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# WWII HISTORY

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**Beyond Band of Brothers:  
Easy Company's  
Battle on the "Island"**  
Special Story by  
**Major Dick Winters**

**Russian  
Onslaught  
at Stalingrad**

**Nazi Holdouts:  
THE LONG  
SURRENDER**  
By Charles Whiting

**Operation Husky:  
Patton in Sicily**

**Marines at Okinawa:  
Bloody Fight up  
Sugar Loaf Hill**

**PLUS: Fairey Swordfish, Nazi Plunder, and more!**

WWII HISTORY - MARCH 2008 Volume 5, No. 3

MAY 2006



RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL MAY 2

# WWII HISTORY

MAY 2006

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Cover: German panzers and infantry on the move in Russia in 1942, from *Signal* magazine. (Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library.)

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## The airborne drop into Sicily was costly but helped to secure the island.

**W**HEN AMERICAN AND BRITISH AIRBORNE TROOPS LIFTED OFF FROM BASES IN NORTH Africa and headed toward drop zones in Sicily during the early morning hours of July 9, 1943, the plan began to unravel almost immediately.

While the American troopers were to parachute in, the British were riding in gliders. A total of 4,600 soldiers climbed aboard their aircraft and into the night sky. All of the pilots were Americans, who would pay dearly for their lack of training. None of the fliers had been briefed sufficiently on the Sicilian landscape, particularly at night. All of their briefings had included only aerial reconnaissance photos which had been taken during daylight hours.

Complicating matters, high winds began to kick up as the aircraft reached cruising altitude. Some gusts were clocked at up to 35 miles per hour, and for the Americans of the 82nd Airborne Division any training jump was canceled if wind speed reached 15 miles per hour. However, this jump into hostile territory would go ahead as scheduled. As a result, the 144 British gliders were buffeted by the winds and became unstable.

Out of fear that the aircraft would be mistaken for Germans by the invasion fleet headed toward Sicily, the pilots were ordered to fly a circuitous route toward their drop zones. After visually sighting the island of Linosa in the Mediterranean Sea, the pilots were to fly on to Malta and dog leg to the left over the southwestern shore of Sicily. The complicated flight plan, high winds, and pilot inexperience combined into a recipe for disaster.

Paratroopers were scattered all over the southern end of Sicily, while the glider-borne British tragically lost as many as 70 of their aircraft which were released prematurely and crashed into the sea. Only 87 British paras reached their objective, the key bridge at Ponte Grande, and ran into heavy resistance. Less than 20 of them survived, but they held the bridge until relieved by advancing ground troops the following morning.

The American paratroopers had been ordered to secure the Piano Lupo, high ground behind the landing areas in the vicinity of Gela. The soldiers of the 82nd Airborne, however, seemed hopelessly scattered. When he hit the ground, Colonel (later General) James M. Gavin, commander of the 82nd's 505th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, was actually uncertain

whether he was in Sicily at all. Eventually, Gavin was able to gain his bearings and head toward the objective with a handful of men.

Unknown to Gavin at the time, the colonel and his patchwork command, which grew steadily during subsequent hours, were about to find themselves in the thick of the fighting at a location he later learned was known as Biazza Ridge. When the Americans occupied the heights, some proceeded down the far side and ran into an infantry regiment of the Hermann Göring Division supported by Tiger tanks. To their consternation, several of the troopers who scrambled back to the relative safety of the ridgeline reported that their bazooka rounds simply bounced off the armor plating of the big, 60-ton Tigers which replied with 88mm cannon fire.

A series of attacks and counterattacks continued for several hours as Gavin employed every man who was able to hold a rifle. Finally, American tanks and infantry from the landing beaches arrived to reinforce the hard pressed airborne troops.

The scattered parachute drops had produced one unexpected dividend. The Germans were confused, and their lines of communications were cut by paratroopers who fought with incredible courage. The heroic stand of the paratroopers at Biazza Ridge compelled the German commander to abandon efforts to attack the landing beaches at Gela.

As a sad postscript, the next evening the bad luck of the airborne pilots continued. Antiaircraft fire from both land and sea lit up the night sky as planes flew overhead and were mistaken for attacking Germans. In reality, the planes were American, transporting reinforcements. Twenty-three of them were shot down, taking their precious human cargoes with them. The 82nd Airborne Division had passed its first test of combat, but the victory was indeed bittersweet.

Michael E. Haskew

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### Merchant Marines

Dear Editors:

I subscribed to your magazine hoping to see something about merchant marines during WWII. It seems you have forgotten them. These men fought the war just as all the other vets did, and had the highest casualty rate of any in the armed forces: 1 out of every 26 men was killed in action. After 60 years they have still not received just compensation for their combat service.

Dr. Robert L. Simpson  
Antioch, Tennessee

### Coolidge

Dear Editors:

I recently purchased the January 2005 issue of *WWII History*. While I enjoyed reading most of the articles, the one that struck me was Kevin Hymel's photo essay entitled "The Coolidge Goes Down." I am a professional historian who has taught at the Army's Command and General Staff College and War College. While I have written and read a great deal on WWII, I believe I have never heard of



#### March 2006 Issue Correction:

*Astute readers of our last issue wondered why we ran a photo depicting a pair of Grumman "Wildcat" fighters on page 13 of our story on the M-3 Stuart light tank. Here's the photo that was meant to run, showing a Stuart of the 1st Armored Division in Italy.*

the sinking. My father was in Espirito Santo at the time, but as with most of that generation, did not mention the sinking or any other experiences. The sinking of the *Coolidge* was new information to me. The author did a great job on the topic, the narrative, and the photograph section. The description of the sinking certainly whetted my appetite to learn more about the event, and to read your magazine more often. I would be especially interested in more photo essays concerning lesser-known events of the war.

Charles E. Heller, Ph.D.  
Colorado

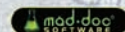
Dear Editors:

Since discovering *WWII History* magazine two years ago, it has become my favorite publication. As a veteran of World War II with 22 months spent in Italy (1944-1945), I am amazed at some of the articles about various battles and campaigns that have been printed. Considering how important the fighting in Italy was to the war effort, I am also amazed at the lack of coverage of Italian action. From the

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crossing of the Volturno River, the battle for the town of Cassino and its mountain-top monastery, the battle at the beachhead at Anzio, the breakthrough of the Gustav Line and the run for Rome, to the battles at the Gothic Line and the Po Valley; some 25 German divisions, along with many Italian units were tied down in Italy. I am certain that the war would have gone on much longer if not for those from the U.S., Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Poland, and many others who fought up the boot of Italy; it was truly an international army. Somehow, with all this background and history, it would seem that *WWII History* magazine would be able to come up with more than a once-a-year article. To me, all the battles, no matter how small, fought in WWII need to be remembered. I'm proud to have served in the 339th "Polar Bear" Infantry Regiment in Italy—truly the "forgotten war."

Frank H. Ruth  
Mansfield, Ohio

*We agree that the Italian Campaign has not always gotten the same attention that fighting in other theaters has received. Perhaps our story about the invasion of Sicily (in this issue) will be of interest to you.*

### USS Wahoo

Dear Editors:

The painting of the USS *Wahoo* on page 66 of your March issue is not of the same USS *Wahoo* mentioned in the story. Note the configuration of the conning tower as it was in 1943. U.S. submarines did not go on war patrol with their hull numbers painted on conning towers and bows—for obvious reasons. I saw *Wahoo* launched at Mare Island Navy Yard in June 1941.

Harold W. Hood  
Claremont, California

*Thank you for your letter. The painting shown in "Marauding Wahoo" was not of the USS Wahoo SS-238. The keel of Wahoo SS-565 depicted on pages 66-67 of our story was laid in 1949.*

### Paul Tibbets

Dear Editors:

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on Paul Tibbets (September 2005 issue); it brought back a lot of pleasant memories. In 1951, I was assigned to the 2000th Test Support Group at Eglin Air Force Base. Across the hall was the headquarters of the 2000th Test Group, commanded by Tibbets. The airpower demonstra-

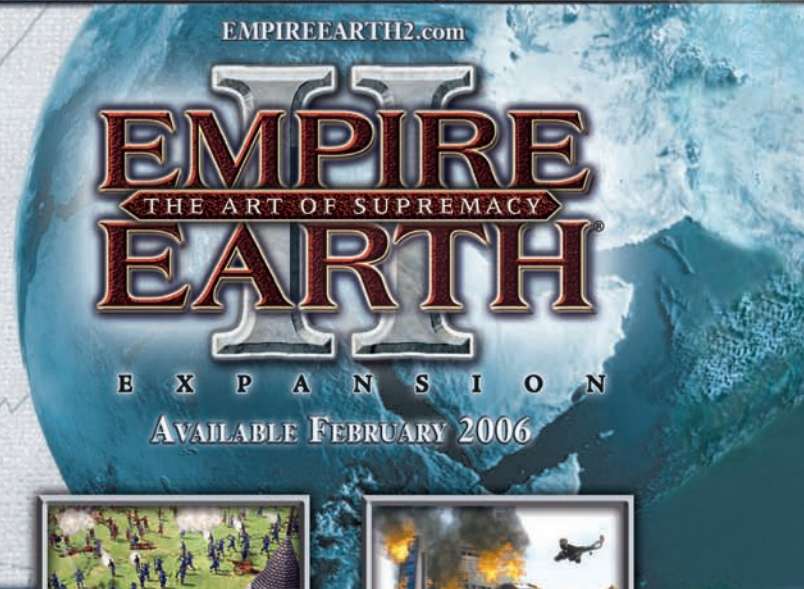
tion that year on Range 54 was truly spectacular. The demonstrations were for the benefit of congressmen and other influential people who could help build the Air Force budget. The last demo for the show compared the firepower of the B-17 to the B-36. The B-17 flew over and hit its target perfectly. Tibbets was piloting the B-36, and we could hear its peculiar drone overhead but could not see it. He dropped his bombs by radar and not only missed the target, but missed the entire range. As a result, he became the laughing stock of the Air Force for this blunder. The insert regarding his minimal decorations and promotions was right on target. He was very arrogant and was disliked by both his superiors and his subordinates, even though he was a good pilot.

Don Barkley  
Bonham, Texas

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## A flying anachronism, the Fairey Swordfish torpedo plane was nicknamed the “stringbag.”

BY GLENN BARNETT

**T**HE SPRING OF 1941, PARTICULARLY THE MONTH OF MAY, WAS A TROUBLED TIME FOR Great Britain. The German battleship *Bismarck* had sunk the huge British battlecruiser *Hood* in just six minutes and was making a getaway to the coast of German-occupied France. Every British capital ship in the Atlantic stopped what it was doing and gave chase, but the *Bismarck* had given them all the slip.

On the stormy evening of May 26, with seas running high there was only an hour's worth of daylight left to stop the German ship. She would very likely outrun her pursuers in the dark and in the morning would be under an umbrella of protective air cover.

Only the aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal* was within range of the *Bismarck*. She turned into the biting wind and slowed to 12 knots to launch her planes. Even at the reduced speed, her flight deck, bow and stern, see-sawed 60 feet with every wave. Off the rain-soaked deck lifted a flight of 15 Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes. They would catch the German battleship in the growing darkness under a gray scud

of clouds. Two torpedoes slammed home. One of them just barely hit the ship's huge rudder, jamming it hard to port. Unable to steer, the *Bismarck* steamed in impotent circles until British battleships surrounded her by morning and pounded her to death with their big guns.

Had it not been for the Swordfish, the *Bismarck* would have reached France with a rare German naval and propaganda victory and lived to fight another day. Remarkably, the crippling blow dealt to the most modern of battleships was delivered by an outdated biplane.

By 1940, the era of the biplane was long over.

The Swordfish was a relic of the past with her agonizingly slow speed, open cockpit, fixed landing gear, and canvas fabric skin. Yet, her importance during the war rivals that of any other combat aircraft.

Like many weapons systems of the inter-war years, the Swordfish was out of date by the time the prototype rolled off the assembly line in 1933. However, at the height of the worldwide economic depression, naval budgets were tight. This one plane would have to fulfill all combat rolls except that of a fighter. The lumbering biplane was built to carry such a variety of ordnance that an early wag likened it to a popular shopping bag used by English women known as a “string bag.” The nickname stuck.

Originally the brainchild of privately owned Fairey Aviation, the Swordfish was designed to accomplish a number of tasks. She could carry a 1,610-pound torpedo or anti-ship mines, bombs, flares, or depth charges. She could be used in a reconnaissance role on land or sea or as an artillery spotter for naval guns. She could perform convoy escort duty or drop mines into enemy harbors. During the war she was used as a tank killer in North Africa and in clandestine missions inserting and extracting agents from occupied territory. She could fly from land bases or as a floatplane off a ship's catapult, but her best use was aboard an aircraft carrier.

The Swordfish's dual wings gave it extraordinary lift on the short carrier decks of that era. The wings folded back when the plane was on deck to maximize storage space. She needed little room to take off or land. The plane's simple design and reliable 690-horsepower Bristol Pegasus engine made maintenance relatively simple. The plane's listed stall speed was an unbelievable 50 miles per hour, which was another plus for carrier landings.

As events would prove, she was amazingly sturdy and could absorb the shocks of carrier landings in rough seas and in darkness. She could also take an amazing amount of battle punishment in her canvas frame and wings and still make it home. All 15 planes that flew against the *Bismarck* returned safely to the *Ark Royal*, find-



The Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber played a vital role in the spectacular success of the nocturnal British raid against the Italian fleet anchorage at Taranto on November 11, 1940. Painting by artist Robert Taylor.

ing the carrier's deck above the dark and pitching sea. Several were riddled with holes.

The Swordfish did have her weaknesses. The seating was cramped, and the cockpit was open to the elements. This made long flights, especially in the frigid North Atlantic and Arctic, a misery for her three-man crew. Her top speed was 130 miles per hour unloaded and 92 miles per hour fully armed. This made her vulnerable to sleek German fighter planes. Yet, even her slow speed was deceptive, for the Swordfish was the most maneuverable plane in the air. She could turn inside any other combat aircraft. An accomplished pilot could turn his Swordfish around within her own 45-foot wingspan.

In a power dive, the Swordfish could pull up at the last minute, skimming the waves while pursuers fell into the sea. More than once aerial acrobatics brought the stringbag home safely. Once, Flt. Lt. Charles Lamb, who later wrote the book *To War in a String Bag*, caused two pursuing Italian fighters to crash into one another when he turned sharply. On more than one occasion, a Swordfish skimmed the water with her wheels and still had power to lift off again.

The Swordfish had to rely on maneuverability because she had little in the way of effective armament. A .303 caliber (7.7mm) vintage World War I Vickers gun was mounted in front and fired through the propeller. A rear gunner could shoot an old fashioned Lewis gun, also of .303 caliber. One amused pilot called the guns, "One stage above the bow and arrow."

At the beginning of the war, there were no radios aboard these planes, and communication with other planes or ships was accomplished with handheld lights using code. Inter-internal communication among the plane's aircrew was accomplished by a speaking tube, which



National Archives

**With torpedoes slung under their fuselages, a squadron of Fairey Swordfish heads toward a distant target.**

proved amazingly effective.

The Swordfish began to earn her keep during the Sitzkrieg, or phony war, when neither Germany nor the Allies committed land forces to the fighting. The naval war, however, was in full swing. U-boats went to work on Allied commerce right away, and the few British aircraft carriers with stringbag squadrons aboard went out to hunt them down.

It was not a one-sided fight. When two torpedoes from a U-29 sank the aircraft carrier HMS *Glorious*, she went down with her entire complement of 24 Swordfish.

The Swordfish was also active in laying mines outside German ports. This was done at night when the slow speed of the lumbering planes did not endanger them. The biplane could hide in the dark with relative impunity. When attacking from altitude, the pilot could throttle back the engine and glide silently to his target.

When the phony war got hot, the Swordfish was in the thick of it. During the Second Battle of Narvik, the British bottled up seven German destroyers in a deep Norwegian fiord and deter-

mined to go in after them. The elderly battleship HMS *Warspite* led a flotilla of British destroyers into the narrow fiord. Stringbags catapulting off *Warspite* served as artillery spotters, locating and reporting the hiding places of the seven German destroyers. One of the biplanes shared in a kill by dropping a bomb on a German destroyer.

During that same battle a Swordfish spotted and sank the German submarine U-64. It was the first time an airplane had ever sunk a submarine. Later in the war, a Swordfish would be the first plane to sink a submarine at night. The Swordfish excelled at submarine warfare. For the duration of the war, squadrons of the mighty biplane flew off tiny escort carriers to keep watch over vulnerable Atlantic convoys. They also flew these missions for the Royal Canadian Navy. At the end of the war the Swordfish was still flying in convoy escort duty and had claimed 22.5 U-boat kills.

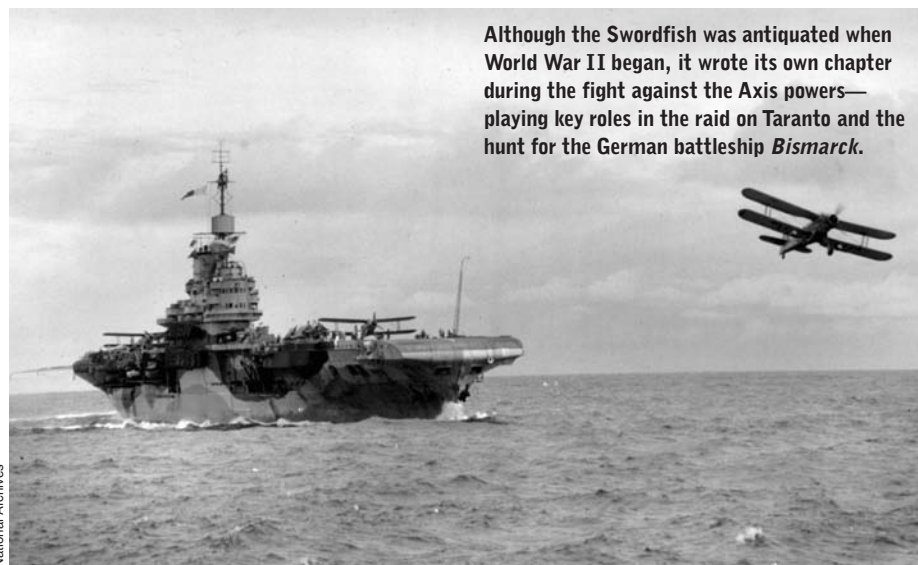
The war moved fast after the invasion of Norway. Soon the panzers were rolling through Holland and Belgium, trapping the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk. Though not designed for the purpose, the Swordfish dropped their bombs in the path of the onrushing Germans on the ground. During the evacuation, the busy biplanes kept watch on the sea lanes day and night to prevent German E-Boats from interfering with the desperate evacuation of British soldiers from the beaches at Dunkirk.

The ungainly looking Swordfish was also making a name for itself in the Mediterranean, participating in the highly successful attack against the French fleet at Oran. Swordfish torpedoes sank the battleship *Dunkerque* and scored a bomb hit on the battleship *Strasbourg*.

In the wine-dark seas of the Eastern Mediterranean, 24 Swordfish flew from Egypt to Greece to support the Greeks against the Italians, and later the Germans. Flying at night from a secret base in Albania behind Italian lines, the Swordfish ranged the Adriatic in search of Italian shipping. The efforts of Swordfish pilots caused the enemy to temporarily abandon the port of Valona on the Albanian coast, creating havoc with supply hungry Italian troops in Greece.

The Swordfish and their pilots paid dearly for their success. Only three of the original 24 with their crews made it back to Egypt. In a tribute to their worth, a captured Swordfish pilot was traded in a prisoner exchange for an Italian general and two majors.

Meanwhile, in Malta the Swordfish was used continuously as a night bomber. In the summer of 1941, the planes were fitted with radar for detecting surface vessels. Now able to "see" at



National Archives

**Although the Swordfish was antiquated when World War II began, it wrote its own chapter during the fight against the Axis powers—playing key roles in the raid on Taranto and the hunt for the German battleship *Bismarck*.**



National Archives

In addition to its attack capabilities, the Swordfish was also well suited to reconnaissance, with later versions carrying ASV radar.

night, the biplane pilots were highly effective at sinking Italian transport ships en route to North Africa. In the dark, even with an agonizingly slow airspeed, the torpedo plane was invisible.

During a seven-month period, the stringbags accounted for 50,000 tons of Axis shipping each month. The damage done to the Italian merchant marine convinced Rome to stop trying to supply Italian troops by sea. General Erwin Rommel's *Afrika Korps*, German units sent to bolster the Italians in North Africa, also suffered supply shortages. By war's end the Swordfish collectively accounted for a million tons of enemy shipping sunk.

The most famous of the Swordfish's exploits and the most important in military terms was the strike on the Italian naval base of Taranto on November 11, 1940. Located in the arch of the Italian boot, Taranto was the home of Italy's powerful fleet. The harbor was well protected by barrage balloons and anti-aircraft guns. The bulk of the Italian fleet lay there apparently safe at anchor. The British Admiralty envisioned a night raid on Taranto using carrier-based planes from HMS *Illustrious*. The Swordfish was the best and only aircraft for the job.

For this mission, the Swordfish's third crewman, the rear gunner, was replaced by an extra fuel tank. The extra tank increased the range of the Swordfish from 200 to 900 miles, but it also increased the danger to the two crewmen. If the plane was hit by ground fire or attacked by fighters, the large tank of volatile aviation fuel was not shielded in any way other than the canvas that covered the fuselage.

Two waves of stringbags took off under a full moon. They flew at three different altitudes. The first three planes of the first wave of 12 aircraft carried flares to illuminate

the harbor. They flew at 5,000 feet and drew defensive fire upward. A second group attacked from 1,600 feet, and, using dive bomber style tactics, accelerated their limited speed to 200 miles per hour in a power dive before leveling out at 90 feet to make their torpedo runs. The third group attacked at sea level, flying between the defensive balloons and their deadly cables. A second wave followed within the hour.

Two planes were lost during the raid, but significant damage was inflicted on the Italian fleet. When the smoke cleared at the port of Taranto, one battleship was sunk and two others severely damaged. A cruiser and a destroyer were also damaged, and an oil refinery was destroyed. The balance of power in the Mediterranean had shifted in favor of the Allies, helped tremendously in one night by 18 antiquated biplanes.

In Tokyo, the Japanese carefully studied the British plan of attack, which bolstered their belief that a successful surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was possible. Aerial warfare was changed forever.

The Swordfish also played a leading role in the Battle of Cape Matapan. The skillfully piloted biplanes damaged the Italian cruiser *Pola* and the battleship *Vittorio Veneto*.



Although its top speed was a lumbering 138 miles per hour, the Fairey Swordfish MK I had an effective range of 546 miles.

The Swordfish racked up an impressive number of victories, but her weaknesses were also apparent. In February 1942, three German capital ships, the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and the cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, were anchored at the French port of Brest. The big German ships were exposed to the threat of British air and sea power. The Germans determined to move them to the safety of ports on the Baltic Sea.

The three German ships got up steam on a dark night and headed through the English Channel at daybreak. The Channel Dash, as it was called, was supported by overwhelming German air cover for the few hours needed to make the run. No British warships were available to contest their passage.

The word went out for land-based Swordfish to stop the German flotilla. Six of the aging biplanes armed with torpedoes took off from airfields in southern England. All six were shot down before they could get within range. The Swordfish, nearly invulnerable at night, was an easy target when encumbered by a heavy torpedo in the harsh light of day.

The Swordfish was one of the few planes that was operational during the entire war. Unlike more sophisticated aircraft, the Swordfish was comparatively easy to assemble. Altogether, 2,396 of the biplanes were delivered. Later models featured a more powerful engine, an enclosed cockpit, and metal underwings with hard points for attaching rockets. The British attempted to replace the aging war bird with another Fairey model, the Barracuda, but the Swordfish outlived its successor.

By war's end, Swordfish pilots could claim to have sunk over a million tons of enemy shipping. Twenty-three enemy warships were damaged or sunk. When England stood alone, the Swordfish proved to be a powerful weapon. The record of the antiquated stringbag compares favorably with any combat aircraft of World War II. □

*Glenn Barnett is a frequent contributor to WW II History. He lives in Los Angeles and is writing a book about the Roman invasions of Iraq.*

## Dr. Corydon Wassell's selfless effort to aid wounded sailors on Java earned him undying gratitude and a Navy Cross.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL



During the early months of 1942, the Allied forces in the Pacific suffered numerous setbacks at the hands of marauding Japanese. Here, a Japanese soldier watches several oil storage tanks go up in flames.

Reportedly, the Japanese had landed on the northern coast. Paratroops had supposedly dropped and were hiding in the hills. Dutch officials, some said, were preparing to evacuate.

Among the Allied servicemen in Java that tense month of February 1942 were 41 American sailors at a small Dutch hospital in the thick jungle of the Javanese interior. They were wounded survivors of the light cruiser USS *Marblehead* and the heavy cruiser USS *Houston*, severely damaged on February 4 by a Japanese armada in the Makassar Strait off Balikpapan, Borneo. As part of the American-British-Dutch-Australian Fleet under Dutch Rear Admiral Karel W. Doorman based at Surabaya, the *Marblehead* and *Houston* had been attacked that morning by 54 enemy bombers. The two damaged ships had been forced to retire from the battle area, the *Houston* limping south to Australia and the *Marblehead* putting in at Tjilatjap on February 6.

Lying in their cots and being tended by caring, efficient Dutch doctors and nurses, the bluejackets from the two cruisers were not told of the rumors rife in Java. But they knew the enemy was not far away and that the Red Cross was not far away and that the Red Cross was not a guarantee against Japanese butchery. Wounded British soldiers had told them grim stories of what happened after the fall of Singapore.

There was another American in that hospital who was also uneasy. He was 58-year-old Navy Lt. Cmdr. Corydon McAlmont Wassell, a former Arkansas country doctor and medical missionary who had been the chief naval medical officer at Surabaya until ordered to come to the up-country hospital to act as liaison officer between the wounded sailors and the Dutch doctors. This assignment was to prove the toughest—and most rewarding—in his long career of medical practice and research in Arkansas and China. An unassuming man with a slow drawl, Dr. Wassell knew that somehow he had to move the men in his care to safety, hopefully in Australia.

He tried several times to telephone the navy headquarters in Tjilatjap but was unable to get

**A**LLIED FORTUNES WERE AT A LOW EBB AS STRATEGIC BRITISH AND AMERICAN BASES FELL like ninepins to the Japanese across the Far East in the early months of 1942.

At anchor in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the U.S. Pacific Fleet had been crippled by carrier planes of the Imperial Japanese Navy. The “impregnable” British base at Singapore had fallen. Valiant but poorly trained and equipped American and Filipino troops were falling back in the Philippine Islands, and the Royal Navy battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* and battlecruiser HMS *Repulse* had been sunk by airplanes off Malaya.

In the Dutch East Indies in early February 1942, under-strength Allied naval forces were mauled by the Japanese navy, while ground units of the empire advanced to Sumatra and invaded Bali. Between the two islands lay the Dutch colony of Java, its wealth of rice, rubber, and oil resources a magnet to the Japanese. The

gallant Dutch had vowed never to surrender the sprawling, lush island, but the enemy was getting close, and the Dutch, American, British, and Australian military and diplomatic authorities there were anxious.

The U.S. Asiatic Fleet shifted its headquarters from Surabaya on the northern coast of Java to Tjilatjap on the southern coast. Rumors swept the island during the week after Singapore fell.

through. Once, he did make a connection but was yelled at and told not to ask questions to which no one knew the answer. Unperturbed, he regularly toured the hospital wards and told the sailors to be patient. Things would turn out all right, somehow.

Then, the headquarters called Wassell and told him to get his less seriously wounded cases ready for evacuation. He was ordered to bring everyone who could stand a rough sea passage. There was urgency in the voice on the other end of the line. Wassell did not tell the men that night because he felt they would be too excited to sleep. An eight-hour train ride to the Java coast would be arduous enough.

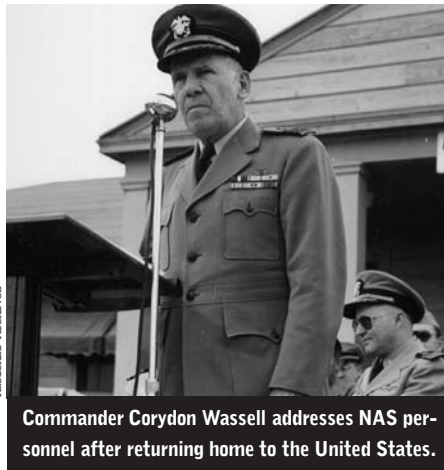
Soon after dawn, Wassell informed the sailors. Until 10 AM, he rushed around preparing for their departure. Each patient had to be officially released by the methodical Dutch doctors. When the 41 bluejackets were loaded aboard ambulances to head for the local railway station, the entire hospital staff stood and waved. The chief Dutch doctor wished them bon voyage, and Wassell declared that he would never forget the kindness of the Dutch and Javanese.

The American doctor and his charges then began the journey back to Tjilatjap, the port to which the sailors had come after their ordeal in the Makassar Strait. The 50-mile journey was slow, and the stifling heat became more intense as the train chugged down to the coastal plain. During its frequent stops, Wassell dashed outside to buy food and drinks for his men. The train was delayed for an hour at one station because of an air raid alert.

When the train finally rolled into the Tjilatjap terminal, Wassell tried to reassure the sailors, exhausted from their journey. He told them to try and appear to be in better condition than they actually were. If they looked too sick, they would not be taken aboard ship because they would be too much of a burden if the vessel were attacked at sea.

Tjilatjap was a mass of humanity. The railway station and the town swarmed with Dutch and British troops, refugees from the interior, and local officials trying to keep order. There was confusion, but no panic.

Wassell assembled his men on a hotel terrace and went to find a ship that would accommodate them. He located the navy headquarters on the crowded dock and was told to bring his sailors there immediately. He did so, shepherding them to the waterfront, where several Dutch steamers waited to sail at nightfall. Most of them were already crammed with passengers. The wounded sailors waited patiently near one of the largest vessels, the *Breskens*. The sun



Commander Corydon Wassell addresses NAS personnel after returning home to the United States.

blazed down, and there was no shade on the dock for the stretcher cases. A Dutch officer standing on the gangway of the *Breskens* demanded a permit, which Wassell did not have. His navy papers were waved aside, and he was told to talk to a captain in one of the dock offices.

Struggling through the crowds, the doctor bumped into a high-ranking U.S. naval officer – the one he had talked to by telephone the previous night. He offered to help Wassell get his men aboard the *Breskens* until he saw the pathetic looking sailors on stretchers. The officer told the doctor that he would have to take them back to the hospital in the interior because they would have no chance if the steamer were torpedoed. But he did help the walking wounded get aboard the *Breskens*.

Wassell was downcast, but he had no alternative. Waving farewell to his walking wounded, he had the stretcher cases reloaded on the ambulances for the return to the railway station. The hospital train had already left, but the resourceful Arkansan persuaded the Javanese authorities to couple an extra boxcar to another train that was about to depart for the interior. The stretcher cases were loaded aboard, and the train puffed out of the station, rattling through the countryside on a cool night.

It was a sad journey, and the sailors did little talking. Wassell was discouraged, but he refused to show his feelings to them. During a brief delay at a junction, he telephoned the hospital and told the chief doctor that he was returning with nine sailors – eight on stretchers and one of the walking wounded who had wandered off in Tjilatjap for a few beers and a tryst with a pretty Javanese girl.

The train rolled on. Puffing a cigarette in a long white holder, Wassell watched the sleeping sailors and realized that they were his men now, and not just a few stragglers. They mattered to him, and he pledged to get them to safety what-

ever the odds. Corydon Wassell mused about his earlier life and what had brought him all the way to Java.

The doctor was born on July 4, 1884, in Little Rock, the son of Albert and Leona (McAlmont) Wassell. The family had immigrated from Kidderminster in the English Midlands. After earning a medical degree from the University of Arkansas in 1909 and completing postgraduate courses in internal medicine at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, young Corydon started practicing as a doctor in the village of Tillar in Drew County, Ark. It was a hard life with few material rewards, but that did not matter to the young idealist whose singular purpose in life was to help others. He worked among poor tenant farmers and sharecroppers, and organized a group medicine plan for black field workers. Wassell married a young village teacher.

One day in 1913, the country doctor went to the Tillar Episcopal Church to hear the president of Suchow University in China speak about the needs of his countrymen. Wassell felt a compulsion to go to China. His wife supported him, and a few months later they were on their way to the Far East as medical missionaries. They set up home in Wuchang on the Yangtze River. Wassell worked there in the Boone University Hospital, studied Chinese, and became a father. His medical skills and compassionate approach were soon well known, and by 1918 he was in charge of the Chinese National Red Cross. The Wassells' fourth child was born in Little Rock during a brief leave in 1919.

In 1921, Wassell found himself heading International Red Cross relief efforts after the Han River levee break and during the subsequent famine. He studied neurology, served as a professor of parasitology in Changsha, published articles on encephalitis, and did pioneering research on amoebic dysentery. Through tireless field work in some of the most remote and backward areas of China, he discovered the source of a plague that was ravaging the people. From 1923 through 1927, he served as the port medical officer and maritime medical officer at Kiukiang and also found time to run a private practice and consult at a Roman Catholic hospital. His wife died, and Wassell later married a missionary nurse, Madeline Day, of Englewood, N.J.

