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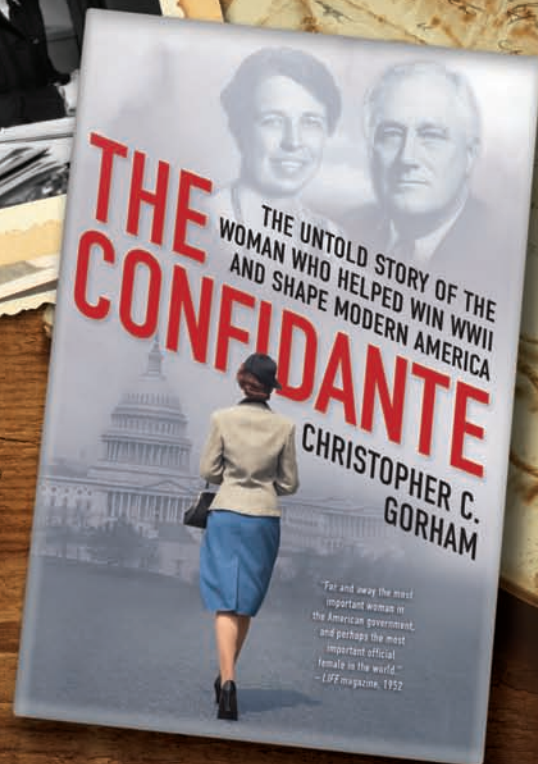
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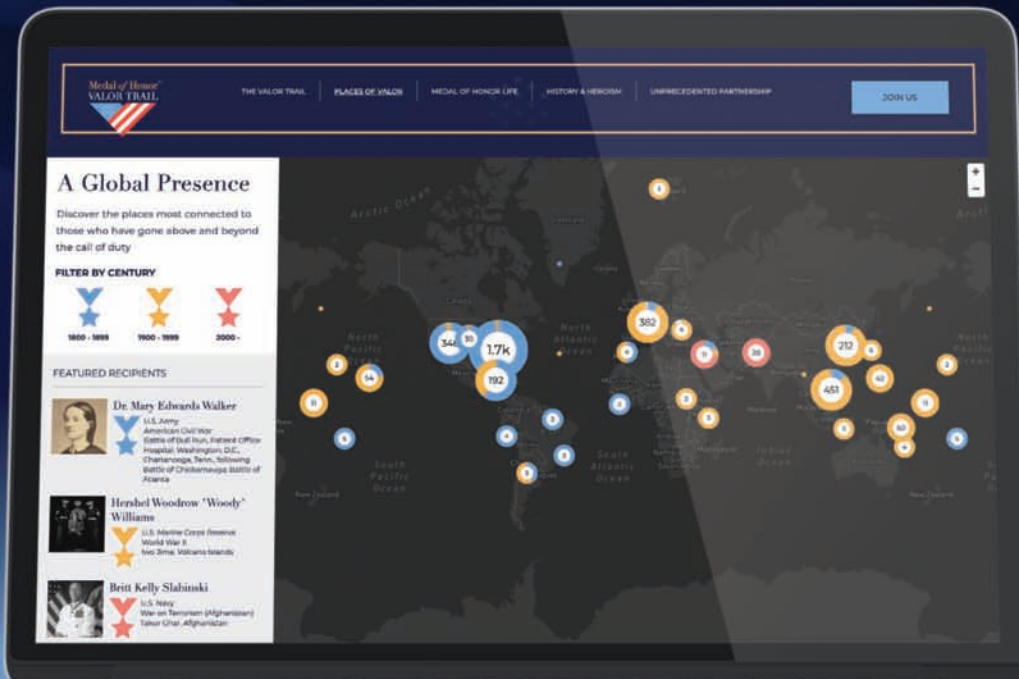


Cover: A Panzer IV of the 16th Panzer Division moves along a road in southern Italy in September 1943. See story page 56. Photo: Bundesarchiv Bild 1011-305-0652-24; Photo: Funke.

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Tyler Perry, Netflix present the story of the all-Black, all-female 6888th Postal Battalion in World War II.

ACTOR AND FILMMAKER TYLER PERRY KNOWS A GREAT STORY WHEN HE comes across one. And when he read Kevin Hymel's dramatic narrative of the 6888th Central Postal Battalion in the pages of *WWII History* magazine, he knew it was something special.

Perry, whose partnership with Netflix has been quite successful in recent years, is putting together *Six Triple Eight*, a feature film that is already in production. And star power is contributing strongly to the anticipated Netflix release to viewers with Oprah Winfrey, Kerry Washington, Sam Waterston, and Susan Sarandon committing to key roles.

Six Triple Eight relates the experiences of the U.S. Army's only all-Black, all-female unit to serve overseas during World War II. Based on Hymel's exhaustively researched work, the film will recount the struggles of these women in uniform as they faced discrimination, separation from their families overseas during wartime, and the daunting task of sorting and distributing a three-year-old mountain of undelivered mail to service personnel in the European Theater of Operations. Adopting the motto "No Mail, Low Morale," the 850 female officers and enlisted personnel of the 6888th waded into the backlog of 17 million pieces of mail—letters from home, parcels, and card—that lifted the spirits of countless GIs engaged in the great conflict.

The women arrived in England in February 1945, crossing the U-boat infested waters of the Atlantic, and began their task just days later. They worked endless hours in difficult surroundings—unheated, rat-infested warehouses with the windows blacked out. Occasionally, a Nazi V-1 buzz bomb or V-2 rocket exploded nearby, shaking the buildings.

The achievement of the 6888th was a virtually unknown triumph of World War II until Hymel, a longtime contributor to *WWII History*, noted author, and historian, undertook an effort to interview the few living members of the unit and bring their accomplishments to the attention of the readers of *WWII History*. Lena Derriecott King was with the 6888th, and she vividly recalled an evening in a local theater when Military Police explained that the women were not sitting in an area designated for "colored people." One of the officers of the 6888th made a stand, speaking directly to the colonel responsible for the surrounding facilities. The following day the colonel announced that the theater, bowling alley and cafeteria would no longer be segregated.

While the story of the 6888th is compelling, it is also illustrative of the need—the responsibility, really—for future generations to keep history alive. Without Hymel's effort the story of the 6888th might never reach the vast audience that Perry's Netflix film promises to engage. More than 75 years after the end of World War II, the U.S. government recognized the 6888th in February 2022, with the passage of a resolution to award the Congressional Gold Star to its members. Just a month later, President Joe Biden signed the bill, which noted the award "in recognition of their pioneering military service, devotion to duty, and contributions to increase the morale of personnel stationed in the European theater of operations during World War II."

"When I wrote my interview with Lena Derriecott King, I just wanted to share her story with our readers," explained Hymel. "I never imagined it would be made into a major motion picture with Mr. Tyler Perry at the helm. This experience has surpassed my wildest expectations. I hope other historians, or anyone wanting to write about an important figure or event, realizes that their work may surpass their expectations too."

Winfrey is known for roles in *The Color Purple*, *Lee Daniels' The Butler*, *Selma*, and more, while Washington starred as Olivia Pope in ABC's *Scandal* for seven seasons. Sarandon starred in *Thelma and Louise*, *Bull Durham*, and other feature films; Waterston has appeared in a host of productions, including *The Great Gatsby* (1974), *The Killing Fields*, and the NBC television series *Law & Order*.

WWII History is proud to have first published Mr. Hymel's important work, and honored to be associated with the Netflix film of *Six Triple Eight*, the telling of a tremendous story of the greatest armed conflict in human history, to a wider audience. And congratulations to Hymel, one of our own, who has done so much to celebrate our vibrant collective history.

—Michael E. Haskew

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Matt Urban: Infantry Legend

More than 30 years after the end of World War II, one of the most remarkable American heroes finally had the pale blue ribbon of the Medal of Honor hung around his neck.



Wikipedia

ABOVE: Taking shelter alongside an M4 Sherman medium tank, U.S. soldiers of the 60th Infantry Regiment advance into a Belgian town. **INSET:** Lieutenant Matt Urban fought heroically with the 60th Regiment and received the Medal of Honor decades later.

AT A WASHINGTON, D.C., REUNION OF THE 9TH INFANTRY “OCTOFOIL” Division, on Saturday, July 19, 1980, President Jimmy Carter presented the nation’s highest decoration for valor to Lt. Col. Matt Urban of Buffalo, New York.

“Matt Urban showed that moments of terrible devastation can bring out courage. His actions are a reminder to this nation so many years later of what freedom really means,” Carter declared, calling him “the greatest soldier in American history.”

As the visibly moved president turned to Urban, the Polish-American veteran struggled to hold back tears and maintain his composure. The proud moment was the finale to a long campaign for the medal in which the Disabled American Veterans pressed the Defense Department to review Urban’s overlooked but distinguished combat record.

The award of the Medal of Honor placed Urban alongside Lieutenant Audie L. Murphy, the boyish son of a Texas sharecropper who had been acknowledged as America’s most decorated soldier. According to the Army Personnel Command in Alexandria, Virginia, each received 29 medals and citations.

Matthew Louis Urban was born in Buffalo on Monday, August 25, 1919. His family was not poor, but money was scarce, so the boy worked hard during his high school years in order to help out. By saving extra money, he was able to enter Cornell University in 1937. He earned good grades, joined the ROTC, and excelled in sports. Boxing was his great love, and he became the university champion in three weight classes.

When he graduated in June 1941, Europe was at war and his neutral country was watching

uneasily from the sidelines. “The winds of war were blowing pretty hard then, so I decided to join the Army,” he recalled later. After attending officer candidate school, he joined the 60th Infantry Regiment at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as a lieutenant. “Immediately, I loved the military,” he said. His first assignment was as the base’s recreation officer and a boxing coach. His prowess in the ring became well known throughout the regiment.

By the time his regiment received orders for overseas shipment in the summer of 1942, Urban was a company commander. The 60th Infantry and other units of the 9th Infantry Division landed in northwestern French Morocco when Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa, was launched on Sun-

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Soldiers of the 60th Infantry Regiment advance across a hill during their march to Bizerte, Tunisia, on May 7, 1943. Matt Urban and a sergeant of the regiment had to commandeer a rubber raft to get into the fighting in North Africa.

day, November 8, 1942. Activated in August 1940, the division was led by burly Major General Manton S. Eddy, who emerged as one of the outstanding American field commanders of World War II.

The 60th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Frederick J. de Rohan, went ashore at Mehdia and encountered heavy resistance while trying to capture the nearby airfield at Port Lyautey, a primary objective. But Lieutenant Urban, while eager to get into action, missed out on the initial assault.

Because of their special assignment as regimental boxing coaches, he and a sergeant missed shipping out with their regular unit and sailed to North Africa aboard the troopship *Florence Nightingale*. “My ship to Africa was a ship of outcasts,” Urban remembered. “You’d think a ship with a name like that would not be a fighting man’s ship, and it wasn’t.”

When the ship anchored off Morocco, Lieutenant Urban and the sergeant sought out a colonel and asked permission to be reunited with their own company on the beach. The colonel refused, telling Urban that he was “being saved for recreation assignments.” This was not what he wanted to hear; he had come to North Africa to fight Germans and not to box.

So, he and the sergeant jumped into a small rubber raft and made for the beach. “I remember the colonel yelling at us from the deck to come back,” Urban recalled. As he and the sergeant paddled, they realized that soldiers around them were drowning because of their heavy packs. Urban and the sergeant started

pulling them out of the water and managed to drag a dozen GIs to shore.

Later that day, Urban caught up with his own company in the regiment’s 2nd Battalion, and he did not have to wait for his baptism of fire. “Our men were being shot up and killed fairly regularly,” he recalled. “During that first day of battle, we lost three sergeants. We paid the price for not being more experienced.” The regiment fought hard for three days before capturing the Port Lyautey airfield.

Lieutenant Urban and his comrades tasted combat and gained confidence. “Going over, we had boyhood visions that war was like cops and robbers,” said Urban. “But, wow, when we hit that shore, we woke up pretty quick.” His regiment saw plenty of action through the rest of 1942 and early 1943 against Field Marshal Erwin Rommel’s vaunted Afrika Korps. While General Bernard L. Montgomery’s seasoned British Eighth Army pressed in from the east, the untried American infantry and armored units suffered a number of bitter setbacks, as at Sidi Bou Zid, Fondouk Pass, and Kasserine Pass.

But they learned quickly in the crucible of combat. “We became a war machine,” Urban recalled proudly. “My men were combat veterans now, and we had become quite good at what we did.” The subaltern from Buffalo swiftly developed an enviable reputation for his bravery and exceptional leadership. He always led from the front, was unflinching under fire, and cared for his men. Never asking them to attempt anything he would not do, he was popular and respected.

During one action, Urban’s F Company was assigned to capture a German-held hill in northern Tunisia. The Americans concealed themselves before outmaneuvering the enemy and taking the high ground. “For three days, we were surrounded,” Urban recalled. “Our company continued to hold this hill despite counterattacks by German regiment-sized forces. Finally, they gave up and withdrew to Bizerte.”

In March 1943, the 60th Infantry Regiment was attached to the 1st Armored Division, which captured Sened Station. The 9th Infantry Division faced difficult tasks in southern Tunisia that month. It had never made any kind of attack as a unit, and most of its troops had seen little or no action. The fighting across rocky crags and deep gorges was intense, and losses were heavy. But the division matured rapidly after its flawed performance at the Battle of El Guettar resulted in General Eddy incurring the legendary wrath of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, commander of the II Corps.

Lieutenant Urban, aided by First Sergeant John W. Miller, continued to inspire his men as the 2nd Battalion fought on, suffering heavy losses and winning a Distinguished Unit Citation. But sometimes the fearless Urban bristled when his weary young GIs faltered, as when F Company was ordered on April 23, 1943, to seize a German outpost atop Djebel M’Rata. Urban shouted, “Charge!” but no one moved. He called the NCOs together and said angrily, “We’ll try it again. This time, Sergeant Miller will follow up with his Tommy gun ready to shoot any son of a bitch who doesn’t move.” After a couple of minutes, the hill was taken with little enemy resistance, and only two men were killed by return fire. The regiment took Djebel Dardyss the next day and pushed on as the Germans withdrew to the strategic seaport of Bizerte.

While the 1st Armored and the 1st and 34th Infantry Divisions were busy in the southern sector of Tunisia assigned to the Americans, the fighting in the north fell to Eddy’s division. As it advanced toward Bizerte, the last major point of enemy resistance, it was supported by the motley French Corps d’Afrique and tough Moroccan Goums. Late in the afternoon of May 7, 1943, a few hours after British infantry and armored units had marched triumphantly into Tunis, the 9th Infantry Division entered Bizerte. Men of Lieutenant Urban’s company were among the first foot soldiers into the town.

Urban won the Silver Star and oak leaf cluster for heroism in North Africa. Wounded three times, he also was awarded the first of seven Purple Hearts. After recovering, he braced with his company for Operation Husky, the massive invasion of Sicily by the British Eighth and U.S.



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American soldiers of the 9th Infantry Division assist tankers in attaching logs to their tank as additional protection against enemy fire. Matt Urban served with the 60th Infantry Regiment, which was attached to the 1st Armored Division during the campaign in North Africa.

Seventh Armies on July 9, 1943. The 9th Infantry Division landed at Palermo on August 1, pushed toward Randazzo, and took part in the offensive toward Messina.

For Urban's company, the three-month Sicily campaign was a "silent march." His men learned to move swiftly over rugged terrain at night, with full camouflage, while taking ground and eluding the Germans. Lieutenant Urban was nicknamed the "Ghost" because he stressed deception while trying to save his men's lives. "Stealth and sweat wins more wars than force and blood ever did," he explained.

After Sicily was secured and British troops launched the invasion of mainland Italy on September 3, 1943, the 9th Infantry Division was shipped to England in November to prepare for the planned Allied landings in Normandy. The division was spread in camps across southern Hampshire, with its headquarters in the cathedral city of Winchester. Friendly relations were established, and residents came to regard the 9th as "our division." The freedom of the city was conferred upon the gruff yet good-natured General Eddy, who was viewed as a "Father Christmas figure" by local children.

Promoted to captain, Urban recalled, "We trained hard during our time in England. We all knew we were eventually going to hit the beaches in Europe and we would soon meet the Germans again." The division was inspected in March 1944 by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower

and Omar N. Bradley.

General Eddy's division landed across Utah Beach on June 10, and the 60th Regiment went ashore on the following day. The division's assignment was to advance westward with the 82nd Airborne Division, seal off the Cotentin Peninsula, and seize the strategic port of Cherbourg. As the regiment attacked toward the town of St.-Colombe on June 14, Captain Urban's company moved inland to reinforce troops pinned down in hedgerows outside the village of Renouf.

The situation was desperate as two German tanks and small-arms fire raked the position and inflicted heavy casualties. Fearing that his company was in danger of being decimated, Urban grabbed a bazooka from a wounded soldier and worked his way forward under fire with an ammunition carrier to a point near the panzers. Standing up and exposing himself fearlessly, Urban calmly aimed the bazooka and blasted both tanks. Responding to his action, the company moved forward and routed the Germans.

Attacking near the village of Orglandes later that day, Urban spotted another panzer nearby. He tried to leap through a hedgerow, but a shell from the tank's 37mm gun tore into his leg. He refused evacuation and led his company to its objective, a road junction, before taking up defensive positions for the night. At five the next morning, Urban led another attack, and an hour later he was wounded again.

One of his wounds was serious, and Urban

had to be carried on a litter. When the battalion surgeon examined him, he said, "Captain, why are you still here? I'm sending you out for immediate evacuation." Determined to stay with his men, Urban again refused, but the major insisted that it was an order. So, the irrepressible Urban was carried away and shipped to a hospital in England.

While he was recuperating restlessly for several weeks, his regiment helped to spearhead the 9th Division's final assault on Cherbourg in late June. Captain Urban was distressed to see men from his company coming back wounded. The losses, he reasoned, were because of the lack of combat hardened officers. He was eager to get back to France, but walking was still difficult and the doctors would not release him.

Urban then saw a new challenge to occupy him—leading his own "dirty dozen." Near the hospital was a tented camp of GIs who had deserted from their units. "These guys were true misfits," Urban recalled. "They would hardly ever say 'sir.' They had no discipline." They spent their time brawling and playing dice, but Urban told their colonel that, because of his experience as a recreational officer, he could work with them. The colonel agreed, and placed Urban in charge of 40 misfits. The captain tried to instill some discipline and made them get haircuts. "They sure did a lot of screaming and yelling," he said. Urban was determined to get them across the English Channel, but they were also his ticket back to his own men.

One day in mid-July, Urban was visited by a wounded man who told him that F Company had been reduced from a first-rate combat unit to a demoralized bunch of frightened men. Still weak and bandaged, Urban deserted his hospital bed that night, rounded up his misfits, and crossed the Channel. "On our way over the Channel to France, some of these guys actually went overboard to escape the fighting," he reported. "It was incredible."

On a Normandy beach, Urban turned his remaining charges over to a lieutenant, wished him luck, and disappeared over a hill as quickly as he could. "I didn't want him to figure out what he had while I was still around," said the captain. He hitched a ride aboard an ambulance heading for St.-Lo, and then rode a mail jeep toward the 2nd Battalion command post. He arrived at 11:30 a.m. on the morning of July 25. A sergeant recalled, "The sight of him limping up the road, all smiles, raring to lead the attack, once more brought the morale of the battle-weary men to the highest peak."

Urban was fighting mad. He reported, "I was full of anger, remorse, and despair. I'd seen my

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US soldiers crouch under cover as they approach German positions in Normandy. During fighting just after D-Day, Lieutenant Matt Urban used a bazooka to take out two German tanks while fighting in the dense hedgerows of Normandy. Urban was wounded the next day and evacuated to Britain.

men mutilated, chopped up. I was seeking revenge. I was like a tiger. It was all bubbling up inside of me, and it exploded.”

Arriving at the battalion command post, Captain Urban learned that his unit had jumped off half an hour earlier in Operation Cobra, the American breakout from the Normandy beachhead. After a massive Allied carpet bombing, and while the British Second Army advanced southward in the Caen-Falaise area, General J. Lawton Collins’s VII Corps attacked west of St.-Lo. The fighting was to be bitter and losses heavy.

With a makeshift crutch in one hand and a .45-caliber pistol in the other, Urban limped forward to take command of his company and some other troops who were pinned down on a road by strong enemy fire from a ridge. It was a desperate situation. “The troops were frozen on their stomachs in fear,” the captain recalled.

After pulling a wounded man from a burning tank, Urban shouted to his troops, “Who’s in charge here?” No one responded. “You men are dead ducks if you don’t move,” he yelled. “The Germans are on the ridge, zeroed into this position. Follow me. Let’s get out of here!” About 40 troops scrambled after him, taking up new positions off the road and out of the line of fire. Urban tried to restore their spirit and steel them for an attack. A young sergeant reported later, “One of the craziest officers suddenly appeared before us, yelling like a mad-

man and waving a gun in his hand. He got us on our feet, though, gave us our confidence back, and saved our lives.”

That evening, the battalion launched an assault on the ridge but was stalled by heavy fire. Armored support was needed. Two supporting Sherman medium tanks had been destroyed, and a third was undamaged but stuck in a hedgerow. Urban and his men were still pinned down, and the enemy fire increased. When a tank lieutenant and a sergeant were killed while trying to reach the intact tank, Urban crawled forward “like a snake, very slowly” and climbed aboard. As enemy rounds ricocheted around him, he raised his head from the turret, armed the tank’s .50-caliber machine gun and sent well-aimed bursts of fire against the German positions.

Urban was tearful and sure that he “was headed for certain death.” He wept and told himself, “Goodbye, world. God help me.” But he was unscathed and kept shooting while a crew scrambled aboard and managed to get the Sherman moving. With its 75mm cannon firing, the tank clanked up the ridge. Inspired by Urban’s daring, his men scrambled to their feet and followed. The disbelieving enemy troops were now being cut down by withering fire, and their position was destroyed.

“The Germans went from being the hunters to being the prey,” Urban reported, “and we just started pulverizing them.” That day, his

company made the farthest advance of the St.-Lo breakthrough. The unit halted when a colonel radioed Urban, “Hold it, Captain. You’re getting too far out front. Consolidate your position.”

Urban had been lucky, but he was wounded again on August 2 when hit in the chest by shell fragments. Again, he refused evacuation. Four days later, when its commander became a casualty, Urban was chosen over officers senior in rank and age and given command of the 2nd Battalion. Then, while leading an attack on August 15, the indomitable Urban was wounded for the sixth time. Again, he defied the advice of Major Norman Weinberg, the battalion surgeon, and stayed with his men.

The battalion fought its way through France and into Belgium. One day, Urban and his men were dug in on a slope near the River Meuse when they saw several Germans in a command car approaching. They were reconnoitering to see where the Americans were sited. Urban told his men to hold their fire until the car got close to the river. “When they got close to us, we gave them a nice welcome,” Urban recalled later. “They sure were surprised to see us so close.”

The Germans stood in the car when they saw the G.I.s. Urban’s men shouted, “Surrender, surrender!” The enemy soldiers swung the car around to try and escape, but the Americans cut them down with M-1 rifle fire. A resourceful sergeant jumped into the command car and drove it back to Urban. “Cap, we got transportation for you now,” he said proudly. “You have a car.” The captain, who was still having difficulty walking, smiled appreciatively. The vehicle was soon put to use. Wearing an Army Air Forces jacket that he had bought earlier by trading a Luger pistol, Urban was later driven by the sergeant to a battalion commanders’ meeting.

The wide, shallow River Meuse near the town of Heer was a critical location in the Allied armies’ drive toward the German border. The bridge there had been blown up, and Urban’s battalion was ordered to establish a crossing point. The enemy had concentrated heavy forces in the area.

The battalion started across the river early on the morning of September 3, and the leading elements were broken up by a fierce barrage of enemy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire. Captain Urban left his command post and led the disorganized GIs across the river and open terrain toward their next objective, the hillside village of Phillipsville. A German machine-gun nest halted the battalion.

When a sergeant died while trying to knock out the nest, Urban led a charge against it. “I

Continued on page 77

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Caught in the Micrometer Beam

Micrometer beam radar was a war-winning development of Allied scientists—paired with other innovations, the micrometer radar proved deadly to Axis aircraft.

THERE IS NO DISPUTING THAT RADAR PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE Allied victory in World War II. The story of how radar came to be, and the huge effort made to develop it in Great Britain and the United States is hardly known outside of the exclusive fraternity of brilliant scientists and engineers who pulled off one of the most crucial accomplishments of the conflict.

In the summer of 1940, a 29-year-old Welsh engineer named Eddie Bowen was traveling across the Atlantic to the British embassy in Washington, D.C. Next to him in his stateroom, never out of his sight, a small sealed black box held a great secret.

Already considered one of Britain's most promising physicists, Bowen had been on the cutting edge of radar research since 1935, developing the first crude aircraft radar sets and the invaluable Chain Home Network. Even then, Bowen and his superiors in the government had no illusions regarding the threat of Hitler and the powerful modern air force he was building.

As hordes of German bombers began swarming over England as a prelude to invasion, the Chain Home Network was proving its worth by detecting the enemy planes over the Channel in time for RAF Fighter Command to intercept them. Bowen was named as the newest envoy of a Technical and Scientific Mission to the United States. Inside the box were 12 objects, each small enough to fit in the palm of a hand. They resembled clay pigeons but held the future of Great Britain's struggle against Nazi tyranny in Europe. When Bowen reached the British embassy, he was met by Sir Henry Tizard, the Director of the prestigious Imperial College of Science and Technology and chairman of the Committee on Air Defense. Tizard was one of Britain's scientific



Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: The AIM K VIII air interception radar apparatus mounted in the nose of a Bristol Beaufighter Mark VIF night fighter. **TOP:** The Bristol Beaufighter was a large aircraft that was capable of carrying heavy armament and an early version of airborne interception radar without affecting the aircraft's performance in action.

visionaries. In 1936, he pioneered the early use of Radio Direction Finding (RDF), the predecessor of radar. Knowing of the United States' industrial and scientific capacity, Tizard's goal in 1939 was to create an exchange program to share and develop several inventions and theories in military defense.

Even though America was still neutral, there would be advantages in helping Britain improve the new science.

Known informally as the "Tizard Mission," the team Sir Henry was assembling on both sides of the Atlantic was devoted to improving and utilizing radar to defend England against air attack. The objects Bowen had carried from besieged Britain under great security were the newest design of the Resonant Cavity Magnetron, or RCM, the super-secret and sophisticated core of the rapidly advancing technology of micrometer radar.

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ABOVE: Henry Thomas Tizard, Alfred L. Loomis, and Lee Alvin-DuBridge examine a magnetron on a table in front of them in this image. The three scientists were involved in the development of airborne radar for the Allies during World War II. **RIGHT:** The anode block pictured here was developed for the original cavity magnetron and provided a great leap forward in the design of micrometer beam radar.

Wikimedia



The Cavity Magnetron had been invented only eight months earlier by two physicists at the University of Birmingham. The reasons the RCM was so vital to Britain's survival were its compactness and power. Placed inside the nose of an RAF fighter, its 10-centimeter pulse would be sharp, losing little concentration as it made its way to an enemy aircraft and back. Longer radio waves, a meter or more, can only detect large areas, such as land features, but a micrometer beam can pick out smaller objects, like aircraft and submarine periscopes.

From the start, the British effort had been in finding a transmitter tube powerful enough to transmit a reliable micrometer-wave radar pulse. The shorter a wave is, the more power it needs to emit a coherent beam capable of traveling miles to a target and back. The RCM was the key to making the micrometer radar work. But there were problems, such as uneven power distribution. With Great Britain shuddering under the Luftwaffe's bombs and the drain on limited resources, the team could not be sure of a breakthrough before time ran out. Production was another limiting factor. Only the U.S. could manufacture the devices in the numbers needed for war production. Tizard met with

Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox to work out the details of the Anglo-American project. He then went to the White House to talk with President Franklin Roosevelt.

That was where Vannevar Bush of the National Defense Research Committee came in. Appointed by President Roosevelt in July, Bush was the most influential member of the NDRC. Bush oversaw every significant scientific and technological program in the country, the much-needed bridge between the mutually distrustful civilian scientists and the old guard military. He gathered the brain trust of Stanford, Harvard, Columbia, Yale, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the National Academy of Sciences, as well as physicists from the University of California Berkeley. Another prime member of the NDRC was Bell Labs, whose pioneering work in communication and radio were to be valuable. MIT would head up the radar team.

From there, the next step was to test the device and determine its power. Financier and scientist Alfred Loomis had already put together a private research lab at his estate in Tuxedo Park, north of New York City. This is where Bowen met with the radar pioneers. On Sunday, September 29, 1940, Bowen carefully revealed one of the diminutive RCM units. Loomis and other members of the team were there to witness the unveiling. They marveled at the small object that might be the key to winning the war.

The first real test of the RCM on American soil took place at the Bell Laboratories on Sunday, October 6, the same day Hitler ordered nighttime bombing of London, forcing the city's inhabitants to sleep in the Underground as their homes burned. With the Luftwaffe bombing Britain at night, the Chain Home Network's long-wave radar did not possess the resolution for successful interception. What was needed was a micrometer radar that would fit into a fighter. The RCM could be decisive.

Bowen held his breath as he set the magnetic field potential and ran the filament up to the needed level. Then, they switched on the anode. In a moment the assembled scientists were rewarded with a blue glow emerging about an inch from the output terminal. With wide eyes and open mouths, the team stared in wonderment. "I had not seen anything like this before," Bowen admitted. Initial estimates put the output at about 14 kilowatts, seven times what the Bell Labs own centimeter-wave unit produced. It was a breakthrough. It was almost a thousand times greater than the best micrometer radar in use in the U.S. From that moment on, things moved fast. It had, according to Alfred Loomis, "pushed the American research in radar ahead at least two years."

This was exactly what was needed at exactly the right time. Things were not going well across the ocean. In the weeks since Germany began the Blitz, over 7,000 Britons had been killed in Luftwaffe air raids. On September 27, Japan joined Germany and Italy as the third member of the Axis Powers, portending a second major front in the Pacific. A week after the first demonstration of the RCM, a new member joined the team. Summoned from Berkeley by Bush, this was Ernest Lawrence, the Nobel Prize winner from California. He was one of the most brilliant physicists in the country, almost on par with the great Albert Einstein. His invention of the cyclotron would soon open the door to the study of the atomic nucleus, leading to yet another NDRC venture, the Manhattan Project.

But more was needed than to simply mass-

produce the magnetron. Sensitive receivers, new antenna designs, generators, and a myriad of other devices had to be invented specifically for the various services. Antiaircraft, bombing, air intercept, submarine- and mine-hunting, and naval surface radars had to be brought from conception to blueprint to testing to mass-production and deployment to the war zones. The United States, with its nearly limitless resources and funding, was the ideal place to develop radar. Bowen made it clear that the most urgent need was a 10-centimeter radar for night fighters. The second goal was for a radar capable of controlling antiaircraft guns.

Lawrence, who had joined the team with little confidence in England's ability to survive the Blitz, was won over by Bowen's pitch. "This changes the odds," he said. "Let's get going as fast as possible, and do anything we can to help the British."

