Curtis 02313

ROMMEL: The Man & the Myth

WWII QUARTERLY

JOURNAL OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

TAKING HILL 112:

Bloody Fight in Normandy

Armored Assault at Kasserine Pass

EYEWITNESS

Slugfest on the German Border

COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Shooting the War

Brutal Combat on New Georgia

SUMMER 2017
RETAILER DISPLAY UNTIL OCT. 30

$9.99US $10.99CAN

0 09281 02313 5 75

WWII QUARTERLY ■ SUMMER 2017 *Volume 8, No. 4*

TOUR EUROPEAN BATTLEFIELDS WITH US

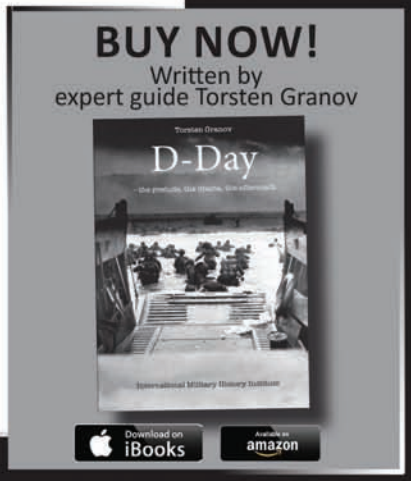
BOOK TODAY !

NORMANDY D-DAY & PARIS

August 20th - 27th 2017 | from $3,600

Experience D-Day come alive with our expert guides

- 4 days in Bayeux, Normandy
- Battlefield tours - all D-day beaches e.g "Bloody" Omaha and Utah
- 3 days in Paris - theme: Occupied Paris and the liberation of Paris
- Tours of the top sites of Paris - including Eiffel Tower and Cathedral of Notre Dame
- Introduction to Europe, France and French cooking
- Excellent hotels and half board
- Entry fee to 10 museums
- 2 expert guides
- Free copy of the book "D-Day - the prelude, the drama, the aftermath" by tour guide Torsten Granov



IMMORTAL MEMORIES

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELDS

Belgium, Luxembourg and Northern France

August 28th - September 1st 2017 | from $ 2,100

Battle of the Bulge, Waterloo, Easy Company of the 101st Airborne, Malmedy, Luxembourg, Verdun, Argonne, Reims.

- The Museum of the Armistice car in Compiègne
- Waterloo battlefield | Malmedy Massacre site and museum
- Battlefields and foxholes of Easy Company, 506th Regiment, 101 Airborne at Bastogne,
- Battlefield of 109th Infantry Regiment of the 28th US ID in Luxembourg
- Verdun battlefields from WW 1, American Military Cemetery, Meuse-Argonne.
- Sgt. York's trail - we follow the famous American WW 1-hero

INTERESTED IN BOTH TOURS? We offer you room and dinner in Paris from August 27th to 28th - at no extra cost

TRAVEL WITH OUR EXPERT GUIDES

DANIEL MARTINEZ

Historian, author and TV-personality. Host on Unsolved History on Discovery Channel and appearances on documentaries for National Geographic, The History Channel and more.

TORSTEN GRANOV

Historian, MA Director of International Military History Institute. Author of a number of books, and specialist lecturer about WWII and Nazi Germany. Specialist in WWII and in D-Day and Normandy.

INFORMATION, DETAILED PROGRAM AND BOOKING:

CALL: 808-672-8128

www.militaryhistoryinstitute.org

20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN BATTLEFIELD AND HISTORY TOURS

WE KNOW EUROPE - JOIN US!

TAKE COMMAND OF YOUR OWN BATTLE-HARDENED 1:24 SCALE RADIO CONTROLLED ARMY!

Fight It Out With Up To 16 Players

$159.99 Each

- New 2.4GHz FHSS radio system with a minimum coverage of 60 meters
- Accurate markings, insignia and realistic sound effects
- Turret rotates and gun elevates
- Tracks and wheels roll
- Comes with commander figure

German Heavy Tank
PzKpfw Tiger Ausf. E
sPzAbt. 503 Nr. 312 Poland 1943
372004

U.S Medium Tank
Sherman M4A3
3rd Armored Division, Normandy 1944
372014

Soviet Medium Tank
T-34-85 Late version
53th Guard Bde, Berlin 1945
372002

FORCES OF VALOR®
COMBAT PROVEN MACHINES

German Medium Tank
PzKpfw IV Ausf. H
Eastern front, 1943
372001

General! The Commander-in-Chief has ordered you to take command of the legendary Forces of Valor. Each battle hardened radio controlled military vehicle has been faithfully reproduced and can be used individually, one-on-one or in team competitions of up to 16 vehicles.

Features and Capabilities

Exterior:
- Plastic exterior
- CNC machined aluminum gun barrel
- Hobby grade painting
- Weathering effects
- Zimmerit pattern on Tiger I tank
- Natural casting surface effect on Sherman tank

Hardware:
- Coils suspension system
- Individual track links *(Clipping type)*
- Turret rotates 320 degrees
- Gun barrel elevates 25 degrees
- Drives forwards, backwards, left and right
- Infrared shooting board for target practice *(Standard equipment)*

Electronics:
- New 2.4GHz FHSS radio system with a minimum coverage of 60 meters
- ARM Based MCU architecture
- Remote control volume adjustment
- Remote control headlight
- Left and right hand throttle interchangeable
- 12 steps throttle responsiveness control
- Auxiliary control mode - turret rotates, gun elevates, fire machine guns and main gun
- Engine running mode - drive tank forward, backward, left, right, battle with other tanks plus everything you can do in auxiliary power mode

Sound:
- Real sound recorded from museums and private tank collections
- Maybach 231 engine sound for Tiger I, Continental V8 for Sherman M4A3 and V-2-34 for Soviet T34/85
- Class D amplifier
- 1W output speaker
- 4 channel sound chip, can play up to 4 sound effects simultaneously
- 14 sound effect profiles that include engine ignition, engine shut off, engine idling, acceleration, maximum acceleration, deceleration, machine guns (recorded from real weapons), main gun (obtained from a sound library), turret rotation, gun barrel elevation, tank explosion, vehicle on fire (signifying destruction), and headlights switching on

Power:
- 4 x 1.5V Alkaline battery *(Transmitter)*
- 6 x 1.5V Alkaline battery *(Tank on board)*
- Optional Ni-MH rechargeable battery *(Tank on board)*

Battle system:
- Team A vs. B battle system, now supports up to 16 players. You can even form a team of up to 15 players against a single opponent. Team combinations can consist of 8 vs. 8, 7 vs. 5, 4 vs. 3, etc...
- Team N battle mode: last man standing (fight against everyone)

Safety:
- Tank shut off reminder system
- Automatic power cut off after 4 minutes of idling

www.themotorpool.net • ph: (718) 465-3292

Ordering Information: $14 for each vehicle shipped within the Continental US. If you reside in Alaska, Hawaii, the US territories or anywhere else outside the US, please contact us to inquire about applicable shipping rates. Order online via credit card, PayPal or Amazon Pay. New York state residents please add applicable sales tax. Sorry, no checks or money orders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WWII QUARTERLY

Departments

COVER: Legendary German General Erwin Rommel, photographed in North Africa in January 1942.

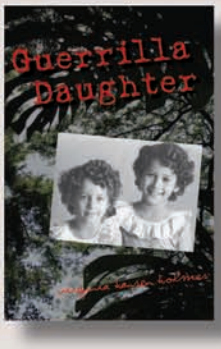
See story page 48.

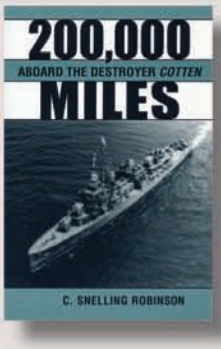
Photo: © SZ Photo/The Image Works

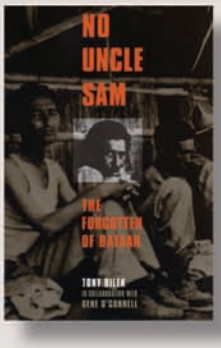
Features

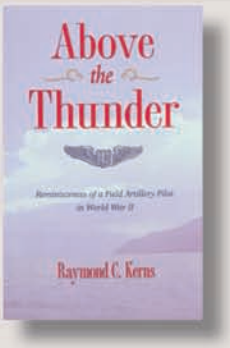
WWII Quarterly (ISSN 2151-3678) is published four times yearly by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101-4554. (703) 964-0361. *WWII Quarterly,* Volume 8, Number 4 ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to *WWII Quarterly* **Circulation, WWII Quarterly, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Hardbound single copies: $19.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $39.95; Canada and Overseas: $79.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII Quarterly,* 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101-4554. *WWII Quarterly* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII Quarterly, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

First-Hand Accounts That Will Put You in the Middle of the Action









Grasshopper Pilot

A Memoir

"There is a group of men who have been forgotten, ignored, or are just plain unknown to most people . . .the Grasshopper pilots . . . These daring men were constantly in the thick of battle. . . . The only defense against an assault upon the Piper Cubs was the pilot's ability to outmaneuver enemy fighter planes and dodge gunfire."

—from the Introduction

Guerrilla Daughter

This memoir of an American family's struggle to survive the Japanese occupation of Mindanao is the story of how the men in the family fought as guerrilla soldiers in the resistance movement, while the women were left to their own resources to evade the Japanese. Faced with immediate death if found and suffering from hunger, disease, and barely tolerable living conditions, they hid out in the jungle and remote villages to remain just ahead of the Japanese presence and avoid capture.

200,000 Miles Aboard the Destroyer *Cotton*

"Written with a navigator's penchant for accuracy, a mariner's love for the sea, and an abiding interest in human nature, Snell Robinson's chronicle of the campaigns of the destroyer *Cotten* [from its precommissioning to becoming a part of the Occupation Force in Tokyo Bay] is a fresh and compelling narrative history of the naval war against Japan."

—Colonel Joseph H Alexander, USMC (Retired)

No Uncle Sam

The Forgotten of Bataan

Anton Bilek was only twenty-two when he was captured in Bataan. This is his story of survival through the Death March, his imprisonment under horrific conditions in the Philippines and Japan, and his servitude as a slave laborer in the Japanese coal mines. Bilek tells of the frustration, anger, fear, humor, hope, and courage that he and his fellow prisoners shared during their captivity.

Above the Thunder

Reminiscences of a Field Artillery Pilot in World War II

Winner of the 2009 Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Book Award

"If you're looking for macho, fighting-man talk, you've picked up the wrong book. . . . This is just an honest narration of some of my experiences . . . during my service in the U.S. Army between 1940 and 1945."

—Raymond C. Kerns

"One of the ten best memoirs of Combat action to come out of World War II."

—Edgar F. Raines Jr., U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C.

Available from your local bookstore or from www.KentStateUniversityPress.com 800-247-6553

THE KENT STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1118 LIBRARY • KENT, OHIO 44242-0001
■ www.KentStateUniversityPress.com

Remembering a day of remembrance

This year, as I have done almost every year for the past 30 years, I took part in the Memorial Day ceremony at the 10th Mountain Division War Memorial near the division's former training area high up in the Colorado Rockies. Some years I have been the organizer, some years the master of ceremonies, and some years just doing what I can behind the scenes. I figure it's the least I can do to pay my respects to the 1,000 men of the division (my father's division) who lost their lives in World War II.

With Memorial Day 2017 having just passed, it's still appropriate to reflect on that solemn day. In our country, unfortunately, Memorial Day is just another excuse for a long weekend to head to the beach or go camping or hit the mattress sales. The true meaning of the day is in danger of being lost.

For some people, it's easy to not give a moment's thought to why the day is a national holiday. It was originally established in 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, to remember those who died during the Civil War. Today we have many more wars and war deaths to remember.

There is a frequently told story about the 1945 Memorial Day (it was still called Decoration Day then) ceremony held at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery at Anzio-Nettuno at the end of the war. On May 30, 1945, the final resting place for thousands of soldiers still looked like a pasture, with little grass, few trees, and no permanent structures. Instead of marble headstones, there was a sea of white wooden crosses and Stars of David. Giving the main address was Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Fifth U.S. Army commander.

In addition to the usual assemblage of dignitaries, honor guard, and military band, the G.I. cartoonist and journalist Bill Mauldin was in attendance, representing *The Stars and Stripes* newspaper, and he wrote movingly of Truscott's speech, probably the most unusual ever given at a memorial ceremony:

"When Truscott spoke, he turned away from the visitors and addressed himself to the corpses he had commanded there. It was the most moving gesture I ever saw. It came from a hard-boiled old man who was incapable of planned dramatics. The general's remarks were brief and extemporaneous. He apologized to the dead men for their presence here. He said everybody tells leaders it is not their fault that men get killed in war, but that every leader knows in his heart this is not altogether true. He said he hoped anybody here through any mistake of his would forgive him, but he realized that was asking a hell of a lot under the circumstances….

"Truscott said he would not speak of the glorious dead because he didn't see much glory in getting killed in your late teens or early twenties. He promised that if in the future he ran into anybody, especially old men, who thought that death in battle was glorious, he would straighten them out. He said he thought it was the least he could do."

I suspect that most readers of this magazine no doubt pause every Memorial Day to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. I just wish that everyone would do so—even for a few minutes. That's the least everyone can do.

Flint Whitlock, Editor

CORRECTION: At the end of Samantha Quigley's article in the Spring 2016 issue about the Willow Run B-24 factory, we incorrectly stated that her original story appeared in the Fall 2013 issue of the USO's *On Patrol* magazine; it actually appeared in the Fall 2015 issue.

WWII Quarterly Volume 8 • Number 4

WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK.com

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director,
Founder

FLINT WHITLOCK
Editor
WWIIQuarterly@gmail.com

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Arnold Blumberg, Joseph Connor, Jr., William G. Dennis, Jon Diamond, John M. Khoury, Eric Niderost, Mark Simmons, Blaine Taylor, Susan Zimmerman

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
BEN BOYLES, Advertising Manager
(570) 322-7848, ext. 110
benjaminb@sovhomestead.com

LINDA GALLIHER, Ad Coordinator
570-322-7848, ext. 160
lgalliher@sovmedia.com

BUSINESS OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ
Vice President & Publisher

TERRI COATES
Subscription Customer Services
sovereign@publishersservicesassociates.com

PUBLISHERS SERVICE ASSOCIATES
Circulation Fulfillment

CURTIS CIRCULATION COMPANY
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100
McLean, VA 22101-4554

www.WarfareHistoryNetwork.com

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:

2406 Reach Road
Williamsport, PA 17701

(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE USA.

BY APPOINTMENT
TO THE ROYAL HOUSE OF ITALY

AUKTIONSHAUS ANDREAS THIES EK

Steingaustr. 18 · D-73230 Kirchheim unter Teck (Germany)
Phone +49 1 71 / 2 66 27 81 · Email: afthies@t-online.de · www.andreas-thies.de

62th Auction, June 23 – 24, 2017

On October 31, 1941, the USS *Reuben James* became one of America's first casualties of war—even before war was declared.

When the destroyer USS *Reuben James* (DD-245) was assigned to convoy duty in the North Atlantic in the autumn of 1941, its crew had a sense of foreboding and feared the worst. Germany and Great Britain had been at war for two years. The United States was still neutral, at least officially, but neutrality offered little solace—or protection. Deadly German U-boats were prowling the North Atlantic and feasting on Allied shipping. Convoy duty was hazardous and becoming more so by the day.

Reuben James is a name rich in Navy lore. On February 16, 1804, James, a boatswain's mate, stood on the deck of the USS *Philadelphia* in Tripoli as Barbary pirates struck.

The sinking of the USS *Reuben James* by Navy artist Griffith Baily Coale, who witnessed the German U-boat attack on the destroyer while it was on convoy duty west of Ireland. Ninety-nine Americans died.

When a sword-wielding pirate attacked Lieutenant Stephen Decatur, James is said to have jumped in front of Decatur and taken the blow meant for him.

The ship named for James, the USS *Reuben James,* was a four-stack destroyer, commissioned in 1920. She was 314 feet long, 30 feet in the beam, and capable of speeds of up to 33 knots. She was armed with four 4-inch guns in her main battery, torpedo tubes, depth charges, and numerous antiaircraft weapons. To her crew, she was affectionately known as "Ol' Rube."

Although the United States was still officially neutral, Congress had enacted the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941 to help Great Britain survive. The act permitted President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sell, lend, or lease munitions, aircraft, weapons, and military supplies to "the government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States." Great Britain was one of those countries.

U.S. Navy ships helped escort the convoys bringing Lend-Lease goods to England. The Royal Canadian Navy escorted the convoys to a point off Newfoundland. The U.S. Navy picked the convoys up there, escorted them out into the Atlantic, and handed them over to the British Royal Navy at a mid-ocean meeting point. The Navy performed these duties while the United States maintained its official neutrality. The pretext was that the Navy was helping to supply American troops stationed in Iceland. Merchant ships of other nations, such as Great Britain, were free to tag along, and these "hitchhikers" got U.S. Navy protection. This subterfuge was necessary because of isolationist sentiment in Congress, but it fooled few, least of all the German Navy.

On September 4, 1941, a German U-boat attacked the destroyer USS *Greer* (DD-145) as she steamed alone toward Iceland. The *Greer* dodged two torpedoes and counterattacked with depth charges. In response, Roosevelt ordered the Navy to shoot on sight any Axis warship found in waters "the protection of which is necessary for American defense." The North

Bigger Buttons

"My friends all hate their cell phones... I love mine!" Here's why.

No Contracts

FREE Car Charger

Say good-bye to everything you hate about cell phones. Say hello to the Jitterbug Flip.

"Cell phones have gotten so small, I can barely dial mine." Not the Jitterbug® Flip. It features a large keypad for easier dialing. It even has a larger display and a powerful, hearing aid compatible speaker, so it's easy to see and conversations are clear.

"I had to get my son to program it." Your Jitterbug Flip setup process is simple. We'll even program it with your favorite numbers.

"What if I don't remember a number?" Friendly, helpful Personal Operators are available 24 hours a day and will even greet you by name when you call.

"I'd like a cell phone to use in an emergency." Now you can turn your phone into a personal safety device with 5Star® Service. In any uncertain or unsafe situation, simply press the 5Star button to speak immediately with a highly-trained Urgent Response Agent who will confirm your location, evaluate your situation and get you the help you need, 24/7.

"My cell phone company wants to lock me in a two-year contract!" Not with the Jitterbug Flip. There are no contracts to sign and no cancellation fees.

"My phone's battery only lasts a short time." Unlike most cell phones that need to be recharged every day, the Jitterbug Flip was designed with a long-lasting battery, so you won't have to worry about running out of power.

Available in Red and Graphite.

Monthly Plan	$14.99/mo[1]	$19.99/mo[1]
Monthly Minutes	200	600
Personal Operator Assistance	24/7	24/7
Long Distance Calls	No add'l charge	No add'l charge
Voice Dial	FREE	FREE
Nationwide Coverage	YES	YES
30-Day Return Policy[2]	YES	YES

More minute plans and Health & Safety Packages available. Ask your Jitterbug expert for details.

"Many phones have features that are rarely needed and hard to use!" The Jitterbug Flip contains easy-to-use features that are meaningful to you. A built-in camera makes it easy and fun for you to capture and share your favorite memories. And a flashlight with a built-in magnifier helps you see in dimly lit areas. The Jitterbug Flip has all the features you need.

Enough talk. Isn't it time you found out more about the cell phone that's changing all the rules? Call now! Jitterbug product experts are standing by.

Order now and receive a **FREE Car Charger** – a $25 value for your Jitterbug Flip. Call now!

Call toll-free to get your

Jitterbug Flip Cell Phone

Please mention promotional code 105070.

1-888-839-2959

www.JitterbugDirect.com

We proudly accept the following credit cards:

VISA MasterCard American Express DISCOVER

jitterbug flip

firstSTREET for Boomers and Beyond®
1998 Ruffin Mill Road
Colonial Heights, VA 23834

100% U.S. Based Customer Service

47669

IMPORTANT CONSUMER INFORMATION: Jitterbug is owned by GreatCall, Inc. Your invoices will come from GreatCall. [1]Monthly fees do not include government taxes or assessment surcharges and are subject to change. Plans and services may require purchase of a Jitterbug Flip and a one-time setup fee of $35. Coverage is not available everywhere. 5Star or 9-1-1 calls can only be made when cellular service is available. 5Star Service will be able to track an approximate location when your device is turned on, but we cannot guarantee an exact location. [2]We will refund the full price of the Jitterbug phone and the activation fee (or setup fee) if it is returned within 30 days of purchase in like-new condition. We will also refund your first monthly service charge if you have less than 30 minutes of usage. If you have more than 30 minutes of usage, a per minute charge of 35 cents will be deducted from your refund for each minute over 30 minutes. You will be charged a $10 restocking fee. The shipping charges are not refundable. There are no additional fees to call GreatCall's U.S.-based customer service. However, for calls to a Personal Operator in which a service is completed, you will be charged 99 cents per call, and minutes will be deducted from your monthly rate plan balance equal to the length of the call and any call connected by the Personal Operator. Jitterbug, GreatCall and 5Star are registered trademarks of GreatCall, Inc.

The USS *Kearny*, shown here, was attacked by a U-boat two weeks before the *James* was sunk, causing the deaths of 11 Americans. Neither attack provoked the U.S. into declaring war on Germany.

Atlantic came within the scope of this order. Roosevelt's logic was simple: "If you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him."

On October 17, 1941, a U-boat torpedoed the USS *Kearny* (DD-432) as she escorted a 50-ship convoy. U-boats had already torpedoed several merchant ships in this convoy and a burning ship had silhouetted the *Kearny,* making her an easy target. The *Kearny,* a modern ship commissioned in 1940, survived the attack and reached port, but 11 sailors were killed and 22 more were injured. "Hitler's torpedo," Roosevelt said, "was directed at every American," but America did not go to war over this act of war.

The escalating danger worried the crew of the *Reuben James*. They listened to the radio, read the newspapers, and knew the score. When chief machinist's mate Alton Cousins visited his family that fall, he left his gold watch behind. "It's not going down with me," he told his wife. While on leave, boatswain's mate Frederick Post had a drink with a friend and predicted it would be the last drink they would ever have together. For gunner's mate Walter Sorensen, his main wish was to come home on leave just once more, "even if it is only for a few days."

"Ol' Rube" was not as rugged or in the same class as modern destroyers like the *Kearny,* but "in an emergency ... these craft must be used as found," retired Admiral William V. Pratt told *Newsweek* magazine.

On October 23, 1941, the *Reuben James* left Argentia, Newfoundland, to escort convoy HX-156. Her skipper was Lt. Cmdr. Heywood L. "Tex" Edwards, a 1926 Naval Academy graduate and a member of the 1928 U.S. Olympic wrestling team. The *Reuben James* was one of five destroyers escorting the convoy's more than 50 merchant ships, many of which flew the Union Jack. Her mission, seaman James Thompson wrote to his parents, was to "see who is raising hell with our ships."

Only one destroyer in the convoy—the USS *Niblack* (DD-424)—had radar. On the *Reuben James,* torpedoman Robert Howard recalled, "All you had was a pair of binoculars and a rubber ear to press against the skin of the ship to listen for [submarine] screw noises."

The *Reuben James*' last day was October 31, 1941. At daybreak, she was about 600 miles west of Ireland and "blacked out to avoid reflection in the inquisitive monocles of U-boat periscopes," as *Newsweek* put it. A torpedo fired by *U-552* hit her on the port side, ignited her forward magazine, and blew her in half. "With a terrific roar a column of orange flame towers high into the night as her magazines go up," recalled Griffith Baily Coale, a naval artist sailing with the convoy.

Survivors on the *Reuben James* saw the instantaneous damage. "The whole front of the ship lifted up and it was gone. Gone in an instant," recalled electrician's mate Thomas Turnbull. "Midships was now the bow" is how fireman Norman Hingula described it. The aft part of the ship remained afloat for about five minutes.

Those who survived the blast jumped into the frigid water. They had no choice. The *Reuben James* carried only two lifeboats and they were now useless. One had been demolished by the torpedo; the other could not be lowered into the water because of the steep angle of the sinking ship.

