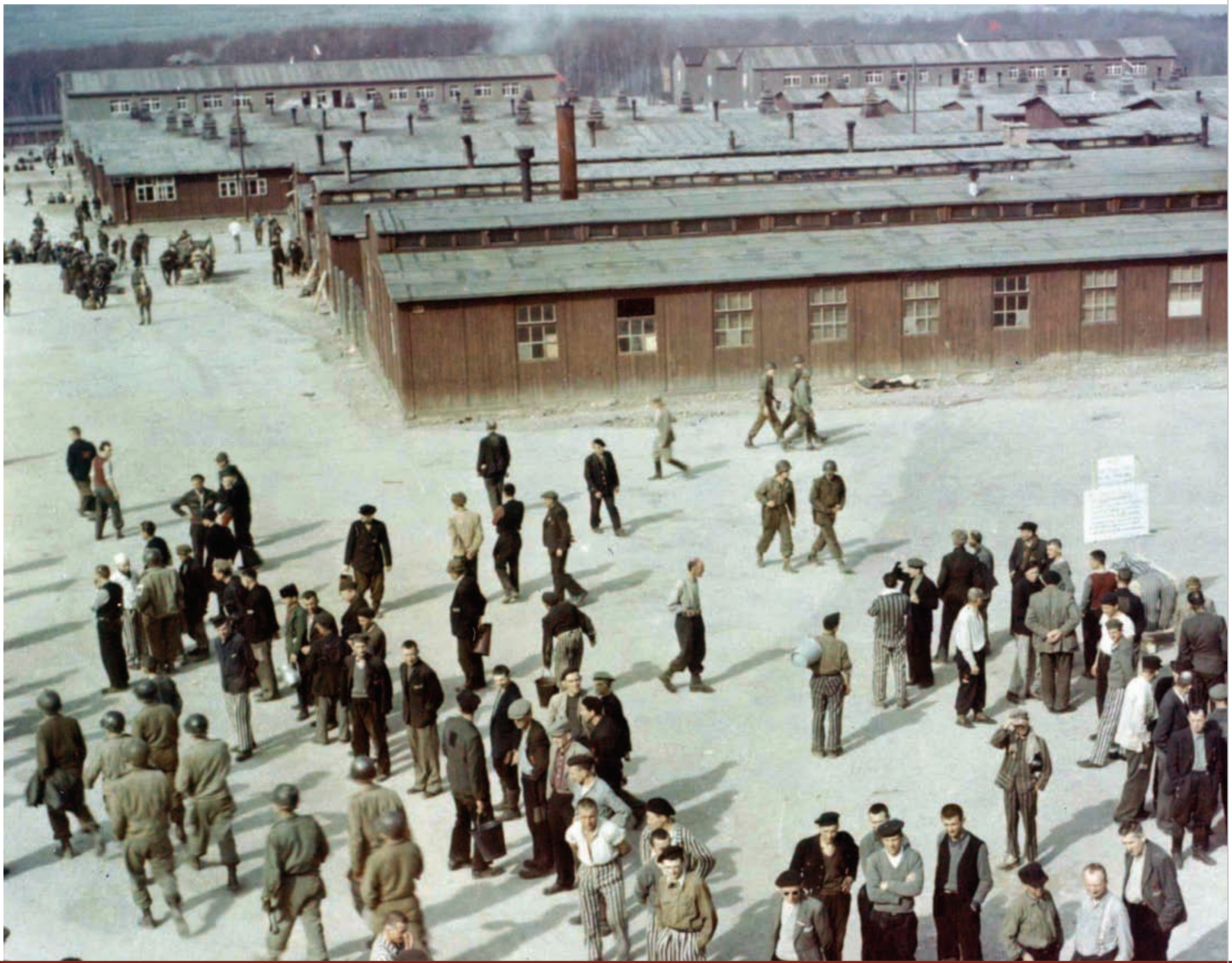
In the writings of the generals and statements of those GIs who came across the camps it appears that all were ignorant as to what was happening in the camps they uncovered. For example, although he recalled reading countless newspaper stories about the Nazi persecution of the Jews, Captain Mel Rappaport, 6th Armored Division, who arrived at Buchenwald on or about April 16, insisted that neither he nor the Army "knew in advance about the concentration camps, the killing centers, the gas chambers, the ovens, the hanging bars, the shooting grounds, etc. The big brass hats never told us that we would someday overrun these camps. Not even Patton knew."

Merrill C. Burgstahler, an enlisted man with the 6th, also claimed no prior knowledge of the atrocities that were being committed. "It came out of the blue," he said.

The reason why most soldiers have professed

Continued on page 74

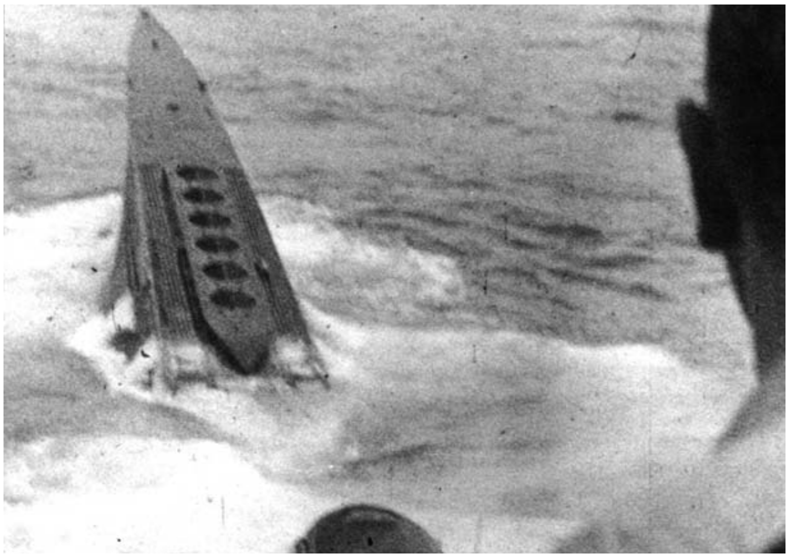
Waiting for transportation to Displaced Person Camps, former prisoners of Buchenwald who are able to walk mill around in the compound. Ultimately, they would be repatriated. This photo was taken from the guard tower near the main gate, which dominated the entire camp. (National Archives)



When in Doubt,

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

THE DESTROYER ESCORT USS *THOMAS* WAS ARMED WITH AN ARRAY OF WEAPONS: deck guns and 20mm machine guns for surface and airborne threats, hedgehogs and depth charges for underwater threats. But sometimes those defenses were not enough to destroy the enemy.



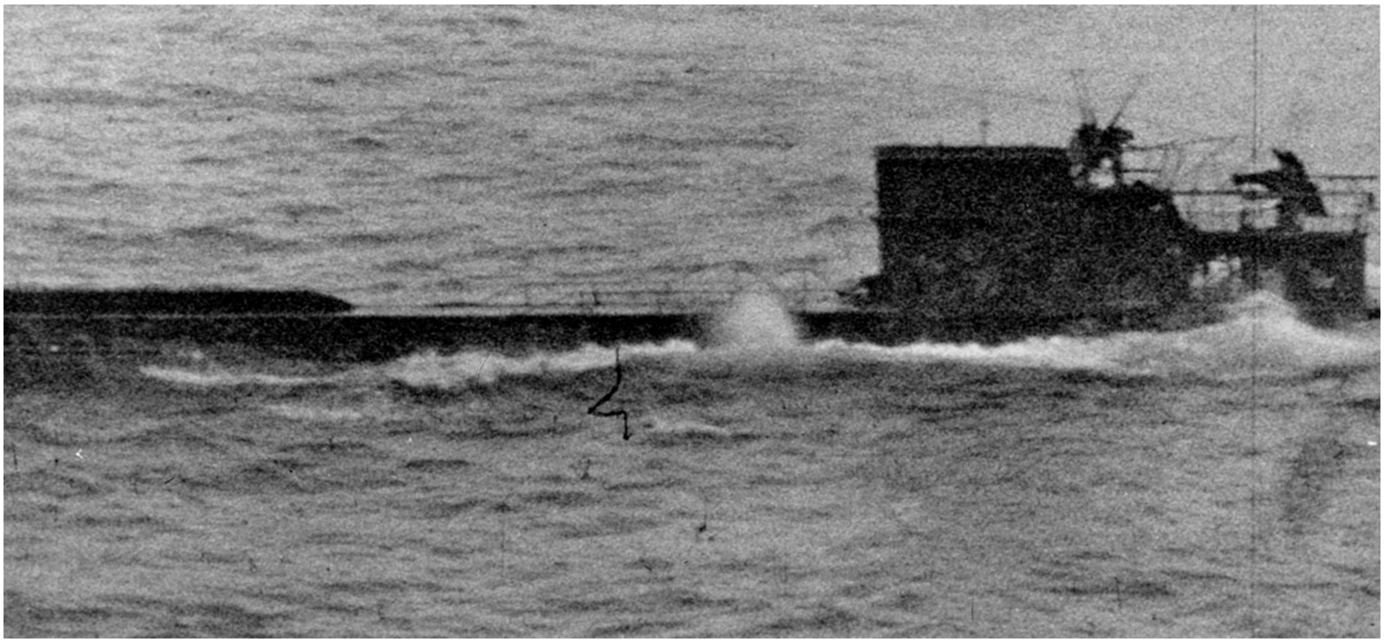
The *Thomas* was part of a hunter/killer group searching for German U-boats in the North Atlantic off the U.S./Canadian border. Under the command of Lt. Cmdr. David M. Kellog, she had already helped sink three U-boats during a previous sweep of the North Atlantic. At sunset on July 5, 1944, the group was approximately 100 miles south of Sable Island when sonar contacted a U-boat. The crew immediately dropped two depth-charge patterns. In less than 10 minutes a U-boat, the mine layer *U-28S,* broke the surface.