Meanwhile, the energetic doctor had been appointed a lieutenant junior grade in the U.S. Naval Reserve Medical Corps in 1924. He was promoted to lieutenant two years later. During 1927, he was on unpaid active duty with the gunboats of the famed Yangtze River Patrol,

and that same year he returned to Little Rock for another stint at private practice. Soon, however, he found himself back in public service. Wassell was a public health unit director in Caldwell Parish, La., and Pulaski County, Ark., and spent six years as health director of the Little Rock schools.

Wassell championed public health systems, particularly affordable diphtheria immunization. During the Great Depression, he was given the task of battling malaria at camps of the Roosevelt administration's new Civilian Conservation Corps. Based at St. Charles, Ark., he supervised the control of malaria at seven CCC camps from 1936 to 1938.

The U.S. Navy had not forgotten Corydon Wassell. He resumed regular commissioned duty at the age of 52 in 1936, and was called to active duty in 1940 when the CCC was disbanded. He served on a submarine inspection board at the Key West Naval Station in Florida, and in September 1941 was ordered to the naval base at Cavite in the Philippines. Wassell was scheduled to sail on December 7, 1941, but his departure was delayed because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was assigned instead to Java to take over as the chief medical officer at the Surabaya Navy Base. He arrived there in January 1942.

Now, Wassell and his nine dispirited patients rode the train back into the Javanese interior. There was no way of knowing if they could reach Australia or if they would be trapped by the advancing Japanese. Arriving at the hospital just after dawn, Wassell and the sailors were welcomed by nurses with sherry, tea, and cakes. They could now hear the rumble of distant explosions, and the American doctor learned from his Dutch colleagues that Tjilatjap had been bombed during the night and several ships sunk.

While his men slept, Wassell put through a call to an airfield three miles away where some British and U.S. planes were based. An American major told him to call back in an hour. The doctor did so and was told that there would be room for him and his charges on the 13th and last plane leaving the field. They were to take no luggage—not even a razor blade—and should be ready at an hour's notice.

Later that day, Japanese planes strafed the area, and concussions shook the little hospital. As heavy chunks of plaster dropped from the ward ceilings, the sailors took refuge under their beds, smoking and giggling with the nurses while trying to stay calm. The next morning, a wounded British soldier was wheeled into the sailors' ward from the operating room, where he had had two machine gun

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bullets extracted from his legs. Asking Wassell for a cigarette, the Tommy said he had been hit during an attack on the airfield. The doctor was informed by telephone later that one of the 13 planes had been damaged and there would be no room for his wounded sailors. Again, he hid his disappointment from them.

Unable to sleep that night, Wassell heard an urgent knock on the door of his quarters. It was the chief Dutch doctor, who told him, "The enemy has landed on Java!" There was now no time to lose, but what could Wassell do? He tried unsuccessfully for an hour to telephone Tjilatjap, and then, without waking his men, wandered outside. He walked into the nearby town, where crowds were gathering at street corners. He sensed tension in the air.

The American doctor strolled around in the night, his spirits flagging. Just before dawn, several dusty military staff cars and trucks rumbled into the town and drew up in front of the busy Grand Hotel. It was the advance guard of a retreating British Army convoy. Wassell's hopes rose once more. He pursued the commanding officer, an aloof and languid man, who entered the hotel to ask where he could buy food and supplies. Wassell asked if the convoy was bound for Tjilatjap. Told that it was, Wassell asked if he and his nine wounded men could ride along.

The British officer agreed readily and told Wassell to bring his men there within two hours. Dashing back to the hospital, the doctor awakened the sailors and told them that the British convoy was probably their last chance to get out of Java. Meanwhile, he managed to get through by telephone to Tjilatjap and was told that there were still some ships there. The sailors were enthusiastic about returning to the coast. "Good for you, boys," said Wassell. "Let's get going!"

Without delay, the nine sailors and their guardian angel joined the British convoy. The worst cases were loaded into an old Ford car, and the rest rode in a truck. Wassell took the steering wheel of the Ford, although he had not driven for several years. Before the sun was high, the long convoy—staff cars, 200 supply trucks, wheeled antiaircraft guns, field kitchens, and mobile repair trucks—rolled out of the town. This was it. Wassell and his bluejackets were on their way again.

The vehicles were spaced out to minimize the possibility of air attacks, and everyone was told to jump out and take cover if Japanese planes appeared. Wassell wrestled with the old Ford over twisting, narrow country roads, threading his way past Dutch vehicles and Javanese ox carts. When the convoy occasionally made a halt, the British soldiers shared their bully beef,



Wounded Allied servicemen are unloaded from the USS *Marblehead* on the island of Java in 1942.

chocolate bars, and brewed tea with the American sailors.

The convoy rumbled on into the night, easing over bridges that had been mined to hamper the approaching Japanese. The vehicles snaked across a long suspension bridge over a river, and Wassell handed out scotch whiskey to Dutch and Javanese guards as they scrutinized every vehicle and its occupants. Then, in the middle of the night, Wassell and his men found themselves back in Tjilatjap.

The tireless doctor went into a crowded hotel, procured some food and beer for his men, and managed to find a room for them. A Dutch officer told Wassell that he would help him find a ship the following morning. As a dawn sea mist drifted in and enemy planes droned high above the port, Wassell hired a Javanese launch and rode out to one of two ships anchored in the Tjilatjap harbor. She was the *Janssens*, a small inter-island steamer.

The doctor clambered aboard and found that the captain was not eager to ferry wounded American sailors. Wassell pleaded his case emphatically, and the captain reluctantly agreed, although there was no sick bay, and no medical supplies were aboard, the captain warned, and the doctor would be solely responsible for his men.

Rushing back to shore excitedly, Wassell learned that his party had been depleted to seven men. One sailor had gone on ahead with a British evacuation officer, and another had been left at a medical aid station because he was too ill to continue. At dusk and under heavy rain that day, Wassell and some British soldiers carried the seven *Marblehead* sailors piggyback fashion aboard the *Janssens*. She was crowded, but the doctor found space for

his men's mattresses under an awning on the stern deck.

It was dark when the laden little steamer nosed out of the harbor, zigzagging through a minefield to the open sea. Wassell gazed back for the last time toward Tjilatjap, where British troops were setting up antiaircraft batteries on the pier. They had been ordered to make a last stand, and the American doctor felt sad because he knew they had little chance of survival against the superior Japanese forces now pushing across Java.

Into the night, the *Janssens* butted through the sea and the rain. She had been built for 200 passengers but now carried twice that number. Designed for 11 knots, her diesel engine could only labor along at seven and a half.

Wassell and his seven men relaxed for the first time since leaving the Dutch hospital. They were finally on their way to freedom, and the threat of enemy submarines, surface ships, and airplanes did not shake their spirits. The steamer headed due east, through the night and into the next day, which dawned bright and cloudless. The wounded sailors felt better after a night's sleep on the cool deck, and the food aboard the *Janssens* was ample.

Wassell brought beer to the sailors, and some of them took a faltering walk on the deck. The steamer was crammed with refugees of various nationalities—Dutch, Javanese, Australian, British, and American. Some of them offered to give up their cabins to the wounded sailors, but the weather was warm and their doctor felt they were better off on deck—and they were closer to the lifeboats.

The *Janssens* forged on as Dutch sailors manned small guns on the bow and stern and 30-cal. machine guns on each side of the

bridge. The sailors strained their eyes across the empty sea for any sign of the enemy. Wassell was pouring himself a drink with a correspondent in the smoke room when he suddenly heard a commotion on deck. "Planes!" someone shouted. The doctor and the other men in the smoke room crawled under tables as three Japanese Zero fighters dived toward the *Janssens*. They had been escorting bombers from Bali to Tjilatjap when their leader had spotted the steamer.

The doctor struggled to reach his men on deck but was unable to force his way through the frantic crowd of passengers below. The enemy planes roared down at 300 miles an hour, machine guns chattering, and raked the steamer from bow to stern again and again. The Dutch gunners tried desperately to hit the three raiders, and the captain zigzagged the ship. The gun crews ran out of ammunition. Then, after several more passes against the steamer, the Japanese planes sheered off and flew away. It was almost a miracle; only 10 people aboard—most of them gunners—had been injured, and the steamer had suffered no serious damage. Rushing topside, Wassell was relieved to find his men unharmed.

The wounded gunners were carried into the ship's bar, where there was a first aid cabinet.

Wassell, who had not practiced any serious surgery for many years, rolled up his sleeves and went to work immediately. With only some morphine, iodine, bandages, and splints at hand, he and a Dutch pharmacist's mate did what they could for the gunners.

Meanwhile, everyone aboard feared that the Japanese would return, and many passengers pressed the captain to put them ashore where their chances of survival might be better. So, three hours after the attack the *Janssens* put in at a little island inlet, and a lifeboat carried some passengers and crewmen ashore. Several of the passengers were women and children. All were sure that the little steamer was doomed.

The *Janssens* stayed in the inlet for four hours, during which food and water was taken aboard and the damaged lifeboats repaired. Wassell and his men agreed to stay aboard and try their luck at reaching Australia. The captain waited for nightfall, and when the moon rose the steamer headed back out to sea. A bright, full moon etched the outline of the vessel on the smooth water. There was not a ripple of wind. The men aboard the *Janssens* were apprehensive, sure they would be spotted by the enemy.

The steamer pressed on. With more room aboard now, Wassell moved into a cabin with a

Dutch chaplain. The seven wounded bluejackets chose to stay on deck. Later that night, the captain announced that the *Janssens* had turned due south and, if all went well, would reach Australia in 10 days. Because of his depleted complement, the skipper ordered every able-bodied man to help with the chores and watches. Wassell and the Dutch padre set to work with mops and pails in the smoke room. Before turning in that night, both men knelt by their bunks and prayed for a safe journey and a speedy end to the war.

The little steamer chugged on southward through the moonlit night and day after day, with no sign of land. Her fearful occupants peered across the vast, empty ocean for a speck on the horizon or in the sky that could mean trouble, but there was nothing. Their luck held, and finally, after 10 grueling days, the Australian shore was sighted. Hearts soared and shouts went up, and the *Janssens* slipped into Fremantle harbor on the southwestern coast. The long odyssey of Wassell and his wounded sailors was ending.

Wassell took the men ashore and got them settled into a hospital. A few days later, he was summoned by an American admiral and informed that he had been awarded the Navy Cross for his "gallantry and splendid leader-

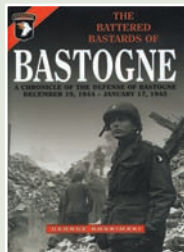
*Continued on page 78*

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## Japan initiated its World War II campaign on the basis of a series of assumptions and unknowns.

BY LT. COL. JOHN W. WHITMAN, U.S. ARMY (RET.)

**P**LANNING A WAR REQUIRES ASSUMPTIONS. HOWEVER, THERE SHOULD BE AS FEW ASSUMPTIONS AS POSSIBLE, OTHERWISE ONE CAN ASSUME AWAY ALL ONE'S PROBLEMS. Japanese shortfalls in resources influenced their assumptions in planning for World War II. Because Japan could not successfully fight a long war, planners assumed it would be short—in accordance with the decisive battle doctrine. One big naval battle with the U.S. Pacific Fleet, early in the war, and Japan would emerge victorious.

The U.S., on the contrary, always assumed that a war with Japan would be a war of attrition. Because attrition would rule, U.S. planners assumed that a decisive battle, if one occurred, would be the outcome of years of attrition and would result in a U.S. victory. A naval blockade and air bombardment of the home islands would then force the Japanese to surrender.

The Japanese assumed away their enemy's capabilities and underestimated their enemy's

quality, quantity, bravery, and strategic grasp, partly and no doubt subconsciously because Japan realized it could not defeat strong enemies. The most serious short-term strategic failure in estimating the enemy concerned the Allies' ability to recuperate after the first Japanese blows. Concurrently, the Japanese woefully underestimated the length of time it would take the Allies to launch counteroffensives. The most serious long term strategic failure was Japan's complete inability to understand its own indus-

trial weakness and the overwhelming industrial power of its enemies.

Japan had no guarantee or assurance that Germany would declare war on the United States. Japan began the war facing the possibility that every bit of U.S. manpower, matériel, and resolve (and a little of Britain's) would be aimed at Japan alone. The Japanese did worry about this, but they assumed it away with the bland comment, "This must be watched..." Japan's gamble is all the more hopeless in retrospect when one considers how quickly the Pacific War would have been won if the U.S. had not immediately prioritized, in concert with its Allies, the defeat of Germany.

Because Japan did not understand war, they could not accurately predict the ability of the U.S. to mobilize its resources. A competent general staff can address "known knowns" or "known unknowns" or even "unknown unknowns" and work toward learning what it does not know. The Japanese, however, blinkered their approach to war with a plethora of unknown unknowns.

As an example, they did not understand the breadth of the U.S. educational infrastructure and did not believe that the U.S. could train the officers, noncommissioned officers, and specialists needed to take back Japan's conquests. Japan's training techniques, such as naval aviator training, did not allow for the efficient transformation of the average Japanese aviator into a competent pilot. Therefore, the Americans, they believed, could not do it either. The Japanese had not adequately studied the American or British armies and therefore could not fathom their latent aviation airfield engineering capabilities.

The Army and Navy assigned mediocre personnel to their limited number of intelligence slots and did not appreciate what intelligence and analysis could do. The Navy considered intelligence a secondary function. Although the collection of intelligence was good, its dissemination to tactical elements was poor. The Navy's operations division often ignored or did not believe its own intelligence, especially when



Naval aviation cadets receive pointers while looking over their flight orders at NAS in New Orleans, La.

that intelligence threatened planners' assumptions. The Navy's gross underestimation of the U.S. Navy just before Midway was a contributing factor to its disastrous defeat there.

The Japanese Army entered World War II with just 20 officers and 20 enlisted men at its army general staff intelligence section, and their focus was on the Soviets. Another two or three officers addressed air intelligence. The Army war college gave only superficial intelligence training to its students, and neither the war college nor the air officers training school gave any special intelligence courses. A Japanese journalist recorded in 1943, "[We] are totally incapable of standing apart objectively and viewing positively the emotions and thought patterns of other countries. Accordingly, it is not possible for [us] to look at things objectively."

Although Navy personnel had studied the American and British navies, the studies had always been on tactics. No one of note was interested in possible Western shipyard expansion, large-scale crew mobilization and training, or scientific exploration. Estimates, therefore, as to Western combat potentials, if explored, were fatally flawed or ignored. A strategic operation such as the early 1942 invasion of Burma, with an objective of cutting the Burma-to-China line of communications, failed

to achieve its purpose when the West opened an airlift over the Himalayas. No Japanese planner could have dreamed of an aerial supply line of such magnitude in such difficult conditions. Thus, an unknown unknown became a factor in the outcome of the war.

Faulty estimates of enemy strength originated during fighting in China. There were, in 1937, a total of 10 fairly well-trained Chinese divisions. The remaining 200 or so divisions and division equivalents could claim only unsatisfactory to non-existent training. Equipment was obsolete and poorly maintained, while ammunition was dear and hard to replace. The Japanese learned their warrior trade and exercised their logistics by fighting the Chinese, an army described by an American as a "... medieval mob."

The Japanese Army became spoiled by easy access to military intelligence about the Chinese. The Army ignored its own counter-intelligence practices, from its peacetime organization through training and into combat. There seemed no need for an elaborate operational intelligence system because the Japanese easily obtained intelligence from the Chinese themselves. In China, Japanese officers developed disdain for their foes. It was often worse than disdain; it became a virulent, decades-long, gov-

ernment-driven indoctrination of contempt. The Chinese were little better than animals and insects. China could easily be subdued. In fact, as War Minister Hajime Sugiyama had assured the Emperor in 1937, Japan could crush China in a month.

The army underestimated Soviet prowess, firepower, and logistical sustainability before Nomonhan in 1939. Japanese logisticians had assumed that the Soviets could not launch a major offensive any farther than 200-250 kilometers from a major supply base. The Japanese were having great difficulties themselves in supplying their own forces at 220 kilometers from a major base. Therefore, they believed Soviets must be similarly hobbled. However, the Soviets launched their victorious campaign 600 kilometers from the nearest major supply base.

Underestimating the enemy continued in the Philippines where Japanese army officers estimated the strength of General Douglas MacArthur's 1942 Bataan army at 25,000 men when there were actually 80,000 on the peninsula. They estimated British forces in Singapore at 30,000 when there were 85,000. They estimated the Midway garrison at 750 men and 60 aircraft when there were 3,027 men and 121 combat aircraft. They underestimated the effectiveness of the U.S. Navy itself. They underes-






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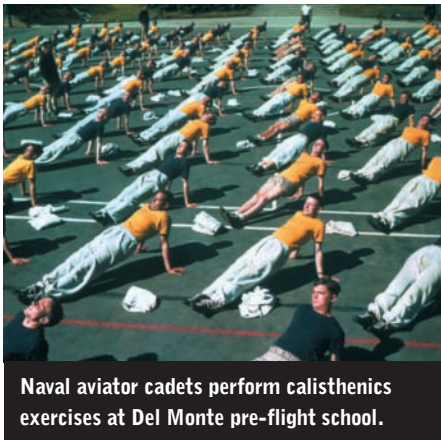
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timated the toughness of Australian and U.S. infantry in New Guinea. They underestimated the deadly effect terrain and weather would have on their own soldiers.

The Japanese completely missed the timing of the Guadalcanal landing. They considered it inconceivable that the landing was anything more than a reconnaissance. They estimated Marine strength on Guadalcanal at 2,000 when there were over 10,000 early in the campaign and later at 10,000 when there were 23,000 Americans on the island. The Japanese estimated that there were two or three infantry companies at Milne Bay on New Guinea, so they landed 1,500 men against 9,458 Australians and Americans. Japanese planners on Bougainville underestimated by half the American forces holding the Empress Augusta Bay perimeter. These miscalculations did not improve with time. They missed the timing and underestimated the strength of the August 1945 Soviet invasion of Manchuria.

Because Japan had not delved deeply into the alchemy of strategic air power, no one could predict how Allied strategic air capabilities might affect Japanese plans. As a result, they underestimated its considerable impact, both on field forces and on logistics. A known known was the extent America's 1941 aviation



National Archives

strength. The Japanese knew what it was. In 1941, a known unknown for the Japanese was certainly a realistic estimate of America's projected aircraft production for 1942. The Japanese knew what they did not know. This is a warrior's view of his enemy. It is an immediate question that can be solved.

And they solved it. Their estimates of U.S. naval air strength in 1941 and increases into July 1942 were excellent. Their estimates of U.S. aircraft production through the end of 1943 were almost exactly in line with actual production. Japanese estimates of U.S. warship production through December 1945 were close

enough for any staff to plan a war. They did stumble badly on merchant tonnage, estimating U.S. construction capacity in 1943 at five million tons versus the actual 19.2 million tons.

Unfortunately for the Japanese, no one could address the unknown unknowns which followed these known knowns. For example, what industrial and organizational assets could America produce in what time frame for rapid airfield construction and for maintenance and supply of aircraft that were resupplied by sea? Then, based on that, how would U.S. strategy and tactics be affected? The Japanese failed to ask these questions because they were bereft of similar abilities and could not conceive of them.

The Japanese could grasp American quantity, but they failed to conceive of American quality mated to incredible quantity, fighting spirit, sound strategic minds, managerial adeptness, and timely, globe-circling logistics.

The Japanese failed to predict U.S. military manpower levels. While they counted ships and airplanes very well, their estimates as to how quickly the U.S. Navy could expand its officer and enlisted ranks fell seriously short. Japan estimated that by December 1943 the U.S. Navy would have 13,070 officers and 296,000 enlisted men. Actual strength was 219,279 officers, 120,472 officer candidates, and 2,034,343

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enlisted men. Based on their undercount, by more than seven to one, it is understandable that the Japanese failed to forecast the huge U.S. naval logistics effort manned by some of those 2.4 million men.

The Japanese underestimated the effect war would have on their own homeland's food situation. Japan domestic production of food, especially rice, was inadequate. The prewar diet was already deficient in animal proteins, fat, vitamins, and minerals. The 1941 food supply was only 6.4 percent above a subsistence minimum. Meat, poultry, and dairy products were relatively rare. The 1941 rice crop fell 12 percent below average, partly due to bad weather. War meant a reduction in acreage and yields as men left the farms, as fertilizer use declined, and as farm tools deteriorated without replacement. Japan had the highest dependency on agricultural fertilizers in the world with 105 pounds of chemical fertilizers needed per acre versus nine pounds in the United States. Food consumption increased because of a larger labor force working longer hours, and food imports were interdicted as the enemy tried to cut the home islands off from overseas sources.

In early 1942, Imperial General Headquarters assumed that the 1942 German offensive on the Eastern Front would finish off the Soviets and thereby remove the Soviet threat from Manchuria. Japan's advance toward Australia and into the Indian Ocean was expected to cut Britain off from its colonies and possibly force Britain out of the war. Britain's withdrawal, in turn, would leave America despairing of victory, and a negotiated peace might then be concluded.

Imperial General Headquarters assumed that 2.1 million tons of shipping were needed for army operations monthly for the first four months of war. They estimated that the loss of efficiency in the merchant marine due to the war would be only 15 to 20 percent. They estimated that the 2.1 million ton requirement would decline to 1.7 million in the fifth month, to 1.65 million in the sixth month, to 1.5 million in the seventh month, and to 1 million in the eighth month. From then on, 1 million tons of shipping would keep the army operating. The navy was expected to need 1.8 million tons monthly. Planners assumed no increases. The forecasting by Imperial General Headquarters extended eight months, through July 1942. One week later, the American landing at Guadalcanal toppled all their tonnage assumptions.

The Japanese assumed that with the U.S. committed first to the defeat of Germany and with the losses inflicted at Pearl Harbor it would take the Americans at least 12 months to launch



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Female workers finish transparent noses built for A-20 attack bombers at Douglas Aircraft's Long Beach, Calif. manufacturing facility. The Japanese high command severely underestimated the Allied industrial capabilities, with disastrous results.

an offensive. The Japanese also assumed that a democracy would be unable to stomach the huge losses inflicted by fanatically resisting Japanese garrisons on the defensive perimeter. Some American planners shared this concern, especially if Japan avoided a direct attack on Americans and American territory. However, the tactically effective yet strategically insane attack on Pearl Harbor ended that possibility.

The Japanese grandly assumed the completion of a string of heavily fortified island air bases and garrisons that would absorb and repulse U.S. mass. Completely apart from the tactical fallacies of a perimeter defense, in which 95 percent of the defensive effort is wasted when the attacker can choose the point of attack, no one sat down to plan the logistics or construction of those bases. No one had figured out the shipping needed to get construction material to the far-flung frontier, and no one had determined the shipping needed by those garrisons to sustain active battle.

The Americans would, after spilling their blood in futile assaults against this perimeter, compromise and allow Japan to keep most of her war gains. A few Japanese championed this approach even past Japan's 1945 surrender. An admiral railed when he heard of the surrender, "I will never follow such shortsighted cowardice! I will not surrender! We will carry on guerrilla action throughout the nation and will not lose this war! The enemy will get tired and give up!"

Planners underestimated America's spiritual fiber. Americans were spiritually degenerate, absorbed in the quest for pleasure. There was,

of course, no science or serious research behind this belief, just a vague, self-satisfying, comfortable self assurance. The Japanese military did not think that America could instill a martial spirit in its populace. A veteran Japanese pilot recalled that his comrades were told that mind could win over might. "We fought by spirit," Minoru Honda recalled, "while we were told that the Americans were lazy so-and-so's. This was not true. American pilots were very brave and extremely courageous."

The Japanese army overestimated the expected military triumphs of Germany and underestimated those of its enemies. Some Japanese doubted a strategy that was to conclude the war by negotiations rather than by some logical military culminating point. For if the enemy did not negotiate, what then? As one Japanese officer wrote after the war, "No Japanese military student possessing any basic knowledge of military logistics could fail to foresee ultimate defeat for our nation in a prolonged war."

Maybe Japan's problem was that no one possessed any basic knowledge of military logistics. They certainly were lacking when it came to realistic assumptions, estimates, and unknown unknowns. □

*John W. Whitman is the author of the book Bataan: Our Last Ditch. The Bataan Campaign, 1942. He is a retired infantry lieutenant colonel, airborne, ranger, with a Combat Infantryman's Badge. He has had over 60 articles and encyclopedia entries published or accepted for publication.*

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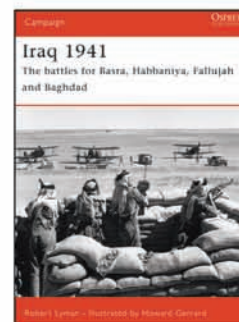
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## The gold train incident was one of several involving riches plundered by the Nazi regime from their victims across Europe.

BY PETER KROSS

**B**Y THE SPRING OF 1945, HITLER'S THOUSAND YEAR REICH HAD COME CRASHING DOWN in flames. The Allied armies that had landed at Normandy almost one year earlier had penetrated deep inside Germany. Soviet forces were shelling the city, and by April, Adolf Hitler, situated in his fortress bunker, would commit suicide.

Throughout Europe, plans were underway by various high-ranking German officers to save themselves. Many planned to make their getaways with the plunder taken from millions of holocaust victims, who had perished in the concentration camps and that which had been confiscated in occupied countries.

In Hungary, a clandestine plot was hatched by a few greedy military officials who took possession of millions of dollars worth of gold, diamonds, and other precious valuables stolen from the Jewish victims of the holocaust. So began the myth of the Hungarian Gold Train, one of the most mysterious and brazen inci-

dents to come out of World War II.

The Jews of Hungary occupied a unique position among the nations of Eastern Europe. In 1867, the Hungarian government emancipated the Jews, who then began organizing their cultural and economic life as a distinct minority in a non-Jewish nation. The Catholic Church never recognized the Jews' distinct position in everyday life and only gave lip service to their newly found freedom.



**U.S. soldiers carry bags of valuables discovered on a German freight train. Much of the property stolen by the Nazi regime during their occupation of neighboring countries has yet to be returned to its rightful owners.**



**This Hungarian Catholic relic was one of many such valuable items plundered by the Third Reich. Discovered near Salzburg, Austria, it was turned over to the Prince Bishop of Salzburg by U.S. Army officials.**

In 1938, one year before the outbreak of World War II, the first anti-Jewish laws were put into effect in Hungary. The government of Kalman Daranyi decreed that all professional Jews, such as doctors and lawyers, could no longer pursue their livelihoods. Further restrictions forbade Jews from participating in the cultural arts of the country. In 1939, the so-called Second Jewish Law put severe impediments on the everyday occupations of the majority of Hungary's Jews. For the Jews of Hungary, conditions became even worse when the radical, anti-Semitic Magyar government allowed the Nazis to assert control over their country at the outbreak of World War II.

Hitler's Final Solution to the Jewish problem in Europe did not spare Hungary's minorities. Under the command of Colonel Adolf Eichmann, over 600,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to the concentration camps. Before being killed, the Nazis stripped these innocent victims of all their precious jewels, gold, furs, and anything of value that could be later sold for profit.

By the end of the war, 200,000 Hungarian

Jews remained alive. Like their brethren, they too had lost their jobs and possessions, taken by either the puppet Magyar government or its Nazi protectors. The fascist government of Hungary was in possession of millions of dollars worth of valuables looted from its own populace. As the war drew to an end, Hungarian government officials drew up an audacious plan to take these valuables out of the country and far from the reach of the fast approaching Allied armies.

When Hungary fell to the Red Army on April 5, 1944, preparations to move the treasure went into high gear. With Switzerland as its final destination, a large train consisting of 24 cars filled with the looted treasure, 15 other cars containing police and selected army officers, a large amount of foodstuffs, and finally, seven cars containing miners, made emergency plans to leave. In all, the train consisted of 46 cars, with a total of 213 people on board. The gold train was about to begin its journey into myth and legend.

The man in charge of the gold train was Colonel Arpad Toldi. Toldi had served in the German ministry of occupation in Hungary. He had written numerous pamphlets on police procedure and a manual for the Gendarmerie (police) training school. Soon after the German occupation, he had been appointed governor of the Fejer district in Hungary. Toldi was virulently anti-Semitic and anti-Soviet in his politics. He appointed his own people to all the local positions of governmental authority, enforced the deportations of Jews, and oversaw the seizure of their personal property. He was eventually given the prestigious job of Commissioner of Jewish Affairs.

With Soviet troops now on his heels, Toldi began the laborious process of getting the gold train ready for departure. He firmly believed that the treasure was the property of the Hungarian government.

Hundreds of men toiled for months during the summer, fall, and winter of 1944 to prepare the stolen property for its journey. Under his personal supervision, Toldi divided the most precious cargo in preparation for two types of transportation. The most valuable goods, mainly gold and jewels, were stored on trucks. The rest of the booty was attached to the main part of the train. The cargo was divided to save some of the items in case the train came under Allied aerial attack.

By the end of December 1944, the gold train was ready for departure. On board were members of Toldi's family, including his wife, son, and step daughters. At a point along the train's trek, Toldi was reported to have unceremoni-



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ously expelled his step daughters from the caravan.

The gold train began its journey shortly before Christmas 1944. Its first stop was the town of Zire, 120 miles from Budapest. At this juncture, Toldi requisitioned several transports from a nearby Hungarian army base to gather up more Jewish gold and jewels, which had been secretly kept at the nearby Obanya Castle. A week later, the train arrived in Brennbergbanya. It stopped along the route at various small towns and villages where more gold and other valuables had been stored in warehouses and were then transferred to the train.

The gold train spent 92 days at Brennbergbanya, where the cargo was carefully counted and sorted into various categories. Classifications included precious stones and jewelry, gold objects, gold coins, gold watches, silver objects, and furs.

By the time the gold train began the second leg of its journey in the spring of 1945, the war was almost over. Toldi was convinced that the Soviets were actively hunting his treasure-laden train, and he began a desperate gamble to keep the contents out of their hands. As the train neared the Swiss border, Toldi intended to stop from time to time and begin selling off some of the contents to the guards on board, as well as certain civilians living along the route.

Events on the train were about to shift into high gear as Toldi began a double cross intended to ensure the safety of himself and his family at the expense of the rest of the crew and passengers of the gold train.

During the night of March 30, 1945, Toldi, his family, and a few trusted aides left the train with the most valuable of the loot, leaving his subordinate, Lazlo Avar, to take the train to its ultimate destination, the Swiss-Austrian border. This was a tactical decision, Toldi stated to Avar; he would meet up with him later. Unknown to Avar, Red Army units were only 10 miles away.

At the beginning of April 1945, with the end of the war in Europe now weeks away, Toldi and his family were situated at the border between Switzerland and Austria where they accumulated additional valuables beyond what they had already stolen from the train. Toldi and his party tried to enter Switzerland but were refused admission by the Swiss government. With his situation growing more desper-



**A railyard in Austria comes under attack by U.S. fighter-bombers. The Gold Train, laden with plundered treasures from Eastern and Central Europe, narrowly escaped destruction during such a raid.**

ate by the day, Toldi had to find a way into Switzerland before the Soviets could grab him. He now turned to an SS officer, Wilhelm Hottl, for help.

Hottl had previously been a high-ranking officer in the Balkans, and the two men had come in contact with each other during their work. At this point, the historical record becomes sketchy regarding how much and what kind of assistance Hottl gave Toldi, as well as what the former Nazi officer demanded in return. Reports say that Toldi gave Hottl 10 percent of the plunder in exchange for his promise to transport the fugitives to Switzerland and to give the Toldi family fake German passports under assumed names.

Hottl worked with another con man, Friedrich Westen, an Austrian who traveled freely to Poland, Romania, Italy, and Yugoslavia. In February 1945, Westen made secret contact with Allen Dulles, the American OSS station chief in Bern. Westen, it seems, was a go-between on behalf of Hottl with the OSS. In time, however, the OSS worked directly with Hottl, although the extent of their cooperation is not known.

Toldi, the story goes, got false passports from Westen. In return, Hottl and Westen received

four crates of valuables as their cut. By May 1945, Hottl and Westen disappeared from sight. Their trail had grown cold—at least temporarily.

After the war, the new Hungarian government tried to find Toldi, and investigators came up with interesting information. Toldi's personal file was missing from the Hungarian Ministry of Defense. Reports placed him in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1947, but that sighting could not be verified. Charges were filed against him for the forcible deportation of 4,000 Hungarian Jews, and the post-war government asked for his extradition. All requests for his surrender were for naught. Unconfirmed accounts placed Toldi in North Africa or as having enlisted in the French Foreign Legion.

By May 1945, U.S. intelligence operatives actually made contact with the gold train. On May 16, the train arrived in the city of Werfen and stayed there four weeks. During this time, U.S. Army investigators began interrogating the remaining members of the train entourage and soon learned its sordid history. At the same time, the Soviets took control of Hungary and demanded that all the loot on

the train be turned over to them. With the Soviets in the picture, an international incident loomed ahead.