Loomis had not been idle since the first demonstration. He used his considerable clout to add RCA and the Sperry Corporation to the team. Five magnetron sets were needed for initial development. Bell Labs would produce the magnetrons, Sperry the parabolic reflectors, and RCA built the cathode-ray tubes, modulated power supplies and intermediate frequency amplifiers. General Electric manufactured more magnetrons while Westinghouse joined RCA in producing antennas.

Bush, the NDRC, and the Microwave Committee agreed to set up a new research and development laboratory on the grounds of MIT on October 18, 1940. The speed at which this was done was an indicator of the importance of the project. Officially it was called the Radiation Laboratory to disguise its true function. In 1940, no one took the military use of nuclear research very seriously. The facility was called the "Rad Lab" by its members.

According to Carl Compton of MIT, the Rad Lab "...was the greatest cooperative research establishment in the history of the world."

Bush and Loomis secured hangar space at East Boston Airport for the airborne-intercept project. The Rad Lab, which had adopted Bowen right off, nicknaming him "Taffy" from his Welsh roots, went right to work. Dozens of physicists and engineers were recruited from all over the country. About 20 were brought into the exclusive microwave fraternity after having been sworn to secrecy. There was no shortage of talent. The Rad Lab was the place to be.

Among the assembly was Lee A. DuBridge from Rochester, where he had built the university's first cyclotron. He would eventually become the Rad Lab's director. DuBridge wrote to Lawrence, "I'm still dizzy at the pace things are going. Everyone is working together

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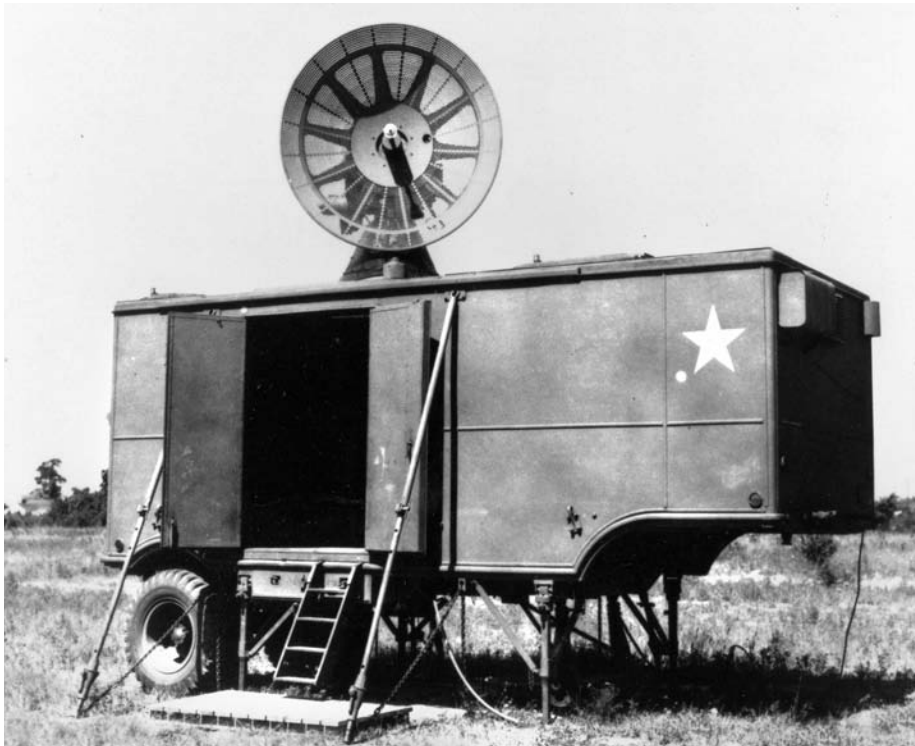
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The projects with the highest priority were an aircraft-mounted interception radar, an anti-aircraft interception system, and a radar to enable bombers to hit targets through dense clouds. These were brought together under the name THOR, a reference to the God of Thunder who could destroy his enemies at a distance with lightning bolts.

The difficulty in seeing, tracking and training an anti-aircraft gun toward a distant, fast-moving aircraft was virtually a hit or miss situation. It was too much to expect a human gun crew to rapidly swing and elevate a heavy gun along an aircraft's flight path and fire shells to explode at the same altitude where the plane would fly into it. Radar did alert a AAA battery to the enemy plane's altitude and distance, but it still required human reflexes and muscle to move the heavy gun into position. What was needed was a true gun-tracking system, one that could not only pinpoint the target, but also move the gun and track it along its flight path – in short, a fully automatic fire-control system. While the navy did have the superb Mark 37 Fire Control System for secondary (5-inch/38-caliber) guns that kept the turrets and guns on a moving ship on target, it was a far cry from a radar that could do the same thing with a fast-moving aircraft. Only the new microwave radar was up to the task. But how to translate

an electronic target blip into mechanically directed fire control?

One of the most critical elements came into use just after the D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. German engineers had built and deployed the first of the so-called Vengeance Weapons, starting with the V-1 "Buzz Bomb," a 27-foot-long pilotless ram-jet missile that could reach from France to London. The Buzz Bomb was launched from rails and flew in a straight line to crash and detonate nearly a ton of Amatol explosive on whatever target happened to be below. With an airspeed of more than 320 knots, it was too fast for propeller-driven planes to catch. But with radar, the RAF and USAAF were able to intercept and dive on the bombs, shooting them down in sparsely populated areas. The problem was shooting down enough of them. The new SCR-584 mobile radar units became the first part of the Rad Lab's technological triad that would become the terror of Axis aircraft.

The SCR-584 had first been tested in May 1941. It made use of the tight microwave radar pulse from the RCM with far more accuracy than the previous SCR-270 units that were already in service. One of the more infamous 270 units was on OPana Point on the northern tip of Oahu on the morning of December 7, 1941. While the unit did detect the incoming Japanese strike force, it was human error that had failed

to recognize the threat. Another SCR-270 was on Midway on June 4, 1942, and pinpointed the first wave of Japanese bombers coming to hit the island. In both cases, the longer-wavelength 270s were able to establish a rough range and azimuth, but not altitude or composition.

When the 584 was first tested it was almost a quantum leap forward in pinpointing range, azimuth and altitude. But like its predecessor, the 584 could only detect the enemy, not shoot them down. The next step was what became known as the Bell Labs Mark 9 Predictor.

Basically an early analog computer, the M9 was conceived by David Parkinson of Bell Labs. He designed a system that, upon detecting a moving target, would traverse the antenna's cone-shaped beam to keep the target in the center of the radar beam. In other words, the antenna tracked the aircraft. The M9 was an analog computer able to compute where to fire a shell to explode just when the plane intersected it. From there the M9 sent its data via cable to the AAA batteries to automatically swing and elevate the gun to fire and intercept the target.

The final piece of the triad was the proximity fuze. Prior to its invention, anti-aircraft shells were detonated by altimeter, time fuze or impact. Of course all of these depended on precise calculations or random chance to work. During the London Blitz, it took roughly 20,000 shells to bring down a single plane. Other calculations put it as much as five times higher. The proximity fuze was the brainchild of Merle Tube of the Carnegie Institution. Tube was a friend of Lawrence and developed pulse radar. Pulse radar was an important step toward designing an influence fuze to detect a nearby aircraft. Acoustic, infrared, photoelectric and radio were impractical. The final concept was a compact, continuous wave radar to be screwed into the hull of a standard artillery shell, forming the nose. It would emit a steady oscillating 180 to 220 megahertz signal. The shell itself constituted one electrode of the dipole, with the fuze itself as the other. A plastic nose, transparent to radio waves, covered the receiving antenna. Any metal object that was detected within a few megahertz of the pulse triggered the detonator. The first obstacle was to design four vacuum tubes the size of a fingertip to fit into the fuze and be rugged enough to withstand the shock of firing. Tube created a chemical combination of zinc, carbon and chromic acid, that would, upon firing, cause a galvanic reaction and serve as a battery. By April 1942, the fuze was ready for testing at the secret Applied Physics Laboratory in Silver Spring, Maryland. In order to maintain secrecy, the plastic nose cones were

shipped via Johns Hopkins University Hospital as “rectal spreaders.”

After a successful test series, Sylvania Corporation began producing the shells at a rate of 400 per day. By late 1944, Sylvania and other companies were mass-producing 70,000 of them a day in various calibers. The deadly anti-aircraft triad was complete. With the SCR-584 radar Unit, the M9 Predictor, and the proximity fuze, there was no escape for an enemy plane.

The location of the first deployment of the system was a problem. The V-1 Buzz Bombs coming from German-occupied territory meant setting up AAA batteries in Belgium. But this risked dud proximity fuzes turning up in German hands for examination. That could not be allowed. But a consignment of the new fuzes had arrived in England at the start of the V-1 offensive. Any dud shells would fall into the Channel. Since the Buzz Bombs flew in a straight line, they were easier to shoot down.

At selected points along the south and east coasts of Britain, the SCR-584 units were assembled with a generator nearby. Cables connected the M9 Predictor on its own trailer. Then 90mm guns were stationed at four points about 50 yards away. Rad Lab engineers Leo Sullivan and Lee Davenport trained the gun and radar crews. By the end of August, the guns and fighters were bringing down about 70 percent of the Buzz Bombs. On August 28, the last day the Germans launched the V-1s before the launching sites were overrun by Allied troops, 104 were launched, of which the SCR-584 AAA guns shot down 64, while fighters accounted for 14. Only four reached London, the rest having crashed.

In all, the anti-aircraft batteries shot down 1,600 V-1s—about the same as the fighters. The 584 had been one of the Rad Lab’s biggest gambles, but turned out to be its greatest success. It saw action in Europe after D-Day, when army artillery troops learned to use the system and the proximity fuze on German tanks and gun emplacements. They were so effective that even at night the Germans were forced to retreat from the deadly accurate fire of the 584’s invisible radar. Many surrendered and ran to the Americans, yelling “Kamerad!”

Prisoners called the proximity fuze cannonade the most “demoralizing thing they have ever endured.”

The next theater for the new system was the Pacific, where the Kamikaze threat was killing ships and men in horrifying numbers. As the Allies moved north toward the Japanese Home Islands, the numbers would only grow worse. The most remarkable use of the 584 was first demonstrated in early 1944, when General

National Archives



This interior view of an SCR-584 radar station depicts the controller at left with his plotting table inside the truck. The table reveals the line of flight of radar contacts which show through the map as illuminated moving dots. As fighters are vectored to their targets, forward director posts and microwave early warning stations watch for hostile aircraft near the flight path.

Douglas MacArthur was moving up the north coast of New Guinea. Rad Lab engineer Henry Abajian was present as the first 150 sets were deployed to the U.S. Army’s anti-aircraft batteries. But he found the veteran gun crews to be uncertain of the 584’s effectiveness. “They set up the batteries as if they still had to depend on optical gun-laying,” he said. “They were ignoring the automatic tracking.”

Abajian and a General Electric technician toured New Guinea, Fiji, New Georgia, and the Green Islands area, training the crews. Abajian arrived on Leyte in the Philippines during the heavy bombing by Japanese planes after the Allied landings in October 1944.

The first six radar units went ashore immediately behind the first wave of assault troops. Over the next two weeks, the 584-directed anti-aircraft guns brought down about 300 Japanese planes. “Superior shooting,” MacArthur said in a message to the AAA regiment commander. But those kills were done without the full potential of the system. Abajian went to Mindoro, south of Leyte, where he visited four 584s controlling 16 90mm AAA guns. “They were still not using the system the way it had been designed.” In order to convince the battery commander of how effective the full system was, Abajian connected a set of searchlights to a spare 584.

“And when we turn on those lights,” Abajian

said to the officer, “I guarantee there will be an aircraft in that beam.”

The officer agreed, but the searchlights would only be illuminated after the guns had fired, so the lights would not alert the pilot. When the next plane was detected by the 584s, The Rad Lab engineer waited as the commander spoke to his gunners. “‘A’ Battery locked on target. Fire when ready.”

“Commencing fire!” the gunners shouted.

The 16 big guns roared at once, strobing the night sky like brilliant fireworks. At that moment Abajian switched on the searchlights. “Sure enough, right in the center of that beam was this Jap bogey,” he remembered. A second salvo burst out, and the plane was turned into a bright yellow and orange meteor as it fell to earth. The searchlights followed the dying plane all the way down.

Cheers erupted from every man in the battery. There, on that dark night in the Philippines, the feverish work of Bowen, Tizard, Bush, Lawrence, DuBridge, Parkinson, and 1,000 others was vindicated in the most dramatic way. From that moment on, no one would doubt that radar was going to win the war. ■

Author Mark Carlson has written on numerous topics related to World War II and the history of aviation. He resides in San Diego, California.



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King Boris of Bulgaria visits Adolf Hitler at Obersalzberg in Berchtesgaden on June 7, 1941. Boris would die on August 28, 1943, two weeks after a sudden illness. INSET: A regency made up of a council of ministers held power for Boris' six-year-old son, Simeon II. He would be the last King of Bulgaria, forced out of office with the abolition of the monarchy on September 8, 1946, but would return to power in 2001 as Simeon Sakskoburggotski, Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

Bulgaria Betwixt and Between

A neutral country for much of World War II, Bulgaria faced the possibility of both Nazi and Soviet domination.

THOUGH NEUTRAL FOR MOST OF IT, FEW COUNTRIES HAD SUCH A PASSAGE

through World War II as did Bulgaria.

That way was marked—or scarred—by brutality, treachery, a rumored royal death, one of the war's least-known and most tragic intelligence disasters, and cynical power-playing as the country's fate was discussed over doodling on a piece of paper.

Yet there was also one of the few successes in saving lives. And for the Bulgarians the ordeal did not finish with the war's end—it was only beginning, with an ironic sequel after its conclusion.

"Boris is by temperament a fox rather than a wolf, and would expose himself to great danger only with the utmost reluctance" Hitler said about Bulgaria's King Boris III before the monarch's sudden, suspicious death. In fairness, Boris had seen his father forced from the throne for being on the losing side in World War I, then had to struggle for survival in a poisonous political atmosphere, brutal even by Balkan standards.

One unlucky prime minister's head was returned to his family in a biscuit tin. Boris himself outran assassins through the woods on a hunting trip, commandeering a bus and driving it away while the panicked passengers ducked under their seats as shots shattered the windows. A 1934 coup by quasi-Fascist officers threatened to reduce his royal status to princely puppet until he staged his own in October 1935, and established a dictatorship. Yet, if the King was finally in complete control of events inside Bulgaria, he soon found that forces on the outside would shape



Bulgarian Army soldiers with a German Pz.IV Ausf H in Sofia, December 1944. For the first nine days of September, Bulgaria had been at war with the Axis and the Allies. But with Soviets in control of neighboring Romania, the Bulgarians began secret peace talks with the Allies in Turkey. Stalin preempted the talks as the Red Army swept into the capital and set up a new government with Communists in effective control. A month later the government sent a delegation to Moscow to sign an armistice.

his country's future.

Hitler needed to cross Bulgarian territory to attack Greece and did not hesitate to use Germany's 70 percent stranglehold on Bulgaria's trade to force Boris to sign his de facto alliance, the Tripartite Pact, on March 1, 1941. But while Bulgaria permitted passage for the Wehrmacht to assault Greece it did not take part, then refused to join in the invasion of Russia, instead making—for the moment—a harmless gesture of declaring war against the United States and Great Britain on December 13, 1941. And for a time it seemed that Bulgaria was, uniquely among Hitler's hostage allies, getting the better of the deal with the devil.

Prices increased for its exports, and the Bulgarians were permitted, while having no part in winning them, to seize eastern Thrace from Greece and western Macedonia from Yugoslavia. "The Fuhrer is showing himself remarkably liberal towards Bulgaria," Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels recorded in his diary on March 28, 1942, the likely lone time he would ever describe Hitler as such. The Fuhrer was back to his usual self a year later, meeting with Boris at his Wolf's Lair headquarters in East Prussia to demand that Bulgaria finally declare war on Russia and hand over the country's 50,000 Jews. With

Boris refusing, the result was a shouting match between the Fuhrer and the sovereign.

"He had staked everything on 'our Fuhrer,' and now he was compelled to realize his card had been trumped," Hitler's personal pilot, Hans Bauer, observed while flying the beleaguered Bulgarian monarch home. But how Boris would continue to bluff was never to be known.

"I wished that we would be shot down by some enemy plane, so that it would be all over with me," Boris glumly remarked on his return. While at his retreat in the Rila Mountains two weeks later, Boris rode up into the mountains and climbed to the top of the nearly 10,000-foot Musala Peak, something he'd done many times. Three days afterward, complaining of trouble breathing and chest pains, King Boris collapsed. Hitler rushed specialists to Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, but four days later, inside his palace, at 4:22 p.m. on August 28, 1943, King Boris III died.

Though he was just 49, coronary thrombosis was announced as the cause and blamed on the mountain climb. But one of the German doctors reported to Berlin privately something sinisterly different, "...a Balkan death." The king's lower extremities suspiciously had blackened after he died. "The Fuhrer told me that it must be regarded as certain that King Boris was poi-

soned," Goebbels declared in his diary. "Who mixed the poison isn't known yet."

Nor would it ever be. Although his widow would say two decades later, "My husband did not die a natural death," she had refused an autopsy at the time. Since the new King, Simeon II, was only six, a three-member regency headed by his uncle took charge but a power vacuum had been created into which British intelligence was prepared to step in, with tragic, disastrous results.

"Our policy towards Bulgaria at present in the very nature of things must be fluid and opportunist. We are therefore in a position to wait on events and exploit any turn they may take," replied the British Foreign Office in its Whitehall way of saying both everything and nothing when asked for advice by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in January 1943. To the SOE, the King's death eight months later provided the event to exploit—and there appeared to be the means to do so with.

Back in July 1942, the Bulgarian Communist Party, on orders from Moscow, had deceptively duped other groups opposed to the alliance with Hitler to form the Fatherland Front, which embarked on a campaign of arson, assassination, sabotage, and guerrilla resistance in the mountains. To make common cause, as it had

with Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia, the SOE parachuted Mission Mulligatawny, Major Mostyn Davies and four enlisted men, into Albania on September 20, 1943.

Davies made an epic 84-day trek, mostly at night, across the steepest, 6,000 feet average, mountain range in the Balkans, and twice escaped encirclement by the Bulgarian Army to finally make contact with the Front. Regrettably, it would turn out that his powers of endurance were not matched by those for observation. His prewar career as a civil servant concerned with, among other obscure things, accounts for lighthouses, proved to leave Davies ill-equipped for ruthless, duplicitous Communists with loyalty to Moscow, not Sofia.

Davies naively accepted assurances from the Front that it was democratic and numbered 12,000 fighters. Actually, the Communists were in complete control, and the Front had scarcely 2,000 in arms and just 200 fighters where Davies happened to be. Instead of ordering Davies out, as the SOE would likely have done had it known the truth, SOE leaders perilously proceeded to deepen the disaster coming for it in Bulgaria.

A second mission, Claridges, just Major Frank Thompson and a radio operator, landed by parachute in Yugoslavia on January 25, 1944. An SOE agent with Tito's Partisans, Major John Henniker, accompanied Thompson into Bulgaria to also meet with the Fatherland Front.

Thompson didn't like what he saw. "I was glad they were not my prop and stay—a pretty inexperienced and low-level mixture of individual deserters from the towns," he reflected to Davies' brother. "Compared to the Yugoslav army they had an unreal and slightly horrific air of a brigand army, boastful, mercurial, temperamental, and an inexperienced yen to go it alone."

Compared to the disciplined Partisans of Yugoslavia the Bulgarians shambled through the countryside under the watchful eyes of ever-present informers, without food and guides, with the SOE missions just an hour by truck from Sofia. Henniker returned to his own mission in Yugoslavia just in time—the Bulgarian Army launched 12,000 troops against the fumbling Front, trapping the Mulligatawny and Claridges missions.

Davies disappeared, and how he met his end is unknown. Thompson, for the moment, survived when a Bulgarian bullet struck the dictionary in his backpack as he was fleeing from an ambush—but it proved only a reprieve. Thompson was captured and executed by firing squad on June 5, 1944. The radio operator was



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the only survivor of the two missions.

"Your son's life was not thrown away uselessly," the SOE later tried to console Davies' parents. "It is certainly true that the Partisan effort in Yugoslavia has been more spectacular in its results, and has indeed produced much more actual activity against the Germans, but the Bulgarian Partisan was not a forlorn hope, and your son's task was not a hopeless one."

What would be the SOE's official excuse of an explanation for its covert calamity? "One thing above all hampered it—bad weather. For bad weather meant no arms; no arms meant no partisan fighting force and no fighting force meant no achievement against the German or Bulgarian forces. One thing is abundantly clear that given arms, under the inspiring leadership of Major Davies, the Mission would have been capable of liberating territory inside Bulgaria and thus providing a base for future SOE operations. The failure of the Mission to do this is the story of man against the Gods of the Heavens."

Just three months after Thompson's execution, in the first nine bewildering days of September 1944, Bulgaria's course in the war, and for the next half-century, was to be set. Sofia by then was being bombed by the Allies, and the economy was collapsing. With the Russians in control of Romania across the border, a new government in Sofia broke the Tripartite Pact, began peace talks with the Allies through its foreign minister in Turkey, and offered to form a coalition with the Fatherland Front.

Earlier, in Moscow, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had jarringly jotted down a proposed division of influence in the Balkans with Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Churchill was willing initially to concede 75 percent influence in Bulgaria to the Soviets, but Stalin demanded and received 100 percent.

To forestall the peace moves with the West, Stalin declared war, and the Red Army swept into Sofia as Bulgarians lined the roads to applaud the movement of Soviet tanks and troops. The Fatherland Front, now numbering 9,000, seized control of more than 150 towns and villages; in Sofia itself, Army conspirators broke into a meeting of the Regency Council to arrest its members and bloodlessly occupied ministries and other key positions around the city.

A new government was formed, officially a coalition but with the Communists in effective control, and a month later the government sent a delegation to Moscow to sign an armistice. In successfully severing its ties with Hitler, Bulgaria was, along with Finland, one of just two nations allied with the Nazis to save their Jewish populations. King Boris III was once recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by



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Israel but later lost the designation amid charges that he permitted the deportation of 11,343 Jews in occupied Macedonia to the Germans. His defenders argued that the deportees were never Bulgarian nationals and that the Germans were in effective control in Macedonia at the time.

The Bulgarian Army, 450,000 strong, finally joined the war and fought alongside the Russians through Yugoslavia, Hungary, and eventually into Austria. But the Russians were soon waging a different war—a war on the Bulgarians themselves. Some 40,000 were imprisoned or executed. The child King, Simeon II, was allowed to leave unharmed, but it would be the Soviets' sole act of mercy.

The three Regents were marched, naked, to a firing squad on February 2, 1945. A score of former ministers met the same fate. "You are ruling by sheer terror," the former Fatherland Front dupe Nikolai Petrov now protested, and he got a deadly demonstration. Petrov was brazenly arrested at his seat in Parliament and hanged after a spectacular show trial spectacular in September 1947. With Petrov's end completing the Communist takeover of Bulgaria, their new leader bluntly, brutally, warned any remaining opposition, "Reflect on your own actions, lest you suffer the same fate."

Wikimedia Commons, Yad Vashem Archives



Jews being deported from Macedonia to the Treblinka Death Camp in occupied Poland, March 1943. A month earlier, Bulgaria signed an agreement with Germany to deport 20,000 Jews—from Macedonia and northern Thrace, which it had annexed in 1941, and from Bulgaria itself. It is estimated that only 200 Macedonian Jews survived the war.

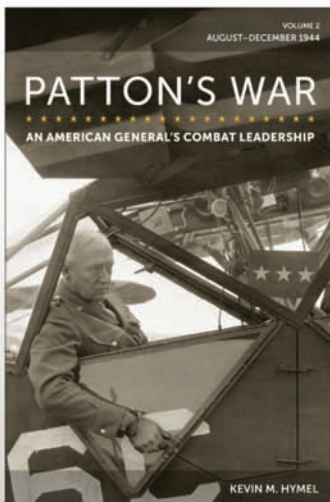
An American journalist told a Bulgarian official he was moving on to Yugoslavia. The official was shocked. "Why, that place is a dictatorship!" he said.

Bulgaria would remain a bleak, brutal Communist nation until 1990. Afterward, in a remarkable twist even for the bizarre Balkans, none other than former King Simeon II would

serve as the country's democratically elected prime minister from 2001 to 2005, though he had never renounced his title or claim to the Bulgarian throne. ■

Author John W. Osborn, Jr., is a resident of Laguna Niguel, California. He has written for WWII History on a variety of topics.

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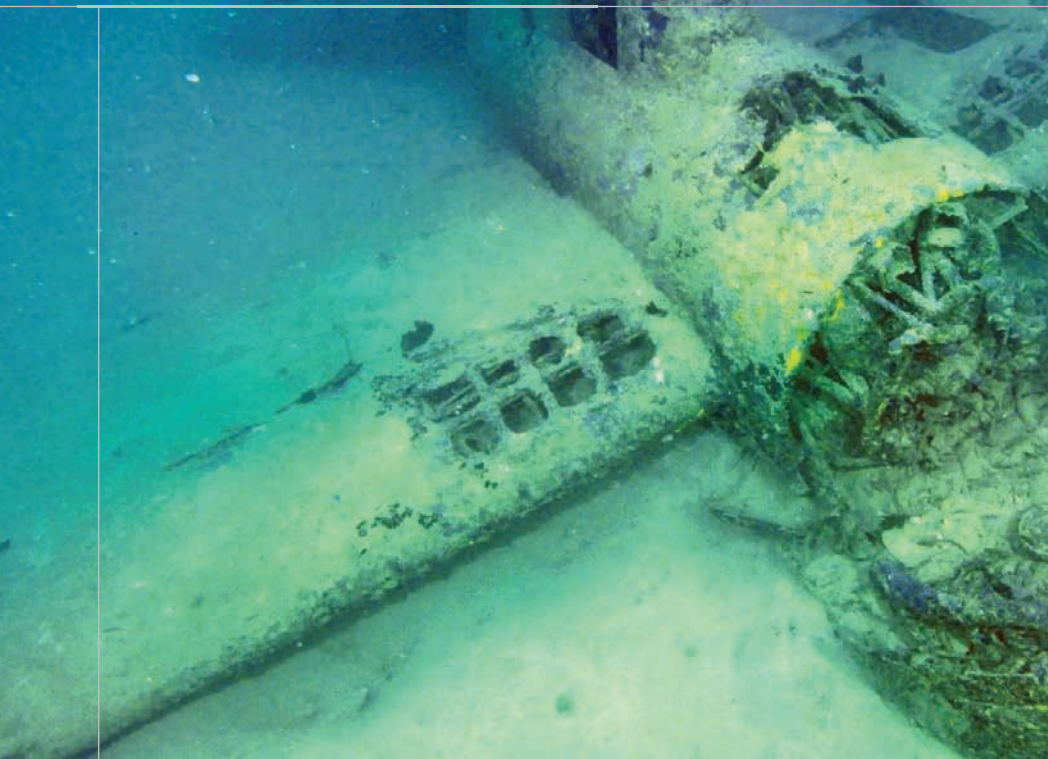


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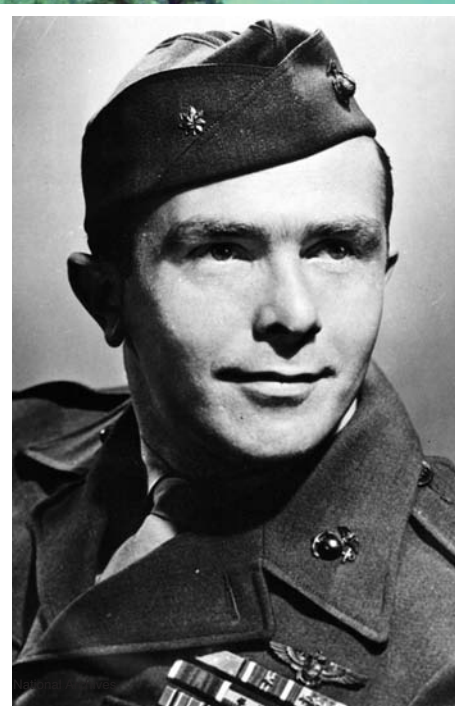
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The submerged “Gavutu Wildcat,” a Grumman F4F fighter plane possibly flown by Lt. James E. Swett, a U.S. Marine Corps ace, during the aerial battles in the Solomon Islands during World War II. INSET: First Lieutenant James E. Swett of the U.S. Marine Corps became a fighter ace flying the Grumman F4F Wildcat and survived his plane’s shutdown as well.

Searching for a Wildcat

The Grumman F4F fighter known as the ‘Gavutu Wildcat’ may have been piloted by Marine Corps ace James E. Swett.

ON NOVEMBER 3, 2011, AT 0945, THE HYDROGRAPHIC SHIP HMNZS *Resolution* discovered what appeared to be an aircraft in the waters near Gavutu Island in the Solomon Island group. Almost 70 years earlier U.S. Marines secured these islands in Operation Watchtower.

Matt Wray—then a lieutenant commander—was in command of the *Resolution*. Ewan Stevenson had recently joined the ship as a voluntary Pacific War history consultant. AHSO [Able Rate Hydrographic Systems Operator] Julie Butler was the sonar operator and the one who first observed what Stevenson recognized as a Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter from World War II. Although the sonar image was not detailed, later that day an ROV (remotely operated vehicle) revealed an intact Wildcat. Later labeled the “Gavutu Wildcat,” by Stevenson, it would become the object of further efforts in the area in 2014 and 2018.

In 2011 the New Zealand Defence Force Operational Headquarters combined numerous requests from the southwest Pacific together under the standing Pacific operation name, “CALYPSO.” After completing duties as the Royal New Zealand Navy’s Review Ship for its 70th Anniversary in Wellington Harbour, *Resolution* (RES) headed towards Papua New Guinea.

“Phase One of the deployment had *Resolution* providing hydrographic survey support to the Australian Defence Forces, Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) disposal operation, Operation RENDERSAFE,” according to Commander Matt Wray, RNZNR. “This entailed *Resolution* surveying Simpson Harbor in Rabaul [to aid in developing a] list of potential targets for the Royal Australian Navy’s minehunters to investigate and prosecute the ERW and UXO that proved to be a threat to the local population.”

Phase Two, according to Wray, took the *Resolution* to the Solomon Islands, where among other tasks, it transported New Zealand’s Deputy High Commissioner to Mono Island for New

Zealand Day and Vella Lavella Island, to lay a plaque in recognition of the Kiwis who died there during World War II.

Resolution then took on board historian Ewan Stevenson, a liaison officer, and a film crew as part of a search for *I-3*, an Imperial Japanese Navy submarine that was the sister submarine to the *I-1* sunk by HMNZS’s warships *Kiwi* and *Moa* in late January 1942 off the northwest coast of Guadalcanal.