The enemy craft was wounded but still had some fight in her. The *Thomas* opened fire and the U-boat took off, swerving radically to escape the surface fire. The American ships joined the attack, ripping shells into U-28S's conning tower and setting it on fire. Geysers erupted on either side of the struggling craft. Kellog set the *Thomas* on a collision course and bore down on the submarine with all guns firing. The *U-28S* tried to return fire from her rear deck guns, but it was ineffective. With a loud, nasty crunch, the *Thomas* sliced through *U-28S*'s hull about 20 feet behind her conning tower. The U-boat cracked in two underneath the destroyer escort and the sea rushed into the breech. The helpless U-boat sank stern first in less than a minute, leaving nothing but an oil stain and 29 survivors in the water. The *Thomas* rescued them all.

Two days later, the *Thomas* was detached from the task group to return to the Boston Navy Yard for repairs, but she would be back in action before the war's end. On April 30, 1945, she helped sink *U-548*.

RAM!

With bull dog tenacity, destroyer escort USS *Thomas* took on *U-28S* in the North Atlantic.



The OSS and the Fourth Dimension of Warfare

BY BOB BERGIN

John Singlaub served as a covert operative in Europe and the Pacific.

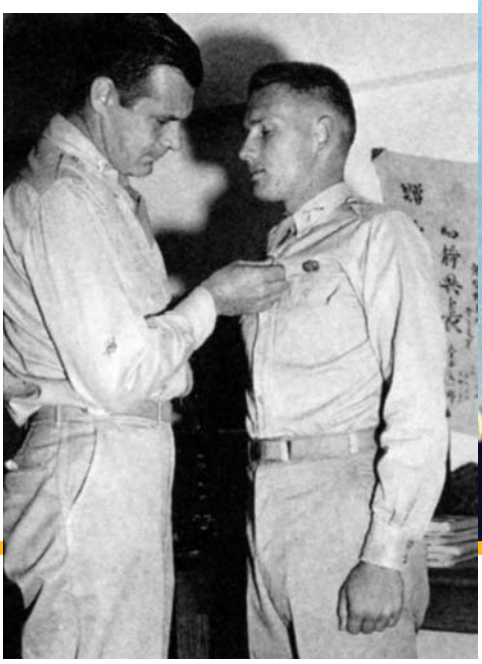
MAJOR GENERAL JOHN K. SINGLAUB WAS A YOUNG airborne lieutenant when he took up an offer from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to become engaged in "hazardous duty behind enemy lines." He was a participant in Operation Jedburgh and parachuted into occupied France to organize, train, and lead a French Resistance unit. When the Germans were driven from his operational area, he was concerned that he might miss the rest of the war and volunteered for duty in the Far East. He was sent to China, where he trained a guerrilla unit to operate in Japanese-occupied Indochina and just before the Japanese surrender led a dangerous mission to rescue allied POWs on Hainan Island off the Chinese coast. The operations carried out by General Singlaub and other OSS Special Operations officers during World War II were the foundation upon which the U.S. Special Forces were built and the basis for the special operations that are conducted by U.S. forces to this day.

BOB BERGIN: At the time of Pearl Harbor you were in ROTC at UCLA. Could you tell us about your interest in a military career?

JOHN SINGLAUB: I joined junior ROTC at Van Nuys High School in 1937. When I turned 17, I enlisted in the reserves. I wanted to be an infantry officer. I applied for an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy, but my congressman turned me down. He said he couldn't do it for the son of a Democrat, a very conservative Democrat, I might add. I decided I would go to UCLA and get a reserve commission. I was commissioned in January 1943 and went straight to parachute school. I was serving in a parachute regiment at Fort Benning when an OSS recruiter came to review officers' records. Those with a language qualification were asked if they were interested in

RIGHT: At Albrook Field in the Panama Canal Zone, the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion performs a demonstration jump before a large crowd during a war bond drive in February 1943.

(National Archives)



BELOW: Then-Captain John K.Singlaub receives a decoration for service with the OSS at the agency's headquarters in Kunming, China, in 1945.

(Photo courtesy of John Singlaub)

joining an organization that engaged in hazardous duty behind enemy lines. I was on a TDY (temporary duty assignment), and when I came back the adjutant asked if I was interested. I thought I was already in a unit preparing for hazardous duty, but OSS sounded interesting. I was pleased to learn that the language they were interested in was my French, not my Japanese. I had studied both at UCLA.

BB: You came to Washington in October 1943?

JS: I had orders to report to the Munitions Building at 17th and Constitution in Washington, a temporary building from World War I that was still in use. There I was told to report with my kit the next morning to the parking lot at 'Q' Building down the street. Others showed up, and we were loaded into the back of a two-and-a-half-ton truck. They put down a flap so we couldn't see out. One of the guys asked where we were going. The driver said, "The Congressional Country Club." Ask a dumb question, we thought, and you get a dumb answer.

Well, we did go to the Congressional Country Club over in Maryland. OSS did some training there, but for us it was mostly psychological assessment. They put us in training exercises where we acted as squad leaders and were presented with problems. One guy would always mess things up. He looked like a fellow student, but in fact was a member of the faculty. He was there to see how we handled the problems he caused.

BB: How long were you there?

JS: Less than a week. We went farther into Maryland, to a former boys' camp that President Roosevelt called Shangri-La; today it is known as Camp David. It was taken over by OSS, and we did some serious training there. Our principal instructor for weapons training and hand-to-hand combat was Major William Fairbairn, a well-known British Army officer. He had been the head of the British Police in Shanghai when he was drafted by the British Army. [Fairbairn was legendary for creating his own deadly form of hand-to-hand combat and for designing the famous Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife with Major Bill Sykes, who was also a close-combat instructor for OSS officers in England.]

BB: How did Fairbairn become part of OSS training?

JS: President Roosevelt had authorized William "Wild Bill" Donovan, who later conceived and organized the OSS, to go to Great Britain in 1940 to look into things like espionage that we didn't know very much about. Donovan came back and tried to introduce the American leadership to what he called "the fourth dimension of warfare." The first and second dimensions were land and naval warfare; the third, air warfare, was introduced in World War I. The fourth dimension, Donovan said, was to organize the enemy's rear areas to our advantage. The idea was to help people under German occupation and use them to achieve our objectives. It's what my group was heading for. We had been recruited for a joint British-American effort, and the Brits set up the schooling. Most of our training took place in Great Britain. When we arrived there, we were met by a British Army officer, and from then on were under British command. The commanders of the training areas were Brits; the curriculums were organized by British Special Operations Executive (SOE) officers. We had a joint OSS-SOE HQS in downtown London.

BB: Where did you train in Britain?

JS: Initially, in Scotland, where we arrived in December 1943. In January 1944, we moved to southern England, and in April to our final training site at Milton Hall near Peterborough. The plan was for the United States to provide 50 officers and 50 enlisted radio operators. In fact, I think we had 47 officers and about same number of radio operators.