As the survivors struggled to stay afloat, unsecured depth charges from the *Reuben James* hit the water as the ship sank. Terrified sailors heard the depth charges arm themselves, and then the charges exploded, hurling debris and men into the air. "If it hadn't been for those depth charges, we probably would have had another 40 or 50 survivors," recalled Fireman Second Class George Giehrl. "Some were knocked unconscious. Others were torn apart."

Nearby ships rushed in to save the survivors. Rescuers heard "cursing, praying, and hoarse shouts for help" from sailors struggling to stay alive. "Choking on oil and water, they are like small animals caught in molasses," artist Coale wrote. Acting with "cold precision," the ships and their crews rescued the few survivors.

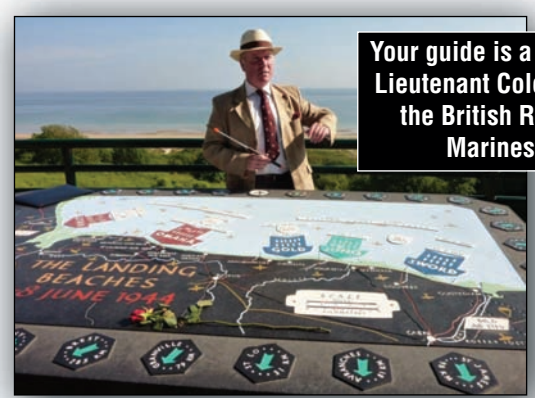
"I know I got picked up pretty quick," said William Bergstresser, a chief machinist's mate. "The water was so cold it would kill you in no time. But it didn't seem quick. It seemed like a long time."

Of the ship's crew, only 45 were saved; 99 sailors perished, including all seven of the ship's officers. Among the sailors lost were Alton Cousins, who never reclaimed

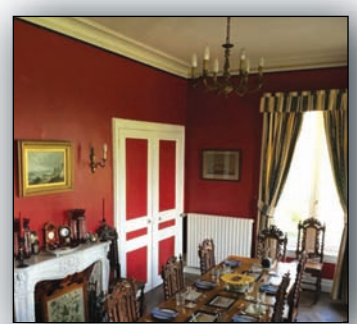
TOUR THE DDAY BEACHES OF NORMANDY

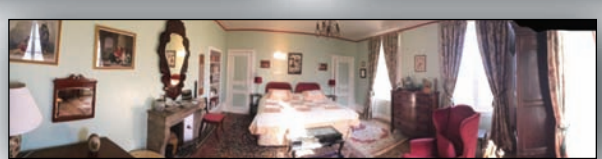
Tours include Omaha Beach, Utah Beach, St Mere Eglise,
Pointe du Hoc, US Military Cemetery Colleville,
Pegasus Bridge, Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches, Longues Batterie.

- Our all inclusive package includes accommodation, transportation to and from your point of arrival in Normandy.
- All meals, refreshments, tours and any entry fees are also included.
- Tours of Mont St Michel and Bayeux also available.



Your guide is a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the British Royal Marines





You will stay in our 19th century Chateau, all our bedrooms each have their own private bathroom (recently refurbished to 21st Century standards!)

After your tours you will be wined and dined in style. Take a stroll around the grounds, a pre dinner drink, browse in the library...

Chateau de Beaulieu
Historic Normandy Tours
Edward and Sharon Parks
Contact us by Email: normandytour@aol.com
Phone: France +33 (0)233 080092

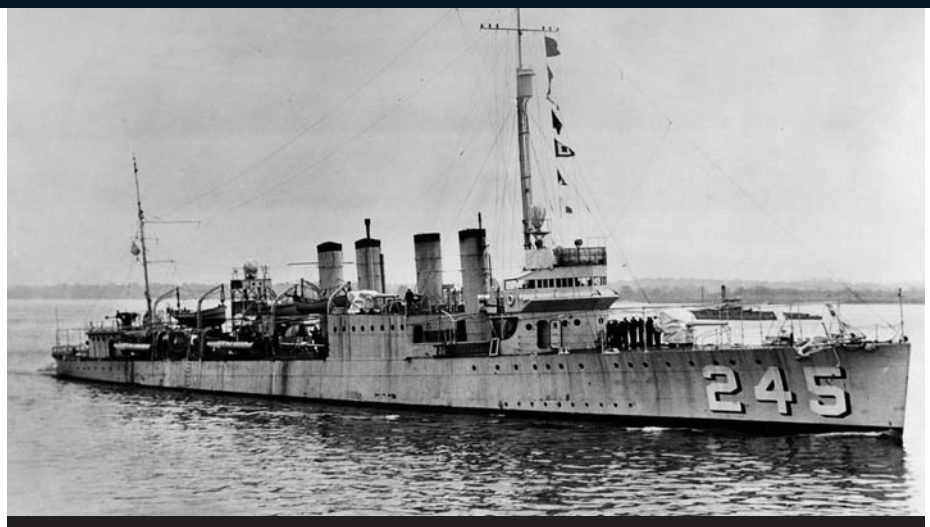
Website: www.normandy-battlefields.com

his gold watch, Frederick Post, who never had another drink with his friend, and Walter Sorensen, who never got his wished-for last visit home.

The presence of the escort destroyers may have saved the crew of the *Reuben James* from even greater casualties. On April 2, 1942, the same U-boat—*U-552*—sank the SS *David H. Atwater,* an unescorted collier, off the coast of Virginia. As the crew abandoned ship, *U-552* raked them with machine-gun fire, killing all but three of the 27 men.

Word of the *Reuben James* sinking quickly reached the United States, but details were few. When Neda Boyd, wife of machinist's mate Solon Boyd, heard the news on the radio, she "froze in the chair." She felt a sense of doom because, when last home, her husband had told her, "I'm afraid we won't be back this time." Their six-year-old daughter heard the name of her dad's ship on the radio and wept inconsolably. (Luckily, Boyd survived).

A *New York Times* editorial said that the sinking "brushes away the last possible doubt that the United States and Germany are now at open war in the Atlantic." "Worse than piracy," proclaimed Navy Secretary Frank Knox, and Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky accused the Germans of trying "to drive us off the seas, and I don't believe the American people are ready to be driven off." Senator George Aiken of Vermont, however, said that Roosevelt was "personally responsible for whatever lives may have been lost" because he had ordered convoy duty.



The USS *Reuben James*, photographed in 1932. The ship had been commissioned in 1920.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill cabled Roosevelt that he "grieved at the loss of life you have suffered with *Reuben James*." In her daily newspaper column, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt wrote that she could not "help but think of every one of the 120 men and their families, who are anxiously awaiting news." The Russian newspaper *Pravda* praised the United States for having "taken its fighting post," and the *London Daily*

Mail predicted that the United States was "marching down the last mile to a declaration of war."

Germany defended the attack. By escorting British ships, a German official said, the *Reuben James* became fair game: "Anybody walking along the railroad tracks at night should not be surprised if they get run over by an express train." Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota seemed to agree. "You can't expect to walk into a barroom brawl and hope to stay out of the fight," he said. Japanese officials were strangely silent.

While news of the sinking arrived quickly, word on the fate of the crew took several days longer. In Portland, Maine, where about half the crew lived, the wives of 40 crew members—"red-eyed and listless, after hours of vigil with little sleep"—awaited news of their husbands.

On November 2, Almeda Edwards, wife of Lt. Cmdr. Edwards, wrote to her husband, "It has been two days and still no one has told me that you are coming back to me. I know you will though…." Before she could mail her letter, however, she learned that her husband would not return. Like many others, she received the dreaded news through a telegram from "C.W. Nimitz, Chief of Bureau of Navigation."

Forty-three years earlier, the sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana harbor had led to an outcry for war, but the sinking of the *Reuben James* did not spark the same reaction. Roosevelt did not break off diplomatic relations with Germany, and he stayed away from the bellicose rhetoric he had used after the *Greer* and *Kearny* attacks. As for a declaration of war, the *New York Times* noted, "The people, their Representatives in Congress and even many high officials of the government are deeply divided on the subject." Rather than spark enlistments, Navy enlistments declined 15 percent in November 1941, something officials attributed to the loss of life on the *Reuben James*.

Some did rally to the flag, however. John Ryan, 43, joined the Navy after his son, John Jr., died on the *Reuben James*. He said he was "itching to get a crack at" the German Navy. Young men in Logan County, West Virginia, home of lost sailor George Woody, sought revenge. "The incident stirred up emotions in our hometown. As a result, several of us local boys enlisted in the Navy," said Farris Burton, one of those who joined up.

In Boston harbor, the Navy held a memorial service on the deck of the USS *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides"), a ship well known to sailor Reuben James, as the families of the lost seamen looked on with "tear-stained, tight-lipped faces." Six women, led by Almeda Edwards, "tossed flowers on the ebbing tide and even as they did the sun broke through the thick clouds and bathed the wreaths in its pale light," the Associated Press reported.

World events soon pushed the *Reuben James* to the side. Five weeks later, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Congress declared war on Japan, and Germany declared war on the United States.

The *Reuben James,* however, was not forgotten, thanks in large part to folksinger Woody Guthrie's ballad about the sinking: "Tell me what were their names. Tell me what were their names. Did you have a friend on the good *Reuben James*?" □

BRUTAL BATTLE FOR A NORMANDY HILL

BY MARK SIMMONS

The fight for Hill 112 during Operations Epsom and Jupiter pitted British troops against eight German panzer divisions.

Imperial War Museum

"At Tarnopol we endured heavy Russian fire but in Normandy we were hit again and again, day after day by British artillery that was so heavy the Frundsberg [10th SS Panzer Division "Frundsberg," named after 16th-century German knight and general Georg Von Frundsberg] bled to death before our eyes. It was worst during an attack, theirs or ours, when we would be terribly blasted. I saw grenadiers struck dumb and unable to move and others made mad by the increasing 'drumfire.'"

So recalled Gunter Balko, an infantryman in the 21th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, who went on to say that the British artillery was his worst memory of Normandy, when he was fighting for Hill 112.

The ground in Normandy over which the fight for Hill 112 took place in July 1944 lay to the southwest of Caen between the Odon and Orne Rivers. The River Odon is small, no more than a stream in places, running through a narrow, steep-sided valley lying north of the area and has few crossing places. The banks, hedges, and steep sides of the river represented a difficult obstacle for tracked and wheeled vehicles to cross. Rising from the valley are the open slopes of Hill 112, gentle slopes hardly seeming to dominate. But from the hill, observation is impressive.

The River Orne, larger than the Odon, forms the eastern and southern boundary. The flanks of Hill 112 sweep down into a broad valley through which the river flows. Beyond was the tempting goal the Allies sought: the open plains of northern France, ideal tank country. Interspersed in the area were farms and villages, the buildings well built from local honey-coloured limestone.

General Bernard Montgomery, commander of the Allied forces in Normandy, had, between June 7 and the end of the month, directed three operations to take Caen—first by the 3rd Canadian Division on June 7-8. According to one historian, the Canadians had "come off second best" against the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitlerjugend," which fought with fanatical courage.

The Allies had benefited from the great success of Operation Fortitude, the deception plan that had fooled the Germans into holding most of their forces in the Pas de Calais area believing Normandy to be a feint. However, on June 9, the 12th SS and 21st Panzer Divisions were joined by the Panzer Lehr Division after a 90-mile drive,

Churchill tanks of the 107th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps, move toward the front, July 17, 1944—six weeks after the Normandy landings. The unit took part in heavy fighting near Hill 112, southwest of Caen—engagements that eventually wore down the II SS Panzer Corps.

during which it had been repeatedly attacked by Allied air forces. These three divisions now formed the main German force around Caen.

On June 13 came the Villers-Bocage operation in which Montgomery committed his veteran Eighth Army divisions: the 51st Highland and 7th Armoured (the "Desert Rats")—the latter with four regiments and nearly 300 tanks. The Highlanders would attack southward east of Caen toward Cagny, while 7th Armoured would attack through Tilly and toward Villers-Bocage.

Imperial War Museum

An infantry patrol from the British 8th Rifle Brigade, armed with Lee-Enfield rifles and a Bren gun, advances near Eterville, southwest of Caen, on June 29, 1944.

Then British 1st Airborne Division, still in England, would be dropped south of Caen and link up the two prongs, thus surrounding Caen. However, warned by the Ultra decodes from Bletchley Park of the impending counteroffensive by the Germans, Montgomery decided against committing the airborne troops, but he still decided to launch the attacks on both sides of Caen to forestall the Germans and keep the pressure on them.

On June 10-12, the 51st Highlanders pushed inland toward Cagny but soon found there was little hope of reaching it against the determined opposition of 21st Panzer, reinforced by elements of the 346th and 711th Divisions. On June 11, the Highlanders' attack was brought to a halt. The 5th Battalion, Black Watch Regiment went into action at 4:30 AM and suffered 200 casualties in an attempt to reach Bréville. The unit history recalled, "Every man of the leading platoon died with his face to the foe."

The next night the 12th Battalion of the Parachute Regiment took Bréville at a huge cost. Of the 160 men that went into action 141 became casualties, but they closed an alarming gap in the line. After this the offensive ground to a halt.

Meanwhile, 7th Armoured made slow progress south from Tilly toward Villers-Bocage. It was the first venture into the soon to be infamous Normandy "bocage" country—thickly banked hedgerows enclosing small fields separated by narrow winding lanes, many of which were lower than the surrounding fields. The countryside was ideal for antitank defense.

The bocage country into which the Desert Rats moved was defended by Lt. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein's Panzer Lehr. It was a strong division but had 10 miles of front to cover with its two tank and four infantry battalions.

Major General W.R.J. (Bobby) Erskine, commander of 7th Armoured, commented as his men moved off that he "never felt serious difficulty in beating down enemy resistance." However, enemy resistance increased and slowed Erskine's progress at Tilly on June 11. A gap was found in the German line between Caumont and Villers-Bocage, so 7th Armoured swung westward to exploit the hole, but the British were advancing on a narrow axis.

It took the British four days of bitter fighting to reach Villers-Bocage, losing men and tanks along the way. Early on the morning of June 13 they entered the town to be greeted by its exuberant population. The advanced guard of the 4th County of London Yeomanry and a motorized company of the Rifle Brigade headed out of the town toward the high ground of Point 213 and the road to Caen. There they were ambushed by the Tiger tanks of the 501st SS Heavy Tank Battalion.

The commander of the 501st's leading company was none other than Obersturmführer Michael Wittmann, who had won the Knight's Cross on the Eastern Front, where he had knocked out 117 Russian tanks. Hidden in woodland, he observed the leading elements of 7th Armoured leaving Villers-Bocage and allowed the British to approach close to his position before opening fire, destroying the leading Cromwell tank. He then left cover, confident in the Tiger's armor, and motored along the column, systematically destroying tanks while his machine guns dealt with the motorized infantry.

The 8th Hussars reconnaissance company came to the aid of the London Yeomanry. However, as they came into view the four other Tigers of Wittmann's company engaged them and drove them off. A second Tiger company soon joined Wittmann and entered the town. The British 6-pounder antitank guns were largely ineffective against the Tigers, but Wittmann's own tank was stopped when a track was blown off.

In the narrow streets of Villers-Bocage, the Tigers began to fall victim to close-range

weapons of the British infantry. After two Tigers were set on fire, the rest withdrew. Later that day, infantry of the Panzer Lehr retook the town while 7th Armoured fell back toward Tilly.

Erskine and Montgomery, having gained intelligence that another panzer division, the 2nd, had been identified in the area, approved the withdrawal. It was the first German armored division to reach Normandy from outside the area, moving from its base at Amiens.

On June 17, Adolf Hitler made his only visit to the French front at Margival, the underground German headquarters near Soissons. The purpose was to encourage his commanders, Erwin Rommel, head of Army Group B, and Gerd Von Rundstedt, commander-in-chief in western Europe (OB West). Hitler told them that reinforcements were on the move from Russia and the flying-bomb attacks on London were to be intensified.

Rommel spoke up and pointed out that the power of the Allied air forces and naval gunnery made counterattacks in strength extremely difficult. He felt a withdrawal out of range of the naval guns would be prudent and the bocage country would aid the defense. Hitler, to whom the word "withdrawal" was anathema, would not hear of it. Later, Rommel bravely suggested Germany should try to make peace with the Allies. Hitler screamed at him that it was a question "which is not your responsibility."

That evening a flying bomb in which the Führer had so much faith went out of control after being launched and hit the Margival compound. Hitler, protected by more than 20 feet of reinforced concrete, was not injured, but the close call convinced him to leave, canceling his planned visits to Rommel's front. He never returned.

A great storm on June 19-23 affected the Allied buildup, costing them 140,000 tons of stores. Montgomery rejected a new offensive east of the Orne, for he realized that committing single divisions would achieve little. Instead, he waited to commit the entire VIII Corps on a four-mile front between Carpiquet and Rauray, toward the wooded banks of the Odon. Three fresh divisions—15th Scottish, 43rd Wessex, and 11th Armoured—would be committed to Operation Epsom under Lt. Gen. Sir Richard O'Connor.

The Germans had nearly three weeks to prepare the defense, making good use of embanked hedgerows, sunken lanes, woods, and sturdy stone buildings. It was

Ullstein Bild

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: The Germans await: a pair of SS panzergrenadiers, supported by a Panther medium tank, man their MG-42 machine gun in a field near Caen, July 1944. LEFT: With wary expressions, British infantrymen of the 130th Brigade, 43rd (Wessex) Division take cover in the shelter of a hedgerow during a mortar barrage, July 10, 1944. The 43rd Division was heavily engaged in the battle for Hill 112.

five miles deep with interconnecting positions, which gave supporting zones of fire from a honeycomb of machine-gun nests. There was a second line two miles behind this with heavier weapons.

Starting on June 25, Operation Epsom was slow going for the British. The narrow corridor they advanced into found too many troops fighting off a single road. Thus VIII Corps was unable to deploy enough troops against the determined resistance by the 12th SS Panzer Division

"Hitlerjugend," which itself had suffered heavy casualties in the defense of Caen. The 12th SS had deployed its antiaircraft batteries as field artillery, and its engineer battalion was fighting in the infantry role.

The 49th British Division's advance on Rauray was stopped by the Germans, exposing the "Scottish Corridor" into which 15th Scottish advanced, exposed to counterattack. The British armor suffered heavy losses, as did the infantry from nests of machine guns and Nebelwerfers—multibarreled mortars. The advance ground to a halt on the Caen-Villers-Bocage road.

On the evening of June 27, the 2nd Battalion, Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders took the small Tourmauville bridge over the River Odon by slipping through a gap in the German defenses; they dug in and held on. The 11th Armoured was quickly up in support and across the bridge heading toward the Orne and open country. Lieutenant Pratt of C Squadron, 23rd Hussars, crossed the bridge half an hour after the Scots took it.

According to one historian, 11th Armoured's Shermans "ground along in low gear up a steep and twisting track through wooded and difficult country until they came out just south of the village of Tourmauville (south of the river) where, for the first time, they were able to fan out on ground that gave a good field of fire. Commanders and gunners strained their dust-filled eyes. Were some of those bushes camouflaged tanks?"

On June 28, B Squadron of the 23rd Hussars, 11th Armoured Division reached the top of Hill 112. A counterattack by elements of the 12th SS Panzer with Panther and Mark IV tanks, was beaten off but not before several Shermans were knocked out as the intensity of the German attacks increased. By then some 40 British tanks had been lost; however, the infantry and tanks had now been joined by the supporting arms, but their position on Hill 112 was tenuous, being surrounded on three sides and at the end of a long, exposed corridor.

Pressure had risen behind them farther back on the corridor between June 26-July 1. General Paul Hausser of II Panzer Corps launched the 9th, 10th, and part of the 2nd SS Panzer Divisions against the western flank of the corridor. The Germans were driven back by VIII Corps with the help of close air support by rocket-firing Hawker Typhoons. The British also had the advantage of Ultra decrypts warning them of the impending attack.

General Hausser reported, "Murderous fire from naval guns in the [English] Channel and the terrible British artillery destroyed the bulk of our attacking forces in their assembly area. The few tanks that did go forward were easily stopped by British antitank guns."

"MURDEROUS FIRE FROM NAVAL GUNS IN THE CHANNEL AND THE TERRIBLE BRITISH ARTILLERY DESTROYED THE BULK OF OUR ATTACKING FORCES IN THEIR ASSEMBLY AREA."

Midshipman Tony Robinson of the battleship HMS *Rodney* went ashore with the Guards Brigade and saw evidence of the effect of the naval gunfire from 15- and 16-inch guns. Near Tilly, they came across a Tiger tank and Robinson recalled, "The turret had been wrenched from the body of the tank and lay in the grass some distance away." Nearby he noticed the graves of the crew.

Lieutenant General Sir Miles Dempsey, commander of the British Second Army, felt Hausser's Panthers would launch another attack, so he ordered 11th Armoured to withdraw to the west bank of the Odon, thus retiring from Hill 112 with the approval of Montgomery, who wrote, "In view of this, it was decided that VIII Corps should concentrate for the time being on holding the ground won, and regrouping started with the object of withdrawing the armour into reserve ready for new thrusts."

Imperial War Museum

Hausser's SS panzer divisions did not renew their attack until late on June 30 and July 1, but by then the opportunity to cut the British off in the corridor had passed.

Thus Operation Epsom came to an end; the value of Hill 112 had not been appreciated at the time, nor the ineffective nature of the German counterattacks. In the month to come this would cost the troops who would fight for Hill 112 dearly during a new operation called Jupiter.

At the end of June 1944, Montgomery reviewed the situation. He felt he had been successful in that forcing the "enemy to place the bulk of his strength in front of the Second Army, we have made easier the acquisition of territory on the western [U.S.] flank." Second Army now

ABOVE: Moving from Caen toward Villers-Bocage, the British ran into stiff opposition at Hill 112, located about seven miles southwest of Caen. OPPOSITE: A Loyd carrier of the 8th Middlesex Regiment advances during the British attack in the Odon Valley, July 16—part of the fight to take Hill 112.

faced eight identified German panzer divisions, whereas there were only two on the American front.

Monty told his Army commanders, Dempsey and General Omar Bradley of the First U.S. Army, that they had to "retain the initiative" and "on no account must we remain inactive." Thus the Second British Army's main task was to hold the enemy in the Villers-Bocage area. Therefore, to keep the "pot boiling," the reinforced 43rd Wessex Division would attack Hill 112.

Days before Maj. Gen. Gwilym Thomas's 43rd Wessex Division attacked Hill 112 in an attempt to break out to the west, the Germans had wanted to relieve II SS Panzer Corps from its defensive role with infantry divisions. However, by the time of the attack on July 10, the key feature of Hill 112 was still held by the 10th SS Panzer Division "Frundsberg" with the 21st Panzergrenadier Regiment while 22nd Panzergrenadiers held the gap between the eastern edge of the hill and the Orne River. In support were the guns of the II SS Panzer Corps. The well dug-in SS soldiers with armored support would be a formidable foe for the 43rd Wessex to dislodge.

At dawn on July 10, the British opened the battle with a 15-minute bombardment by more than 1,000 guns, aided by cruisers, monitors, and battleships whose guns ranged from 6-inch to the 16-inch guns of HMS *Rodney*. At 5 AM the bombardment reached its climax, and four infantry battalions of the 130th Brigade rose from their start line and advanced toward the left flank of Hill 112. Moving through fields of tall wheat, they saw their objective, clearly marked by the dust of the bombardment above the hill.

With the 5th Dorsets leading the advance, the Les Duanes farm quickly fell, its defenders still stunned by the ferocious barrage. At Horseshoe Wood, the Germans, with more time to recover, put up stiff resistance. Lt. Col. Coad recalled, 'Winkling out the loathsome SS with rifle butt, bullet, and bayonet had been a costly affair.'

By 8 AM, the leading units had reached Eterville, where 4th Dorsets dug in around the hamlet but then received orders to press on to the village of Maltot. They advanced in extended line through cornfields toward the village but came under heavy machine-gun fire and the shells from Tiger tanks in hull-down positions. Corporal Chris Portway, a section commander, recalled, "They knocked us down in lines." Reaching the village, the 4th Dorsets fought from house to house.

Unknown to Portway and his section, the order to withdraw had been given, and his men came under heavy fire from the British covering artillery. There he was captured—an event that left him stunned. "I couldn't believe that I'd never see the unit again," he said.