“After conducting survey operations in the last known position of the *I-3* to the maximum depth of the ship’s Multi Beam Echo Sounder



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An F4F Wildcat test pilot demonstrates the proper technique for deployment of a life raft after the Grumman fighter has been forced to ditch in the sea. Swett survived ditching his Wildcat after a fierce encounter with the Japanese.

(MBES), *Resolution* headed to the Florida Island group to gather data where, according to Wray, “*Moa*, a Bird-class, British-built corvette, was sunk in April 1943. Survey operations in the area revealed many new finds, and among them was a Grumman F4F Wildcat.”

On November 9, 2011, Stevenson conducted the first dive on the Wildcat. Accompanying him on this dive were Neil Yates and several lucky dive tourists from Shell Harbor Scuba Center, Australia. Based on what was found on this dive and historic evidence, Stevenson hypothesized this Wildcat to be that of 1st Lt. Jim Swett, USMC.

To put this find in historical context, 1st Lt. James E. Swett of San Mateo, California, was on his first ever combat mission on April 7, 1943. He was with U.S. Marine Corps Fighter Squadron VMF-221, nicknamed “The Fighting Falcons.” VMF-221 was rebuilt in Hawaii after the Battle of Midway and deployed to the Solomon Islands in early 1943. On April 1, VMF-221 logged its first combat over the Russell Islands just to the northwest of Guadalcanal, claiming seven kills.

Swett was not part of that engagement, but less than a week later, on April 7, he flew an early morning patrol near Savo Island, then returned to base just as reports of many Japanese aircraft came in. His Wildcat was hurriedly refueled and rearmed. During a frenzied 15-minute period that soon followed, Swett claimed eight Japanese aircraft shot down. He was given credit for seven and one probable. However, it should be noted that gun cameras were not in use. Confirmation was based on eyewitness accounts from other pilots and personnel on the ground, both military and locals.

And, as is generally recognized, like submarine skippers from this era, fighter pilots tended to exaggerate damage done. During the engagement for example, the American side claimed 19 victories—six Zeros and 13 Vals for a loss of seven American fighters. Another 25 Japanese aircraft were claimed by antiaircraft fire.

Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, rightfully suspected duplicate claims, and a resulting study estimated the total damage done to the Japanese was fewer than 25 aircraft. Still, Swett was eventually awarded the Medal of Honor for his purported seven kills and one probable.

As Ewan Stevenson has pointed out, “This whole ‘claims’ thing is very sensitive. Swett’s accounts differ from book to book and get more inconsistent over the years. Unbelievably, I have not found an after-action report for Swett, and no after-action pilot interview.”

Proof of whether the Gavutu Wildcat is that of Swett will be based on archaeological evidence following future dives: evidence of battle damage from Japanese gunfire, condition of canopy, evidence of friendly fire, position of flaps, throttle position, ammunition expenditure, propeller position, location of crash site, comparison to other Wildcat crash sites nearby (a process of elimination), and missing seat (What happened to it?).

During his short but furious minutes of combat, Swett sustained damage from the rear seat gunner of his last victim—or so he thought—and friendly fire, when a 40mm antiaircraft shell went through his port wing. The resulting damage forced him to ditch near Gavutu Island, which Swett recounted, and is the basis of some of the archaeological evidence that was used in

finding the aircraft.

“Without the primary evidence of a serial number derived from the site, we were left with analyzing the remaining archaeological evidence and seeing whether it corroborated or refuted Jim Swett’s account,” continues Stevenson.

As stated above, for unknown reasons individual pilot after-action reports from VMF-221 involved in combat on April 7, 1943, have not been found in the historical record. Normally, it would be standard practice for the squadron intelligence officer, in this case 1st Lt. A.E. Hacking, USMCR, to interview pilots post-battle and record in detail their observations and experience. If there was a post battle interview or after-action report, neither have survived. In the case of James Swett, this is most unusual, considering some sort of justification must have been put forward for his Medal of Honor award.

Post-war, Jim Swett’s account has been written and published many times. What is not obvious is whether the individual authors based their writing on textual material provided by Swett, actual interviews of Swett, or historical documents and existing published material. It is generally accepted that the most accurate accounts are those published closer to the event; the later the account, the less historically accurate. Details fade, inaccuracies increase, and erroneous assumptions are written in to fill gaps. With this Wildcat it is fortunate that postwar accounts are a rich source of detail which can be tested archaeologically.

To quote Stevenson directly in his after-dive report on 28 August 2018: “The heat-treated molybdenum steel engine mounts have given way and the Pratt and Whitney Model R-1830-86 radial engine has fallen forward. The combined archaeological evidence indicates this Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat is that of ‘ace-in-a-day’ 1st Lt. James E. Swett of VMF-221.”

Part of that evidence remains hidden below the sand, and if Stevenson’s prediction is correct, a three-bladed Curtiss Electric Model C5315S propeller will not be feathered, and all the hollow steel blades will be perfectly straight in line with Swett’s account. This might explain why no propeller blade is protruding above the sand and, as Swett related, his engine seized due to battle damage, and one of the blades was straight up in front of him.

Stevenson goes on to note that during the intervening seven years between the time the Wildcat was first located in 2011 and the more recent dive in 2018, the effects of time and salt-water have taken a toll on the aircraft. On the left side of the aircraft large holes have appeared in the 24ST aluminum alloy plating where it had peeled off. The pitot tube (airspeed measurement

device) on the port wing tip has also fallen off during the same seven-year period.

Looking back at the events of early 1943, the Japanese had given up on holding Guadalcanal, having pulled their surviving forces off the island two months earlier. However, they were not done inflicting damage against the Allies.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet, moved his headquarters to Rabaul on the island of New Britain earlier that year. In addition to the land-based aircraft the Japanese already had in the area, Yamamoto ordered additional carrier-based aircraft ashore and spread them from Rabaul to as far southeast as tiny Ballalae Island off the southern tip of Bougainville in preparation for one of the biggest Japanese air attacks in that part of the Pacific to date.

Historical research reveals at least nine Wildcats lost in the Florida Island group, which is just to the north of Guadalcanal. This includes Tulagi and other smaller islands in the area. During the length of the campaign, 115 F4Fs were lost from the Cactus Air Force, which was the name given for all Allied aircraft operating in the area at that time. Seventy were lost in aerial combat, 12 were destroyed on the ground, and 33 were operational losses. Carrier air groups operating in the area lost another 81. There may be others, but as Stevenson has observed, "Our research is based on limited access to historical records."

Stevenson pointed out, "As most of the aircraft made semi-controlled [water] landings, the sites are going to be in good condition. The deeper the site, the better the site condition."

The identification of individual aircraft found in saltwater is made difficult because, in the case of Wildcats for example, the Grumman manufacturing plates are located on the bulkhead behind the pilot and are not always accessible. The Bureau Number on the vertical stabilizer is stenciled in black paint one-inch high, and the plane's side number used for quick identification on the airfield and in the air is painted on the rear fuselage in large, white paint. After more than 70 years, marine growth and corrosion make these numbers almost always impossible to recover. Thus, to date the only way to identify individual aircraft is through historical research and analysis. On subsequent missions to the Solomons, Sealark Maritime Exploration repeatedly dived the Gavutu Wildcat, each time gathering further archaeological information.

The only Navy Wildcat of the nine lost in the area was from VF-6, the "Shooting Stars." Petty Officer pilot Julius Achten, USN, tangled with a Zero on the day of the Operation

Photos courtesy of Ewan Stevenson, Sealark Exploration, Inc.



ABOVE: A pair of spadefish glide past the exposed empennage of the Gavutu Wildcat. **LEFT:** The instrument panel of the Gavutu Wildcat. Years of corrosion have caused some instruments to dislodge from the panel and fall behind it.

Watchtower landings, August 7, 1942, and landed in the waters off Tulagi after being shot up. He was picked up by a small landing craft and survived.

Another Wildcat, flown by Marine Corps squadron commander Major Robert Edward Galer from VMF-224, "The Fighting Wildcats," was forced to ditch to the east of Florida Island on October 2, 1942, his second water landing in two weeks. This was after receiving the Navy Cross from Admiral Nimitz. Before the campaign was over, Galer had 13 kills, making him a double ace. In March 1943, he received the Medal of Honor. He was the sixth ranking Marine Corps ace of World War II.

Second Lieutenant Edward K. Peterson of VMF-112 parachuted over Florida Island after being shot down. His F4F crashed on Nggela Sule Island, near Gavutu.

Most of the F4F Wildcats lost in the Florida group were from VMF-221 and were lost on April 7, 1943. Other pilots were, 1st Lt. Edward A. Walsh, who like Swett, crash landed in the waters near Tulagi, and 2nd Lt. P.P. Pittman, who was shot down over Tulagi, and although the record is not entirely clear, it appears he parachuted to safety.

First Lieutenant Wallace H. Hallmeyer was

shot down over Tulagi, ditched close to Florida Island, and was the subject of another successful Sealark search in 2018. He was rescued by local Melanesians and returned to Tulagi the following day by canoe. According to historian Richard Dunn, Hallmeyer took shrapnel to the legs and was evacuated on April 19 of that year.

During the time spent on planning in Auckland and time spent together on the Resolution, Stevenson and Wray formed a friendship and a desire to keep trying to solve these World War II mysteries of missing aircraft and sunken ships. Early steps in 2014 saw the two of them form Sealark as a nonprofit company to pursue their work. The name has its origins from HMS *Sealark*, a Royal Navy survey ship that conducted hydrographic surveys around the Pacific in the early 1900s. She left her imprint on the Solomon's with the named Sealark Channel close to the Florida Islands. Early in 2021, Sealark Maritime Exploration became Sealark Exploration to acknowledge the exploration on land as well as in surrounding waters and was incorporated as a U.S. 501c3 Not For Profit.

The impact of World War II on the Solomon Islands was significant then, as it is today. Many wrecks are still waiting to be found. Such discoveries not only provide information, and in some cases comfort, for the families of those who served there, but also benefit the local population today. ■

Bruce Petty is the author of five books, four of which concern World War II in the Pacific. He is a resident of New Plymouth, New Zealand.

John F. Kennedy and *PT-109*

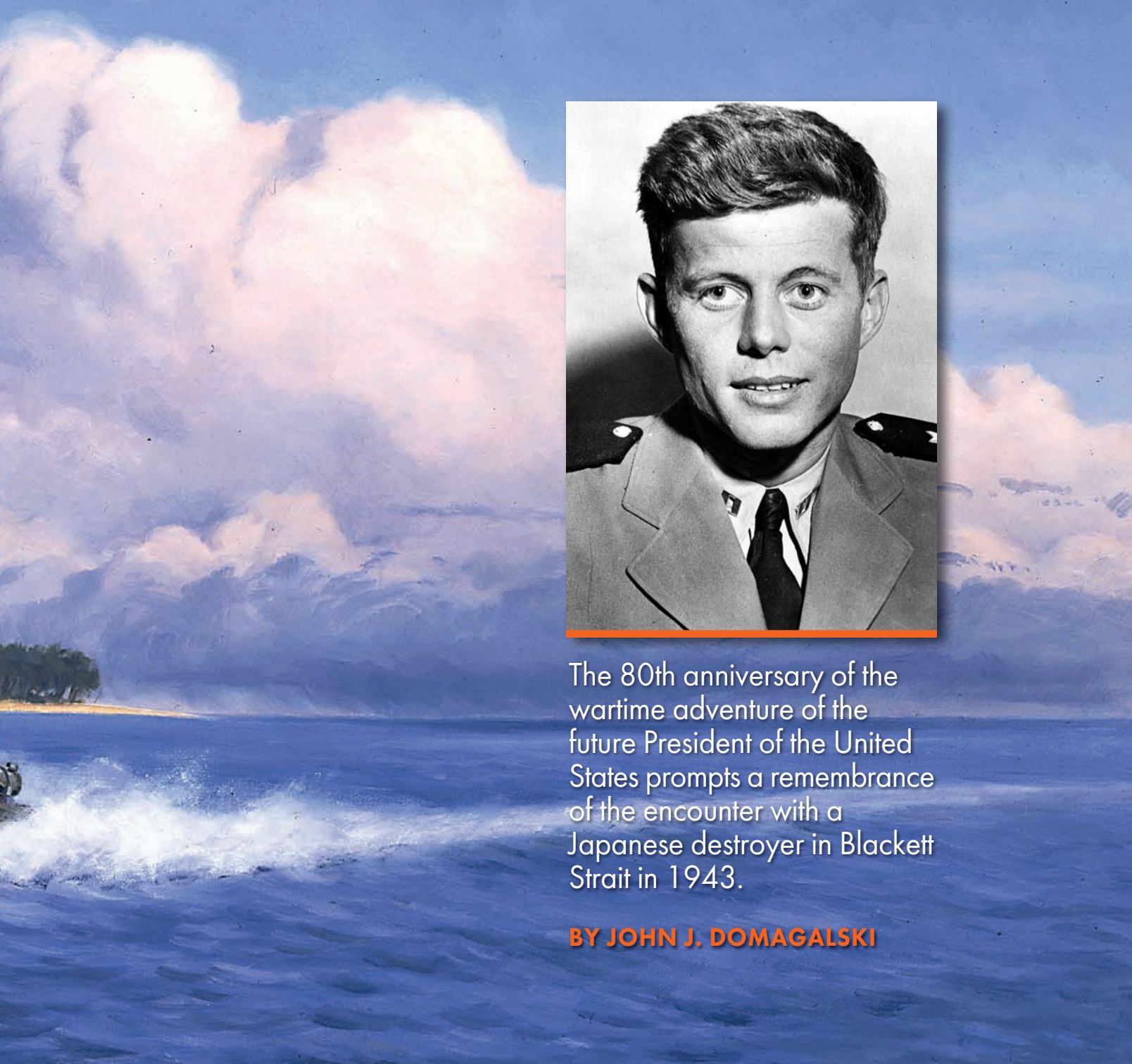


The celebrated life of President John F. Kennedy has been recounted many times in the decades since he assumed the highest office in the land. His time spent in the navy during World War II is lesser known to more recent generations. His service as a junior officer brought him close to death 80 years ago on the front lines of the war.

Lieutenant John Kennedy joined the front lines in the South Pacific as he pointed the bow of *PT-109* toward the small PT boat base off Rendova Island. It was July 1943, in the Solomon Islands. His small patrol, torpedo or “PT” boat was about 80 feet long, made of wood, and armed with torpedoes and some light guns. Fierce fighting had been taking place on nearby New Georgia since the American invasion on June 30.

The road to war for the young officer had been a long one. The son of a former American ambassador to England was able to join the Navy through his father’s connections even with a bad back suffered while playing football at Harvard University. Kennedy was working a desk job at the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, D.C., when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He later volunteered for PT boat duty while attending officer training in Chicago.

The small kidney-shaped Lumbari Island, positioned near the entrance to Rendova Harbor, was serving as a forward operating base for torpedo boats under the command of Lieutenant Commander Thomas G. Warfield. The Rendova PT boats were under orders to intercept Japanese



The 80th anniversary of the wartime adventure of the future President of the United States prompts a remembrance of the encounter with a Japanese destroyer in Blackett Strait in 1943.

BY JOHN J. DOMAGALSKI

attempts to deliver reinforcements to New Georgia—voyages dubbed the “Tokyo Express”—and guard the area against enemy surface ships. The boats operated in the waters north and west of Rendova covering a distance of about 50 miles.

The geography was new to young Kennedy. The round island Kolombangara stood directly northwest of New Georgia. A narrow string of miniature islands ran along the southern boundaries of Kolombangara and adjacent Vella Gulf. Kennedy would soon become familiar with island names like Gizo and Wana Wana, the body of water called Blackett Strait off the southwest coast of Kolombangara, and narrow passages such as Ferguson Passage. Kennedy and his men quickly fell into

In this painting by artist Larry Selman, *PT-109* streaks across the waters adjacent to the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons. *PT-109* was cut in half during a collision with the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri*. INSET: This photo of young Lieutenant John F. Kennedy was taken on March 28, 1944, several months after his heroics in the aftermath of the loss of *PT-109*.

an exhaustive routine—tense night patrols, limited sleep, possible friendly fire incidents, and the nearly constant threat of enemy air attacks.

August 1, 1943, looked to be a routine day for the men aboard *PT-109*. She was scheduled to stay in base that night after recently completing several nocturnal patrols. The boats were increasingly encountering armored Japanese barges, prompting Kennedy to add some firepower



to his PT in the form of an old army 37mm anti-tank gun. The single shot gun was mounted on some wooden planks near the bow of the boat. It was only an experiment, but Kennedy was comfortable knowing he would have some added firepower when he inevitably came across an enemy barge.

The situation changed that night when Warfield received a coded message from superiors warning a Tokyo Express run was planned and directing him to deploy the maximum number of PT boats. “Jap air out to get Peter Tars [PT Boats],” the message also advised. Warfield had little time to decipher the meaning of the ominous warning before the base was thrust into chaos.

A group of 18 Japanese bombers was suddenly approaching Lumbari Island—appearing so fast as to give the PT sailors little warning before the aircraft were almost overhead. John Kennedy jumped into action ordering *PT-109* to get underway while briefly seeing a Japanese plane crash into the water off Rendova. His crewmen opened fire with the forward machine gun and 20mm cannon near the back of the boat.

The *109* was able to move out of harm’s way. Other boats, however, were not so lucky. Two PTs were considered total losses and two sailors killed. The harbor was a scene of chaos and destruction.

Warfield wasted no time in assessing the damage, developing an operational plan for the evening, and gathering his boat captains together for a meeting. Fifteen PT boats, including *PT-109*, were available for the operation.

The plan divided the PTs into four separate groups, each including a radar-equipped boat. Three would be stationed near or in Blackett Strait, the most likely route of the Japanese destroyers. The remaining group was to be positioned further south as a reserve.

Warfield instructed his boat captains to restrict radio communications to contact reports. Individual boats were to follow their group leader to attack after hearing the initial sighting report. Further radio talk was likely discouraged to prevent interception by Japanese listeners and avoid confusion in the night conditions.

Kennedy’s *PT-109* was assigned to a group of four boats under the command of Lieutenant Henry Brantingham in *PT-159*. The group was deployed the furthest north in Blackett Strait off the west side of Kolombangara. In addition to Kennedy and his executive officer, Ensign Lenny Thom, Ensign George Ross was aboard the boat as a third officer. Ross was a friend of Kennedy whose original boat had been damaged. Ten other enlisted sailors rounded out the crew.

When midnight ushered in August 2, 1943, *PT-109* was slowly idling through Blackett Strait. The inky black moonless night coupled with the background of Kolombangara made for difficult conditions for even experienced sailors. John Kennedy was at the small bridge area known as the conn. The remaining crewmen were scattered around the boat. They were not at battle stations but ready to spring into action at a moment’s notice. Most were donning helmets and life jackets.

The sailors had no way of knowing the American intelligence was spot on—the Tokyo Express was running on this night. They also did not know the enemy mission was almost over. A group of Japanese destroyers had earlier sped through Blackett Strait carrying troops and supplies. Brantingham in *PT-159*, which had become separated from *PT-109* in the dark conditions, spotted the enemy around midnight and closed in to attack without sending out a radio report. The fast-moving Japanese destroyers successfully dodged a bevy of American torpedoes before delivering their passengers and cargo to Vila on Kolombangara. The ships were now making a high-speed run back through Blackett Strait.

A cluster of sailors was around *PT-109*’s conn. Kennedy was manning the boat’s wheel. Radioman 2nd Class John Maguire was positioned to his right. Motor Machinist Mate 2nd Class Harold Marney manned the nearby .50-caliber machine gun. Lenny Thom was on Kennedy’s left side, just outside the conn. George Ross was acting as a lookout near the bow.

At about 2:30 a.m. an object suddenly appeared out of the dark night about 250 yards off the port bow and closing fast. “Ship at 2 o’clock,” Marney yelled. George Ross pointed out into the night at the approaching object. A 30- to 40-second sequence of terrifying events ensued. “At first I thought it was a PT,” Kennedy later said of the moment. “I think it was going at least 40 knots.”

The speeding warship was the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri*. Japanese lookouts spotted

the torpedo boat only moments earlier. Whether the destroyer's commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Kohei Hanami, turned his ship to ram or avoid the PT boat has been open to question during the decades since the event.

Kennedy glimpsed the phosphorescent wave from *Amagiri's* bow. "As soon as I decided it was a destroyer, I turned to make a torpedo run," he later recalled. Historians who reviewed *PT-109's* final moments largely agree Kennedy had no more than 15 seconds to make a crucial decision. Before Kennedy could turn his boat for a torpedo attack, *Amagiri's* steel hull crashed through the wooden PT hull.

The destroyer sliced into *PT-109* at a sharp angle causing catastrophic damage. A brief burst of flames from the boat's high-octane gasoline created a brilliant explosion while the air filled with the sound of cracking wood. One of the PT's engines was knocked away as the boat was sliced in two beginning near the forward starboard side torpedo tube.

Kennedy was hurled against the wall of the conn, ending up on his bad back. "This is how it feels to be killed," he thought during the moment. "I can best compare it to the onrushing trains in the old-time movies. They seemed to come right over you," he later added. He glimpsed briefly at *Amagiri's* slanted smokestack as the soaring warship passed. The destroyer quickly disappeared into the black night with her wake dousing the flames from the explosion.

Most of the sailors fell into the water or were knocked overboard by the force of the collision. Five of *PT-109's* sailors were soon clinging to the still floating forward section of the boat—Kennedy, Thom, Seaman 1st Class Raymond Albert, Radioman 2nd Class John Maguire, and Quartermaster 3rd Class Edgar Mauer. Other sailors were scattered around the immediate area in the water. Kennedy initially ordered his small group to abandon ship over fears of a fire, but the men soon returned to the floating wreckage.

Kennedy began yelling out for his remaining men. Ross and five others replied. He swam out to help two injured men. Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class Patrick McMahon was stationed below deck and was badly burned. Kennedy towed him back with the strap of a life jacket while coaxing and berating injured Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Charles Harris along through the difficult swim.

Thom and Ross pulled aboard Motor Machinist Mate 2nd Class William Johnston, Torpedoman 2nd Class Ray Starkey, and Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class Gerard Zinser. The two remaining crewmen never

responded to the calls. Torpedoman 2nd Class Andrew Kirksey and Motor Machinist Mate 2nd Class Harold Marney were both killed in the collision, possibly on impact.

The sailors took stock of their situation. The men knew they were in Japanese waters. McMahon was seriously hurt; others had less severe injuries or were affected by gasoline fumes, and all were exhausted.

The morning light of August 2 found the sailors' situation deteriorating. There was no sign of any American PT-boat or seaplane. The wreckage, initially kept afloat by sealed compartments, was now taking on water. "We knew the ship would sink any minute, so we decided to swim for an island we knew was

Naval History and Heritage Command



ABOVE: This iconic photo of Lieutenant (j.g.) John F. Kennedy was taken aboard *PT-109* near the island of Tulagi in the Solomons in 1943. Kennedy displayed great leadership and command presence after *PT-109* was sunk.

OPPOSITE: Posing with crewmen of the *PT-109* at a South Pacific naval base, Lieutenant John F. Kennedy smiles at far right. This photo was taken in 1943 not long before the fateful encounter with the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri* in Blackett Strait.

nearby," Kennedy later said. They set out for a small island about three and a half miles away and hoped it was unoccupied.

Although Kennedy spent time on the Harvard swim team, nothing could have prepared him for what was ahead. He set out towing McMahon by clenching the life belt strap of the incapacitated sailor in his teeth. The remaining crewmen followed with two non-swimmers lashed to a wooden plank that was pulled or pushed along by the others.

Kennedy and McMahon made landfall on Plum Pudding Island after almost four hours of swimming. The exhausted Kennedy quickly

collapsed. The others arrived a short time later after making the slow swim. The survivors had been in the water or on the wreckage for about 15 hours.

Plum Pudding was uninhabited and part of an assortment of small islands in Blackett Strait southeast of the larger Gizo Island. The islet was covered with trees, foliage, and low growth.

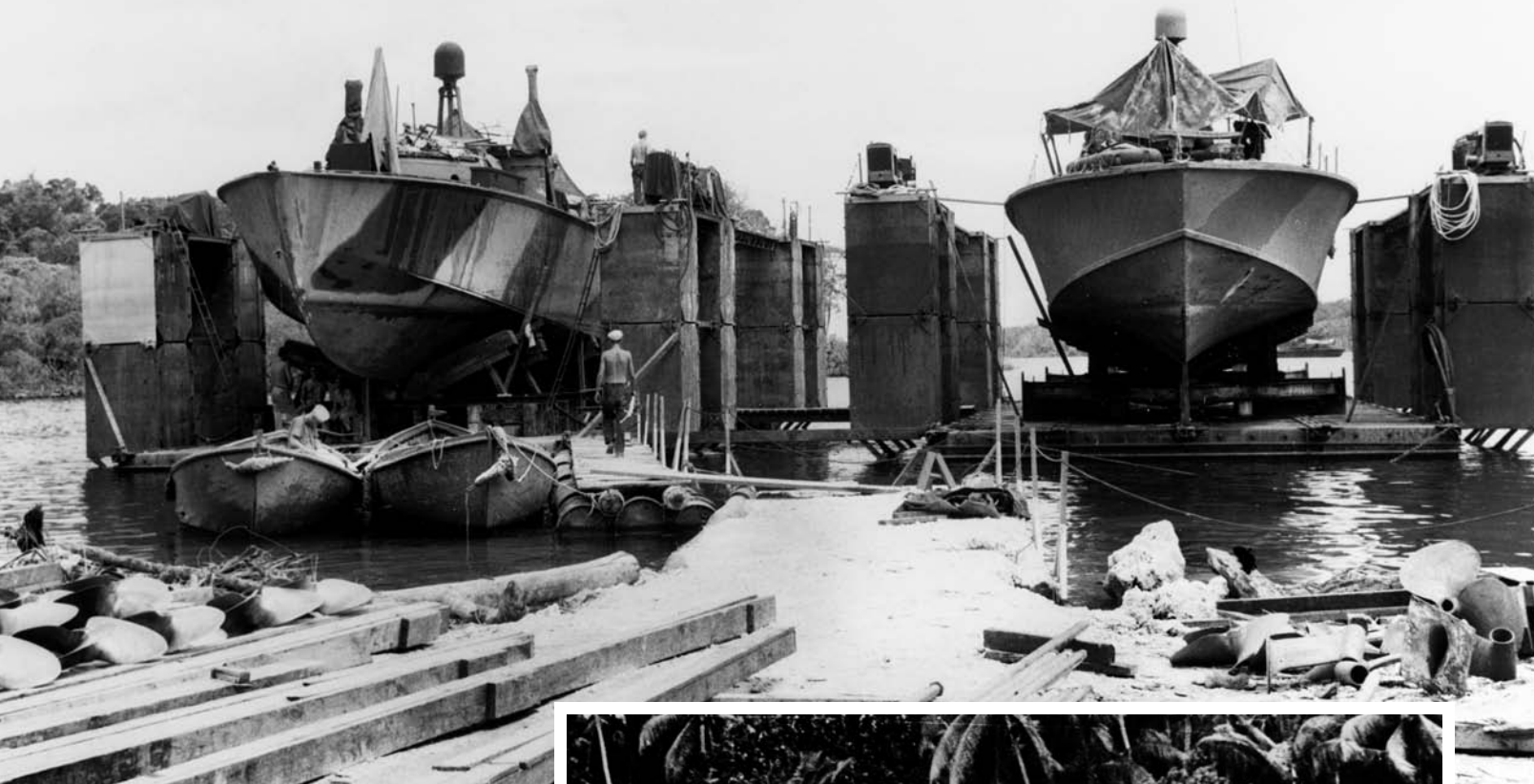
There was no substantial food or water—the coconut fruit on the trees was green and not edible. The sailors called it Bird Island due to the abundance of droppings.

A quick survey found no sign of the Japanese. However, it was clear they were not far when a slow-moving enemy barge passed nearby. The closest Japanese soldiers were on Gizo Island

about 5 miles away.

A formation of planes overflew the island low and fast shortly after the sailors arrived. The men hid in the foliage thinking the aircraft were Japanese. They realized the planes were New Zealanders after spotting the white tails, though too late to try to send off a signal flare.

The planes were in fact looking for any sign of the missing PT sailors. It was clear to base commanders *PT-109* was missing when she did not return to Lumbari. The morning briefing included some discussion about sending PTs out to search Blackett Strait. The idea was abandoned when other boat captains reported



Both: Naval History and Heritage Command

seeing the terrific explosion ripping apart the 109. The possibility of survivors did not seem likely. An air search was ordered. The New Zealand pilots spotted the wreckage with no one aboard and did not see the men hiding on the island.

“He was presumed to be dead,” fellow boat captain Richard Kersey later recalled of Kennedy. A simple funeral service was held at the base for the crew of *PT-109*. As is the case in war, PT boat operations then continued.

Kennedy knew they could not stay on the island and their position was not far from Ferguson Passage—the route taken by PT boats to enter Blackett Strait. He decided the best possibility of rescue was to swim out into the passage in the hopes of hailing a passing PT with a lantern salvaged from his sunken boat.

He set out in the early evening, island-hopping among several small islets and reefs, suffering some painful coral cuts to his feet along the journey. It was dark by the time he arrived in Ferguson Passage. Kennedy treaded water for about an hour while grasping the lantern and intently listening for the muffled sound of boat motors. At one point he sighted some flares far off in the distance beyond Gizo. The weary sailor eventually concluded the PTs were operating elsewhere.

The swim back to Plumb Pudding Island was difficult. Strong currents pushed him back and then out into Blackett Strait. He was chilled. The sailors back on the island were intently

TOP: This photo depicts PT-boats in floating drydocks at the Rendova base in the central Solomons in 1943. The PT-boats were swift and heavily armed, providing firepower and surveillance during the fight to wrest control of the Solomons from the Japanese. **ABOVE:** With a gaping hole in her bow after a Japanese air raid, *PT-117* lies beached at Rendova on August 1, 1943. PT-boats saw heavy action during the campaign in the Solomon Islands. **OPPOSITE:** Underway at high speed, *PT-96* demonstrates the swiftness of the light patrol craft. Note the external torpedo tube visible on deck. This photo was taken in 1942.

waiting—hoping their boat captain would return with news of finding a PT boat. They were disappointed.

Kennedy was thoroughly exhausted by the time he arrived back on the island. He spoke briefly to Ross, directing him to make the same attempt during the next evening. Kennedy then passed out and would sleep through the day. Ross spent the night perched on a small island overlooking Ferguson Passage armed with a signal pistol. There were no signs of any PT boats.

After the decision was made to leave Plum Pudding Island, the shipwrecked sailors were back in the water on August 4 heading south to the larger Olasana Island in the hopes of

finding food and water as well as moving closer to Ferguson Passage. Kennedy and Ross had previously spotted the island and taken note of the abundant coconut trees. The boat captain again towed McMahon by the life belt strap, and the others grouped around the wooden plank for the three-hour swim.

The sailors found more coconuts on the new island with the juice giving some of the men a sick feeling. However, there was no sign of water, and they did not venture far from a small area over fear of encountering Japanese troops. Some of the men resorted to licking the water off leaves after an evening rain.