BB: This was the Jedburgh Operation? [Jedburgh was also a Scottish border town renowned for its fierce warriors].

JS: We were Jedburghs. Each of our teams consisted of three men: one English-speaking officer, British or American; a second officer from the country we would operate in; and an enlisted radio operator. The foreign officers were mostly French, although we had a couple of Belgians and about four Dutchmen. The training we received from the Brits was outstanding, particularly in weapons and demolition. They had learned a lot from conducting clandestine operations while running their colonies. That gave them a lot of experience we didn't have.

BB: You were a qualified paratrooper, but now you were jumping with the British, who did things differently?

JS: Airborne qualified or not, everyone was sent to the parachute school for the British Airborne forces. They ran a special pre-jump course in their parachute landing training, which was far superior to ours. I was always thankful for that. It was years before the Americans used the parachute landing fall (PLF) devised by the Brits. And their parachutes were different—they were bag packed—the bag with the parachute inside stayed at the end of the static line until the suspension lines were fully extended as you fell away from the airplane. Then the silk canopy broke out of the bag. That greatly reduced the number of canopy malfunctions. The majority of jump aircraft in the British system were bombers. They took the belly turret out and lined the opening with wood. That's where we exited.

I said I didn't intend to be captured. I didn't want anyone to consider surrender as an option.

BB: That was what they called the "Joe hole"?

JS: The RAF never referred to us as agents or people or humans. Each of us was "just another Joe." They also used barrage balloons with a basket attached, sent it up 800 feet. The advantage was that you knew where the balloon was, even if you couldn't see anything. We jumped in very thick fog, and at night. We did two balloon jumps for every one from an aircraft. It was cheaper that way. We had to learn to have confidence in the British system. The Brits jumped without a reserve. At some of the altitudes we jumped, there was no time to use a reserve.

BB: How were your teams formed? Was it a self-selection process?

JS: It could be. A French officer and a Brit or an American became friends and then teamed up. But psychological assessments were a big part of the process. The man who ran psychological assessments for the OSS at the Congressional Country Club provided input. We were training in southern England at a place called Milton Hall when the teams were announced. I was very satisfied. My radio operator was a sergeant named Tony Denneau, from Green Bay, Wisconsin. He stayed with me for most of the war. The French officer's real name was Jacques de Penguilly. He's still alive in Brittany. His nom de guerre was Dominique Leb. The three of us got along great. We spent all our time together, trying to reinforce each other's skills.

BB: Wasn't it around this time that you met your case officer?

JS: There was a guy apparently in charge, Bill Casey. He came out to the airfield where we were held in isolation. He checked us out, gave us our final briefing, and offered us L-tablets [suicide pills] that we could use if we were captured.

BB: That was Bill Casey, who later became Director of the CIA. What did you make of him then?

JS: He was a Navy lieutenant, but came in civilian clothes. He was slow speaking, but smart and really knowledgeable about what was happening in France. He was a New York lawyer when Donovan brought him in. Donovan did a lot of his own recruiting. For his staff, he liked people who were compatible, whose capabilities he knew. A lot of them had zero military background, but they had other skills he wanted. He recruited from all walks of life, academics, museum administrators, lawyers, other parts of the government. Donovan had a personality that made people want to go with him and see what he had in mind.

BB: Did you accept the L-tablets Casey offered in case you were captured?

JS: I refused. I said I didn't intend to be captured. I didn't want anyone to consider surrender as an acceptable option. I got this point across to my partners, who agreed.

BB: It was spring 1944, and you must have had a feeling the invasion was coming.

JS: Everybody had that feeling. But I also was having painful attacks in my abdomen and eventually went to the medics. It was appendicitis and had to be operated on. What made me really sick was the idea that I would be out of action. Fortunately, they put me in an American hospital. The U.S. colonel who did the operation was an expert and said I would be ready to jump in a couple of weeks. The British doctor said he had never heard such nonsense; it would be a couple of months at least. I was ready to be released from the hospital when D-Day occurred. I was absolutely crushed. I had missed the whole thing. Then my two partners, Jacques and Tony, came to the hospital and said they would wait for me. Our mission had been changed. We were originally going to go into Brittany because my Frenchman was from Brittany.

As it turned out, none of the Jedburgh teams went in before D-Day. It was a matter of operational security. Some of Eisenhower's staff were simply not up to date on airborne operations. They were veterans of World War I. They didn't know that the British and the French had been parachuting agents into Europe and that most survived. The staff finally brought in advisers, but the process delayed the dispatch of the Jedburgh teams. My mission was changed from supporting the Normandy invasion to supporting the coming southern invasion.

ABOVE: **With his static line hooked up, Lieutenant John Singlaub is shown moments before exiting his transport aircraft during a training jump. The exercise was held at Fort Benning, Georgia.** **INSET:** **Shown in full combat gear, airborne officer John Singlaub was one of many paratroopers who added considerable weight to their bodies when fully loaded with equipment.** **OPPOSITE:** **Before parachuting into occupied France, an OSS Jedburgh team is briefed on numerous topics. Agent John K. Singlaub is shown second from right.** (Photos courtesy of John Singlaub)

BB: You were to link up with the French Resistance in Central France, train them, and set up drops for weapons and other supplies. Who were the French you would work with?

JS: We had two groups to deal with. One was the AS, the "Armee Secrete," that was led primarily by French regular officers who had refused to evacuate to North Africa. They were reliable, knowledgeable, and could handle most of their own training. All they needed was supplies. The other group was the FTP, the "Franc Tireurs et Partisans." They were the Communists, led by members of the Communist Party. They swore they were loyal to de Gaulle, but they didn't always follow his instructions from London. We learned later that they got instructions via the Soviet Embassy in Berne, Switzerland. There were real French patriots among them, men who did great things. But the FTP wanted to stay in the towns. It gave them a great political advantage in the years that followed the war.

BB: Tell us about your jump into France on August 11, 1944.

JS: Our drop aircraft was a Stirling bomber from a special squadron. We took off from England, rendezvoused with the bomber stream, and started out on the night mission. At the limit of our fighter escort, our pilots faked an abort. They turned back toward England and dropped below German radar. A French Special Air Service (SAS) team had been put on our aircraft at the last minute. They jumped before we did. Their drop was not good; they were kilometers from where they should have been. Our drop was right on. As we neared the DZ [drop zone], fires were lit below, three fires in line with our direction of flight, and a light alongside that flashed the Morse code letters for that night's drop.

The jump itself was uneventful. At the DZ we were met by an SOE agent named Simon. He was British, but born and raised in France. His job was to collect intelligence to determine the resistance potential in the area. He had established good agent nets and found that the resistance was already partially organized. All they needed was advisers, trainers, and contact with supply.

Simon introduced us to Hubert, the AS leader, and then disappeared. Hubert hustled us off the DZ and into a barn. We slept there, and in the morning the farmer's daughter brought us a fresh mushroom omelet, a real treat. We had not had real eggs all the time we were in England, where the ration for a soldier was one egg a week. All we ever got there was powdered eggs.

BB: How close was the nearest concentration of Germans?

JS: About 20 kilometers away, in the town of Egletons, which quickly became the focus of our attention. It looked as though the Germans there were getting ready to fight. They moved from their garrisons in the downtown area to the outskirts, to a school on a little hill. The school building was reinforced concrete and stone, a very rugged thing, and it had clear fields of fire all around. It was an excellent spot for the Germans and a real problem for us.

BB: Dealing with the two different resistance groups must have been interesting.

JS: We found that we could not rely on the FTP to hold a sector or attack when they were told to. We got word via coded BBC broadcasts that we would be authorized to attack the local German garrisons in a couple of days. To us it was simple: the directions came from London and we would not attack until the day we were told to, but the FTP started their attack at Egletons a day early. Our concern was an anti-Maquis force to the east, at Clermont-Ferrand, about 50 kilometers away. They had armored cars and trucks, light mortars, and a lot of machine guns. We knew that if the thing went on too long this force would come to relieve the siege.

What the Germans did not know was that the other three German garrisons in our area were put under siege and agreed to surrender. The Germans at the villages of Brive and Tulle insisted on surrendering to an American. As I was the only American around, Hubert drove me there in his car. I took their surrender, and then we drove back to Egletons.

BB: How strong was the German force in Egletons?