The 9th Royal Tank Regiment in open country beyond Eterville was covering the open flanks with its Churchills, heavily armored tanks but with poor 75mm guns that were no match for the German tanks. However, in support was an antitank regiment that had M10 tank destroyers mounting the excellent 17-pounder gun—the best Allied gun. But these vehicles were poorly armored and, even worse, had an open turret that proved to be a huge disadvantage as the crew could be knocked out by air bursts or even a well-placed mortar shell.

The 129th Brigade, unlike the 130th, had no villages to take. It was to advance on a wider front, its objective being the slopes of Hill 112. It was supported by the tanks of two squadrons from the 7th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (7/RTR) and Crocodiles—Churchill tanks equipped with flamethrowers—of 79th Armoured Division.

However, things began going wrong before the start. Captain D.I.M. Robbins of B Company, 4th Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment recalled, "We lined up in the open in the FUP [forming-up point] and over zoomed the artillery. It was very noisy and quite exciting.

"Suddenly some heavier artillery started coming whistling towards us like a train. I thought that this was unusual and that it may land near us, and it surely did. It was our 5.5-inch medium guns dropping short. They wrote off our leading platoon. I remember men from 11 Platoon lying all over the place and one chap being carted off with no legs. The company commander said, 'We can't go into battle with the SS like this.'

"The CO, Ted Luce, came up and said, 'What's left?' and I remember saying, 'Ten men from that platoon and a few from this.' 'Well,' he said, 'Form up, we haven't much time. We are going over.' At 0500 that depleted company went over."

From the high position of his halftrack, Major John Duke of the 224th Battery, 94th Field Regiment watched the advance through the fields of standing corn. "We quickly ran into heavy mortar fire," he said, "and found many wounded men crawling around in the standing corn and dead German SS antitank gunners lying around their guns.

"Bombardier Nobbs was soon able to report to Regimental HQ on his wireless that we had reached the first objective and Gunner Cox got a German Spandau [MG-42] and opened fire on some enemy infantry who appeared over the hill."

Shortly thereafter, Major Duke was wounded by fire from a group of Tiger tanks that had just arrived on the battlefield; the Wiltshire's antitank guns engaged the Tigers, stopping one tank. A standoff developed between the Wiltshire Battalion and 21st SS grenadiers with the Tigers in support. The Germans were held back by the 17-pounder antitank guns that took advantage of the standing corn to conceal their positions. But the Churchills of 7/RTR were caught in the open, and four tanks were destroyed by the Tigers.

The 4th Battalion, Somerset Regiment went into the assault on the right of the Wiltshires but had the advantage of much of their approach being through dead ground. However, from their start line they were in open view. A creeping barrage helped keep the Germans' heads down, but casualties in men and armor soon mounted. With the appearance of German Mark IV tanks on the crest, the panzergrenadiers counterattacked.

The Somersets were brought to a halt on the Caen-Evrecy road, unable to make further headway no matter the goading from Brigade HQ. Lieutenant Sydney Jarry of the Somersets described the British problems: "When we attacked a German position, the problem, though a simple one,

Imperial War Museum

was very difficult to overcome. Vastly superior infantry firepower, both small arms and antitank, was their trump card. A German infantry platoon could produce about five times our firepower. There was no way through the curtain of fire from the MG-42s. Sometimes, by stealth, we were able to bypass it; otherwise artillery or armoured support was necessary—often both. But due to their excellent anti-tank guns ... the use of armour could prove costly."

The 5th Wiltshire Battalion went to the right of the Somersets, the last in line of 129th Brigade. This unit had been in the line since June 29 and thus through its reconnaissance patrols knew the ground well. Their mission was to clear the Caen-Evrecy road and provide a flank guard to the southwest to protect the rest of the brigade once Hill 112 had been secured.

On their front, the British bombardment stunned the SS defenders. The 5th Wiltshires reached their objective relatively quickly but soon came under heavy shell and mortar fire, so they hastily dug in. C Company went farther forward to clear the enemy along the crest of the hill but quickly became pinned down by heavy fire; it was not until 5 PM that they could be extricated—a task that took much of 129th Brigade to achieve.

With 129th Brigade's assault stopped, 130th Brigade sent the 7th Hampshire Battalion forward to their objective: Maltot and the woods south of the village. Once Maltot fell, the plan was for the 4th Armoured Brigade to advance to the Orne and cross the river into open country. However, this depended on 129th Brigade holding the dominant feature of Hill 112, which they had failed to do.

The 7th Hampshires were reinforced on their right by two companies of the 5th Dorsets; in support was A Squadron, 9/RTR. The attack penetrated deep into the enemy positions but was subjected to a crossfire from Hill 112 and Maltot, the village being hurriedly supported by four German Tiger tanks that had arrived at the same time as the Hampshires.

Willi Fey, commanding the leading Tiger, said, "We reached the edge of the village.

British armoured units were well equipped with U.S. M4 Sherman tanks, shown here crossing an open wheat field in the Odon Valley near Evrecy, July 16.

Wasting no time, we pushed through the hedges. There in front of us were four Sherman tanks. Panzers halt. On the left hand, tank 200 meters. Fire at will. Two rounds finished that one on the left; the one on the right suffered a similar fate, and our platoon commander pushed forward to knock out a third. The fourth sought safety by rushing back along the road." (Newly arrived from the Russian front, the German unit's ability to recognize Allied tanks was not their strong point; these tanks were Churchills, not Shermans.)

The 7th Hampshires reported to 130th Brigade HQ that they had occupied Maltot. However, this was not the case as many of the buildings were still defended by the Germans. The Dorsets west of the village were driven back. By midday the report had changed—the situation was now in the balance. The 9/RTR was buckling under the pressure, A Squadron having lost 75 percent of its tanks.

By 1 PM a stalemate had descended on the front. The Germans had contained the British advance but were exposed. It had taken a reinforced 10th SS Panzer Division to achieve this while the 9th SS Panzer Division was still some way off. The Germans were well aware of Montgomery's tactics but had to respond to stop a British breakout.

Meanwhile, the 43rd Wessex had little in reserve to continue the attack other than the 4th Armoured Brigade, whose commander, Brigadier Michael Carver, was unwilling to commit his lightly armored Shermans to the battle; he feared that if he did the leading regiment would suffer 75 percent casualties.

At 3 PM the British commanders met at the Fontaine Etoupefour church. From its tower they could see much of the area, and it was obvious Hill 112 had not been taken. Elements of 4th Armoured Brigade were brought south of the Odon to protect the gains from German counterattacks; elements of three SS panzer divisions had been identified in the area. The 4th Dorsets were ordered up to support the Hampshires at Maltot, while the 5th Battalion, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (5/DCLI), would try to take Hill 112.

Captain Pat Spencer Moore, ADC to the 43rd Wessex Division's commander, Maj. Gen. Gwilym Thomas, expressed his quandary: "It was clear to [Thomas] that only a completely fresh attack on Hill 112 could stabilise the battle, perhaps even win it, or perhaps incur even more shattering losses? It was a gamblers throw by Thomas ... he was gambling with the lives of hundreds of his well-trained but completely green young soldiers. It must have been a terrible decision...."

Meanwhile, an attack by the 20th SS Panzergrenadiers on Maltot confirmed the need to support the 130th Brigade. Artillery slowed down the Germans, but it took rocket-firing Typhoons to halt the advance. However, they were not as effective against concealed targets and did little to help the 129th Brigade's attempt to take Hill 112. Even so, the Hampshires were unable to hold onto Maltot; the 4th Dorsets approaching the village met the Hampshires withdrawing.

BBC reporter Chester Wilmot witnessed the scene: "By now that wood was enveloped in smoke ... not the black smoke of hostile mortars but white smoke laid by our guns as a screen for our infantry who were being forced to withdraw. We could see them moving back through the waist-high corn, and out of the smoke behind them, came angry flashes as the German tanks fired from Maltot.

"But even as the infantry were driven back, another battalion was moving forward to relieve them, supported by Churchill tanks firing tracer over the heads of the advancing men. They moved right past our hedge out across the corn. The Germans evidently saw them coming, for away to our right flank machine guns opened up and then the Nebelwerfers."

By 4:45 PM, the Dorsets had reached Maltot and were street fighting with the SS panzergrenadiers for possession of the shattered village. At 8:30 the 4th Dorsets were

given permission to withdraw, but many were captured, not having received the order. Of the Dorset battalion that fought at Eterville and Maltot, only five officers and 80 men reassembled in Horseshoe Wood.

The attack of 5/DCLI late on July 10 was the last throw in Operation Jupiter. They had to cross 400 yards of open ground to reach the crest of Hill 112. A heavy bombardment would proceed the advance, and they would be supported by 7/RTR. At 8:30 PM, the DCLI stepped off, their objective the woods and orchards on the crest of Hill 112. As they went forward, every available gun supported them—even the antiaircraft Bofor guns. The 7/RTR was late arriving and went forward with A Company in support of the leading companies.

At 9 PM, the report reached the German command that British tanks had taken Hill 112 from the worn-out 3/21 Panzergrenadiers. Having gained the position, 5/DCLI dug in behind banks and hedges; they knew the inevitable counterattack would be coming.

It was dark by the time the SS infantry, supported by Tigers, attacked. The Cornish infantry stopped the grenadiers, and the Tigers were wary to go on alone, fearing the British PIATs (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank—a hand-held antitank weapon) at close range. However, losses in the bigger 6- and 17-pounder British antitank guns mounted.

Another German attack came near midnight as B Company of DCLI had to abandon the forward hedge. Private John Mitchell described the desperate fighting: "My mate and I were digging in, in the second to last hedgerow from the crest. We both cried out in dismay as the hedge came down on top of us; a Panther most likely, was pivoted on the bank and we were underneath, with the tracks on either side of us. The large gun on the tank fired, it was deafening, so much so we hardly heard the shell hit the underbelly of the tank inches from us. It was a 'PIAT' fired by one of our lads at close range. The Panther backed off the bank as it was possibly damaged."

As the night wore on, 5/DCLI's strength ebbed away. Lt. Col. Dick Jones, a 26-year-old prewar Territorial soldier, had only been in command of the battalion for two weeks, but he displayed exemplary leadership. At dawn on July 11, the DCLI was still holding on, having repulsed numerous attacks throughout the night. They received word that a company of the 1st Worcester Battalion and a squadron of the Scots Greys from 4th Armoured Brigade were to support them; however, the lightly armored Shermans were no match for the German tanks. In a short time the Scots Greys were reduced to four tanks after they had attracted the fire of 9th SS Panzer, which had occupied the southern slopes of Hill 112.

CLASH OF ARMOR: THE OPPOSING TANKS

The Churchill Mark IV was the most widely used Allied tank during Operation Jupiter. Production began in 1940; by 1944 it was in the MK VII guise mounting a 75mm gun. It was slow with a speed of 15mph but heavily armored, being five tons heavier than the Sherman.

The Crocodile flamethrowing tank was based on the Churchill and widely used in the Normandy campaign. It carried flame fuel in a towed trailer and was used to support attacks against well dug-in German infantry positions.

The Sherman M4 was the mainstay of the Allied armored formations. It was reliable and efficient, but by 1944 suffered from thin armor and lack of firepower. Some Shermans mounted the 17-pounder British gun and were called Fireflies. However, even this variant and the later 76mm M4A3E8 were generally handicapped against German armor.

Half the German armored units in Normandy were equipped with the Panzer IV, looked on as obsolescent in 1944. However, the upgunned version, mounting the 75mm KWK 40 gun, known as the MK IV Special, was a formidable opponent, albeit slow and with a poor climbing performance due to its side skirts.

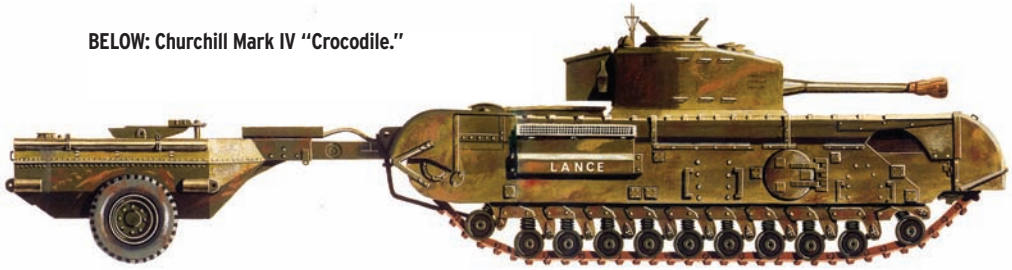
The Panzer VI Tiger became the most feared of German tanks; its 88mm KwK 36 gun had a devastating punch. The 20-pound shell could pierce 100mm of armor at 1,000 yards, making the Sherman, with its 76mm of frontal armor, easy prey.

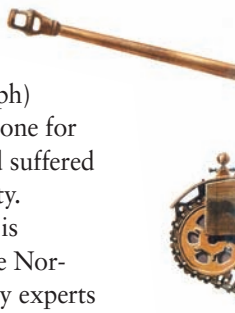
The 54-ton Tiger was heavily armored and superb in defense but was slow (23 mph) and needed two sets of tracks, one for travel and one for combat, and suffered from poor mechanical reliability.

The Panzer Mark V Panther is regarded as the best tank of the Normandy campaign; indeed, many experts consider it as the best design of World War II. Less heavily gunned than the Tiger but far more mobile and reliable, it weighed 45 tons and had a top speed of 34 mph. The 14-pound shell fired from its 75mm KwK 42 gun could also pierce 100mm of armor at 1,000 yards.

Its only weakness against the Sherman was slow turret traverse. It was the first German tank with a sloping glacis plate, showing the clear influence of the Russian

BELOW: Churchill Mark IV "Crocodile."





The 3rd Battalion, 9th SS Panzergrenadiers launched a fresh attack in broad daylight. Control for them was better, but it also gave the British the advantage of using their artillery. Colonel Jones himself climbed a tree from which he had a clear view of the Germans; he called down map references to a signaler, Private Jack Foster, to relay to the batteries. He was no doubt glad to see the enemy withdrawing under the heavy, accurate fire. However, he was spotted and a burst of fire killed the heroic colonel.

At about 3 PM, the SS mounted another attack. A Major Fry, the sole surviving officer, now gave the order to withdraw; 5/DCLI had been in action for 21 hours. It had been "a battle of shattering intensity even by the standards of Normandy," as one historian wrote. Others compared the bombardments to those suffered at Passchendaele during World War I.

Hill 112 had not been held by the British, nor had the Orne crossing been seized, but they had not been the real objective. Rather, four SS panzer divisions had been drawn into a defensive battle and worn down to such an extent that II SS Panzer Corps would never again reach the level of strength it had on July 10, 1944.

Montgomery came in for some criticism for his handling of the Normandy campaign. Patton commented, "Montgomery went to great lengths explaining why the British had done nothing." Eisenhower, under pressure from Washington, wrote, 'It appears to me that we must use all possible energy in a determined effort to prevent the risk of a stalemate."

Montgomery was certainly not the easiest man to get on with and not always right, but history, the great arbitrator, has come to see Operation Jupiter not as a tactical success for the 43rd Wessex Division, but rather a strategic success for Montgomery. □

T-34 tank on its design. But the Americans held the edge in tank production; 49,000 Shermans were built during the war, while the Germans built only 5,805 Panthers.

ABOVE: German Panzer Mark V "Panther." BELOW: U.S.-built M4 Sherman "Firefly" with 17-pounder gun.

National Archives

ABOVE: Two German Mark V Panthers of the Panzer Lehr Division lie destroyed after British attacks on July 13, 1944. BELOW: A British 17-pounder antitank gun and Morris C8 Quad artillery tractor knocked out and burning after the battle for Hill 112, July 15.

Imperial War Museum

MARCHING THROUGH New Georgia

After their defeat at Guadalcanal, the Japanese hoped to forestall U.S. advances in the Pacific by fortifying New Georgia Island. Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey had other ideas. **BY JON DIAMOND**

Vice Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, commander of the U.S. 3rd Fleet, did not want another protracted campaign like he had experienced while trying to take Munda in New Georgia. He stated, "The undue length of the Munda operation and our casualties made me wary of another slugging match, but I didn't know how to avoid it."

As a result, rather than assault every island occupied by Japanese forces, he decided to bypass them and allow them to "wither on the vine" while moving on to capture more essential islands. But it was a hard-learned lesson.

Early Allied victories in the Pacific War, beginning in May 1942, have been identified as campaigns that stemmed thevictorious Japanese tide of 1941-1942. First, the "strategic victory" of the U.S. Navy's carrier air forces at the Battle of the Coral Sea during the first week of May 1942 thwarted the Imperial Japanese Navy's (IJN) amphibious assault against Port Moresby on the southern coast of New Guinea, protecting northern Australia across the Arafura Sea.

Second was the U.S. Navy's sinking of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's four aircraft carriers at Midway in early June 1942, which crippled future IJN initiatives on the scale mounted during the war's initial six months.

Third, the Americans' epic, grueling conquest of Guadalcanal in the southern Solomon Islands by land, sea, and air forces from August 7, 1942, through February 7, 1943, deterred any planned Japanese southeastward expansion into the South Pacific, which was intended to sever the sea lanes to the Antipodes.

Fourth, the initial defense by Australian military forces in New Guineaalong the Kokoda Trail and at Milne Bay in August-September 1942 prevented separate Japanese overland and amphibious assaults, respectively, aimed at seizing Port Moresby. This was followed by a combined Australian-American offensive from November 1942-January 1943, under General Douglas A. MacArthur, through the hellacious northern Papuan jungle and coast to capture the entrenched and tenaciously defended Japanese garrisons at Buna and Gona.

What has been ignored, however, is the backbreaking series of defeats that the Japanese suffered in their attempts to defend the New Georgia group of islands in the central Solomons. The toll in Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) units, naval ships, aircraft and crews was never replaced after the defeats suffered on those jungle hellholes—especially given the requirement of Imperial forces elsewhere in the Central Pacific and on New Guinea and the Asian mainland.

Additionally, the capture of Japanese airdromes on these central Solomon Islands brought the fledgling Allied air campaign closer to Rabaul on New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago.

The Solomon chain, consisting of six major islands and many smaller ones, is more than 500 miles long. Bougainville, 300 miles to the north of Guadalcanal, is one of the most northern in the island chain as well as the largest at 130 miles long and 30 miles wide.

Soldiers of the 27th Regiment, 25th Infantry ("Tropic Lightning") Division cross an improvised bridge over a stream in the dense jungle near Zieta village on New Georgia, August 1943. Although overshadowed by other, better known Pacific battles and campaigns, the New Georgia campaign was one of the most difficult faced by U.S. and New Zealand forces.

National Archives

North of Guadalcanal lay the 11 main islands in the central Solomons, with New Georgia, at 45 by 35 miles, being largest. The Japanese had situated a major airfield and base at Munda Point on New Georgia's southwestern tip. Munda Point is the approximate center of the central Solomon group and is situated about 170 miles northwest of Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Other islands in this group include Kolombangara, Arundel, Vella Lavella, Gizo, Ganongga, Tetipari, Gatukai, Vangunu, and Rendova. Rendova is located about seven miles south of New Georgia across the Blanche Channel.

The proximity of Rendova to Munda Point played a major role in Halsey's strategic plans for his offensive after securing the Russell Islands following the Guadalcanal victory. The Russell Islands, some 125 miles southeast of New Georgia, were the obvious stepping stones for Halsey's South Pacific Force to advance toward the central Solomons.

The terrain of New Georgia is typical of the islands in the central Solomons, with heavy rain forests covering volcanic cores. The coastline of the island is irregular with many inlets, lagoons, and channels. Immediately inland from the coast are rugged, jungle-covered cliffs; suitable landing beaches were few in number.

The Japanese reconnoitered New Georgia in October 1942 with the intent of building suitable airfields to support the action on Guadalcanal. As early as December 1942, American scout planes discovered the Japanese hard at work on a well-camouflaged airfield at Munda Point. Elements of the Sasebo 6th Special Naval Landing Force (SNLF) along with some IJA detachments and construction crews had arrived in late November. American pilots also observed that another Japanese airfield was being completed at Vila on Kolombangara across the Kula Gulf from northwestern New Georgia.

By the first week of February 1943, the Guadalcanal campaign was won by the U.S. Marines, Army, and Navy after almost six months of horrific jungle combat, aerial attacks, and naval surface

By landing at several points in the New Georgia group, American forces were able to pin their opponents into areas from which escape would be difficult, if not impossible.

actions. However, the Japanese did not consider Guadalcanal's evacuation more than a temporary setback in the South Pacific. Both the emperor and his military leaders expounded that Japanese forces were simply changing emphasis. For several months they had been on the offensive on Guadalcanal and on the defensive in Papua, New Guinea. A reversal was soon to occur.

For the IJA, after its eviction from Buna and Gona, the important matter was the capture of all of New Guinea with a renewed drive for Port Moresby from Lae in northeast New Guinea. The Solomons in the South Pacific were to be an IJN problem, under the continued leadership of the Japanese Combined Fleet Commander, Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto. This disunity in effort and planning between the Japanese armed forces had major corrosive effects in subsequent campaigns, which bore little resemblance to the lightning string of victories from December 1941 to May 1942.

Yamamoto wanted to regain the strategic initiative and win one additional major victory after the losses at Coral Sea, Midway, Papua, and Guadalcanal. A decisive Japanese victory in 1943 might compel the Allies to seek a negotiated peace and allow the Japanese to keep their new Pacific empire.

During the first week of February 1943, shortly after the successful Japanese evacuation of Guadalcanal, Operation Ke, Yamamoto drew a new defensive line in the South Pacific running north to south through the middle of the Solomons. He had withdrawn his advanced IJN bases to newly constructed airfields and installations on New Georgia, Kolombangara, and Vella Lavella in the central Solomons.

With the abandonment of Guadalcanal, Imperial headquarters in Tokyo made plans to reinforce the area to regain the initiative. The IJA and IJN would have to work together again with the latter bringing in supplies and ground reinforcements to the garrisons—especially on New Georgia with its airfield at Munda Point.

Yamamoto was responsible for continued operations in the Solomons, while Lt. Gen.

Hitoshi Imamura, the 8th Area Army commander on Rabaul, directed the ground forces in the central Solomons. The IJA troops in the Solomons included the 17th Army under Lt. Gen. Harukichi (Seikichi) Hyakutake.

Following their defeat on Guadalcanal, the Japanese still retained a distinct advantage in the Solomons. Their fighter aircraft—the IJN Mitsubishi A6M Reisen, or Zero, along with the IJA Nakajima Ki-43 Hayabusa, or Oscar—had longer ranges (nearly 2,000 miles) than American fighter planes. Additionally, the central Solomon airfields at Munda, Vila, and Barakoma (on Vella Lavella) were to be staging areas for Japanese air raids emanating from Rabaul to attack the American bases at Tulagi and Guadalcanal.

At these central Solomon airfields, Japanese planes refueled and had emergency landing sites to conserve the diminishing number of skilled pilots, many of whom had been lost in air combat elsewhere. During the late winter of 1943, American fighters based on Guadalcanal did not have the range to reach Rabaul, engage the enemy in aerial combat, and return to their bases. Recognizing this logistical advantage, Yamamoto intended to reinvigorate his air attacks on Guadalcanal from his airdromes on Rabaul.

After Yamamoto built the central Solomon airfields, the Japanese admiral had compelled the IJA to initially provide roughly 10,000 protective garrison troops for them, including the complex at Munda Point on New Georgia.

Ironically, during a morale-boosting trip to the northern Solomons on April 18, 1943, Yamamoto's personal IJN Mitsubishi G4M3 Betty bomber was shot down by Guadalcanal-based U.S. Army Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighters. Admiral Mineichi Koga took over the Combined Fleet after Yamamoto's death.

Between February and May 1943, the Japanese reinforced New Georgia and Kolombangara with additional IJA and SNLF troops, not knowing which was to be Halsey's first objective in the U.S. Navy's central Solomons campaign. In early May 1943, the commander of the 8th Area Army on Rabaul, General Hitoshi Imamura, chose Maj. Gen. Minoru (Noboru) Sasaki to lead the defense of New Georgia and Kolombangara with the designation Commanding General, Southeast Area Detachment, under the administrative direction of the IJA's 17th Army and the IJN's 8th Fleet situated at Rabaul.