The first members of the American military to question the Hungarians on the train were the members of the 430th Detachment of the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) stationed in Salzburg, Austria. Marton Himler was the arresting officer who took charge of the gold train investigation. With the train now in American hands, it was given a new name—the “Werfen Train.” The train and its passengers were separated, and the Hungarian guards helped the Americans unload and sort the contents. Emptied from the train were 1,500 crates containing watches, silverware, and jewelry, as well as 5,200 Persian carpets, stamp collections, and fine china.

No immediate provisions were made for the return of the train's contents to the people of Hungary. Three years later, on July 27, 1948, Secretary of State George C. Marshall sent a cable to the U.S. Legation in Budapest spelling out the United States' position regarding the contents of the gold train. Marshall's directive reads in part: “American forces having examined the portion of the Hungarian train in the American Zone of Austria, the U.S. Com-

National Archives

mander (General Mark Clark) determined that the contents therefore were unidentifiable as to owners and, in view of the territorial changes in Hungary, as to national origin, restitution to Hungary being therefore not feasible, it was determined, with the approval of this government, that the property in question would be given to the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees ...”

This statement by Secretary Marshall made an already complicated situation more involved as the surviving Hungarian Jewish population railed at the American decision, asserting that the contents of the gold train belonged to them.

Greed on the part of certain high ranking American military officers also reared its ugly head. On July 13, 1945, Maj. Gen. Henry Collins, the commander of the 42nd Infantry Division in western Austria, requisitioned certain valuable objects from the gold train for his own personal use. Among the items taken by General Collins for both his private villa and his personal railcar were the following: chinaware; silverware; glassware, including liqueur and champagne glasses; five rugs; eight paintings, 30 sets of table linens; 60 sheets; 60 pillow cases; and 60 large bath towels. Other high-ranking American officers also took gold train items. Some items from the train unexpectedly showed up at American PX stores where they were sold to GIs and others.

Post-war documents held in the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) in Jerusalem reveal the extent of the American pillage of the gold train. Dated July 16, 1947, a report by Yehuda Gaulan, a member of the negotiating team with the Americans regarding the fate of the gold train, is quite revealing.

“The local American authorities are doing everything to obstruct that work,” the report reads, “especially in view of the fact that at the beginning of this work they have lost a source for easily acquiring riches. It is known that top ranking officers of the American army have pocketed very valuable items ...”

The Americans were not the only ones to take illegal possession of gold train contents. French troops, tipped off by informers, were able to confiscate large caches which had been hidden in their occupation zone in Austria.

By 1948, portions of the receipts from the sale of contents of the gold train found their way into private hands. Some funds wound up in the vaults of the Hungarian National Bank. About \$8 million was sent to the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem.

With the U.S. declaration that the rightful

*Continued on page 78*

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## FACING MORE THAN TWO COMPANIES OF HITLER'S ELITE SS MEN AT THE "ISLAND," DICK WINTERS AND THE MEN OF EASY COMPANY DEMONSTRATED UNPARALLELED COURAGE UNDER FIRE.

The military career of Major Dick Winters, former commander of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, was brief, but distinguished nonetheless. His success as a combat commander during World War II was virtually unequalled. Taking command of Easy Company on D-Day, Winters led the fabled "band of brothers" throughout the Normandy campaign. In September 1944, then-Captain Winters jumped into Holland at the head of his men as part of Operation Market-Garden. After two weeks of grueling combat around Nijmegen and Uden, Easy Company moved on October 2 to the "Island," an area between the Lower Rhine and the Waal Rivers. Three days later, Winters led Easy Company in an assault that decimated two enemy companies and repelled a heavy German attack. Following is Major Winters's personal account of the action that he termed "my apogee as a company commander." This selection is an excerpt from his book *Beyond Band of Brothers*, with Cole Kingseed, published by Berkley Caliber Books in February 2006.

BY MAJOR DICK WINTERS, WITH COLONEL COLE C. KINGSEED


# THE ISLAND

Now that Uden was secured, Easy Company and the remainder of the 101st Airborne Division received orders to move to the "Island," a long narrow area north of Nijmegen between the Lower Rhine and the Waal Rivers. The ground between the dikes of the two rivers was flat farm land, spotted with small villages and towns. The dikes along the rivers were twenty feet high and the fields were criss-crossed with drainage ditches that were covered with heavy vegetation. There were roads on the top of the dikes and narrow roadways through the adjoining farm land. The farming was concentrated and lush with fields of carrots, beets, and cabbages, interspersed with fruit orchards. For the upcoming operation the 101st Airborne Division was attached to the British XII Corps. On October 2, the 506th PIR moved by trucks over the bridge at Nijmegen and was the first unit of the 101st to move to the Island. Intelligence reported that the German 363d Volks-

grenadier Division was in the vicinity and received orders to clear the Island. The 363d Volksgrenadier Division had been cut up in Normandy, but now had been reinforced and was anxious to return to battle.

The following day our regiment relieved the frontline positions held by the British 43d Wessex Infantry Division, which was covering a line of approximately six miles in length. The 43d Division had suffered heavy casualties in their attempt to seize the crossings of the Lower Rhine and to evacuate the British 1st Airborne Division that had jumped at Arnhem. As we approached the forward positions, the British Tommies were withdrawing in trucks. Taking a good look at them, I had never seen more thoroughly dispirited soldiers. Two weeks of combat had totally drained their morale and had thoroughly demoralized the troops. Colonel Strayer's 2d Battalion now dispersed its line on the south bank of the Rhine, covering an area

of over three miles in length, starting at a point one-half mile east of Heteren and extending two and one half miles west of Randwijk toward Opheusden. The 3d Battalion lay on our right flank with 1st Battalion in reserve. Easy Company held the right of the battalion line, with Dog Company on the left flank, and Fox Company in reserve. Colonel Strayer established battalion headquarters at Hemmen, a village just to the rear of our front lines. Each company had responsibility to cover one and one half miles of front, far in excess of the normal distance for company defensive positions. The line could only be covered by strategically placing outposts at the most likely avenues of enemy approach and where I calculated enemy infiltration would occur. Company headquarters would keep contact with these outposts by means of radio, wire, and contact patrols. I placed the second and third platoons on line and kept my first platoon in reserve. Easy Com-



**OPPOSITE:** Captain Richard D. Winters poses for a photo at the Schoonderlogt estate, south of Arnhem, Holland. Winters and several of his 101st Airborne troops were decorated for their heroic assault against German artillery positions at Brécourt Manor on D-day.

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DE LANDGOLDE  
SCHOONDERLOGT.



pany's entire complement of personnel consisted of five officers and 130 enlisted men present for duty.

There was little action the first two days but around 0400 on October 5, the enemy attacked in strength with machine gun and mortar support on our flank, striking 3d Battalion headquarters and killing the battalion commander. Simultaneously on our front, a patrol of four men led by Sergeant Art Youman left Randwijk to observe enemy activity and to adjust artillery fire from an outpost on the south bank of the Rhine River. The patrol included Youman and Privates First Class Roderick Strohl, Jim Alley, and Joe Lesniewski. The patrol returned at 0420 with all four wounded by small-arms fire and hand grenades. Alley had caught the worst of it. He had thirty-two holes in his left side, face, neck, and arm and would spend the next two months in the hospital. Everyone in the patrol was out of breath. One look at them and you knew that they had been in combat and had faced death in the night. There was absolutely no question about it. Strohl reported that they had encountered a large body of Germans at the crossroads three quarters of a mile east of Easy Company's command post. In his estimation, the Germans had achieved a major breakthrough of our lines. Strohl also reported

that the enemy had a machine gun that was firing randomly to the south. As they had approached the machine gun, his patrol had come under fire.

Due to the potential seriousness of the situation, I decided to investigate myself. Taking Sergeant Leo Boyle from the company headquarters (he carried the SCR 300 radio), and one squad from 1st Platoon, which at this time was still the reserve platoon, I organized the patrol and started off as fast as possible to analyze the situation. As we approached the crossroads, I could see and hear intermittent machine gun fire, with tracers flying off toward the south. This firing made no sense to me because I knew there was absolutely nothing down that road for nearly three and a half miles—and that would be the 2d Battalion headquarters at Hemmen.

At this point I halted the patrol and tried to make contact with the Canadian soldier who was our forward observer for artillery support. I wanted the observer to place a concentration of artillery fire on that crossroads, but I could not raise him on the radio. Leaving the patrol in charge of Sergeant Boyle, I conducted a short reconnaissance myself to determine which was the best way to get closer to that crossroads. I saw that the river side of the dike had a ditch

about two-to-two-and-a-half-feet deep that ran parallel to the dike road. This would provide us better cover. Leaving two men as guards for our rear and right flank protection, I took the remainder of the squad up and over the dike to the north side. We then followed the ditch toward the crossroads and the machine gun. Approximately 250 yards from the crossroads, I again halted the patrol and crawled up the ditch by myself to scout out the situation. As I got closer to the crossroads, I heard voices and then I observed seven enemy soldiers silhouetted against the night sky, standing on top of the dike by the machine gun. They were wearing long winter overcoats and distinctive helmets. I crawled until I was about twenty-five yards behind them in the drainage ditch at the bottom of the dike. I thought to myself, "This is just like the movie 'All Quiet on the Western Front.'"

I returned to the patrol and informed them of the enemy dispositions. The instructions were clear: "We must crawl up there with absolutely no noise, keep low, and we must hurry." I could see that we would not have the cover of night with us much longer. We reached a position about forty yards from the machine gun as dawn approached. I halted the patrol and instructed Sergeant Dukeman and Corporal Christenson to set up our machine gun. I then



Incoming artillery sends U.S. soldiers scurrying for cover along a roadside in Holland. The 101st Airborne Division jumped into Holland as part of Operation Market Garden in September 1944.

went to each man and in a whisper assigned each a target on the German machine gun crew with instructions to fire on my command. Next I stepped back and raising my voice a bit louder, said, "Ready, Aim, Fire!" The rifle fire was good, but our machine gun fired a bit high. Three Germans started running for the other side of the dike. I joined in with my M-1, as did everybody else. In short order we accounted for all seven enemy soldiers.

No sooner had we eliminated the German gun crew than we started receiving some light rifle fire from the east side of the roadway that ran from the dike to the river. I immediately withdrew the patrol down the same ditch for which we had approached the crossroads for about 200 yards to another drainage ditch that ran parallel to the roadway from which we were receiving the rifle fire. I had one major problem because the Germans on the other side of that roadway were at least combat patrol size and I only had one rifle squad at my disposal. I radioed Lieutenant Harry Welsh at the company CP to send up the balance of 1st Platoon and also 1st Lieutenant Frank Reis from the battalion headquarters company with his section of light machine guns. At this time we received some rifle grenade fire from the direction of a culvert that ran under the road to the river. Without any direction, the men immediately returned that fire and destroyed the Ger-



Stripped of their shoes and other much-needed supplies by their retreating comrades, the bodies of three German soldiers lie in the Dutch countryside.

National Archives

man position. In the ensuing exchange, we lost Sergeant William H. Dukeman, a man we all respected. "Duke" was a Toccoa man who was beloved by everyone in the company.

While waiting for the rest of the platoon to join us, I went out fifty yards into the field between the two lines to contemplate the situation we were facing. After careful reflection, three things were immediately apparent: first, the Germans were behind a good solid roadway embankment. We were in a shallow ditch, with no safe route for withdrawal. Second, the Germans were in a good position to outflank us to our right and catch us in this open flat field with

no cover. Lastly, if the Germans had a force of any size, they could advance right down that roadway south and there would be nothing to stop them until they hit the battalion command post. Determining that we could not stay where we were and refusing to retreat, I decided to attack. To surrender the initiative to the enemy was indefensible. I figured that when you are in a face-off, the guy who gets off the first shot usually wins. There was really no other decision to make than to take the battle directly to the enemy. I asked God to give me strength.

By the time the balance of the 1st Platoon arrived, full daylight reached our position. I called Lieutenants Reis and Peacock, the latter being the leader of 1st Platoon, and Staff Sergeant Floyd Talbert together and gave them the following orders: "Talbert, take 3d Squad to the right. Peacock, take the left with 1st Squad, and I'll take 2d Squad right up the middle. Reis, I want your machine guns placed between the columns and I want good covering fire until we reach that roadway. Then, lift your fire and move up and join us. Fix bayonets and get in line as quickly as possible. Peacock, when everybody is in position, I'll give you a hand signal and you drop a smoke grenade to signal our jump-off."

I then assembled the second squad and explained the plan. Don Hoobler was standing right in front of me. When I said, "Fix bayonets," he took a big swallow. I can still remember seeing his Adam's apple make a difficult trip up and down his throat. Hoobler's adrenalin was flowing.

My adrenalin was pumping too. I had never been so pumped up in my life. On the smoke signal, the base of fire commenced and all three columns started their dash across the 175 to 200 yards of level field. I was a good athlete in school, but I am sure that I ran the 200 yards faster than I had ever run 200 yards

## THE EXTRA DIMENSIONAL CAPABILITIES OF THE AIRBORNE

WHEN CAPTAIN DICK WINTERS LED Easy Company's charge over the "Island" dike in Holland, he provided an example of the additional capabilities that airborne forces brought to the table.

Airborne divisions were designed as light troops, relying on the shock value of landing to the enemy's rear, and giving the Allies a third dimension of attack. Airborne troops were armed with light weapons, such as folding stock rifles and light artillery; they had no tanks, and their heaviest vehicles were a few jeeps. Paratroopers ate and fought with whatever they could carry, relying on cargo planes or a breakthrough by ground forces for resupply.

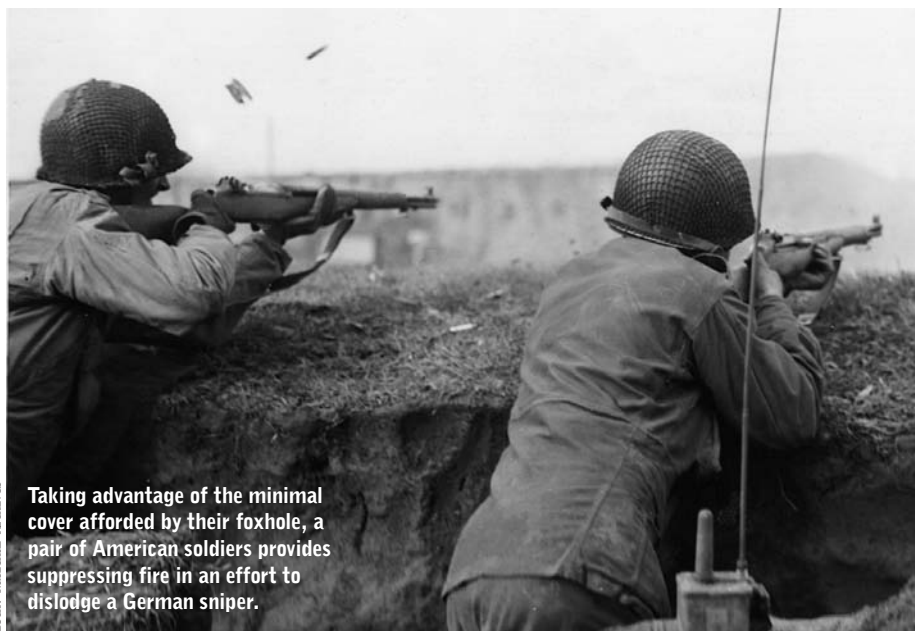
Airborne soldiers were supposed to fight for a maximum of three days before being relieved, but the necessities of war quickly changed that. In Normandy the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions fought for a month before being relieved. In Holland they fought for over three months, from September 17-November 25, guarding Hell's Highway to Arnhem, and defending the Island.

Despite their reputation as shock troops, they were often quite stationary. It is true that they could cover hundreds of miles while flying to their drop zones across North Africa, Sicily, France, Holland, and Germany, but once on the ground, paratroopers had to count on their feet for movement.

Leaders like Winters made up for the stationary nature of airborne troops with aggressive tactics. Unlike a regular ground soldier who might be tempted to rely on heavy artillery or tanks to precede maneuver, Winters relied on shock and speed to overwhelm the enemy. Although outnumbered two-to-one at the dike, his men crashed into the Germans' flank and poured on the fire. It wasn't until the main threat was neutralized that he called in artillery to stop the remaining Germans from retreating.

It was that aggressive nature and the ability to fight long past the three-day doctrine limit that would serve Winters and his men well when the Germans launched the Ardennes Offensive and surrounded the 101st at a little, nondescript town called Bastogne.

*Kevin M. Hymel*



Taking advantage of the minimal cover afforded by their foxhole, a pair of American soldiers provides suppressing fire in an effort to dislodge a German sniper.

in my life. Hidden in the grass were strings of barbed wire, about the height of the tops of our shoes. I tripped once or twice but continued running. Oddly enough, I seemed to be floating more than running as I rapidly outpaced everyone else in the platoon. When I reached the road leading to the dike, I was completely alone, oblivious to where the rest of the men were located.

The roadway from the dike tapered from being twenty feet high at the dike to a level of about three feet in front of me. I simply took a running jump onto the roadway. Good God! Right in front of me was a sentry on outpost, who still had his head down, ducking the covering fire from Lieutenant Reis. To my right was a solid mass of infantry, all packed together, lying down at the juncture of the dike and the road, on which I was standing and which led to the river. They, too, still had their heads down to duck under that base of fire. Since it was already cold in October, the enemy were all wearing their long winter overcoats and had their backpacks on, all of which hindered their movement. Every single man was facing the dike and I was in their rear. I realized what the size of a company formation of paratroopers looked like and I knew this was much larger than one of our companies. Other than a lone sentry, who was directly in front of me, the rear of this mass of men was about fifteen yards away and the front of the company was no more than an additional fifty yards from my position.

I wheeled and dropped back to my side of the road, pulled the pin of a hand grenade, and tossed it over. At the same time, the German sentry lobbed a potato masher back to

me. As soon as I threw the grenade, I realized that I had goofed. I had kept a band of tape around the handle of my grenades to avoid an accident in case the pin was pulled accidentally. Fortunately, the enemy's grenade also failed to explode. I immediately jumped back up on top of the road. The sentry was still hunched down covering his head with his arms waiting for my grenade to explode. He was only three or four yards away. After all these years, I can still see him smiling at me as I stood on top of the dike. It wasn't necessary to take an aimed shot. I simply shot from the hip. That shot startled the entire company and they started to rise and turn toward me en masse. After killing the sentry, I simply pivoted to my right and kept firing right into that solid mass of troops.

The movements of the enemy seemed surreal to me. When they rose up, their reaction seemed to be so slow. When they turned to look over their shoulders at the sound of my firing, it was in slow motion, and when they started to raise their rifles to fire, they seemed so lethargic. I cannot give you a reason for this mental trance that I was in other than to say that everybody around me seemed out of synchronization. I was the only one who seemed normal. I never experienced anything like this in combat before or since. I immediately emptied the first clip of eight rounds and, still standing in the middle of the road, I put in a second clip. Still shooting from the hip, I emptied that clip into the enemy. By now I could see some of the Germans throwing their rifles to their shoulders to start shooting at me, but they were caught up in the pushing and shoving so they were unable to get a good shot at

me. Most of the mob was just running away. After finishing the second clip, I dropped back to my side of the road for cover. Looking to my right I could see Talbert sprinting to reach the dike. Crouched over, he was still a good ten yards from the road. Right behind him was Sergeant Rader running straight up with that long stride of his. My column was still struggling to reach the road. Tripping over the wire, they were at least twenty yards away. Lieutenant Peacock was leading his column, but he was also about twenty yards from the road.

Not waiting for the remainder of the platoon, I inserted a third clip and started popping up, taking a shot or two, and then dropping back down. The Germans, in the meantime, began running as best they could, but those long winter overcoats and packs shortened their strides as they ran away from



Rapidly moving across the low-lying Dutch countryside, an American soldier leaps over a drainage ditch. After the initial phase of Operation Market Garden, the fighting in Holland became more protracted.

me along the foot of the dike toward the east. By now, Talbert, Rader and his crew were in position and they immediately commenced a deadly accurate fire. "Fire at will," I commanded. You could not have written a better script than this. Talbert's and Rader's squads had a duck shoot straight into the rear of that mass of retreating men. It was virtually impossible to miss. Without effective leadership to calm them down and to make this battle organized chaos, the enemy's retreat disintegrated into a rout.

At this time, another German company arrived from about 100 yards away, east of the road crossing. They had been in the vicinity of the windmill adjacent to the river. When they joined the company that we had routed, the increased mass of troops produced a target-rich environment. My column by now had reached the road and PFC Roy W. Cobb placed his machine gun and delivered long-distance fire on the retreating Germans. Cobb

was a hard-nosed individual if you ever saw one, a regular army man who clearly understood combat. Cobb's fire was extremely effective, as was the fire of Talbert's squad, since Talbert had a straight shot at a distance of 250 yards. Peacock's group, on my left, now engaged the enemy, inflicting six dead and nine prisoners on the retreating Germans. As the enemy fled along the dike to the roadway leading back to the river, we could observe their withdrawal at all times. I now called artillery support and we maintained effective fire on the Germans as they ran as fast as they could toward the river.

My immediate intention was to pursue them toward the river and cut off their retreat. I requested an additional platoon from battalion, and they ordered a platoon from Fox Company to come to my support. While waiting for the platoon to arrive, we

reorganized. My casualties were one man dead and four wounded. Tech/5 Joseph D. Lieb Gott had been slightly wounded in the arm, but he was ambulatory so I assigned him the mission of escorting seven German prisoners to the rear. Lieb Gott had earned the reputation of being one of Easy's best combat soldiers, but we had all heard stories that he was very rough on prisoners. Lieb Gott was one of Easy Company's killers, so I deemed it appropriate to take a bit of caution. When he heard me say, "Take the prisoners back to the battalion command post," he replied, "Oh boy! I'll take care of them." In his exuberance Lieb Gott stood up and paced back and forth and he was obviously very nervous and concerned.

I stopped him in his tracks. "There are seven prisoners and I want seven prisoners turned over to battalion."

Lieb Gott was highly incensed and started to throw a tantrum. Somewhat unsure of how he would react, I then dropped my M-1 to my hip, threw off the safety, and said, "Lieb Gott, drop all your ammunition and empty your rifle." There was much grumbling and swearing, but he did as I had ordered. "Now," I said, "you can put one round in your rifle. If you drop a prisoner, the rest will jump you." One of the German prisoners, an officer, evidently understood this exchange. After he understood my orders, he relaxed and sat down. Lieb Gott returned seven prisoners to battalion headquarters that day—I personally checked with Nixon.

When the platoon from Fox Company finally arrived, I distributed ammunition and then made plans to advance toward the river. I intended to set up a base of fire, and then move half the unit forward 100 yards, stop and set up another base of fire, and then have the second half of the platoon leapfrog 100 yards. We would again establish a base of fire and repeat the maneuver in this manner to the river, a distance of 600 yards. At the river end of this road was a ferry that connected the village of Renkun on the north side of the Rhine with a factory on the Rhine River's south bank. Obviously, the Germans had used this crossing to get these two companies to the Island from Arnhem. Now they wanted to return to the ferry to withdraw across the river.

We conducted four leapfrog movements with little trouble other than receiving a light concentration of artillery fire, which fell harmlessly on our left flank. As we reached the factory buildings, we were hit by an attack on our right rear flank by a force that I estimated at seventy-five men. Looking at my tactical position from the factory, I realized that I was getting myself into a bottleneck. By now, Easy Company was really close to the river and we were looking up at the German artillery and mortar positions. And now, on my right rear flank, I had what was left of those two German companies pinching in on my flank and attempting to cut off the withdrawal of my two platoons. I decided it was better to call it a day, withdraw, and live to fight tomorrow. Consequently, we withdrew to the dike, leapfrogging in reverse, but always laying down a base of fire.

All went as planned, but just as we were pulling the last groups over the dike, the enemy cut loose with a terrific concentration of mortar and artillery fire right on that crossroads. They had that point zeroed in just perfectly. Before we could move the troops either right



Two Easy Company paratroopers hold the line during fighting at the "Island" in October 1944.



At the "Island" dike after Easy Company destroyed two German infantry companies on October 5, 1944.

Both: Nat'l. Arch. 1. Archives

## THE "ISLAND" TODAY



A modern view of the terrain at the "Island" reveals the depression through which Major Richard Winters led his company.

THE FAMED "ISLAND" DIKE WHERE DICK Winters fired his last shot of the war looks much today as it did on October 5, 1944.

Many of the terrain features are still there: the shallow ditch where Winters and his men began their charge, the second ditch where he led the men forward to kill seven Germans, the culvert that ran under the road, and the factory where the day's actions ended. There have, however, been a few changes in the 60-plus years since Easy Company's definitive action: Fences run along the road, cattle graze, and bales of hay line the road during harvest time. There are no longer traces of fox holes dug into the sides of the dike, but the factory is still there, producing bricks and other masonry products.

Following Winters' footsteps to the top of the road, the panorama of the German position reveals an easy killing ground, and the road is high enough to offer the perfect position for hip shots from an M1 rifle. Winters had no need to aim from this high ground at such close range. Looking down from this position, it seems amazing that none of the Germans

were able to fire a level shot at Winters in such an exposed place.

Much of the terrain surrounding the Island consists of lowlands cross-stitched with raised dikes, also known as levies—many of which serve as roads. The area is in many ways similar to the checkerboard design of France's hedgerow country—minus the heavy brush. The sea-level climate is mild, even in November, unlike Bastogne which is in hill country.

The 2001 HBO miniseries, *Band of Brothers*, reenacted Easy Company's action at the dike to the detail. Although filmed in Hertfordshire, England, the set designers were able to almost perfectly recreate the Dutch terrain (the grass in Holland is a much brighter green). With the exception of a few changed lines (the miniseries has Easy Company simply opening fire on the seven Germans instead of reacting to Winters's command), and some artistic license with a few actions (the surrendering Germans emerged from a clump of reeds, not the culvert), it was an excellent representation of what actually happened.

Kevin M. Hymel



A modern view of the field where Winters and his men discovered the Germans.

or left away from the crossroads, we suffered eighteen casualties, all wounded. I grabbed the SCR 300 radio and went to the top of the dike to try and return some artillery on the Germans. I put the radio down by my left shoulder and was coordinating artillery fire as rapidly as I could. I also called battalion and asked for medics and ambulances to extract the wounded. Lieutenant Jackson "Doc" Neavles, the assistant battalion surgeon, replied and wanted to know how many casualties. I told him we needed help for "two baseball teams." Neavles wasn't very sharp where sports were concerned, and asked me to put that message in clear language. I replied, "Get the hell off the radio so I can get some more artillery support, or we'll need enough for three baseball teams."

About that time a concentration of mortar rounds hit right behind me and I heard a "ting." I took off my helmet to examine it, thinking I'd been hit on the helmet. There was no sign of damage, so I put it back on and then I noticed that the antenna to the radio sitting by my left shoulder had been clipped off right at the top of the radio. Eventually, the artillery and mortar fire ceased, but we had suffered far too many casualties to continue the engagement. Fortunately none was killed in weathering that mortar and artillery concentration. Sergeant Leo Boyle was one of those hit. He had been my right-hand man all day, and he was in a fox-hole right behind me when he was hit. That was the end of the war for Boyle, a very good, loyal friend. The ambulances came and picked up the wounded. I set up a couple of strong points to cover the crossroad, but did not put one on the crossroad since the Germans had already used the intersection as a target reference point. About this time Captain Nixon showed up and asked me, "How's everything going?"

"Give me a drink of water," I replied as I sat down on the edge of the dike. Until that point, I had not realized how exhausted I was. He handed me his canteen and as I went to lift the canteen, my hand was visibly shaking. I'd often seen Nixon's hand shake when he had one too many drinks, but this was the first time that I had ever seen my own hand shake. Nixon's shaking hands were the result of guzzling a shot of Vat 69 and were due to the shock of his nervous system gearing up. I felt my shaking hands were the result of my nervous system settling down, recovering from exertion and excitement.

How we had survived, I had no idea. We were certainly *very* lucky, as we had probably

faced 300 plus troops. Fortunately the German leadership was abysmal. This was a far cry from what we had experienced in Normandy, where the enemy marksmanship and grazing fire inflicted a far greater number of casualties on Easy Company. At no time during our current battle had there been any evidence of German commanders directing well-aimed and concentrated fire until their artillery had opened up as we reached the river. This lack of fire discipline was seen originally by the indiscriminate firing of the machine guns early in the morning. Once we had eliminated the enemy machine gun crew, the Germans magnified their mistakes by letting our initial squad get away with sitting in that open field, waiting for the balance of the platoon and the machine gun section to come forward from the company CP. While we waited, we were located in a shallow trench—they had a road bank for a firing line. We sat there for at least one hour without the enemy exercising the slightest bit of initiative. Additionally, the German officers allowed their company to bunch up in one gigantic mass once the battle started. Finally, the Germans compounded their errors by permitting us to pin them down with two machine guns while the remainder of 1st Platoon made a dash across 200 yards of a perfectly flat field. To allow roughly thirty-five men rout two companies of elite troops hardly spoke well of the leadership of the enemy.

In my estimation, this action by E Company was the highlight of all Easy Company's engagements during the entire war and it also served as my apogee as company commander. Easy's destruction of the German artillery battery at Breccourt Manor on D-Day was extremely important in its contribution to the successful landing at Utah Beach, but this action demonstrated Easy Company's overall superiority, of every man, of every phase of infantry tactics: patrol, defense, attack under a base of fire, withdrawal, and, above all, superior marksmanship with rifles, machine guns, and mortar fire. All this was done against numerically superior forces that had an advantage of ten to one in manpower and excellent observation for artillery and mortar support. Since early morning, we had sustained twenty-two casualties from the fifty-five or so soldiers who were engaged. Nixon and I estimated the enemy casualties as fifty killed, eleven captured, and countless wounded. I guess I had contributed my share, but killing never made me happy. Satisfied, yes, because I knew I had done my job; but never happy.

There was no superior officer or staff officer present to witness any part of the engagement. Therefore, it was up to me to write up the account. Describing this action, I intentionally wrote the entire narrative without once using the word "I." My reason was simple—I wanted to ensure that all credit went to the men who deserved it. I was not bucking for a personal decoration or any personal acknowledgement of my abilities as a combat commander. On October 16, I recommended that 1st Platoon and the first section of the light machine gun platoon of Headquarters Company be cited for gallantry in action. In compiling my recommendation, I noted that 1st Platoon had spearheaded the company attack at Carentan. In Holland they had led the attack on Nuenen during which fifteen men of the platoon were killed or injured. Now they had been instrumental in the destruction of two companies of SS troops. God, I was proud of these men! Eleven days later, Colonel Sink issued a regimental general order that cited 1st Platoon, Easy Company for "their daring and aggressive spirit and sound tactical ability" against a vastly superior enemy force. That citation was reward enough for me.


My real satisfaction lay in the eyes of the men. In a sense, Staff Sergeant Talbert was representative of the entire company. From that day onward, there was a look in his eye of respect, and a look in my eye of respect for him and the others who had participated in the attack. The key to a successful combat leader is to earn respect, not because of rank, but because you are a man. In a letter dated after the war, Tab attempted to summarize our relationship: "The things we had are damn near sacred to me." The feeling was mutual as October 5 sealed feelings of camaraderie and friendship that were beyond words. You can't describe it. You have to live through it, but you never question it.

October 5 marked my last combat action as commander of Easy Company and the last day that I fired my weapon in combat. On October 9, Colonel Sink assigned me to 2d Battalion headquarters to serve as battalion executive officer. The episode in the HBO series that depicted Sink visiting Easy Company on the dike after we had destroyed the two German companies to ask if I thought I could handle a battalion was fairly accurate, but the timing was wrong. This conversation actually occurred while we were at Mourmelon-le-Grand after we were pulled off the front line in November. First Lieutenant Fred Heyliger temporarily assumed command of Easy Com-

pany until First Lieutenant Norman S. Dike, Jr. arrived from regimental headquarters to assume command of the company with which I had served for two years. Heyliger had been an 81mm mortar platoon leader in Headquarters Company of 2d Battalion. He had two combat jumps to his credit and was well respected in Easy Company.