JS: As near as we could tell, there were between 150 and 200, including elements of the Das Reich panzer division. They were well armed and had antitank guns and a radio that gave them an advantage the three other garrisons didn't have. The others had to use telephones. The telephone exchanges were all manned by the resistance, and we were able to keep track of what they were up to. When we put those garrisons under siege, we just unplugged them.

BB: From what I read, you found yourself right in the middle of the action in Egletons.

JS: I was trying to do a reconnaissance of the area and got into this house. It was two stories and had an attic from where I could get a good look into the area around the school. I spotted an antitank gun that I first saw that morning when it put a round through the roof just as I exited the attic. At this particular time I wasn't remembering everything I was taught. As I moved around the attic, I put myself between the hole where that round came in and the hole where it went out. I must have blocked the light. The gunners saw that and decided to do something about it. I saw them moving the gun my way, and scampered down the ladder just as a round went through the area I vacated.

A sniper was shooting at me, and fragments from the slate roof hit my face and tore up my right ear. I was bleeding like a stuck pig. Some of the FTP troops were sitting around the yard as I came out. They were shocked by my appearance. I grabbed one of their Bren guns and an extra magazine and worked my way down the street without being seen. I got behind some bushes from where I could get a good look at where the gun was. It was camouflaged, but I fired a full magazine at it. I could see I hit some of the Germans. I slipped in another magazine and waited. When they tried to man the gun again, I opened up with the Bren. That put them out of action. We didn't hear from that gun again.

BB: Did this make any impression on the FTP troops sitting in the yard?

JS: They didn't have much of an appreciation of what you do in a war. They were not trained and did not want to be. When they saw what our team was willing to do, that an American was willing to risk his life, it did make an impression on them. I told them we wanted to help, but we didn't want to do their work.

BB: How did the situation evolve after that?

JS: The French SAS team arrived. There were about 24 of them, trained by the British SAS and very good. They had a British two-inch mortar, comparable to our 60mm, but very few rounds. We wanted to get the Germans out of the top floor of the four-story school building from where they dominated the whole area. I told the SAS I would act as their observer. We fired into the roof and set it on fire. When it burned out, the Germans were completely exposed. That really reduced their effectiveness.

BB: I recall from your book, *Hazardous Duty*, that you were attacked by German aircraft at Egletons.

JS: We were hit first by Heinkel He-111 bombers. They came in very low, probably because they were looking for us. They dropped butterfly bombs, antipersonnel bomblets that spun as they fell and threw the pin that held the striker. Then they sat there and exploded if somebody bumped them It was demoralizing. The ordinary 100-kilo bomb was less terrifying. You could see it coming. When it landed, it exploded and the killing was done. But those damn bomblets lay in the grass, and you couldn't go stumbling around in a place that was booby-trapped by those damn bombs.

BB: Your men got a Heinkel with Bren guns?

JS: It came in so low it was easy. I could almost see the hits. The pilot turned away to the southwest. The plane wobbled, but looked under control. Later we learned it crashed. We were subjected to a lot more attacks by fighter bombers, [Focke Wulf] Fw-190s. They dropped single bombs and strafed us. I finally requested air support, and in return got some wise comments from OSS London. Later, I accused Bill Casey for that, but all he did was smile. The message we received said, "You're getting more air attacks than the Invasion Force at Normandy." And that was true. The Luftwaffe had been driven inland; we were closer to Germany than Normandy was. And we didn't have any antiaircraft guns.

BB: How did the siege in Egletons finally end?

JS: The German anti-Maquis column arrived. We set ambushes on the road, but when it was clear that the Germans would break through, we took to the hills. Jacques worked with the SAS troops to ambush any Germans that tried to break through. Although the Germans at Brive and Tulle to the west had surrendered, the FTP now claimed that the Germans there had organized a force that was coming to attack us.

BB: Did the FTP have bad intelligence?

JS: The FTP did not like the idea that the AS was having success, and the rumors greatly weakened our ability to operate. We couldn't get any of the FTP troops to man the ambush sites, so we made do with the AS forces, and they did a great job. The Germans got to Egletons, found some wounded, and took them. They planned to go to the west but ran into more AS ambushes, so they turned around and went back to Clermont-Ferrand.

BB: The Germans effectively had been cleared out of your area. Was your job done?

JS: We looked for a new mission. I didn't recognize it then, but our whole area, the Department of Correze, and several other departments in the region were liberated without assistance from conventional forces. The Germans were now starting to move their forces on the Atlantic Wall back into Germany. They didn't want to go through our area. They went farther to the north, but kept south of the Loire River. I got permission from London to take some of our AS troops up there to set up ambushes. We made sure they didn't come down our way. We made it very unpopular to go through our area.

BB: How did you move your troops around the area?

JS: We used farm trucks, charcoal burners. A stove on back of the truck heated charcoal to make the gas that went into the engine. This was not conducive to making a fast getaway. We would drive to the ambush position with the trucks, leave them some distance off. Afterward, when the troops got back to the trucks, they had to crank up the fire before we could leave.

We prepared an old German airfield that had been bombed into uselessness. There were still delayed-action bombs on the runways that we had to deal with. Because we were beyond Lysander [transport aircraft] range, Hudson bombers had to be used as transports, and we arranged for one to come in. We had downed Allied airmen to send out. That was also one of our missions. Our area was a logical place to hide downed airmen until we could exfiltrate them.

BB: Eventually you left from that airfield.

JS: Jacques and I flew to London. We had some conferences about setting up a Jed base inside Austria. We had learned that there were a large number of French in Austria who had escaped from forced labor camps and been taken to the Tyrol mountains. The idea was to drop Jed teams in to organize them. The Brits and Americans signed off on the idea, but French Intelligence had say over the use of French Jeds. The French Service was now back in Paris, and Jacques was ordered to report there.

I flew back into France to pick up my team. We traveled by automobile across areas where the Germans were still on the move. We had been advised to try to get across the Loire River in the vicinity of Orleans, where American forces had pushed across the river. We found some American troops on the south bank, and they couldn't imagine how we had come through this territory full of Germans.

BB: I recall reading that on your drives through German-occupied areas, you figured out the interval the Germans kept between convoys and then drove in the gap.

JS: The Germans were very methodical. Once you knew the interval between their convoys, you could cut the time in half and get on the road in between them. On one series of reconnaissance missions I was with "Popeye Revez," the French Jedburgh team leader from the area next to ours. He was up front with the driver, and Jacques and I were in the back seat. Years later Popeye and Jacques would laugh about how—when we passed through a French village—I would greet the young ladies we saw. Jack was in the back seat shouting—in English yet—"Hi Tootsie!"

BB: It sounds almost like fun.

JS: It was not all bad; we had some pleasant times. There were still castles with families living in them, and sometimes we were invited in. They had bricked up their wine cellars, as did the people in the towns. The good wines were hidden where the Germans wouldn't find them. We always had good wine, or somebody would uncork a 50-year-old cognac. When a town was declared cleared, the people wanted to share what they had been hoarding. Our primary diet was wine, big cheeses, and fresh bread. It certainly simplified our class one supply. There was stress, strain, and pain, but you could survive.

BB: What happened after you left France?

ABOVE: **Minutes after landing on the island of Hainan off the coast of China, an OSS prisoner of war rescue team confers with a Japanese lieutenant. While his men gathered supplies, Captain John Singlaub refused to negotiate with the startled officer, saying he was not senior enough.**
OPPOSITE: **OSS operatives interrogate a German prisoner recently captured by French partisans known as Maquis. John Singlaub is at the left with his hand on his hip.** (Photos courtesy of John Singlaub)

JS: Our team stayed together because of our potential mission to Austria. It was already agreed that Austria was going to be administered by the four [Allied] powers after the war, and each of the four had to be consulted to approve this operation. I finally told Jacques that I thought this would drag on and we'd miss the rest of the war. I volunteered to go to the Far East.

They gave me 30 days leave in the States, and I got married. I had briefings in Washington and some training on Catalina Island. I ended up as the leader of the OSS group. We boarded a troopship at San Pedro and embarked on a 35-day zigzag course to Calcutta via Melbourne and Perth. From Calcutta we went by train up toward the Himalayas to Dinjan, and by truck to Chabua. When I found it would be two weeks before we could fly over the Hump, I volunteered my unit to assist OSS Detachment 101 move its headquarters to Bhamo in Burma via the Ledo Road. Japanese stragglers and Chinese bandits were still setting ambushes on the road, and I spent the time scanning for places we might be ambushed. It was ironic. A few months earlier I was the one setting ambushes.