National Archives

Lieutenant Colonel Lester Brown (standing) briefs officers of the 103rd Regiment, 43rd Infantry Division, dressed in camouflage-pattern uniforms, prior to boarding several LCIs (Landing Craft, Infantry) in the Russell Islands for transport to Rendova, June 1943.

Sasaki had three years of combat service with an emphasis on mechanized warfare. He was to command troops of the 38th Infantry Group, comprising of elements of the IJA 6th and 38th Divisions, with headquarters at Vila. By the end of May 1943, the Japanese garrison on New Georgia numbered approximately 8,000 troops. At the time of Halsey's invasion of New Georgia in July, there would be 5,000 IJA and 5,500 SNLF troops on New Georgia, with an additional 4,200 troops available on Santa Isabel Island northeast of New Georgia and due north of the Russell Islands.

It was obvious to the Japanese high command that after the Americans secured Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands Allied fighters would be able to attack Kolombangara and New Georgia Island without much difficulty. Additionally, Munda airfield came under marauding U.S. Navy destroyer gunfire as early as March 1943. Halsey's strategists planned for the seizure of Rendova, south of Munda Point, to serve as a staging area for the main invasion of New Georgia. Rendova was to also serve as an excellent artillery platform to shell Munda airfield with 105mm howitzers and the longer range 155mm "Long Tom" M2 cannons.

Halsey's central Solomons offensive initially utilized the heavily reinforced U.S. 43rd Infantry Division, transported from both Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands, to secure tactical vantage points at four locales in the immediate vicinity for the eventual invasion of New Georgia and capture of Munda airfield.

The original plan for the invasion of New Georgia was prepared by Halsey's war plans officer, Marine Brig. Gen. DeWitt Peck; however, Allied plans for offensives in the South Pacific were constantly subject to revision. Peck's early plans called for the landing of a division-strength contingent at Segi Point on the

Naval History and Heritage Command

southeastern end of New Georgia. Halsey's ground forces would then move west in an overland trek to take Munda airfield.

Other officers had serious doubts about the feasibility of both the amphibious landing site at Segi Point and the march to assault Munda through New Georgia's southern coastal jungle, which was dotted with Japanese outposts.

The Japanese defenders on New Georgia had speculated that the Americans would land at Dragon Peninsula on the southwestern coast and attempt a shorter overland assault on Munda airfield. Most other coastal sites had only small landing areas with thick, trackless jungle. Sasaki felt that a landing along the Dragon Peninsula would enable him to receive major reinforcements from southern Bougainville and Vila on Kolombangara to quickly bolster a defense-in-depth around Munda.

As the fractious American assault planning for New Georgia continued, an initial reconnaissance of the island was made by Marine Lieutenant William P. Coultas, an intelligence officer on Halsey's staff, accompanied by six other Marines. This contingent landed at Segi Point on March 3, 1943. There, they met the colorful Donald Kennedy and stayed at his armed compound, which included an arsenal and a prisoner-of-war cage at the former Markham Plantation. Kennedy was a British district officer who provided oversight for the western islands and was originally stationed on Santa Isabel Island.

When the Japanese arrived on New Georgia, Kennedy escaped to Segi Point with its more central location and protected approaches with secluded coastal channels. At Segi Point he became a pivotal member of the Australian coastwatching network with expertise in radio repair and communications. Kennedy also commanded an armed local native constabulary that rescued downed Allied pilots, from aerial combat in the region.

Coultas and his fellow leathernecks spent three weeks reconnoitering the area behind enemy lines that the Americans were to soon invade and examining Kennedy's maps at his coastwatching headquarters. Coultas had prewar experience in the Solomon Islands and spoke pidgin with Kennedy's native scouts, who assisted his reconnaissance and evasion of Japanese patrols.

Another coastwatcher Coultas met at Segi Point was Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RANVR) Lieutenant A.R. Evans, a prewar purser aboard a steamer in the Solomons, who would play a prominent role in the extraction of future American president Lieutenant (j.g.) John F. Kennedy and his crew after the ramming and sinking of their *PT-109* by the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri* in Blackett Strait on August 2, 1943.

JFK's motor torpedo vessel was attempting to interdict enemy destroyer traffic from Rabaul (the Tokyo Express), which was bringing reinforcements to Vila and Munda airfields on Kolombangara and New Georgia. In early March 1943, Evans was about to depart for Kolombangara to observe the Japanese airfield construction at Vila, which

was to support the enemy airdrome at Munda Point.

After his reconnoitering was complete, Coultas reported to Halsey's headquarters at Noumea on New Caledonia that a large-scale assault on New Georgia was still possible but not through Segi Point. Coincident with Coultas's mission, four other Marine patrols with the aid of other coastwatchers in the central Solomon area explored the Roviana Lagoon on the Dragon Peninsula's eastern shore and identified Zanana and Laiana Beaches as suitable amphibious landing areas. The reports of these Marine scouting patrols clearly demonstrated that Halsey's assault on New Georgia could be made at points much closer to Munda than had previously been thought.

Halsey's planners now called for landing separate forces at a number of sites in preparation for a major amphibious landing at Zanana beach via the Roviana Lagoon. Rendova, with its barrier islets and harbor, was to be transformed into a PT boat and forward artillery base to interdict the IJN's seaborne supply runs and to shell Munda.

Three additional targets were deemed necessary to occupy for the eventual seizure of Munda airfield. These included Segi Point, Brig. Gen. Peck's original main landing position, on the southeastern end of New Georgia near Donald Kennedy's compound; Viru Harbor, a Japanese base up the southern coast of New Georgia west of Segi Point; and Wickham Anchorage, a well-situated, sheltered Japanese-occupied harbor off Vangunu Island's eastern coast, to the east of Segi Point.

The American landing at Segi Point was launched in response to fears of a looming Japanese assault there by the entire 1st Battalion, 229th IJA Infantry Regiment. The Japanese objectives were to seize Kennedy's fortified base and subsequently build their own airfield at Segi Point. However, Halsey's planners wanted a fighter strip to be built there by the U.S. Navy Construction Battalions, or Seabees. An airstrip at Segi Point would minimize the distance Halsey's planes had to fly on missions to the central Solomons from their current airfields on Guadalcanal and from newly constructed ones in the Russell Islands.

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: U.S. Marines fire at Japanese snipers hidden in the dense foliage at one of the landing beaches. Enemy opposition was heavier than U.S. planners expected. OPPOSITE: Riding in assault craft, Army infantrymen and medics land on a New Georgia beach, where they will be met by native guides.

Half of the 4th Marine Raider Battalion, under Lt. Col. Michael Currin, landed at Segi Point on June 20-21, 1943, as part of Halsey's Eastern Landing Force. Colonel Harry B. Liversedge, who oversaw the stateside training of Marine Raider battalions in September 1942, commanded the newly formed (March 1943) 1st Marine Raider Regiment, composed of the 1st and 4th Battalions.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment, 43rd Division along with an airfield survey party also landed at Segi Point on June 22 to assist the Marines. The Eastern Landing Force's mission was to protect Kennedy's base and the surrounding area for the planned American airfield from any Japanese encroachment from either Viru Harbor or Wickham Anchorage.

As no major encounter occurred at Segi Point, the detachment from the 4th Marine Raider Battalion moved west through intense rain and thick mud to attack Japanese installations at Viru Harbor from the rear on June 30, 1943. After some firefights and a failed Japanese banzai charge by 250 men of the IJA 229th Infantry Regiment, the Marine Raiders captured the enemy compound and a landing-barge facility and shore battery at Viru.

After ferreting out enemy snipers in the surrounding jungle and with the surviving Japanese retreating west to Munda over jungle trails, the Marines turned over the area to Army troops. By July 1, the Japanese position at Viru Harbor ceased being an issue for Halsey's subsequent movements through Blanche Channel toward the Dragon Peninsula and Rendova.

Another element of Halsey's Eastern Landing Force seized Wickham Anchorage on June 30, 1943. With its location between Vangunu and Gatukai Islands east of Segi Point, Halsey planned it as a fueling station for PT boats and other small craft moving north from Guadalcanal.

On June 30, Halsey's Western Landing Force assaulted Rendova during intense tropical rain at that island's North Point. Elements of the 169th Infantry Regiment,

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The Japanese staged air raids to counter the American invasion. Here, smoke from an exploding Japanese bomb drifts over a U.S. Army 155mm "Long Tom" gun on Rendova that was bombarding enemy positions on New Georgia. OPPOSITE: With their tube at maximum elevation, a mortar crew from the 172nd Regiment, 43rd Infantry Division lobs rounds at a nearby Japanese machine-gun nest.

43rd Division also seized two smaller barrier islands, Bau and Kokorana, to keep Blanche Channel's approach to Rendova harbor open.

The 43rd Infantry Division's 172nd Regimental Combat Team's (RCT) 3,500 men and a battalion of the 103rd Infantry Regiment landed at Rendova and faced no more than 400 Japanese in a series of firefights. The Japanese troops were in company strength from the 3rd Battalion, 229th Infantry Regiment and the 2nd Company of the 6th Kure SNLF.

U.S. Navy destroyers accompanying the transports silenced some Japanese artillery batteries on Munda Point. Fortunately for the Americans landing on Rendova, the majority of Japanese naval guns at Munda were not properly sited to fire on the assault beaches. Also, the Japanese mountain guns at Munda did not have the range to harass the Western Landing Force's amphibious assault. A few of the enemy on Rendova escaped to Munda.

As the soldiers of the 172nd RCT moved inland from the beachhead on July 1, the Marine 9th Defense Battalion erected antiaircraft emplacements for their 90mm, 40mm Bofors, 20mm, and .50-caliber guns around the Rendova Plantation.

The predictable Japanese aerial counterattack, although with only Zero fighters from Rabaul, ensued that morning. Allied fighters were dispatched from Guadalcanal and protected the invasion fleet without losing a ship.

Another late afternoon Japanese air attack with both fighters and torpedo bombers disabled Admiral Turner's command transport, the USS *McCawley,* which was later inadvertently sunk that night, probably by torpedoes from an American PT boat.

During the next few days, Japanese air attacks inflicted 150 casualties on Americans at the Rendova beachhead and destroyed several landing craft. Japanese cruisers and destroyers also moved through "The Slot," the channel running between islands in the Solomons, at night to harass the beachhead; however, the success of the Rendova landings was complete. Long-range artillery was in position to shell Munda airfield, although the Marines and soldiers on Rendova had to contend with the ceaseless rain, tenacious mud, and numerous treetop-level Japanese air attacks.

Rendova was secured on July 4, 1943. Halsey's staff anticipated that after four days on Rendova sufficient men and matériel would be concentrated for an assault across Roviana Lagoon to Zanana Beach on the southeastern side of the Dragon Peninsula on July 4-5, to commence the direct invasion of New Georgia with a large-scale force at a site closer to Munda airfield than originally planned.

General Sasaki was at Munda and observed firsthand the successful American landings at Rendova. The Japanese commander did not swiftly contest Halsey's Rendova attack since he believed that the Americans were going to land at Lamberti Plantation or Munda Point itself.

However, on June 30, 1943, Sasaki personally observed two companies of the U.S. 169th Infantry Regiment occupying two islets, Baraulu and Sasavelle, on either side of Onaiavisi Entrance, the waterway leading from Blanche Channel into Roviana Lagoon and Zanana Beach. Sasaki concluded that Zanana Beach was where Halsey intended to land on New Georgia in strength.

Upon sighting the Americans on these islets, Sasaki ordered his outlying garrisons in eastern New Georgia to withdraw inland toward Munda, some 200 of whom were available to defend the airfield in mid-July through early August.

Halsey had placed U.S. Army Maj. Gen. John H. Hester, commander of the 43rd Infantry Division (a New England National Guard Unit), as commander of the New Georgia Occupation Force (NGOF). Hester's mission, after moving from Rendova to Zanana Beach, was to march west to seize Munda airfield.

On July 3-5, Hester began ferrying troops over in landing craft or coastal transport vessels, Assault Purpose Destroyers (APDs) that were converted World War I destroyers, from Rendova to Zanana Beach. His landing force included major elements the 43rd Infantry Division's 169th and 172nd Infantry Regiments, a battalion of Army field artillery, two battalions of Navy Seabees, a small detachment of the 1st Fiji Division,

elements of the 9th Marine Defense Battalion, and other units of the Fleet Marine Force.

To assist isolating Munda airfield, Colonel Liversedge took 2,600 men of the 1st Marine Raider Battalion, 1st Marine Raider Regiment along with the 3rd Battalion from each of the 145th and 148th Infantry Regiments of the 37th Division to occupy Rice Anchorage on the far western coast of New Georgia along Kula Gulf opposite Kolombangara.

Although the 1st Marine Raider Regiment was originally composed of the 1st and 4th Raider Battalions, half of the 4th Raider Battalion was deployed along the south coast of New Georgia at Segi Point and Viru Harbor, while its other half was at Wickham Anchorage on the southeast coast of Vangunu Island. Liversedge's formation was designated the Northern Landing Force.

Rice Anchorage was a swampy river delta northeast of the Japanese positions at Enogai Inlet and Bairoko Harbor. With the aid of native scouts and coastwatcher guides, approach routes to Enogai Inlet from Rice Anchorage were hacked out of the jungle.

After arriving unopposed, the Marines and soldiers were met with Japanese 140mm artillery shelling from Enogai, which scattered their naval landing force, leaving the Americans without supplies and isolated until Enogai could be taken. The capture of Enogai and the subsequent intended assault on Bairoko were to prevent the Japanese from reinforcing the Munda area through Bairoko Harbor from Vila on Kolombangara.

Liversedge's force proceeded on an eight-mile overland march from Rice Anchorage that became a protracted three-day ordeal as the Americans had to traverse flooded jungle swamps and two rivers running high because of the torrential rainfall.

The Marines of the 1st Raider Battalion were to directly assault the Japanese garrison at Enogai on the western side of Enogai Inlet, while the two inexperienced Ohio National Guard battalions of the 37th Division were to secure the inland trails and communication routes in the vicinity.

The Japanese barge base at Enogai was defended by a garrison of 800 6th Kure SNLF troops. In addition, the enemy base had a battery of four 140mm rifled naval guns sited to command Kula Gulf; Marine patrols had recovered the detailed plans for Enogai's defense from dead Japanese soldiers.

After five days of sporadic jungle combat between company-sized forces, the Japanese positions at Enogai collapsed on July 10, the enemy survivors either having fled to Bairoko or having attempted to swim to small islands offshore in Kula Gulf under Marine gunfire from the shoreline.

The encounter left a casualty list of 48 dead Marine Raiders and nearly a hundred other casualties as Liversedge radioed for PBY Catalina flying boats to be dispatched to extricate the wounded. The dead Marines were buried at a small, improvised cemetery at Enogai.

In addition, there were resupply and reinforcement issues for the Army units of the 3rd Battalion, 145th Regiment, which was maintaining a blocking position on the Bairoko-to-Munda trail that was established to interdict Japanese reinforcements from the airfield. Disease, lack of rations, and near continuous jungle combat had reduced the battalion's strength of 750 men by half.

Liversedge had to eventually abandon the trail block and ordered the surviving soldiers back to Triri, farther inland, to refit and prepare for the upcoming Bairoko assault.

The 1st Raider Battalion was reinforced with elements of the re-deployed 4th Raider Battalion, under Lt. Col. Michael S. Currin, which had landed at Enogai on July 18.

The remnants of both Marine Raider battalions continued on to the main enemy

Both: National Archives

position at Bairoko Harbor and assaulted it from the north on July 20. The Army units were to mount a converging attack from Triri to the east using an inland trail leading to Bairoko. Smaller Army detachments remained to cover both the Triri and Rice Anchorage bases.

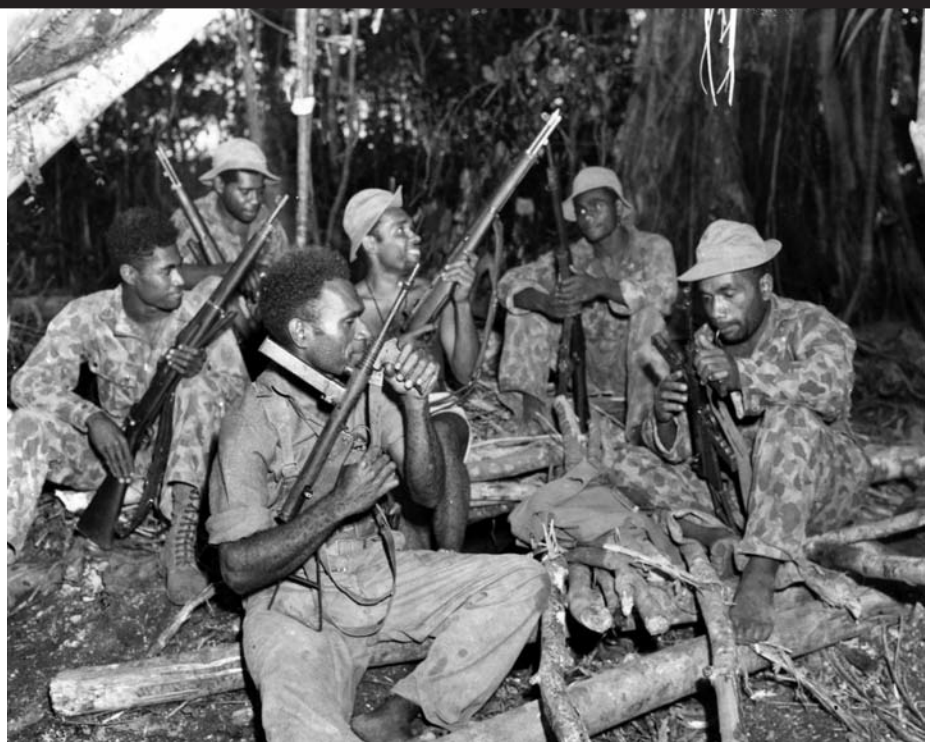
The Japanese defenses at Bairoko were fortified with a battalion-sized garrison in possession of 90mm mortars and pack artillery; Marine 60mm mortars could not reduce the entrenched enemy positions. The Army units on inland trails made little headway against prepared enemy positions. Subsequently, the Raiders and Army units suffered grievously, the former accruing a 20 percent casualty rate through a lack of air support and absence of accurate artillery fire to reduce the Japanese bunkers.

Liversedge correctly feared that the enemy garrison at Bairoko would be heavily reinforced from Vila during the night of July 21. Finally, continued Japanese heavy mortar fire necessitated Liversedge's withdrawal of the Northern Landing Force to Enogai. In the early hours of July 22, Liversedge radioed his superiors, "Request all available planes strike both sides Bairoko Harbor beginning 0900. You are covering our withdrawal."

The Marines were dealt one of their few defeats in the South Pacific at Bairoko Harbor. The Japanese had held onto their barge base as the Northern Landing Force remained in possession of Enogai.

The Northern Landing Force's mission to Bairoko was indeed bungled as it pitted green Army infantry battalions against a veteran enemy in horrific jungle terrain. Classic U.S. Army infantry tactics that had been taught at the war colleges fell apart when having to cross neck-deep waterways and walk in single file beneath the jungle canopy's darkness.

Unlike other infantry combat locales, requested air strikes to neutralize Japanese machine-gun positions impervious to light infantry weaponry and near ceaseless mortar barrages failed to materialize. The enervating march of these American troops unfortunately bore a striking resemblance



ABOVE: Native soldiers of the 1st Commando, Fiji Guerrillas, under the command of New Zealanders, check weapons before heading out on patrol, July 26, 1943. OPPOSITE: Three M3 "Stuart" light tanks of the Marine Defense Platoon advance near Munda airfield, August 6, 1943. Fanatical defenders knocked out several tanks before being overrun.

to those of other inexperienced U.S. Army units that had fought the Japanese at Buna in northern Papua in late 1942.

Elsewhere along the eastern coast of New Georgia's Dragon Peninsula, General Hester's 169th and 172nd Infantry Regiments proceeded slowly out of the Zanana beachhead as separate advances toward the Barike River. The Japanese noted that both the weather and American tactical caution made the 43rd Division's advance a time-consuming, tedious one. By July 7, the two regiments finally reached the Barike River.

After receiving more than 3,500 fresh 13th Infantry Regiment reinforcements from Kolombangara via Bairoko, General Sasaki deployed them along with the 229th Infantry Regiment and elements of the 230th Infantry Regiment, the latter having fought on Guadalcanal, for upcoming counterattacks against the Zanana beachhead.

Sasaki had interposed elements of the 13th Infantry Regiment between the American 169th and 172nd Regiments on the southern portion of the Dragon Peninsula on the night of July 7. The Japanese struck the forward battalions of the 169th Regiment, with many American infantry companies literally falling apart amid the six hours of undisciplined gunfire and grenade throwing. After the previous night's enemy attack, the U.S. infantry regiments waited two additional days to prepare to launch their assault across the Barike River toward Munda to the southwest.

Hester unleashed a massive artillery barrage during the predawn hours of July 9 to herald his infantry's advance. The Japanese lines west of the Barike River were also plastered with more than 2,000 rounds of 5-inch high-explosive (HE) shells from a task force of four U.S. Navy destroyers.

As the naval fire ebbed, five U.S. Army artillery battalions opened up. The heavy bombardment buoyed the American infantrymen's spirits; however, negligible damage was inflicted on the Japanese positions. American intelligence officers had little information as to where the enemy positions were or to what extent they were fortified. The movement of the two Army regiments, although on schedule, lacked aggressiveness, enabling

the Japanese to remain in close contact with them while minimizing their exposure to the American artillery fire.

On July 10, five days after the landings at Zanana Beach, Hester's staff had concluded that Sasaki's forces were well entrenched in camouflaged coral and coconut log emplacements along the many hills leading to Munda. The NGOF would have to reduce these obstacles one at a time, often finding that others nearby were mutually supporting with an ample number of protected light and heavy machine guns screened by infantry in nearby rifle pits. Japanese mortars and light artillery pieces were well situated behind these defensive lines to wreak havoc on advancing American columns, and, in fact, stopped many units of the U.S. 169th Infantry Regiment in their tracks.

The colonel commanding this regiment and most of his staff were relieved of command by Hester and replaced by younger, more vigorous officers.

Hester realized that if he established a second beachhead at Laiana southwest of Zanana he could shorten his supply lines and assist his 169th Infantry Regiment's advance considerably as it had fallen far behind the 172nd's movement on its left flank. In fact, the 169th and 172nd Regiments were often out of contact with one another, enabling Japanese infiltrating units to harass the American supply lines and rear areas.

By the evening of July 13, the 172nd Infantry Regiment reached the Laiana area, but terrain, heat, and exhaustion compelled them to simply construct defensive positions for the night. The next day, the 43rd Division's 3rd Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment landed at Laiana. In addition, tank lighters were offshore ready to disembark Marine M3 light tanks, six of which landed on July 15.

On July 17, Sasaki unleashed his bold counterattack against the American landing sites. Typical of the earlier fighting on Guadalcanal, poor Japanese inter-unit communication, thick jungle, and American defensive measures severely impeded the enemy counterattack.

Nonetheless, late on July 17, major elements of the 13th Japanese Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Satoshi Tomanari, marching from north of Munda turned the right flank of the U.S. 43rd Division, which was situated on the Barike River. The Japanese attacked the Zanana beachhead supply area and reached the American command post there, cutting the lines of communication to the 172nd Infantry Regiment to the southwest.

American artillery fire from the offshore islands of Roviana and Sasavele in Roviana Lagoon prevented the Japanese troops from organizing into their customary banzai charge. Together with a valiant defense by Marine and 172nd Infantry Regiment heavy weapons platoons, plus about 50 Army service (noncombatant) troops and artillerymen, the Japanese were prevented from overrunning Zanana beachhead.

By daylight, Tomanari was forced to halt his attack and order the regiment's surviving troops to withdraw to Munda. The July 17 Japanese counterattack marked the last effort by Sasaki to mount an offensive against the American lines.

After the heroic beachhead defense,

fresh reinforcements were needed. Maj. Gen. Robert S. Beightler brought his 145th and 148th Infantry Regiments (less their 3rd Battalions that had landed at Rice Anchorage as part of the Northern Landing Force) from Rendova to the battlefield to relieve the 172nd Infantry Regiment. As the bulk of the 169th Infantry Regiment was withdrawn to Rendova for rest and refitting, they were replaced by the 103rd and 161st Infantry Regiments from the 43rd and 25th Divisions, respectively, between July 18-22.