Morale among the group was low, and sev-

eral viewed their situation as hopeless. Their ordeal was now stretched to four days with no sign of help. Kennedy met with Thom and Ross. “What do we do now?” he asked. Kennedy was not ready to give up. He decided to go with Ross to Nauru Island, the easternmost island in their vicinity overlooking Ferguson Passage. Both were tired and weak. The pair arrived around noon on August 5. Wary of possible Japanese patrols, the two peered from the brush to see a small enemy boat out on the reef. It appeared to be wrecked.

They spotted a small unopened box with Japanese markings near their position. It contained—to their delight—some candy. An additional find was a small shelter with a keg of water and a one-man canoe. Kennedy and Ross took a drink and were heading back toward the beach when they suddenly spotted two men on the Japanese wreck. They were most likely islanders and probably not Japanese. Kennedy called out, but the natives quickly paddled away in a canoe.

Kennedy used the newly found canoe for another evening trip into Ferguson Passage with the same results—no PT boats. After paddling back, he loaded the candy and water aboard before setting out to return to his men on Olasana. Ross remained on Naru to rest.

Arriving on Olasana, Kennedy was surprised to find the same two natives from Naru with his men. The two were Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana. Both were only 19 years old and working as scouts for the Allies. The men had

stopped for coconuts on Olasana after their earlier encounter with Kennedy and Ross. Thom convinced them they were Americans by shouting, “White star! White star!” while pointing to the sky. The natives seemed to understand as they were taught to help downed American pilots whose planes were adorned with white star markings.

Gasa and Kumana accompanied Kennedy back to Naru, picking up Ross along the way when they encountered him swimming back to Olasana. Once on Naru they showed the Americans the location of a hidden two-man canoe. Thom had already written a note describing their position for the islanders to take to Allied authorities. Kennedy decided to add another, carving a message in a coconut husk with his knife: “11 alive native knows posit & reef Naru Island Kennedy.” He reportedly told them “Rendova, Rendova,” referencing the PT base.

Perhaps still suspicious of the final outcome or not wanting to leave anything to chance, Kennedy insisted on he and Ross using the two-man canoe to again venture out into Ferguson Passage on the night of August 6. It was a near fatal decision. They did not get far before heavy seas swamped the canoe, battering both men. The pair eventually made it back to the shallow waters around Naru suffering painful injuries from the sharp coral before getting on dry land.

Kennedy and Ross did now know that someone had actually been looking for the *PT-109* men. Australian Sub-Lieutenant Reginald Evans overlooked Blakett Strait from a perch

on Kolombangara. He was charged with reporting Japanese ship and plane movements to American authorities on Guadalcanal. Evans previously sighted a floating object in Blakett Strait but was not able to discern that it was wreckage from a PT and did not see any sailors. He dispatched natives to search for possible survivors after receiving a radio message about the missing *PT-109* and later reported the searches were negative.

The exhausted Kennedy and Ross woke up the next morning to find four natives with them. One spoke English and produced a letter from coastwatcher Evans requesting the senior officer visit him by canoe on Gomu Island in Blakett Strait. The islanders first took Kennedy and Ross back to Olasana where they unpacked supplies. Some of the natives began cooking a meal on a portable stove, including beef hash, potatoes and c-rations. It was the first solid meal for the hungry sailors in days. Others constructed a lean-to shelter for the injured McMahan.

By afternoon it was time for Kennedy to make the trip to see Evans. He hid out of sight in a canoe under some carefully placed palm leaves as the islanders paddled across Blakett Strait. Evans ventured down to the beach after spotting the approaching canoe at about 6 p.m. “Hello, I’m Kennedy,” the American said after uncovering himself. “Come to my tent and have a cup of tea,” Evans replied.

Evans had already notified the Rendova PT base of the survivors. Navy officials were plan-





National Archives

In this photo taken during World War II in the South Pacific, PT-168 is replenished with ammunition and supplies by members of her crew. A tarpaulin has been stretched across the deck aft to provide other crewmen with some relief from the tropical sun.

ning to send boats directly to the men on Olasana while Kennedy was directed to return to Rendova. Kennedy insisted on his personal involvement in the operation so the rescue boats could safely get through the shallow waters and reefs. The plan was modified—the boats would pick up Kennedy on small Patparan Island in Blackett Strait before completing the rescue of the others.

The seven PT boats participating in the rescue operation departed Rendova on the evening of August 7. Five went directly to a patrol area at the lower end of Vella Gulf, arriving by 9:30 p.m. Visibility was fair to poor with some cloud cover and rain. The actual rescue would be done by PT-157 under the command of Lieutenant William Liebenow with assistance from PT-171. Lieutenant Henry Brantingham was in overall command of the operation aboard PT-157. Others on the boat were a pharmacist mate, three natives—including Gasa and Kumana—Lieutenant Alvin Cluster, and two war correspondents in addition to the regular boat crew. The two boats traveled at a slow speed to Patparan Island so as not to attract the attention of any lurking Japanese float planes.

Kennedy left Evans's hideout with some natives by canoe earlier in the evening for the voyage to the rendezvous point. They waited in the darkness at the 10 p.m. meeting time. The sound of rumbling motors more than an hour later marked the arrival of the rescue boats.

An exchange of shots in the air confirmed the identity of both sides before the canoe pulled up to the side of PT-157. Someone from the PT shouted, "Hey Jack." Kennedy was still irritated over not being rescued after the sinking.

He angrily responded, "Where the hell have you been?" The ill will quickly faded away after he was pulled aboard.

The two PTs headed for Olasana, arriving sometime after midnight. With PT-171 providing cover in the background, PT-157 slowly moved along the reef with Kennedy looking for an opening he knew was there. "[Kennedy] stood between me at the wheel, and the two natives," Liebenow later wrote of the tense moments. "He pointed out the direction, the natives agreed, and we headed out."

Kennedy joined Cluster and an islander in a small wooden boat lowered off the stern. The other PT-109 sailors were asleep when they came ashore. Kennedy called in the darkness for Thom, to the chagrin of the other rescuers who were concerned about possible nearby Japanese. "Here we are!" Thom finally answered. A second small boat was brought in to help. All of the shipwrecked sailors were soon aboard the rescue boat after several trips.

William Liebenow then set a course for Rendova. His crew provided all the possible comforts for the PT-109 men during the three-hour voyage—sandwiches and brandy were served, the pharmacist mate assisted the wounded, and reporters collected information for their stories. The PT arrived at Rendova at about 5 a.m. on August 8, ending the nearly week-long ordeal. The rescued sailors received a stirring welcome once ashore.

Kennedy convalesced for about a week with medical care for cuts, lacerations, and fatigue. He then moved to a tent for rest. Losing two crewmen weighed heavily on the boat captain. Kirksey had previously had a premonition of

death. "When a fellow gets the feeling that he's in for it, the only thing to do is to let him get off the boat because strangely enough, they always seem to be the ones that do get it," Kennedy wrote at the time. "I don't know whether it's just coincidence or what. He had a wife and three kids. The other fellow had just come aboard. He was only a kid himself."

John Kennedy remained in the Pacific until November 1943, commanding PT-59 for a time. He then returned to the United States and spent time at the Naval Hospital in Chelsea, Massachusetts. He was granted a medical discharge on December 27, 1944, with the Secretary of the Navy making it effective on March 16, 1945.

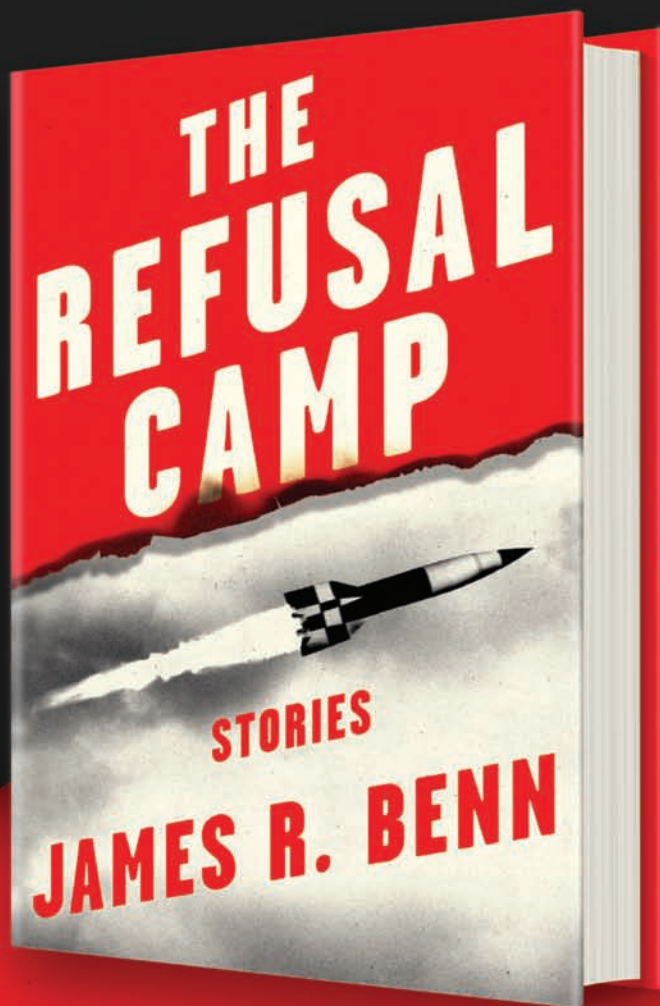
Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his actions after the loss of PT-109. He also earned the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in the sinking. The story initially appeared in some newspapers and later gained a larger audience when reporter John Hersey published articles in *The New Yorker* and *Reader's Digest*. Kennedy later campaigned as a war hero, entering politics and eventually becoming the 35th American President in 1961. ■

John J. Domagalski is the author of three books on World War II. Into the Dark Water: The Story of Three Officers and PT-109 (Casemate, 2014), Sunk in Kula Gulf (Potomac Books, 2012), and Lost at Guadalcanal (McFarland, 2010). His articles have appeared in WWII History, Naval History, and WWII Quarterly magazines. He is a graduate of Northern Illinois University and lives near Chicago.

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Tough Fight at

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON



American paratroopers struggle to hold the line in Mook, Holland, during a crucial phase of the ill-fated Operation Market-Garden.

MOOK

In the midst of the ambitious Operation Market-Garden, Brigadier General James M. Gavin, 82nd Airborne Division Commander, first heard about the crisis at Mook, along the Maas River, from his chief of staff, Lt. Col. Robert H. Wienecke.

Wienecke ran “Champion Main,” codename for the division’s command post (CP) located outside Groesbeek, the Netherlands. It was his job to keep the commanding general updated on operational matters; as such, the two men were always connected by radio. Except now the general wasn’t answering.

“Jim from Bob, Jim from Bob, come in, over,” Wienecke spoke repeatedly into a hand mike. Finally, after 30 anxious minutes, Gavin responded. His normally unflappable chief’s frantic manner came across clearly through the radio receiver.

“General,” Wienecke advised, “you’d better get back here [the CP] or you won’t have any division left.”

It was 1330 hours on Wednesday, September 20, 1944. As his jeep sped off to Champion Main, Gavin fretted over this ominous warning. What could possibly be so serious as to require his immediate attention?

Three days earlier, 7,250 men of the 82nd “All-American” Division parachuted or rode by glider into Holland alongside their comrades in the U.S. 101st “Screaming Eagles” and British 1st “Red Devils” Airborne Divisions. Their task was to open and hold 64 miles of roads and bridges leading to the Rhine River bridge at Arnhem, over which XXX Corps—vanguard of the British Second Army—would advance and open an invasion route into northern Germany.

Market-Garden’s mission order demanded speed, surprise, and a healthy dose of optimism regarding the enemy situation. Allied commanders recognized that many things had to go right for the scheme to succeed. Above all, their lightly equipped airborne soldiers needed to take and hold several key bridges over five major waterways. Any delay caused by weather, traffic congestion, or German counter attacks could prove disastrous—especially for the Red Devils fighting around Arnhem.

The 82nd Airborne’s paratroopers and glidermen bore responsibility for nine bridges in their area of operations. Of special concern were the one railroad and two highway spans that traversed the wide Waal and Maas Rivers. These massive structures had to be seized intact, as did at least one of four crossings over the smaller Maas-Waal Canal.

American paratroopers come to earth as Douglas C-47 transport aircraft drone in the skies above. Cows are grazing peacefully in this photo, undisturbed by the early events of Operation Market-Garden.

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The city of Nijmegen, on the Waal's south shore, could pose additional problems for Gavin's division if resolute defenders were encountered there. Two crucial bridges, one built for rail and the other for road traffic, ended inside the city center. Should German forces manage to block the way, it would require a costly and time-consuming urban assault to defeat them.

The All-Americans also had to seize a long, wooded ridgeline about six miles southeast of Nijmegen called Groesbeek Heights. A triangle-shaped plateau reaching some 300 feet above the surrounding area, this high ground dominated all friendly approaches to Nijmegen. It also covered several counterattack routes

To accomplish its assigned missions, the All-American Division had available a mere 7,250 troopers on the first day of Market-Garden. In no way could this number of men be considered adequate. Jim Gavin remarked that he really needed two divisions at Nijmegen, but a shortage of troop carrier aircraft dictated the 82nd Airborne enter battle on September 17 with only three of its four infantry regiments.

The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), back with the division after detached service in Italy, was directed to grab the 1,200-foot-long Maas River bridge at Grave along with several smaller spans over the Maas-Waal Canal. The combat tested 508th PIR had the task of securing Groesbeek Heights' northern

Groesbeek Heights. Ekman needed to cover this six-mile line with only two battalions, as his 2nd Battalion had been taken away to act as division reserve. In the north, 3rd Battalion (Major James L. Kaiser commanding) would occupy Groesbeek while maintaining contact with the 508th. On the right, Major Talton W. Long's 1st Battalion was to seize key terrain along the regiment's southern flank.

Major Long's command consisted of three rifle companies (A, B, and C), plus a heavy weapons platoon. Holding Company A in reserve, Long ordered Company C to establish a line of blocking positions facing east. Company B had to take two villages named Mook and Riethorst, plus the Maas River railroad bridge. This outfit also needed to control a vital roadway leading in from the enemy stronghold of Gennepe.

It was a difficult assignment, but Company B proved equal to the task. Brought back up to strength after heavy fighting in France, the unit possessed a healthy mix of combat veterans and fresh replacement troopers. Some old timers, like Sergeant Harvill W. Lazenby, had already parachuted into Sicily, Salerno, and Normandy. First Lieutenant Stanley Weinberg ably led 2nd Platoon into battle on D-Day, while 20-year-old bazookaman Private Northam H. Stolp would experience his first combat in Holland.

Commanding the approximately 145 paratroopers assigned to Company B was 1st Lt. James M. Irvin, a long-serving officer whose escapades in France became the stuff of legend. Jumping out into the darkness on June 6, 1944, he accidentally landed inside a German artillery emplacement and was instantly captured. While en route to a POW camp, he made his escape to find shelter with the Resistance. In August, Irvin successfully made his way back to England where he resumed command of Company B in time for the Market-Garden operation.

When told they would likely be facing "old men and children," Irvin's veterans scoffed. Most of them had already learned the hard way never to underestimate their foe's skill and tenacity in battle. And while the 82nd's main opposition on September 17 consisted of easily stampeded Luftwaffe anti-aircraft gunners and rear echelon personnel, a more robust German response was not long in coming.

Field Marshal Walter Model, commanding Army Group B from his headquarters just 18 miles from the Groesbeek drop zones, wasted no time in organizing a counterattack. Quickly mobilizing German Army, Luftwaffe, and SS forces scattered across the Netherlands and western Germany, Model directed his local

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ABOVE: Wearing American flag armbands so that Dutch civilians can easily identify them, American paratroopers load their C-47 transport plane just before taking off on September 17, 1944, opening day of Operation Market-Garden, the combined airborne/ground offensive into the Netherlands. **OPPOSITE:** During the opening phase of Operation Market-Garden, U.S. paratroopers of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment land in an open field designated drop zone "N."

leading from the heavily forested Reichswald region of Germany only three miles to the east.

Whoever held Groesbeek Heights also controlled a large open area labeled Drop Zone (Landing Zone) "N." This was the 82nd Airborne's main logistics hub, onto which Allied transport aircraft would deliver glider-borne reinforcements as well as rations, medicine, and munitions. Until XXX Corps punched through to Nijmegen, aerial resupply was the only way Gavin's unit could keep fighting.

half, including the villages of Beek and Berg en Dal. The 376th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion (PFAB) and its dozen 75mm pack howitzers would also jump in to provide immediate fire support, while eight 57mm anti-tank (AT) guns from Battery A, 80th Anti-Aircraft Battalion, were set to arrive by CG-4A "Waco" glider later that afternoon.

Making its fourth combat drop of the war, Colonel William E. Ekman's 505th PIR was responsible for the 82nd's right flank along



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commanders to form ad hoc “kampfgruppen” (combat teams) with whatever troops and equipment they could scrape together.

One such organization was Corps Feldt, named for its commanding officer General Kurt Feldt. Stationed on the Lower Rhine, Corps Feldt’s primary mission involved constructing fortifications along a segment of the Westwall, or Siegfried Line. It controlled just one subordinate command: Lt. Gen. Gerd Scherbening’s 406th Infantry Division. Initially, this outfit contained a headquarters staff and some reserve units made up of convalescents (so-called “stomach and ear” men), unassigned replacements, and searchlight crews.

Scherbening faced enormous problems on September 17. None of his riflemen possessed any infantry training, nor did the Germans have adequate communications, artillery, or logistical support. By requisitioning every serviceable motor vehicle in its sector, however, the 406th Infantry Division managed to push forward a growing number of reinforcements to establish attack positions inside the Reichswald.

Model did not expect Corps Feldt to defeat the American invaders; rather, he needed it to buy time so his staff could organize and send forward a more formidable counterattack force. This formation, the II Fallschirmjäger (Parachute) Corps, had for the past few months been rebuilding its ranks from what remained of the 3rd and 5th Parachute Divisions. Although no longer capable of conducting air-

borne operations, these well-armed and battle-wise troops represented an extraordinarily deadly threat to the overextended 82nd Airborne Division.

Yet it would take time to move the men of II Parachute Corps up from their encampments near Cologne via the Third Reich’s war worn rail network. In a cable to Model, corps commander Lt. Gen. Eugen Meindl estimated his Fallschirmjäger should be in position by daybreak on Wednesday, September 20. Until then, the flak gunners, supply troops, and trainees already in place around Nijmegen needed to hold on.

Those Germans were still full of fight, though, as Company B’s Lieutenant Stanley Weinberg discovered on the afternoon of September 17. Preparing to jump from his C-47 transport aircraft, Weinberg experienced a close call with some enemy antiaircraft crews. “Just before I got up to stand in the door to look for familiar landmarks,” he wrote, “a bullet came through the floor in the doorway.” Luckily, no one in his plane was hit by that burst of flak.

Moments later, at 1310 hours, the green “go” light came on inside Weinberg’s C-47. Within a few minutes, every member of Company B jumped onto DZ “N” in the first Allied daylight parachute assault of World War II. The 505th PIR’s historian enthusiastically called it “a perfect drop.”

Sergeant Harvill Lazenby, who survived the chaotic nighttime jump into Normandy, mar-

veled at the improved discipline shown by U.S. Army Air Forces transport pilots over Holland. “The most impressive thing I recall was the troop carrier group that brought us in. They made a 180-degree turn after the drop—the flak guns were really hitting them. They held their formation while burning and never broke formation until they fell.”

Once assembled on the drop zone, most of Lieutenant Irvin’s men moved out toward their initial objective—high ground east of Bisselt—while other troopers collected equipment bundles containing the company’s radios, light machine guns, and extra ammunition. Also stowed inside those canisters were Browning Automatic Rifles, newly authorized to increase each infantry squad’s firepower. Known as BARs, these weapons would soon make their presence known all along the Groesbeek Heights.

The soldiers of 1st Platoon, led by 1st Lt. William J. “Buck” Reardon, stepped off at 1730 hours toward the railroad span north of Mook. A line of dug-in Germans momentarily blocked their way; those troops surrendered after a brief scuffle. This action, however, consumed precious minutes and alerted all within earshot to the Americans’ presence. Continuing on, Reardon’s men ran into machine-gun fire from a second, more determined group of defenders about 400 yards from their destination.

Taking cover in a ditch, Harvill Lazenby “got a small-arms bullet in my ankle [that] almost took my foot off.” As his fellow paratroopers deployed



Bundesarchiv Bild 101II-M2KBK-771-34; Photo: Willi Höppler

for a hasty attack, the sergeant noticed German engineers setting explosives on the bridge that 1st Platoon was attempting to capture.

“One squad flanked to the right,” an observer stated, while “the remainder of the platoon got to the bridge, which was blown up just as they reached the railroad tracks.” Two G.I.s were killed and three wounded in the blast.

Although Reardon’s outfit did not accomplish its primary mission of grabbing intact the Maas River bridge, much work remained to be done. Running underneath the railroad overpass was a highway leading straight toward enemy-held territory. First Platoon’s riflemen spent most of the night establishing roadblocks all around this chokepoint.

Meanwhile, 1st Lt. Stanley Weinberg’s 2nd Platoon—reinforced by a 14-man machine gun section from Headquarters Company—began moving toward the hamlet of Riethorst. Emerging from a woodlot north of Plasmolen, Weinberg’s men saw several Germans wiring a nearby ammunition dump for demolition. Before his paratroopers could react, however, an enormous explosion went off.

Assaulting through the debris, Weinberg’s men rapidly cleared Plasmolen. Leaving behind some machine gunners for local security, the rest of 2nd Platoon continued on toward Riethorst. Along the way they ambushed a German staff car, killing Lt. Col. Siegfried Harnisch while capturing his driver and another Wehrmacht officer.

Second Platoon secured Riethorst—a small settlement of perhaps 30 residents—by 1530 hours. Weinberg established his platoon CP on high ground that covered both the village and a main roadway. Other troopers, armed with light machine guns, BARs, and bazookas, set up outposts meant to provide early warning of enemy patrol activity.

They did not have long to wait. At 1630 hours, soldiers manning the strongpoint under Sergeant Frederick W. Gougler killed a bicycle-mounted scout seen moving west along the Nijmegen-Gennep road. A platoon of Germans then rose up and stormed the Americans’ positions. The fighting grew so intense that one of Gougler’s machine guns overheated, forcing his gunners to draw their .45 caliber pistols in self-defense.

Weinberg sent forward reinforcements and called in artillery fire, which forced the foe to retreat. Yet 2nd Platoon would need help to hold Riethorst, a realization acknowledged by 1st Battalion’s commander Major Long. Shortly after sunset, Long dispatched Lieutenant Harold L. Gensemer’s 1st Platoon, Company C, to support Weinberg. The two lieutenants divided responsibility for their hill-top bastion, with Weinberg’s platoon to the south and Gensemer’s soldiers occupying the northern side.

Few men got any sleep that night. Sometime after 0100 hours on September 18, a large group of Germans attempted to infiltrate the

paratroopers’ outposts. These soldiers represented the lead element of an escalating response to the Market-Garden landings.

Once he learned that Allied forces were dropping on Nijmegen, the 406th Division’s General Scherbening started deploying several hastily assembled combat teams to develop the situation. One of these organizations, Kampfgruppe (KG) Goebel (named for the officer commanding it), was directed to penetrate the enemy’s southern flank at Mook and continue its attack another mile or so downriver to seize the Maas-Waal Canal’s lock bridge at Heumen.

This was a tall order for the approximately 350 soldiers under Goebel’s command. Many of them came straight from a combat engineer training school and lacked heavy weapons such as mortars and machine guns. Yet, somehow Goebel managed to acquire three self-propelled “Wirbelwind” (Whirlwind) antiaircraft gun platforms. The 20mm automatic cannons mounted on these tank-like vehicles could shred unprotected infantry with ease.

U.S. intelligence officers recorded the presence of three PzKpfw. V “Panther” tanks in Company B’s sector, a claim unsubstantiated by German sources. American paratroopers frequently misidentified enemy armor throughout the war; their Panther sightings on September 18 were likely Goebel’s Wirbelwinds.

Around 0700 hours, Lieutenant Richard H. Brownlee from Company C had just positioned an automatic rifle team near Riethorst when

one of the Wirbelwinds came into view. “Our two BAR men engaged the tank and received for their efforts a direct hit from the tank, killing both men,” he reported.

The German gunners next targeted their opponents’ hilltop redoubt. “We started to receive very heavy fire from the tank with twin guns mounted,” Brownlee remembered. “He

was really stripping trees—and men.” Gensemer and Weinberg tried bringing artillery down on the Wirbelwind, but were frustrated to learn the 376th PFAB was rationed to five rounds per fire mission due to ammunition shortages.

Individual paratroopers then began moving forward to defeat this fearsome machine. “Corporal Allison took a bazooka to the forward

south edge of the hill on a level with the tank to try to get at it,” Brownlee’s account continued. “But because it had sheets of steel [mounted on the sides] around its treads he couldn’t damage it.”

Other G.I.s attacked the Wirbelwind with a British-designed anti-tank weapon, the sack-like Mk 82 Gammon bomb. Brownlee recalled how “several of the men...tried to throw Gammon grenades down into it without success.”

Pinned down on the summit, American soldiers could only watch helplessly as KG Goebel’s troops pushed on toward Mook. Weinberg warned his company commander of the approaching threat, but with just two understrength platoons (Buck Reardon’s 1st and 2nd Lt. Emil H. Schimpf’s 3rd) available, there was little Jim Irvin could do about it except tell his men to dig in deeper and get ready.

That morning, a crisis to the north prevented 1st Battalion from assisting the beleaguered defenders of Mook and Riethorst. Occurring simultaneously with KG Goebel’s attack, some 2,300 soldiers organized into three battle groups came boiling out of the Reichswald intent on capturing the vast drop zone (DZ “N”) now renamed and marked as landing zone “N” (LZ “N”) for glider landings.

Over 450 CG-4A cargo gliders were due to arrive at 1430 hours, which meant LZ “N” had to be cleared immediately. Starting around 1240 hours, the troopers of two rifle companies—one from 1st Battalion and another with 3rd Battalion—dashed forward while firing from the hip and yelling like demons. They were soon joined by a pair of combat engineer companies fighting as infantry. This bold counterthrust caused panic among the Germans’ poorly trained conscripts and pushed them back to their start points inside the Reichswald. After clashing briefly with Company B outside Mook, Goebel’s troops also retreated.

In the glider assault that followed, Gavin’s division received nearly three full battalions of airborne field artillery along with another battery of 57mm anti-tank guns. Later, a resupply mission flown by 131 Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers of the U.S. Eighth Air Force parachuted in 258 tons of supplies. Included in this drop was a large quantity of sorely needed artillery projectiles, mortar rounds, and small arms ammunition.

What Gavin needed most, though, was infantry. His own 325th Glider Infantry Regiment was not due to arrive for another day weather permitting, while at last report Second Army’s spearhead had not progressed much past Eindhoven—40 miles to his south. The unexpected attack on LZ “N,” plus a nagging

Polish War Museum



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ABOVE: Crewmen pause in the chassis and turret of a Sherman Firefly tank of the British Coldstream Guards during the ground advance into the Netherlands. Six Fireflies, modified from the original Sherman configuration to carry a 17-pounder gun and belonging to the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards helped Company B, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment repulse a German attack on the Heumen Bridge. **TOP:** German paratroopers of the 5th Fallschirmjäger Division fire a captured American-made Browning M1919 A4 .30-caliber machine gun during the fighting in Operation Market-Garden. **OPPOSITE:** Two camouflaged German armored vehicles on a road in the Netherlands during Market-Garden. These are the Flakpanzer IV Möbelwagen, armed with a 37mm anti-aircraft gun. A variant of the PzKpfw. IV medium tank, the Flakpanzer IV, or similar armored vehicles, may be what troopers of the 82nd reported as PzKpfw. V “Panthers.”



Map © 2023 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: The villages of Mook and Riethorst—lower right, where elements of the 82nd Airborne Division under the command of General James Gavin encountered heavy German resistance—were in the south of the division's operations area during Operation Market-Garden. **TOP:** American airborne soldiers load a 57mm anti-tank gun through the nose of a glider in preparation for Operation Market-Garden. During the fighting in the Netherlands, the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division received three full battalions of airborne field artillery and two batteries of 57mm anti-tank guns for fire support.

realization that his paratroopers had yet to capture those critical bridges inside Nijmegen, greatly troubled the young general at day's end.

Yet as the sun rose on Tuesday, September 19, so did Jim Gavin's spirits. At 0830 hours he looked on while a column of British tanks rolled north over the bridge at Grave and into the 82nd Airborne's perimeter. "It is difficult to describe my feeling of elation at that moment," he wrote of the Guards Armoured Division's arrival. With XXX Corps now bolstering his defenses, Gavin could finally focus on seizing the Nijmegen bridges. The Red Devils, fighting unsupported at Arnhem for nearly three days, urgently needed those structures in Allied hands.

For Lieutenant Irvin's troopers situated at Mook and Riethorst, September 19 was spent improving their fighting positions, replenishing ammunition supplies, and welcoming two 57mm gun crews that came forward to help deal with enemy armor. Combat patrols also went out regularly, netting dozens of stragglers left behind in the previous day's attack.

As the day wore on, however, there appeared several signs of a new and dangerous adversary nearing the battlefield. The 505th PIR's commander, Colonel Ekman, was making his rounds along the perimeter when Dutch civilians told him they saw 500 Germans moving north toward Riethorst. At sunset, paratroopers all along the 505th's line reported receiving one or two rounds of large-caliber artillery. The foe seemed to be "registering" his big guns—sighting them in—for future fire missions.

Concealed by the impenetrable Reichswald Forest, thousands of battle-hardened German combat troops began making final preparations for a dawn attack on the 82nd Airborne Division's eastern flank. Their commander, Lt. Gen. Meindl, had learned much about his adversary's dispositions from Corps Feldt's nearly successful foray the day before. Meindl believed the men of II Fallschirmjäger Corps, who were much better armed, trained, and supported than Feldt's scratch force, could easily puncture the Americans' fragile defensive lines.

Adopting Feldt's scheme of maneuver—a four-pronged assault designed to drive the Allies off Groesbeek Heights—Meindl added to it several elements of combat power such as additional field artillery, "Nebelwerfer" rocket launchers, and mobile flak guns firing in the infantry support role. Three Kampfgruppen, Becker, Furstenberg, and Greschick, were to recapture the villages of Wyler, Beek, and Groesbeek. Meindl's fourth battle group, named after its commander Lt. Col. Harry Hermann, would seize Riethorst, Mook, and the

Maas-Waal Canal bridge at Heumen.

Hermann's outfit included two understrength battalions from the 5th Fallschirmjäger Division (gutted in Normandy that summer), as well as those survivors of KG Goebel still willing to fight after their failed attack on Monday. Goebel's Wirbelwinds were on hand along with a battery of airborne field guns. Altogether, this combat team numbered 650-700 fighting men as it prepared for action during the early hours of Wednesday, September 20, 1944.