BB: What happened when you finally got to Kunming?

JS: I reported to the OSS commander, Colonel Richard Heppner, and our bunch was divided up. I was assigned to train a guerrilla unit of young Vietnamese at Poseh, our base camp near the Chinese border with French Indochina.

BB: Was this near Ho Chi Minh's turf?

JS: We had an OSS team working with Ho Chi Minh. He felt he was in charge of all of Vietnam, and anything the Americans did there needed to be cleared with him. That caused problems. I didn't realize it at the time, but my mission was delayed several times because of Ho. Later, I learned that Ho objected that I was being inserted into an area he did not consider strategically important. He wanted my team with him, where he could select targets and commit us where it would do the most good—for him. OSS headquarters also thought I should take a French officer along, which didn't make sense to me. The French no longer had influence, and they weren't supplying anything. They said it was their territory, but it was Japanese territory now. I didn't take a French officer on my team.

BB: What was your mission?

JS: To jump into Vietnam with enough explosives to cut the road and the rail line that ran from the Hanoi delta through a gorge in the mountains to a border town called Lang Son. This was the route the 21st Japanese Division would take if it had to oppose a landing of American forces in China.

BB: Was a landing in China actually planned?

JS: A landing in China was part of a deception plan to hold local Japanese forces in China so they couldn't be used against the main U.S. landings in Japan, which were planned for the island of Kyushu. The idea was that an American force would seize a beachhead in China that included a port. Having a port in China would take pressure off the long logistical trail that stretched all the way from Calcutta. This planning was not something we wanted to discuss with Ho Chi Minh. Because of that, Ho thought that the road I was going to cut was not heavily traveled. We couldn't say it was lightly traveled now, and that's why we wanted to cut it—so that it can't be traveled when that Japanese division needs it.

The delays went on until the first A-bomb was dropped, and Kunming put my mission on hold. When the second A-bomb was dropped, our mission was cancelled and I was told to get to Kunming as soon as I could.

I got to Kunming in a heavy monsoon downpour. I went to sleep on an upper bunk and awoke to find a stream of water flowing through the barracks. My foot locker was afloat. The walls were made of clay brick, and they started to dissolve. I finally got to see Colonel Heppner in a dry office. He asked if I was willing to take a rescue mission to Hainan Island where the Japanese were holding a large number of Allied POWs. We had to take control of them. We had learned from intercepts that the Japanese commanders had been given instructions to kill all Allied POWs, and even how to do it most effectively.

BB: How did you prepare for the mission?

JS: I had a briefer, a Captain Woods from the Air Ground Aid Service, or AGAS, an intelligence unit that worked with Chennault's Flying Tigers. His job was to prepare air crew for escape and evasion, and to know everything possible about the Japanese POW camps in China. He briefed me and gave me photos that I used to pick a DZ. Then he begged to go along. I made him our executive officer.

BB: You had to put together a new team?

JS: I picked people I needed. There were nine of us, and only five had jumped before. Tony Denneau volunteered to stay as my radio operator. From my team in Poseh, I had a medic and a Marine who I knew would be useful. I wanted Japanese and Chinese interpreters. My Japanese interpreter, Lieutenant Ralph Yempuku, was outstanding. He was a Nisei from Hawaii who had fought with OSS Detachment 101 in Burma. The mission was urgent, but the rains in Kunming continued. We had to collect our gear in a rubber boat.

BB: How did you get to Hainan?

JS: We left Kunming in a C-47 and flew across the upper part of Vietnam. At the Gulf of Tonkin, we got 50 feet off the water. We turned down the coast until I saw a small jetty that I recognized. I knew the camp was just inland from that. We turned out to sea, gained altitude, and started in. I wanted to drop at 600 feet, really the minimum. I showed the pilot where we were going, then went back to get at the head of the stick. I put a strong jumper behind the last of the nonjumpers and designated him the push master. We landed relatively safely. Our Japanese interpreter had his chin badly cut by the quick opening device on the parachute harness.

We were given a mission and sent off to do it with the resources we had, whether we were in occupied France, China, or Vietnam.

The Japanese thought we were attacking. A squad was on its way with fixed bayonets. We saw their trucks coming as we rounded up our supplies. Most of our equipment had been destroyed by being dropped too low. The parachutes were still deploying when they hit the ground, and the bundles just exploded. Our radio was all over the field. Not a great beginning.

I found another injury. My exec, Captain Woods, had been hit in the back of the head by a connector link and knocked silly. His job was to take photos. If things went sour, somebody might find the camera and that might explain what happened. There he was, staggering around, taking pictures, looking totally unconcerned about the weapons pointed at him. Then the medic came and said Captain Woods had a concussion.

BB: What happened when the Japanese got to the drop zone?

JS: The Japanese lieutenant and I had a confrontation. I turned my back on him and through my interpreter told him he was not senior enough for me to talk to, that I would talk only with his commanding officer. Then I used his trucks to transport us and our gear to his headquarters. I made him ride up front in his sedan with the driver. I got in the back seat with my interpreter.

BB: This was a situation that could have gone downhill very rapidly if you didn't do exactly the right thing. How did you come up with the tactics you used in handling the Japanese?

JS: An OSS specialist on the Japanese military had briefed me in Kunming. He had served as an attaché in Japan before the war. He knew the Japanese well and suggested the best way to do things. I was a captain then, and he insisted that I become an instant major. When I jumped in, I was wearing major's insignia.

BB: You must have been doing the right thing. What happened when you got to their headquarters?

JS: We went into their guard house. I told my team not to go back outside. Japanese guards had surrounded the place and were obviously ready to shoot anybody who tried to "escape." There was a Japanese captain there, and I told him he didn't have enough rank to talk with me either. He got on the telephone line and screamed to get connected to his colonel. We listened outside his door, and Ralph could hear the captain saying, "But sir, they jumped in broad daylight, the major insists that Japan is surrendering—and he will talk only with you!" The captain told us that the colonel was on his way and took us to another building that had been a hospital ward. We spent the night there. I made up a roster of guard duty. I wanted somebody awake all the time.

It was a nervous night with a lot of praying. We really had no idea what would happen next. We had been told that MacArthur had issued instructions that Japanese garrisons were to offer assistance to Allies in their areas. Obviously this had not gotten through.

BB: When did the colonel arrive?

JS: The next day. He came from his headquarters on the island's northern coast. The meeting room had been arranged with him in the place of honor. I changed that, put our people there. That didn't make him happy. I told him how things stood. I would not accept his surrender—a Chinese army coming from the mainland would take it—and I wanted to see the senior POWs. They quickly brought in the senior Australian, Lt. Col. W.J.R. Scott, and a Dutch officer.

BB: How many POWs were on the island?

JS: Our planning figure was 400, but by the time I got there it was just over 390. They were in terrible shape, dying at a rapid rate because of malnutrition and the diseases that came with

ABOVE: American Lieutenant Frank G. Beiser and two officers belonging to the Japanese Marine contingent on the island of Hainan pose for the camera beside a sign proclaiming the end of the war and urging any escaped Allied prisoners to come in from hiding. OPPOSITE: Recently liberated Allied prisoners of the Japanese show the effects of their time in captivity. Starvation and disease took their toll on the POWs, some of whom were in enemy hands for years. (Both: National Archives)

it. The POWs were deliberately starved.

When Lt. Col. Scott came in, I moved the Japanese and put him and the Dutch officer at the table. Then I told the Japanese we needed food, medicine, and medical care. I commandeered all transport, food, and medical facilities for the POWs. They went from two meals a day to four and then five small ones, which turned out to be the right thing. It was difficult. We had lost supplies and our radio in the drop and were out of contact with Kunming. I had arranged that every day after our drop a recon airplane would fly over the DZ, and I would display panels to indicate our situation.

I took the first trainload of ambulatory POWs to the southern tip of the island where they could be evacuated, and we got ambushed. There were Chinese guerrillas in the hills. They tore up the track and derailed the train. We had a Red Cross flag on the train and didn't get fired on. A Japanese repair team got us going again. We got to our destination late that evening. There was an unused airfield there, and my radio operator found a powerful Japanese transmitter, got it working, and contacted Kunming. They didn't believe it was him and challenged him until he finally convinced them.

We asked for a doctor. When the first airplane from Kunming flew over the field, a doctor parachuted from it and dislocated his shoulder. My medic had to set it, and now I had a doctor with one usable arm.