Due to the extremely slow American advance, Vice Admiral Halsey sent in Lt. Gen. Millard Harmon, South Pacific Ground Forces commander, to assess the situation. On July 14, Harmon ordered Maj. Gen. Oscar W. Griswold, commanding officer of U.S. XIVth Corps (comprised of both the 37th and 43rd Divisions), to take over the NGOF in mid-July, relieving Hester, who reverted back to command of the 43rd Infantry Division.

Griswold had observed that the 43rd Division's 169th and 172nd Regiments were a spent force and unable to take Munda by themselves. Nonetheless, by July 23, Griswold had the remaining elements of the 37th and 43rd Divisions, the latter moved to the left flank, deployed on a 4,000-yard front. Griswold had previously recommended that the U.S. 25th Infantry Division be deployed to New Georgia to reinvigorate the stalled offensive.

Utilizing Marine M3 light tanks and Army infantry in support of the armor on July 24-25, 1943, progress was made as the American force moved toward the Lambeti Plantation on the southern coast of the Dragon Peninsula and occupied the Ilangana Peninsula southwest of Laiana. Both locales were stepping stones towards the ultimate prize, Munda airfield.

In this action, Marine M3 light tanks of the 10th and 11th Defense Battalions worked alongside the Army units that had become stalled on the jungle trails on the way to Munda. On July 26-27, the Marine tanks led an assault on Bartley Ridge, just northeast of the airfield, but suicidal Japanese infantry charges and well-camouflaged enemy 47mm antitank guns managed to disable or destroy some of the Marine armor.

On July 29, Maj. Gen. John R. Hodge replaced Hester as commander of the 43rd Division after the relatively poor showing by the 169th and 172nd Infantry Regiments. On August 1, advance elements of the 43rd Division exited from the jungle with the southern end of Munda airfield visible. Four days later, Munda airfield was captured. Many of the remaining Japanese defenders had resorted to holing up in caves in the Bibilo and Kokegolo Hills.

On August 5, Griswold reported to Halsey that organized resistance in the Munda area had ceased. His 30,000 American troops started mopping up operations against the Japanese survivors. Considerable effort by Navy Seabees was required to repair the badly damaged Munda airstrip to make it operational again for Marine Vought F4U Corsair fighters within 10 days of its capture.

On July 21, 1943, elements of Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins' 25th Infantry Division landed at Zanana Beach and moved northwest. The 25th's trek took it through the jungle and swamp on the Munda-Bairoko trail where Collins' infantrymen were tasked with

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Wading through deep water, American soldiers move slowly during the assault to capture one of New Georgia's smaller islands, September 13, 1943. OPPOSITE: A 43rd Division soldier uses an M2 flamethrower against a Japanese pillbox during fierce fighting near Munda airfield, September 9, 1943. The Japanese fought skillfully, forcing a stalemate at the airfield.

severing the supply route and path of retreat for any of the Japanese remaining on New Georgia who were not encircled in the Munda area.

On August 9, a battalion of Collins' 27th Infantry Regiment contacted patrols of Colonel Liversedge's combined Army and Marine Northern Landing Force. The following day, Liversedge's command was placed under the operational control of Collins' division.

By the third week of August, both the 25th Division soldiers, along with the remaining Marine Raider and 37th Division Army units of Liversedge's Northern Landing Force, began closing in on Bairoko Harbor. On August 24, Bairoko—an objective that eluded the Marine Raiders and soldiers from the 3rd Battalions of the 145th and 148th Regiments in their July 20-22 assault—fell to the Americans without combat. On August 29, the 1st Marine Raider Regiment embarked from Bairoko back to Guadalcanal.

The major ground fighting on New Georgia had ceased as General Sasaki skillfully evacuated the remainder of his Bairoko garrison across Kula Gulf to Kolombangara on the night of August 23, almost three weeks after the fall of Munda airfield.

The Japanese commander had previously hoped that with adequate reinforcements and supplies he could counterattack the Americans after establishing a new line on western New Georgia's Kula Gulf coast from Bairoko Harbor to Sunday Inlet, the latter site bordering Hathorn Sound, the waterway that separated the Dragon Peninsula from nearby Arundel Island.

However, U.S. Navy interdiction of the Tokyo Express had made this plan implausible. On August 6, the Tokyo Express, laden with reinforcements from the Shortland Islands, was intercepted and many of the Japanese destroyer transports in the flotilla were sunk. As Sasaki was unable to receive any more reinforcements for New Georgia, he left the island for Kolombangara across Kula Gulf.

Sasaki was under a joint IJA/IJN directive dated on August 13 to hold out in the New Georgia group for as long as he could to enable Lt. Gen. Hitoshi Imamura, the 8th Area Army commander, to bolster the defenses of the northern Solomon Islands, especially Bougainville.

West of New Georgia's Dragon Peninsula were the relatively flat and heavily jungle-clad central Solomons of Arundel and Wana Wana (also referred to as Vona Vona). These islands were directly south of Kolombangara with its Japanese airfield at Vila. Sasaki had previously wanted to use these islands as staging points to regain parts of western New Georgia following the loss of Munda airfield.

Elements of the American 37th Division, while attempting to clear parts of western New Georgia after the seizure of the Munda airfield, received artillery and small-arms fire from Baanga and Arundel Islands. Elements of the battle-scarred 43rd Infantry Division landed on Baanga Island on August 10 and secured it after 10 days of combat, with the few Japanese survivors escaping to Arundel and Kolombangara.

On August 11, Halsey ordered Griswold to move into position on Arundel Island and shell Vila airfield on Kolombangara. Arundel was separated from the west coast of New Georgia by the Hathorn Sound and Diamond Narrows waterways. The 172nd Infantry Regiment, 43rd Division invaded Arundel on August 27, opposed by a single company of the Japanese 229th Regiment that harassed the invaders principally by sniping and nocturnal infiltration to sever lines of communication.

Then, the intensity of the enemy resistance was heightened due to Sasaki's orders to delay Halsey's forces for as long as possible. On September 8, Sasaki sent a battalion from his 13th Infantry Regiment, under Major Kikuda, from Kolombangara to strengthen his forces on Arundel. The American advance was retarded by a series of enemy ambushes so that Japanese artillery on Arundel was able to shell the newly acquired American airfield at Munda Point.

The 172nd Regiment's movement forward ceased two weeks after landing on Arundel, necessitating the deployment of elements of the 27th, 169th, and 103rd Infantry Regiments along with Marine tanks to secure the island from fanatical

Both: National Archives

Japanese resistance.

However, the Japanese on Arundel were not resupplied due to continued U.S. Navy interdiction in the waters of Kula Gulf and Blackett Strait. Without supplies from Bougainville and the Shortland Islands, Sasaki, still on Kolombangara, sent the remainder of his 13th Infantry Regiment to Arundel on September 14 with the forlorn plan to attack Munda to capture foodstuffs.

Eventually, Sasaki ordered his Arundel defenders back to Kolombangara, which ended the fighting on Arundel on September 21. Sasaki lost more than 800 men on Arundel; however, the Japanese held up the American advance for more than three weeks. This enabled General Imamura and Vice Admiral Jinichi Kusaka, commander of the 11th Air Fleet at Rabaul, who was also in charge of all naval units in the Solomons, to bolster the defenses of both Rabaul and Bougainville. American casualties on Arundel were approximately 300 men.

Originally, Halsey's plan called for the attack against Munda to be followed by the seizure of Vila airfield on Kolombangara. Correct estimates of the considerable strength of the Japanese garrison on Kolombangara numbered just under 10,000 troops. Halsey did not want another protracted campaign to capture Vila, so he decided not to attack Kolombangara as a prelude to moving into the northern Solomons. Instead, the Americans bypassed the heavily defended Kolombangara and prevented its resupply by naval and aerial interdiction.

The South Pacific Force seized the lightly held island of Vella Lavella, just 15 miles northwest of Kolombangara. U.S. Navy intelligence estimates placed the Japanese garrison there at roughly 1,000 troops. Halsey's staff reasoned that Vella Lavella, the northernmost island in the New Georgia group, provided a forward airfield at Barakoma that could aid in severing enemy supply runs to Kolombangara while also serving as a base for American air support for future operations in the northern Solomon Islands.

On August 15, 1943, a Northern Landing and Occupation Force of over 6,500 troops—composed of the 25th Division's 35th RCT, the 58th Naval Construction Battalion, the Army's 25th Cavalry Reconnaissance Unit, and the 4th Marine Defense Battalion—landed virtually unopposed at Barakoma on the island's southeast coast.

The Japanese had realized that to salvage the troops and equipment on Kolombangara they would need a nearby base; Vella Lavella's northern tip seemed a logical locale. To facilitate establishing a base there at Honaniu, two companies of the 13th Infantry Regiment and some SNLF troops had been landed there by armed barges on the night of August 17-18.

Halsey noted that the mopping up of the Japanese on Vella Lavella was not moving according to plan. So he brought in reinforcements—the 14th New Zealand Brigade of the 3rd New Zealand Division—which arrived on September 18, 1943, to complete the forcing of the enemy garrison into the northwest corner of the island with a two-pronged offensive commencing on September 24.

There was never any substantial ground combat on Vella Lavella because Japanese forces were both limited and in the process of withdrawing. However, the enemy harassed the Kiwis' advance through the jungles of Vella Lavella to stall Halsey's cam-

paign and gain additional time to strengthen the Northern Solomon Islands.

The sporadic fighting on Vella Lavella lasted until October 5-6, as the Japanese employed tenacious delaying tactics. The real struggle for Vella Lavella occurred with naval surface action and incessant aerial attacks on American shipping, which included more than 100 hundred enemy sorties from August 15 through September 3.

Halsey sent the Navy's Seabees to Vella Lavella to restore the airfield at Barakoma. The intent was for American fighters with auxiliary fuel tanks to be stationed there for a roundtrip air assault on Rabaul.

The American admiral also established a Marine staging base on Vella Lavella for future attacks in the northern Solomons, such as the Marine parachutist raid on Choiseul in late October 1943. To accomplish this, elements of the I Marine Amphibious Corps (IMAC) landed some units from the 3rd Marine Division at Ruravai farther up Vella Lavella's eastern coast in mid-September.

On September 20-21, as General Sasaki withdrew his Arundel forces, he also moved his troops off Gizo Island eastward to Kolombangara, which would eventually have over 10,000 IJA and IJN troops.

Two days later, the planning for the Kolombangara garrison's withdrawal began. It was Sasaki's responsibility to get these troops evacuated safely from Kolombangara's northern coastal points and bays. This was accomplished by Japanese destroyers that received landing barges laden with troops from Kolombangara. The evacuation commenced on September 28 during a moonless night and brought those troops to Choiseul, a six-hour northerly voyage across The Slot.

BELOW: U.S. Army troops warily approach suspected enemy positions on Arundel. The Japanese managed to evacuate a few hundred men from New Georgia before the U.S. declared the area secured. OPPOSITE: Marine Raiders cross a stream during the advance on Enogai Point, August 1943. Extreme heat, humidity, disease, and a tough, well-camouflaged enemy took a heavy toll on American troops.

By the end of the first week of October, the Kolombangara withdrawal was complete despite attempts by U.S. Navy surface vessels to disrupt the evacuations. Those troops from Kolombangara who were not diverted to Choiseul were sent to either Bougainville or to Rabaul; the evacuating Japanese troops from Vella Lavella were sent to the Shortland Islands off the southern coast of Bougainville.

General Sasaki had managed to maintain the integrity of his forces during both the combat on and skillful evacuations from the islands of the New Georgia group in the central Solomons. These Japanese forces were to soon fight Halsey's northern advance again on the large northern Solomon Island of Bougainville from November 1, 1943, until the end of the Pacific War.

The American campaign for New Georgia and other islands in the central Solomon group from early July 1943 until the end of September was one the bloodiest fights in the South Pacific, although it has been overshadowed by the earlier six-month campaign on Guadalcanal. Halsey's grueling advance on New Georgia, which was transformed into the keystone of Japanese defense in the central Solomons, culminated with the capture of Munda airfield.

However, this Marine and Army victory did not get the publicity that MacArthur's New Guinea or Nimitz's Central Pacific campaigns received. Instead, elite Marine Corps infantrymen, gunners, and tankers along with former National Guardsmen from New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., confronted the previously victorious Japanese troops amid a difficult climate and forbidding terrain, including fortified defensive positions often shielded from aerial assault by the extensive jungle canopy.

The victory on New Georgia and in the surrounding islands expanded the blueprint for success that was necessary in formulating the island-hopping strategy in the Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the Pacific Theater. □

TRIAL

Reeling from his defeat at El Alamein, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel intended to toss the dice again before leaving North Africa for good. His target was the green American Army in Tunisia.

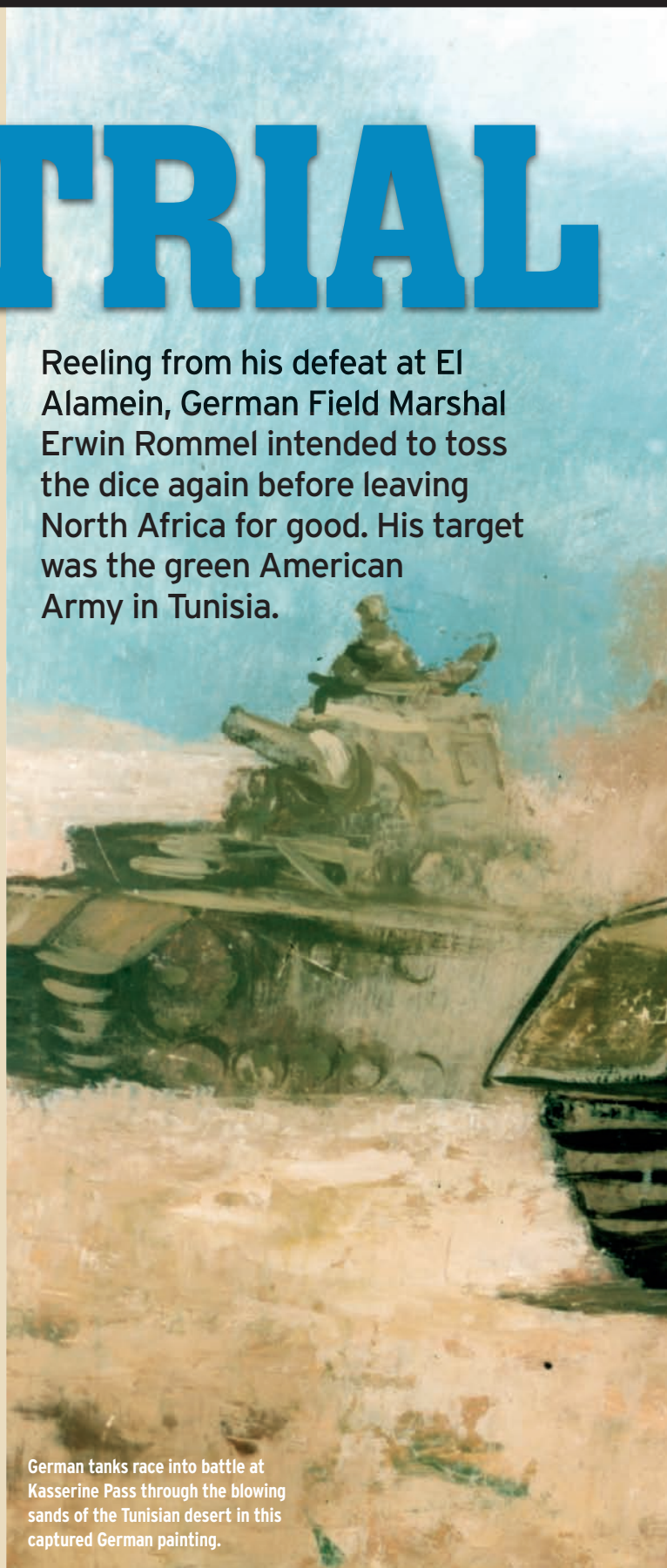
IN THE WINTER OF 1942-1943, the Allies had every reason to believe that they were on the verge of total victory in North Africa. It had started in November 1942, when German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's much-vaunted Panzerarmee Afrika was decisively defeated by the British Eighth Army at the Second Battle of El Alamein. Rommel's setback was not merely a defeat but a full-scale rout, and surviving German and Italian units were forced into a headlong retreat through the burning deserts of northern Libya. Rommel seemingly was trapped between American forces advancing to block his retreat and British forces in hot pursuit to his rear.

The Axis disaster at El Alamein coincided with Operation Torch, three coordinated Allied landings in French North Africa at Casablanca, in Morocco, and at Oran and Algiers, in Algeria. Operation Torch, approved after a series of sometimes acrimonious discussions between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was designed to open a second front to augment the valiant Russian efforts against Nazi Germany in the East. Owing to French sensibilities, the landings were mainly an American effort. The Americans came ashore on November 8 waving the Stars and Stripes and were immediately met with fierce resistance from French colonial troops loyal to the collaborationist Vichy government back home. At Oran, British naval cutters *Walney* and *Hartland* were sunk by French fire, costing the Allies an additional 445 unnecessary casualties before the political situation was sorted out. At Algiers, a five-day delay in the proceedings was finally resolved, and Vichy commander Jean Darlan reluctantly agreed to end colonial resistance to the Allied landings.

The need for continued cooperation from Darlan was eliminated—along with Darlan—when the admiral was assassinated on Christmas Eve by a Free French intelligence operative. The way was clear for a concerted drive on the grievously wounded Panzerarmee. For even the gifted Rommel, the end seemed near. In two years of unremitting desert warfare, he had performed wonders, earning him the respect and admiration of friends and foes alike. Allied air and naval forces often reduced his supplies to a trickle, and he was usually outnumbered by his British foes. German Führer Adolf Hitler, preoccupied with his ongoing Russian campaign, failed to appreciate the strategic significance of North Africa. Many of Rommel's fellow officers were old-school aristocrats bred in the Prussian tradition, and to them he was little more than a middle-class upstart.

In spite of all these difficulties, Rommel had won a number of brilliant victories and came within an ace of capturing the Suez Canal, key to the entire Middle East and Great Britain's lifeline to India and East Asia. Rommel led from the front; he was a masterful tactician and strategist imbued with an offensive spirit that swiftly exploited enemy weaknesses. Rommel had become larger than life, a man christened with the enduring sobriquet "the Desert Fox." Even his enemies gave him grudging admiration.

In the fall and winter of 1942-1943 the fox seemed at bay, surrounded by a host of Allied hounds. Panzerarmee Afrika was a



German tanks race into battle at Kasserine Pass through the blowing sands of the Tunisian desert in this captured German painting.

BY FIRE at Kasserine Pass

BY ERIC NIDEROST

U.S. Army Art

broken reed, a mere shadow of its former self. About half of Rommel's command had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner, and 450 tanks and 1,000 guns were taken or destroyed. Rommel himself was exhausted and increasingly prone to periods of ill health. He was plagued by headaches, and to make matters worse, he came down with a painful bout of nasal diphtheria.

Yet Allied hopes of total victory turned out to be premature. The Torch landings, besides giving the green American troops an exaggerated idea of their own prowess, had finally aroused Hitler from his lethargy on North African affairs. Enraged, he occupied southern France and began to pour reinforcements into Tunisia. German and Italian troops were easily ferried into Tunisia from Sicily, only one night's voyage distant. General des Panzertruppen Hans-Jurgen von Arnim's Fifth Panzer Army was the main element in the eleventh-hour surge of Axis troops.

By January 1943, Rommel had retreated some 1,400 miles across the spine of northern Africa, and his men's morale was as low as their casualties had been high. Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery's Eighth Army took Tripoli—Rommel's main supply base—on January 23, but the triumph was short-lived. The Allied pursuit was literally bogging down, with heavy winter rains turning Tunisia's yellowish soil into a sea of primordial muck. Rommel retained hopes of linking up with von Arnim's forces and effecting an orderly withdrawal of all German forces from North Africa. But to do so, he believed that it was necessary to inflict a stinging defeat on the newly arrived Americans before they could complete a fatal encirclement with the British Army along the old French fortification line at Mareth on the Libya-Tunisia border.

His counterpart, American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was supreme commander in the Mediterranean Theater, a job that demanded tact as well as diplomatic skills. Eisenhower performed both tasks admirably, but he was too often handicapped by political considerations in the early stages of the campaign. In early February he had to drop everything to attend the famous Casablanca Conference and consult with Roosevelt and Churchill on Allied plans. He finally left the conference on February 12 and immediately took a tour of the Tunisian front.

Meanwhile, Rommel received word that he was to be recalled to Germany for rest and recuperation. There was to be a reorganization of his forces; Panzerarmee Afrika would be designated the German-Italian Panzer Army and placed under the command of Italian General Giovanni Messe. But the Desert Fox did not want to leave Africa on such a sour note. Rommel wanted to redeem himself and restore his reputation, tarnished after El Alamein and what to him was an ignominious retreat. Rommel was a keen observer and a strategic opportunist. He saw weaknesses in the American forces, whose troops

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

ABOVE: The two-pronged German attack on the Western Dorsal range of the Atlas Mountains. Rommel had hoped to unite both wings at Kasserine, but he was overruled. OPPOSITE: Field Marshal Erwin Rommel surveys the field of battle near the wreckage of a British Bren gun carrier.

National Archives

were green and largely untested. Rommel began to think in terms of an offensive, using the Fifth Panzer Army and, he hoped, a rested and re-equipped Panzerarmee Afrika. If Rommel could smash through the inexperienced American line, he could rush through Kasserine Pass and take Tebessa, a major Allied supply hub. There was also a possibility that Rommel could sweep north and take the remaining Allied forces—now facing von Arnim's Fifth Panzer Army—in the flank and rear.

If and when his plan was approved, Rommel knew that he would not have to worry about Montgomery's Eighth Army advancing in his rear. The old French fortifications at the Mareth Line would hold Montgomery in check—at least for a time. Rommel planned to man the Mareth Line with his infantry, reserving his more mobile armored forces for the proposed attack. The American II Corps would be Rommel's primary target. It was commanded by Maj. Gen. Lloyd Fredendall, a man full of bravado and macho posturing. He had a habit of tough-guy talking that alienated subordinates and sometimes made his orders unclear.

Rommel argued for an immediate offensive, and at first it seemed like a tough sell. On paper, German operations in Africa were controlled by the Italian Comando Supremo, although Rommel generally had a free hand. Now the Desert Fox had to deal with Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, who had been appointed Oberbefehlshaber Sud (Commander in Chief, South), an area that encompassed the whole Mediterranean. Meeting with Kesselring and von Arnim at a Luftwaffe airbase at Rhennouch, midway between Tunis and Mareth, Rommel presented his plan. It was a frosty meeting. Rommel and von Arnim knew each other well, but in their case, familiarity did not breed affection. As the well-born son of a Prussian general, von Arnim resented Rommel's parvenu status and heroic image, which he considered overdone. Kesselring did not like Rommel any more than von Arnim did, but he was inclined to give Rommel one last chance. Rommel's plan was approved, although scaled down. Instead of one major offensive thrust through the mountains, there would be two separate attacks. Von Arnim would launch an offensive code-named Operation Frühlingswind (Spring Wind), while Rommel would attack to the south of von Arnim under the designation Morgenluft (Morning Air).

Tunisia, a fist of land thrusting out into the Mediterranean Sea, is a region of arid plains and formidable mountain ranges. The Western Dorsal and Eastern Dorsal are two offshoots of the Atlas Mountains that run roughly parallel to the coast, 70 miles inland. These two rocky "backbones" are all but impassable, save for a number of passes that cut through their rugged slopes. Allied units had already advanced through the Western Dorsal and established a front line that touched the western edge of the Eastern Dorsal. The northern part of the line was held by the British First Army under Lt. Gen. Sir Kenneth A.N. Anderson. Americans felt uncomfortable around Anderson, considering him a prototypical dour Scotsman. Like most British officers, he liked to closely supervise the tactical plans of subordinates, which to American sensibilities felt too much like uninvited interference. Anderson's main focus was the northern segment near the coast, where he felt the decisive showdown with the Germans ultimately would take place. The center of the Allied line was held by Free French troops of the XIX Corps d'Armee. They were largely colonial troops of varying quality, poorly equipped until the Americans gradually gave them more up-to-date weapons. The officers were almost stereotypes of Gallic pride, always eager to

National Archives

ABOVE: U.S. soldiers, weapons at the ready, advance warily toward German positions across the rock-strewn desert. OPPOSITE: A column of German Mark III tanks rolls across a desert road. Hitler initially sent Wehrmacht units to North Africa to support his faltering Italian allies.

show their courage and quick to take offense at perceived slights to French honor.