Opposing KG Hermann were four understrength platoons of U.S. paratroopers. Weinberg and Gensemer still occupied that strategic height of land near Riethorst, while Reardon and Schimpf shared responsibility for Mook. Two 57mm guns provided anti-armor defense, and forward observers from the recently arrived 476th PFAB kept watch from their perch in a church steeple. Yet company commander Lieutenant Jim Irvin could not stop worrying about his unit's ability to contain another large-scale attack.

Located along the Maas River's east bank, Mook boasted a wartime population of 2,100 inhabitants. Sadly, many residents chose to ignore Irvin's strongly worded advice that they evacuate. A baker named Dinnissen, for instance, kept busy turning bread even as Nebelwerfer rockets exploded outside his front door.

At Riethorst, Lieutenant Weinberg noted this barrage started at 1100 hours and continued for three full hours. One of Weinberg's troopers, Pfc. Robert Yeiter, endured the shelling from a nearby outpost until he spied some Fallschirmjäger closing in. Yeiter and a buddy decided to retreat up the hill.

"I remember diving over a chicken wire fence," he said later, swearing the obstacle measured seven feet tall. Yeiter and his companion both "hit the top [of the fence] with our bellies, and flipped over on our feet on a dead run for 50 yards to a stone wall, with bullets skipping all around us."

While most of KG Hermann's infantry swept on toward Mook, a large detachment moved up against Weinberg's stronghold. American riflemen, machine gunners, and BAR teams caused many casualties, but the enemy possessed superior numbers. Charging through a rain of mortar fire, exultant Fallschirmjäger reached the hilltop and began rooting stubborn G.I.s out of their holes.

Shouting out orders to take cover, Weinberg called an artillery strike down directly on his own position. The fast-shooting 476th PFAB responded with a full battalion's worth of high explosive fury. It worked; those Fallschirmjäger unhurt by flying fragments stumbled back down

to safety. The fighting at Riethorst devolved into a stalemate, with Hermann's men dug in along the base of the hill and Weinberg and Gensemer's platoons occupying its summit.

Meanwhile, in Mook heavy shelling caused residents and paratroopers alike to seek shelter. Buildings caught fire and collapsed; the 476th's artillery spotters were blasted out of their steeple-top observation post by an unseen high-caliber weapon. At 1400 hours, German infantry charged into town.

Buck Reardon's 1st Platoon caught the brunt of this attack. Although his men fought courageously, Reardon knew he could no longer hold and ordered a withdrawal. Half the platoon made it back inside the town, but at least a

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Near the Dutch town of Zon, American paratroopers guard German prisoners on the way to a collection point on September 19, 1944.

dozen troopers were either killed, wounded, or captured. Both 57mm anti-tank guns also had to be abandoned.

Just outside the village, 3rd Platoon prepared to make a final stand against KG Hermann's rampaging Fallschirmjäger while Lieutenant Irvin radioed for reinforcements. Located just 1,200 yards behind them was the Maas-Waal Canal bridge at Heumen—the sole crossing point over this waterway sturdy enough to support British armor. It could not fall to the foe.

Irvin's message reached the 505th PIR's command post, where a radioman scribbled "Plenty Trouble Mook" into his operations journal

before advising Colonel Ekman of this new threat to the regiment's flank. Ekman forwarded the report to Lt. Col. Wienecke at Champion Main, then took off by jeep to see what was going on.

Arriving at Irvin's CP at 1500 hours, Ekman observed a large number of Germans organizing for an assault on the Heumen bridge. Knowing that Company B could not stop them unsupported, he directed two reserve platoons from Company A to move forward on the double. Ekman also called up six British-crewed Sherman tanks from the Coldstream Guards' 1st Battalion.

Inside Mook, Reardon and his paratroopers sniped away at unwary adversaries from their

hideouts in residents' basements. In an attempt to silence them, Fallschirmjäger began tossing explosives down cellar stairways. Tragically, several civilians perished this way—the Thoonen family lost six people to German grenades, including 15-month-old toddler Maria Wilhelmina.

The 82nd Airborne's entire eastern flank staggered under II Fallschirmjäger Corps' violent attacks. The crisis required Brig. Gen. Gavin's personal leadership, but he was miles away supervising a daring river crossing operation at Nijmegen. Bob Wienecke, whose CP

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In this photo montage, General Arthur Percival is pictured around the time that the Japanese invaded the Malay Peninsula, leading to his surrender of the bastion of Singapore. In the background, Japanese soldiers celebrate their victory with a rousing Banzai cheer.





Percival's Surrender: Britain's Greatest FAILURE

General Arthur Percival's surrender of the bastion of Singapore to the Japanese was a low point of World War II for the British Empire. **BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN**

To those that met him, Lieutenant General Arthur Percival was uninspiring and gloomy, seeing difficulties rather than opportunities; one who was weak and hesitant when a decision was needed.

He was a thin man with two protruding teeth that made him look like a rabbit. When he wore his Wolseley tropical pith helmet, his men ridiculed him behind his back. He was neither ruthless, nor brilliant, nor hard-driving. He had no experience of top-level leadership when he was given the Malaya command.

He was a meticulous staff officer who could write reports to perfection. There was no question of his battlefield courage: he suffered five wounds in the Great War. He was an excellent athlete, too: winning cross-country runs and excelling in equestrian events.

Such was the man who would lead the Commonwealth ground forces in Malaya to the greatest defeat in the history of the British Empire.

Percival was born on December 26, 1887, in Aspenden, Hertfordshire, attended Rugby School, and clerked for an iron-merchant company in London. When the Great War broke out, Percival joined the Bedfordshire Regiment and gained an immediate commission. Gallant in action, he was awarded a Military Cross, Distinguished Service Order, Croix de

Guerre, and the brevet rank of major, along with five wounds.

After surviving the trenches, he was assigned to the 46th Royal Fusiliers, part of the ill-conceived Allied intervention in North Russia. Percival gained a bar to his DSO in those actions. From there, he joined the 1st Essex, gaining both the IRA's hatred and an Order of the British Empire—both for his efficiency, mostly in gaining information from captured suspects.

A man with his field experience was a logical choice to attend the British Army Staff College at Camberley, where he ran cross-country and learned that the defense of Malaya would be based on the Army holding off Japan until the "Main Fleet" and aircraft arrived at the bases being built on the peninsula and Singapore.

He married Betty McGregor in 1927, and the union resulted in daughter Dorinda and son James. Percival drew more important appointments: studying at the Naval Staff College; instructor at Camberley, where he impressed Field Marshal Sir John Dill; student at the Imperial Defense College; promotion to full colonel in 1935.

Percival was then assigned as General Staff Officer One (GSO1) to the Malaya command, then under Major General William Dobbie. His



Alamy

work was planning the defense of Singapore, doing so with meager funds and fewer troops. His appreciation supported Dobbie's views that Malaya could be conquered by a Japanese drive from the north, down the west coast roads, and besieging Singapore. Dobbie also pointed out that the many airfields the RAF had constructed in north Malaya could not be defended with the forces presently assigned and firmer steps needed to be taken.

Dill, now commanding at Aldershot, was impressed by this report. When war broke out, Dill was assigned as commander of the British Expeditionary Force's 1st Corps, and he took Percival to France with him as Brigadier General Staff. Percival was soon promoted to command the 43rd Infantry (Wessex) Division, training in Wiltshire, as a major general.

He didn't last long there. When the 44th Infantry (Home Counties) Division staggered home from Dunkirk, Percival was put in command, and he put it through anti-invasion duties through March 1941. Then he received the fateful news that he had been promoted to lieutenant general and appointed General Officer Commanding Malaya.

Percival arrived in Malaya to find his command in poor shape. The peninsula was defended by the 11th and 9th Indian Divisions and the 8th Australian Division. In theory, they were the finest elements of the British Empire. In reality, the Indian forces lacked veteran

NCOs and skilled officers—the best had been sent to North Africa. The Australians had similar problems. Many of their troops were badly trained and described as “sweepings off the streets of Melbourne and Sydney.”

Almost none of them had any serious jungle training. All the leaders would look at maps, see jungles and swamps, and concentrate on defending the many roads—which would prove critical to the Japanese assault.

The promised aircraft to defend the bases never arrived. The F2A Brewster Buffalos were outclassed by Japanese Zero and Oscar fighters. Malaya's Supreme Commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, a Great War flying ace, said, “Let England have the Super-Spitfires and Hyper-Hurricanes. We can get along all right with what we have here.”

Brooke-Popham's attitude to defense reflected that of the British Malayan and Singapore population. Malaya may have been part of the British Empire, but there was no urgency at any level to replicate the intense defensive measures of England, from Air Raid Precautions to hiring labor to build defense lines, to creating sabotage teams to attack invaders after their advance. Despite being General Officer Commanding, Percival made no effort to change this mentality.

Though legendary, the Singapore Fortress had a critical weakness. It wasn't the popular myth that the guns could not fire northward—

they could. Its magazines were filled with armor piercing shells—useless against infantry.

Nonetheless, Percival planned in accordance with his own pre-war appreciations. Malay and Singapore troops backed up the immobile artillery of the Fortress. The 8th Australian Division's two brigades defended the east coast against Japanese assault. The 3rd Indian Corps set up on the Thai border, against a Japanese invasion of the southern corner of the nation and a drive down Malaya's west coast. If that happened, the British plan was Operation Matador: to hurl the Indian troops into Thailand and hold “The Ledge,” a hilly outcropping facing potential invaders.

All seemed academic in Singapore—the real war was in Europe and North Africa. Nobody bothered with civil defense precautions, air defense systems, or training troops for the jungle. The 3rd Indian Corps commander, Lt. Gen. Lewis “Piggy” Heath, resented that Percival, a junior officer in peacetime, outranked him. Major General Gordon Bennett, who commanded the 8th Australian Division, resented his own officers, senior officers, British officers, and Percival in particular.

On December 8, 1941, the Japanese preempted the British discussions by invading the Kra Peninsula with three infantry divisions totaling 38,000 men of Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita's 25th Army, backed up by swarms of army and navy aircraft, ignoring a monsoon.

They stormed into Thailand and south to Malaya.

Now Percival was in the fire, and he proved unequal to the task. British troops were supposed to move north into Thailand to occupy “The Ledge.” Percival dithered. The Indians didn’t move, instead squatting in the rain, awaiting the Japanese. “The Ledge” was taken by the Japanese.

National Archives



Australia War Memorial



ABOVE: Australian soldiers, exhausted and stunned by the ferocity of the Japanese onslaught in Malaya, watch the destruction of an enemy air raid against Singapore unfold before their eyes in February 1942. **TOP:** Japanese soldiers made use of bicycles as a reliable form of transportation during their advance toward Singapore. When the rubber tires went flat and could not be repaired, the resourceful troops rode on the rims. **OPPOSITE:** Japanese soldiers charge a British position during their swift conquest of the Malay Peninsula in late 1941 and early 1942. The 25th Army under General Tomoyuki Yamashita was relentless in its drive to Singapore and captured the fortress city from the landward side.

The 11th Division was assigned two roles: offensive and defensive. Percival chose neither. Percival’s own pre-war appreciation said that the RAF airfields built in northern Malaya could not be defended. They were neither defended nor properly abandoned, and the Japanese soon seized them and made use of both their runways and supplies. Brigadier Ivan Simson, Percival’s Chief Engineer, repeatedly

pressed the need of building entrenchments in Singapore and anti-tank training for the troops, using bundles of manuals on hand. Percival said that doing so would be “bad for morale.”

Some disasters were beyond Percival’s control. When Japanese aircraft attacked Singapore on the first night of the war, they found the city fully lit. The chief electrician was at the movies with his keys to turn off the power plant, and nobody could find him. Once they did, gas lamp-lighters had to walk around Singapore, shutting the gas lights off one at a time. RAF fighters that survived the loss of their airfields to the north were soon chopped up by Japanese planes. The only good news was that Brooke-Popham and his mustache were fired and replaced by the capable Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell.

Things got worse. Percival could not control the battle. Yamashita’s men took the initiative and took to their bicycles at once, thundering down Malaya’s paved roads. From Fort Canning in Singapore, Percival could not effectively coordinate and communicate with his men. Civilian telephone operators went to lunch or cut his calls, and he made no efforts to rectify the situation. At meetings, Percival arrived tired and worn out, unable to lead. The British official historian summed these conferences up well: “Bennett would...take the floor putting forward impracticable proposals until Heath would break in with a sensible suggestion based on sound military considerations, which Percival would act upon.”

The Japanese moved around road-based British defenses, sloshing through mangrove swamps and thick jungles. When the 11th Indian Division disintegrated at Jitra, historian Arthur Swinson pronounced it “a disgrace to British arms.”

Percival tried to defend the Slim River, hoping to hold it until the 18th British Division could arrive in Singapore, bringing fresh troops, unfortunately trained for desert warfare. Once again, Japanese tanks and infantry blasted the Anglo-Indian defenses, sending the men fleeing in disorganized mobs. The Japanese killed 500, taking 3,200 prisoners and vast quantities of intact supplies.

Blame for this catastrophe fell on Percival’s head for failing to replace the battered and demoralized 11th Indian Division with relatively fresh troops that were still in garrison in Singapore.

After this, Wavell flew to Singapore to find out what was going on for himself and was unimpressed. Wavell found Percival “an uninspiring leader, weak and gloomy.” However, the field marshal could find no replacement, given that the British had already fired a number



National Archives

of division and brigade commanders in Malaya.

Yet Wavell privately told Percival's subordinates of his lack of confidence in their boss. Nor did Wavell stamp out the bickering between Heath and Percival. Wavell's only move was to put Bennett and his Australians in northwestern Johore and Heath's 3rd Indian Corps in southeastern Johore. This, Wavell determined, would be the decisive battle for Singapore. Wavell intended that the Australians, with their aggressive jungle fighting tactics, would buy time for the 18th Division to arrive. However, Percival wanted to fight a more conventional battle and sabotaged Wavell's plan.

Yamashita attacked the British defenders, who now outnumbered him, relying on air superiority and captured supplies. The Australians fought hard, but the Indian troops less so. The Japanese Imperial Guard Division crushed the 45th Indian Brigade and cut off two Australian battalions, which took heavy casualties in their breakout. Bennett and Heath blamed each other, and Percival made no effort to resolve the debate.

Australian and Indian troops streamed across the Johore Causeway into Singapore Island, joining the 18th British Division already there. Percival had lost 19,123 killed, wounded, and missing, along with vast amounts of supplies. London told Wavell and Percival that Singapore had to be held as long as possible. Australian replacements—some barely trained—were sent to Singapore. They joined other

ill-disciplined men in an orgy of looting. Again, Percival failed to act. Wavell again reminded Percival to build trenches on Singapore's north shore. Again, Percival said they would be "bad for morale." Nor did Percival build air raid shelters for civilians. He did not act to resolve disputes over pay for coolies to dig them.

Now Percival had to figure out where the Japanese would attack his 220 square miles of flat land. Wavell ordered Percival to deploy the fresh 18th Division at the island's northwest corner, amid the mangrove swamps, where the Japanese were likely to attack. But Percival's intelligence officers argued that Yamashita had 150,000 men and 300 tanks—more than double their actual strength—and Percival placed the 18th Division and the best Indian units in the east, leaving the northwest coast to Bennett's weary or poorly trained Australians.

The Japanese launched their assault on Singapore on February 8, at dusk—against the Australians in Singapore's northeast corner. They blasted through the exhausted Australians, who gave way after weeks of determined and hopeless defense. Percival overestimated the Japanese attack at 23,000 men rather than the 12,000 it really was. Admiral Jack Spooner, the Royal Navy's senior officer, "tried to ginger up Percival to send reinforcements from anywhere and risk a second attack as the chances were the Japs wouldn't know the troops had been moved for some time. But no—he had no fight left."

Australian leadership disintegrated, too, with one of their brigadiers saying he was going to urge Percival to surrender. Wavell, a firmer voice, flew into Singapore on February 10, and told Percival that his troops outnumbered the Japanese and "the honor of the British Empire and of the British Army is at stake."

It didn't help. British Imperial troops deserted and found succor in wine stocks. Japanese troops advanced. On February 13, the top British commanders met at Fort Canning's air-conditioned "Battle Box," where Bennett and Heath said that further resistance was futile. "I have my honor to consider and there is also the question of what posterity will think of us if we surrender this large Army and valuable fortress," Percival said.

Heath had a harsh retort: "You need not bother about your honor. You lost that a long time ago up in the North."

At 9:30 a.m. on February 15, Percival summoned his commanders for a last meeting at the Battle Box. There was just one day's supply left of water, gasoline, and artillery ammunition. There was no possibility of a counterattack. Continued resistance would mean death not only for troops but Singapore residents. Percival announced his decision to surrender.

The scenes that followed remain iconic, the tin-hatted Percival, looking dazed, and his defeated party marching out under white flags to the Ford Factory at the Bukit Timah Road to surrender to Yamashita, the angry negotia-

tions in which the Japanese general bellowed “Yes or no?” either at Percival or his own interpreter, and surrendered Australian troops sweeping Singapore’s streets while Japanese troops marched in.

It was the greatest military disaster in the history of the British Empire, and the British lost about 130,000 men, most of them POWs, who would suffer unparalleled cruelty and torture while building the “Burma-Thai Railway.”

Bennett did not go “in the bag”—he fled to Australia, claiming the nation needed his knowledge—but Percival did.

Initially, Percival was held at Changi Barracks, a giant pre-war British Army base, with many of his men. Depressed, he sat quietly outside a small house or walked the camp’s perimeter, accompanied by his former aides, reviewing his ill fortune. The Japanese recruited 10,000 Indians and Sikh prisoners into the Indian National Army, and these renegades served as camp guards, happy to mistreat their old officers. If a British officer failed to salute an INA guard, the guard would set the Briton straight with a beating by a rifle butt. Officers were forced to do menial tasks.

The Japanese also starved their prisoners, seeing them as dishonorable for surrendering.

As senior POW, Percival showed moral courage. He did not oppose the Japanese requirement to salute all guards but stood up for POW welfare, complaining about their inadequate accommodations, rations, and medical treatment. When the Japanese asked Percival for British technicians to repair captured anti-aircraft guns, he refused, saying that would be aiding the enemy. The Japanese repeated the threat later, with a similar result. The Japanese threw Percival into solitary confinement for 17 days. Eventually, they simply asked him if he knew where the guns were located. Percival said the Japanese must know where they were as well as he did by now, and that ended the punishment.

When three British artillerymen were caught in a failed escape attempt, the Japanese shot them, though Percival protested that such punishment was illegal.

Percival wrote in his memoirs of the Japanese hypocrisy on hygiene: “They will insist on fingernails being clean, but a fly-covered refuse dump adjoining a kitchen means nothing to them. They seem to have absorbed Western ideas but not how to apply them.”

On August 13, 1942, Percival and other officers and civilian leaders were shipped to Taiwan on the cargo steamer *Tanjong Maru*. The officers sweltered in the holds, enduring diarrhea and dysentery, with few latrines. The Japanese did little about it, and the suffering did not end

until August 31, when the POWs were unloaded and taken to Heito Camp—officially Taiwan POW Camp No. 3—which held American generals bagged in the Philippines, including Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, who had endured the cruel duty of defending and surrendering the archipelago after General Douglas MacArthur was ordered to escape.

The Japanese ordered their captives to sign “no escape” declarations. Aware that British officers were under strict orders from London to make every effort to escape, Percival and his men refused. Percival was marched off to the guardroom. The parade remained formed up

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ABOVE: General Tomoyuki Yamashita, commander of the Japanese 25th Army, pauses as he dictates terms of the surrender of Singapore to General Arthur Percival. **OPPOSITE:** General Arthur Percival, far right, marching to the negotiating table with the surrender of Singapore imminent. Percival is accompanied by soldiers carrying the white flag of truce and the British Union Jack. Yamashita, though victorious, had already spent most of the fighting capability of his command and succeeded in taking Singapore partially with bluff and bluster.

for three hours in the rain until sunset.

Percival asked to meet with his men and agreed to the Japanese terms, regarding the document as meaningless. After that, he and his men were sent to their barracks, which had brick walls, palm leaf roofs, and bamboo partitions, with wooden shelves to sleep on—but no mattresses.

The Japanese commanding officer was Lieutenant Tamaki, a vicious sadist who cared little for the welfare of his prisoners. Tamaki provided no medical care. He told them he would “fill the camp cemetery.”

In September, the British and American officers were moved to Karenko Camp in Taiwan,

the collecting point for all prominent POWs, including Dutch generals and admirals from the East Indies and Britons from Hong Kong. Despite their high rank, treatment was “disgraceful,” in the words of Hong Kong Governor Sir Mark Young. Senior officers, regardless of age and health conditions, were required to perform manual labor. Percival found himself sharing a room with Simson, one of his old antagonists from Singapore.

Japanese troops treated generals and governors as mere coolies, beating them and slapping them on any pretext. Oddly, the work was not that hard—mostly gardening—but the

abuse was continuous and sadistic. Guards would conceal themselves in bushes on the path to the latrine, leap out, and beat senseless a POW who had failed to see and salute them. After that, the guards would stand around laughing at the POW’s plight.

The Japanese appointed Percival “squad leader” for his room, and soon he was fired from that exalted post for constantly standing up to his captors on many issues. He protested everything: living conditions, food, guard assaults, and abuse. The Japanese ignored him.

The food was bad...thin vegetable soup, cooked rice, and occasional meat. Percival and



Above: National Archives; Right: Australia War Memorial

ABOVE: In 1944, Percival and other prisoners were transported to Camp Hoten near Mukden, Manchuria where winter temperatures regularly fell 30-40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. **RIGHT:** Some of the prisoners taken at Singapore were relocated to Burma, where they worked as forced laborers on the Burma-Thai Railway—made famous in David Lean’s Oscar-winning film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.



his men wasted away. To supplement their meager diets, the POWs planted vegetables.

In his spare time, Percival took pencil and paper and began writing an account of the Malayan campaign, knowing that London would need it sometime. He had to write it from memory and with the support of his fellow POWs, which led to a lot of rehashings of old arguments.

While this was going on, Japanese officers regularly beat and physically abused the captured generals for refusing to give up secrets in interrogations or cooperate in making propaganda statements.

In late 1942, the Japanese brought in reporters to interview the prisoners, hoping the defeated generals would say that Japan was going to win the war.

Percival and some of his fellow officers, including Wainwright, were taken to the home of the mayor of Karenko for tea. “But then the trick was exposed,” Percival wrote. “Cameras were produced and photographs taken of the Allied prisoners ‘enjoying tea and a smoke in their comfortable quarters.’ That was typical of the Japanese methods.”

Beatings continued—Japanese troops pounded Heath, who was unable to stand at attention

due to his withered arm. Percival protested the evil deed and its savagery, and a Japanese orderly officer and sergeant interpreter strode up to Heath. The officer spoke at length in Japanese. The interpreter said, “You have now received an apology.” The two left.

Percival was not frightened of, or cowed by, the Japanese bullying tactics. He met with the camp commandant’s executive officer—the CO never deigned to meet with POWs—and demanded better supplies for all ranks. The Japanese told him that “the sentries were right in beating prisoners and that Japanese internees were being beaten by the English and Americans.”

In addition to fighting the Japanese, Percival also had to stand up to exhausted and physically and mentally weakened POWs who were ready to appease their captors, in an isolated environment, where they had no news of the war or letters from home.

In April 1943, the Japanese moved their pris-

oners to Tamasata, and astonished their senior prisoners by issuing Red Cross parcels, giving a Swiss Red Cross representative a potted 30-minute tour of the new camp with no opportunity to speak to prisoners individually. But at a conference, Percival told him of their needs.

Thirty minutes after the Red Cross man left, the POWs went straight back to Karenko and a brand new camp for the most senior officers, called Moksak. This camp had a library and a record player “liberated” from a British resident of Taiwan. The commandant pressured Percival and Wainwright to take part in Japanese propaganda films. They refused. The Japanese tried bribery, offering Percival a caged canary as a pet. He let it escape, unable to see another creature in a cage, particularly a bird.

The Japanese offered to let the officers go fishing. They did so, to cope with the monotony, and found a battery of film cameras waiting for them, along with a live fish in a bucket, attached to a rod, to prove they could really catch fish.

The Japanese also let their captives listen to the radio—but the stations were all Japanese. However, the POWs translated the broadcasts and discovered that while the Japanese were winning “tremendous victories,” they were all taking place closer and closer to their homeland, suggesting they were on the retreat.

The propaganda stunts having failed, Percival and his company were moved back to Karenko, where beatings grew worse. Emperor Hirohito declared that Japan’s military situation was “truly grave” on October 26, and prison guards scapegoated their captives.

From there, the POWs moved to Shirakawa, where beatings continued. A Japanese soldier decided a British general was not standing at attention properly and pounded him with his rifle butt. The orderly officer stood by, laughing heartily. Percival wrote that the Japanese “are almost all of them subject to fits of uncontrollable temper. But I would say that the most outstanding characteristics are ignorance of world affairs and narrow-mindedness. Perhaps this is not surprising when one remembers that it is little more than 80 years since Japan emerged from isolation. I believe there were few people in Japan who had any conception of the resources of the Western Powers.”

Beatings were a major menace to the prisoners, but so were health issues, with overflowing latrines and rivers of sewage near the kitchen. More than 60 British and American colonels were ordered to empty the latrines with buckets.

However, by October 1944, the war was finally catching up with Taiwan, and the U.S. Navy and Army Air Forces were subjecting it to regular bombing. The most prominent POWs were moved to the relative safety and bitter cold of Japanese-occupied Manchuria—for fear they might be liberated and tell the truth about the horrors they endured.

Required to take minimal kit, Percival was forced to burn his carefully compiled reports. Now that every Japanese ship moving in the Pacific was a fat target for American submarines, Percival and his colleagues were flown to Sian, near Shenyang (then called Mukden).

As winter approached, the exhausted POWs found that the Japanese had actually thought ahead and provided them with Red Cross parcels. Brutality was replaced with boredom. Percival received his first letters from home, posted years ago, including one from Dill, saying, “I constantly think of you. Do not think that you are forgotten.” Shortly afterward, Percival found out that Dill had recently died.

However, while the Japanese were treating Percival tolerably, if not well, they continued to commit vile atrocities on lower-ranking



Percival, left, with General Douglas MacArthur (center). On the right is General Jonathan M. Wainwright, who surrendered Allied troops in the Philippines to the Japanese in the spring of 1942 and also endured harsh captivity. Both liberated commanders were present with MacArthur during the surrender of Japan aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945.

POWs. Tokyo ordered that they be massacred to prevent the advancing Allies from learning about the mistreatment. At Palawan in the Philippines, Japanese troops hurled gasoline into air raid shelters full of prisoners and set them on fire. On other islands, death marches took care of Australians and Britons.

The war turned into a race for survival between the prisoners and the Japanese, and the U.S. Army Air Forces ended it on August 9, 1945, dropping the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and millions of battle-hardened Russian troops stormed into Manchuria. This double whammy forced Emperor Hirohito to accept the Allied unconditional surrender demands, which included, in writing, the unharmed release of every single remaining Allied POW, from Percival to the lowest-ranking private. Japanese generals ordered their camp staff to turn over the facilities to their captives, burn records of atrocities, and order guards who had committed the gravest crimes to shed their uniforms and flee Allied retribution.

Now came the hard part of evacuating exhausted, sick POWs from Japanese camps across the Pacific. Japanese generals, summoned to American-held Okinawa to organize the occupation of the homeland, were ordered to bring complete lists and particulars of the camps.

On August 16, 1945, Percival and fellow prisoners saw planes fly over and parachutes drift down near their camp. The Japanese provided no information. That evening, six armed white men in unfamiliar uniforms arrived at the camp, went straight to the guardroom, and met with Japanese officers. After that, the Japanese relaxed their tight discipline in the camp, and prisoners were allowed to walk around all night, smoke, and even take cigarettes from sentries.

At 7 a.m. the next day, the Japanese commandant summoned the top Allied officers and told them the Empire had signed an “armistice” with the Allies on August 15. Even now, the Japanese could not use the word “surrender.”

The six parachutists were a team from the American Office of Special Services, sent in to care for the POWs and ensure their safety.

The U.S. Army Air Forces began parachuting containers of food, clothing, and medical supplies to camps throughout Manchuria, and a more authoritative form of liberation came when Soviet tanks crashed through the gates of many prison camp and English-speaking Russians offered to kill any Japanese guards who had mistreated Allied POWs.

Percival was flown to Chongqing (then Chungking) on August 27, where he was greeted by General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart, Britain’s liaison officer to China. In a fresh uni-

Continued on page 78

Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division ride aboard a transport aircraft en route to their drop zones near the Salerno beachhead during the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland September 13-14, 1943. Members of the 504th and 505th Parachute Infantry Battalions were dropped to support the push inland. Members of the 509th were deployed behind enemy lines to break up German communications at Avellino.





Desperate Venture at **AVELLINO**

BY NATHAN N. PREFER

THE Fifth U.S. Army was in trouble and dropping 600 paratroops at Avellino to disrupt the communications of the 16th Panzer Division seemed like a sound solution. Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark's command had landed in Italy at the Bay of Salerno expecting to find little or no opposition. After all, the Italian armed forces had just surrendered, and few German military units were expected in southern Italy. Allied plans like "Gangway" and "Barracuda" were envisioned as easy landings with an overland march directly to Naples, where follow-up forces would come ashore at that port with dry feet. It was to be "wine, women and song" all the way to Rome. But things were not working out as planned.

Unknown to the Allies, the Germans had made plans to take over the coastal defenses—Plan Asche—after the Italian surrender. When

A HASTY MISSION TO DROP THE 509TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY BATTALION ON GERMAN-OCCUPIED AVELLINO DURING THE BATTLE FOR SALERNO LEFT 600 MEN SCATTERED AND STRANDED BEHIND ENEMY LINES FOR TWO WEEKS AS THE ALLIES FOUGHT FOR A TOEHOLD ON THE ITALIAN MAINLAND.

it came, the Germans moved swiftly. The German force assigned to Salerno was the LXXVI Panzer Corps with the reconstituted 16th Panzer Division under command. Formed from the 16th Infantry Division in 1940, this veteran unit had fought on the Eastern Front at Lvov, Taganrog, and other battles before being destroyed at Stalingrad. Rebuilt with survivors, veterans, and recruits, it had trained in France before moving to Italy where it was assigned to defend the Salerno Bay area. Its major units were the 2nd Panzer Regiment, the 64th and 79th Panzergrenadier Regiments, and the 16th Panzer Artillery Regiment. Generalmajor Rudolf Sieckenius commanded the division at the time of the Salerno battle.

National Archives



Both: National Archives

Barely had the 16th Panzer Division settled into the Italian defenses above the Bay of Salerno when the Fifth U. S. Army arrived. General Clark's forces consisted of the VI U.S. Corps under Major General Ernest J. Dawley and the X British Corps under Lieutenant General Sir Richard L. McCreery. One American and two British divisions, reinforced with Ranger battalions and Commandos, made up the assault force. The attack began on September 9, 1943.