We filled the craters on the runway, and a C-47 landed. I was trying to establish contact with escaped POWs or others who were in the hills or with guerrillas in the interior. When the next plane landed, I took the pilot chutes from reserves, attached a bottle of atabrine and a note in Chinese, Japanese and English, saying the war was ending and we were here to retrieve all Allied personnel on the island. Then we buzzed the villages and dropped the small chutes. The atabrine established that the message really came from the Americans.

Our supply service sent over an aged lieutenant colonel with no combat experience. His instructions were to relieve the OSS group, which he took to mean that he was to take over and send us out. He was obnoxious to OSS personnel and antagonistic to intelligence operations. Meanwhile, the Japanese had accused my deputy on the other side of the island of misconduct, and I had to go there. I used an incoming airplane and jumped free fall to get there.

I learned that my deputy had not done anything wrong, but that he had found a camp with about 5,000 Chinese slave laborers. The conditions at the camp were unbelievable, worse than anything we had seen. We provided what food and medicine we could and raised their priority on incoming supplies.

I rode the train back to the coast with the last load of POWs. I found that the lieutenant colonel had made a complete fool of himself while I was gone. He went to a Japanese dinner party and insisted my people go. He toasted the Japanese and made outrageous statements, saying they if they had just followed up on Pearl Harbor our positions now would be reversed. My people were outraged. Then he told the Japanese that they would not have to deal with me and my team. I recommended to Kunming that the OSS team pull out, and they agreed.

We left on an Australian destroyer for Hong Kong and arrived in time to witness the official end of the war. That evening we sat on the veranda of the Peninsula Hotel and watched the assembled fleet set off pyrotechnics.

BB: What a great way to end the war!

JS: After so much destruction, the POW rescue mission was a satisfying thing.

BB: Your days with the OSS were just the beginning of your long and eventful career. What strikes you when you look back?

JS: It's clear that Donovan really understood that Special Operations were to be conducted as unconventional warfare. We were given a mission and sent off to do it with resources we had, whether we were in occupied France, China, or Vietnam. We went in with very small teams. The concept was that we would train the indigenous people and let them conduct the operations. Today we're losing that. The emphasis now seems to be on direct action—to launch an attack with our own highly trained people to kill the enemy or kick down doors. There seems to be too much emphasis on the direct action part of special operations—rather than keeping our own participation low, and training the indigenous people to do the job.

General Singlaub continued his distinguished military career. Immediately after World War II, he was chief of the military liaison mission to Mukden, Manchuria. He served two combat tours in the Korean War. In the Vietnam War he was the commander of the Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (MACSOG). In addition to his service in three wars, he held many other important positions in the United States and abroad and was instrumental in establishing the U.S. Army Ranger training center at Fort Benning, Georgia. His career is chronicled in his autobiography, *Hazardous Duty—An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century.* □

Bob Bergin is a former Foreign Service officer and Southeast Asia specialist who writes about aviation history in Southeast Asia and China and on the OSS.

ESCAPE FROM AUSCHWITZ
Andrey Pogozhev

After being shunted from one POW camp to another, Pogozhev found himself, along with 20,000 other Soviet soldiers, locked up in Auschwitz, the Nazis' main killing factory in southwest Poland; a year later, barely 100 of these men were still alive.

Pogozhev's harrowing account of his experiences adds new understanding of the Nazi death camp system. He recalls the details of his time in the camp, the sickness and malnutrition, the appalling conditions, and the cruelty that killed all but a few of his comrades.

The fact that Pogozhev survived at all is remarkable in itself. That he also took part in one of the few successful escapes from the camp makes his narrative a historical document of extreme importance. His description of the escape and his subsequent journey eastward as a fugitive through the Carpathian Mountains into the Ukraine and his eventual meeting with the Red Army makes for unforgettable reading.

Yet Pogozhev's gripping story does not end there. In 1967, he was called to give evidence in a West German courtroom against his former Auschwitz guards, thereby bringing to justice some of the perpetrators of Nazi evil. □

Tragedy, author Sean L. Malloy, an assistant professor in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts at the University of California, Merced, explores Stimson's relationship to the atomic bomb program, the scientists and officers behind it, and his own struggle to reconcile his responsibility for "the most terrible weapon ever known in human history" with his longstanding convictions about war and morality.

As Malloy argues, Stimson's story is one of ultimate failure. Despite his beliefs, he reluctantly acquiesced in the decision to use the bomb against the heavily populated Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Malloy has also uncovered evidence illustrating the origins of Stimson's commitment to eliminating or refining the conduct of war against civilians—information that makes clear the agony of Stimson's dilemma.

A thoughtful book that should be studied during this time of heightened fears about nuclear proliferation in Asia and the Middle East.

Warman's World War II Collectibles, by John F. Graf, Warman Publishing, 2008, 256 pp., photographs, softcover, $24.99.

Many readers of *WWII History* are also collectors of military artifacts. To serve this group, Warman Publishing Co. has created a welcome, indispensable guide to World War II collectibles written by John F. Graf, a master in the field and editor of *Military Trader* magazine.

Collecting artifacts, while enjoyable and rewarding, can also be frustrating and expensive. There are many replicas and reproductions being passed off as originals, and unscrupulous sellers can often take advantage of the unwary. Graf's monumental work will help expert and novice collectors alike identify and price militaria and avoid the frauds and rip-offs.

Included in the book's 256 pages are 3,000 listings with current prices and over 900 color photos showing the artifacts that were used by the major combatants—everything from uniforms, headgear, equipment, and footwear to weapons, medals, insignia, personal items, and much more.

The U.S. Navy Against the Axis: Surface Combat 1941-1945, by Vincent P. O'Hara, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2008, 364 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, $36.95.

Naval history buffs will find a special place on their bookshelf for this invaluable reference work. Author Vincent O'Hara meticulously researched 49 naval encounters in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Mediterranean in which American surface ships took part and puts them into proper context.

Here the reader will find all the facts and figures plus tables, charts, and a taut narrative that explain the battles and more. O'Hara covers the actions that demonstrate how U.S. battleships, cruisers, and destroyers played a decisive role at critical junctures in the war and made significant contributions to the Allied victory. He deftly documents with clarity and precision the performance of weapons systems, shows how doctrine developed as the war progressed, and examines the roles played by new technologies.

Besides refreshing the reader's understanding of such familiar surface encounters as Guadalcanal and Leyte Gulf, the author also highlights lesser known battles, such as Vila-Stanmore, Horaniu, and Ormoc Bay—battles that required no less bravery and seamanship to win than did those that made the history books.

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bicycle; a smiling girl in a red-and-white striped dirndl. Austrian types in black Homburgs and velvet jackets moved casually through the streets. In a field at the roadside lolled some hundreds of Wehrmacht troops only mildly interested in the American staff car which rolled by them. The first traffic control we encountered was, indeed, not an American MP but a square, very correct German soldier with an automatic weapon slung over his shoulder."

All this while, General Wolff still held court in his luxurious headquarters at the palace of the Duke of Pistoia, "a monumental red brick building enclosed in a compound the size of a good New York City block," as Ryan described Wolff's lair. Their meetings were cordial with all the Prussian formalities of heel clicking and salutes, highlighted by four-course meals with "apologies for the fare, and toasts to the 'game' and to the players."

On their final evening, after Mrs. Wolff had poured the coffee and liqueurs, the conversation uncomfortably turned to Ryan, who brought up the most important topic to Colonel Russell Livermore, 15th Army representative in Bolzano, and to the OSS, including the whereabouts and well-being of Allied officers in German POW camps, in particular, OSS agent Roderick "Steve" Hall. Hall had been included in Dulles's original request for prisoner release as a sign of good faith in the early Sunrise negotiations.

While Wolff managed to release future Italian prime minister Ferruccio Parri, he lied to Dulles, telling him that Hall had been transferred to the Mauthausen camp in Germany. Now, Wolff's staff was stonewalling Livermore's requests, and Ryan wanted to impress upon Wolff and company that this was a very serious matter. "Hüll? Hall? Yes, there had been a Captain Hall … who would not reveal his citizenship; during an air raid in Bolzano he had hung himself in his cell."

Ryan knew this to be a deliberate lie. Unbeknownst to the participants, OSS Captain Al Materazzi was investigating Hall's death. Materazzi had found the death certificate, spoken with the medical student who had signed it, and then located the gravesite. It was immediately clear that Hall had been tortured and murdered by the Nazis at the Bolzano concentration camp. Further investigation revealed that Hall had been murdered in February 1945, just prior to Dulles's request for an act of good faith from Wolff.