Leaving Easy Company was the hardest thing I had done in my life. Life in an infantry company is extremely intimate and the result is that men share their collective experiences each and every day. As I reflected on my two years in the company, from a platoon leader at Toccoa to Easy's commanding officer since D-Day, I knew that I was leaving the greatest group of men with whom I had ever served. From the tyrannical tenure of Captain Sobel through my relief, Easy Company had trained and fought as a cohesive unit. At Toccoa, Sobel had constantly screamed at the men and he forced each soldier to stand on his own. You were not supposed to help one another. If you did, Sobel withheld your pass and placed you on extra duty. He was trying to wash the men out. This brought the men closer together as they helped each other with their sprains, in carrying heavy equipment, such as crew-served weapons, mortars, and base plates. Easy Company had to work together to get through each day, and this cohesion intensified as the weeks passed. In time, I noticed that when the men started receiving packages from home, they shared within their squad and within their platoon. When we deployed to England in 1943 the cooperation manifested itself even more when the noncommissioned officers mutinied because of their fear of going into battle with Captain Sobel. The rebellion was based on true fear of what lay ahead. Fortunately, Colonel Sink had intervened to diffuse a highly dangerous situation. And later, of course, when we entered combat, the men continued to share the good and the bad, the tough times and the easy times. From D-Day onward, combat further cemented the closeness that united Easy Company. Stress and combat created a special bond that only exists in an infantry company at war. Hardship and death brought the men together as close as any family or any husband and wife. It was this bond that made Easy Company "a band of brothers" that exists to this day. I was fortunate enough to have been a part of it, but the cohesion that existed in the company was hardly the result of my leadership. The company belonged to the men—the officers were merely the caretakers. □

# SOVIET CIRCLE of IRON



In November 1942, Red Army units assemble for the beginning of an offensive that will result in the utter destruction of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

## THE EXECUTION OF MARSHAL GEORGI ZHUKOV'S MASTER PLAN FOR OPERATION URANUS TRAPPED THE GERMAN 6TH ARMY IN STALINGRAD. BY PAT McTAGGART

In the fall of 1942, the Red Army had its back to the wall once again. During the first six months of the 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht had killed or captured almost three million Russian soldiers. December brought the Soviet Winter Offensive, which sent the German Army reeling back at the cost of another million Russian dead.

Overextended Soviet supply lines, coupled with the onset of the spring thaw, brought the offensive to a halt, allowing both sides to regroup. As replacements and reinforcements rushed to the front, Adolf Hitler began planning a new offensive that he hoped would economically strangle his communist enemy.

Codenamed "Blau" (Blue), the offensive was aimed at seizing the oilfields in the northern Caucasus and establishing a defensive line running along the Don River from Stalingrad to Voronezh. The move would deprive the Russians of valuable oil and, at the same time, provide that much needed commodity to the German armed forces.

It was an ambitious plan—one that would stretch German armies in southern Russia to their limit. To bolster the German attack forces, Hitler called upon his Italian and Romanian allies to supply divisions for the offensive. In response, Mussolini ordered his 8th Italian Army to participate while Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu offered the 3rd and 4th Roman-

ian Armies. Hungary and Slovakia also contributed to the cause.

Stalin had ambitious plans of his own. In mid-May, he ordered the Red Army to recapture Kharkov, which had been under German control since the previous fall. The offensive was a disaster, costing the Russians almost 300,000 casualties and shattering five Soviet armies. As the Russians reeled from this latest defeat, preparations went forward for Blau, with orders being sent out to corps and division commanders detailing their part in the operation.

For the Russians, the Kharkov offensive was another blow for an army still trying to find its way in the Blitzkrieg era. From Stalin downward, commanders had made mistakes costing millions of lives. By mid-1942, the situation seemed like it would not improve in the foreseeable future.

In the far north, the Germans were advancing on Murmansk. Leningrad was besieged and starving, and a German salient around Rzhev was only about 150 miles from the Kremlin. In southern Russia, the Kharkov offensive had failed and the Crimean port of Sevastopol was almost certain to fall within a few weeks. Now it appeared that the Germans were grouping for a southern offensive of their own, and staff and intelligence officers in Moscow were working day

and night trying to figure out where and when the Germans would strike.

For once, the Fates intervened on the side of the Soviets. On June 19, nine days before Blau was scheduled to begin, Major Joachim Reichel, the chief of operations of the 23rd Panzer Division, was flying back to his divisional headquarters after an aerial inspection of the front. His light aircraft, a Fiesler Storch, either developed engine problems or ran into turbulent weather. Whatever the cause, the Storch went down, forced to land behind the Russian lines.

Against orders that forbade classified material being taken into the forward areas, Reichel had kept the operational orders for Blau in his briefcase when he took off on his inspection flight. As he frantically tried to burn the briefcase, a Russian patrol appeared. Reichel's fate is not known, but less than an hour later the plans were sitting in front of the commander of the 76th Rifle Division.

It was all there—orders of battle, divisional operational plans, maps, and timetables. The gold mine of information made it quickly up the chain of command. Army and Front commanders gleefully waited for orders from Moscow concerning how the information could be used, but they were sorely disappointed. When news of the find reached Stalin, he dismissed the papers as either forgeries or a deception plot.



He had the plans for Blau, and he did nothing.

On the German side, Hitler was furious when told about the debacle. Several officers were sacked, and an air of uncertainty spread through the German high command. Did Reichel manage to destroy the documents or were they now in Soviet hands? No one knew. Nevertheless, Hitler was determined to achieve his goal. The offensive would not be called off.

Blau began on June 28 with Generaloberst (Colonel General) Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs's 2nd Army and Generaloberst Hermann Hoth's 4th Panzer Army advancing on Voronezh. On June 30, General Friedrich Paulus's 6th Army began its attack to clear the Donets corridor. The Soviets fell back in disarray, suffering heavy casualties as they retreated.

In mid-July, Hitler astounded his commanders by assigning more objectives for the offensive. He divided the powerful Heeresgruppe Süd (Army Group South), his main attack force, into Heeresgruppe A (Field Marshal Wilhelm List) and Heeresgruppe B (von Weichs), and set a new list of priorities. List, with the 11th Army, 17th Army, and the 1st Panzer Army, was ordered to take all the oilfields north of a line running from Batumi, near the Turkish border, to Baku on the Caspian Sea. Von Weichs's Heeresgruppe B (2nd Army, 6th Army, and 4th Panzer Army) was still assigned the mission of establishing a protective flank along the Don River, but Paulus was given one more objective for his 6th Army: capture Stalingrad!

Hitler had hardly mentioned the city before July, but the idea of capturing a great industrial center named for his arch enemy slowly became

a fixation. In designating Stalingrad as a major objective and adding objectives in the Caucasus, the Führer had upset the operational planning of his entire southern front.

To accomplish his new plan, Hitler diverted Hoth's 4th Panzer Army south to help in the Caucasus operation and to protect Paulus's right flank, leaving a weakened Heeresgruppe B to continue slugging it out with the Russians in the Donets corridor. Despite Hitler's meddling, von Weichs's troops continued to press forward. In the south, Rostov was taken, allowing the motorized and panzer divisions of Heeresgruppe A to drive a deep wedge into the Caucasus.

Hitler was ecstatic as he read List's reports, but he grew increasingly impatient about von Weichs's operations in the north. He complained about the slow progress in reaching Stalingrad, conveniently forgetting that he had stripped most of the motorized divisions from Heeresgruppe B. Growing more anxious, he made another astounding move by ordering the 4th Panzer Army to disengage in the northern Caucasus and return north to help in the drive to the Volga.

The order angered both List and Generaloberst Franz Halder, the chief of staff of the German Army. When they protested to Hitler, he dismissed them both, personally taking command of Heeresgruppe A. Other commanders cautiously brought up the fact that the drive on Stalingrad, coupled with the enlarged Caucasus operation, was dangerously stretching the German flanks to the limit.

Hitler dismissed the danger, reminding his generals that the Italians, Romanians, and Hungarians were on the way. He assured

them that these reinforcements could handle the flanks while German forces pursued their objectives. It was an amazing statement, considering the quality of the men and equipment that would be tasked with guarding those flanks.

The equipment in the three allied armies was mostly obsolete, some dating back to World War I. Much of the artillery was horse-drawn, and heavier caliber weapons were sorely lacking. Officers in the Romanian and Italian Armies generally treated their men as ignorant peasants, and there was a vast difference in lodging and dining privileges between those that gave orders and the common soldier.

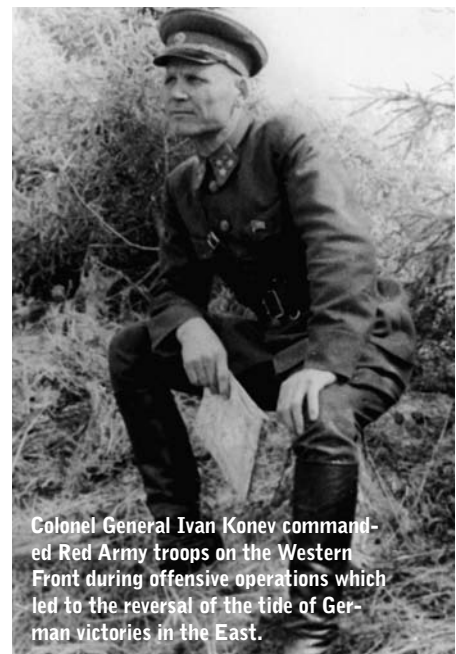
Although allies of Germany, Romanian and Hungarian units could not co-exist on the same sector of the front. Age-old religious and ethnic rivalries remained ingrained, and the two sides could just as easily open fire against each other as they would on the Russians.

When reviewing all these factors—Hitler's meddling, dubious allies, and an increasing list of objectives—it seems incredible that the Wehrmacht made it as far as it did in the fall of 1942. On August 23, Paulus reached the Volga north of Stalingrad, and the battle for the city began in earnest. The 2nd Army had taken Voronezh, establishing a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Don, and Heeresgruppe A continued its drive south, reaching the Kuban River and heading for the Caucasus oil wells.

The void left by these operations was filled by the arriving allied armies. With the 6th Army, assisted by elements of the 4th Panzer Army, engaged at Stalingrad, General Petre



**Commander of the Soviet Don Front, General Konstantin Rokossovsky observes units moving forward to attack German positions around the embattled city of Stalingrad.**



**Colonel General Ivan Konev commanded Red Army troops on the Western Front during offensive operations which led to the reversal of the tide of German victories in the East.**



Exhausted by their protracted ordeal, German soldiers pick their way through the rubble of a demolished factory in Stalingrad.

National Archives

Dumitrescu's 3rd Romanian Army (two cavalry and eight infantry divisions) took over a defensive line northeast of the city that ran for about 90 miles along the Don River. To his right was General Giovanni Messe's 8th Italian Army, which formed a wedge between the Romanians and the 2nd Hungarian Army.

General Constantin Constantinescu's 4th Romanian Army (two cavalry and five infantry divisions) was thrown in south of the city. It occupied a line running approximately 170 miles from Straya Otrada to Sarpa.

The dispositions of the allied armies were a clear invitation for disaster. Stalin had already ordered that Stalingrad be held at all costs, but the meat grinder was destroying units almost as fast as they could make their way into the city. He needed a miracle to break the stranglehold at Stalingrad, and he found his wizard in the person of Marshal of the Soviet Union Georgi K. Zhukov.

Born in 1896, Zhukov was conscripted into the Army at the beginning of World War I. In 1918 he joined the Red Army. For more than 20 years, he served in the Red Army's cavalry and armored forces until joining the Soviet high command in 1939. Escaping the purges that ravaged the Red Army in the 1930s, Zhukov was sent to the Far East, where the Japanese had already made two incursions into Soviet territory the previous year.

In May 1939, the Japanese struck again and drove toward the Khalkin Gol River. Fighting raged for four months until a counterattack, led by Zhukov, encircled and all but annihilated the Japanese 6th Army. Zhukov's meteoric rise to fame was assured as a result of the victory.

As chief of the general staff, Zhukov was

involved in organizing western Russian defenses in early 1941. When the Germans struck in June, he helped organize the defense of Leningrad. He was also instrumental in developing the plans for the Soviet winter offensive that drove the Germans back from the gates of Moscow.

In August 1942, with the Germans fast approaching Stalingrad, Zhukov was made deputy supreme commander of the Red Army. His plan to save Stalingrad was to trade land for blood. The longer the Germans had to fight for each mile of Soviet territory, the more time he had to gather reinforcements for the signature counterattack that had already brought him fame. He was willing to take enormous losses to achieve his goals, and he made no excuses for his actions.

Zhukov's cold-blooded approach to warfare was balanced by his genius for operational organization. His offensives and counteroffensives were marked by meticulous work from his hand-picked staff. Careful placement of artillery, armor, and infantry at the precise point of an intended breakthrough was his hallmark. His method of fighting also showed careful consideration: Let the enemy overextend himself while fighting bloody engagements at every turn. When the enemy's offensive momentum faltered, strike him at his weakest points and annihilate him.

The battle for Stalingrad and the Caucasus raged throughout September and October as both sides continued to pour more men into the region. Meanwhile, using the maxims that had served him so well, Zhukov and the general staff were working on a plan that would change the balance of the war in the east once and for all. The plan was known as Operation Uranus.

Looking at the extended front in the Stalingrad sector, Zhukov and his staff immediately grasped the opportunities afforded by the large areas held by the Axis allies. The Soviets had two extensive bridgeheads on the western bank of the Don facing Dumitrescu's forces, which would provide them with their northern strike points. Constantinescu's army, with its long, thinly held defensive front, would provide the perfect spot for the southern strike.

The Russians were already masters of deception and camouflage, but Zhukov and his staff turned it into an art. As the plans for Uranus got under way, the Soviets launched several small attacks against Heeresgruppe Mitte. Dummy formations with their own radio nets were set up in the sector, giving German intelligence officers the impression that the Russians were concentrating forces for a late fall or early winter offensive against the Heeresgruppe.

Generaloberst Reinhard Gehlen, the head of the German high command's Fremde Heeres Ost (Foreign Armies East), was in charge of gathering and deciphering intelligence information on the Eastern Front. Although surprised at the number of Russian divisions identified during the first few months of the 1941 invasion, his office still did not appreciate the vast manpower reserves possessed by the Soviet Union.

With the purported buildup of Soviet forces in Heeresgruppe Mitte's sector, Fremde Heeres Ost was convinced that the Russians could not possibly possess enough men to launch any sort of major offensive in the south. When nervous Romanian commanders brought up the subject of a possible Soviet offensive, they were told not to worry because the Russians were already stretched to the limit.

Zhukov faced a daunting security problem. Massing the divisions for his offensive without being discovered by the Germans meant that the units could only be moved at night or in bad weather as they neared the front. During the day, the trains and convoys transporting men and materiel for Uranus would stop, and troops would camouflage the vehicles, making them invisible from the air.

In all, Zhukov would have 11 armies to mount his offensive. They would be augmented by several separate mechanized, cavalry, and tank brigades and corps. About 13,500 artillery pieces and mortars were assembled along with 115 rocket artillery detachments, 900 tanks, and more than 1,000 aircraft. It was a tremendous logistics operation, but the Russians were able to pull it off without the Germans being any the wiser.

Although stationed in Moscow, the Soviet marshal made extensive visits to the front to confer with his commanders about Uranus. Although they were not privy to the overall scope of the operation, the Front and Army commanders made suggestions about objectives in their particular sectors and coordination with neighboring units and gave other opinions that the marshal sent back to his Moscow staff.

The supreme headquarters and Zhukov's staff incorporated many of the suggestions into the final plan for Uranus. Intelligence concerning opposing enemy units was also funneled directly to Moscow. As German and Russian soldiers fought and died in the rubble of Stalingrad, the buildup continued. By mid-October, the final plans for Uranus were being fine-tuned, and it was hoped that the operation could begin sometime in the first week of November.

As November approached, German commanders in the 6th Army were facing shortages in both men and materiel. They were also becoming increasingly nervous about unconfirmed reports that the Soviets were massing on their flanks. Zhukov's deception had worked for the most part, but even the Russians could not totally mask the movements of such a massive force as it came within earshot of the Germans. Motors rumbled and horses neighed, and the sounds carried well in the crisp late fall air.

On Paulus's left flank, General Karl Strecker's XI Army Corps had three divisions to cover a front of more than 60 miles along the Don bend. Strecker knew that this was too much for his divisions to defend, so he pulled them back to well-prepared secondary positions, cutting his frontage by half.

Lieutenant General P.I. Batov immediately took advantage of the situation by sending

units of his 65th Army across the Don to establish yet another Soviet bridgehead. Batov then conducted several spirited attacks against Strecker's new positions, but the Germans were too firmly entrenched to make any progress.

While pleased with his own divisions' performance, Strecker kept a wary eye on the Romanians to his left. The 3rd Romanian Army was woefully short of everything, especially antitank weapons. Their own were obsolete, and Dumitrescu continually badgered the Germans for more effective pieces. Some 75mm guns had been transferred to his army, but not nearly enough to stop any major Russian attack.

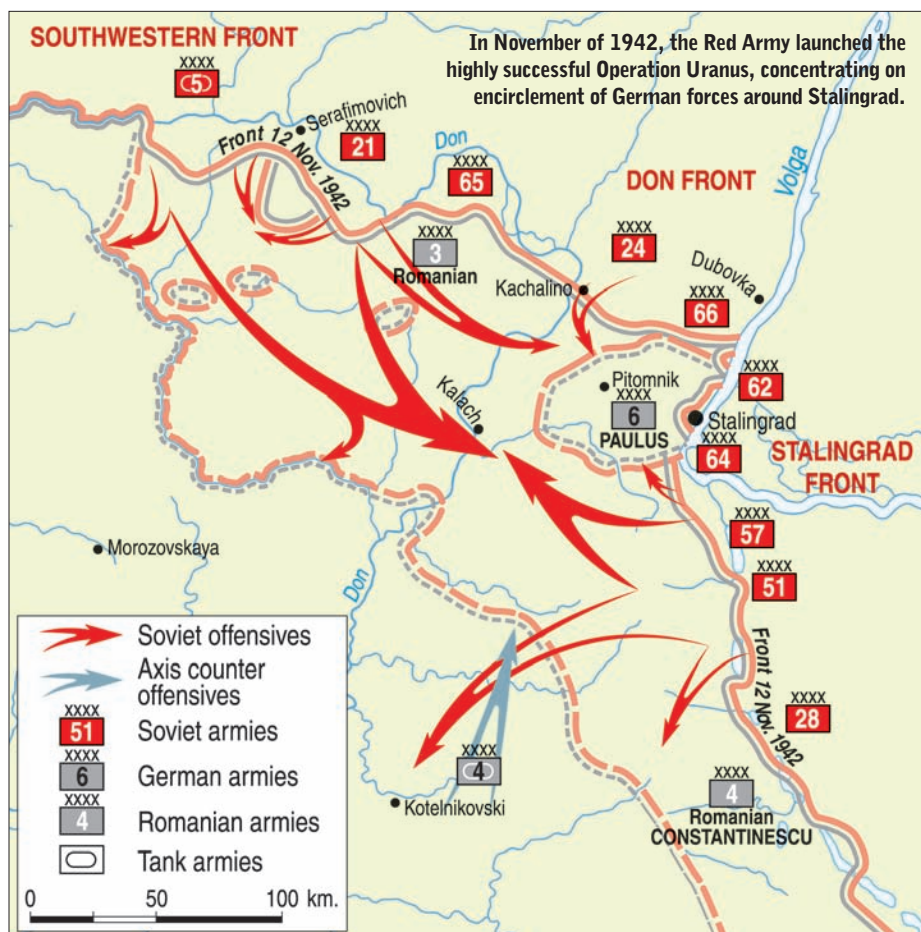
Berlin had also ordered General Ferdinand Heim's XLVIII Panzer Corps to disengage from its sector on the front and form a ready reserve behind Dumitrescu's army. Elements of the 14th Panzer Division and the 1st Romanian Tank Division were also ordered to the area. It seemed a good plan, but the nucleus of Heim's corps, the 22nd Panzer Division, was equipped mostly with outdated Czech tanks. Also, one of its panzergrenadier regiments had been detached from the division and moved to another sector of the front.

Zhukov planned to begin Uranus on November 9, but the date had to be postponed after

the marshal made another series of visits to his commanders. Arriving in Serafimovich, a small Cossack farming and fishing village on the middle Don, he conferred with Generals Konstantin K. Rokossovsky and Nicholai F. Vatutin, the commanders of the Don and South West fronts. They pointed out that the freezing rain and hard frosts of the previous week had made things very difficult for the forces trying to reach the front. They also said that shortages in winter clothing had to be addressed before they felt their men were ready for battle.

Moving on to the headquarters of General Fedor I. Tolbukhin's 57th Army south of Stalingrad, Zhukov was told that men and equipment were not arriving on schedule and that the artillery had yet to be entrenched and targeted. He returned to Moscow and postponed Uranus until November 17. Upon hearing that air units marked for the offensive might not be ready on that date, Zhukov postponed the operation for two more days.

Stalingrad was on the verge of collapse as Uranus was postponed not once, but twice. The more time that elapsed, the more chance that the Germans would find out about the massive buildup. Luckily, Berlin had other problems to deal with. On November 8, the Allies landed in



French North Africa, threatening Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's rear and dooming the vaunted Afrika Korps and Panzer Army Afrika. The German high command now had to split its attention, focusing on potential disasters on two fronts.

As the 19th approached, Zhukov sent out his final orders. Uranus would involve a double envelopment of Stalingrad with a primarily infantry force encircling the city itself. An outer ring, consisting of tank, mechanized, cavalry, and infantry units, would form a steel buffer against any possible German counterattack. German and allied units caught between the two rings were to be systematically destroyed and, if the opportunity arose, Soviet forces in the south would advance to Rostov and trap the divisions of Heeresgruppe A, which was still engaged in the Caucasus.

The first phase of the operation involved Vatutin's South West Front attacking the 3rd Romanian Army out of the bridgehead on the west bank of the Don. At the same time, Rokossovsky's Don Front would begin the envelopment of Stalingrad from the north and east. A day later, General Andrei I. Eremenko's Stalingrad Front would attack the 4th Romanian Army in the Lake Sarpa area south of Stalingrad.

Both fronts were to send armored and mechanized forces to link up near Kalach. At the same time, other units of the fronts would spread out and head west to protect flanks as the outer ring formed.

The senior Soviet officers got very little sleep during the night of November 18. Shortly after midnight, the Russian artillery started firing smoke shells from the eastern bank of the Don. Soviet propaganda units had already set up loudspeakers close to the front weeks before, so the Germans and their allies paid little attention to the political messages and music that blasted through the night air. As usual, Axis soldiers regarded the loudspeakers as more of a nuisance designed to keep them from getting a good night's sleep.

This time, however, the smoke and noise from the Russian line had a different purpose. Under cover of these distractions, Soviet armored and mechanized forces streamed across the Don to the already established bridgeheads. A little after 2AM, more than a million men from the three attack fronts received their orders. They were told that they were about to participate in a deep raid toward the enemy rear. The word "encirclement" was not mentioned to the troops in case something went wrong with the plan. Nevertheless, the old timers knew that something was up. There were too many men and too many vehicles for this to be just a raid. Are we,



**Soviet Katyusha rockets lift off in waves and speed toward their targets among the German defenses at Stalingrad. After months of relentless pounding, the Germans capitulated and over 300,000 prisoners were taken.**

National Archives

they wondered, finally starting to see the beginning of the road to victory?

The Russians were helped by snow and a thick fog that cut visibility down to almost nothing. On the German-Romanian line, sentries strained to see just a few feet ahead of them, but all seemed fine except for the damned Soviet loudspeakers blaring in the distance. Only a few yards away, Red Army engineers, camouflaged in white uniforms, had been working their way toward the enemy lines all night, clearing mines and cutting wire obstacles to make a path for the Russian assault forces.

On the Soviet side, commanders anxiously looked at their watches. The fog offered good concealment and would not hinder the effects of the planned Russian artillery bombardment, as the guns had been pre-sighted for just such a situation. Minutes ticked away until, at 7:20AM Moscow time (5:20AM German time) the Soviet artillery commanders received the codeword "Siren."

The earth trembled as battery after battery of Katyushas (Stalin Organs) sent their rockets screaming toward the enemy lines. A ghostly glow reflected off the fog as the batteries fired again and again. To be on the receiving end of the rockets tested the courage of the best German units. For the Romanians of Dumitrescu's 3rd Army, the effect was devastating.

Strongpoints and trenches literally disintegrated as the rockets struck their preplotted sites. Communications between the forward outposts and higher headquarters were shattered, and many of the ammunition dumps close to the front were destroyed in spectacular explosions. Many of those not killed outright in the bombardment were already fleeing to the rear, trying to escape the carnage.

Ten minutes later, the massed Russian artillery was given the order to fire. Thousands

of guns roared at once, causing many an artilleryman to bleed at the ear from the concussions caused by so many artillery pieces firing at the same time. Almost immediately, shells began crashing into Romanian artillery emplacements and secondary positions behind the front line. Those fleeing from the opening bombardment were now caught in a second rain of steel, which further decimated the retreating troops. Black earth churned up from shell impacts was interspersed on the snow with red blotches that had a few seconds earlier been men fleeing for their lives.

The bombardment kept up for one hour and 20 minutes. Dazed Romanians lucky enough to escape death from the rain of explosives were in a state of near paralysis as they desperately tried to dig their way out of their shattered positions. Wounded men howled in agony for their comrades to help them while the surviving NCOs and officers worked to regain control over their troops.

Above the cries of the wounded, a new sound was heard. It was not the sound of artillery or tank motors, but the deep, guttural sound of a beast preparing to pounce on its prey. The Romanians strained to see through the fog, hoping not to see what they knew was coming. As the fog lessened, shapes appeared—first hundreds and then thousands. Coming toward them were the massed echelons of Romanenko's 14th and 47th Guards and 119th Rifle Divisions. The sound that the Romanians now heard—the one that struck fear into their very souls—was the Russian battle cry coming from thousands of soldiers: "Urra! Urra! Urra!"

In some sectors of the Romanian front, soldiers made split-second decisions on whether they would live or die. Hundreds of them threw down their weapons and, with hands held high, hoped for the best as the Russians bore down

on them. For the most part, the Soviet assault forces bypassed them and continued their advance, leaving the surrendering Romanians to be picked up later by units in the second or third wave of the attack.

In other Romanian sectors the story was different. The 13th Romanian Infantry Division, for example, occupied a sector of the front opposite the 21st Army. When the Soviet infantry attacked, survivors in the front trenches repulsed them. A second attack, this time supported by tanks, met the same fate. Frustrated, Christyakov ordered another round of shelling. At the same time, he ordered A.G. Kravchenko's 4th Tank Corps and P.A. Pliev's 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps to prepare to attack.

Christyakov wanted to hold these units in reserve until the Romanian line was broken, but the resistance of the 13th and some other Romanian divisions had already upset his timetable. Together with fresh waves of infantry, the Soviet assault smashed the remaining positions of the Romanian IV Army Corps, allowing the 21st Army to advance.

To the west of the IV Corps, the Romanian II Army Corps, facing the 5th Tank Army, was undergoing its own personal hell. Following the bombardment and infantry assault, Romanenko unleashed V.V. Butkov's 1st Tank and A.G. Rodin's 26th Tank Corps, followed by the 8th Cavalry Corps. The attack hit the Romanian 9th, 11th, and 14th Infantry Divisions like a sledgehammer, and their positions crumbled as the Russian armor rolled forward.

The Soviet cavalry spread out toward the west, severing communications between the Romanians and General Giovanni Messe's 8th Italian Army. As the Romanians fled, the cavalry formed a barrier against any possible counterattack while the armored and infantry forces swung southeast toward the Chir River and Kalach.

The gods smiled on the Soviets about mid-morning as the fog dissipated enough for the Red Air Force to enter the fray. Aircraft from K.N. Smirnov's 2nd and S.A. Krasovsky's 17th Air Armies swooped down upon the retreating Romanians with a vengeance. The Luftwaffe was nowhere to be seen as the Soviet pilots bombed and strafed enemy troops and positions.

On the Don Front, the going was more difficult. Batov threw his 65th Army at General Alexander Freiherr Edler von Daniels's 376th Infantry Division, but his infantry made little progress against a determined German defense. Batov found easier going at the junction of the 376th and the 1st Romanian Cavalry Division, and the Soviets were able to advance as they pushed the Romanians aside. Von Daniels was forced to arc his left flank to prevent the Russians from breaking into his rear as a result of the Romanian cavalry's retreat.

In Stalingrad, Paulus was informed of the Soviet attack at 9:45AM, but he seemed relatively unconcerned. The German general ordered Heim's XLVIII Panzer Corps to advance toward Kletskaya to support the

Romanians and then went back to briefings concerning the fight for the city.

Heim put his units on the road and headed toward his objective, but at 11:30 new orders arrived, this time from Hitler's headquarters. The feisty panzer general cursed roundly as he read the message ordering him to turn his forces northwest to the Bolshoy area and stop Romanenko's armored units. Valuable time and fuel were lost as he reformed his attack force.

Meanwhile, Paulus began receiving more reports concerning the Russian attack. The first fragmented information had caused little alarm. After all, they were coming from Romanians, and everyone knew that they tended to exaggerate and were prone to unnecessary panic.

Toward noon, the situation became clearer. This time the staff officers of the 6th Army definitely took notice. A Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircraft reported hundreds of Soviet tanks advancing across the steppes northwest of Stalingrad. Clear reports from German liaison officers flatly stated that the 9th, 13th, and 14th Romanian Infantry Divisions had been shattered and were no longer capable of any organized resistance.

Although Paulus had three panzer divisions (14th, 16th, and 24th) and three motorized divisions (3rd, 29th, and 60th) at his disposal, he did nothing to form a strike force to stop the Soviet armor. Preferring to keep them engaged in and around Stalingrad—a pure waste of armor in an urban battle—he relied on Heim's panzer corps to deal with the Russian attack.

A German panzer corps in 1942 was a formidable weapon that could take on a Soviet Tank Army and usually come out on top. Heim's corps, however, was a panzer corps in name only, something that seemed to slip by the generals that were expecting him to stop the Russians.

By the time Heim was ordered to attack, his 22nd Panzer Division had only about 30 combat-ready tanks. His motorized elements were critically short of fuel, and the orders changing the direction of his attack only made the problem worse.

Heim's mechanized units were also plagued by the forces of nature. While bivouacked, mice had gotten into the tanks and armored personnel carriers and had gnawed on or through some of the electrical wires in the vehicles, causing them to break down as the systems shorted out. Another problem was the width of his tank treads. The Russian T-34 had a wide, gripping track while German tanks had narrow tracks, causing them to slip and slide on the icy terrain. Nevertheless, Heim and his men pushed forward, hoping to surprise the Russian spearhead.



Soviet tank commanders are briefed by a commanding officer. The quality of the Soviet T-34 tank was a major factor in the ultimate victory of the Red Army.

Advancing across a snow-covered Russian steppe, German soldiers clad in white camouflage snowsuits support tanks and self-propelled assault vehicles.



National Archives

The weather worsened during the afternoon of the 19th, with the freezing mist lowering visibility to almost zero, and maps were practically useless as the Soviets continued their drive. Taking into account the possibility of bad weather, Russian commanders had enlisted area peasants as guides, but even they were having a difficult time traversing the mist-shrouded landscape.

It started getting dark before 4:00PM, which only added to the difficulties faced by the Russian tank crews as they pushed toward their objectives. To make things worse, the wind picked up and snow began falling, which led to almost blizzard-like conditions on the steppes.

Having essentially obliterated the Romanian defenses, the Soviet tank commanders felt reasonably assured that their only threat would come from a possible German counterattack. All things considered, that attack would probably be directed against Kravchenko's 4th Tank Corps, as that unit was advancing closest to the main 6th Army forces at Stalingrad.

It would have worked that way if Heim had not received new orders sending him toward Bolshoy. Heim's panzers, now numbering about 20, hit Butkov's 1st Tank Corps near the Chir River at Pestchany. It was an uneven battle from the start, with the Germans being outnumbered, outgunned, and outmaneuvered. In an almost suicidal action, an armored group led by Oberst (Colonel) Hermann von Oppeln-Bronikowski tore into the Russians. Supported by the 22nd Panzer's antitank battalion, von Oppeln's tanks managed to isolate and destroy several Soviet tanks in Butkov's spearhead.

The Soviets regrouped, and the unequal struggle continued into the night until Heim ordered the battle to be broken off. He told his commanders to make for the Chir River crossings and get to the west bank of the river, thus saving his panzer corps from encirclement and annihilation. Those retreating units would

remain a thorn in the side of the Russians for days to come.

The retreat order had the expected consequences for Heim as a furious Hitler recalled him to Berlin, stripped him of his rank, and had him imprisoned. He was released 10 months later without having been tried. On August 1, 1944, his rank was restored, and he was appointed commander of Fortress Boulogne on the Western Front.

At Heeresgruppe B headquarters, Generaloberst Baron von Weichs recognized the danger he faced earlier than most. He issued directives at 10:00PM on the night of November 19 to try and forestall the looming disaster.

"The situation developing on the front of the 3rd Romanian Army dictates radical measures in order to disengage forces quickly to screen the flanks of 6th Army," he wrote.

Among those measures was ordering all offensive operations in Stalingrad to cease. He also directed Paulus to detach two motorized formations, an infantry division, and all antitank units he could spare to stop the assault forces of Vatutin and Rokossovsky. These measures may have blunted the Soviet advance, but it was already too late. On November 20, the second stage of Uranus began as Eremenko's southern anvil began moving to meet the northern hammer.

The same bad weather plaguing the northern Soviet forces also hampered the Russians in the south. Icy fog made the going slow as the assault forces of the Stalingrad Front edged closer to Constantinescu's 4th Romanian Army. At 10AM, the Russian artillery opened up along the front. Soon after, the initial assault troops were already pouring through the Romanian line.