The landings at Salerno were intended to speed up the conquest of southern Italy, which had already begun when Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery's Eighth British Army had landed on the Italian "toe" on September 3, 1943. But the Germans were delaying the Eighth Army's advance with demolitions and ambushes. A landing behind their lines, at Salerno, might force a more rapid withdrawal. The surrender of the Italian Armed forces also raised Allied hopes of a swift move on Rome.

But from the first landings at Salerno, it was clear that the 16th Panzer Division had no intention of withdrawing. Their defenses stood firm against the novice Americans of the 36th "Texas" Infantry Division and the British veterans of the 46th West Riding and 56th City of London Infantry Divisions. The Battle of Salerno quickly became a vicious and bloody struggle to remain ashore or be pushed back into the sea.

Major General Fred L. Walker's "Texans" fought desperately at Altavilla, where three Medals of Honor were awarded and the 1st Battalion, 142nd Infantry, was reduced to just

60 remaining soldiers. The Germans also made a dangerous thrust along the Sele River corridor, threatening to split the Allied beachhead in two. Across that river, Major General J. L. I. Hawkesworth's West Riding and Major General D. A. H. Lyne's City of London Divisions were equally hard pressed. General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, commanding the Tenth German Army, was determined to throw the Allies into the sea or destroy them on the beaches. Knowing that the 16th Panzer Division alone could not both hold the beachhead perimeter and successfully counterattack, he called up his reserves, including the 15th Panzergrenadier Division, the 29th Panzergrenadier Division, and later the 26th Panzer Division.

By September 13, the situation of the Fifth Army at Salerno was increasingly desperate. The last reserves, the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment and the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment, had been thrown into the battle as infantry. Even the landing of most of the 45th "Thunderbirds" Infantry Division under Major General Troy H. Middleton failed to turn the tide. A withdrawal to a final beachhead line was ordered, and General Clark sought further assistance from beyond Fifth Army resources.

Field Marshal Montgomery's Eighth British Army had halted to reorganize and was still too far south to be of any help. General Clark and his staff had already discussed with Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt preliminary plans for an evacuation of either the American or British beaches, depending upon developments. Admi-

ral Hewitt objected that such an operation was technically impossible. He pointed out that it was easy to retract a landing craft from the beach after it was emptied but quite another thing once it was fully loaded. Despite his concerns, Admiral Hewitt met with British Admiral G. N. Oliver who raised the very same concerns. Nevertheless, ships and landing craft were placed on a half-hour alert for movement to the sea outside of the range of shore-based artillery in preparation for an evacuation. Later, General McCreery would also object to evacuating his X British Corps.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Mediterranean theater commander, had offered General Clark the 82nd Airborne Division's two parachute regiments as an immediate reinforcement. Others would have to come by sea, taking days to arrive—time the Fifth U.S. Army did not have to spare. Clark accepted and asked that the regiments be dropped within the beachhead as soon as possible. The drop would occur that very evening, September 13.

General Matthew B. Ridgeway, commanding the 82nd Airborne Division, turned to Colonel Rueben H. Tucker, commanding the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), for the drop. First, General Ridgeway made sure that there would be no repetition of the tragedy during the Sicily invasion, where Allied ships off the beachhead had mistaken his paratroopers for the enemy and opened fire on their aircraft, killing and drowning many. Once assured that every ship had acknowledged the upcoming air-

borne drop, he prepared for the actual operation by assigning a drop zone five miles north of Agropoli, a flat area about 1,200 yards long and 800 yards wide between the sea and the coastal highway.

Then the 2nd Battalion, 504th (PIR), boarded its planes and began its flight into the Salerno beachhead. Forty-one aircraft dropped the battalion at 0130 hours on September 14. The 1st Battalion followed, and by 0300 hours on September 14, Colonel Tucker reported to VI Corps headquarters that he had 1,300 troops available for the defense of the beachhead.

Not everything went smoothly for the 504th PIR. One company landed eight miles from the drop zone, a result of pilots' confusion and poor navigation. On the German side, a Lieutenant Rocholl, commanding three armored vehicles of the 16th Panzer Division's Reconnaissance Regiment was enjoying his first good night's sleep in many days when a guard awakened him to report enemy paratroopers landing nearby. He stepped into the night to see 50 or 60 paratroopers about 500 feet high swinging down in their parachutes. He could faintly hear aircraft in the distance. The bright moonlit night showed every detail of the descending enemy troops.

The Germans rushed to their armored cars and swung the barrels of their 20mm cannon and their machine guns to fire at the descending enemy. They fired until the paratroopers were too low to continue without hitting friendly forces. Most of the Americans landed further up the mountain on which Lieutenant Rocholl's company had bivouacked. The Germans immediately moved to reconnoiter the area, searching houses, but at first found no enemy soldiers. As they came to the last house, Lieutenant Rocholl knocked at the door, finding it locked. When there was no response, two of his men kicked in the door and ducked just as a burst of automatic weapons fire came from inside. The Germans replied with two grenades and their own automatic weapons. When the dust and smoke cleared Lieutenant Rocholl found several wounded American paratroopers who surrendered. As he left, he noticed several other shadowy figures racing further up the hill but declined to chase them in the dark.

The German counterattack continued on September 14, but the senior German commanders were beginning to realize that they could not compete with or overcome the great advantages the Allies had in naval gunfire and air support. Combined with the increasing artillery fire from the beachhead and another reinforcing drop by Colonel James Gavin's 505th PIR, the German command soon decided to withdraw

from Salerno. Unaware of this development, the Allies still feared the enemy would bring more strength against the beachhead, and so another airborne operation was planned. This one was intended to aid the X Corps, which had suffered the brunt of the German counterattacks. A separate battalion of American paratroopers, the 2nd Battalion, 509th PIR, would be dropped well behind enemy lines to harass German communications and delay the arrival of German reinforcements.

The 2nd Battalion, 509th had an unusual history. It began as a separate battalion designated as the 504th Parachute Infantry Battalion. In February 1942, it was redesignated as the 2nd

talion was then attached to the 82nd Airborne Division but was not used during the Sicily operation. Lieutenant Colonel Doyle R. Yardley took being ignored hard and his troopers were eager for the next operation.

With the two parachute regiments of the 82nd Airborne Division already fighting at Salerno, the plan to disrupt the enemy's rear areas needed another airborne unit. There was only one other available in the theater, and that was the 2nd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion. General Clark had requested that they drop on the night of September 12, but that left insufficient time for preparation. Instead, the planners moved to the



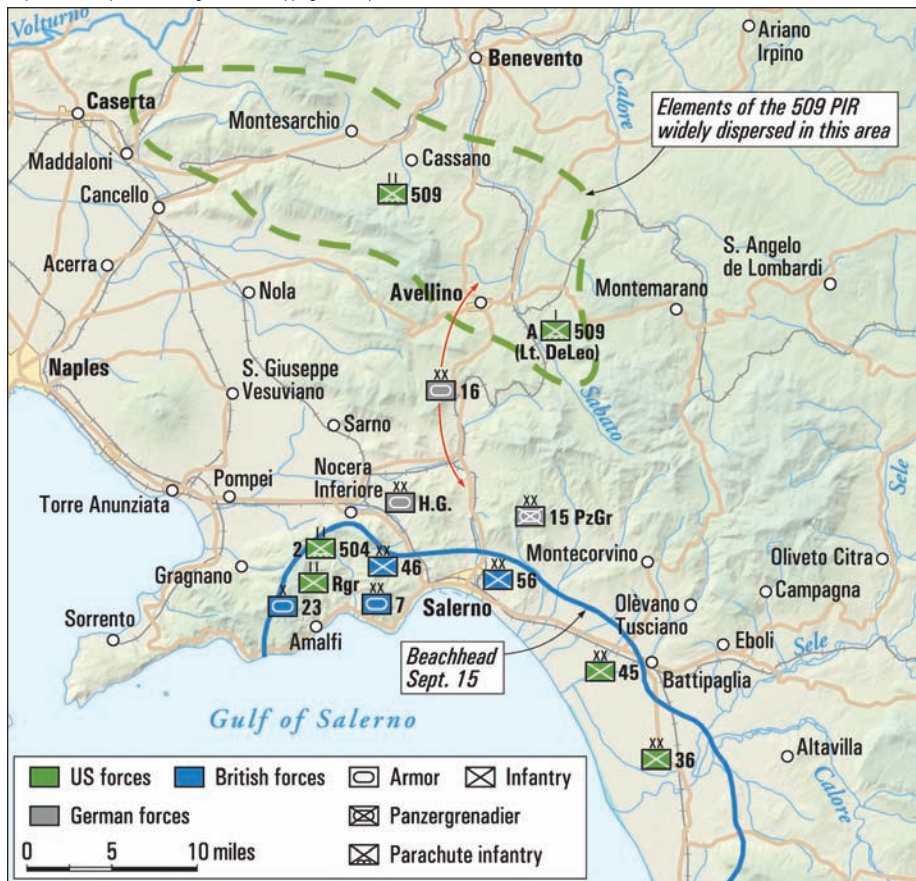
ABOVE: Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division collect their gear and load aboard aircraft in preparation for their jump into Italy near Salerno on September 13-14, 1943. The airborne troops were inserted to reinforce the Allied Fifth Army invasion of the Italian mainland. **OPPOSITE:** The Germans contested the Salerno landings vigorously, prompting Allied commanders to order the 82nd Airborne Division (504th PIR and 505th PIR) to jump in as reinforcements. Elements of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion were inserted behind enemy lines to disrupt troop movements and communications.

Battalion, 503rd PIR, then training at Fort Benning. In July of that year the battalion was abruptly shipped overseas to Scotland, never to return to the 503rd PIR, which created a new second battalion. While in Scotland the battalion trained with the British 1st Airborne Division. At this time, the battalion received a new designation, as the 2nd Battalion, 509th PIR (Separate). The rest of that regiment was never formed. Later, on December 10, 1943, the battalion would become the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

The "orphan" battalion jumped into Algeria and Tunisia, making the first three combat jumps in American parachute history. The bat-

following night, and General Clark, when queried as to which operation had priority, the drop into the beachhead or the one behind enemy lines, unhesitatingly designated the latter as the priority operation.

The drop zone was a crossroad about three miles southeast of the town of Avellino. The mission was described as a five-day harassment of the Germans, after which the paratroopers were to withdraw to Allied lines by infiltration, unless the Fifth Army had reached its area by then, an unlikely occurrence given the situation at Salerno. Even with the one-day postponement, haste marked the operation. No intelligence of the area or the German defenses could



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ABOVE: The airborne jump in the vicinity of Avellino was widely dispersed, and the difficult terrain contributed to the confusion and early breakdown of unit cohesion. The paratroopers of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion spent days behind enemy lines fighting for their lives against German forces. **TOP:** U.S. 82nd Airborne troops were used to assist Operation Avalanche, the Allied landings near the port of Salerno as the invasion of mainland Italy began September 9, 1943. On September 14, members of the 504th and 505th Parachute Infantry Battalions were dropped near the beachhead. The 509th PIR was dropped behind enemy lines near Avellino. Rough terrain and missed drop zones scattered the paratroopers of the 509th, leading to 115 of 641 men being listed as killed, captured or missing. Members of Company A took shelter in a cave and eventually managed to damage a bridge with TNT.

be found. Aerial photographs only became available on the afternoon before the drop. The maps available were at a scale of 1/50,000, much too large for use by company and platoon leaders. Even then, they showed only Avellino and its immediate environs. Because the battalion had to travel two hours to reach its departure airfield, the commanding officers had barely two hours to study the maps and photos before loading. There was no time to have a commanders' conference before departing.

The men of the battalion had been expecting a call to Salerno, believing that they would join the 504th and 505th PIRs there. They had been waiting in Sicily, sleeping on their parachutes. The call came, not for Salerno but a place called Avellino about which they knew nothing. They were told that only service troops would be in the area, although a German panzer division was expected to pass through in a "few days." The men were told that if anything went wrong, they were to head south toward British lines. The battalion doctor, Captain Carlos "Doc" Alden, wrote "We're all nervous. Hiding it well. I read. Colonel sleeps. Others talk. We're ready for whatever comes."

The 600 men of the battalion boarded 40 aircraft in Sicily and set off for Avellino. Navigational errors and poor radar results, along with the failure of the Aldis lamps carried by their pathfinders, combined with a high jump altitude at 2,000 feet to scatter the paratroopers as far as 25 miles from the drop zone. Two plane loads simply disappeared for the next two months before they were located. Only 15 planeloads landed within five miles of the target.

Once on the ground the paratroopers found that they had landed in broken terrain, making it impossible to concentrate into large groups. Thick woods and vineyards made organizing even more difficult. Most of their heavy equipment, including mortars, machine guns and bazookas, was lost or irretrievably hung up in the trees. Faced with these unexpected difficulties, the paratroopers coalesced into small groups of five to 20 men and did their best to avoid detection while mounting raids on supply trains, truck convoys, and isolated outposts.

Doc Alden had a frightening jump. As he descended, he looked down to see that he was heading directly for a well. With all his equipment, he was sure to drown if he fell in. Despite his best efforts to avoid it, he fell into the well and found himself up to his waist in water. Using his parachute risers as a ladder, he climbed out and moved toward the drop zone. As he moved, he was struck by the quiet. Given the fact that a battalion of paratroopers had just dropped into the area, it was surprisingly quiet.



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General Mark W. Clark, commander of the Allied Fifth Army at Salerno, briefs troopers of the 82nd Airborne Division prior to a mission during the invasion of the Italian mainland in late 1943. The Salerno beachhead was threatened but held against repeated German counterattacks.

Not a shot was heard. He came upon an Italian civilian, who informed him that there were about 250 German soldiers in trucks two or three miles up the road toward the drop zone.

Lieutenant Colonel Yardley had reached the drop zone and gathered as many men as he could. With perhaps 100 troopers, he set off for the crossroads to accomplish his mission, or to at least cut the German lines of communication in the area. Doc Alden's Italian civilian guided them for a mile and then disappeared. Lieutenant Colonel Yardley stopped his column to decide what to do without a guide. Deciding that the guide had left because he was scared, the column moved forward, only to come under fire from several machine guns. Enemy flares lit up the night. A fierce firefight began.

The fighting continued for several minutes, but the Germans soon added tanks and 88mm anti-tank guns to the fray. Aiming these guns at clusters of paratroopers, they soon forced the group to disperse. Lieutenant Colonel Yardley was one of those seriously wounded in this battle. As he lay defenseless on the field, German soldiers came up to him and prodded him with bayonets. Others dragged him to an aid station. Lieutenant Colonel Yardley's part in the Italian Campaign was over.

What Lieutenant Colonel Yardley and his men did not know was that a few days before

they jumped an entire regiment of the 16th Panzer Division had moved into the area. The thought that they faced only "service troops" was now a thing of the past. But the dispersed jump had worked to their benefit. Since they were so widely spread out, the Germans had no center of gravity to attack and had to deal with each small group of paratroopers as they revealed themselves, causing a significant waste of time and effort on the part of the Germans. But that made it no easier for the troopers.

Staff Sergeant William Sullivan later recalled his experiences. "Not long after the jump, Christ, it seemed the whole German army moved into the area, and they were hunting for us—they were hunting for us like rabbits. That scared the hell out of me. They were going up and down the rows of corn and shooting anything that moved.... The idea of being captured or the idea of someone hunting you scared the...out of you ... there's nothing you can do, you have to hide."

Many of the survivors of this fight, including Doc Alden, managed to crawl away in the darkness. Most of the Italian civilians in the battle zone were willing to help the Americans get away, hiding them and providing food before passing them along to others at a distance. At one stop, Alden found some wounded paratroopers in a house and treated their

wounds. As he emerged, he was captured by German soldiers and taken back to the battle area of the previous night. During his interrogation, Alden learned much about the German dispositions. Sent to a German field hospital where he was to treat British and American wounded, he enjoyed a three-day respite, eating with the German commander of the hospital before escaping. Thirty miles behind German lines, the paratroop doctor was hidden by Italian civilians until Allied forces arrived.

Lieutenant Daniel DeLeo and his platoon of Company A had landed a few miles from Avelino. As soon as they landed, they came under fire from the enemy. Four paratroopers were wounded. The rest faded away into the darkness, taking the wounded with them. They found a cave and sheltered there for the rest of the night. After a few days, Lieutenant DeLeo contacted local civilians who provided food but had no medical care available for the wounded. Wearing civilian clothes, Lieutenant DeLeo and some of his troopers went into the local village and kidnapped a Fascist doctor under the noses of the German troops there. Once out of the village, the doctor cooperated, treating the wounded, and stayed for several days to supervise their recovery.

Despite some who thought the doctor could not be trusted to keep their position a secret,



ABOVE: This photo of American prisoners of war was taken at the height of the fighting around the Salerno beachhead. The POWs are members of the 82nd Airborne Division captured after their jump into Italy in support of the Allied invasion of September 1943. **RIGHT:** Captain Carlos "Doc" Alden of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment received the Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star for heroism during the fighting in Italy. **OPPOSITE:** Weeks after the airborne jump of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion near Avellino, American soldiers enter the town. The airborne soldiers parachuted near Avellino but were widely dispersed and could not muster the strength to take the town. Colonel Doyle Yardley, battalion commander, was wounded and taken prisoner, spending 16 months as a POW.

Lieutenant DeLeo released him after making him promise that he would not reveal their location. He reminded the doctor that Allied forces were approaching the area and that if he betrayed them there would be consequences. So convinced was the doctor that he never revealed their presence and even came back every few days to see how the wounded were progressing.

While hiding in the cave, the paratroopers made several forays against the Germans. One evening, they ambushed a German motorcycle courier, hiding his motorcycle in the woods for future use. On others they ambushed individuals or small groups of Germans traveling through. When British troops arrived in the area, the Americans made sure to repay their Italian friends without whom they would not have survived. They seized an abandoned Italian Army supply depot and distributed its contents to those families who had helped them survive behind enemy lines. The former fascist doctor was plied with enough medical supplies to last him quite a while. Arms and military equipment went to Italian partisans.

The battalion executive officer, Major William Dudley, had found about 50 paratroopers from the jump. Some 40 miles from Allied lines and 20 miles from Avellino, he began a march south to Avellino. Before daylight, his group hid on a

steep hill overlooking an unknown village. Some stragglers from his column had stayed in the town, and German troops now engaged these few in the village. Outnumbered and with no heavy equipment, Major Dudley could do nothing to help. He at first decided to remain hidden and await the arrival of Allied forces, but his men strongly objected and wanted to take an active part in the battle.

Advised by a local civilian that there was a bridge which served a large amount of German traffic nearby, Major Dudley reconsidered his position. The paratroopers had 25 pounds of TNT with them, and this could be used on the bridge, severing a German supply line. Major Dudley led a reconnaissance along with the battalion supply officer, Captain Edmund Tomasik, Sergeant Joseph Buchanan, and Private Jack Alongi. The bridge was near the village of Montello, and a nearby mountain would provide a good position for the Americans to watch the traffic.

A plan was made in which Lieutenant Justen McCarthy would place the TNT on the bridge, covered by two security teams, one at each end. The rest of the force under Major Dudley would take positions on the mountain to cover the others with fire support. Waiting for the

German guards to relax, and with no traffic on the bridge, Lieutenant McCarthy and Private Guy Jeanes were placing explosives on the bridge when a German scout car approached. In an instant, the paratroopers on the hill opened fire on the scout car, which skidded into a ditch. The car's occupants opened fire, and the paratrooper security teams returned fire.

Under this barrage, Lieutenant McCarthy and Private Jeanes completed their placement of the explosives and jumped over the side of the bridge into the stream below. After gathering his security teams, Lieutenant McCarthy escaped and joined the main force on the hillside. As they ran, the TNT exploded, creating a large hole in the center of the bridge. A German truck, unwarned by the bridge guards,

proceeded onto the span and blew out its tires on the new hole. The paratroopers on the hill opened fire again, killing a reported six enemy soldiers and backing up traffic for a mile the following day. Two weeks after they had landed, Major Dudley's forces were contacted by the advancing Allies.

These activities and the widely scattered nature of the drop convinced German intelligence officers that the entire 82nd Airborne Division had dropped behind their lines. Captured paratroopers were soon being asked the whereabouts of Colonel Tucker of the 504th Parachute Infantry and Colonel Gavin of the 505th Parachute Infantry. The association of the 2nd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion with the 82nd Airborne Division was known to German intelligence.

Whichever way it is portrayed, the drop of the 2nd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion at Avellino was a desperate venture. In a post-mortem of the battle the battalion cited several reasons for the ineffectiveness of the Avellino operation. These included insufficient time allowed for briefing and equipping the troops; orders to carry five days' rations and five days of ammunition overburdened the troopers physically; and no radio procedures or schedules were worked out to ensure communications. Nor was there an opportunity to secure special radio equipment to maintain contact with the Fifth Army.

Although the Avellino drop did cause confusion behind the German lines and briefly interrupted the lines of communication of the 16th Panzer Division, it had no significant effect on



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the outcome of the Salerno battle. In fact, the day after the paratroopers had dropped, and before they could possibly have had any effect on the battle, General Clark was declaring the battle won.

Miraculously, of the 641 men who jumped at Avellino eventually more than 400 returned to Allied lines. Another 115 were killed, captured, or listed as missing. Some of these missing returned after the war from prison camps. Lieutenant Colonel Dudley escaped from a German POW camp in January 1945 and made his way successfully to Russian forces, where he spent two months with Marshal Georgi Zhukov's Fifth Soviet Army. He was then sent to Odessa, where he joined hundreds of other liberated Allied POWs. Eventually, these men were shipped home.

Doc Alden continued to serve with the battalion, earning a Distinguished Service Cross, a Silver Star, and other awards for gallantry. He was the only member of the battalion to have a book written about him—*Captain Cool: Paratrooper Legend*. General James Gavin of the 82nd Airborne Division would call Doc Alden “the bravest of the brave,” while Lieutenant General William P. Yarborough, who had once commanded the battalion in his long military career, called him “the most gallant paratrooper doctor of them all.”

Captain Edmund J. Tomasik, who had fought at the bridge battle near Avellino, would be the only officer of the battalion to serve in it from organization to disbandment. He would be the battalion's last commander, as Major

Tomasik. After 30 years in the army holding ranks from private to colonel, he retired with a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, and other decorations.

The “bastard” battalion was reorganized, and replacements were integrated. Lieutenant Colonel William P. Yarborough assumed command and Tomasik replaced Major Dudley as executive officer. The battalion was relieved from the 82nd Airborne Division and assigned as the honor guard for Fifth Army Headquarters in recently captured Naples. A detachment was sent to take some offshore islands, which they did successfully. A recommendation for a Distinguished Unit Citation for the battalion's work at Avellino was submitted but never approved. Some veterans think it was because officers involved did not want to bring attention to such an abortive operation occurring under their command.

The battalion went on to fight in Italy at Venafro under the command of Colonel William O. Darby and his Ranger Task Force. While fighting at Mount Croce, its official designation changed once again, to the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion. The battalion next went to Anzio, still attached to Darby's Rangers. When the Rangers were destroyed, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion was attached to the 3rd Infantry Division, remaining at Anzio throughout the fighting there. It was at Anzio that the battalion earned one of its two Presidential Unit Citations.

The invasion of southern France followed. The battalion was part of an ad hoc airborne

task force consisting of many individual airborne and glider troops which dropped around Le Muy near the French Riviera. Resistance was light, and the advance inland soon relieved other paratroopers. The First Airborne Task Force, under the former commander of the 1st Special Service Force (Devil's Brigade), Brigadier General Robert T. Frederick, then protected the flank of the advancing Seventh Army in what has come to be known as the Champagne Campaign.

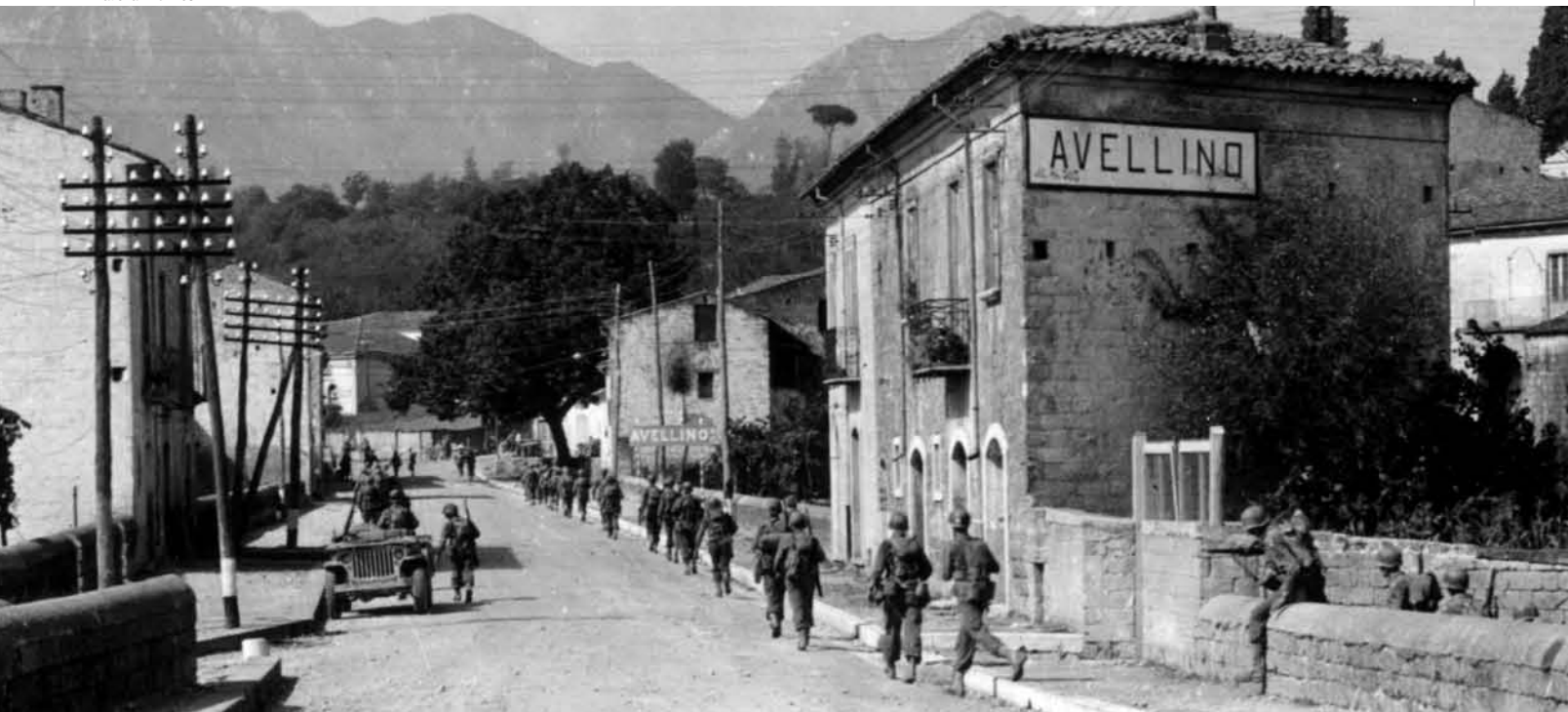
By December 1944, the battalion was back with the 82nd Airborne Division in France. When the Battle of the Bulge began, the battalion, like the rest of the American airborne forces, was in reserve. Together with the separate 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion and the 517th PIR, the battalion was ordered to report to Bastogne and the 101st Airborne Division, but before it could arrive its orders were changed. It was instead told to report to the 3rd Armored Division near the town of St. Vith.

Suffering from the cold and with inadequate winter clothing, the paratroopers were parceled out to the various task forces of the 3rd Armored Division as added infantry. Individual companies fought at Parker's Crossroads, Manhay, Sadzot, and other fiercely contested crossroads in the Ardennes. For these actions, the battalion would receive its second Presidential Unit Citation, and Company C would win a third.