To the U.S. government, Bolzano was an extremely delicate situation. Wolff's cooperation in Sunrise put him and his collaborators in special positions—just as they had hoped. The delicacy of the cultural balance and the potential for hostilities given the number and concentration of German troops coupled with the majority Allogen citizenry added up to a potentially explosive situation.

Locally, de Angelis had created a coalition government combining representatives of the Italian CLN with members of the Tyrolean Peoples Party. Accusations flew back and forth between the groups but, fortunately, it was largely only words that flew through the air. Both Italians and Allogens wanted the active participation of the Allies because each felt an outside military force would protect them from each other. The continued presence of German troops was an irritant, but largely did not factor into the local political equation.

The more important questions of languages that would be taught in schools and posted on streets and buildings took precedence. Both sides jockeyed for better position in the composition of local and provincial governments. Larger questions about the future of the province—whether to hold a referendum on returning to Austria or staying with Italy—loomed in the background.

The Italians feared that the U.S. State Department preferred a united Tyrolean state under the Austrian flag, as C.L. Sulzberg wrote in *The New York Times* in January 1945: "United States foreign policy, as represented by the State Department, desires the re-establishment not only of an independent Austria with a Government of popular choice, but favors enlarging such a State by the cession to a future Vienna administration of the Bolzano area obtained by Italy after the last war … would move the Austrian-Italian border well south of the Brenner Pass, including considerable portions of the mountainous resort areas, as well as the Bolzano rail center."

British political adviser to the Allied Commission A.S. Halford conveyed the sentiments of the British embassy in his May 28, 1945, memo to the commission that Austria should be regarded as "a prostrate enemy" and "when in doubt, German interests should be subordinated to Italian interests so long as gross and patent injustice, whereby danger to our lines of communications might result, is not done."

On Sunday, May 13, SS General Karl Wolff received hundreds of guests who had come to honor him on his 45th birthday and, perhaps, to celebrate the turn of events. Instead, Wolff, his wife and their guests were "abruptly lined up in the courtyard and, in two-and-one-half-ton trucks, removed as P/Ws from the halls of Pistoia."

In an effort to withdraw American military forces from the region, the 88th turned over command of Bolzano to the Italian Folgore Paratroop Division on May 31, 1945, in a ceremony in front of the city's war memorial. The Austrians were intensely upset and openly hostile over the substitution of Italian for American troops, and even the Allied Commission complained about the behavior of the paratroopers.

Animosity had risen so high that the Allies decided to leave behind the 349th Infantry Regiment as a buffer between Italians and Austrians. This ignited a spark among the Allogen population that took decades to extinguish. At the end of 1945, Bruno de Angelis stepped down from his successful term as prefect of Bolzano. He moved to Rome where he was a representative of the Socialist Party and served as minister without portfolio in the Ministry of the Interior. Although he was eyed as a possible candidate for an elected national office, de Angelis soon disappeared from the political landscape.

Agreements were reached with the French for their withdrawal from the western provinces. Compromises were reached with Tito in the settlement of the Venezia Giulia. All of the provinces had been fully handed over to the Italian government, except one—Bolzano. Bolzano did not rejoin the Italian Republic until late 1946.

By mid-May 1945, the border issues had been settled by a council of foreign ministers in Paris, in essence, along the "spartiacque," where on one side the waters run northward to the Danube and finally the Black Sea and on the other side, the waters run south to the Adriatic.

The 87th Division history recounted the memories of soldiers on leaving "lovely Lake Garda, moving north through the valley to Rovereto and then east up onto a beautiful mountainside. The battalions were bivouacked in and around Folgaria. After the memory of the seared browns of the Apennines and the recent dust of battle, the May colors in the foothills of the Alps seemed unbelievably fresh and vivid. The towns were pastel-colored and more picturesque in architecture than the Italy of farther south. Every view seemed like a children's book illustration." □

Dennis Whitehead is a freelance journalist in Arlington, Virginia. Currently, he is handling research for an upcoming PBS documentary on military cemeteries and developing a documentary on a father and son killed in World War II. This story is dedicated to the memory of OSS vet Al Materazzi who gave vital support to this author, the same he has given to countless journalists and academics.

company b

Continued from page 39

tions of the tanks for the tank destroyer crews as the tracer fire ricocheted off their hulls.

The second platoon then moved up to the crest of the ridge some 900 yards from the enemy and began firing on the troops in the orchard, distracting them from the first platoon. This enabled the first platoon to move up to the Roman arch by bounding, one section covering the other as it moved to the new position, where it then provided cover for the other to move. Both sections took up good firing positions near this arch.

Meanwhile, the second platoon had succeeded in knocking out every Italian tank visible in the orchard. The rest of the Italian tanks and infantry now began to retreat into the town. Caught in a deadly crossfire between the two American platoons, more tanks fell prey to the American gunners.

The enemy force was, in fact, a mixed unit of Germans and Italians. The Germans saw the battle turning against their allies and decided to pull out. Manning a number of trucks, they retreated through a rear gate to the northeast road. The three remaining Italian tanks quickly followed the Germans. One tank destroyer from the first platoon tried to move from its position near the arch to cut off the retreating enemy trucks and tanks, braving heavy machine gun fire. The enemy tanks opened fire and succeeded in disabling it, wounding one of the crewmen. This was the only casualty Company B sustained during the entire two-day operation.

A medic was summoned as the Germans and Italians made good their escape. The medic reached the wounded man on foot. Along the way, he had to jump a large ditch. To his surprise, this ditch was full of Italian troops, all of whom surrendered to the unarmed medic.

Ellman now ordered the rest of his tank destroyers to move into the town. They approached cautiously, firing at any enemy they saw. A number of the intersections in the town had enemy machine guns posted nearby. The half-track crews quickly silenced them, sometimes by actually running over the positions with their vehicles. Sbeitla's remaining defenders surrendered. Company B had fought its third successful action in two days.

One platoon of M3s and a recon section were posted on the northeast road in case of a counterattack. Ellman sent a scout on a motorcycle to bring up a company of paratroopers that was supposed to be following Company B. About 100 Italian soldiers had been captured; these were searched and taken to the rear. Many of the townspeople had been rounded up and secured in two buildings, one for the men, and the other for the women. Curiously, the children had not been collected and many wandered the town, which some Arabs had taken the opportunity to loot. The GIs found a trio of these children wounded and hiding in an abandoned German truck; they were turned over to a town official who himself had just been freed.

A short time later, a French force consisting of a company of infantry supported by an artillery battery arrived to take up the defense of the town. Company B was told to return to Kasserine, where it was finally able to get some rest. Its actions during the preceding two days had resulted in 15 enemy tanks destroyed and more than 400 prisoners taken. The company had covered 400 miles in its movements from Feriana to Gafsa and El Guettar, then back to Feriana before advancing to Kasserine and Sbeitla and finally returning to Kasserine. That it accomplished all this with only one man wounded and two half-tracks lightly damaged is an impressive achievement, especially considering the company's lack of support during most of its operations.

Company B's success was also a tribute to the courage and spirit of its soldiers. For men as inexperienced as they were so early in the conflict, they moved with a speed and daring that no doubt contributed greatly to their victories. Certainly, their opponent's lack of security and defensive preparations contributed to the American accomplishments, but the victories required men with a will to exploit such opportunities despite their relative rawness. Indeed, one could argue that more experienced troops would not have tried such risky endeavors in the same situation. In this case, their boldness paid off.

The towns Company B took and fought in would change hands, in some cases several times, during the remainder of the North African campaign. The ground the tank destroyer men had fought for was shortly to turn into a bloody proving ground for the United States Army, one that would see months of hard combat for the GIs. The small but whirlwind victories accomplished by Company B, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion during two days of fighting in North Africa are a tiny yet proud moment in that epic conflict. □

Christopher Miskimon writes from Denver, Colorado. He has served in both the Infantry and Field Artillery branches of the U.S. Army and is an avid and longtime student of military history. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland.