German soldiers in the 297th Infantry Division, adjacent to the 20th Romanian Infantry Division, watched in awe as the human flood of Russians advanced. As on the northern sector, some of the Romanians fled or surrendered

almost immediately, while others fought bravely until being overwhelmed. Reports came in speaking of Romanian antitank crews firing their pitiful 37mm guns until they were crushed beneath the marauding Soviet tanks of the initial attack forces.

The leading Russian armored and mechanized forces performed well, but command and control problems, the bad weather, and problems getting across the Volga River crossing points delayed the spearhead units designated to exploit the breakthrough. Maj. Gen. V.T. Volsky's 4th Mechanized Corps, designated to advance with Maj. Gen. N.I. Trufanov's 51st Army, was supposed to strike between Lakes Sarpa and Tsatsa, but its units had not yet concentrated. The same could be said for Colonel T.I. Tanaschishin's 13th Mechanized Corps.

Angry messages flew back and forth as the delay continued. The spearhead units were supposed to attack at 10AM, but it was already well after noon, and there was still no sign of movement from the corps. General Markian M. Popov, the deputy commander of the Stalingrad Front, headed to Volsky's headquarters and confronted him directly.

The angry exchange between the two lasted for some time before Volsky finally gave in and ordered his still disorganized units forward. Tanaschishin was also ordered forward immediately. It was already past 4PM, and the Soviet timetable was hours behind schedule. As they moved out, Volsky's units became intermixed, causing further confusion as they headed westward.

The Germans reacted much more quickly to the southern attack than they had on the previous day. General Hans-Georg Leyser's 29th Panzergrenadier Division, nicknamed the Falcon Division, was ordered to hit the flank of Tanaschishin's 13th Mechanized Corps. The 29th was a first-rate division, and its troops moved out quickly to meet the foe.

About 10 miles south of Beketovka, Leyser's armored columns slammed into elements of Tanaschishin's corps. The panzers bloodied the Russian tanks and sent the mechanized units reeling, causing the Soviets to beat a hasty retreat. It was a shining moment in an otherwise dismal day for the Germans, but the victory was short lived.

Farther west, the Soviets were running rampant through the retreating Romanians. Leyser was ordered to turn his division around to protect the exposed southern flank of the 6th Army, leaving the field to Tanaschishin's forces, which were regrouping for a counterattack.

While the fighting raged south of Stalingrad, the northern sector reeled under hammer blows from the South West and Don Fronts. General Strecker's IX Army Corps, its left flank left hanging by Dumitrescu's retreat, was forced to form an arc to meet the advancing Russians. General von Daniels's 376th shifted its front westward to meet the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps, while General Heinrich-Anton Deboi's 44th Infantry Division, forced to leave much of its heavy equipment in place because of lack of fuel, extended its line to cover the gap left by von Daniels's shift.

Meanwhile, Kravchenko's 4th Tank Corps turned toward the southeast. Its objective was the Don River town of Golubinski, which happened to be Paulus's headquarters. At the same time, units of the 5th Tank Army continued to smash isolated pockets of Romanians that tried to stand and fight.

The Russian infantry was now moving steadily forward, leaving the armored and mechanized units to continue to work on closing the jaws of the trap. Rodin's 26th Tank Corps took Perelazonvsky, about 80 miles northwest of Stalingrad. Butkov's 1st Tank Corps snapped at the heels of Heim's XLVIII Panzer Corps, which was starting to retreat to the southwest, while the 8th Guards Cavalry Corps continued its drive to the Chir River. Despite several difficulties, the 20th had been an excellent day for Uranus.

On Saturday, November 21, the 21st Army spearhead continued moving southeast, closing on Golubinski. Paulus, finally realizing the disaster overtaking him, asked Berlin for permission to pull his army out of Stalingrad and for a new defensive line on the Don. He then relocated his headquarters to Nizhnye Chiskaya, a village about 40 miles to the southwest.

Later that day, Paulus received two messages from Hitler. The first one read: "The commander-in-chief will proceed with his staff to Stalingrad. The 6th Army will form an all-round defensive position and await further orders."

Later in the day, Hitler sent Paulus the following message: "Those units of the 6th Army that remain between the Don and the Volga will henceforth be designated Fortress Stalingrad."

The two messages not only sealed the fate of the 6th Army, but they also meant that Zhukov would not have to worry about any kind of breakout attempt by the Stalingrad forces. In effect, it gave him the opportunity to start solidifying his inner ring around the city while concentrating on closing the outer ring.

Between the inner and outer rings, Germans and Romanians were still fighting. Heim's XLVIII Panzer Corps, trying to make its way to the Chir River crossings, actively engaged Soviet forces in several pitched battles as they made their bid for freedom. General Mikhail Lascar had gathered remnants of the V Romanian Army Corps farther north and was resisting repeated Russian attempts to overrun his hastily constructed defenses. Hoping for German support, Lascar would wait in vain for any relief effort.

While these clashes were taking place in the north, Eremenko's southern offensive was running into problems, despite having effectively split Hoth's 4th Panzer Army in half. Most of

Hoth's German units were trapped inside the ever tightening ring around Stalingrad. The 4th Romanian Army, which had been subordinated to Hoth's Panzer Army, was in disarray, and the 16th Panzergrenadier Division, the only German unit outside the Stalingrad sector, was making a fighting withdrawal through heavy opposition.

It was a golden opportunity for the Russians, but command failure was still a problem that plagued even the highest ranks of the Red Army. Tolbukhin's 57th Army and Shumilov's 64th Army were making good progress closing the inner ring around Stalingrad. Trufanov's 51st Army was a different matter.

Once the breakthrough was achieved, Trufanov was supposed to send his 4th Mechanized Corps and 4th Cavalry Corps speeding northwest to Kalach while the bulk of his infantry was to head southwest as a shield for his left flank. The coordination and complexity of controlling both armored and infantry forces moving in different directions proved too much for Trufanov and his staff.

Instead of the quick thrust toward Kalach, the mechanized and cavalry forces moved sluggishly to the northeast, giving many of the retreating Romanians a chance to flee for their



Corpses and the wreckage of tanks and guns lie strewn about at a former German position around Stalingrad. The overwhelming strength of Russian firepower and superior numbers left many German units devastated.

akg-images



Hurrying past a smoldering German tank, Red Army soldiers plunge into the haze of combat with their rifles at the ready.

National Archives

lives. The flanking infantry advanced even more slowly, amazing even Hoth as he followed their progress. Although his remaining forces could have been destroyed by a more aggressive Soviet posture, all he faced on the battlefield before him was “a fantastic picture of fleeing (Romanian) remnants.”

Sunday, November 23, found the Russians in the north advancing on the Don in force. In the predawn hours, an assault unit captured a newly constructed bridge across the river at Berezovski near the primary objective of Kalach. It was the first Soviet victory of the day, but it would not be the last.

By now, communications between the 6th Army headquarters and outlying units had almost completely broken down. At Kalach itself, word of the Soviet breakthrough only reached the garrison on the morning of the 21st. The troops occupying the town, which was located on the eastern bank of the Don, consisted mostly of maintenance and supply personnel and included the workshops and transport company of the 16th Panzer Division. They were augmented by a Luftwaffe flak battery and a small force of field police.

There had been no other word about the breakthrough since a message concerning the breakthrough in the south was received on the afternoon of the 21st. Tasked with defending both Kalach and the western bank, the garrison faced an impossible situation. The town commander had no idea that three Soviet corps were heading directly for him, and even if the Germans had known, the garrison had no way to stop them.

With the Berezovski Bridge in Russian hands, Maj. Gen. Rodin sent Lt. Col. G.N. Filippov

and his 19th Tank Brigade speeding along the Don to Kalach. Using captured German vehicles to lead the way, Filippov’s men overwhelmed the detachment guarding the Don bridge. On the western heights, Luftwaffe 88mm field guns opened fire and destroyed several Russian T-34 tanks.

Filippov, not waiting for his mechanized infantry, ordered a detachment of tanks to cross the river and form a bridgehead on the eastern banks while other T-34s continued to duel with the 88s. When the infantry did appear, he once again split his forces, sending some infantry across the river and ordering the rest to support the tanks trying to take the heights. A combined assault finally silenced the German guns, and the heights were taken by midmorning.

From their new vantage point, the Russian tanks on the western bank poured round after round into Kalach, while their comrades on the eastern bank stormed the town’s flimsy defenses. Those Germans that could escape loaded themselves on anything drivable and fled toward Stalingrad. By early afternoon, Kalach was in Russian hands.

In the south, Trufanov was finally getting his forces under control. Although his infantry was still slowly plodding westward and southwestward, his mechanized units were advancing at a faster pace. By the end of the day, Volsky’s 4th Mechanized Corps had taken Buzinovka and was moving toward Sovietski, a few miles east of Kalach near the junction of the Don and Karpovka Rivers.

In essence, by the end of the day any German or Romanian units east of the mechanized ring had only one place to go—Stalingrad. General Lascar, surrounded and running low on ammu-

munition, refused several Russian requests to surrender. His force was overwhelmed, its survivors forming long gray columns marching east toward a very uncertain future.

By now, there was little to stop the northern and southern spearheads from completing their missions. Volsky reached the south bank of the Karpovka a little after noon on November 23. The 45th Tank Brigade of Kravchenko’s 4th Tank Corps arrived on the opposite bank around 4PM. Zhukov’s trap was finally closed, with about 300,000 of the enemy in the giant cage called Stalingrad.

The meeting of the northern and southern pincers was later restaged for Soviet propaganda films, but there is little doubt that the emotions shown on the screen were the same felt by Volsky’s and Kravchenko’s troops as they first joined. Although Heeresgruppe A was able to make a masterful withdrawal from the Caucasus in the months to follow, the Red Army had bottled up the 6th Army and a good deal of the 4th Panzer Army. It was a great victory.

Operation Uranus was only the first step in the annihilation of Fortress Stalingrad, but it was a giant one. Despite control problems, Zhukov and his commanders in the field had shown that they had learned the lessons vital to modern mechanized warfare. Methods developed during Uranus were finely honed and used again by Zhukov and others in later operations that would shake the foundation of the German military and finally bring it crashing down. □

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# THE RACE TO MESSINA



*The rivalry between British General Bernard Montgomery and American General George Patton became heated during Operation Husky, the campaign to liberate Sicily.*

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BY MAJ. GEN. MICHAEL REYNOLDS

Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, was the only operation in World War II in which generals Bernard Montgomery and George S. Patton, Jr., participated as equals. Monty was commanding the British Eighth Army and Patton the American Seventh. It is also noteworthy that the initial assault force, more than eight divisions, was in fact larger than that used in the invasion of Normandy, making Husky numerically, in terms of men landed on the beaches and frontage, the largest amphibious operation of World War II.

The basic plan included Monty's Eastern Task Force of some 115,000 men with four infantry divisions, including one Canadian division; an independent infantry brigade; and a Canadian armored brigade. The main effort landed on a 40-mile front in southeast Sicily from the Pachino Peninsula to Syracuse. Patton's Western Task Force of some 66,000 men with one armored and three infantry divisions was to land in the Gulf of Gela between Licata and Scoglitti and then move rapidly inland to seize the airfields just north of Gela.

Monty and Patton had never met to discuss the overall plan, but they were both clear that the Seventh Army's mission was to protect the Eighth Army's left flank as it made the main thrust toward Messina. The opposition facing the Allies totaled 10 Italian infantry divisions, of which six were immobile coastal formations, the Hermann Göring Panzer Division, and two similarly reformed panzerergrenadier divisions. Plentiful reinforcements were available from mainland Italy. It is also important to understand the topography of the island. "Sicily is very mountainous and [vehicle] movement off the roads and tracks is seldom possible," described Montgomery. "In the beach areas there was a narrow coastal plain, but behind this the mountains rose steeply ... It was apparent that the campaign in Sicily was going to depend largely on the domination of main road and track centres."

To fully understand the difficulties facing the British, American, and Canadian troops, one has to go to Sicily and see the ground. Only then can one fully understand the extent to which Mount Etna dominates the northeast third of the island; and even then one has to remember that none of today's highways with their wide surfaces, tunnels, and super viaducts existed in 1944. Of the four narrow roads that led north from the landing beaches, only two went all the way to Messina—one running along the eastern coast from Catania and the other turning east after reaching the northern coast. Monty planned from the outset to make his main thrust up the east coast, and it did not take long for Patton to realize that if he was to reach Messina before Monty he had no choice other than to strike north and then east along the northern coast road, Highway 113.

The 2,760 ships and landing craft carrying the two task forces came from as far afield as Scotland, the United States, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Lebanon. They rendezvoused off Malta, where General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander of Allied forces in North Africa, Monty, and the commander of Allied Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, British Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, had located themselves. With the help of bad weather, which led the defenders to believe no landings were possible, the American and British troops stormed ashore against virtually no opposition some two hours before dawn on July 10, 1943.

Inevitably, many things failed to go exactly according to plan, particularly the airborne operations that had preceded the landings. The U.S. 82nd and British 1st Airborne divisions suffered very heavy losses due to badly trained pilots, high winds, and heavy antiaircraft fire, both enemy and friendly. Nearly 400 aircraft and 137 gliders were involved. Thirty-six of the gliders landed in the sea, drowning 252 men of the British 1st Air Landing Brigade, and only 12 gliders reached their objectives. Some 3,400 U.S. para-

In this surreal artist's vision of wartime Sicily, American soldiers traverse an otherwise empty street in a war-torn village. Operation Husky, though successful, was unable to prevent thousands of German troops from escaping to the Italian mainland.



## TWO INCIDENTS IN SICILY INITIATED A FALL FROM GRACE FOR GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON, JR.

On August 3, 1943, the day that General George S. Patton, Jr., learned that his superior, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was to award him the Distinguished Service Cross for "extraordinary heroism" at Gela on July 11, he called at the 15th Evacuation Hospital near Nicosia in Sicily. One patient he encountered was Private Charles H. Kuhl of the 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Division.

Seeing no visible wounds, Patton asked the soldier why he was in the hospital. The soldier responded that he was not wounded but, "I guess I can't take it." Patton called Kuhl a coward and ordered him out of the tent. When the terrified soldier remained motionless, Patton "slapped his face with a glove, raised him to his feet by the collar of his shirt and pushed him out of the tent with a final kick in the rear."

That night, Patton wrote in his diary, "Companies should deal with such men, and if they shirk their duty, they should be tried for cowardice and shot."

A week later, in the 93rd Evacuation Hospital, Patton encountered a regular army artilleryman, Private Paul G. Bennett, shivering on his bed. When Bennett said, "I can't stand the shelling anymore," Patton lost his temper, called him "a goddamned coward," and ordered the receiving officer not to admit this "yellow bastard." He then shouted at Bennett, "You ought to be lined up against a wall and shot. In fact, I ought to shoot you myself right now, God damn you!"

Patton then pulled out his pistol and waved it in the terrified soldier's face, after which he ordered the hospital commander to "get that man out of here right away." He then slapped Bennett across the face. Not content with this,

when Patton saw Bennett break down in tears he returned to his bed and hit him a second time. By then, a number of doctors and nurses had arrived on the scene and were witnessing the confrontation. It was only brought to an end when the hospital commander interposed himself between Bennett and Patton.

There was clearly no way such actions could be kept quiet for long. One of the 93rd Hospital nurses told her boyfriend, a captain in Public Affairs, and he passed the story on to American press and radio correspondents attached to the Seventh Army. On August 19, a written summary of the incident was presented to Ike's chief of staff, confirming a similar report sent three days earlier to Eisenhower's chief surgeon, Brig. Gen. Frederick Blessé, by the II Corps chief surgeon.

Following Blessé's report, Eisenhower wrote an extremely strong letter of censure to Patton. He stated that there could be no excuse for "the abuse of the sick, nor exhibition of uncontrollable temper in front of subordinates." He concluded "that [such] conduct...will *not* be tolerated in this theater no matter who the offender may be," and ordered Patton to "make in the form of apology or otherwise such personal amends to the individuals concerned as may be within your power."

Three days later, Patton was ordered to apologize, not only to the individual soldiers concerned, but to every division in the Seventh Army.

On August 21, Patton shook hands with Bennett and apologized, but that night he wrote in his diary: "It is rather a commentary on justice when an Army commander has to soap a skulker to placate the

timidity of those above." The following day, he apologized to Private Kuhl.

Patton's apologies to his divisions were charged with emotion. He used earthy language, and the general reaction of the troops is said to have been one of quiet indifference. In the case of the 2nd Armored, a division he had once commanded, there was general disbelief about the incidents and he was received enthusiastically. While he addressed the 1st Infantry, he was heard in stony silence and there were even said to have been a few boos. The reaction in the 9th Infantry varied. In the case of one regiment, he was cheered after his opening word and he left in tears without saying another. In a second regiment, the men released blown up condoms that floated over his head, again causing him to leave with a different type of embarrassment.

Despite Patton's indiscretions, Eisenhower was determined to save him "for service in the great battles still facing us in Europe," and he hid the full details of the slapping incidents from Washington.

In a letter to Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall dated August 24, he attributed the success of the Sicily campaign to Patton's "energy, determination, and unflagging aggressiveness."

Ike went on to explain to the media his need to keep the services of his brilliant if unorthodox subordinate and asked for their cooperation. Surprisingly, an unofficial gentleman's agreement was reached. For the time being, at least Patton was safe from media and Congressional attention. Eventually, however, the story became public and Patton's career was nearly wrecked prior to the D-Day invasion of Normandy in June 1944. □

troopers, who should have been dropped northeast of Gela, landed over a 1,000-square mile area of southeastern Sicily. Their commander, Brigadier General Jim Gavin, came down over 25 miles from his intended landing site. Nevertheless, Monty's insistence on an overwhelming concentration of ground forces ensured overall success.

Monty was so elated with the success of the landings that at 1030 hours on the 10th he went in person to see Admiral Cunningham to express his "great appreciation of the work of the Navy," and he followed this up with a letter to British Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Mediterranean, congratulating him on the fact that "the Allied Air Forces had definitely won the air battle." These were generous gestures since both men detested Monty and had vigorously opposed his plan for the invasion, Tedder on the grounds that air cover could not be guaranteed before the capture of the Gela and Comiso airfields, and Cunningham saying that he would not commit the navy without guaranteed air cover. Both had finally given way.

Monty's enthusiasm was translated into firm directives that evening when he signalled both his corps commanders, General Oliver Leese of XXX Corps and General Miles Dempsey of XIII Corps, to "operate with great energy" toward Noto and Avola in the first case and Syracuse in the second. He then embarked in the destroyer HMS *Antwerp* and landed on the Pachino Peninsula at 0700 hours the following day. His morale received another boost when he learned that the whole peninsula was secure and that the port of Syracuse had been captured intact.

With an arrogance that would have caused problems with anyone other than British General Sir Harold Alexander, his boss and the commander of the 18th Allied Army Group, Montgomery signalled, "Everything going well here ... No need for you to come here unless you wish. Am very busy myself and am developing operations intensively ... Have no, repeat no, news of American progress ... if they can ... hold firm against enemy action from the west I could then swing hard with my right with an easier mind. If they draw enemy attacks on them my swing north will cut off enemy completely."

It was clear that Monty was telling his commander how subsequent operations

should be developed, and this did not bode well for future relations between himself and George Patton.

Patton had embarked in the American naval task force commander's flagship *Monrovia* four days before the landings. He wrote in his diary on July 9: "I have the usual shortness of breath I always have before a polo game. I would not change places with anyone I know right now."

Following the successful American landings, Gela was captured by midday. Patton remained aboard the *Monrovia* throughout July 10, but when the enemy launched a major counterattack in the Gela sector on the morning of the 11th he could restrain himself no longer and at 0930 hours he disembarked, wading ashore as one eyewitness recalled "resplendent in an immaculate uniform complete with necktie neatly tucked into his pressed gabardine shirt, knee-length polished black leather boots and his ever-present ivory-handled pistols strapped to his waist."

Patton arrived at the Ranger headquarters in Gela just in time to witness a second enemy counterattack being beaten off. He then went on to see the commander of the 1st Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Terry Allen. Needless to say he could not resist interfering and issued orders that the Division was to push inland, ignoring a strong German pocket of resistance to its rear. This was in direct contradiction of the corps commander's orders. The latter, Maj. Gen. Omar Bradley, wrote later, "He countermanded my Corps order to the Div without consulting me in any way. When I



British General Bernard Montgomery (left) and American General George S. Patton, Jr., could barely contain their dislike for one another. Here, they walk to a meeting at Patton's headquarters in Sicily.

spoke to him about it George apologized and said he should not have done that. But George didn't like it."

Thanks to a British newspaper correspondent who never even went ashore in the first two days of the invasion, the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Los Angeles Evening Herald-Express* carried wildly exaggerated reports of Patton's first actions in Sicily. "Patton leaped ashore to head troops at Gela," trumpeted the former, while the latter ran the headline: "Patton led Yanks against Nazi

tanks in Sicily." Its subsequent story read that Patton had "leaped into the surf from a landing boat and personally taking command, turned the tide in the fiercest fighting of the invasion of Gela." Nothing could have been further from the truth. The Rangers, the men of the 1st Infantry Division, and the tanks of the 2nd Armored Division beat off the counterattacks without any help from Patton. At 1900 hours he was back on the *Monrovia*. That evening he noted in his diary: "This is the first day in this campaign that I think I earned my pay."

Patton was not alone in bypassing the normal chain of command and giving orders directly to divisional commanders. Monty went even further. The commander of the 50th Infantry Division recalled that on July 12, he "... got a message, return at once to your Headquarters, Army commander wants to see you ... Monty explained to me that he was going to drop parachutists ... and that I'd got to get forward as fast as possible to relieve them ... Monty gave these instructions to me, not Dempsey [his corps commander] ... " Usually in an army, the army commander would give orders to the corps commander who would summon the divisional commander. Monty was determined to impress his personality on the chap who was doing the job.

The commander of the 51st Highland Division later remembered that during the same day Monty had gone even further and given orders directly to one of his "brigade commanders.

July 12 was a pivotal day in the relationship between Monty and Patton. At 2200 hours, the Eighth Army commander signalled Alexander. "My battle situation very good ... Intend now to operate on two axes. XIII Corps on Catania and northwards. XXX Corps on Caltagirone-Enna-Leonforte. Suggest American Div at Comiso might now move westwards to Niscemi and Gela. The maintenance and transport and road situation will not allow two Armies both carrying out extensive offensive operations. Suggest my Army operates offensively northwards to cut the island in two and that the American Army holds defensively ... facing west."

It is quite clear from the above that Monty, having received no directions of any sort from Alexander as to how future operations should be developed, had decided to take matters into his own hands and do the commander's job for him. In doing so, he uncharacteristically split his army and departed from his normal principle of concentration of force.



British infantrymen waded through pounding surf onto the invasion beaches of Sicily during the opening phase of Operation Husky.

A look at the map shows that in fact Monty's proposals made sound military sense—as well as thrusting directly toward Messina, he would, by cutting inland toward Enna, be outflanking the Axis forces facing the Americans north of the Gulf of Gela. Alexander, however, did nothing, and the U.S. 45th Infantry Division continued moving up the Vizzini–Enna road (Highway 124). Monty wrote later in his diary, “The battle in Sicily required to be gripped firmly from above. I was fighting my own battle and the Seventh American Army was fighting its battle; there was no co-ordination by 15th Army Group [Alexander].”

Frustrated by the lack of response from his commander, Monty again took matters into his own hands and ordered the 51st Highland Division, 23rd Armored Brigade, and the 1st Canadian Infantry Division to move up Highway 124—right across the path of the advancing 45th U.S. Division!

On July 14, Alexander finally responded to Monty's request and moved the inter-Army boundary, a boundary that had been agreed long before the landings. This resulted in the 45th Division being completely wasted; it was forced to pull back all the way to Gela and then move west to the left flank of the 1st Division.

Omar Bradley, commanding II U.S. Corps, was understandably furious. He recalled later, “We had a boundary for II Corps which went through Ragusa to the north to Vizzini ... Just before we got there, we got [an] order changing the boundary—switching us off to the north-west and giving that road as boundary to the British including the road ... I was peeved ... They [the new orders] were so obviously wrong and impractical. We should have been able to use that road, even if we would have shifted to the left—used it to move to the left.”

Monty's attempt to drive northwest and outflank the enemy in front of the Americans came to nothing. By the time the British, lacking mobility, reached Highway 124 and the sector south of Vizzini, the Germans had brought in armor and were able to hold on. Leese, the British XXX Corps commander, said later that he thought the decision to move the boundary and pull the 45th Division back was a mistake. “I often think now that it was an unfortunate decision not to hand it [the Caltagirone–Enna road] to the Americans ... They were making much quicker progress than ourselves, largely owing, I believe, to the fact that their vehicles all had four-wheel drive ... We were still

**BELOW: A German Mark VI Tiger patrols the streets of a Sicilian village for signs of advancing Allied columns. BOTTOM: Operation Husky had British and American forces landing on the southern and eastern coasts of Sicily. After initial progress, Allied forces found themselves bogged down against heavy German defenses around Messina.**



inclined to remember the slow American progress in the early stages in Tunisia, and I for one certainly did not realise the immense development in experience and technique which they had made. . . I have a feeling that if they could ... [have been allowed to drive] straight up this road [Highway 124], we might have had a chance to end this frustrating campaign sooner.”

Monty's thrust toward Catania was also frustrated when the Germans suddenly and dramatically reinforced their defenses with a strong parachute force.

But what was the reaction of the commander of the Seventh U.S. Army to these dramatic events? On July 12, Eisenhower had visited

Patton, who was still aboard the *Monrovia*. Ike was in a bad mood and had already sent a signal blaming Patton's command for a tragedy the previous evening when Allied naval forces had shot to pieces an aerial convoy bringing in a regimental combat team of the 82nd Airborne Division. Sixty pilots and 81 paratroopers had died. Ike demanded an investigation and ordered that action be taken against those responsible. Not content with that, he proceeded to castigate Patton for the inadequacy of his progress reports and, as if that was not bad enough, he left without saying anything positive about the successful landings in the Gulf of Gela. The following day Patton wrote in his diary: “Perhaps Ike is

looking for an excuse to relieve me ... If they want a goat, I am it."

There is no doubt that the confrontation with Ike affected Patton deeply, and it may well have made him reluctant to challenge Alexander's decision to change the inter-Army boundary. Maybe he would have done so if Alexander had come clean with him during a visit on the 13th. By then, the latter knew of Monty's suggestion that the boundary should be changed, but he made no mention of it and, unforgivably, Patton was left in the dark for several more hours. He did, however, obtain the commander's agreement to expand his operations to the northwest and take Agrigento, but only provided he continue to protect the Eighth Army's left flank and did not get involved in a major engagement. Patton and the commander of the 3rd Division, General Lucian Truscott, agreed that a "reconnaissance in force" would meet Alexander's requirement.

When Patton learned of the inter-Army boundary change on July 14, he determined



General George Patton and Lt. Col. Lyle B. Bernard of the U.S. 30th Infantry Regiment discuss a plan of attack on the outskirts of Messina.

that it was time to stop playing second fiddle to the British. This resolution was strengthened even further when on July 16, he received a message from 15th Army Group instructing him to occupy a defensive line running northward from Caltanissetta with the aim of protecting Monty's XXX Corps as it swung east toward Leonforte. Patton knew that the Eighth Army's several thrusts were in trouble after encountering strong German resistance, and with only relatively weak Italian forces on his own front he saw his chance.

"Monty is trying to steal the show and with the assistance of Divine Destiny [Eisenhower] he may do so," Patton wrote in his diary that evening. The following day he arrived without warning at Alexander's headquarters in Tunisia and suggested that his army should advance on two fronts with Bradley's II Corps driving north to Termini, while a provisional

corps made up of the 2nd Armored, 3rd Infantry and 82nd Airborne divisions under his deputy, Major General Geoffrey Keyes, cleared the western part of the island.

In fact, Patton's eyes were not set on Termini, but rather on the capital of Sicily—Palermo. Alexander was clearly caught off guard. Instead of taking control of his two strong-willed subordinates and ordering Monty to concentrate on holding the Germans in place and Patton to forget western Sicily and drive north and then east to Messina to cut off the Axis forces in the northeast of the island, he agreed and the campaign dragged on for another month.

Although Brig. Gen. Maxwell Taylor, the artillery commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, described the provisional corps' advance into northwestern Sicily as "a pleasure march, shaking hands with Italians asking, 'How's my brother Joe in Brooklyn?' Nicest war I've ever been in!" it was in fact extremely unpleasant for many of the GIs who had to march over 100 miles through very rugged country in stifling heat and swirling dust. Nevertheless, Palermo fell to Truscott's 3rd Infantry Division on July 21, and his men were greeted by thousands of flag-waving Sicilians.

When Patton himself arrived in Palermo after modestly allowing Keyes, the provisional corps commander, to enter first, he was greeted with cheers of "Long Live America!" and "Down with Mussolini!" He quickly established his headquarters in the royal palace and "had it cleaned by prisoners for the first time since the Greek occupation [241 BC]." It was there that he was visited by the cardinal of Palermo's rep-

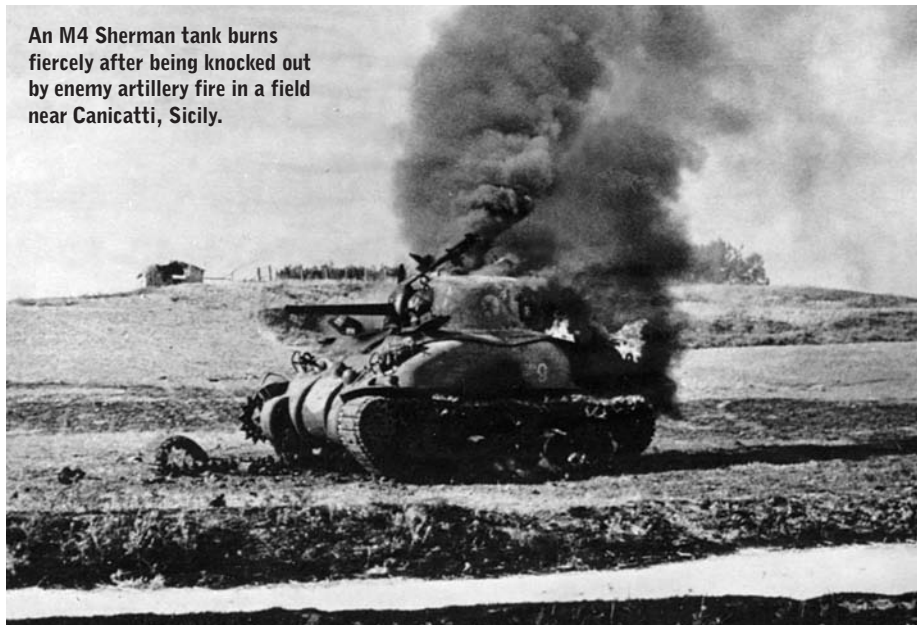
resentative, ate "K-rations on china marked with the cross of Saxony" and "got quite a kick about using a toilet previously made melodious by constipated royalty."

On July 23, Bradley's II Corps reached the northern coast at Termini and Patton lost no time in ordering it to turn east. He was determined to beat Monty to Messina.

What did Monty make of the Seventh Army's advances to Palermo and Termini? By the time Bradley's II Corps reached the latter on July 23, Monty realized that his own dispersed thrusts, aimed at bypassing Mount Etna via Adrano on the west side and Fiumefreddo on the eastern coast road, were getting nowhere. The ground was the most difficult in the whole of Sicily, and the Germans were inevitably making good use of it. After the war he blamed a lack of coordination of the land, sea and air efforts for the delay in gaining "control of the island more quickly, and with fewer casualties ... the Supreme Commander was in Algiers, Alexander ... was in Sicily; Cunningham, the Naval C-in-C, was in Malta; whereas Tedder, the Air C-in-C had his Headquarters in Tunis. When things went wrong, all they could do was to send telegrams to each other."

In fact, there were two basic reasons for this delay—one, Alexander's failure to coordinate the Seventh and Eighth armies; and two, Monty's failure to understand early enough the topographical difficulties involved in trying to advance past the east and west sides of Mount Etna. On July 19, Monty had signalled Alexander, outlining his axes of advance around either side of Mount Etna and suggesting that "when the Americans

An M4 Sherman tank burns fiercely after being knocked out by enemy artillery fire in a field near Canicatti, Sicily.



have cut the coast road north of Petralia, one American division should develop a strong thrust eastwards towards Messina so as to stretch the enemy who are all Germans and possibly repeat the Bizerta manoeuvre [i.e., cut them off].”

This made complete military sense, but by the 17th Patton had persuaded Alexander to allow him to drive toward the northwestern part of the island. When Alexander tried to restrain Patton by sending him a new directive on the evening of the 19th, it was too late. The directive, in accordance with Monty's suggestion, ordered Patton to first cut the coastal road north of Petralia and only then to move on Palermo. However, the Seventh Army Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Hobart Gay, kept the first part of the message from Patton, ensured that the remainder took a long time to be decoded, and then asked for it to be repeated on the grounds that it had been garbled! By the time this problem had been resolved, the advance guard of Keyes' provisional corps was already in Palermo and Monty's idea of an American division helping him, at least in the short term, had been frustrated.