After a brief rest, the understrength battalion was attached to the 9th Armored Division and trained to act as armored infantry. Then, along

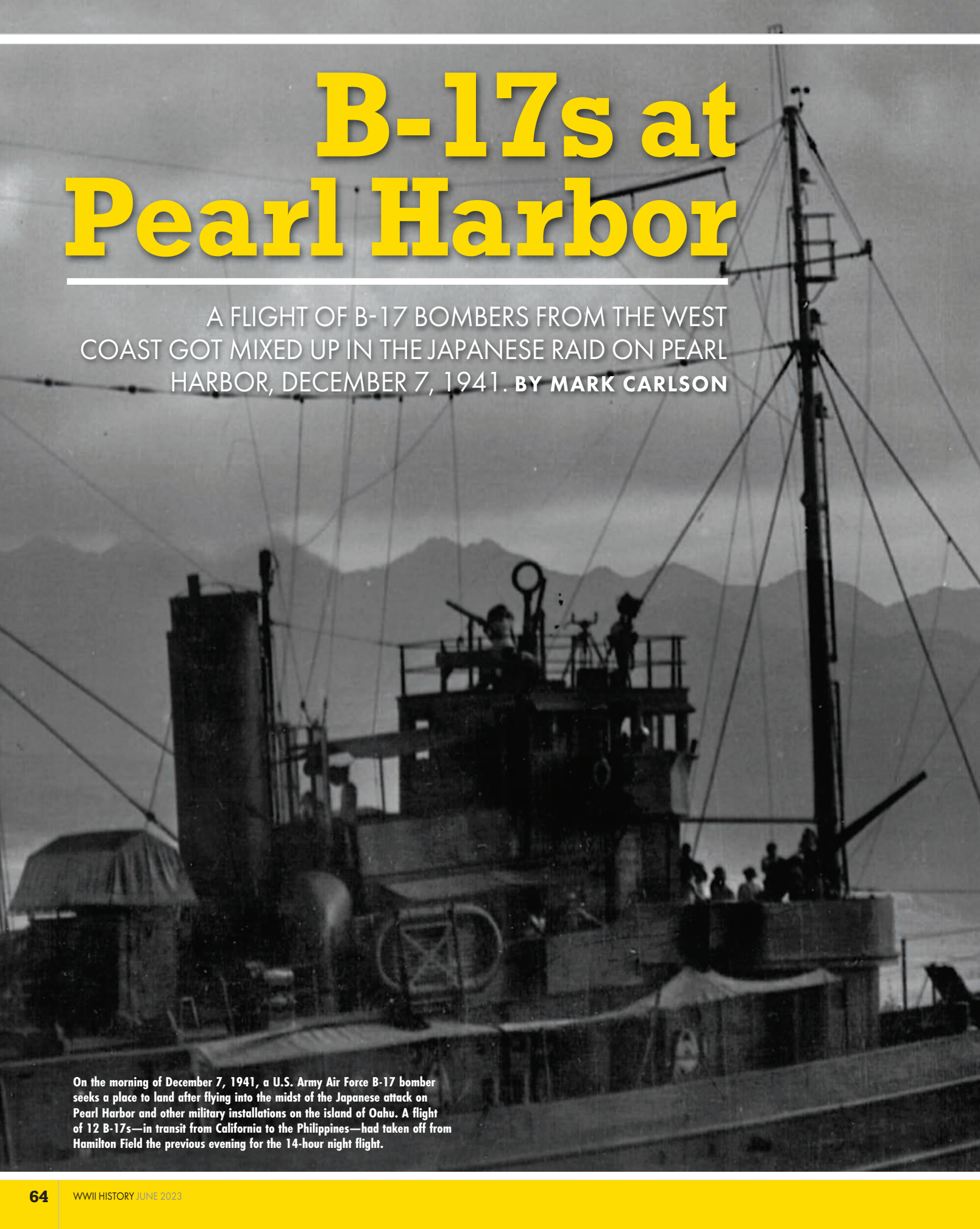
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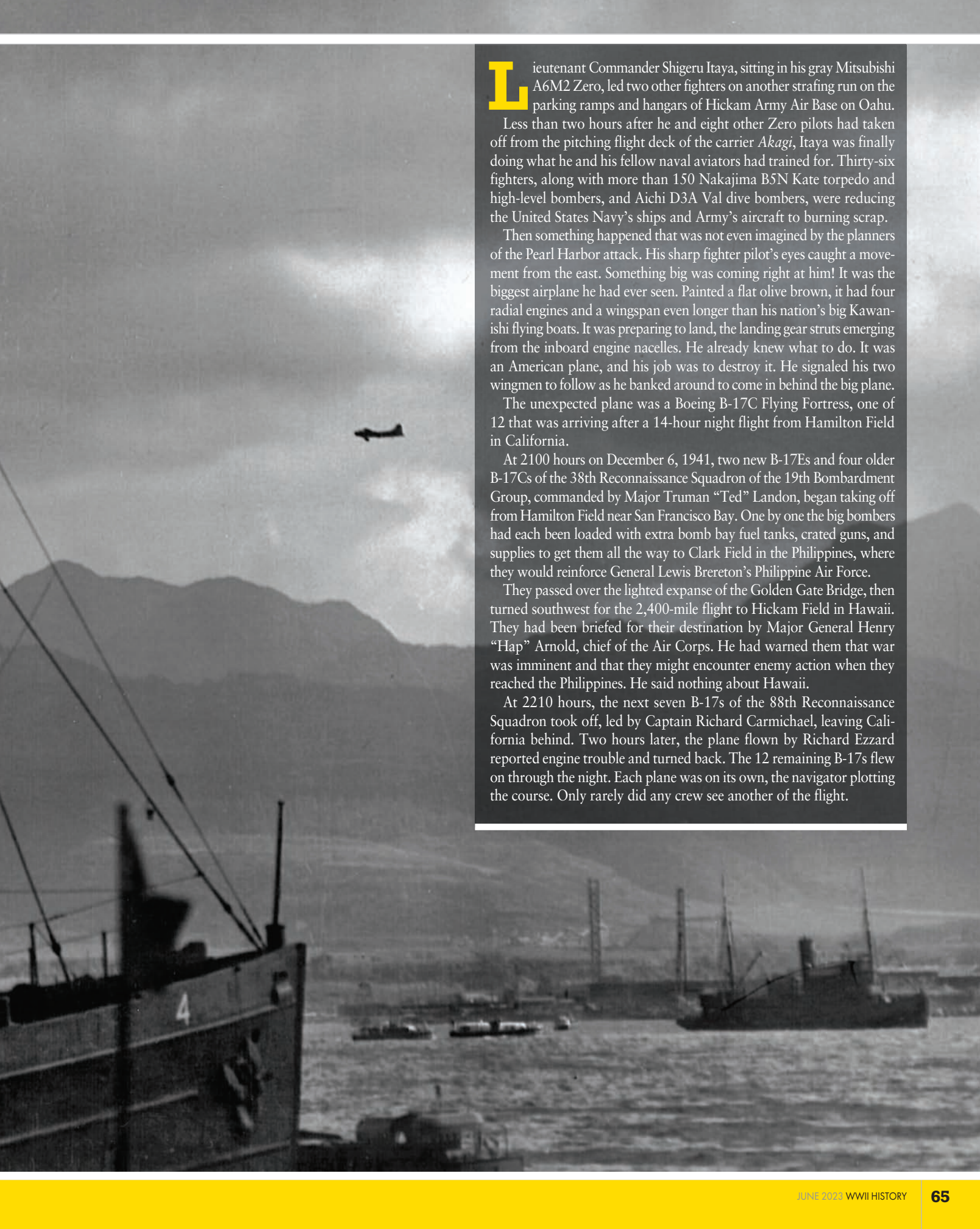


B-17s at Pearl Harbor

A FLIGHT OF B-17 BOMBERS FROM THE WEST COAST GOT MIXED UP IN THE JAPANESE RAID ON PEARL HARBOR, DECEMBER 7, 1941. BY MARK CARLSON



On the morning of December 7, 1941, a U.S. Army Air Force B-17 bomber seeks a place to land after flying into the midst of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and other military installations on the island of Oahu. A flight of 12 B-17s—in transit from California to the Philippines—had taken off from Hamilton Field the previous evening for the 14-hour night flight.



Lieutenant Commander Shigeru Itaya, sitting in his gray Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero, led two other fighters on another strafing run on the parking ramps and hangars of Hickam Army Air Base on Oahu.

Less than two hours after he and eight other Zero pilots had taken off from the pitching flight deck of the carrier *Akagi*, Itaya was finally doing what he and his fellow naval aviators had trained for. Thirty-six fighters, along with more than 150 Nakajima B5N Kate torpedo and high-level bombers, and Aichi D3A Val dive bombers, were reducing the United States Navy's ships and Army's aircraft to burning scrap.

Then something happened that was not even imagined by the planners of the Pearl Harbor attack. His sharp fighter pilot's eyes caught a movement from the east. Something big was coming right at him! It was the biggest airplane he had ever seen. Painted a flat olive brown, it had four radial engines and a wingspan even longer than his nation's big Kawanishi flying boats. It was preparing to land, the landing gear struts emerging from the inboard engine nacelles. He already knew what to do. It was an American plane, and his job was to destroy it. He signaled his two wingmen to follow as he banked around to come in behind the big plane.

The unexpected plane was a Boeing B-17C Flying Fortress, one of 12 that was arriving after a 14-hour night flight from Hamilton Field in California.

At 2100 hours on December 6, 1941, two new B-17Es and four older B-17Cs of the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron of the 19th Bombardment Group, commanded by Major Truman "Ted" Landon, began taking off from Hamilton Field near San Francisco Bay. One by one the big bombers had each been loaded with extra bomb bay fuel tanks, crated guns, and supplies to get them all the way to Clark Field in the Philippines, where they would reinforce General Lewis Brereton's Philippine Air Force.

They passed over the lighted expanse of the Golden Gate Bridge, then turned southwest for the 2,400-mile flight to Hickam Field in Hawaii. They had been briefed for their destination by Major General Henry "Hap" Arnold, chief of the Air Corps. He had warned them that war was imminent and that they might encounter enemy action when they reached the Philippines. He said nothing about Hawaii.

At 2210 hours, the next seven B-17s of the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron took off, led by Captain Richard Carmichael, leaving California behind. Two hours later, the plane flown by Richard Ezzard reported engine trouble and turned back. The 12 remaining B-17s flew on through the night. Each plane was on its own, the navigator plotting the course. Only rarely did any crew see another of the flight.



A pair of Japanese Aichi D3A “Val” dive bombers flies near the B-17E bomber piloted by Lieutenant Karl T. Barthelmess in this photo taken by Sergeant Lee Embree. The American plane was one of several B-17s from the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron that were caught up in the aerial melee above Oahu.

At Hickam Air Base just east of Pearl Harbor, the field was ready for the bombers. But just before 0800 hours the thrum of over a hundred radial engines at full power grew louder. From north, east, and west dozens of fighters, dive and level bombers began shooting and bombing the island’s navy, Marine and air bases. In moments the center and southern end of Oahu were a maelstrom of explosions and burning ships.

In the tall control tower at Hickam Field, Major Gordon Blake, the operations officer, stood with mouth agape as he watched dive bombers dropping bombs on Naval Air Station Ford Island and his own field. Great eruptions of orange fire rose from fuel tanks and shredded planes. Neat lines of fighters were ripped apart as Itaya’s Zeroes strafed them. Blake had been in the control tower since 0730 hours, waiting for Landon, an old West Point friend, to land.

The first Fortress to make landfall was piloted by Lieutenants Robert Richards and Leonard Humiston in B-17C No. 40-2049, named “Skipper” after the small mixed terrier puppy Richards had adopted when he took command of the ship. His crew was tired after the long over-water flight but excited to be arriving at the island paradise, but just as Richards was lining up for landing at Hickam, he saw another plane angling in from the left. Suddenly, there was the sound of something hitting his big bomber. His bombardier, Sergeant Melvin Zajic, called over the intercom that it had to be

U.S. Navy planes conducting a realistic attack simulation with wax bullets. But then Sergeant Joe Angelini yelled from behind Richards, “There are damned holes in the wing!”

Richards, totally taken by surprise, shoved the throttles forward and headed for a low cloud north of the field. But when Skipper emerged, she was again set upon by the Zeroes. Thinking the smaller Bellows Field might be safer, Richards banked around to land there.

The second B-17 to approach Hickam was B-17C, No. 40-2063, piloted by Lieutenants Bruce Allen and Charles McArthur, Jr. They were also taken by surprise. The bombers were in trouble—nearly out of fuel and unarmed. All of their .30-caliber and .50-caliber machine guns were packed away in boxes filled with rust-preventative cosmoline. There wasn’t ammunition for them anyway, as the extra fuel needed for the long flight put the planes near their maximum weight limit.

Now as Allen lined up for landing, the voice of Major Blake came on the Hickam frequency. “The base is under attack! You have a Jap fighter on your tail!” Allen chose to land as fast as he could, wrenching the big plane off the runway and toward a grassy parking ramp. Even as the four propellers on the Wright Cyclone engines slowed, Allen and his crew dove out of the nose and rear hatches to run for cover in the nearby patch of trees. Miraculously none were hurt. The Boeing was strafed but did not burn.

Then the third Flying Fortress approached Hickam. Itaya and his two wingmen dove to attack. Boeing B-17C No. 40-2074 carried one of the most experienced crews in the Army Air Corps. Captain Raymond Swensen, along with his navigator, Homer Taylor, had both ferried an earlier group of B-17s to Hawaii in May. The flight engineer was Master Sergeant Leroy Pouncey, at 41 the oldest man in the squadron. He could fix anything and was respected by the crew. His Assistant Engineer was 20-year-old Sergeant Earl Williams, who would be the last surviving member of the flight when interviewed by the author in 2016. A superb mechanic, Williams had joined the Air Corps in 1939 right out of his Ohio high school. Now Williams was standing on the flight deck behind Swensen. In the jump seat beside him and behind the co-pilot, Ernest Reid, was William Schick, the squadron flight surgeon. Schick had joined Swensen’s crew at Hamilton Field and intended to take pictures of his odyssey across the Pacific. He was holding the camera given to him by his wife.

Williams decided to head back to the radio compartment past the bomb bay. After negotiating the narrow catwalk and entering the small insulated compartment, he found Sergeants Joe Bruce and Lee Burke. The three men watched the green shores of the island come closer over the broad wings and thrumming engines of the B-17. “Then all hell broke loose,” recalled Williams. Six of Itaya’s Zeroes banked around and began firing their machine guns on the helpless B-17 as it came in for final approach. “Suddenly there were a lot of loud bangs and popping noises,” he said. “Then the Plexiglas cover over the radio compartment shattered and I saw a fighter flying toward us. I first thought it was an exercise where they had mistakenly put real bullets in the machine guns.”

Williams, Bruce, and Burke cowered as a hail of 7.7mm bullets shredded the cotton insulation on the fuselage, making the air look as if it were snowing. “Then the bullets hit the flare locker and the entire compartment was full of fire.” Burke and Bruce ran aft into the waist compartment while Williams went through the forward door into the bomb bay. He closed it “but the heat came right through. My hair was burned.”

Reaching the flight deck, he saw that Hickam and Pearl Harbor were burning. Swensen and Reid were trying to land with black smoke filling the plane.

Flight Surgeon Schick kept his head down, unable to take any pictures. He called out that gunfire was coming up from below. American AAA gunners and servicemen were firing whatever they could find at the aircraft, not recog-

nizing the big bombers as their own.

Just then Schick yelled, "Goddamnit those are real bullets! I'm hit!" Two others of Swensen's crew were wounded as he tried to bring his burning bomber in for landing.

Back in the radio compartment, the magnesium flares burned fiercely, eating into the ribs and spars in the floor. The fire ate big holes in the fuselage.

Opening the left window to let the smoke clear, Swensen ordered the gear down. He had

to land before the bomber exploded with all the fuel fumes in the tanks.

Moments later the crippled B-17 hit hard, the weakened fuselage buckling and bouncing back up. Reid recalled, "It took both of us to get the wings level after that first bounce."

As the plane hit again, the waist and tail section tore away and skidded, shedding metal and boxes of supplies. Burke and Bruce held on for dear life as the burning plane came to a stop, then ran for their lives.

The forward section, with the trailing edge of the 104-foot wings dragging and spewing sparks, came to a stop. Swensen yelled for everyone to get out. Reid and Williams chose to hunker down next to the heavy landing gear struts rather than risk being out in the open where the Japanese were still strafing. Schick ran for the hangars and was hit in the face by shrapnel. He lay unconscious on the tarmac. Two more of Swensen's men were hit by bullets.

Over Bellows Field to the east, Richards made an attempt to land on the fighter strip. Suddenly a Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk fighter rolled onto the runway ahead of the big bomber. Richards yanked back on the control wheel and made a steep turn to come at the runway downwind. He had no fuel left. This was their only chance. The wheels touched down on the short runway, and still moving at over a hundred knots, the big plane plowed over a drainage ditch and lost its wheels. Finally it came to a stop. Skipper would never fly again, but the Zeroes strafing Bellows raked the Boeing with bullets. Skipper did not burn. Joe Angelini tried to remove the secret Norden bombsight but was unable to do so. He grabbed the dog and climbed out the nose hatch.

By 0815 three of the bombers sent from California had come to rest. Two would never fly again. Soon the first attack wave turned north back to their carriers, while the second wave swept over the island. In the short lull two of the 38th Squadron's planes were able to land. First, Major Landon's new B-17E No. 41-2413 came in and touched down without being hit, followed by Earl Cooper's B-17C, 40-2054. Five of the six planes of Landon's flight had come to ground.

The other new B-17E, No. 41-2408, piloted by Karl Barthelmess and Larry Sheehan, landed after a harrowing night. A few hours after take-off, Barthelmess and Sheehan set the Automated Flight Control System, most commonly called an autopilot, and promptly fell asleep. The navigator, Charles Bergdoll, had made his star shot to pinpoint their location and course to Hawaii. As the plane reached the halfway point, Bergdoll realized the B-17E was less than 3,000 feet over the black Pacific. He tried to wake Barthelmess with no luck. Sheehan was roused and corrected the descent. Back at 6,000 feet, Bergdoll knew that his original navigation was invalidated. With the sun up, he could only use dead reckoning and he had little confidence in the result. If they ran out of fuel before finding the Hawaiian Islands, they would have to ditch.

Shortly before 0730 hours, an island was sighted to the south. It was Oahu. Bergdoll plotted a course to Hickam. Then they realized



ABOVE: A Japanese Nakajima B5N "Kate" bomber speeds away from Hickam Field on Oahu after dropping its load of bombs on December 7, 1941. In the distance is smoke from stricken ships in Pearl Harbor, adjacent to Ford Island. **BELOW:** The wrecked U.S. Army Air Force B-17C bomber piloted by Captain Raymond T. Swenson lies on the runway at Hickam Field. Rounds from a Mitsubishi Zero fighter ignited a locker full of magnesium flares that caused the burning bomber to break in half as it landed.





there were other planes in the air with them. But instead of more B-17s, the crew saw about 15 gray-painted single engine planes in a broad “V” formation, also heading south. Incredibly the B-17E had intersected with the Val dive bombers in the first attack wave. But the Americans were totally unaware that the strange planes were Japanese.

The Japanese planes did not attack the big American bomber due to their training and discipline. The attack on Pearl Harbor was still half an hour away, and they could not risk a distress call from the bomber.

Sergeant Lee Embry took some pictures with his Speedgraph camera, not knowing he was taking the first photos of the Pacific War.

The Japanese planes eventually passed, leaving the crew wondering what they had seen. As they banked around the eastern end of Oahu, radio operator Sergeant Nicholas Kahlefent, who was tuned into Honolulu’s station KBMB, heard a sudden announcement. “This is not a mock battle! This is the real McCoy!”

He told the pilots, and suddenly the rising smoke and distant thuds of explosions became real.

Soon the B-17E was on approach to Hickam Field. But as Barthelme and Shean lined up on final, they were waved off by Blake in the

tower. Three times the big bomber put on full power and went around again. At last they had no choice. They were out of fuel. Barthelme managed to land. The last of Landon’s six planes were on the ground. The officers and crew took shelter where they could.

Still in the air were six more B-17s led by Captain Richard Carmichael. Having left Hamilton an hour after Landon’s squadron, Carmichael’s bombers did not make landfall until the first wave was withdrawing

The timing was fortuitous. “I called into Hickam, and they told me to land west to east, downwind,” Carmichael said. “They also told me the field was under attack. Things had gone to hell in a handbasket.”

Seeing that one of the B-17s was burning on the runway, Carmichael chose to head for Wheeler Field near Fort Shafter. But the entire flight line of parked P-40s and other planes were aflame. Naval Air Station Kaneohe on the east coast was also burning. With fuel running out, Carmichael chose the only option left, the 1,200-foot auxiliary fighter strip at Haleiwa near the northern tip of Oahu. Coincidentally, Haleiwa was the strip from which Lieutenants George Welch and Kenneth Taylor had gotten their P-40s off to attack the first wave of Japanese planes.

Carmichael lined up on the strip and was surprised to see another B-17C taxiing to a stop off the runway. It was the plane piloted by his operations officer, Harold Chaffin. Carmichael and his co-pilot, Captain James Twaddell, used up the entire strip before bringing the huge plane to a stop. Even though the bombers had landed without damage, the worst was not over. While the crew unloaded the machine guns and went in search of ammunition, the sound of radial engines grew louder. A Zero came in to strafe the field. Carmichael and Twaddell ran to the cover of rocks along the beach.

“There we were,” Carmichael grinned, “the two air heroes cowering under rocks while the sergeants fought back with what they had.” The two pilots nearly drowned when the surf crashed over them.

Meanwhile, back at Hickam, the B-17C No. 41-2433, flown by West Point graduate Harry Brandon, aborted the first landing. The wreckage of Swensen’s shattered bomber was being pulled off the runway. More Japanese fighters had arrived and the AAA gunners were again peppering the sky with shells. Finally, Blake in the tower gave them clearance to come in downwind.

After what was probably the least difficult landing that day, Brandon taxied to the ramp

where, two hours later, the B-17C was fueled and armed.

Lieutenant Bob Thacker's B-17E, No. 41-2432, also reached Hickam as the second wave of enemy planes was raking the air base. Thacker saw billowing clouds of black smoke and orange fires raging in the harbor while his plane received scores of hits from Japanese fighters. He came in fast and downwind, which overheated the brakes. One wheel caught fire as he and Don Surles tried to stop the bomber. Just before running out of concrete, Thacker brought the big plane around in a tight ground loop. The fire was put out by the crew.

Still, the B-17s came in. Alerted by Hickam and Major Landon, the pilots had some idea of what was happening. David Rawls and John Compton in B-17E, No. 41-2434, chose to try for Wheeler. Finding it burning even worse, they went back to Hickam. Smoke from the burning ships at Ford Island provided some cover from the fighters as the pilots banked into the chaotic landing pattern. Just as the B-17E cleared the smoke, a Zero dove and began firing. "We were about 200 feet off the runway," Rawls recalled. "With our wheels and flaps down we had no chance of escaping him." The Japanese fighter hit the bomber's wings and an engine. "We made it in."

Sergeant Bob Palmer in the waist compartment was the only one of the 12 B-17s crews to shoot back at the Japanese that morning, using the only weapon available, a Colt .45 automatic.

At last, the final B-17E, No. 41-2416, the last to leave peace behind at Hamilton Field, came over the coast of Oahu piloted by Frank Bostrom and Wilson Cook. They found Hickam in chaos.

"I called the field at Hickam and asked what the hell was happening," Bostrom said. "We were about 700 feet up and headed in for landing. But about five destroyers began firing at us, cutting off our approach. An antiaircraft shell exploded right off our starboard wing."

The pilots shoved the throttles forward and headed northwest, hoping to stay clear until the attack was over. But then four Zeros moved in to fire at the bomber from behind. Still at full power but with fumes in the tanks, Bostrom looked for a place to land. He saw Kahuku Golf Course at the northern end of the island. Having little choice, Bostrom banked steeply around a tall smokestack like a racer doubling a pylon at Reno, and leveled out over the 7th fairway, a 552-yard flat expanse of clean green grass.

"We cut up the course pretty badly," one crewman recalled. "but we made it. The own-

ers of a nearby sugar cane field did not even know there was an attack going on. We told them there was a war on. They invited us into their home and made us big Highballs. We were content to stay there for the duration."

It was a miracle that all 12 B-17s were able to land without being shot down by the hordes of Zero fighters and determined navy and army AAA fire. While over two dozen men were wounded, only one man died, Flight Surgeon William Schick.

Three hours after the last bombs fell on Hawaii, General Brereton went to see General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Far East Air Force and Army in Manila, Philippines. Brereton wanted to use MacArthur's 14 B-17s

They were among the few long-range planes still flyable after the attack. The crews began flying dawn and dusk patrols as far out as 600 miles in all directions, looking for a second Japanese move against Hawaii. But nothing was found.

More B-17Es arrived on December 11, followed by the 22nd Squadron on December 17. Put under the command of newly promoted Major Richard Carmichael, the new squadron was ordered to fly to Fiji at the end of February. There they would refuel and fly to Australia in support of the navy, which was preparing to defend the Coral Sea against Japanese invasion.

While they never reached Clark Field, the men of the 38th and 88th Squadrons soon



ABOVE: In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor raid, soldiers examine the charred remains of a Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk fighter plane destroyed on the ground near Hangar 4 at Wheeler Airfield. Many American aircraft were shot to pieces by strafing Japanese planes on December 7, 1941. **OPPOSITE:** This photo was taken moments after the B-17 bomber in the foreground, probably piloted by Lieutenant Karl T. Barthelmess, landed safely during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Another B-17 has landed in the distance, and a pall of smoke billows skyward from Battleship Row.

to bomb Formosa, where the Japanese were preparing to invade the Philippines. MacArthur would not permit the raid. By then it was too late, and the islands were attacked by scores of twin-engine bombers and fighters. Among the hundreds of planes caught on the ground were the B-17Cs of the 19th Bombardment Group. Only three survived. In less than one day, the Japanese had nearly destroyed MacArthur's powerful Far Eastern Air Force. The reinforcements coming from California to join them were caught in the Pearl Harbor attack.

The 10 bombers that had managed to land on Oahu and could be repaired were quickly brought into the 31st Bombardment Squadron.

found themselves in the thick of the fighting in the Southwest Pacific. At last they were able to fight back against the enemy. According to retired Air Force Colonel Earl Williams, who had spent the entire war in the Southwest Pacific, "It took over a year before our B-17s were able to hit the Japs as hard as they had hit us. But it was worth the wait."

The last survivor of that historic flight, Williams died in July 2020 in Riverside, California, at the age of 101. ■

Author Mark Carlson has written on numerous topics related to World War II and the history of aviation. He resides in San Diego, California.

Image © Keith Rocco, keithrocco.com



Pacific War, 1945: The Final Chapter

The U.S. Army saw some of its largest and most difficult fighting in the last year of the Pacific War.

MANILA WAS THE FIRST LARGE CITY THE U.S. ARMY HAD TO TAKE IN THE Pacific War. Covering 110 square miles, it had many stone and concrete buildings, perfect defensive positions for the Japanese. These buildings proved resistant to even heavy artillery; many were specially reinforced to withstand earthquakes. Wherever possible, the Japanese defended them in a mutually supporting fashion, making them even harder to capture. The U.S. XIV Corps had forced the Japanese into a semicircular perimeter, their backs to Manila Bay. There was no escape, and the Japanese sold their lives dearly in building, alleyways, and rubble-strewn streets.

The fighting went floor by floor, room by room. If a building was small enough for a squad to search, half the squad stayed outside to cover the entrances while the other half went in. Larger building often required platoons or larger. Squads took on different roles as needed. Support squads covered the advance of assault squads, which moved inside by rushes. Assault squads had a two-man flamethrower

team, a Browning Automatic Rifle team, a pair of men with Thompson submachine guns, a demolition specialist, a two-man bazooka team, a squad leader and three riflemen, carrying as many the grenades and satchel charges as they could. They used all of it.

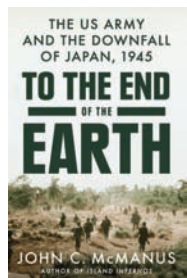
Sgt. Warren Matha of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, later recalled: “Kick in the door, Stick in the flame thrower nozzle. Roast the Japs alive. I can still hear them screaming. I can still smell the burning flesh. The flame thrower has to be the most horrible weapon imagined by man.” Soldiers often went rooftop to rooftop and fought their way down. They would blast holes in walls so they could move without using doorways and windows covered by enemy fire. Sometimes, they just poured gasoline into a room and lit it if the defenders proved too obstinate.

Soon bodies littered the area. Wary of Japanese soldiers playing dead to launch an ambush, GIs shot every corpse they saw through the forehead and stacked against nearby walls. “These were the day-by-day necessities to survive one day more,” commented one soldier. Pfc. Thomas Howard of the 745th Tank Battalion saw Japanese soldiers drag Filipino women into the open and rape them; sitting in a hidden observation post, he was too distant to help the women and couldn’t reveal his position. “There was no way to describe the emotion of hate of the Japanese and the anguish of not being able to help the women,” he said. Another soldier from the 37th Division heard screams and soon found twenty-five Filipino men, women and children, their hands tied, dead from bayonet wounds. The fighting was brutal, close, and unrelenting.

The walled mini city known as Intramuros also had to be taken and leaders knew it would be another hard fight. When the Japanese ignored a surrender ultimatum, two infantry battalions were to go in, backs by nine artillery battalions, plus tanks, tank destroyers 4.2-inch mortars and machine guns. In a one-hour barrage they sent 7,896 rounds into the Intramuros, 131 shells per minute. Most had concrete-piercing fuses. Walls crumbled under such a deluge. When the infantry went in under

cover of a smoke screen, they received little return fire. Japanese resistance within Intramuros ended within the day.

The terrible fighting for Manila was just one battle in the last year of the Pacific War but highlights what soldiers of the



Sergeant Billy E. Vinson of the U.S. 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Division, stops a bayonet charge in the streets of Manila in this illustration by Keith Rocco. The squad leader was awarded a Silver Star.

New Blood Flow Breakthrough Helps Men Enjoy Strong, Long-Lasting Intimacy – At Any Age

Men across America are raving about a newly enhanced potency supplement that helps achieve healthy blood flow on demand

After age 40, it's common knowledge that performance begins to decline in many men. However, a new, performance empowering pill is showing that any relatively healthy man can now enjoy long-lasting, and frequent intimacy – at any age.

This doctor-designed formula, created by leading anti-aging expert Dr. Al Sears, has already helped men overcome low and sinking libido -- and has recently undergone a potency-enhancing update – with remarkable new results.

When the first pill -- **Primal Max Black** -- was first released, it quickly became a top-selling men's performance helper, promoting intimacy across America.

It worked by supporting healthy testosterone levels. However, Dr. Sears soon realized that this isn't the only challenge men face with performance. That's when he turned his attention to blood flow.

And this became **Primal Max Red**.

THIS PROVEN SOLUTION IS MORE MECHANICAL THAN HORMONAL

Truth is, once blood flow slows down for men, no matter how exciting it is, it won't be enough without the necessary amount...

So enjoying intimacy without healthy blood flow becomes difficult for most men.

Luckily, a Nobel prize-winning scientist discovered the simple answer to help support performance strength and confidence -- by boosting vital blood flow -- and enhancing this essential performance function.

Using this landmark Nobel Prize as its basis, **Primal Max Red** enhanced healthy blood flow for untold millions of men around the world with the use of strong nitric oxide boosters.

While **Primal Max Black** helped maintain optimal testosterone, **Primal Max Red** tackles a lesser-known challenge.

Director, Al Sears MD, who has authored over 500 scientific papers and has appeared on more than 50 media outlets including ABC News, CNN, ESPN, Discovery, Lifetime, and many more say, *"Less than optimal blood flow can be part of a huge problem that affects a lot of men. And it needed to be addressed once and for all, so men would not dwell on it. Then, once we optimized it and had a great deal of success, we set out to see if we could do even better."*

The former formula had excellent results. However, new research showed that for even faster, anytime, anywhere results, increasing the dose of a key compound was needed.

So, one of the three nitric oxide boosters in the new **Primal Max Red**, L-Citrulline, was clinically boosted to 9000 mg, and the results were astounding. Which is no surprise considering that 5000 mg is considered a "normal amount" -- giving the new version nearly doubled the blood flow boosting power.

Men who had previously been unsure about their power and stamina were overjoyed to be back to their old selves and to get and maintain a healthy bloodflow when they needed it.



A new discovery that increases nitric oxide availability was recently proven to boost blood flow 275% - resulting in improved performance.

BETTER BLOOD FLOW, STRONGER RESULTS

The best way to promote healthy blood flow throughout the body is with the use of **Primal Max Red**. By using it, when exciting signals leave the brain, blood flows much faster like it used to.

This critical action is how men across the country are enjoying full and satisfying performance at any age. No need to bother with testosterone-boosting shots, blue pills, or shady capsules that have no effect.

Primal Max Red can effectively promote healthy blood flow that most men can use for maximum intimacy. This is leading to more greater capacity and satisfaction, coupled with long-lasting performance.

"There was a time when men had little control when it came to boosting their blood flow," Dr. Sears said. "But science has come a long way in recent years. And now, with the creation of nitric oxide-boosting **Primal Max Red**, men can perform better than ever, and enjoy intimacy at any age."

Now for men across America, it's much easier to stay at their performance peak as they get older.

HOW TO GET PRIMAL MAX RED (AND FREE PRIMAL MAX BLACK):

To secure free bottles of **Primal Max Black** and get the hot, new **Primal Max Red** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-827-9008** TODAY. "It's not available in retail stores yet," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer." Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Primal Max**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. "Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back."

Call NOW at **1-800-827-9008** to secure your supply of **Primal Max Red** and free bottles of **Primal Max Black**. Use Promo Code **WWHPMX323** when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!

U.S. Army saw and experienced. A full accounting of what American soldiers faced in late 1944 and 1945 is chronicled in *To the End of the Earth: The US Army and the Downfall of Japan, 1945* (John C. McManus, Dutton Caliber Books, New York NY, 2022, 448 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$35.00, hardcover).