But it was the southern end of the Allied line that gave Eisenhower the most worry. As soon as he was able to break away from the Casablanca Conference, he traveled to make an inspection of the II Corps. Eisenhower was appalled; in some respects, things were even worse than he had imagined. The problems started at the top. Fredendall had established his headquarters an incredible 80 miles to the rear of the front line in a nearly inaccessible ravine. He seemed obsessed with air attack, and he had a swarm of 200 engineers busily digging a network of underground bunkers for himself and his staff. As Eisenhower remarked later, "It was the only time during the war that I ever saw a higher headquarters so concerned over its own safety that it dug itself underground shelters." Not wanting to embarrass Fredendall, Eisenhower had merely cautioned his corps commander not to stay too close to his command post, adding the less-than-inspiring observation that "Generals are expendable just as is any other item in an army." Fredendall did not take the hint.

Eisenhower also visited the oasis village of Sidi Bou Zid, near the western entrance of the Faid Pass that sliced through the Eastern Dorsal. Axis forces were on the other side of the mountain chain, and who knew what their plans might be? If they decided to mount an offensive, Eisenhower saw only too clearly that the American forces were ill prepared to resist. The troops were green, which could not be helped, but they were also lackadaisical. Defensive minefields had yet to be put down, although Americans had been in the area for at least a couple of days. There were always excuses and assurances that such tasks would be done tomorrow. Some troops had not even bothered to dig foxholes in the desert terrain. Eisenhower pointed out with disgust that the Germans always dug minefields, placed machine guns, and had reserve troops standing by, but the Americans seemed content to throw their backpacks on the ground, stack their rifles and grenade belts in an untidy heap, and head off to the nearest village tavern for some unearned rest and relaxation. A recent circular letter from Eisenhower to his subordinate commanders, cautioning them "to impress upon our junior officers the deadly seriousness of the job," had gone unheeded.

Although Eisenhower did not know yet where the Germans would launch a major attack, he knew in his bones that one was coming soon. Confirmation of a sort had come from his chief intelligence officer, British Brig. Gen. Eric Mockler-Ferryman, who had assured Eisenhower that the Germans were planning to attack the British and French positions on the northern flank of the Allied line. American Brig. Gen. Paul Robinett, whose Combat Command B (CCB) of the 1st Armored Division was temporarily attached to the British sector, had vigorously disputed this claim, telling Eisenhower that his own tanks had penetrated all the way across the Eastern Dorsal without running into a single advanced enemy position. Robinett had tried to warn Anderson as well, but the Scotsman had airily dismissed his warnings. Eisenhower was inclined to believe Robinett, and he ordered Fredendall to gather his scattered armored units into a mobile reserve ready to confront any German attempt to break though the mountain passes. Eisenhower's reasoning was sound, but already too late. It was the evening of February 13, and for the Americans casually guarding the southern line, time had run out.

The first part of the German offensive—Operation Frühlingswind—began in the early morning hours of February 14. The 10th Panzer Division smashed through the Faid Pass, using a blinding sandstorm as perfect cover. At the same time, the veteran 21st Panzer Division raced through the mountains to the south of Sidi Bou Zid, then turned north, intending to link up with the 10th Panzers. The Nazis' initial targets were a pair of hills, known locally as *djebels,* that guarded the road from Faid to Sebeitla. After encircling these Allied-held outposts, von Arnim's troops would capture Sidi Bou Zid itself.

The two hills in question, Djebel Lessouda and Djebel Ksaira, flanked Sidi Bou Zid and seemed like good defensive positions—on paper. Fredendall had placed infantry units on the tops of each hill, intending them to slow the German advance until American armor could deal with them. Unfortunately, there were too few men on the hills, and they were too far away from each other to provide mutual support. The hilltop infantry was reduced to helpless observers of an American debacle swiftly unfolding on the plains far below.

Colonel Thomas D. Drake of the 165th Infantry Regiment, 34th Division, was situated on Djebel Ksaira, watching the spectacle below with growing frustration. Drake phoned the command post at Sidi Bou Zid, warning them that some American artillery was already showing signs of panic. The commanders in the rear refused to believe it, insisting that the men were only shifting positions."Shifting positions, hell," Drake responded. "I know panic when I see it."

Nearby, the Americans on Djebel Lessouda were also powerless to intervene in any meaningful way. A strong southwesterly wind had smothered all sounds of the German buildup the previous night, and Major Norman Parson's patrolling G Company had run headlong into the lead elements of the 86th Panzer Grenadiers and 7th Panzer Regiment that morning, getting themselves knocked out of commission and losing all radio communications with Djebel Lessouda. Once the sandstorm lifted, Lessouda's commander, Lt. Col. John Waters, could plainly see what he estimated to be at least 60 German tanks and numerous other vehicles. Waters was the son-in-law of Maj. Gen. George S. Patton, who had not yet become famous as one of America's best military leaders. Waters earlier had cautioned his men after their easy victory over the French during the Torch landings: "We did very well against the scrub team. Next week we hit the Germans. When we make a showing against them, you may congratulate yourselves." His words would prove to be prescient.

American armor moved forward to confront the growing threat. Colonel Louis V. Hightower's force—two companies of tanks and about a dozen tank destroyers—rumbled out of Sidi Bou Zid to attack the 10th Panzer head-on. Hightower and his inexperienced crews were brave but badly outnumbered and were facing a well-prepared enemy. German 88mm artillery scored hit after hit, turning American armor into flaming coffins one by one. The M-3 Sherman tanks used by the Americans, which for some reason they had nicknamed "Honey," were given a more mocking, if accurate, nickname by the Germans—"Ronson," after the cigarette lighter, because they burst into flames so readily.

Hightower's force was facing Mark VI Tiger tanks, new and powerful additions to the German arsenal that had a firing range twice as long as the American tanks. The combination of German artillery shells and long-range tank fire proved too much for Hightower's men, who tried in vain to conduct a fighting retreat in the face of heavy odds. Hightower's own tank was knocked out, but not before he had destroyed four panzers. Hightower and his crew managed to escape the burning hulk and sneak away from the battlefield amid the smoke and dust. ("Let's get the hell out of here," Hightower said reasonably.) They were the lucky ones—only seven of Hightower's 51 tanks survived the defeat, however. The other 44 American tanks were lost, and Sidi Bou Zid had to be abandoned. American Brig. Gen. Raymond A. McQuillin, commanding Combat Command A (CCA) within Sidi Bou Zid, fell back to a new position seven miles southwest of the town, while German Colonel Hans Georg Hildebrandt took possession of the stronghold.

Before long, 21st Panzer linked up with 10th Panzer, and they moved quickly to consolidate their gains. The 2,500 American infantrymen on the two hills were now cut off, literally islands of resistance in a German sea. Drake still stubbornly held Djebel Ksaira and Waters held Djebel Lessouda, but chances of a successful breakout were diminishing by the hour. Meanwhile, back at his headquarters, Fredendall refused to allow Waters and Drake

National Archives

to escape while there was still time. Fredendall's stubbornness was compounded by faulty assumptions and bad intelligence. British General Anderson, Fredendall's superior, was convinced that the German drive on Sidi Bou Zid was merely a diversionary attack for a larger blow farther north. Allied intelligence also insisted that there was only one Panzer division in the south. As a result, only one tank battalion—Lt. Col. James Alger's 2nd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment—was sent to deal with the Germans and rescue the Americans trapped on the two hills.

Alger's equipment was good—mainly M-4 Sherman tanks—but his tactics were poor, and his men were brave but inexperienced. They did not realize they were going to face not one but two Panzer divisions. The result was an almost textbook example of what not to do in desert armored warfare. Alger's counterattack began on February 15. The 58 Shermans came forward at a high rate of speed, which meant that huge dust clouds marked their passage. So much dust was kicked up that crews were blinded, and the thick plumes made them easy to spot and target. The American tanks rolled forward in a rough V-shaped formation, with tank destroyers on the flanks. It was like an old-style cavalry charge, but the Germans were about to bring the Americans into the 20th century.

German artillery hidden amid olive groves opened fire, and German tanks attacked Alger's flanks. Before long the Americans were trapped, engaging veteran Mark IV Tigers at point-blank range. Only four American tanks managed to escape the debacle. The entire battalion was wiped out, with 55 tanks lost and some 300 men dead, wounded, or captured, including Alger, who was taken prisoner. Divisional commander Maj. Gen. Orlando Ward was left literally in the dark about the attack's outcome. So much smoke and dust were kicked up in the battle that he could only report to Fredendall, "We might have walloped them, or they might have walloped us." It was soon clear who had done the walloping.

Realizing at last that rescue was impossible, Fredendall gave belated permission for the two trapped hilltop forces to try to break out on their own. Drake led his men down the slopes of Djebel Ksaira under the cover of darkness, but he soon encountered German tanks, which surrounded him and his 600 men in a large cactus patch. Drake tried to bluff his way out, shouting "Go to hell!" when the Germans demanded surrender, but it was no use. He and his men were soon made prisoners.

Waters and many of his command were also taken prisoner, with perhaps one-third—about 300—out of the original 900 getting back to Allied lines. The whole Allied line was in jeopardy, and the Germans seemed on the brink of a major victory. There was nothing left to do but fall back to the next line of defense—the Western Dorsal chain, some 50 miles away. With luck, the Western Dorsal passes—particularly the vital Kasserine Pass—could be held and the German offensive stopped.

The retreat to the Western Dorsals proved to be a nightmare. The battered II Corps had been badly defeated, and with that defeat came a crisis of confidence. Fredendall, who had pulled back to the town of Kouif, complained to Eisenhower: "At present time, 1st Armored [is] in a bad state of disorganization. Ward appears tired out, worried and has informed me that to bring new tanks in would be the same as turning them over to the Germans. Under the circumstances [I] do not think he should continue in command. Need someone with two fists immediately." Eisenhower had no intention of removing Ward, but he did send a trusted lieutenant, Maj. Gen. Ernest Harmon, to advise Fredendall "during the unusual conditions of the present battle."

The roads leading west were jammed with fleeing American vehicles, providing easy

NORTH AFRICAN PROVING GROUND FOR U.S. ARMOR

The North African campaign of 1942-1943 was a rigorous test for American theories of armored warfare. In the 1930s, the United States lagged behind other countries in developing tanks and other armored vehicles for its armed forces. Congressional parsimony, rampant isolationism, and Depression-era woes all contributed to the lack of interest in upgrading the Army's fighting tools.

The German blitzkrieg of 1939-1940 shocked American military and political leaders out of their isolationist complacency. German armored spearheads had concentrated along certain points, then punched through enemy lines with overwhelming force. American military planners came up with the idea of a tank destroyer command to deal with these threatened breakthroughs. Once the panzers appeared, so the thinking went, semi-independent tank destroyer commands would appear on German flanks, containing and ultimately defeating the Nazi armor.

As American thinking evolved, the tank itself was conceived as a "mechanical cavalry" to be used to break through enemy lines and pave the way for the rest of the army to exploit the situation. Little real consideration was given to the possibility of tank-versus-tank actions. In theory, American tanks would have little to fear from German panzers. German tanks would have already been eliminated by their "little friends" the tank destroyers.

The reliance on tank destroyers ignored ongoing developments on the battlefield, but military leaders were slow to change their minds. The idea that tanks might have to engage in battle with other tanks was an alien, even fanciful, concept to many American Army officers. As late as 1942, the *Armored Force Field Manual* devoted only two pages of a 450-page text to tank-versus-tank action. Early American armored divisions also had relatively little infantry attached to them, which made them vulnerable in defense. During the Kasserine crisis,

targets for rampaging German Stuka dive-bombers swooping down from the sky like avenging furies. Eisenhower, who had left before the battle to return to his headquarters at Constantine, Algeria, began shuttling reinforcements to Ward and McQuillin at Sbeitla, an old Roman crossroads 13 miles northwest of Sidi Bou Zid. "Our soldiers are learning rapidly," Eisenhower reported to Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. "I assure you that the troops that come out of this campaign are going to be battlewise and tactically efficient." Moreover, said Ike, the men were "now mad and ready to fight. All our people, from the very highest to the very lowest, have learned that this is not a child's game and are ready and eager to get down to business." It was the best face he could put on the looming disaster.

In the meantime, Rommel's Operation Morgenluft had swung into action south of von Arnim's so-far-successful Frühlingswind. Rommel met with little resistance, and the field marshal was delighted when the Allied airfield at Thelepte was captured with 50 tons of much-needed fuel and lubricants on the morning of the 17th. But the offensively minded Rommel was disturbed by the fact that von Arnim had not fully exploited his successes at Sidi Bou Zid. Von Arnim argued that he could not advance too far because the supply and fuel situation was iffy at best. Rommel was unconvinced.

Rommel wanted to assemble all available Axis forces for a major thrust through Kasserine Pass. Once though the pass, he could take the major Allied supply depot at Tebessa then push on to the Tunisian coast at Annaba (Bone). With any luck, this northwestern thrust would get him behind Anderson's British First Army, which could be trapped and annihilated at the Germans' leisure. Rommel's bold plan depended on immediate action, but his superiors had to approve it first. At least a day was wasted while Kesselring and the Italian high command mulled it over. In the end, the proposal was given the green light under the code name Sturmflut (Hurricane), but it was a somewhat vague, watered-down version of the field marshal's initial proposal. Under Sturmflut the Axis forces were to push through Kasserine Pass, then start heading in the direction of Le Kef. Compared with Rommel's original plan, this was a shallow, halfhearted envelopment of Allied forces—but something was better than nothing. All Rommel knew for sure was that he had the green light, and he acted accordingly. The battle for Kasserine Pass was about to begin.

Fredendall's urgent task was to defend the Western Dorsal barrier against Axis attack—but where was Rommel going to strike? Kasserine was not the only pass that cut through the mountains, so he spread his forces thin to cover all possibilities. Some British and French units came down to help, but the Allied defenses were still weak. Kasserine was initially defended by Colonel Anderson Moore's 19th Combat Engineer Regiment, a unit whose main duties were construction, not fighting. Fredendall summoned Colonel Alexander Stark of the 26th Infantry and told him to hold the pass. "I want you to go to Kasserine right away," Fredendall said, "and pull a Stonewall Jack-

"I WANT YOU TO GO TO KASSERINE RIGHT AWAY," FREDENDALL SAID, "AND PULL A STONEWALL JACKSON." IT WAS TYPICAL OF FREDENDALL WHEN ISSUING ORDERS TO MAKE COLORFUL QUIPS THAT CONTAINED LITTLE REAL SUBTANCE."

the hard-pressed 1st Armored Division had to depend on other units, notably the 1st and 34th Infantry Divisions, to fulfill its needs.

American armored vehicle designs were also found wanting in the early days. The first medium tank of any real consequence was the M-3, which first saw action with the British in 1942. There were two versions, which the British dubbed "Lee" and "Grant," but the differences between the pair were relatively minor. The M-3 was a solidly armored tank boasting a 75mm gun, and it did its part at the Battle of Gazala. Unfortunately the M-3 was also badly flawed. It had a high profile, which made it an easily spotted sitting duck in battle. Even worse, its 75mm gun was clumsily mounted on the side of the hull, a design flaw that restricted the tank's field of fire and left it vulnerable to enemy shells.

The Americans realized the superiority of fully turreted tanks, but the M-3 was rushed into production as a stopgap vehicle. In 1941, American industry was incapable of producing the castings and other components that would produce a turreted tank mounting a 75mm gun. Early American tank destroyers accordingly were slapdash affairs, and ultimately as flawed as the theory that gave them birth. Some American units in Tunisia had tank destroyers hardly worthy of the name. Early "tank destroyers" were merely 37mm guns bolted to the backs of trucks, or French 75mm artillery pieces mounted on halftracks.

In the aftermath of Kasserine Pass, American armored divisions were reformed. Gone were the tank-heavy battalions, and in their place were more balanced arrangements that featured combined arms of armor, infantry, and artillery. The Army never entirely gave up the concept, even though better-designed tank destroyers later in the war never fulfilled expectations.

On a more positive note, the M-4 Sherman tank performed well in combat conditions and became more effective as American combat experience grew. The Sherman was upgraded to take on the later German designs, notably the Panther, and these later incarnations met with considerable success. The M-4 was never really a match for the later German tanks, especially the Tiger and its monstrous cousin, the King Tiger, but it was adequate in most situations. Above all, the experience that American crews gained in Tunisia and elsewhere made up for M-4's inferiorities.

National Archives

son." It was typical of Fredendall when issuing orders to make colorful quips, phrases that contained little real substance. Stark arrived at Kasserine Pass on February 19, just as the Germans were beginning their attack in hopes of a breakthrough.

Kasserine Pass was (and still is) a rocky defile that narrowed to about 1,500 yards. Once past that bottleneck, Kasserine's western entrance broadened to a wide basin that split into two roads. One road led west to Tebessa and the vital Allied supply base, while the other trailed north to the town of Thala. The Americans had artillery positions in place at both roads, ready to concentrate fire when the enemy emerged from the narrow Kasserine bottleneck.

February 19 was miserable for all the combatants. A cold wind chilled soldiers to the bone, and drenching rains added to the discomfort. The Germans tried to slip though American positions under the cover of a thick enveloping fog, but their unavoidably noisy movements were detected. American artillery, tank destroyer, and small-arms fire soon sent them packing. The German attack on Kasserine was led by General Karl Bulowius, who seemed to hold such contempt for the Americans that he kept ordering direct assaults. About 3:30 PM, Bulowius sent the Germans forward once again, this time backed by Italian tanks. They ran into American minefields placed there earlier by the long-suffering engineers and were stopped dead in their tracks.

Bulowius, still confident, waited for the coming of night. The Germans would infiltrate American defenses under cover of darkness, slipping through the hills and ridges that formed Kasserine's shoulders. These phantom raiders were partly successful, unnerving green units already shaken by the heavy fighting. On the Tebessa road, one company of engineers broke and ran, and a group of German infiltrators in stolen uniforms captured 100 Americans. Panic became contagious, and the situation was so fluid that some officers did not know what was going on. American soldiers, individually and in small groups, abandoned their positions and sought safety in the rear. Even some forward artillery observers abandoned their posts, shouting, "The place is too hot!" American infantry reinforcements and British tanks arrived during the night and stabilized the situation.

Saturday, February 20, dawned cold and wet, but the Germans had still not achieved the desired breakthrough. Rommel had arrived, and was not happy with what he saw. Time is everything in war, and Rommel knew that he did not have much left to achieve victory. Montgomery's Eighth Army was still far to the east, but was fast approaching the Mareth Line. "Those fellows are all too slow," he complained to aides when he found the 10th Panzer Division resting comfortably near Sbietla. When division commander Brig. Gen. Fritz von Broich explained awkwardly that he was waiting for an infantry battalion to attack first, Rommel exploded. "Go and fetch the motorcycle battalion yourself, and lead it into action too," he ordered. He was tired of listening to lame excuses from his less-daring subordinates.

Rommel's presence had a positive effect, and for a time it seemed as if the heady days of 1941-1942 were back again. The Germans employed a relatively new weapon, Nebelwerfer, multiple-rocket launchers, which the Americans quickly dubbed "Screaming Meemies" because of the terrifying sounds they made in flight. The 10th Panzer Division finally moved through the pass in force, only to be met by a handful of British Valentine and Crusader tanks and American tank destroyers positioned in roadblocks. The British and Americans fought valiantly, but the issue was never in doubt. The Allied armor, outnumbered and outgunned, was destroyed in detail. Twenty-two American tanks and 30 half-tracks littered the valley floor.

The Germans were through the main part of Kasserine Pass and seemingly on the point of

National Archives

ABOVE: American M-3 Lee tanks, with hull-mounted 75mm cannons and 37mm machine guns, raise clouds of dust in the Tunisian desert. RIGHT: A blast from a German bomb rattles this GI as he moves into position at Kasserine Pass.

a major breakthrough. Once on the western side of the pass, Rommel faced two roads—one going southwest toward the Tebessa supply center, the other going north to Thala and then on to the town of Le Kef. Le Kef was the nominal objective of Sturmflut, but Rommel was lukewarm about enveloping the British First Army. In the end, the field marshal sent forces down both routes. Kampfgruppe DAK (Deutsches Afrika Korps) went up the road toward Tebessa, while the 10th Panzer traveled north toward Thala and Le Kef. By now, more and more Allied units were being redeployed and coming into the battle, stiffening resistance. Colonel Paul Robinett's Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division gave the Germans a rough time on Tebessa road. Accurate tank and artillery fire stalled the Axis drive, and American infantry pushed the Germans back and actually recaptured some equipment that had been lost earlier. Even Rommel admitted that the enemy had counterattacked "very skillfully."

German forces driving down the northern road enjoyed greater success against the Allied forces defending Thala. British Brig. Gen. Charles Dunphie's 26th Armoured Brigade fought hard but their equipment could not match German tanks. British Crusader and Valentine tanks were outranged and outgunned, and their armor was thinner. Soon the desert landscape was littered with knocked-out British armor, their flaming hulls sending thick black coils of smoke into the sky. Dunphie pulled back to a ridge threee miles south of Thala, having lost 38 tanks, 28 guns, and 571 men captured. British defenses had crumbled, and the road to Thala was open.

Axis forces might have been victorious, but they were not unscathed. German and Italian personnel losses had been relatively light, although some individual Italian units had been decimated. The main problem was a crippling shortage of fuel and ammunition. More and more Allied units were coming into the fight, some from as far away as Morocco, and Axis advances—once so promising—had slowed to a crawl or been stopped in their tracks. On February 21, American Brig. Gen. LeRoy "Red" Irwin arrived at Thala with three artillery battalions and two cannon companies—a total of 48 guns in all. Despite having made a grueling four-day, 800-mile forced march from western Algeria, Irwin's men immediately moved into place to support the exhausted British.

The next morning, the 10th Panzer was met with a thunderous Allied artillery barrage. Von Broich, having already endured a dressing down by his field marshal, a nerve-wracking attack at the front of his motorcycle battalion, and a brutal hand-to-hand melee with stiff-backed British defenders, called off the advance. After reading an intercepted message from the British commander declaring that "there is to no further withdrawal under any excuse," Rommel realized that the Allies intended to stop him where they stood, or die trying. Down to his last 250-300 kilometers' worth of fuel, Rommel conceded the obvious. He called off all further offensive actions and withdrew to the east. The Desert Fox's last gamble had failed.

In their first extended combat of the war, the Americans had sustained losses of 6,600 killed, wounded, or captured—more than 20 percent of their entire personnel. In a sense, however, the U.S. Army was the real winner at Kasserine Pass. The North African campaign was a painful but necessary testing ground for American forces, enabling them to gain experience and fine-tune weapons and tactics. Incompetent or mediocre commanders such as Fredendall were weeded out and replaced. In their place, more competent and aggressive commanders such as George S. Patton were groomed for larger things. American training on the whole was sound, but armored theory had to be rethought and reforms introduced. Rommel had shaken the Americans out of their cocksure complacency, hardening them for a long, drawn-out struggle. Thanks to the hard lessons so painfully learned at Kasserine Pass, American forces would be better prepared when they mounted their next major invasion—on the coast of Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944. □

Even before the end of World War II, German General Erwin Rommel's fame was such that he was already being elevated into the Valhalla of such legendary warriors as Hannibal against the Roman Empire, Napoleon during his defensive campaigns of 1813-1814, and Robert E. Lee throughout the American Civil War.

Despite the fact that all four "Great Captains" were—in the final analysis—losers, they have loomed far larger in the public mind than those who defeated them. Thus it was that, with Erwin Rommel as well, myth became legend and legend became fact.

Charismatic, dashing, and colorful, Erwin Rommel burst onto the scene in the public consciousness in the spring of 1941 when his first unexpected offensive in the Western Desert of North Africa sent the formerly victorious British Eighth Army reeling in defeat after a year and a half of triumphs over the hapless Royal Italian Army.