By July 23, Monty realized he had been overambitious and that the cost of trying to break through the German defenses astride

Mount Etna, known as the Etna Line, was going to be too great. Two days earlier, he had closed down the XIII Corps drive up the east coast, and he now sent a message to Patton inviting him to come and discuss the capture of Messina. He offered, “Many congratulations to you and your gallant soldiers on securing Palermo and clearing up the western half of Sicily.” Privately, of course, he believed Patton's Palermo escapade had been a completely wasted effort.

Patton met Monty at Syracuse airfield on the 25th. Expecting the worst and mistrusting his comrade's intentions, he was astounded when Monty suggested that the Seventh Army should use both the major roads north of Mount Etna (Highways 113 and 120) in a drive to capture Messina. In fact, Monty went even further and suggested that his right hand, or southern, thrust might even cross the inter-Army boundary and strike for Taormina, thereby cutting off the two German divisions facing the Eighth Army; the latter would “take a back seat.”

That same evening, Patton wrote in his diary: “I felt something was wrong, but have not found it yet. After all this had been settled, Alex [Alexander] came. He looked a little mad and, for him, was quite brusque. He told Monty to explain his plan. Monty said he and

I had already decided what we were going to do, so Alex got madder and told Monty to show him the plan. He did and then Alex asked for mine. The meeting then broke up. No one was offered any lunch and I thought that Monty was ill bred both to Alexander and me. Monty gave me a 5-cent lighter. Someone must have sent him a box of them.”

Monty described the ‘plan’ in his own diary: “... the Seventh American Army should develop two strong thrusts with (a) two divisions on [Highway 120] (b) two divisions on [Highway 113] towards Messina. This was all agreed.”

What is the explanation for Monty's surprising generosity in offering the prize of Messina to Patton? A major factor was certainly his wish to avoid further British and Canadian casualties in an attempt to breach the Etna Line. By July 27, the Eighth Army had suffered some 5,800 casualties. Another was his wish that his army, not Patton's, should mount the main invasion of the Italian mainland. As early as the 23rd he had signalled Alexander, “Consider that the whole operation of war on to mainland must now be handled by Eighth Army as once Sicily is cleared of enemy a great deal of my resources can be put on to the mainland. I will carry the war into Italy on a front of two Corps.”



A U.S. infantryman takes cover beside a stone wall while another scans the terrain before them with a pair of field glasses. The fighting was savage in the rugged terrain of Sicily before Allied troops secured the island.

By giving Patton the main role in finishing off the enemy in Sicily, Monty planned to rest the two corps just mentioned in preparation for the forthcoming invasion. They would then assault the toe of Italy in conjunction with a landing in the Gulf of Gioja by the X British Corps sailing directly from North Africa.

On July 28, Monty flew to Palermo in his Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress for further discussions with Patton. Unfortunately, the landing strip was too short. Montgomery remembered, "The pilot did the most amazing job ... He put all the brakes on one side and revved one engine and swung the whole thing round—which wrote it off. That was the end of it."

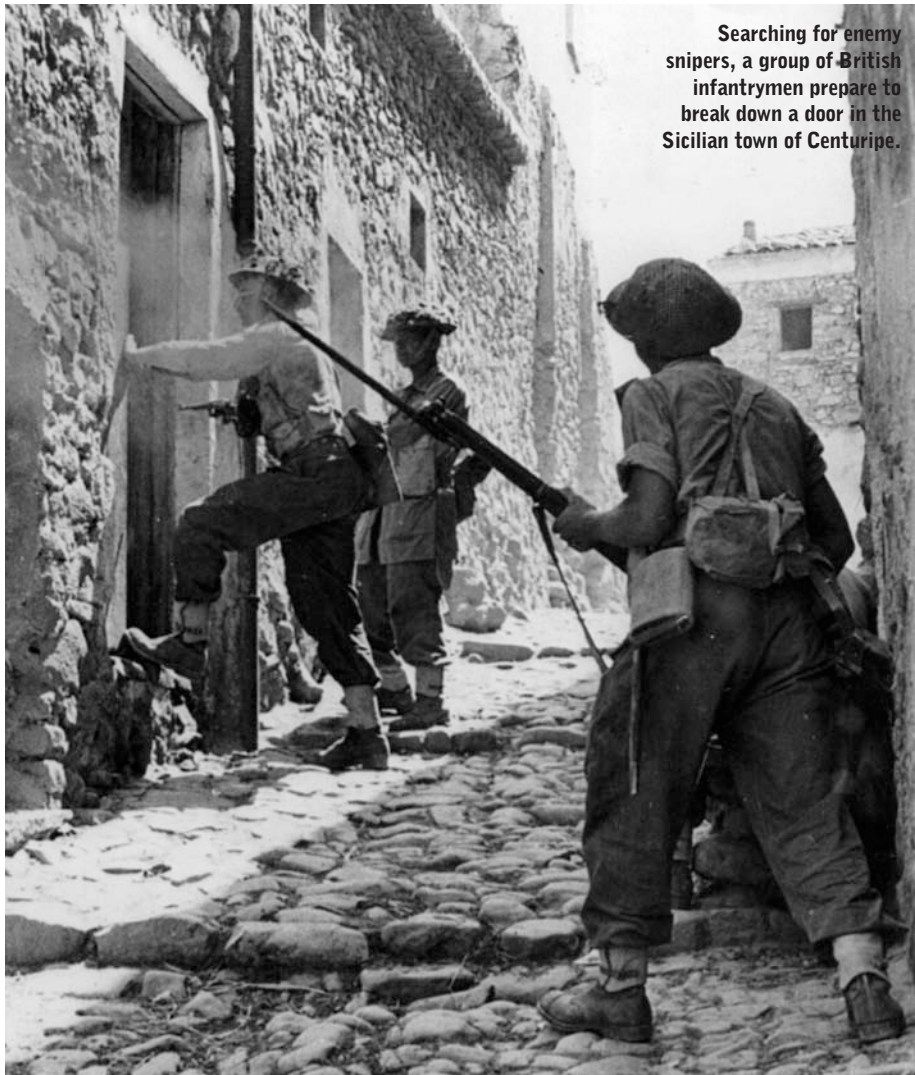
Monty emerged from the wreck seemingly unperturbed, to be met, not by Patton but, by an aide. It was Patton's way of getting back at him for his rudeness in Syracuse. Nevertheless, he then put on a typical Patton reception with motorcycles and scout cars to escort Monty to the palace in Palermo where a band and guard of honour were waiting to greet him. After a formal lunch, the two men reviewed their future plans and Monty again emphasized the importance of the Seventh Army's thrust to Messina.

He wrote in his diary, "We had a great reception. The Americans are very easy to work with. I discussed plans for future operations with General Patton. Their troops are quite first class and I have a very great admiration for the way they fight."

Patton was still very wary of Monty's intentions and sent a note to the commander of the 45th Division. "This is a horse race in which the prestige of the U.S. Army is at stake. We must take Messina before the British. Please use your best efforts to facilitate the success of our race."

George Patton's behavior during the last three weeks of the campaign in Sicily can only be described as extraordinary. He castigated Omar Bradley for the tactics being employed by his II Corps, telling him, "I want you to get into Messina just as fast as you can. I don't want you to waste time on these manoeuvres [outflanking enemy resistance], even if you've got to spend men to do it. I want you to beat Monty into Messina."

On another occasion he allegedly accused the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, Truscott, of being "afraid to fight." Bradley stated later, "Patton was developing as an unpopular guy. He steamed about with great convoys of cars and great squads of cameramen ... To George, tactics was simply a process of bulling ahead. Never seemed to think out a campaign. Seldom made a careful estimate of



Searching for enemy snipers, a group of British infantrymen prepare to break down a door in the Sicilian town of Centuripe.

the situation. I thought him a shallow commander ... I disliked the way he worked, upset tactical plans, interfered in my orders. His stubbornness on amphibious operations, parade plans into Messina sickened me and soured me on Patton. We learned how not to behave from Patton's Seventh Army."

The reference to amphibious operations was in relation to three landings made on the north coast of Sicily during the advance to Messina, known to the Americans as end runs. Patton did not in fact interfere in the first successful landing, but he ordered the second to take place earlier than Bradley and Truscott wished, ending in a minor disaster, and he ordered the third to take place despite the fact that the 3rd Division had already advanced beyond the landing site!

Patton's "parade plans into Messina" again reflected badly on him as an army commander. Although a patrol of the 3rd Infantry Division had entered the city on the evening of August 16, Patton gave orders that no

formed units were to enter until he personally could make triumphal entry. Bradley recalled that he "had to hold our troops in the hills instead of pursuing the fleeing Germans in an effort to get as many as we could. [The] British nearly beat him into Messina because of that."

At 1000 hours on August 17, Patton led an American column into Messina. Ike's liaison officer with Patton, Maj. Gen. John Porter Lucas, who was in the following vehicle, recorded in his diary: "We entered the town about ten-thirty amid the wild applause of the people ... The city was completely and terribly demolished."

German long-range artillery fire landed near the third vehicle, wounding its occupants, but this did not deter Patton, who proceeded on to the central piazza where he met British troops who had carried out an amphibious landing south of the city near Scaletta on the 15th. The commander of the British force, Brigadier J.

*Continued on page 78*

BY CHARLES WHITING

It was said on May 8, 1945, that some of the victors wandered around in a daze. They were puzzled by a strange silence. The guns were no longer firing the permanent barrage, their constant companion, during those last months since they had crossed the Rhine.

Some could not quite believe it was all over. They had longed for an end to the war in Europe for years. "Then suddenly it was upon them all and the impact of the fact was a thing that failed to register—like the death of a loved one," the historian of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division wrote that year.

**FOLLOWING THE SURRENDER OF MOST MAJOR GERMAN UNITS, SOME CONTINUED TO FIGHT THE ALLIES IN EUROPE FOR MONTHS.**

On that day in May, a combat engineer sergeant serving with General George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army in Austria wrote to his wife, "The war's over! All we can think about is, thank God, thank God ... nobody is going to shoot at me any more. I can't be killed. I have made it!" Medal of Honor Recipient Audie Murphy, recuperating from his three wounds in Cannes, went out into the crowds celebrating the great victory. "I feel only a vague irritation," he wrote later. "I want company and I want to be alone. I want to talk and I want to be silent. There is VE Day without, but no peace."

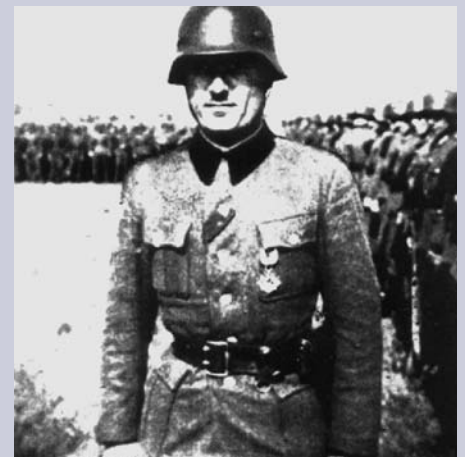
# LONG



Photographers capture the moment as Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Fahmbacher surrenders the German garrison of the French port city of Lorient. Accepting the surrender is Maj. Gen. Herman F. Kramer of the U.S. 66th Infantry Division.

# The SURRENDER





All: National Archives

**ABOVE:** The news of German surrender is broadcast to the world. **TOP RIGHT:** British officers discuss the terms of surrender to be offered to the German command in the war-ravaged French city of Dunkirk. Located on the English Channel, Dunkirk had been the scene of a humiliating defeat and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the continent of Europe in 1940. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Lieutenant Shalva Loladze is often remembered for leading a group of captured Georgian rebels to mutiny against their German masters on the island of Texel, off the coast of Holland.

Most of the GIs were not given, however, to philosophizing. They simply got blind drunk instead. It was Tuesday May 8, 1945—Victory in Europe Day. It was all over. The Germans were beaten at last. There was peace again. Were the Germans really beaten? Was there really peace in Europe?

Over the past few weeks, the great Allied armies had swept through Hitler's vaunted "1,000 Year-Reich," which had lasted 12 years and five months, occupying everything from great, if shattered, cities to remote intact villages and hamlets. But in their urgent drive to kill the Nazi beast, they had left great swaths of territory in German hands. There were German outposts everywhere over hundreds of miles in Germany itself and in the former German-occupied countries, which seemed to come under no one's control save that of the local commanders.

In the area of Dessau, where the U.S. and Soviet Armies had failed to link up, the entire German infrastructure still functioned. For nearly two months, the locals ran their own post offices, telephone exchanges, and so on, guarded by a sizeable force of German soldiers, with the Allies totally unaware of the situation. Farther north in the area of the German border, SS troops still held out in the

forests around Bad Segeberg. Well dug in, they refused to surrender until the commander of the British 11th Armored Division grew sick of the situation. He was not going to risk any more deaths in his division, which had suffered casualties enough since Normandy. Instead, he ordered the commander of the German 8th Parachute Division to do the job for him. Thus, during the week after the war was officially over, German fought German to the death.

These were not the only ones. On the Dutch island of Texel, across from the important German naval base of Den Helder, a full-scale mini war had been under way since the end of April 1945. At that time, the 82nd Infantry Battalion, made up of Russian former prisoners of war from Soviet Georgia under some 400 German officers and non-commissioned officers, had been preparing to fight the Canadians who were advancing into Holland. The ex-POWs believed resistance would mean their death in combat or forced repatriation to Russia where again they might well be put to death as traitors.

Instead of fighting for the Germans, they had mutinied under a broad-shouldered former pilot, Lieutenant Sjalwas Loladze. He argued that if they could take their German

superiors by surprise and equip themselves with whatever artillery they could find on the island, they would be able to hold out until Canadian paratroopers dropped on Texel and relieved them.

Thus it was that they carried out their own "night of the long knives" in late April. In one night they slaughtered their German officers and NCOs in their beds, some 250 of them, and took the rest of them prisoner. The battalion commander, a Major Breitner, could not be found in his quarters. That was not surprising. He was in bed with his mistress, a local Dutch girl. Hearing the midnight bursts of firing, Breitner thought the Canadians had landed, but he soon discovered that German weapons were being fired and that his troops had mutinied. At gunpoint, he forced a local fisherman to row him over to Den Helder and alarmed the authorities there.

The next day, the Battle of Texel commenced. The Germans advanced three battalions, some 3,500 men in all, and they soon forced the Georgians to retreat. Still, the former prisoners refused to surrender. Down to 400 men by May, they continued the bitter struggle in which no quarter was given or expected. When a Georgian was taken pris-

oner by the Germans, he was stripped of his uniform and shot on the spot. The ex-POWs had an even simpler method. They tied bundles of their prisoners together and attached a single grenade to them. It was bloody, but efficient, they thought. Besides, it saved their dwindling supply of ammunition.

While the Canadians, who now occupied that part of Holland, looked on impotently (or so they said later), the men of the Georgian Battalion and their onetime German

masters slaughtered each other ruthlessly. VE Day came and went, and they were still at it.

On May 8, another cut off German garrison— that of the great German U-boat base at Lorient on the French coast—was still holding out, ignoring both the Allied order to surrender and that of the last Nazi leader, Admiral Karl Dönitz, to lay down their arms. Back in August 1944, Patton had intended to capture the key naval base, but

after his army had suffered great losses at Brest and other Breton ports, he had called off the attack.

Lorient was going to be allowed to wither on the vine. Unfortunately for the Allies, Lorient did not wither. For over a year, its commander, elderly General Wilhelm Fahrmbacher, had fought off attacks by the French and American troops who had surrounded the Lorient after Patton had departed with his Third Army. After winning the Knight's Cross

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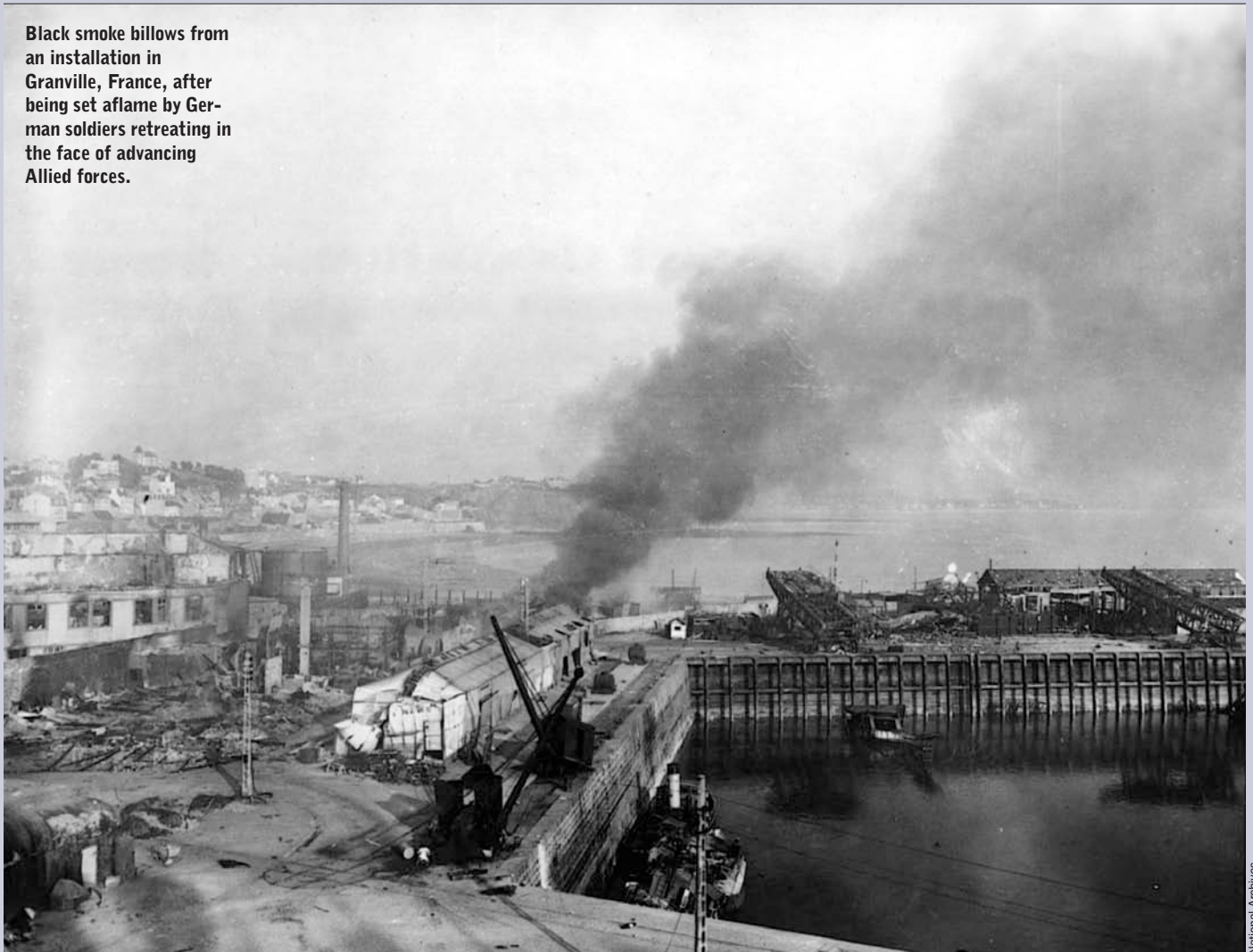
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Hearing the midnight bursts of firing, Breitner thought the Canadians had landed, but he soon discovered that German weapons were being fired and that his troops had mutinied.

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**Black smoke billows from an installation in Granville, France, after being set aflame by German soldiers retreating in the face of advancing Allied forces.**



National Archives

in Russia, Farmbacher had been put out to pasture at Lorient.

During what amounted to a siege, he had been supplied by U-boat and long-range aircraft, supplementing the garrison's rations with raids on the French and Americans and penetrating their lines in depth to buy food from the local farmers, who were prepared to deal with the enemy—at a price.

Throughout those long months, Farmbacher had succeeded in maintaining the garrison's morale with a daily supply of that German staple—bread. Unknown to the troops, however, most of that freshly baked Kommissbrot was made from sawdust. Farmbacher and his chief quartermaster, who kept the matter strictly secret, had had the local rail track pulled up to get at the wooden sleepers below. Daily and in secrecy, these sleepers were sawed up to make sawdust.

Indeed, one of the first things that the fortress commander insisted upon as soon as

men. We remember our sorely tried homeland. Long Live Germany.” Thereupon, he ordered one of his officers to make contact with the French besiegers in order to surrender. A little later, the elderly general found himself serving five years in a Parisian jail for having disfigured French property. His real crime was that he did not know the whereabouts of the French postage stamps that had been overprinted with the word “LORIENT” and used by the garrison. His French interrogator had wanted them for himself, knowing they were rare and would soon be valuable. They were, and they are. Today, each one of those 60-year-old stamps is worth at least \$1,000.

On the other side of the English Channel were the only possessions of Great Britain to have been occupied by the Germans in World War II. They were the Channel Islands, which the Germans had captured in June 1940. There, the Germans had fortified the three main islands and established a garrison of

before had been Eisenhower's first headquarters in continental Europe.

There, they caught the French garrison and the U.S. supply companies completely by surprise. They took some 90 GIs prisoner, looted the port, captured two small freighters, and returned to the Channel Islands as heroes. Huffmeier offered them the choice of a reward. Either they could have the Iron Cross or a spoonful of precious strawberry jam! They opted for the strawberry jam. It is not recorded if the Madman of the Channel Islands personally handed them their spoonful of jam for their heroic efforts.

Now in May, with Germany clearly defeated, Huffmeier was already planning another attack on the Americans in France. However, another hard liner, Admiral Friedrich Frisius, who was the commander of the 12,000-strong garrison at Dunkirk farther up the French coast, had beaten him to it. Ever since the British Army had fled Europe in June 1940, Dunkirk had been a

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**Fahrmbacher knew the situation was hopeless. He could not feed the garrison with a couple of sacks of molding flour and the sawdust provided by one lone wooden sleeper. It was time to surrender.**

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he was awakened by his soldier servant and given his cup of acorn coffee was for the quartermaster to report the state of the sawdust. Now, over a week after Germany surrendered, Fahrmbacher summoned his quartermaster and asked, “How many railroad sleepers have we left?” The quartermaster hesitated, and the big general knew instinctively that he was in trouble. Slowly, avoiding the general's eyes, the quartermaster replied, “One!”

Fahrmbacher knew the situation was hopeless. He could not feed the garrison with a couple of sacks of molding flour and the sawdust provided by one lone wooden sleeper. It was time to surrender.

That afternoon, he sent his last message to Dönitz far away in North Germany at the small coastal town of Murwik. It read, “Wish to sign off with my steadfast and unbeaten

nearly 20,000 men. As 1944 gave way to 1945, these men, who were down to quarter rations, were calling themselves “Division Kanada” because they thought that was where they would end up as British POWs. They had not reckoned with their commander, the “Madman of the Channel Islands,” as they called 46-year-old Admiral Friedrich Huffmeier, formerly the commander of the German battlecruiser *Scharnhorst*.

Huffmeier, tough, fanatical, and a convinced Nazi, did not care a bit about the wretched state of his starving men. He was determined not only to stick it out to the bitter end, but also to take the war to the enemy. On the same day that the U.S. 9th Armored Division captured the famous bridge across the Rhine at Remagen, a group of Huffmeier's men raided the little French port of Granville, which only six months

thorn in the flesh of the British and later the Americans. For years, the big German guns located at a spot some 20 miles from the white cliffs of Dover, had pounded southwestern England. From Dunkirk the Germans had received the first warning of the great Allied air armada soon to descend upon Holland in September 1944 during Operation Market Garden.

In 1945, Frisius was not content to maintain a passive role, surrounded as Dunkirk now was by the exiled Czech Legion. Code-named Operation Bluecher after the great Prussian general of the Napoleonic Wars, Frisius launched a surprise attack on the Czech positions. The Germans advanced some 10 miles out of their fortified positions at Dunkirk. British engineers at Gravelines, south of Dunkirk, had to blow up the bridge on the River As to prevent them advancing

any farther. The date was May 4, 1945, five days after Hitler had committed suicide!

While Admiral Frisius rested on his laurels, not even having a German high command to which he could report his success, Admiral Huffmeier prepared to continue the fight, reasoning that if the Allied victors assumed he might attack again they would not expect him to do so once more at Granville. He did, wiping the port out completely this time. He assembled the fittest of his Division Kanada men, who were now living off boiled potatoes and nettle soup, at the local cinema and told them, "I intend to hold out here with you until the Fatherland has won back the lost ground and final victory is wrested from the enemy. We do not wish, and we cannot allow ourselves, to be shamed by the enemy...as commander of the defenses of the Channel Islands, I will carry out without compromise the mandate given me by the Führer. We stand by him, officers and men of the Fortress of Jersey."

Then, he explained his plan. A group of volunteers would block the entrance to Granville harbor with a large freighter filled with cement. Next, the port would be looted, its installations destroyed completely, and the volunteers would escape in high-speed Luftwaffe motor launches. The date for the great attack, May 7, was one day after the German generals under the command of the Admiral Dönitz had surrendered to British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

The Madman of the Channel Islands was not fated to carry out this last attack in the name of Adolf Hitler, who had been dead for over a week. On May 8, two British warships appeared off the Channel Islands, and the surrender of Huffmeier's garrison was demanded. Huffmeier would not face the British, but sent a subordinate to discuss terms. The British commander flushed a choleric purple. He told the weedy German naval officer that he had not come to discuss terms but to take the island's surrender. The German officer pointed to the island's shore batteries and said, "I'm to tell you that you and your continued presence here will be regarded as an unfriendly act.... Admiral Huffmeier will regard your presence here as a breach of faith and a provocative act."

Fists clenched, the British commander told the sallow-faced German officer, who was obviously half starved, to "tell Admiral Huffmeier that if he opens fire on us we will hang him tomorrow."

That same day, Lieutenant Loladze, the commander of the Georgian rebels fighting

for their lives in Holland, was trapped by the Germans. He entered a burned-out cottage, perhaps to look for food, when he heard a twig snap behind him. He swung around. Too late. His stomach was ripped apart by a burst of schmeisser fire at close range. His death seemed to symbolize the end of the German resistance in continental Europe. One day later, Admiral Huffmeier agreed through an intermediary to surrender. He was too frightened of his own rebellious troops, who had sworn to kill him, to venture out himself. Later, in brilliant sunshine, the British started landing their troops. After nearly five years of occupation, the only part of the British Isles captured by the Nazis was free at last.

Still, some diehard Nazis, who believed they could continue the fight against the Western Allies despite Germany's official surrender, continued to resist. Often, they were located in such remote places that the Allies were hardly aware of their presence. All the same, these small bands of tough Germans had played a key role in the secret war that Germany had waged against the West for months, even years.

Daring the winter of 1940-1941 that Britain, and later Russia, had become aware of the presence of some strange Germans newly located in the Arctic wastes. In all, there were 16 teams of radio and weather specialists who transmitted their findings to Berlin so that the German high command could plan its operations against the Russians, the British Arctic convoys and, in the end, the last great counterattack against the Americans in the Ardennes.

For four years, at varying times, Russians, Danes, Norwegians, Britons, Canadians, and finally Americans had sought these secret Germans. It had been a cat-and-mouse game, a small group of highly skilled and tough men on both sides hunting each other through the snow and ice over thousands of miles above the Arctic Circle. Every time the U.S. Coast Guard and the Danish sledge patrols were successful and thought they had finally eradicated the Germans, another radio station would commence broadcasting and they knew they would have to start all over again.

In September 1944, the Germans had sent out perhaps the most important secret team of them all. It was commanded by a Dr. Dege, a meteorologist, who was to set up a weather station on "the island of Nordostland off Spitzbergen," as he explained later, "nearly 15,000 square kilometers in size and regarded as one of the toughest areas in the whole of the Arctic."

Landed by U-boat, Dege and his team began to broadcast the raw weather data on which Hitler based his campaign in the Battle of the Bulge.

From mid-October 1944 onward, when they bid farewell to the sun until the following March, they would provide vital weather forecasts that would encourage Hitler to believe he need not worry about Allied aerial attacks in the coming months of December and January at the turn of the year 1945. The Germans called the conditions "Führer Weather," ideal for the campaign to come—rain and fog and probably heavy snow for the last two weeks of December 1944. On the basis of this information, Hitler ordered the great surprise attack, which would commence on December 16.

On the whole, these "secret Germans" were correct in their estimates. The Battle of the Bulge commenced in that foul weather. As every student of that great battle knows, the conditions changed dramatically on December 22, and Germany's last bold attempt to change the course of the war ended in defeat.

The German weather experts continued to send their forecasts back to the Reich to the bitter end. They were still at it when, on May 22, 1945, Admiral Dönitz and members of his government were arrested by the British and there was no longer anyone to report to. We do not know the mood of Dr. Dege and his team at that time. Perhaps they decided to continue studying the weather in that remote waste in the interests of science, but their supplies were beginning to run out and it was clear that October would soon bring a long winter with little food and no light. As hardy as they were, Dr. Dege and his men could not stand that. He decided to surrender.

At midnight on September 3, 1945, six years to the day after Britain had gone to war with Germany, Dr. Dege had the dubious honor of being the commander of the last German unit to surrender to the Allies. It was four months after the defeat of Hitler's Reich. It was said that one of his first questions after the surrender was, "Is the Führer really dead?"

He was resolutely assured that Adolf Hitler was indeed no longer in the land of the living. □

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*Well-known author Charles Whiting has written numerous books on topics related to World War II. He resides in England.*

# SURVIVAL

THE GRIMY, WEARY MARINES HEARD WITH LITTLE emotion the instructions shouted by their officer. He wanted them to mount yet another charge to the top of the nondescript hill blocking their way, another collection of rock housing an enemy that tried to halt their advance. Yet, his words rang with a different resonance, a tone that stirred feelings the men assumed had lain dormant.

“When we go up there,” barked the officer, “some of us are never going to come down again. You all know what hell it is on the top, but

that hill’s got to be taken, and we’re going to do it. I’m going up to the top of Sugar Loaf Hill. Who’s coming along?”

With that brief oration, Major Henry A. Courtney, Jr., led 44 Marines in a bold charge that helped make the name Sugar Loaf synonymous with courage, ferocity, death, and gallantry.

The Okinawa campaign had opened six weeks earlier with a calmness that starkly contrasted with the violence soon to be experienced by Courtney’s unit.



U.S. Marines make their way across a low stone wall as they seek out hidden Japanese positions on bloody Okinawa.



TAKING AN  
OTHERWISE  
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TASK FOR  
U.S. MARINES.

BY JOHN WUKOVITS



# SUGAR LOAF AT

The desolate visage of Sugar Loaf Hill looms in the distance of this photograph. U.S. troops experienced bitter fighting at Sugar Loaf as a run of good luck came to an abrupt end.



Marine Colonel Earl Landreth, accompanying assault Marines as an observer during the April 1, 1945, landing on Okinawa's beaches, could hardly believe the dearth of opposition. Meticulously penciling notes in his small black-covered notebook as his craft surged closer to shore, Landreth marveled at the lack of enemy mortar shells and hail of machine gun bullets he assumed would by now be rapidly transforming the normally placid waters into a cauldron of death. Instead, only quiet greeted Landreth and the other Marines in his landing craft.

Planners selected the landing site, on Okinawa's western coast near the village of Hagushi, because its width and mild surf offered an attractive entrance, and because the gradually rising terrain behind Hagushi opened toward two key airfields one mile back from the beaches. Marines braced for a brutal shoreline reception, similar to the ghastly spectacle at "Bloody Tarawa" 17 months earlier, through which they would have to fight every inch of the way simply to get to the beach.

A briefing officer at Ulithi laid it on the line for a group of Marine privates and corporals from the 1st Marine Division. PFC Eugene B. Sledge, who later wrote one of the classic memoirs to emerge from the Pacific Theater, recalled what the officer told the hushed group: "This is expected to be the costliest amphibious campaign of the war. We will be hitting an island about 350 miles from the Japs' home islands, so you can expect them to fight with more determination than ever. We can expect 80 to 85 percent casualties on the beach."

Sledge and the other young Marines sat in stunned silence, as if they were listening to their own obituaries. No operation to date had

exact such a frightful toll on its assaulting waves, yet they were being told that was what they should expect.

To reduce that gruesome casualty prediction, a prodigious weeklong bombardment of Okinawa opened on March 24, pouring more than 27,000 rounds of 5-inch or larger shells on Japanese positions. The maddening bombardment rattled enemy soldiers' nerves and disrupted their sleep, prodding one irate Japanese to write angrily in his diary, "What the hell kind of bastards are they?" Despite the pounding, the Japanese suffered light casualties and few positions were reduced to rubble.

The bombardment was but one piece of the vast machine that gathered for the campaign, which marked the initial time that ground forces from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's Central Pacific drive merged with General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific thrust. Over 180,000 troops comprised the Tenth Army, the designated unit ordered to seize Okinawa. Army Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner commanded seven divisions: four Army divisions under Maj. Gen. John Hodge and three Marine divisions—the 1st, 2nd, and 6th—under Maj. Gen. Roy S. Geiger.