This final volume in the author's trilogy on the U.S. Army in the Pacific tells the reader of the difficult fighting soldiers faced as the Japanese Empire was slowly ground down and pushed back to its home islands. This well-written book informs the reader of the varied experiences of soldiers in the Pacific, from troops in the field to the high level strategic and operational decisions made by senior leaders. The previous books in the trilogy were reviewed in past columns and this work is a fitting conclusion to the series. It rivals Rick Atkinson's Liberation Trilogy, which covered North Africa and Europe, in terms of scope and depth.



To Save an Army: The Stalingrad Airlift (Robert Forsyth, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2022, 352 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, \$35, hardcover)

The Battle of Stalingrad consumed human beings and military supplies at a horrifying rate. Once Soviet forces managed to encircle the German Sixth Army, its fate was ensured unless it could be sustained. The Third Reich attempted an airlift to keep its surrounded troops fighting, gathering as many cargo aircraft as it could for the effort. The task was daunting; Sixth Army needed 300 tons of supplies a day just to survive. The winter weather conditions alone were a formidable obstacle, increasing fuel and maintenance requirements for aircraft and exhausting aircrews. In the end, even the minimal amounts of required supplies were more than the German air force could manage to provide. Despite the difficulties, including the weather, worsening aircraft serviceability and losses to an active Soviet Air Force, the German kept flying, dropping supplies even when the last airfield in the Stalingrad pocket had been overrun.

The author has written over thirty books about the German Luftwaffe; this new volume is a welcome addition to that body of work. His compilation and analysis of the strategic, operational, technical, and human factors involved in the Stalingrad airlift are detailed, thoughtful and astute. The book is well-illus-

trated, and the appendices provide hard numbers to reinforce the points made in the text.

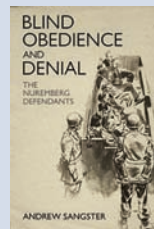
Awaiting MacArthur's Return: World War II Guerrilla Resistance against the Japanese in the Philippines (James A. Villanueva, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence KS, 2022, 234 pp., maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index,

\$34.95, hardcover)

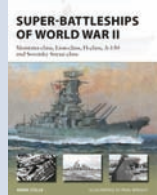
The first significant guerrilla action against the invading Japanese troops took place in January 1942, while fighting against the combined Filipino and American army was still ongoing. A headstrong American miner named William Cushing had raised a 200-strong guerrilla force as soon as the Japanese landed, even getting

New and Noteworthy

Blind Obedience and Denial: The Nuremberg Defendants (Andrew Sangster, Casemate Books, 2022, \$37.95, hardcover) An examination of all 23 defendants and their attempts to escape conviction for their crimes. The book also covers how questionable Allied practices, such as carpet bombing and anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Vichy France were ignored.

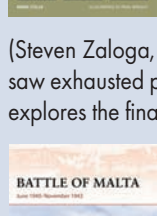


Blood, Dust and Snow: Diaries of a Panzer Commander in Germany and on the Eastern Front (Friedrich Sander, Greenhill Books, 2022, \$37.95, hardcover) The author served in the 11th Panzer Regiment. This memoir covers the period from 1938 to December 1943.



Nagasaki: The Forgotten Prisoners (John Willis, Mensch Publishing, 2022, \$32, hardcover) This book tells the stories of Allied prisoners of war held by Japan who were working around Nagasaki when the atomic bomb was dropped. It recounts their captures and experiences leading up to and after the bombing.

Super-Battleships of World War II (Mark Stille, Osprey Books, 2022, \$19, softcover) The *Montana*, *Lion*, *H*, *A-150* and *Sovetsky Soyuz* classes of battleships were never built but represented the pinnacle of capital ship design. This book examines them in detail.



Tanks in the Battle of Germany 1945: Eastern Front (Steven Zaloga, Osprey Books, 2022, \$19, softcover) The last months of the war saw exhausted panzer divisions fighting well-equipped Soviet tank units. This book explores the final armored clashes of the war.

Battle of Malta: June 1940–November 1942 (Anthony Rogers, Osprey Books, 2022, \$24, softcover) The triumphant story of the Malta's resistance to Axis attack is one of endurance, courage, and planning. The book contains excellent maps of the defenses and original artwork.

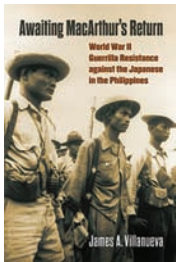


The Battle of Stalingrad Through German Eyes (Jonathan Trigg, Amberley Publishing, 2022, \$32.95, hardcover) Stalingrad was one of history's most brutal and horrific battles. This work looks at it using extensive and personal German accounts.

GI Collector's Guide Volume 1 (Henri-Paul Enjames, Casemate Books, 2022, \$69.95, hardcover) The U.S. Army provided thousands of items to its troops, from uniforms and weapons to rations and books. This collector's guide is a full-color guide with a commensurate level of detail.

GI Collector's Guide Volume 2 (Henri-Paul Enjames, Casemate Books, 2022, \$69.95, hardcover) This volume continues the level of detail of the first, including a large section on the uniforms and gear issued to female service members. It also covers the unique equipment used by branches such as armor

and military police.



some basic military training for his group from a U.S. officer. At Candon on the island of Luzon, Cushing's force ambushed two separate Japanese convoys. For the loss of one wounded guerrilla, they managed to kill sixteen

Japanese and capture or destroy fourteen trucks. A regional governor named Roque Ablan, assisted by Philippine Army Lt. Feliciano Madamba, organized another well-armed force nearby. On January 28, 1942, they ambushed a Japanese column, killing fifty Japanese soldiers. This was only the beginning of armed resistance to the Japanese invaders in the myriad islands of the Philippines.

Organized guerrilla groups gave strong resistance to the Japanese occupation forces and materially helped the conventional war effort. The author of this new book deftly reveals how Japanese brutality, turned the populace against them and aided the guerrillas, who fought extended, complex campaigns with often limited supplies and armaments. The book is well-researched and insightful.



Sharpen Your Bayonets! A Biography of Lieutenant General John Wilson "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, Commander, 3rd Infantry Division in World War II (Lt. Col., Ret., Timothy R. Stoy, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2022, 320 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, \$37.95, hardcover)

"Iron Mike" O'Daniel was already an experienced soldier when he took command of the 3rd Infantry Division in World War II. His military career started in the Delaware National Guard, with service on the Mexican border in 1916. As a lieutenant, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross during World War I. O'Daniel was a hard-nosed leader and he reinforced this reputation in World War II, when he led the 3rd Infantry Division from the Battle of Anzio until the end of the war in Europe. The division saw heavy fighting in places such as the Colmar Pocket, Nuremberg, and Munich. He later commanded I Corps in Korea and led the Military Advisory Assistance Group in Vietnam before retiring.

This comprehensive biography of John O'Daniel does justice to its subject, who was a remarkable soldier. The books reveals O'Daniel's leadership style, his professionalism,

some basic military training for his group from a U.S. officer. At Candon on the island of Luzon, Cushing's force ambushed two separate Japanese convoys. For the loss of one wounded guerrilla, they managed to kill sixteen Japanese and capture or destroy fourteen trucks. A regional governor named Roque Ablan, assisted by Philippine Army Lt. Feliciano Madamba, organized another well-armed force nearby. On January 28, 1942, they ambushed a Japanese column, killing fifty Japanese soldiers. This was only the beginning of armed resistance to the Japanese invaders in the myriad islands of the Philippines.

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and his tenacity as a division commander. O'Daniel has received relatively scant attention compared to some of his peers; though he is frequently mentioned in other works, he rarely gets the recognition he deserves. This well-written and authoritative book remedies that imbalance. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel was already an experienced soldier when he took command of the 3rd Infantry Division in World War II. His military career started in the Delaware National Guard, with service on the Mexican border in 1916. As a lieutenant, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross during World War I. O'Daniel was a hard-nosed leader and he reinforced this reputation in World War II, when he led the 3rd Infantry Division from the Battle of Anzio until the end of the war in Europe. The division saw heavy fighting in places such as the Colmar Pocket, Nuremberg, and

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Dogfight Me 262 Northwest Europe 1944-45 (Robert Forsyth, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2022, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, \$23, softcover)

When the Luftwaffe first flew the Me 262 jet



fighter against the Allied air forces in the summer of 1944, it made a fearful impression. Powered by a pair of Jumo 004 jet engines and packing four 30mm cannons in its nose, it was faster than any Allied fighter and boasted the firepower to down heavy bombers like the B17 and B24. Despite its performance and capabilities, it could not single-handedly defend Germany against the aerial threat to its cities and industry. Keeping the high-tech plane serviceable and filling its cockpit with trained and capable pilots proved a far more difficult task. While its overall effect on the war was minimal, it caused great concern to Allied pilots and planners.

The author is an acknowledged expert on the Luftwaffe during the World War II and that

Simulation Gaming BY JOSEPH LUSTER

STEP INTO THE SHOES OF PAST LEADERS IN TOTAL TANK GENERALS AND PREPARE TO BRAVE THE HORROR OF THE TRENCHES

TANK GENERALS

PUBLISHER 505 GAMES •

GENRE STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC

Many World War II games have you donning your best virtual general garb, but not all of them let you take on the role of actual historical generals. True to its name, *Total Tank Generals* does just that, tasking players with taking command of an army and leading them to victory through real historical military campaigns that were overseen by the likes of Patton, Zhukov, Rommel and other notable figures at the forefront.

That historical approach is a major focus for developer Noobz From Poland, who are anything but newbies if the first taste of this upcoming strategy-RPG is anything to go by. Hardcore WWII enthusiasts will find the documentary-style presentation particularly appealing, and there's something here for both veterans of the genre and those just now dipping their toes into tactical gameplay.

Battles in *Total Tank Generals* allow you to compose your forces as you choose, taking your pick from dozens of units and strategically positioning them on the battlefield. One of the game's most interesting features is the ability to stack units and mix their features and abilities, adding another layer of strategy to an already deep system. The in-game stats of each unit are indicative of the way their historical counterparts performed, so there are plenty of ways to figure out the best strategy to make the most out of what each army has at its disposal.



Beyond the main game, *Total Tank Generals* aims to offer plenty of support for modding and map-making through Steam Workshop. If you fancy yourself a creator of any level, you can dive into the map editor and take advantage of what the developers hope to be an easy and intuitive means of creating new missions and scenarios of your own to share with all the other players around the world. The campaign has us excited enough, but we also can't wait to see what everyone comes up with as the game grows and expands past its planned March launch.

TRENCHES

PUBLISHER STEELKRILL STUDIO •

GENRE SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** PS4, PS5,

Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S, Switch While we primarily focus on World War II games here, we'll occasionally come across a title that makes it worth our while to step a little further back into the past. *Trenches*—a survival horror game from Steelkrill Studio that takes place in the dank and claustrophobic trenches of World War I—is something we found difficult to resist.

As evidenced by what we've seen while the

expertise is apparent in this new book. He uses first-hand accounts from Allied and German fighter pilots, diagrams specially made for this volume and original artwork to explain how the Me262 was employed during the final year of the war. Over fifty period photographs add to the storytelling, providing added visual effect. The Me 262 is one of the most famous aircraft of the war and this book gives depth to its image.



index, \$35, hardcover)

To VE Day Through German Eyes: The Final Defeat of Nazi Germany (Jonathan Trigg, Amberley Books, Gloucestershire UK, 2022, 305 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, \$35, hardcover)

When the Wehrmacht in Western Europe collapsed in August 1944, it seemed a great opportunity, coinciding with similar great defeats on the Eastern Front that summer. The Allied armies pushed ahead, but despite their efforts the Third Reich managed to stave off final defeat until the following May. The time in between was one of suffering, hardship, and deprivation for all the combatants and the civilian populations in the war zone. Once the war was over, thousands were left homeless, displaced persons tried to find their way home and Europeans who had thrown in their lot with the Nazis now had to face the consequences of that decision.

This second volume in the author's series records the stories of German who fought and lived through this dark period. Rather than focus on Hitler and his generals, the book looks at junior officers, enlisted soldiers, and others, showing how they saw the defeat of their

game is in Early Access—which is where it likely will still be by the time this issue is in your hands—*Trenches* isn't your average survival horror game. The developer has put an emphasis on psychological horror as you step into the role of James R. and attempt to survive and escape a harsh war-torn environment. Set in 1917, players must tangle with both tangible threats and existential encroachments upon their very sanity, exploring a chilling story that has you desperately trying to make it back to your family alive in the process.

All images and video from the game will clue you in on the fact that this is literally and figuratively a dark experience. In many cases you'll be depending on your hearing to figure out how best to escape as you follow the sounds of the Trench Whistle



with which you're equipped. Using the whistle gives you a chance to follow the specific sound, but you'll have to be careful, because enemies can hear the whistle, as well, cluing them into your position. To make things even more desperate, this is a single-save game. If you die, you die, so those into more demanding challenges will get the most out of this particular war game.

Thankfully, you'll have more than a whistle at your disposal throughout your grueling journey.

An in-depth hiding system gives you plenty of opportunities to evade watchful eyes, and you can also knock on wood or toss bottles to throw enemies off your trail. These enemies can hear your footsteps, and even your breathing, though, and the constant pressure is sure to play havoc on your sanity. The state of your personal sanity can even change the environment, so just because you've been to a location before doesn't mean you won't

see something new and potentially jarring upon second glance.

At certain points you might not even be able to tell the difference between what's real and what's playing tricks on your mind. Aspects like this make *Trenches* something that has real legs and an exciting kind of replayability, so it will be interesting to see how it develops throughout its Early Access period. We're ready to continue failing to survive over and over again in the meantime. ■

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nation firsthand. The book makes no excuses, his subjects served an evil government and paid the price. However, the work shows the human side of German soldiers and citizens; it is well written and detailed. As the author puts it, it is a story of “failure, told by the losers.”



The Capture of U-505: The US Navy's Controversial Enigma Raid, Atlantic Ocean 1944 (Mark Lardas, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2022, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography,

index, \$22, softcover)

Germany's Enigma device provided its navy with secure coding equipment for secret communications. On his own initiative, U.S. Navy Captain Daniel V. Gallery decided to capture a German U-Boat and get an example of Enigma. With no approval from his superiors, Gallery planned the operation, trained his subordinates, and eventually executed his plan successfully. His command, Task Group 2.23, found, crippled and boarded *U-505* on June 4, 1944. It was an astounding feat, but ultimately useless; Gallery could not have known the Allies had already cracked the Enigma code. To preserve that secret the fact that an enemy submarine was captured with its Enigma device intact and its crew taken prisoner was kept a secret until after the war.

The story of *U-505's* capture is thoroughly analyzed in this new book. The author reveals how the mission was planned and prepared for, and then executed. The book contains good maps, numerous photographs and several original pieces of art depicting the seizure of *U-505*.



Bomb Group: The Eighth Air Force's 381st and the Allied Offensive over Europe (Paul Bingley and Mike Peters, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2022, 406 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography,

index, \$37.95, hardcover)

The 381st Bombardment Group formed up at an airfield in Texas, trained, and then

crossed the Atlantic to England in May 1943. They arrived at RAF Ridgewell, one of seventy air bases hosting units of the United States' Eighth Air Force, America's primary bomber force for the war over Northwest Europe. US military strategists were convinced that daylight precision bombing was the key to destroying Nazi Germany's war industries and set about to prove it. The aircrews of the 381st were soon in the skies over Europe, braving enemy fighters and flak to deliver their payloads against factories, railroad yards and other vital targets. They flew the B-17 Flying Fortress; by the war's end the 381st flew 297 missions over Germany.

The remarkable story of the 381st is told in great detail in this new work. The authors' passion for their subject is obvious in the detailed research and meticulous organization of the book. Extensive use of veteran recollections bring life to the narrative. This book is a fitting tribute to the veterans of the 381st.



Save the Last Bullet: Memoir of a Boy Soldier in Hitler's Army (Wilhelm Langbein and Heidi Langbein-Allen, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 201 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, \$32.95, hardcover)

Fourteen-year-old Willi Langbein crouched in a foxhole, four panzerfaust antitank weapons stacked next to him. Ten meters to either side was another foxhole with another teenaged soldier huddling against the chill and the fear. Next to the panzerfausts sat an MP-44 automatic rifle. Willi hoped he would have time to run back and get more weapons and ammunition once the battle started, but then a wall of tanks seemed to rise over the horizon. He tucked a panzerfaust under his shoulder in the proper firing position and fired at a tank when it was twenty meters away. It burst into flames, but another tank came past it and pivoted over a nearby foxhole, crushing the boy inside it. Willi destroyed another tank just as waves of Soviet infantry appeared. He grabbed his rifle and opened fire, but the enemy soldiers just kept coming. It was March 31, 1945.

Willi Langbein was taken from his parents when he was thirteen, given some hurried training, and sent into battle. Despite the odds, he survived the war, was helped by a British soldier, and later worked to ensure what he experienced would never be visited on other children. This memoir is a harrowing account of what he experienced as a teenager. ■

with the 2nd Battalion, 517th PIR, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion was assigned to the 7th Armored Division for the retaking of St. Vith. Paired with the armored division's tank battalions, the force advanced on January 19. Attacking in blizzard conditions, they fought German paratroopers defending the town. By the time the battle was over, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion had about 120 men fit for duty, less than the normal strength of a parachute company. Consolidating its strength into two companies, the battalion continued to attack to clear the St. Vith area for the next several days.

St. Vith was the end of the war for the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion. On January 27, orders arrived at battalion headquarters announcing the deactivation of the battalion. The officers and men were assigned to other units. The men were told on January 29, and things moved swiftly afterward. Major Tomasik led a group to the newly arrived 13th Airborne Division. Others went to the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions.

The Army adopted an organization table increasing the size of airborne units to regiment or division, with no smaller, independent battalions. During its brief career it had earned eight battle stars, three arrowheads (for three invasions), two Presidential Unit Citations (plus a third for Company C), the French Croix de Guerre with Silver Star, and two Army and two Corps commendations. Members of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion had personally earned one Medal of Honor, 10 Distinguished Service Crosses, 62 Silver Stars, six Croix de Guerre with Silver Stars, five Legions of Merit, and many other decorations.

But the record and accomplishments of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion were not forgotten. Under the U.S. Army's Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS), the lineage of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, including their campaign credits for Algeria, French Morocco, Tunisia, Naples-Foggia, Anzio, Rome-Arno, Southern France, Rhineland, and the Ardennes-Alsace campaigns reside with the reactivated 509th Infantry Regiment of the regular United States Army. ■

Nathan Prefer is the author of numerous books and articles on World War II. He received his Ph.D. in military history from the City University of New York and is a former Marine Corps reservist. Dr. Prefer is now retired and resides in Fort Myers, Florida.

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moved faster than I ever moved before,” he recalled later. He tossed two hand grenades, and the second was a direct hit. But Urban fell when a machine-gun round tore a large hole in his neck. It was his seventh wound, and he lay on the ground conscious but bleeding profusely.

Under heavy fire, he was dragged to a roadside ditch, where the battalion surgeon hastily performed a tracheotomy so that the captain could breathe. He was still conscious when a Roman Catholic chaplain arrived and asked the surgeon, “Any hope?” Major Weinberg shook his head. “Thanks a lot,” Urban recalled thinking. “I felt like dying right there.”

While his battalion continued their advance, Urban was laid on the hood of a jeep and driven to a field hospital tent. He was kept there, unable to talk, for six weeks. When the doctors saw that he was not going to die, Urban was shipped to a hospital in England. Eventually, after more recuperation, he cajoled doctors into giving him a five-day convalescent pass to Scotland. They agreed, and he left instantly—but not to the Highlands. Refusing to let seven wounds keep him out of the war, the gallant captain was determined to rejoin his men.

Voiceless and still in pain late in 1944, he spent two nights sleeping on a bench while waiting for a chance to hitch a plane ride to France. Unauthorized flights had been banned after the loss of Major Glenn Miller’s plane in the English Channel, but Urban was able to “hook up with some Air Corps guys who were sweethearts.” They helped him to stow away aboard a plane and cross the Channel.

Communicating by writing notes, he hitched rides in trucks and jeeps while trying to reach his battalion, which was now fighting its way toward Berlin. It was a grueling journey, but Urban managed to reach Amsterdam and eventually catch up with his surprised men. They wanted him to stay, but the regimental commander told Urban, “You’ve had enough.”

After being allowed to stay for five days, he was sent back to England. The war was over for Matt Urban, but his heroism had made him a U.S. infantry legend in the European theater. He recovered from his wounds but spoke in a raspy voice because of damaged vocal cords. Urban was promoted to lieutenant colonel in October 1945, and received a medical discharge five months later.

Besides campaign ribbons, his decorations included the Silver Star with oak leaf cluster, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with two clusters, the Purple Heart with six clusters, a

Presidential Unit Citation, two Croix de Guerre Medals, the Belgian Fourragere, and the prized Combat Infantryman Badge.

When he was repatriated in July 1945, Staff Sergeant Earl G. Evans, who soldiered with Urban in North Africa and Europe, wrote to the War Department and recommended him for the Medal of Honor. The letter was forwarded to Major General Jesse A. Ladd, commander of the 9th Infantry Division, then on occupation duty in Germany. It never arrived, but a copy of the recommendation was placed in Urban’s personnel file. The hero knew nothing of Sergeant Evans’s efforts on his behalf.

After the war, Urban lived peacefully and took up social work in Michigan. He served as the Port Huron recreation director for seven years, ran the Monroe Community Center for 16 years, and wound up as the civic and recreation director in Holland. He took time out to speak to veterans’ groups across the country and to write and promote his autobiography, *The Matt Urban Story: Life and World War II Experiences*.

Efforts had been underway in the Polish-American community, meanwhile, to have Colonel Urban honored with the nation’s highest decoration for valor. At a 9th Infantry Division veterans’ reunion in 1977, he learned of Sergeant Evans’s letter, and a campaign supported by the Disabled American Veterans and the Polish-American Congress in Washington was launched. This prompted the Defense Department to review Urban’s combat record. When Pentagon officials admitted that his exploits had been mistakenly overlooked, President Carter took a personal interest and acted to ensure that Urban received the Medal of Honor.

“When I came home, I never thought about war,” Urban remarked in 1988. “That’s why the medal was 35 years late ... I just never pursued it.”

Matt Urban collapsed while working in his Holland office on Friday, March 3, 1995, and died of complications from a collapsed lung—resulting from one of his war wounds—the following day in the Holland Community Hospital. He was 75.

After a funeral Mass at St. Francis de Sales Church in Holland on March 7, Colonel Urban was buried near the Memorial Amphitheater and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery. He was survived by his wife, Jennie; a daughter, Jennifer, and a brother, Stanley. ■

The late Michael D. Hull wrote on a variety of topics for WWII History. He resided in Enfield, Connecticut.

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Mook

Continued from page 47

stood right in the foe's line of march, needed his commanding general present to make plans and issue orders.

Once Gavin realized what was going on in Mook, however, he promptly set out to take charge of the situation. In the meantime, Lieutenant Emil Schimpf's 3rd Platoon—perhaps 20 men strong—conducted a spoiling attack straight through the village. One of these paratroopers was a recent replacement named Private Northam Stolp.

"We were spread out on a generally east-west line," Stolp wrote of the fighting that afternoon. "The town was probably two or three blocks wide." He described how his fellow G.I.s advanced "one building at a time...shooting their way in and through them."

Later, a machine gun pinned Stolp's bazooka team down behind a large elm tree. "It [the enemy fire] was almost at ground level, affording us only about 18 inches of safe space over our prostrate bodies. The bits of tree were getting in our eyes.... It was like being under a buzz saw in a sawmill!"

By 1700 hours, however, Company A's riflemen and Shermans from 1st Battalion entered the fight. Stolp described how "a British tank came up on our side of the street. It was blasting away with its .50-caliber and its cannon." He and his comrades "were damned glad to hear and see it coming."

Then a Panzerfaust rocket, likely launched from inside Dinnissen's bakery, struck the Sherman. "It blew up the tank, and everything went with it," Stolp recorded. Another M4, commanded by a Guardsman named Sergeant Capp, lost one of its tracks to a Panzerfaust but kept firing until all ammunition on board was expended.

At about this time, General Gavin's jeep reached the railway overpass north of town. "A tremendous amount of small-arms fire passed overhead," he recalled of that moment. In response, Gavin told his aide, 1st Lt. Hugo V. Olsen, and an NCO named Sergeant Walker E. Wood to climb up on the railroad bank and fire back at any targets they could see.

The only friendly forces present were one visibly shaking bazookaman and a British Sherman. Unfortunately, that vehicle ran over an American land mine while attempting to withdraw; its crew then "jumped out and took off" for the rear. Yet the sight of their division commander sharing the hazards of frontline combat with them inspired many paratroopers; slowly, the initiative shifted in their favor.

Stunned by the Allies' ferocious counterattack, more and more Germans began to surrender or retreat. Towards dusk, Colonel Ekman reported that the situation in Mook now appeared under control. Reassured by this news, General Gavin turned his attention to another tactical emergency occurring farther north along the division's perimeter. First, though, he met briefly with Lieutenant Irvin.

"Tough fight, Jim?" he asked the lieutenant, whom Gavin had known since North Africa.

Irvin replied with the easy familiarity of a fellow combat veteran. "Tough fight, Jim," he agreed.

Mook had been recaptured, yet Irvin's G.I.s could not continue pursuing the foe out of town until they received more ammunition. Company B did not reach the isolated strongpoint at Riethorst until after daybreak on Thursday.

The savagery of this battle was borne out by its long casualty list. A total of 20 U.S. paratroopers were killed at Mook, with an additional 54 men listed as wounded in action and seven missing. The fighting at Riethorst took 13 American lives, as well as 22 wounded. German casualties are unknown.

The inhabitants of Mook also suffered heavily, as Private Stolp attested. While sitting in a small orchard at sunset, he witnessed "a formless mass" of civilians rush out of the burning village. "People were staggering, falling, trying to run," he wrote. "All were screaming and hollering at the top of their lungs." The memory of that horrible night would haunt Northam Stolp for years.

After the war, James Gavin characterized September 20, 1944 as "a day unprecedented in the 82nd Airborne Division's combat history." His men, with significant assistance from the Guards Armoured Division, not only seized the Nijmegen bridges but also blunted a major counterattack along Groesbeek Heights. Pitted against regimental-sized formations of elite Fallschirmjäger, Gavin's "little groups of paratroopers"—never exceeding two platoons in strength anywhere on the battlefield—somehow held onto every objective they were ordered to defend.

Gavin also claimed that Market-Garden was the most difficult campaign in which his division ever participated. Those troopers who fought alongside him at Mook and Riethorst surely agreed with this assessment. ■

Patrick J. Chaisson writes from his home in Scotia, New York. The author wishes to thank Mr. Frits Janssen of the Remember September 1944 Museum in Mook, the Netherlands, for his assistance with this article.

Percival

Continued from page 55

form, the gaunt Percival was flown to Tokyo, where he stood by Wainwright on the deck of the American battleship USS *Missouri*, behind General MacArthur, as the Supreme Commander Allied Powers signed Japan's surrender with six pens. MacArthur gave the first to Wainwright, the second to Percival.

Percival's next stop was the Philippines, where he sat across the table while his old nemesis, Yamashita, surrendered the archipelago he had defended to the Americans. When the Japanese general entered the room, a half-smile flickered across his face.

That was the end of Percival's military career. He flew home to write a long dispatch for the War Office on his defeat, posed for the press with his wife and MacArthur's pen, and wrote his memoirs, *The War in Malaya*. However, unlike the Americans, who hailed men like Wainwright as heroes, the British offered Percival neither promotion nor a knighthood.

Government ministers and historians alike found much fault in the general's conduct: he had shown very little personal leadership, made bad, poor, or no decisions; and crumbled under pressure, defeated by an army he outnumbered three to one. Admittedly, Percival's force was poorly trained, badly equipped, and not motivated, so that even a Slim or a Montgomery would have had a difficult time leading the motley crew, but Percival was a weak man playing a weaker hand.

One group of men never lost faith in Percival—that was the survivors of his command, now the Far East Prisoners of War Association (FEPOW), who elected him their Life President as FEPOW No. 1. They remembered how he had stood up for their welfare against the Emperor's sadists.

In the 1950s and 1960s, he did the same, advocating tirelessly for medical benefits and compensation for his men. The Japanese finally paid each POW a measly £1,500, hardly enough for a lifetime of suffering the after-effects of starvation and beatings. In 1991, with most of the surviving FEPOWs dead, Prime Minister Tony Blair paid the remainder £10,000 each. The FEPOWs were bitter that the money did not come from Japan, but from British taxpayers—including themselves.

Percival was not present to see this bizarre finale. He died on January 31, 1966. ■

Author David Lippman resides in New Jersey and writes frequently on a variety of topics for WWII History.

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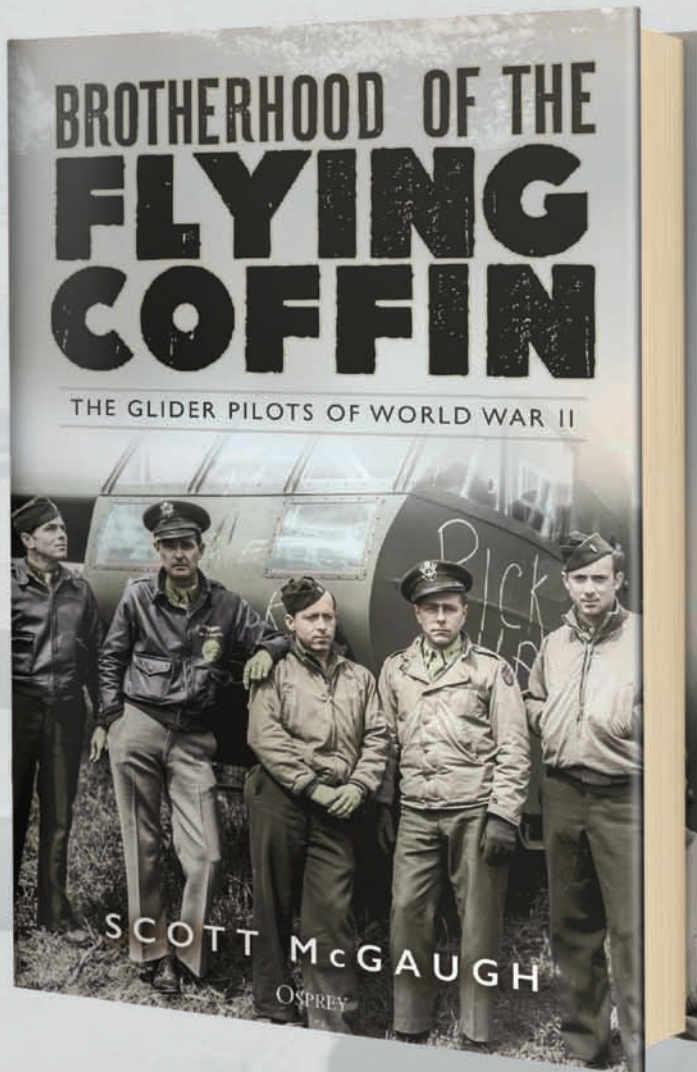
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