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an ignorance of the persecutions being heaped upon the Jews of Europe may seem puzzling at first, but the answer may be quite simple. Millions of young men who may have been accustomed to reading a daily newspaper in their hometowns were suddenly plucked, either by the draft boards or by their own enlistment, from their homes and transported hundreds or thousands of miles away to a military base. A young man from, say, Brooklyn, who regularly read *The New York Times,* might have found himself in 1942 or 1943 at some backwater Army installation where *The New York Times* was not sold. The local newspaper likely did not carry many stories about the treatment of European Jews and, in any case, the average soldier, even if he had been aware of the situation overseas before entering the military, was too busy with his training duties and too concerned about his upcoming deployment to a combat zone to spend much time reading newspapers and attempting to educate himself on the larger picture and the plight of others. His primary focus was on preparing himself for battle.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that the average American soldier received any official Army instruction, either in basic training, advanced infantry training, or at briefings in the field once deployed to the European combat zone that would have educated him about concentration camps or readied him for the possibility of encountering such places. Members of specialized military government units were schooled in how to govern towns and cities captured from the enemy and how to deal with large numbers of civilian refugees but not concentration camps and concentration camp inmates. And, although the average American soldier was issued numerous training and field manuals on scores of subjects, there were no manuals that told him what to expect or how to conduct himself if he should unexpectedly encounter a camp filled with tens of thousands of sick and starving persons, or mountains of skeletal corpses that had been systematically slaughtered.

Even the acclaimed documentary film series *Why We Fight* by Frank Capra, which was shown to all U.S. Army inductees as indoctrination, did not dwell on the plight of European Jewry. In fact, in the entire seven hours of film, the Jews are mentioned only once. In the first film, *Prelude to War,* over a montage of images of churches and a synagogue, the announcer intones, "Thousands of other men of God—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish—were persecuted, arrested, confined in concentration camps." The scene takes less than 15 seconds—15 seconds out of seven hours. There is not a single mention of Kristallnacht, ghettos, persecutions, medical experiments, gas chambers, or any explanation of what the narrator's offhand reference to "concentration camps" meant.

It is no wonder, then, that the average American soldier in 1945 was totally at a loss when he came face to face with the shocking reality of the camps.

On April 16, Third Army commander Patton paid a visit to Buchenwald. Not only was Patton shocked by the stacks of corpses scattered around the camp, their dead eyes staring at him; he was also incredibly angry. He was angry that the Nazis could do this to other human beings and even angrier that the townspeople of Weimar, who undoubtedly knew what had been going on atop the Etterberg hill for eight years, silently condoned it and even profited from it.

To "rub their noses" in the rotting flesh and scenes of atrocities, Patton ordered a thousand citizens of Weimar to march up the hill and forced them to take a guided tour of the camp and view the crematorium with its charred skeletons still in the ovens, the piles of decomposing corpses, the hanging gallows, the whipping bench, the jars from the pathology lab filled with human organs, and the samples of shrunken heads and lamp shades made from tattooed human flesh.

Those Germans with weak stomachs and tender dispositions wept and vomited. Others remained stone-faced, masking their emotions behind impassive glances at the corpses, the gallows, the ovens, the very visible evidence of torture, abuse, and crimes against humanity.

Army photographer Walter Halloran said, "The first group was the men, and of course they were older men because all the young men were in the army. We were so angry we wanted to shoot some of them. They were just rigid and they looked straight forward, not a glance at what was there. Everybody, of course, said they had no idea this was going on."

One GI noted that, after the tour was concluded, the group marched out through the gate and back down the road to Weimar under American escort. The soldier recalled that he was told, "There was a large patrol of our troops marching them, some on either side of the road. As they were moving back to Weimar, not even out of sight of the camp, a number of Germans in the group found something to laugh about. The commander of the American troops heard them and became livid with anger. He turned them around and marched them back through the camp again. This time they went through much more slowly."

In coming days, following a request by Eisenhower to Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, groups of American newspaper editors and members of Congress also visited the camp to see firsthand the atrocities committed by the Nazis.

Eventually, Buchenwald was emptied of former inmates as members of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration moved in. Many of the ex-prisoners tried to return to their homes and families only to find that their homes and families no longer existed (Robert Max Widerman, for example, learned that practically his entire family had been wiped out). Some emigrated to Palestine (where the new state of Israel would be created three years later), others to the United States, Britain, and France. Others, from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other East European nations, did not wish to go to their former homes because the Soviet Union had taken control of those countries.

In fact, during the partition of Germany, Buchenwald fell within the Soviet sector. With no little irony, Josef Stalin's Soviet Union used Buchenwald for many years as a concentration camp for its political prisoners.

Thirty-two of the perpetrators of the crimes at Buchenwald were hunted down and put on trial in 1947. Hermann Pister was tried and sentenced to death but died of a heart attack while in prison. Ilse Koch was also found guilty and sentenced to life in prison, but her sentence was commuted in 1949 by General Lucius D. Clay, the United States high commissioner for Germany. The West German government, however, rearrested and retried her in 1951. Sentenced again to life in prison, she committed suicide in her cell in 1967.

In October 1990, after the fall of communism and the reunification of Germany, the former camp, with most of its buildings torn down, was opened to visitors from the West and elsewhere as a memorial to the victims of Nazism. It remains a chilling reminder of man's inhumanity to man.

It is also a warning that such terrible things must never be allowed to happen again—a warning that the world has yet to heed. □

Denver resident Flint Whitlock has written several books on World War II and is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *This article is an excerpt from his upcoming book on Buchenwald.*

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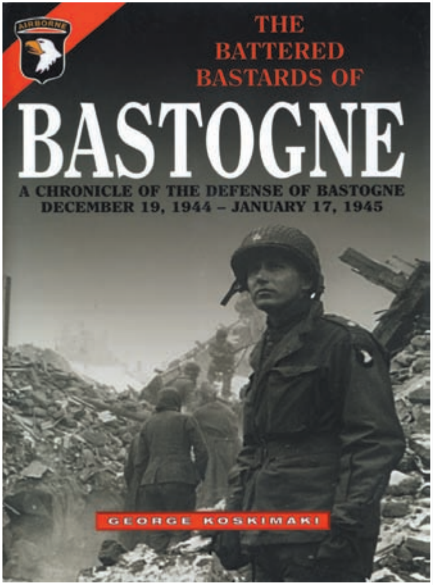
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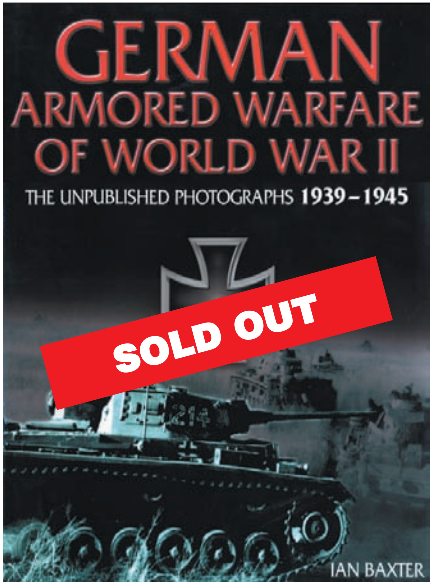
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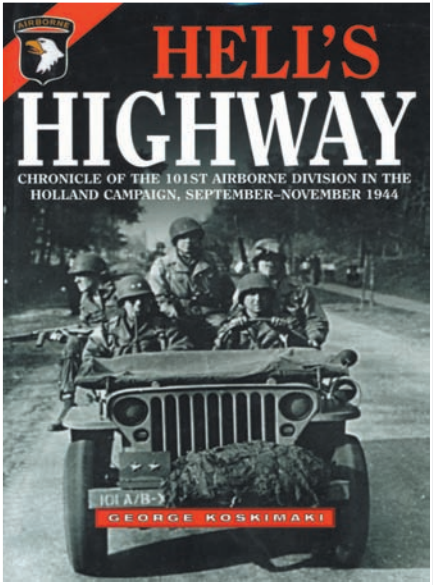
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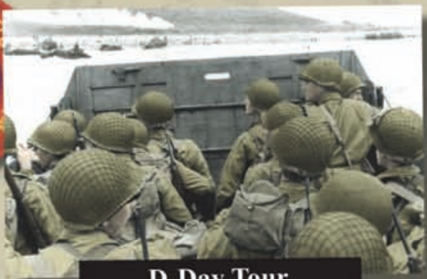
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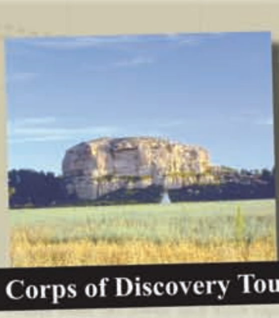
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