The United States wanted Okinawa for three reasons. First, American-medium range bombers could strike the Japanese Home Islands from Okinawa, which rested a mere 360 miles southwest of Kyushu. Second, Military planners needed the island as a support base for the scheduled November invasion of the Home Islands. Finally, seizing Okinawa would sever the remaining supply lines from the resource-rich southwest to resource-starved Japan.

Marines and Army infantry faced strong opposition from more than 100,000 troops of the 32nd Army and their invigorating commander, Lt. Gen. Mitsuru Ushijima, who fit few of the popular stereotypes circulating wartime America about Japanese officers. Thoughtful and quiet as opposed to barbaric and brash, Ushijima carved a successful military career before arriving at Okinawa, commanding an infantry unit in Burma as well as serving as commandant of the Japanese military academy at Zama.

The lean man sporting a large mustache bore himself with the pride of an ancient samurai warrior. His reputation for bravery under fire and his fatherly demeanor instilled not only confidence in those who served under him, but often love. He chatted with young soldiers and thanked volunteers who helped build fortifications, and while he handed great responsibilities to his staff, he accepted the blame whenever anything went wrong.

Shortly before the Americans rushed ashore, Ushijima delivered common-sense advice to his troops, not as a fiery coach might exhort his men during a halftime tirade, but more as a



kindly mentor addressing his closest pupil.

"You must realize that material power usually overcomes spiritual power in the present war. The Americans are clearly our superiors in weaponry. Do not depend upon your spiritual power to overcome this enemy. Devise combat methods based upon mathematical precision, and then think about displaying your spiritual power."

Few strategists, including Ushijima, doubted that Okinawa would fall to the Americans. If the Japanese could force their foe into a long,

protracted campaign, however, maybe they could delay the inevitable invasion of the Japanese Home Islands until peace feelers succeeded or until some miracle saved Japan.

Ushijima knew his men would contest every yard of ground, for once Okinawa fell little remained to keep the United States off Japan's doorstep. Ushijima correctly deduced that he could not halt the Americans on Okinawa's beaches or on its relatively flat northern terrain, where American tanks and aircraft could inflict a ghastly toll. He instead decided to make his stand in the south, where the hilly terrain swung to his advantage and where he could make use of the port of Naha, Nakagusuku Bay, the large city of Shuri, and important airfields. Ushijima intended to allow American troops to land uncontested and advance inland, then wait until they veered to the south. There, on his terms and on ground more suitable to his forces, he planned to destroy the foe.

Unlike the flat northern region, ridges, draws, cliffs, and limestone caves dominate Okinawa's southern third. Stretching along an east-west axis directly across the island, the undulating terrain chops Okinawa into a multi-

while an eastern flank extended to the Yonabaru Airfield near the ocean. Intricate tunnel systems connected underground chambers, caves, and emplacements. Above ground, Okinawan burial vaults provided Ushijima with numerous miniature fortresses from which to oppose the Americans.

Ushijima intended to wear out the Americans by forcing them to assault each ridge and clear out every cave and burial vault. Protective trenches, bristling with troops laden with machine guns and knee mortars, stood in front of the ridges, while heavy machine-gun emplacements added their withering fire from the ridges behind. Mortars placed along the tops and reverse slopes and artillery fire directed from adjoining hills would contribute additional destructive power. When the units in the first line of defense could hold on no longer, Ushijima would pull them to a second line, where the Americans would have to repeat the same costly operations to again dislodge their enemy.

Ushijima hoped to separate American infantry from the tanks that supported them by directing intense artillery fire against the

15,000 naval personnel, and 20,000 members from the *Boeitai*, the Okinawan home guard. Ushijima could also count on 3,500 men stationed in the Oroku Peninsula under Vice Admiral Minoru Ota a short distance behind the Shuri Line. Okinawa might fall, but at a price that would make the Americans think again about seizing Japanese-held soil.

Marines and Army forces did not know this as they prepared to hit the beaches on April 1. Some remarked on the "coincidence" of the attack occurring on April Fools' Day. Others sensed irony in that it was also Easter Sunday, celebrated throughout the Christian world as a day of peace and redemption.

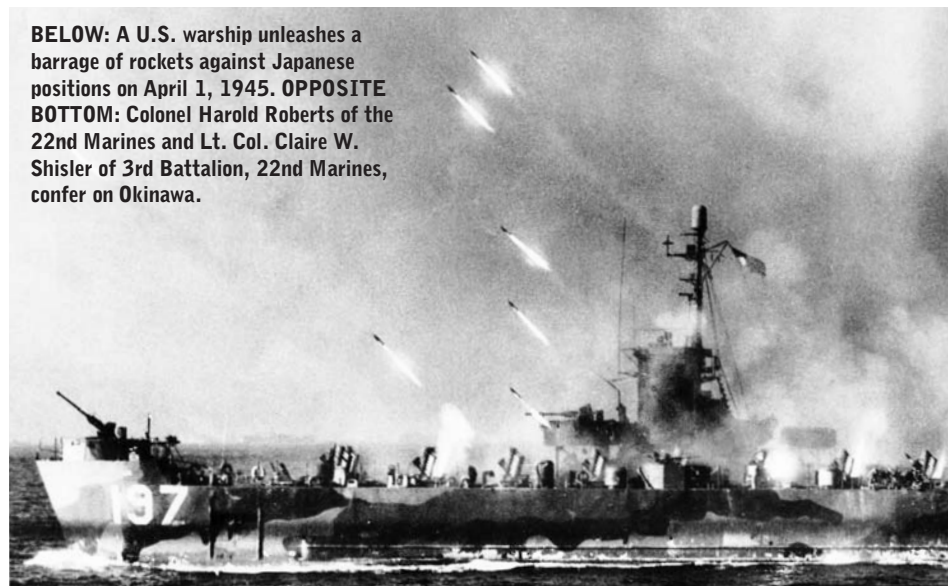
In a deafening pre-invasion bombardment, 42 ships and almost 200 gunboats inundated the area immediately behind Hagushi's beaches with mammoth shells, while 500 naval aircraft crisscrossed the skies strafing the landing zones. As that hellish prelude ended, the 1st and 6th Marines smashed ashore on the northern edges of the beaches while the Army's 7th and 96th Divisions hit the southern portion.

Private First Class Eugene Sledge read a sinister implication into the lack of opposition. If a strong Japanese presence existed on Okinawa, where were they? Sooner or later they would lash back with a vengeance. An unopposed landing simply meant bitter fighting someplace else, at a later date.

For a while, though, Marines took comfort that they remained alive. Their luck continued to hold as units advanced inland toward their first objectives.

"This is hard to believe," wrote *Time* Magazine's Pacific correspondent, Robert Sherrod, who had covered the Marine landings at Tarawa, Saipan, and Iwo Jima. Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, commander of the amphibious forces at Okinawa, jubilantly radioed his superior at Pearl Harbor, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, "I may be crazy but it looks like the Japanese have quit the war, at least in this sector." A more sober Nimitz replied, "Delete all after 'crazy.'"

By nightfall, 60,000 men and their supporting tanks, artillery, and supplies dug in on a beachhead 5,000 yards deep and 15,000 yards wide. The smooth drive across Ishikawa Isthmus continued the next day, when elements of the 1st Marine Division advanced within sight of Okinawa's eastern coast. Marines secured the coast the following day, which severed Ushijima's main element in the south from his men in northern Okinawa. In four days of rapid advance, American forces seized what planners had expected would take three weeks. "I've already lived longer than I thought I



**BELOW: A U.S. warship unleashes a barrage of rockets against Japanese positions on April 1, 1945. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Colonel Harold Roberts of the 22nd Marines and Lt. Col. Claire W. Shisler of 3rd Battalion, 22nd Marines, confer on Okinawa.**

ringed complex of natural fortification lines. Hills and 300-foot ridges look down on dirt roads that meander through valleys, fashioning perfect killing grounds for Ushijima's soldiers and artillery when American units stepped along these routes.

Ushijima anchored three parallel defense lines on ancient Shuri Castle, which from its lofty hilltop position guarded the approaches to a six-mile-wide opening into southern Okinawa. From the castle, a western flank ran through the ridges toward Naha and the sea,

tanks, then dispatching Japanese soldiers with satchel charges and burning rags to approach the tanks in suicidal runs. Other infantry would shoot or bayonet American tank crews as they exited their burning vehicles. Murderous fire from hundreds of caves and gun emplacements would then decimate the exposed American infantry.

Ushijima placed two crack divisions, 24,000 troops from the 62nd and 24th Divisions, along the main defense line, backed by the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade, one tank regiment,

## General Ushijima was supported by two capable subordinates on Okinawa.

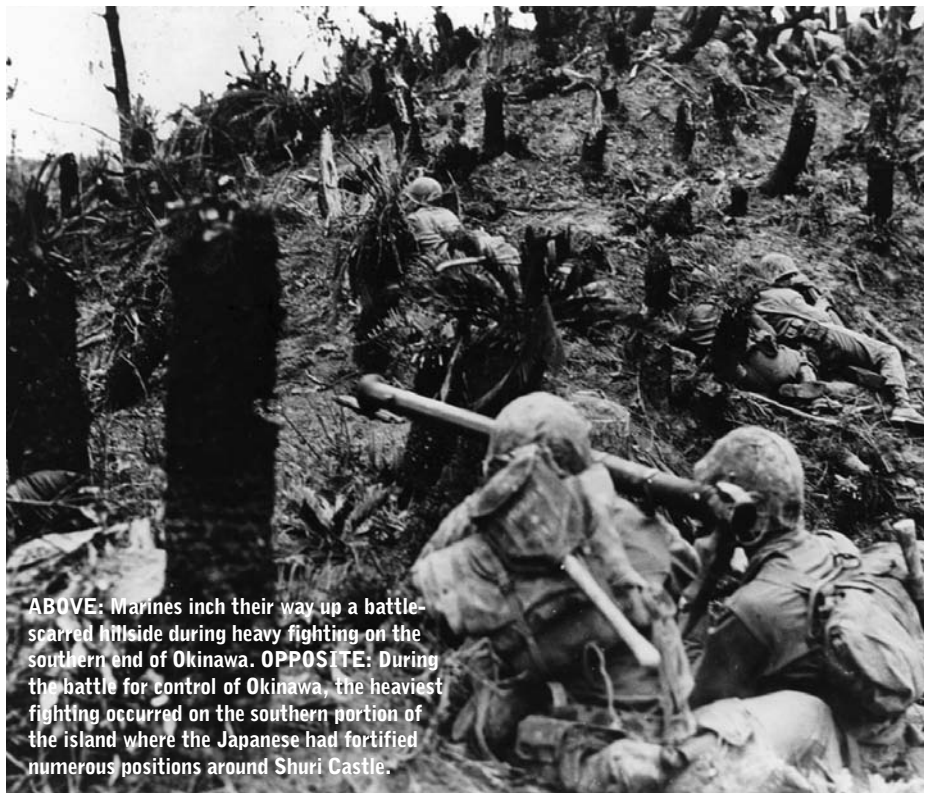
Lieutenant General Ushijima heavily depended upon two staff officers who, although differing in temperament, formed along with the general as effective a commanding trio as the Marines faced in the Pacific.

Lieutenant General Isamu Cho, his chief of staff, was the antithesis of Ushijima. The 51-year-old loved fine liquor and beautiful women almost as much as he enjoyed his participation in murky military plots. In 1930, Cho joined a secret Japanese Army clique called the *Sakurakai*, or Cherry Society, an avid patriotic organization with a deep-seated hatred for Western influences upon Japan. One year later Cho helped devise a plot to murder the prime minister. After it dissolved in the initial stages, Cho developed a second plan calling for aircraft to bomb the prime minister's residence. Fanaticism proved his undoing when the *Kempeitai*, the Japanese military police, arrested Cho for boasting he would personally stab the Emperor if that was what it took to make the operation succeed.

Cho played a major role in the infamous "Rape of Nanking" in 1937. On Cho's orders, thousands of Chinese prisoners perished. The next year, he inflamed already sensitive relations with the Soviet Union when he attacked a Soviet force without orders.

Once ensconced on Okinawa, Cho dared the United States to invade the island. The fiery Cho brought a fervor to his post that complemented the more sedate Ushijima.

The second staff officer advising Ushijima, 42-year-old Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, had traveled more extensively than his two cohorts and thus understood the Western world. After graduating from the Japanese Military Academy in 1923, Yahara attended the Japanese War College before spending 10 months at Fort Moultrie in the United States. Stints in successful campaigns in China, Thailand, Malaya, and Burma honed Yahara's knowledge of strategy and tactics, and he arrived on Okinawa with a reputation as a superb tactician and thinker. He provided Ushijima with the calculated intelligence that the tempestuous Cho lacked. □



**ABOVE:** Marines inch their way up a battle-scarred hillside during heavy fighting on the southern end of Okinawa. **OPPOSITE:** During the battle for control of Okinawa, the heaviest fighting occurred on the southern portion of the island where the Japanese had fortified numerous positions around Shuri Castle.

would," remarked one relieved infantryman from the 7th Division.

Encouraged by the campaign's surprising ease, Marines erected what they considered life's amenities—mess halls, showers, and an outdoor motion picture screen. General Buckner sent the 1st and 6th Marines veering north, while the three Army divisions turned south to look for the enemy.

Sledge proved correct, though. Sooner or later the Marines' good fortune had to end. One of the places it came to a crashing halt was a small mound of dirt bearing a fairytale name—Sugar Loaf Hill.

While the Marines located and engaged the enemy in the Motobu Peninsula in the north, their Army cohorts stalled in front of the first of Ushijima's three defense lines in the Shuri region. Once the Marines completed their mission, Buckner brought them south to aid in puncturing the Shuri Line. The 6th Marine Division entered the lines against Ushijima's western seaward flank, while the 1st relieved the weary Army 27th Infantry Division on the eastern flank. Buckner had divided the island into two combat zones, the Marine western half and the Army eastern half. Two crack foes stood opposite each other about to embark on a costly campaign staged on Okinawa's rugged ridges.

While Marines moved into position along the Shuri Line, Japanese commanders debated their next step. A disastrous Japanese counterattack

on May 3 forced Ushijima to withdraw his forces to the second of his defensive lines, an eight-mile path winding from Yonabaru on the east coast, through torturous ridges near Shuri Castle, on into the port of Naha on Okinawa's western coast. The terrain along this line bore misnomers that sounded more like places out of theme parks. Chocolate Drop Hill, Zebra Hill, Sugar Hill, Wart Hill, and Sugar Loaf Hill dominated Ushijima's second line, but their rugged land features, shrouding hundreds of Japanese machine guns and mortars, soon tested Marine and Army valor and transformed the childlike names into words synonymous with death, pain, and terror.

Buckner planned to throw 85,000 men in five divisions against this line, partly as a response to Nimitz's pleas to speed up the ground operation so his ships could sooner depart the dangerous waters off Okinawa. While the 96th Infantry Division tried to swing around Ushijima's eastern flank at Yonabaru and the 6th Marine Division plunged toward Naha, the Army's 77th Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Division would advance in the middle toward Shuri Castle. If units turned either flank, they had orders to dash across Okinawa and trap Ushijima's men.

When Buckner's general offensive opened at 7 AM on May 11, the 3rd Battalion seized high ground near the Asato River that commanded a view of Naha. Delaying for a time an advance

against the town, Marines swung south and east toward hilly terrain between Naha and Shuri, hoping to encircle Ushijima's defense system. The astute Japanese commander had planned for such a move and placed a surprise directly in the path of the 6th Marine Division; the fortifications at Sugar Loaf Hill.

How could something so ordinary looking possibly cause such problems, wondered many 6th Division Marines as they approached Sugar Loaf, their objective. Shuri Heights, rising precipitously only a few hundred yards to their rear, appeared to dwarf what most Marines disregarded as a minor obstacle. A brief action, at most, might be needed before the division closed in on Ushijima's central strongpoint at Shuri Castle.

The clay elevation hardly inspired terror. Sparsely dotted with shrubs and trees, Sugar Loaf's 300 yards of frontage rose to only about 75 feet before leveling off into a thin crest. However, beneath its serene veneer, 2,000 Japanese defenders waited patiently to deliver deadly blows with hundreds of machine guns, mortars, grenades, and satchel charges, for the diminutive hill anchored the western end of Ushijima's main defense line and stood as sentinel to both Naha and Shuri.

Combined with Horseshoe Hill to its south and Half Moon Hill to its southeast, Sugar Loaf stood as the point of a lethal arrow thrust from Shuri directly at the approaching Marines, who would be forced to advance across level terrain before even placing foot on one of the slopes. Ushijima, who intended to stymie his foe on the flat ground and the slopes, manned the trio of hills with fresh defenders from the 15th Independent Regiment of the 44th Brigade, led by Colonel Seiko Mita, and turned the elevations into intricate, tunneled complexes bristling with machine guns and mortar nests. The Japanese commander so intricately carved out his defenses that should American forces attack any one spot Shuri Heights artillery and converging fire from all three hills would tear into their ranks. Every foot of Sugar Loaf had been gridded and registered; every possible approach was covered. At the first sign of the enemy, the somnolent hill would boom to life with devastating gunfire that would decimate unsuspecting platoons and companies.

It did not take long for Sugar Loaf to stamp its imprint on the combatants. A weeklong pattern of strife on Sugar Loaf left Marines haggard and stunned. Through withering gunfire that depleted their ranks with each step, Marines advanced up the hill's slopes or even rushed to Sugar Loaf's crest, only to fall back in the face of ferocious opposition. Fifty men

might reach the incline; fifteen would scurry back, bloodied and dazed.

Company G of the 22nd Regiment's 2nd Battalion, commanded by Captain Owen T. Stebbins, kicked off seven days of agony with an infantry-tank assault on the afternoon of May 12. Confident that a speedy operation lay before them, Company G encountered minimal gunfire in its first 900 yards. Suddenly, all hell broke loose as small arms fire, machine guns, mortars, and artillery ripped into their ranks and pinned down two of the three platoons before reaching Sugar Loaf's slopes. Captain Stebbins and Lieutenant Dale W. Bair led 40 men of the remaining platoon toward the hill, but before they advanced 100 yards, 28 Marines fell to Japanese gunfire.

Stebbins collapsed when machine-gun bullets riddled his legs. Bair assumed command, but before he could shout his first order, Japanese bullets shredded his left arm. With the limb hanging useless, Bair gathered 25 Marines and, after grabbing a light machine gun with his good hand, resumed the attack. Upon reaching Sugar Loaf's crest with 10 men, the six-foot,

two-inch tall, 225-pound officer boldly stood atop the hill and sprayed the enemy with machine-gun fire.

Bair's total disdain for danger stirred his men. One Marine stated, "It was impossible to be afraid when you saw him standing up there." Sergeant Edmund DeMar claimed Bair looked like a Hollywood actor in those popular war movies where a solitary soldier fires courageously at a swarm of enemy. "And what a sight he was, standing there, all alone, at the top of Sugar Loaf."

Two more bullets slammed into Bair before he went down. One tore a chunk of flesh out of his leg, and the other ripped away a portion of his buttocks. DeMar, bleeding profusely from a thigh wound, saw nothing but dead or wounded Marines all about him. In the midst of the carnage and noise, one sound haunted DeMar. A young Marine, wounded and frightened, cried for his mother and father.

The dwindling number of survivors on the hot summit realized they had to abandon Sugar Loaf to avoid annihilation. Under cover of a protective smoke screen, Marines started crawl-



## Even veteran fighting men sometimes suffered battle fatigue at Okinawa.

Because of the severe conditions at Sugar Loaf and elsewhere on Okinawa, the fighting produced an alarmingly high number of battle fatigue cases. Constant vigilance against nighttime infiltrators, cold, rain, the unbelievable mud, and most importantly, the prolonged volume and accuracy of Japanese artillery taxed the Marines to such a point that some went beyond their endurance level. A special field hospital set up at the end of April to treat battle fatigue cases quickly became inundated with more than 3,000 patients.

Private First Class Eugene Sledge watched one Marine, a veteran of the bitter fighting at Peleliu, dissolve under the strain of combat at Okinawa. The Marine lapsed into sullen silence for about an hour, then burst out yelling that he was going to charge a nearby Japanese machine-gun nest and kill every occupant. He rose to start his sprint, but Sledge and a sergeant, realizing the man was embarking on a suicidal attempt, tripped him up. After the Marine collapsed, he wet his pants and cried uncontrollably. The broken Marine still sobbed as a corpsman gently led him away.

"We had just seen a brave man crack up completely and lose all control of himself, even to the point of losing his desire to live," wrote Sledge after the war.

Some men doubted the validity of battle fatigue, instead questioning the soldier's

manhood. Brig. Gen. Oliver P. Smith, Marine deputy chief of staff for the Tenth Army, at first dismissed most battle fatigue cases as "a good chance to get a five-day rest if your conscience was not too active." He contended that Marines knew that once they were behind the lines they could enjoy rest, hot food, and hot baths.

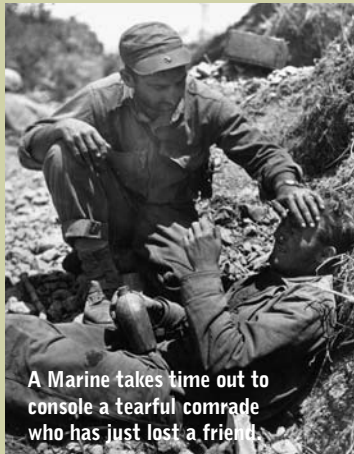
In May, however, General Smith investigated a psychiatric hospital where physicians allowed him to observe their treatment to learn more about the issue. One man was brought in who had been recommended for a Silver Star for remaining at his machine gun during one particularly fierce enemy counterattack. After the action ended, Japanese bodies lay on all sides of his post. The man, still trembling even though resting in a hospital, felt such horrid guilt over killing so many humans that he snapped. Doctors told a moved General Smith that the man simply needed a respite from the battlefield and would most likely return to duty in a few days.

Another Marine had been evacuated to the hospital,

babbling and trembling after a mortar shell exploded in his foxhole. When he finally stopped shaking after several days, doctors, convinced that something deeper than the mortar shell lay behind the man's inability to function, attempted to expose the reason. After injecting a solution into his arm that, while leaving him conscious, removed his inhibitions about talking, a physician asked questions that gradually took the man back to the time of the shelling. As they spoke, the doctor suddenly stamped his feet, smacked the wall with his fists, and screamed, "Mortar! Mortar! Mortar!" The patient instantly began shouting, "Dig deeper! Dig deeper!" fell to his knees, and acted as if he were digging a hole in the corner of the room.

When the Marine finally calmed down, the doctor asked if he read the Bible and whether he knew what the Bible said about killing. The man replied that the Bible condemned killing. The doctor wondered if that included Japanese, whereupon the Marine ground his teeth and muttered, "Kill 'em all." He told the doctor that the Japanese had killed his buddies and so he had to kill them.

The doctor later estimated that this Marine faced a 50 percent chance of recovery. General Smith, once hardcore in his reaction to battle fatigue cases, departed with an increased compassion for such men. □



A Marine takes time out to console a tearful comrade who has just lost a friend.

ing down the slopes toward their lines. DeMar, who labeled the predicament on Sugar Loaf a "screwed-up mess," told another Marine who evinced concern over DeMar's wounds that he would "crawl all the way to Madison, Connecticut, if I have to."

After a short distance, a tank driver lifted DeMar to the top of his vehicle, where he applied a bandage to the wound, but he, too, fell to enemy gunfire and slumped unconscious beside DeMar. As the tank lumbered cautiously down the hostile, smoke-enveloped slopes, the injured driver's blood trickled onto DeMar.

"What a ride!" declared DeMar. "I was covered with blood, a lot from my leg wound and a tremendous amount from the tanker. We must have looked like something out of a horror movie."

Company G repeatedly stormed Sugar Loaf throughout May 12, even seizing its summit on three occasions, but each time Japanese mortars and hand grenades drove them back. When nightfall arrived, the hill remained in Japanese hands, while Marines tended to their wounded. DeMar's platoon suffered 50 percent casualties, while only 75 of 215 men in Company G were able to man their posts that night. The most demoralizing aspect was that, despite the appalling losses, Marines faced further attempts in the days to come. Sugar Loaf had to be taken, which meant that more young Americans would perish.

Marines repeated the gruesome pattern over the next six days. Elements of the 22nd Regiment again reached Sugar Loaf's summit on May 13, but artillery fire from Shuri Heights and potent Japanese counterattacks again drove them off.

Both the 22nd and 29th Regiments attacked the hill the next day. Two companies of Marines gained the summit by early afternoon, but heavy enfilading fire forced them back down. The commander of the 2nd Battalion, Lt. Col. Horatio C. Woodhouse, Jr., ordered a late afternoon assault which stalled on Sugar Loaf's slopes and stranded 44 Marines amid punishing fire that killed or wounded more than a hundred fellow Marines.

As Japanese soldiers rolled hand grenades from Sugar Loaf's summit down on the Marines below, Major Henry A. Courtney, Jr., the 2nd Battalion's executive officer, rallied the small group of attackers with stirring words and bold example. Angry about being caught on Sugar Loaf's slope, Courtney figured he and his men stood in one of those desperate situations men in combat sometimes find themselves where, since they were too weak to defend their position, they may as well attack.

Marines advance on the run. Two carry communications wire and radio equipment to stay in contact with other units.



“Men,” Courtney began, “if we don’t take the top of this hill tonight, the Japs will be down here to drive us away in the morning.” He explained that when they reached the summit, he wanted every man to throw as many hand grenades as he could to pin down the enemy, then dig in for a long stay. After radioing for mortar support, Courtney asked for volunteers to go with him.

Courtney started up with 44 Marines, hurling grenades into caves as he hustled by. Once at the top, Courtney’s group dug in for what they knew would be a bloody nighttime slugfest for control of Sugar Loaf. Enemy soldiers, masked by the darkness, crawled so close to Courtney’s crude perimeter that Marines could hear the Japanese grunt as they heaved

grenades up at them. Around midnight, Courtney perceived movement on the Japanese-controlled side that alerted him to a possible banzai charge. Before the enemy could attack, Courtney hurriedly organized his men and launched a hasty preemptive strike over Sugar Loaf’s crest.

The dangerous move, possibly considered foolish in calmer struggles and safer climes, became typical on Sugar Loaf, where men took risks they normally might never ponder. One Marine who witnessed the attack later said, “Oh, I think he [Courtney] might have gone a little wacky but, you know, that happens. It seems like you’d spend an eternity trying to take a place like Sugar Loaf, watching so many of your buddies getting shot up so badly. Then

you think the hell with it and you do something you wouldn’t normally do.”

As Courtney and his ragged band drove the Japanese back, a hand grenade exploded near Courtney that inflicted a fatal neck wound on the brave leader. Marines, upset at the loss of their commander, covered Courtney’s body with a poncho and continued battling to hold their position, but as the long night wore on, mortars and sniper fire reduced the number of able Marines to 15. Sadly, the next morning they once again yielded Sugar Loaf’s crest.

A Japanese counterattack on at 7:30 AM May 15 forced the few remaining Marines off Sugar Loaf and crashed into Marine lines at the hill’s base, where the battered 2nd Battalion fought bitterly to stem the attack. Six hours

of hand-to-hand combat produced valiant scenes. Wounded Corporal John A. Spazzaferro maintained his fire until he killed the Japanese who shot him, then slumped a short distance from his injured platoon leader, Lieutenant Edgar C. Greene. The two, out of contact with the rest of the Marines, lay as still as possible to fool the Japanese that swarmed on all sides. With eyes shut tight and hearts pounding, they heard four enemy soldiers approach. One stepped toward Greene, removed his wristwatch, then reached into Greene's jacket pocket in search of any valuables. The Japanese quickly yanked his hand back out when he felt a sticky substance—Greene's blood—and rushed away to clean it off. Greene and Spazzaferro lay still for an entire day in Japanese-held territory until the Marine line again reached them and they could be evacuated.

The brutal fighting shocked even veteran Marines. Private Dean Klingenhagen, pinned down by heavy mortar and machine-gun fire, heard a muffled explosion behind him. He turned to see the blackened, almost unrecognizable body of his platoon leader, who had been hit directly by a mortar shell. In moments another Marine, moaning in pain, crawled by Klingenhagen with his right foot blown off.

The Americans battled for 10 hours to halt the Japanese counterattack. Marines lobbed so

many hand grenades at the enemy that part of the terrain on which they battled was labeled Hand Grenade Ridge. Corporal Jack Castignola worked with machine-like precision, pulling the pin of one grenade and rolling it down on the enemy while reaching for another. Castignola, a future high school state champion football coach, also shot and killed a huge enemy soldier who "would have made a good end on any football team." Over six feet tall and weighing more than 200 pounds, the Japanese soldier walked near Marine lines, dressed in a Marine uniform to disguise his identity. At first Castignola paid little attention, but then he noticed the man's long rifle and unusual helmet—telltale signs of a Japanese. "He sagged like a loose rope the first time I shot," recalled Castignola.

In three days of fighting, the 22nd Regiment suffered a 60 percent casualty rate. Its 2nd Battalion alone lost more than 400 men, requiring superiors to replace it with the 3rd Battalion. In spite of the carnage, the Marines held their positions through thunderous artillery and mortar fire the night of May 15-16.

The Marines renewed their assault on Sugar Loaf at 8:30 AM on May 16, the fifth straight day of ebb and flow combat. While the 29th Regiment scaled partially up Half Moon, the 22nd focused on Sugar Loaf. Supported by covering fire from the 29th, a bat-

talion of Marines edged around Sugar Loaf's left side late in the afternoon in hopes of dashing up the slopes but ran into devastating enemy fire, including artillery from Shuri Heights, that pounded their left flank and rear. Four separate times Marines rushed up to gain Sugar Loaf's summit. Four separate times they withdrew.

Combat correspondent Elvis Lane viewed the carnage at Sugar Loaf and wrote, "Corpses litter the gray, muddy landscape. There are numerous severed arms and legs. And an occasional head. I wonder how many besides me are trying not to look at the dead. Some of the corpses seem to be grinning. The flesh has rotted away from the skull and the teeth are bared. I am afraid that if I stare, one of these grinning dead might ask: 'Don't you belong with us?' And another might make this monstrous prediction: 'The war isn't over! You'll soon be joining us!'"

The macabre drill—up the slopes, back down the slopes, more Marine dead littering the ground—continued the next morning, but this time a noticeable crack finally appeared in Ushijima's defenses. After an effective one-two combination of a heavy battleship bombardment followed by carrier-based air strikes, 6th Division commander Maj. Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd moved the 29th Regiment through a small depression running east of Sugar Loaf.

## The encounter of a father and son on Okinawa produced two poignant moments during the brutal campaign.

One of the most heart wrenching moments to occur on Okinawa involved a family with a proud Marine heritage. Colonel Francis I. Fenton enlisted in the Marine Corps in August 1917. He gradually rose through the ranks until he became division engineer officer of the 1st Marine Division in July 1944. With this unit, Fenton won a Bronze Star for duty at Peleliu before landing on Okinawa.

While Colonel Fenton advanced to higher command, his younger son, Michael, enlisted in the Marine Corps on August 17, 1943, and joined B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division—the same division in which his father commanded the engineers. Report-

edly turning down a commission so he could fight at the front, Michael served as a scout-sniper at Okinawa.

Father and son met once during the fighting when their paths crossed at a partially destroyed Okinawan farmhouse. After exchanging news from home, including information on Michael's older brother, Francis, Jr., who had been commissioned a Marine officer in 1941, the two family members returned to their work.

They would never talk again. On May 7, 1945, while beating back a Japanese counterattack not far from Sugar Loaf, 19-year-old Pfc. Michael Fenton was killed. When his father received the bitter news, he traveled to the

site of his son's death and knelt down to pray over the flag-draped body, a scene that produced one of the Pacific war's most touching photographs. Upon arising, Colonel Fenton stared at the bodies of other Marine dead and said, "Those poor souls. They didn't have their fathers here."

After the burial, Colonel Fenton returned to his headquarters and wrote a brief note to his wife, Mary, in San Diego. The soldier then resurfaced. Fenton fixed his attention on a large map hanging in his headquarters, studied it closely for a time, then said to his subordinate, "We'd better double the guard around No. 5 bridge. The Nips may try to blow it." The war was back on.

Mary Fenton learned of her son's death before receiving her husband's letter. In fact, she experienced a bittersweet two days when, on Wednesday, a telegram arrived from the Marine Corps commandant informing her of Michael's death. The very next day came news that her husband had been awarded a second Bronze Star.

Mrs. Fenton told reporters she was proud that Michael had done his duty as a Marine. She quoted a recent letter from him in which the youth wrote that he "dedicated my life to my country" and that he was "prepared to die."

Both Colonel Fenton and his older son survived the war. Colonel Fenton died on July 3, 1978. □



Once safely through, the regiment split into two forces and attacked Sugar Loaf and Half Moon. One company rushed Sugar Loaf's eastern slope and reached the top, but another fierce counterattack toppled the Marines back down the slope.

The company commander, Captain Alan Meissner, ordered his men to fix bayonets and took them to the top again, but he also had to pull back in the face of savage hand-to-hand fighting. After a third attempt failed, frustrated Marines finally reached the summit late in the afternoon and successfully repelled a counterattack. They dug in to hold the crest, but in a cruel twist of fate the Marines ran out of ammunition. After suffering 160 casualties, the Marines had to again yield the crest.