According to noted British military expert and author Basil H. Liddell Hart—one of the recognized fathers of mechanized warfare—from 1941 on, Rommel's name was the most prominent of all German field marshals and generals, reflecting his meteoric and unprecedented ascent from colonel to field marshal. Doubly an outsider, he was not a high-ranking member of the general staff, and all his major victories excepting France in 1940 were outside continental Europe.

His martial renown was deliberately fostered—shamelessly by both himself and as Hitler's hand-picked choice of only two soldiers whom he made into popular heroes—"one in the sun and one in the snow."

Rommel was the "sun hero" for his exploits in North Africa and Edouard Dietl, who rose through the ranks from private before the Great War to four-star general in Finland in 1942, was the "snow hero." Thus Hitler ordered Nazi Propaganda Minister Dr. Josef Goebbels to make Rommel the most enduring Nazi-sponsored hero of World War II.

Following Rommel's forced suicide in 1944, it fell to the victorious Allies to keep alive the spark of the Rommel legend, that of the "good German" who, in the end, had defied the Führer. Thus he found a new life as the patron saint of the West German Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) in 1955 when that force joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which his own deputy once headed.

One man whose career Rommel consciously emulated was T.E. Lawrence (aka Lawrence of Arabia), and it would have been interesting to have seen them pitted against

Seventy years later, should the "Desert Fox" be considered an anti-Nazi hero or a faithful soldier turned opportunist?

Reassessing ROMMEL

BY BLAINE TAYLOR

National Archives

LEFT: Hitler congratulates Rommel during the awarding of Oak Leaves to go with his Knight's Cross, March 20, 1942—before Rommel fell out of favor with Hitler. RIGHT: German Army Colonel General Erwin Rommel with Colonel Eduard Crasemann in North Africa, January-June 1942. Rommel was dubbed "the Desert Fox" by his opponents because of his ability to outwit the British even though his forces were outnumbered.

Imperial War Museum

each other had the latter lived long enough. Both desert warriors created their own legends and burnished their images in their wartime writings, much as Julius Caesar and Napoleon had earlier.

According to his first major biographer, British Brig. Gen. Desmond Young, "The outstanding feature of Rommel's successes is that they were achieved with an inferiority of force, and without any command of the air. No other general on either side gained victory under such conditions."

Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel was born on November 15, 1891, at Heidenheim, a small town in Württemberg near the city of Ulm. His namesake father was a schoolteacher and mathematician, as was his father before him. His father died in 1913 and his mother in 1940, when her already famous son was a major general commanding a panzer division.

Rommel entered the Imperial German Army as an enlisted officer candidate at age 18 in 1910, when his father had opposed his going to work for the Zeppelin works at Friedrichshafen, and thus it was that he served in the ranks before going on to the War Academy.

Promoted to corporal that October, he was raised to the rank of sergeant the following December. In March 1911, Rommel was stationed at the War Academy at Danzig in East Prussia.

Rommel found himself in action against the French soon after Kaiser Wilhelm II brought Imperial Germany into what became known as World War I. The battlefield turned him into the soldier supreme. Typical of the daring, dash, and personal bravery under fire that began then and continued throughout the remainder of his martial career was his being wounded in the thigh near Varennes on September 24, 1914, when he charged three French soldiers with an empty rifle. By the end of the war in 1918, a saying had become famous in all the units in which he had served: "Where Rommel is, the front is!"

Having been awarded the highest decoration that Imperial Germany could offer—Frederick the Great's Pour le Merite or "Blue Max" medal (named after German air ace Lieutenant Max Immelmann), Rommel was retained in the new Republican Army after the fall of the Hohenzollern dynasty and the loss of the war in 1918.

He spent the (for him) dreary but personally happy interwar years doing typical garrison duty: drill and training, commanding ever larger units, lecturing at war academies in both Germany and Austria, and honing his skiing abilities as commander of a mountain battalion at Goslar in 1935.

It was there that he had a chance but fateful encounter with the new chancellor of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler. When Lt. Col. Rommel was informed that a line of the Führer's elite SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler troops would stand between his own men and Hitler at a formation, he asserted that, in such a case, his men would not parade. Hitler got the message and took note of this forceful officer.

This first positive impression was reinforced in 1937 with the publication of instructor Rommel's book, *Infantry in the Attack*, which was adopted by the Swiss Army as a training manual. Hitler read the book as well and again noted the identity of its author. Three times—in October 1938 and in March and September 1939—the Führer personally selected Rommel to head his military bodyguard unit as he entered the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland in quick succession.

From his unique vantage point aboard Hitler's special command train, codenamed Amerika (later changed to Brandenburg), Rommel had a bird's-eye view from which to observe the new field technique of Blitzkrieg (lightning war). At the conclusion of the campaign, when Hitler asked him what he wanted to do next, Rommel boldly asked for command of an armored division in the coming campaign against the Western Allies, although all of his previous 29 years had been spent first in the infantry and then in the Alpenkorps.

He was given the 7th Panzer Division, relieving General Georg von Stumme, who would, in late 1942, replace him briefly during the Second Battle of El Alamein. He took command on February 15, 1940, and went into action at the head of his troops on May 10 when the Germans invaded Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France in a six-week-long campaign that defeated all of them and sent the British Expeditionary Force fleeing back to England from Dunkirk.

BELOW: As commander of the 7th Panzer Division, Rommel accepts the surrender of French and British units during the invasion of France, 1940. OPPOSITE: Rommel inspects a map with subordinates somewhere in the desert of North Africa. Preferring to lead from the front, he was later criticized for not staying in touch with his headquarters.

Imperial War Museum

National Archives

Rommel's own part in all of this earned his division the nickname of "Ghost Division" for its rapid and historic swift advances. T.E. Lawrence had seen desert warfare akin to that of the sea, with his light, mobile forces striking when, where, and how they pleased. In France Rommel employed the same concept with his armored units, telling his men, "We'll do it like the Navy," firing their tanks' guns left and right as they advanced into the rear of the demoralized enemy, all the while constantly moving, gaining ground, and producing a stunning, shattering, psychological effect on the defeated foe.

He replicated these tactics in the Western Desert when he was posted there by Hitler in February 1941 to aid the retreating legions of Italian Fascist Leader Benito Mussolini in what was intended to be merely a supporting role.

Rommel proved himself to be the ultimate independent commander once he arrived at Tripoli in Italian Libya, however, and immediately launched an attack that caught the British Army of the Nile completely by surprise. From the start, the new commander of the Afrika Korps—later expanded to Panzer Army Africa and then to Panzer Group Africa—operated under several daunting handicaps.

First, he was nominally under the command of the Comando Supremo (Supreme Command) in Rome, as well as under the Italians on the spot and under his own German superiors at Hitler's headquarters in far-off East Prussia. Next, despite the presence of the battle-hardened Luftwaffe, he was always outnumbered in the air by the Royal Air Force and, during late 1942-May 1943, by the Americans as well.

The British air and naval presence on the island of Malta bedeviled his supply efforts throughout his desert campaigns, and the high command of the German armed forces never gave his theater priority until after the American invasion of North Africa in November 1942. By then it was too late, as he had already been defeated by the British Eighth Army in the Second Battle of El Alamein.

Desert warfare was by definition mobile fighting, making tanks top priority and infantry of little actual use other than as garrison troops doing occupation duty. When retreating, Rommel always opted to transport his German forces first, leaving the Italians behind to walk.

By the time he was beaten by British Eighth Army commander General Bernard Law Montgomery at the Second Battle of El Alamein in November 1942, Rommel was a sick man and worn out physically, having attempted too much and punished his body mightily in more than two years of exhausting, grueling desert warfare.

Prior to the battle, he returned to Germany for a period of rest and recuperation, then was asked to go back to North Africa when his replacement in command—General Georg von Stumme, from whom he had taken the 7th Panzer Division in 1940—was discovered to be missing and later found dead of a heart attack. By then, Rommel was suffering from severe headaches, overstrained nerves, and poor blood circulation and was taking prescribed sleeping pills.

He lost the battle that he had already planned and was recalled from Tunisia before the Axis forces surrendered there on May 12, 1943. The following September, Rommel had his appendix removed in an emergency procedure after experiencing sharp stomach pains.

Critics such as his later boss in Normandy, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, stated that, while he was a good division commander, Rommel was not really suited to higher command because of his failure to stay in touch with his headquarters. His practice of leading from the front—while making excellent copy material for the

weekly newsreels back home in the Third Reich—was in reality a confusing method of command. Indeed, he often took his chief of staff with him in his command car while careening about in the desert instead of leaving him at headquarters where he might have done some good.

Other critics have also maintained that, while he was a tactical genius of the first rank, he was no strategist, but this argument falls flat when one reads his writings as found in the postwar *The Rommel Papers*. This reveals that, while he disagreed with Hitler's total fixation with the far larger Russian Eastern Front, he was not lacking in the ability to see the larger picture and grasp its possibilities.

Thus, before the arrival of the Americans, he had thought far ahead, well beyond the German capture of Alexandria, Cairo, and the Suez Canal—all of which was possible when he was halted at El Alamein in the late summer of 1942—to the eventual conquest of all of the rest of continental Africa, the invasion of India in possible concert with the Imperial Japanese Army, and a link-up with German forces in the Soviet Caucasus.

Possession of all these territories and mineral resources would have kept the German armed forces afloat for the next several decades, but he could never convince Hitler and the high command of the correctness of his world view. To them, Russia was and remained the primary goal.

Because of his being perceived within the officer corps as "Hitler's favorite general," Rommel had gained many enemies, and he became a defeatist as well after November 1942. He believed that all of Africa was lost the moment the first American GI stepped ashore in North Africa. He lost the command of German-occupied Italy in 1943 because he advocated surrendering all of Italy—including Rome—to the Allies without a fight, then making a stand in the Alps between Italy and Germany. Hitler balked and named Luftwaffe Field Marshal Albert Kesselring to command instead. Kesselring waged a successful fighting retreat up the "boot" for the next 18 months. Hindsight says Kesselring was a better choice.

Following a one-day command of Greece on July 25, 1943, where Hitler feared an imminent Allied invasion, Rommel served as a sort of combined military adviser-consultant at Führer headquarters at Rastenberg until Hitler could find a new posting for his most famous—if defeated and defeatist—field marshal.

In the end, from November 1943 to July 1944, Rommel was posted as inspector general of the Atlantic Wall and later commanding officer of Army Group B in France to prepare for the expected cross-Channel Allied invasion in the spring of 1944.

"Rommel alone is worth the whole Atlantic Wall!" it was asserted, and in a very real propaganda and public relations sense that was, indeed, the case. While formidable—and he no doubt made it more so—in the final analysis, the defenses were but a hollow linear shell with little depth. In fact, they were breached by the end of a single day and the Allies were ashore in force in Europe to stay.

After breakfasting at 6 AM on June 4, 1944, Rommel left for Germany for a much-needed rest and a birthday party for Frau Rommel on the 6th of June—D-Day. Thus it was that the field marshal missed the start of the biggest military campaign of his career. He returned to the front later that day, but by then the Allies were already ashore in Normandy.

Rommel's future possible impact on the battle for France was further negated when, on July 17, 1944, while returning to La Roche-Guyon after a meeting with Josef "Sepp" Dietrich at 1st SS Panzer Corps headquarters, his open Horch staff car was strafed by an RCAF Spitfire near Livarot and crashed.

As head of Army Group B, Rommel was responsible for fortifying the French coast against invasion. Here he inspects German defenses in Normandy.

Captain Helmuth Lang, who was riding in the car, reported, "Marshal Rommel, who at the start of the attack had hold of the handle of the door, was thrown out unconscious when the car turned over, and lay stretched out on the road about 20 yards behind it. A second aircraft flew over and tried to drop bombs on those who were lying on the ground." Rommel was hospitalized for months with serious head injuries. He never returned to his command.

Rommel did or did not flirt with the idea of both removing the Führer from office and "opening up" the Western Front to the Allies to help bring this about. In either case, he would have been a traitor to his country by any standards, even given today's moral—if incorrect—view that he was a "good German" who turned against Hitler in the end.

The fact remains, however, that he supported Hitler and gratefully received a marshal's baton from his hands when the Nazis were winning, then abandoned that cause a mere six months later when it was becoming apparent that the war was lost.

In 1974, three decades after his death, the British revealed that they had been reading most of his radio traffic via their famed Ultra decryption program at Bletchley Park, an incalculable advantage, and one that must be factored in when assessing Rommel's military successes and failures.

What then, should history's verdict be on Erwin Rommel? There is no doubt that he was a brilliant tactician and capable strategist, but also a wishy-washy politician who might have emerged from the lost war as president of the Reich had the July 20 plot succeeded and he had been given the opportunity.

To disguise his role in Rommel's forced suicide, Hitler gave the field marshal a lavish state funeral in Ulm on October 14, 1944. His helmet and marshal's baton lay atop the flag-draped casket.

Both: National Archives

But these things did not happen, and the Field Marshal Rommel of myth, legend, and fact died a mysterious death and was given a hero's funeral. We are left, therefore, with a chilling reality: he was no soldier of democracy at all, but the holder of an Imperial Iron Cross and Blue Max, then a Nazi Iron Cross, Knight's Cross, and marshal's baton.

Had he been successful in North Africa, India, the Middle East, Normandy, and possibly even against the Red Army later, the capital of Nazi-occupied Europe would today be at Germania, the former Berlin, the Jews would have been completely wiped out by the triumphant Nazis, and a second, far more brutal Holocaust inaugurated against the combined Slavic peoples of the conquered East.

First in 1950 in Brigadier Desmond Young's ground-breaking biography *Rommel: The Desert Fox,* and then embellished upon in *The Rommel Papers* in 1953, the surviving members of the Rommel family and their political and military allies put forth the story that the late field marshal was compelled to commit suicide.

This was done on the orders of Hitler and inspired by his alleged "rivals" in the high command of the armed forces, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and Col. Gen. Alfred Jodl. The reason was his supposed involvement in the anti-Hitler bomb plot of July 20, 1944.

Here is Field Marshal Keitel's own first-hand account, written in his Nuremberg jail cell in 1946 while he was himself awaiting hanging, and published in 1979: "Rommel was heavily incriminated by the testimony of one of the main conspirators, a lieutenant colonel on the staff of the military governor of France, General Karl Heinrich von Stulpnagel.

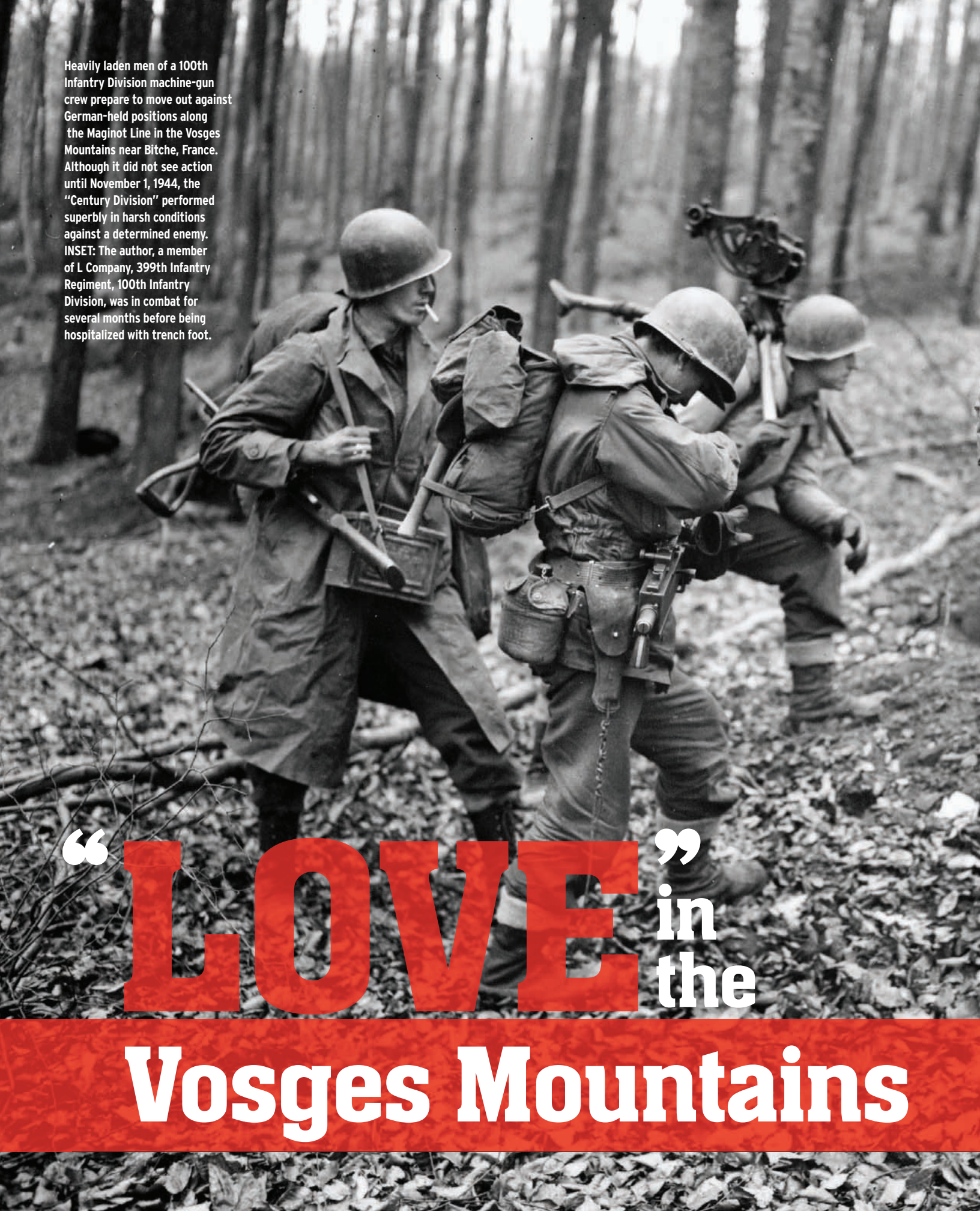
"The Führer showed me the protocol of the testimony and ordered the Chief of Army Personnel to summon Rommel to his presence; Rommel refused to come, as he was too ill to travel. Thereupon, the Führer ordered his chief adjutant and the Chief of Army Personnel, Wilhelm Burgdorf, to go and see him, taking with them the incriminating protocol and a letter which I wrote at Hitler's dictation.

"In this letter, it was submitted to Rommel that he should report to the Führer if he believed himself innocent; if he could not, then his arrest was inevitable, and he would be obliged to answer for his actions before a court. He might like to consider what the consequences of that would be; on the other hand, there was another way out for him to take."

After reading the protocol and the letter, Rommel asked whether the Führer was aware of the protocol's existence. "Then he asked General Burgdorf for time to think. Burgdorf had personal orders from Hitler to prevent Rommel from committing suicide by shooting himself; he was to offer him poison, in order that the cause of death could be attributed to the brain damage he had suffered in the motor accident; that would be an honorable demise and would preserve his national reputation.

"As they drove off together to the doctor in Ulm, Rommel swallowed the poison and died. The real cause of death was concealed, on Hitler's express wish, and Rommel received a state funeral with full military honors." Thus, it is seen that Rommel killed himself in this way because he was, in fact, guilty of treason against the state.

In both the Young and *Rommel Papers* accounts, the argument is put forward that the field marshal elected death in order to save his family from harm by Hitler, but it should be pointed out that neither the widow of the actual would-be assassin of July 20, 1944—Colonel Count Claus Schenck von Stauffenberg—nor her three sons were killed (she was, however, sent to a prison camp and the sons were sent to an orphanage), and indeed, survived the war; so did Rommel's wife and son. □



Heavily laden men of a 100th Infantry Division machine-gun crew prepare to move out against German-held positions along the Maginot Line in the Vosges Mountains near Bitche, France. Although it did not see action until November 1, 1944, the "Century Division" performed superbly in harsh conditions against a determined enemy. INSET: The author, a member of L Company, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, was in combat for several months before being hospitalized with trench foot.

"LOVE" in the Vosges Mountains

National Archives

The author is a self-described "tough kid from Brooklyn" who enlisted in the U.S. Army's Enlisted Reserve program in October 1942, hoping to complete his college education before being called up for active duty. But the Army had other plans. At first assigned to the tank corps and then the air corps, Khoury ended up as a rifleman in L ("Love") Company, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, which saw heavy action in the Vosges Mountains of France following Operation Dragoon, the invasion of the Riviera coast in August 1944. The following is adapted from his self-published book, Love Company: 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, During World War II and Beyond.

After fighting their way northward, in December 1944, Khoury and the 100th Division found themselves in Alsace-Lorraine.

Author Photo

ONE BATTLE FADED INTO THE NEXT. I cannot describe every firefight with the enemy. It was almost always the same. We attacked with mortars and cannon shells followed by riflemen moving ahead with rifles, grenades, and machine guns. The Germans returned our fire with their fire. Then it depended on which side had the greater firepower and the fewest casualties to advance or retreat. Fortunately, we outfought the Germans in almost every battle. Some were very costly.

Each patrol was a repetition of the last. Whether it was a battle or a patrol, I remember the shots of German burp guns and machine guns whizzing over my head as I hugged Mother Earth. They spewed bullets in tremendous bursts. Trees and branches splintered around me as they were hit. I could only fire back with the M1 Garand rifle that I had when the Germans stopped firing for an instant or fired in another area.

When we were bombarded with artillery shells, they tore up the ground and exploded in the trees, showering us with shrapnel. They maimed and killed more men than any other weapon. The soldier had no defense against an artillery bombardment except to dig a foxhole with a cover. When you could fire back, you did it with anger and vengeance for the buddies that were hit.

After one particular battle, when everything was quiet, my foxhole buddy and I were having a meal of K rations outside our foxhole and relaxing when we were suddenly surprised. Standing before us in a spotless uniform and polished boots was a German officer. He wore

The author, a rifleman in "Love" Company, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, recalls brutal winter combat along the French-German border. | BY JOHN M. KHOURY

an officer's cap and not a steel helmet. He had a pistol in a holster on his belt, but he did not take it out. He said in an authoritative way that he wanted to see our commanding officer.

We were so stunned that we grabbed our rifles and pointed them at him. We took his pistol, which was a P-38 and not a prized Luger, and checked to see if he had any other weapons. He sneered at our unkempt uniforms, dirty, unshaven faces, and plodding movements. That was answered with a powerful shove that almost sent him into the muddy ground as he was escorted back to the rear. This officer was more than a lieutenant, probably a major or a colonel. We wondered how he managed to walk from his own front lines alone across no man's land and not be noticed. He seemed to materialize out of nowhere. I did admire how he surrendered in style.

Our movements were usually on foot whether we were in reserve or were sent back up to the front line. As one company pushed through our position, we would then be following the front. We would rest a few days and then march up to push through K or I Company's position. Until we reached their line, we would march along in the usual manner on both sides of the road with five-yard distances between each man.

The roadside sights on those marches told of the destruction of this war. There were burned-out tanks, destroyed trucks, rubble piles that were once houses, dead horses and cattle lying on their sides with their four legs sticking straight out in rigor mortis, and there were dead soldiers, too. The destruction of men and military matériel was from both sides. However, when it was an American soldier we were especially grim, and we felt a loss even though we did not know him.

We passed the body of an American sapper who was lying in the middle of the road where he had been killed by an enemy mine that he was trying to disarm. His arm was reaching into the hole where the mine was buried. It exploded, and then it was all over for him. I felt a shiver of pain, but it just added to my feeling of numbness.