On the positive side, a battalion seized a large section of Half Moon Hill, which meant that Marines could count on increased fire support for the next day's attempt. General Shepherd saw an opportunity to conclude the nasty business at Sugar Loaf.

An intricate ruse worked to perfection on May 18. The commander of D Company, 29th Regiment, Captain Howard L. Mabie, sent a group of Marines against Half Moon and Horseshoe to divert enemy machine-gun and mortar fire away from Sugar Loaf. While the

Japanese turned their weapons on this group, a second force of Marines, backed by tanks, hit Sugar Loaf's right flank. As the Japanese defenders shifted men to that sector, Mabie dispatched a third group of men and tanks around the left flank to Sugar Loaf's rear, then sent 80 men under 1st Lt. Francis X. Smith up the forward slope. When Smith and his men reached the summit, they tossed grenades on the Japanese from above while Mabie's tanks fired point-blank from below.

Ushijima's defenders had no choice but to either abandon their positions with near suicidal retreats through the Marines, or to rush the Americans with banzai efforts. One group streaked out of a cave, explosives strapped to their backs, but quickly disappeared in a violent explosion when Marine machine gun bullets ignited the satchel charges. While this occurred, Marines gunned down fleeing Japanese with abandon. Lieutenant Donald R. Pinnow watched while "the Japs began running down from the crest. There must have been 150 of them. We fired and blew them all over the landscape."

Those actions ended the fight for Sugar Loaf, which finally fell silent after so many days of chaos. Weary Marines maintained a tight vigil, but after seven maddening days the scarred,

churned elevation was theirs. Fighting for what had at first appeared to be a harmless accumulation of dirt and rock, 6th Division Marines suffered 2,662 men killed or wounded. They lost another 1,289 men evacuated because of either exhaustion or battle fatigue. Although Ushijima continued to harass the Marines until both Horseshoe and Half Moon Hills were secured, Marines never again relinquished their hold on Sugar Loaf.

Correspondent Lane's reaction typified how privates and captains, corporals and majors felt now that they had survived the weeklong bloodbath. Lane thought that the fighting on Sugar Loaf "must be the bloodiest triumph in Corps history. Thank God there are no signs, none whatsoever, that the enemy is again rushing troops to try and recapture this hill. I've lost count of how many times Sugar Loaf was seized by us, by them, and how many days we've been here. The silence convinces us that Sugar Loaf really does belong to the 29th." □

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*John Wukovits is the author of Pacific Alamo, the story of the battle for Wake Island. He has previously written Devotion To Duty, a biography of Admiral Clifton A.F. Sprague, hero of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, published by the Naval Institute Press.*

## Revelations from Japanese records shed new light on the epic Battle of Midway.

BY MASON B. WEBB

**L**ATELY, MANY OF THE SCORES OF BOOKS PUBLISHED ON THE TOPIC OF WORLD WAR II PURPORT to be the “untold story” of such-and-such battle, campaign, or event; very few of them are actually untold stories, and most are merely the rehashing of the familiar. However, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2005, 613 pp., photographs, maps, schematics, charts, index, bibliography, \$35.00, hardcover) by Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully truly lives up to its subtitle.

Basing their weighty volume on a considerable trove of heretofore untranslated primary-source Japanese documents, Parshall and Tully, two well-known authors and scholars of the Pacific War, have done a remarkable job in correcting many of the myths and half-truths that have attached themselves over the decades to the 1942 Battle of Midway.

Seeing the battle primarily through Japanese eyes, Parshall and Tully have crafted a truly original and exhaustively-researched work that provides a full dimension to the pivotal battle.

Numerous maps show how the various phases of the battle developed, and many photos from Japanese sources paint a more complete picture than ever before.

As noted naval expert John B. Lundstrom says in the foreword, “I was truly shocked to learn from Jon and Tony that much of what [Commander Mitsuo] Fuchida wrote about the Battle of Midway (and some on Pearl Harbor for that matter) has been debunked in Japan,

where a whole corpus of historical thought on Midway remained untapped in the West.... *Shattered Sword* is without doubt the most significant and balanced treatment of the Japanese side of the Battle of Midway, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.”

This is not “revisionist” history in the sense that it is iconoclastic. But *Shattered Sword* does an important job of revising what we in the West for too long thought we knew about the Battle of Midway.

Much of what the West knows about Japanese carrier operations at Midway was based on Fuchida’s 1953 book which, Parshall and Tully point out, was seriously flawed by his desire to color the facts for domestic consumption and put the best face possible on disaster. As the authors say, “After all, Japan had just suffered an enormous national humiliation, one



U.S. Navy

Japanese carriers and heavy ships fall victim to a devastating U.S. air assault in this rendering of the Battle of Midway by American artist Griffith Bailey Coale.

particularly devastating to a society that viewed itself as uniquely superior.... Some sense of national pride might be regained by revealing some moments of nobility within that defeat.”

One can only hope that Parshall and Tully are working on future volumes that will bring a similarly new and fresh perspective to the rest of the Pacific campaign.

*Louis Johnson and the Arming of America*, by Keith D. McFarland and David L. Roll, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2005, 452 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, \$23.00, hardcover.

It is probably safe to say that few post-war Americans are familiar with the name Louis Arthur Johnson. All but unknown today, he was, during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, one of the most powerful figures in America.

Described variously as arrogant, rude, abrasive, insensitive, intelligent, gregarious, articulate, and eternally optimistic, Louis Johnson antagonized those both above and below him, thereby sowing the seeds of his own downfall.

Big and beefy (240 pounds), Johnson, a college boxing champion and World War I veter-

eran, came to Roosevelt's attention in the mid-1930s after serving as head of the American Legion. The first third of the book deals with Johnson's relationship with Roosevelt and his efforts to alert the isolationist nation to the growing threat he saw building in Japan, Germany, and Italy. From the time he started his job as FDR's Assistant Secretary of War in the summer of 1937, he did all he could to mobilize America for the coming war. But in June 1940, Johnson was released from his duties as FDR's chief war planner and appointed the president's special envoy to India—a task that turned out to be frustrating and thankless.

After the war, Johnson returned to his life as a lawyer, but his political career was soon resurrected. In 1948, when no one stepped forward to take charge of fundraising for Harry Truman's faltering presidential campaign, Johnson volunteered; his efforts rescued the campaign from certain defeat. As a reward, Truman made Johnson Secretary of Defense (replacing the mentally ill James Forrestal, who committed suicide) from 1949-1950.

A fanatical budget slasher under Truman, Johnson had the heads of the armed services howling in protest. Only the start of the Korean War in June 1950 brought a halt to his fiscal

austerity crusade; Johnson was suddenly faced with having to hurriedly rebuild the military in order to throw back the Reds.

While his tenure as Secretary of Defense was brief, his accomplishments were many. He was deeply involved in the establishing of NATO, as well boosting America's atomic arsenal and championing the development of the hydrogen bomb.

But ambition got the better of him (he wanted to be president). His bitter feud with Secretary of State Dean Acheson was legendary, and Truman suspected Johnson was disloyal, firing him just two days before Douglas MacArthur's bold invasion of Inchon, Korea, that turned defeat into, if not victory, at least a stalemate that prevented defeat.

Delving into the dusty archives at Steptoe and Johnson (Johnson's Washington D.C. law firm

canal in August 1942, to the blood-letting on the threshold of Japan—Okinawa—in April 1945, *Pacific Warriors* chronologically follows each grim Marine campaign on America's road to Tokyo.

Hundreds of superb quality photographs, an astonishingly high number of them reproduced here for the first time—and more than a few not for the squeamish—provide the reader with a Marine's eye view of combat. Hammel's prose also details the enormous obstacles the Marines had to overcome on each of their amphibious assaults.

In the chapter on Peleliu, he writes, “Most, perhaps all, of the battalion's medium tanks were knocked out at one time or another during the campaign, but most were speedily returned to duty by expert, dedicated repair crews. The tanks made all the difference on

Peleliu. The infantry was no less magnificent. It took utmost teamwork and bravery to advance on hidden, mutually supported bunkers and caves, and these were traits the Marine infantry possessed in abundance. With or without the support of the tanks, the infantry steadily reduced bunker after bunker, cave after cave, and defensive locale after defensive

locale. The price was exorbitant, but the gains from D+1 onward were considerable.”

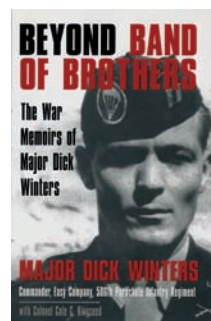
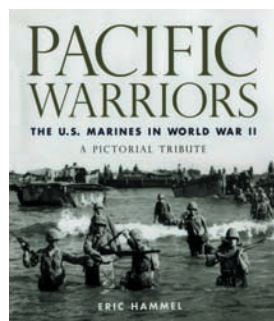
The legend of the Marine Corps was written in blood and fire across the islands of the Pacific, and Hammel's pictorial tribute is indeed a loving tribute.

*Beyond Band of Brothers*, by Major Dick Winters (with Colonel Cole C. Kingseed), Berkeley Caliber, New York, 2006, 320 pp., photographs, maps, index, \$24.95, softcover.

Dick Winters is a name that anyone familiar with Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* and the HBO television series of the same name will instantly recognize. He was the commander of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. At long last, he has published his memoirs—and the wait has been worth it.

Here are the eyewitness accounts of some of the toughest, most storied battles of the European phase of World War II written by the officer who led the way. Unsparing in his view of combat, courage, and cowardice, Winters tells it like it was.

His descriptions of being under fire are riveting. Describing the flight across the English Channel and the jump into Normandy, Win-



where co-author Roll works as a lawyer), the authors have crafted a very readable biography of the only civilian who shaped the national security and military preparedness of both the Roosevelt and Truman presidencies to meet the exigencies of both World War II and the Korean conflict. The book sheds considerable light on the behind-the-scenes machinations within the corridors of power.

*Pacific Warriors: The U.S. Marines in World War II—A Pictorial Tribute*, by Eric Hammel, Zenith Press, St. Paul, MN, 2005, 256 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$40.00, hardcover.

The acclaimed author of 28 books of military history has brought his expertise to bear on the U.S. Marine Corps' entire combat history in the Pacific.

Opening with two chapters on the early days of the Corps and its battle experiences in the Spanish-American War and subsequent engagements in Mexico, Nicaragua, and the Caribbean until the last days of peace in December 1941, Hammel lays the groundwork of the horrendous Pacific island battles to follow in this handsome, oversized (11 x 12.5) volume. From the invasion of Guadal-

ters writes, “As the Germans illuminated the night with searchlights and anti-aircraft fire, the pilots naturally began taking evasive action. We came in too fast and too low. I did not realize it at the time, but the plane carrying Lieutenant Meehan was hit and plunged toward the earth, killing Easy Company’s entire headquarters section save myself... On the outskirts of Ste. Mere-Eglise, I saw a large fire, which turned out to be a downed plane... I had lost my weapon. When I landed, the only weapon I had was a trench knife that I had placed in my boot. I stuck the knife in the ground before I went to work on my chute. This was a hell of a way to begin a war.”

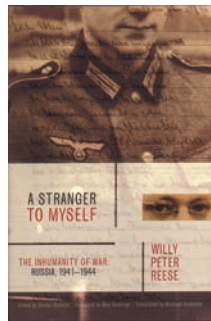
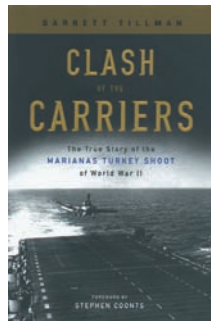
Also riveting is his disdain for those rear echelon types who kept out of harm’s way but puffed up their own resumes to make themselves seem like heroes.

He recalls the day he met SHAEF’s combat historian S.L.A. Marshall gathering airborne war stories that subsequently would be published in his book, *Night Drop*. “[Marshall] alleged that less than 20 percent of the [airborne] soldiers actually fired their weapons in combat [on D-day in Normandy]. Marshall obviously had not visited Easy Company, because all its troopers had been decisively engaged. Moreover, Marshall concentrated on the experiences of West Point officers and paid scant attention to those front-line officers who had not graduated from the U.S. Military Academy.... My personal encounter with Marshall was relatively brief. He pulled me into a tent with all the senior officers to discuss Easy Company’s role on D-Day. There was a hell of a lot of brass in that tent, all anxious for Marshall to make them famous. I couldn’t have cared less.... As a result, Marshall didn’t say anything special about Easy Company—and what he did say was totally fabricated.”

What Winters has written is not fabricated. *Beyond Band of Brothers* is destined to become an instant classic of men at war, ranking with Charles MacDonald’s *Company Commander*. Run, don’t walk, to get this one.

***The Final Hours: The Luftwaffe Plot Against Göring***, by Johannes Steinhoff, Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2005, 220 pp., photographs, map, index, \$19.95, softcover.

It is easy, given the timespan of history, to regard the Nazi regime as all marching in lock-step, following their beloved Führer without question. Of course, such a picture would be false and few books illustrate that fact better than Steinhoff’s. The Luftwaffe colonel’s searing memoir paints a behind-the-scenes portrait of the German Air Force, at least in the dying



months of the war, as being disillusioned, doubtful of victory, and determined to rid themselves of their leader, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, whom they were convinced was leading Germany and the Luftwaffe to disaster.

Steinhoff, a heavily decorated, high-scoring ace, commanded an elite group of pilots trained to fly the world’s first combat jet fighter, the Me-262. In the futile hope of forestalling final defeat in the air in the autumn of 1944, Göring had sent the small fleet of jet fighters on hopeless missions to shoot down the daily waves of B-17 bombers that were turning Germany into a charnel house. Steinhoff and other senior air leaders became determined to depose their commander for, among other things, his failure to properly employ the Me-262s for which the Allies had no defense.

Steinhoff recounts the pressure of fighting for an evil regime and how an unstable command fostered disloyalty and conspiracy. His book reveals the inner turmoil of his struggle to survive and the temerity of his fellow pilots to risk punishment for speaking out about a cause that they considered hopeless and a commander they considered incompetent—a commander who branded his best pilots “cowards.”

At last the pilots rebelled. After reciting a long list of grievances, Steinhoff confronted his immediate superior and demanded in no uncertain terms that Göring be dismissed and replaced. “I’d said it,” notes Steinhoff. “The last sentence rang in my ears as if I had shouted it at the top of my voice. Something had just occurred that Wehrmacht regulations made no provisions for: a colonel had demanded that his ultimate military superior be removed from his post! Von Greim could have had us arrested and court-martialed for mutiny. To my surprise, though, his face betrayed something more like amazement, possibly even a trace of amusement.”

But it was too late in the war; Göring was not dismissed and Steinhoff was not disciplined. After crashing his Me-262 during take-off in April 1945, the badly burned and horribly disfigured Steinhoff had time to ruminate about Germany’s future while lying in the hos-

pital (which was under the control of the Americans). He dictated to another wounded soldier what would eventually become *The Final Hours*.

This is a superbly written account by a leading member of a very small band of elite warriors. Besides recounting several instances of exciting aerial combat in the jet-powered planes, Steinhoff provides a rarely glimpsed look at the inner workings of a legendary, if dysfunctional, military force. His account is illuminating, and the picture he draws of courage and devotion to duty in the face of certain defeat is both heartening and heartbreaking.

***Clash of the Carriers: The True Story of the Marianas Turkey Shoot***, by Barrett Tillman, NAL Caliber, New York, 2005, 348 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$24.95, hardcover.

The Battle of the Philippine Sea, in June 1944, quickly became known as the “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot” because the now-obsolete Zero aircraft and the inexperienced Japanese carrier pilots—who had been rushed through training following the twin debacles of Coral Sea and Midway—were no match for the well-trained, combat savvy Americans and their Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters.

Barrett Tillman, naval aviation’s most prolific chronicler, brings the greatest air battle of all time alive with a superb new history of the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

On June 13, Operation Forager, the American invasion of Saipan—supported by Admiral Raymond Spruance’s Fifth Fleet and its striking arm, Marc Mitscher’s Fast Carrier Task Force 58, with 535 ships of all descriptions and 905 aircraft distributed across 15 carriers—began. A total of 71,000 Americans came ashore at Saipan, 1,200 nautical miles south of Tokyo.

In an attempt to sweep them off the small island and cripple Mitscher’s fleet, Japan sent a large armada, including eight carriers, 440 aircraft, and the two biggest battleships in the world, the *Yamato* and *Musashi*, steaming toward Saipan. To Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa’s assembled fleet the Japanese warlords radioed the following message: “The fate of the Empire rests on this one battle. Every man is expected to do his utmost.”

During two days of aerial combat, the planes of the American and Japanese carriers dueled without pause, launching wave after wave of aircraft at each other in hopes of crippling the other’s flattops.

When the sky battle finally ended, more than 400 Japanese aircraft and 3 Japanese carriers

lay at the bottom of the ocean. The “fate of the Empire” had been decided. Saipan and Tinian were in American hands, and the huge aerial armadas of B-29 Superfortress bombers would soon use the islands as springboards for the devastating bombing raids—including the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—over Japan.

Tillman’s tense account of the battle’s strategy and tactics, drawn from official records and memoirs and interviews with men from both sides, moves along at a fever pitch. *Clash of the Carriers* is an important testimonial to the bravery of those who fought and died in one of the most monumental battles of the Second World War.

*A Stranger to Myself: The Inhumanity of War—Russia, 1941-1944*, by Willy Peter Reese, translated by Michael Hofmann, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, New York, 2005, 176 pp., photographs, map, \$35.00, hardcover.

“The war began, and we saw God and his stars perish in the West. Death rampaged over the earth—he took off his mask, and his skull face grinned, chiseled with dementia and pain. We set out into no-man’s-land, saw him dance in the distance, and heard the throb of drums at night.”

So begins an amazing book that many are calling the *All Quiet on the Western Front* of the Second World War. This slim volume recounts with painful insight how a sensitive, war-hating German lad was converted into a decorated, battle-hardened veteran.

A 20-year-old bank clerk trainee when he was drafted into the Wehrmacht in 1939, Reese spent four tours of duty during the war of devastation and annihilation on the vast, frozen front lines of Hitler’s unwinnable war against the Soviet Union.

Bearing witness to and participating in some of the worst atrocities of war, the youthful Reese had dreams of someday becoming a writer. He loved books, poetry, nature, philosophy, Bach, Beethoven, the simple pleasures of the flesh. He hated the military, stupidity, cruelty, ugliness, and the war that had been foisted upon him and members of his generation.

Yet, he was assigned to an infantry unit and soon caught up in war’s strange, terrible beauty, epic sweep, and its demands to keep marching on the treadmill toward extinction while recording everything, and forgetting nothing.

He kept notes of his battlefield experiences in a journal and on various scraps of paper. During his last furlough home he typed up his notes in manuscript form, then gave them to his

**Battle of Trafalgar** October 21, 1805  
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May 2006 WWII HISTORY 75



The Second World War remains a lively setting for first-person video gaming. The default characters in these games are often young OSS (Office of Strategic Services) officers, and **World War II Combat: Road to Berlin** for the Xbox and PC from Groove Games, is no exception. The player's character, Stephen Moore, is assigned to beat Stalin's army to Berlin. His superiors believe that the Russians' objective is the Germans' nuclear research; however, the ultimate objective turns out to be the rocket construction buildings at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. This game pitches the player against the Germans and the Russians with the fate of the Western World at stake.

As is also the norm for these games, all the equipment, vehicles, and much of the cutting-edge science in weaponry is taken from real German designs of the era. Items available consist of actual deployed weapons and machinery, as well as things that were still testing in wind tunnels or existing only on paper. Moore uses nine authentic weapons including the M1 Thompson Submachine Gun, MK2 Pineapple Grenade, Panzerfaust rocket launcher, and KA-BAR utility knife. The storyline plays out over ten levels. For players more interested the mechanics than the history, there are also ten multiplayer maps for up to sixteen players. These players can either be humans

linked over the net, or bots with variable degrees of difficulty, or a mix.

A different single player experience is provided in **Silent War: the United States Submarine War Against Imperial Japan, 1941-1945** from Compass Games. *SW* is a solitaire board game that simulates exactly what its subtitle suggests. With a non-threatening array of counters and charts, *SW* lets the player approach the war either in stages, or all at once. There is also a patrol mode where instead of playing the role of Commander of Submarines, U.S. Pacific Fleet (SubComPac), the player captains a single boat. The campaigns can



take ten hours or more, while patrols can be done in as little as ten minutes.

The maps in *SW* cover the entire theater and the counters cover every U.S. submarine deployed during the war. The charts keep the mechanics simple and "right in front"



of the player—exactly where they need them. There are special rules for American torpedo improvement, submarine repair and readiness, wolfpacks, campaign and combat events, war progress, patrol and search, TDC solutions, merchant shipping, and Japanese battleship doctrine. There are even optional two-player rules.

Returning to the PC is the action game **WWII Tank Commander**, from Sylum Entertainment. More of an arcade game than a strict simulation, *WWITC* has the player drive an M4 Sherman tank serving in the Fourth Armored Division of Patton's Army. The game begins with the landing on Utah Beach, and continues across Western Europe. The player will cut off enemy forces at the Brittany Peninsula, relieve the besieged 101st Airborne at Bastogne, cross the Rhine, and carry the war all the way into Czechoslovakia. Along the way, the player will meet German Panthers, Tigers, and Hummels.

While the mechanics of the game engine are game rather than simulation based, the player does use authentic weapons in environments that simulate the actual battlegrounds. There are 30 objectives spaced over ten missions which range in style from assault to rescue. □

mother for safekeeping. There they sat, undiscovered, unpublished. The book's editor says, "For decades, no one was interested in Reese's manuscript. But his memoirs might have helped make the day-to-day reality of the common soldier during the war a part of the general consciousness in Germany."

In 2002, a cousin inherited the manuscript and, recognizing its remarkable prose, turned it over to the German popular magazine *Stern*, which published it in 2003 to great acclaim. An excellent translation has now brought Willy Peter Reese to the attention of the English-speaking world.

Hailed in Germany as one of the Second World War's most important memoirs to date, Reese's poignant accounts of life on the battlefield resonate with ambiguity and internal conflicts. At times horrified by battle, at other times exultantly taking part in its most debasing aspects, Reese gradually descends into the life of an automaton, performing his military duties without thinking, without questioning, yet never quite losing the last shreds of humanity or his ability to record the world around him and his relationship to it.

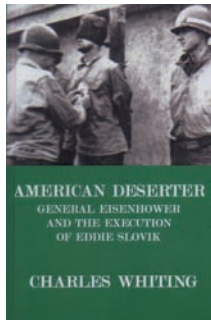
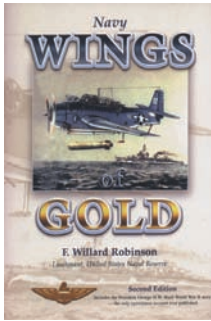
Reese's death on the Russian Front, at age 23 and in June 1944, represented more than the loss of just another German soldier; it was also the world's loss of a brilliant writer of great promise, whose contributions to the world of literature were unfulfilled. Who knows to what literary heights he might have climbed had his life not been snuffed out at such an early age in such a senseless conflict?

**Navy Wings of Gold**, by F. Willard Robinson, River Park Press, Boise, ID, 2005, 342 pp., photographs, maps, 342 pp., \$19.95, softcover.

Precious little has been written by and about carrier pilots, but F. Willard "Robbie" Robinson's memoirs do much to fill the gap.

A Navy TBM-3E Avenger torpedo plane pilot assigned to Squadron VC-7 aboard the escort carrier USS *Manila Bay*, Robinson describes his training and deployment to the Pacific in detail. He also recounts the harrowing crash landing in February 1944 that left him badly injured and nearly cost him his life. While coming in at dusk for a landing on the carrier with a full load of four 500-pound depth charges (the mission had failed to locate targets), Robinson's heavy plane lost altitude too quickly and plunged into the water.

He writes, "It was too late to jettison the explosives! Without warning the plane lurched and trembled. Like a goose hit in the wing by a volley of shot, we plummeted into the Pacific with terrifying finality. The plane smashed into



the water in a death dive, hitting the sea and instantly exploding in a shattering burst of water and debris.... With one last tremendous effort I tripped the release on one side of my Mae West life jacket. Then the storm passed and I was left bobbing in a sea of unreal quietness. I looked around. All was gone, the flight crew, the plane, and even the debris that usually floats from a crash." His two fellow crewmen were both lost and Robinson was badly burned, torn apart by shrapnel, and had his legs crushed. Three subsequent chapters deal with his efforts to recover from his terrible wounds.

Robinson also includes, as an extra bonus, memoirs and interviews he made with eight other carrier pilots, including Grumman Hellcat flyer Nat Adams, who has written the only known eyewitness account of the shooting down of future president Lt. (j.g.) George H. W. Bush's Avenger off the coast of Chichi Jima.

This is an essential book for anyone wanting a glimpse into the lives of the Navy's valiant aerial knights.

### SHORT BURSTS

*American Deserter: General Eisenhower and the Execution of Eddie Slovik*, by Charles Whiting, Eskdale Publishing, York, England, 2005, 234 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$24.95, hardcover.

"He was a Polish-American kid from the wrong side of the tracks." So notes the prolific British military historian Charles Whiting in his detailed look into the life and death of Private Eddie Slovik, a reluctant replacement in the 28th Infantry Division and the only American soldier executed for desertion in World War II. Even today, debate rages between those who thought a grave injustice had been done to Slovik, and those who believe he got what he deserved. Troubling and thought-provoking.

*Worlds Away: Following My Father's World War II Footsteps*, by Patrick M. Finelli, Paradise Press, 2005, \$19.95, softcover.

A scuba diving son retraces his Marine Corps father's exploits as a frogman by visiting the underwater graveyards of famous naval

clashes. Finelli discovers an incredible amount of war debris under the sea at Truk Lagoon and on the infamous bleeding ground of Peleliu, and juxtaposes his own photos with those taken during the war. Compelling and fascinating.

*War Stories III: The Heroes Who Defeated Hitler*, by Oliver North (with Joe Musser), Regnery, 2005, 342 pp., \$29.95, hardcover.

Fox News military analyst and retired Marine Corps Colonel Ollie North has produced the third volume in his best-selling *War Stories* series, this one covering the entire panoply of the European theater. Within its 342 pages, scores of veterans share their personal tales of combat in the air, on land, and on the sea with the reader. Included are spellbinding accounts by Lieutenant Bob Dole of the 10th Mountain Division, renowned fighter ace Chuck Yeager, B-24 pilot George McGovern, 1st Infantry Division Medal of Honor recipient Walt Ehlers, Lieutenant Charles Calhoun who served aboard the destroyer USS *Sterrett* in its deadly battles with German U-boats, Choctaw Indian and Medal of Honor recipient Van Barfoot of the 45th Division, and many others. A great read.

*The Button Box: A Daughter's Loving Memory of Mrs. George S. Patton*, by Ruth Ellen Patton Totten, University of Missouri Press, 2005, \$34.95, hardcover.

If the old adage, "Behind every great man is a great woman" is true, then the wife of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., is as deserving of as many accolades as her husband. This highly absorbing book, written by the Pattons' daughter, is an engaging, never-before-told account of her parents' lives—especially her extraordinary mother, Beatrice Banning Ayer. As Ruth Ellen points out, her mother, a woman from a wealthy Boston family and an accomplished equestrian, sailboat racer, musician, and author, had a profound impact on the general, and doubtless helped make him the man he was. This is an indispensable book for anyone who wants to know more about the hidden side of one of America's greatest warriors. □

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C. Currie, saluted Patton “dazzling in his smart gabardines,” and is reported to have said, “General, it was a jolly good race. I congratulate you.” The film *Patton* gives a completely false version of this event. Monty himself is depicted leading a British column into Messina, only to be greeted by Patton with a smirk on his face, having beaten his arch-rival into the city.

Although Husky was successful, there is no doubt that bungling and lack of direction and coordination by both Eisenhower’s and Alexander’s headquarters allowed 40,000 Germans, 60,000 Italians and some 10,000 vehicles, including 47 tanks, to escape in a skilfully executed withdrawal across the Straits of Messina. Admittedly, the Axis forces had suffered 160,000 casualties, of which 140,000 were prisoners, but the cost to the Allies had been heavy—12,843 British Commonwealth casualties and 8,781 Americans. These figures can be doubled if one takes into account those who were evacuated with malaria. Monty blamed higher command for the failure to stop or at least heavily interfere with the Axis withdrawal.

As early as August 7, having seen the latest Royal Air Force reconnaissance reports and aware that the Etna Line had finally been broken by his XXX Corps, he noted, “There has been heavy traffic all day across the Straits of Messina and the enemy is without doubt starting to get his stuff away. I have tried hard to find out what the combined Navy-Air plan is in order to stop him getting away; I have been unable to find out. I fear the truth is that there is NO plan ... The trouble is there is no high-up grip on this campaign ... It beats me how anyone thinks you can run a campaign ... with the three Commanders of the three Services about 600 miles from each other.”

Surprisingly, Monty did not include Ike in his criticism. It was after all the latter’s responsibility to coordinate the activities of his service commanders. Eisenhower finally did so on August 9, but even after that there was still no coherent interdiction plan and Monty could do nothing other than to watch the enemy escape and his rival claim the limelight. □

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*Retired Maj. Gen. Michael Reynolds is a graduate of the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. He served in the British Army around the world and was seriously wounded during the Korean War. He is the former director of NATO’s Military Plans and Policy Division and the author of four well-received books.*

owners of the gold could not be ascertained, large amounts of the gold train booty were shipped to the United States for auction. The first shipment of merchandise arrived in New York in December 1947, under the direction of the Advisory Liquidation Committee, and was auctioned in June 1948, at the Parke-Bernet Galleries. Roughly \$4 million in valuables was put up for auction.

In December 1949, over a thousand paintings were transferred to the custody of the government of Austria. In a change of direction by the American government, a March 26, 1952, State Department document titled *Confidential Security Information: Hungarian Cultural Property in U.S. Custody*, said in part that it would “... propose that all cultural property of Hungarian ownership will be held indefinitely for eventual return to the rightful owners and that this fact should be broadcast to Hungary.”

The strange case of the Hungarian gold train lingered well after the end of World War II. Wilhelm Hottl turned himself in to U.S. 3rd Army personnel along with six of his men. The Army’s Counterintelligence Corps issued a most wanted list with the name of Arpad Toldi right at the top for the crime of “destruction of Hungarian Jewry.” Toldi, aware that he was a wanted man, made contact with a French Army officer named Colonel Henri Jung and told him a bogus story that he was ordered to “protect” the gold train from the Soviets. He provided Jung with the locations of various sites in the French zone that contained portions of the gold train loot. Toldi decided it was in his best interest not to reveal his secret deal with Friedrich Westen and Wilhelm Hottl. Toldi was finally arrested in August 1945, and released from confinement that November with no charges being filed.

In October 1999, the United States government released its findings on the gold train incident as part of its investigation into the role of the Swiss government during the war. The U.S. report’s ending paragraph sums up the case in spades. “In the end, there may be no single explanation of why the property of the Hungarian Jewish community was so readily dispersed. But the fact remains that the application of several policies to the various assets aboard the Gold Train assured that the property was never returned to its rightful owners.” □

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*Peter Kross is the author of The Encyclopedia of World War 2 Spies. He resides in New Jersey.*

ship.” The unassuming Arkansan was stunned and wept when the admiral told him of the tribute the *Marblehead* sailors had paid to him.

Wassell became a national hero when his exploits were revealed in a radio broadcast by President Roosevelt on April 28, 1942. In one of his widely heard “fireside chats,” FDR announced, “... The men were suffering severely, but Doctor Wassell kept them alive by his skill and inspired them by his own courage. As the official report said, Wassell was ‘almost like a Christ-like shepherd devoted to his flock.’”

Returning to the United States, the gallant doctor served at the San Pedro navy base in California until June 1944, when he became the assistant navy public relations director for the West Coast. He was promoted to captain in July 1943. That year, his inspiring story was told in a biography by James Hilton, British author of the classic novels *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* and *Lost Horizon*. More fame was to follow, for Hollywood director-producer Cecil B. DeMille, who had heard Roosevelt’s broadcast, decided that here was a worthy subject for a major motion picture.

On a memorable night in April 1944, the former country doctor and medical missionary went to Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., for the premiere of DeMille’s *The Story of Dr. Wassell*. The epic, 140-minute film starred Gary Cooper in the title role, which was one of his most sensitive performances, supported by Laraine Day, Dennis O’Keefe, Signe Hasso, Paul Kelly, and Philip Ahn.

Wassell was detached to the naval training center in Miami, Fl., until August 1946, when he retired with the rank of rear admiral. The following year, he and his wife resumed their medical missionary work, joining the staff of the Shingle Memorial Hospital, an Episcopal mission on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. The couple worked without pay. They left the hospital in December 1947, however, because the famed doctor said it “is being run as a commercial public institution and not as a missionary institution.”

After living in Florida for a time, the Wassells returned to Little Rock in 1956. The Navy Cross hero died there on May 12, 1958, at the age of 73, and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. □

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

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