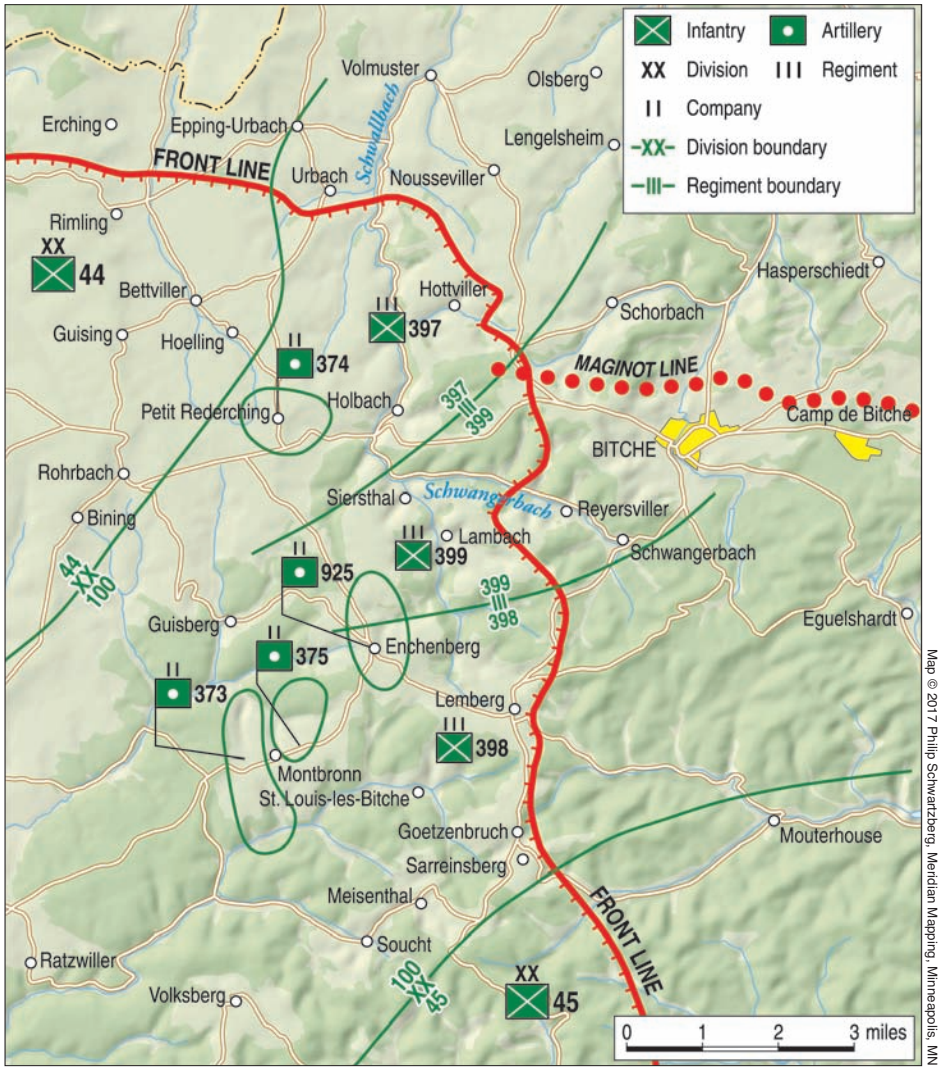
Upon reaching our destination where we were to attack through another company's line, we would follow orders when to move ahead. On one particular action, we had to wait in a column in a wood and could hear the sounds of a firefight in front of us. There were American and German machine guns and rifles firing away in loud bursts. It seemed that the men ahead of us had run into strong enemy positions and were pinned down.

My platoon was in the rear of the column, and we had stopped to await orders. Out of nowhere, we were joined by a lieutenant colonel, the regimental commander, whom I had never before seen so close to the front. He stood with us for a few minutes and then shouted, "Tell those soldiers to move up! That's an order from the colonel! Pass it along!" The command was picked up by the company noncoms and soldiers and yelled to the men farther ahead nearer the fighting. "The colonel says, 'Move up!' That's an order! Pass it along!"

It was not too long after that when we received the reply from the front, "Screw the Colonel! Pass it along!" He did not stay there with us but got into his jeep and left. We, of course, did move up into the line as the situation developed and our platoon leaders gave the orders.

For the dogface at the front, the orders of his sergeant and platoon leader are the only ones he feels confident to obey because they are there with him in the middle of the fight. Very high-ranking officers are not overly respected by those at the very bottom of the military ladder unless they have proved themselves in combat.

In fact, it was rumored that the big Army brass at the top levels sent an order to the



Map © 2017 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

National Archives

100th Division to the effect that our casualties were not consistent with the amount of territory we were capturing. This meant that there was something wrong, that we must be having an easy time and were not pushing hard enough against the enemy.

Incidentally, long after the war was over our division commander, Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress, was asked what he was most proud of while in combat. He said that the 100th Infantry Division conquered more enemy territory with fewer casualties than any other division in the war. For that reason alone, I think "Pinky" Burress was one of the unsung heroes of World War II.

[On November 28, the 399th Infantry Regiment was transported 32 miles from Moyenmoutier to Brouderdorff, France.] We arrived there after a brief rest during Thanksgiving to take our position with other companies in the 3rd Battalion of the 399th Infantry Regiment.

A story was told that a sergeant and a few of his men had come in from the front to the kitchen of regimental headquarters for a Thanksgiving dinner. They were on special assignment to have this special treat. Of course, they were in miserable shape, dirty and smelly, and they were greeted by an arrogant mess sergeant who said to them, "You're too late. The kitchen's closed. There's no more turkey."

This did not please the hungry sergeant and his men. They took their rifles off their shoulders and pointed them at the mess sergeant and his cooks. "We have just come in from killing the Germans! Now, do we get a dinner or do we have to shoot somebody?" They were promptly fed.

[On December 2, the regiment was trucked to Siewiller, 16 miles from Brouderdorff.] From this point we advanced on foot. Many of the towns in this part of France, which is Alsace, have German names and the people speak German and French, but they are true Frenchmen. For the next few days, we met little resistance because the Germans had retreated. Nevertheless, we had to dig in each day because of sporadic enemy shelling.

One day while we were marching, we passed a few tanks of the 781st Tank Battalion, which were attached to our division. We noticed all the extra items they were able to carry on the outside of their tanks. They had cartons of "10-in-1" rations that contained cans of orange marmalade, bacon, and meat and loaves of real bread and butter.

As we marched by the tanks, we liberated as much as we could without the tankers' knowledge. One of best items that we carried off was a full-sized shovel. That shovel was used to dig a foxhole in a quarter of the time it took with our regular entrenching tool. When we had to dig in, this shovel made it almost a pleasure. Later, it was passed around to everyone in the platoon. That spade was carefully guarded, but one day it mysteriously disappeared. We never caught the culprit.

[For the next several days, the regiment continued marching until it reached the vicinity of Goetzenbruck, France.] We were ordered to dig in along the crest of a hill. I had selected a spot for our foxhole, but my buddy who was to be in the hole with me did not like my choice and started digging about 50 feet to the left. I did not argue because one spot was the same as any other.

ABOVE: Elements of the 100th Division move through the ruins of Raon L'Etape in the Vosges Mountains area of northeastern France. OPPOSITE: The 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Division took part in heavy fighting at Lambach, Lemberg, and other towns near Bitche in the fall and winter of 1944-1945.

We had been hacking at the frozen earth for a short time when, suddenly, we were being pounded with artillery shells. Both of us dove into the partly hollowed-out foxhole as the earth around us shook with the explosions. Dirt and shrapnel flew up and around us. This lasted for about 15 minutes as I tried to crawl as deeply as possible into my helmet for protection.

Finally, all was quiet and we came up to see what had happened. The spot I had chosen for a foxhole had a direct hit! A thing like that unsettles the nerves and brings on a prayer of thanks.

The shelling did not sound like German 88mm artillery, and someone said that one of our officers had read the contour map wrong. He gave the number of the hill we were on and called for artillery fire instead of the number of the hill in front of us, where the enemy was dug in. Not only were the Germans trying to kill me, but I had to worry about my own officers! I don't know what casualties we had that time, but every day someone got sick or

Both: Author Photos

was wounded or killed.

[On December 8, the unit was at Lemberg, France.] This small town in the Vosges Mountains is an important intersection for main roads and a railroad leading in all directions. The strongest forts in the Maginot Line were located at Bitche, which is only about five miles to the northeast. The Germans retreated to this town and set up strong defenses to hold it against our advance.

On December 9, early in the morning, the 3rd Platoon moved through the woods following a road leading to a railroad trestle. We reached the edge of the woods and were deployed along a draw facing an open field that sloped upward toward the railroad embankment; the road to our left ran under the trestle. We peeked over the edge of the draw and looked across the open field, but we could not tell what the enemy had facing us. All the dogfaces were tense as they fixed bayonets.

At that time I had a Springfield '03 rifle and a grenade launcher and two rifle grenades. We awaited the command to charge across the open field into the German positions. Our mortars and artillery did not lay in a barrage before us. The attack was supposed to be a surprise. Smoke shells were probably used to screen our movements, but they did not do much good.

When our platoon leader, Lieutenant Bennett Taylor, gave the order to charge, "Let's go!" it was like a reenactment of a World War I movie. We all rose up and started running across the open field. We had not gone very far when the Germans opened up with their machine guns, rifles, mortar shells, and 20mm antiaircraft gun at us with tracers and exploding shells.

ABOVE: The author's platoon was engaged in a fierce firefight at this strongly defended railroad bridge over a road leading into Lemberg. Photo taken in 1994 by Al Lapa. BELOW: Pfc. Russell Hackett and other members of the author's platoon dig foxholes in preparation for an enemy counterattack in the Bitche area, November 1944. OPPOSITE: An M4 Sherman tank of the 781st Tank Battalion, in support of the 100th Division outside of Wingen-sur-Moder, France, January 6, 1945. A GI helmet and knocked-out vehicles bear witness to the fierce fighting.

There was booming noise and smoke and streaking bullets whizzing all around us. I had the strangest feeling that I was not really there in the middle of all this mayhem. In my mind, I was floating as I was running straight for the cover of the embankment, and I did not feel any terror or exhaustion. It was not me, but someone else who was there, and I was just an observer. I didn't even seem to hear or smell the battle. It was like a dream. Some would call it an "out-of-body experience."

In what seemed like an instant, I ran across the open field, straight into the enemy fire, cut to the road just to the left of the underpass, and hit down on the side of the embankment.

Meanwhile, right over our heads, the Germans were firing away with a machine gun and the 20mm cannon. I crawled up over the embankment to see where they were and caught sight of the position. I crawled back behind the embankment, removed my bayonet, and attached the grenade launcher to the end of my rifle. Carefully, I aimed for

the spot just beyond the tracks and to the left of my position where I had seen their emplacement. I fired the two grenades, and in the turmoil I don't know if they hit the target, but there was no more firing from there.

This attack was recorded in the *Story of the 399th Infantry Regiment*—the regimental history: "Love Company spearheaded the 399th into Lemberg, when they made a dash from the eastern woods to reach the railroad underpass in the center of town in midafternoon. The railroad was the Germans' main line of resistance.

"Lt. Taylor's 3rd Platoon reached the railroad embankment and Lt. MacDonald's 2nd Platoon dashed up a draw to hit the railroad on the right. Charley Goldman stuck his head over the embankment and got hit by a machine-gun bullet. Sgt. John Butler tried to lead the 2nd across the tracks but didn't make it. They were firing a hail of 20mm stuff and machine guns up and down the tracks. The only possible way into Lemberg was through that underpass and the Germans knew it.

"A bunch of krauts came charging through the underpass and we wiped 'em out with guns and grenades—Harvey Rohde, Al Lapa, and Bob Binkley shot up plenty. George Demopoulos of the Medics amputated a Mike [Company] boy's arm under fire. Then two mortars were rushed up behind the embankment and set up like infantry crossfires, each firing a different direction. John Khoury crawled up on the tracks and directed fire to knock out a flak wagon and a machine gun. Then we opened up with everything we had,

National Archives

charged through the underpass, and made a dash for the first couple houses of Lemberg."

There was enemy small-arms fire as we sought cover inside a house that had thick masonry walls. They were shooting at the windows and the door from positions overlooking the main street opposite us. Private Carroll Stratmann had just joined the company as a replacement on November 26. Two weeks later, as he stood next to me at the door of that house, a sniper's bullet hit him.

I crouched by a window and looked up at the German position and was surprised to see it in plain view on a low hill. Then an officer or noncom walked upright in front of the dug-in soldiers and was silhouetted against the sky, apparently giving orders to his men. He was about 200 yards away, and I took careful aim from the window, fired one shot, and missed. He did not flinch or duck or take cover.

I fired a second shot that did not miss. He stopped and collapsed backward. That was my small contribution to the memory of Stratmann, who later died of his wounds.

Meanwhile, in a house at the end of the main street, there was a German sniper firing from the upper window at any GI in the street. A Sherman tank was called in and it sent one 75mm cannon shell into the window, which eliminated the sniper but did not improve the house.

Lemberg was taken after some house-to-house fighting, and the enemy retreated to fight at his next line of defense.

According to the Morning Reports of December 8, there were six officers and 150 enlisted men in Love Company; two days later there were five officers and 139 enlisted men.

Of course, news circulated fast of who was wounded or killed or missing. That news always hurt everyone. On that day, word came that "Redbird" [Pfc. John W. Howe, Jr.] was hit and taken to a house nearby where our medic was giving him first aid. A couple of old buddies stopped in to see him and reported back that Redbird sent a message that he was okay and would be back soon.

But he had been hit by shrapnel in several places, and his wounds were so severe that he did not survive. I felt both sad and angry because he was such a good old buddy.

For their action at the railway bridge on December 9, the soldiers of the 3rd Platoon were awarded Bronze Star medals for valor.

During the next week, the company was in reserve. We bathed out of our helmets, which served as wash basins. We also shaved a two-week growth of whiskers with a dull Army razor. I let my mustache grow just for a change. We scrubbed our clothes of the mud and filth. The supply sergeant gave each of us clean underwear and socks.

We stripped, cleaned, and oiled our weapons to be sure that they would be ready for us when we returned to the front. Our rifle, BAR, or carbine was our closest friend.

Meanwhile, laid out in contorted positions in town were the bodies of about a dozen German soldiers that we passed on our way to chow each day. Seeing the gray, lifeless corpses with sightless eyes wide open and flies buzzing around them did not disturb most of the men who had seen almost two months of combat and death

in many forms. Since it was late autumn and the weather was cold, the corpses did not smell of decay.

During this week, we also heard about the German Ardennes Offensive that became known as the "Battle of the Bulge." We were not involved directly in the battle, which was to the north of us on the Belgian and Luxembourg front. The situation there was very serious. Our part of the front in the south with the Seventh Army was of secondary importance.

Support units, such as tank battalions, artillery batteries, and Army Air Corps units were relocated to the Ardennes sector where they were needed. As a result, there was a notable lack of new replacements in our company. Since we entered combat at the beginning of November, the Morning Reports showed that we had 18 privates and one T5 join the company as new replacements. Many came from other units where they were no longer needed, such as antiaircraft artillery, and others came directly from the States right out of basic training. Nevertheless, there was a constant shortage of soldiers in our company.

I had a chance to look around at the whole company while we were in reserve. It was obvious that there were many men gone from the company, and the ranks of non-coms were filled with the promotion of Pfcs and privates. At the time I did not know how many were in the company but the Morning Report of that day listed five officers and 123 enlisted men.

A memorable soldier was T. Sgt. Argil H. Warner, who was a platoon sergeant and probably the oldest man in our company. He was about 34 years old and was affectionately called "Pop" Warner by "his boys," who were about half his age. His younger brother, who was in the 1st Infantry Division, had urged him to transfer out of the rifle company and get an assignment in a less dangerous unit. Because of his age he could have gotten another assignment but he replied that he would not leave his boys.

In the vicinity of Schwangerbach, France, Warner was killed by a direct artillery hit on his foxhole. He wanted to do his duty as a soldier even if it cost him his life. The Army does not give medals for devotion to duty.

On December 15, we reached a wooded mountain facing the Citadel and the Maginot Line at the town of Bitche. (The French pronunciation is "Beesh," but for several reasons the Americans called it a female dog.)

From the edge of the forest, we could look across an open field of some 500 yards toward huge concrete forts where the retreating German Army had taken up defensive positions. From our foxholes in the woods where we had dug in, we had no idea what we were facing. We could see concrete bunkers that had a commanding view of the

The idea of running across that open field, carrying this clumsy bomb, climbing up to a huge bunker, and setting it off seemed to be the height of absurdity.

National Archives

National Archives

Christmas Eve dinner at the front: men of the 399th Regiment line up to receive hot chow—a rare treat. OPPOSITE: 100th Infantry Division riflemen fire from behind a berm near Rosteig, France, several miles south of Lemberg, in early December 1944.

entire area before them.

The fortifications here were the strongest of the entire Maginot Line. We did not know that. We only knew that this was the next objective. Looking at these gray, ominous forts did not make us feel very happy. We waited for orders to attack, but the enemy positions had to be softened up first.

[Thirty-six hours of "softening up" was undertaken by air and artillery on the forts surrounding Bitche.] Our artillery pounded the forts with a barrage of shells. We could see the shells land and, when the air cleared, the forts had chipped concrete but were still intact. The division artillery battalion with 155mm "Long Tom" cannons was brought up to fire point blank at the forts. They had direct hits, but it was the same as before. We could see some shells bounce off the rounded concrete bunkers and burst in the air.

Finally, some of the heaviest artillery in the Army was brought in, and that included the 240mm howitzer. Seven Germans surrendered after being pounded by these shells. They were driven out by the concussion and the noise, but the shelling did very little damage to the forts.

Then 78 fighter bombers were called in, and they dropped 27 tons of 500-pound bombs in a series of dive bombings in a futile attempt to neutralize and destroy their targets. After all this, the forts were still there: gray, silent, unmoved, looking benign, but deadly powerful.

We now knew that it was up to us to take those forts where the Germans were still hunkered down and waiting. For us, the expendable GIs, it was a matter of getting up to the open gun slits and the steel doors and fighting our way in to rout the enemy. The plan was for us to charge across the open field under covering machine gun and mortar fire with a smoke screen to reach the fortifications.

At this point, each soldier was to carry out his own assignment. I had the task of carrying a satchel or "beehive" charge—a 25-pound, cone-shaped charge of TNT designed to cling to a vertical or horizontal surface. This had to be strategically placed by hand, and the fuse had to be ignited. Before it exploded, I would have enough time to find a cozy spot to wait in safety.

This whole idea seemed ludicrous to me after seeing what little damage had been done before by huge pieces of Army ordnance. However, I was assured that this little device was shaped to explode with such tremendous, concentrated force that it would blow a hole in any spot. Through the opening, we could then drop lots of grenades on the defenders.

Still, to me, the idea of running across that open field of fire, carrying this clumsy bomb, climbing up to a huge bunker, and setting it off seemed to be the height of absurdity. However, I knew I would try to do it. On other missions, I had known fear but I had not lost courage or determination. This time I had a mortal fear that it would be my last mission.

Other men in the platoon had other assignments. One of them, Al Lapa, had to carry a flamethrower across the open field and try to get up to an opening in the bunker. Then he had to shoot his fiery stream inside at the enemy. He told me, "They must be crazy if they think I'm going to run at the Krauts with 10 gallons of gasoline on my back! It weighs 75 pounds and when I hit the ground the thing knocks off my helmet and slides off my back."

When he complained to Lieutenant Taylor, someone else got the assignment. These Maginot Line forts were so solidly built that they could only be taken from an inside assault. Fortunately, other units of the division were able to blast in through the steel doors to rout the German defenders in their sector. Before we had to attack the fort in front of us, the situation was changed by the battle to our north.

This situation convinced me that bombing and strafing and artillery shells alone cannot win battles and in turn cannot win wars. Even 70-ton tanks cannot do it alone. It is the little soldiers in the front line who must be there to claim the victory or suffer the defeat. All the other units have to support them so that they can take possession of the enemy's territory and defeat his forces.

Our assault on Bitche was aborted because the Battle of the Bulge, which began on December 16, was drawing on all the Allied military resources; we could not continue our advance without support.

[On December 21, the regiment marched four miles to Lambach.] It was time to return to the front line and relieve King Company. 6:15 PM is late in the evening to start a march and, in winter, in

the snow-covered mountains where there is no light but the moon and the stars, the world is shades of gray.

No one had any idea of where we were or where we were going. In order not to get lost, we followed closely behind the soldier in front of us, and no one could talk or light a match or cigarette. It was single file through woods, across roads and open fields, and at one point we slid down the bank of a stream on the seats of our pants and waded across to the other side. There the river bank was muddy, and we slipped trying to get up it. The man behind had to boost up the man in front of him. Most of the time each soldier had to hold onto the belt of the man in front of him because it was pitch black. We were lost!

National Archives

105mm howitzers of the 925th Field Artillery Battalion, 100th Division fire a barrage to stop a counterattack in France. OPPOSITE: Taking advantage of snow, fog, and freezing temperatures, German troops launch their surprise counterattack known as "Operation Nordwind" in the Vosges area.

Somehow, the next night we finally arrived at Lambach and spent the night in the schoolhouse. We had gone four miles in 22 hours! We never found K Company but it was rumored that we had gone behind the German line and circled back to our own. It seemed that map reading was not a strong point with some of our officers.

The following morning, the battalion commander, Major Angelo Pinero, arrived on the scene and reamed out our company commander, Captain Carl Alfonso, for getting lost. We were grateful that we were still alive.

We still had to relieve K Company and headed off in daylight to find them. We came across a distant spot on the side of a hill that looked like an outpost in front of a wooded area. Lieutenant Taylor halted the platoon in the woods where we were and ordered another GI and me to go and check the outpost for K Company.

We slowly plodded up the snow-covered hill with our heavy winter clothing, our clumsy shoe-pac boots, our rifle, and ammunition, slipping every few steps. We were about 200 yards from the outpost and still could not tell if we were looking at friends or enemies. Then we saw two helmeted heads rise slowly and two rifles appear over the edge of the foxhole. They were pointed at us! Uh-oh! In an instant, we both spun around and raced back down the hill as bullets flew at us. We fell. We rolled. We zigzagged and got back gasping to our line.

Before we moved on, a 60mm mortar crew from our heavy weapons platoon was called in to return fire to that outpost. As we watched, they sent up three or four shells that landed directly on the enemy dugout. The accuracy of our mortarmen amazed us. That finished their outpost.

We finally found K Company and took over their foxholes so that they could get relief and rest for a few days. During those times when we passed through another company hardly more than a few words were ever exchanged. It seems as though one company had gotten a reprieve and the other company had been returned to serve its time. Between the two groups, there were only feelings of common understanding of what we all experienced.

[On Christmas Eve, the regiment was trucked 82 miles back to Goetzenbruck.] Christmas 1944 was spent in a foxhole. We had to dig through snow and a foot of frozen ground before we reached softer earth. We cut pine branches to line the dirt floor, and heavier branches were cut to cover half of the opening of the hole. This made a cozy place that gave protection and warmth.

We had a special hot turkey dinner on Christmas Day, which was received on a chow line about 300 yards behind the front line. The extra treat was a can of beer and some peanuts, and the special present was a fur-lined parka overcoat. The fur was on the inside and the rough skin was on the outside. It had a reversible cloth covering in white on one side and khaki on the other. With the attached hood, we were warm inside that coat like never before. This made everybody look very wide, but underneath there was just some skinny kid.

It was relatively quiet that day. Some cannon fire was heard now and then, but it was very little. What a paradox it was to be eating out in the snow with grubby, grimy hands, sitting on a log, enjoying turkey, mashed potatoes with gravy, and a hot cup of coffee and saying "Merry Christmas."

The religious services were brief and held in the open field just beyond the chow line and led by a chaplain who seldom ventured to the front on any other occasion. Nevertheless, Christmas carols were sung, and it almost seemed festive. When it was over, we picked up our weapons and shuffled back to our foxholes.

We remembered how it was often said that the war would be over by Christmas. There was a popular song, "I'll Be Home for Christmas." We were not home and there

was a lot more war to be fought before it was over. On December 26 we moved again—back to Lemberg, less than two miles away.

For the first time since we entered the line, we had to take up defensive positions. We no longer were chasing the Germans. We were going to wait for them to attack us, but that still meant that we had to send out reconnaissance patrols. We needed to learn where they were, what they had, and what they were doing.

We also cleaned and checked our weapons. Every man was given extra ammunition and grenades. Fifty-caliber machine guns, which are usually mounted on vehicles such as a tank, half-track, or a truck, were brought to the front-line positions with ample belts of ammunition. We were well armed to defend our line.

The main deficiency in L Company was the lack of men. We had between 125 and 130 enlisted men and six officers. Of the original number of 141 privates and Pfcs, there were only about 94 at the end of December 1944. Losses of privates and Pfcs were filled by replacements, and we had very few of them for many weeks. Sergeants were always replaced by privates or Pfcs, so that there was always a full complement of non-coms. I was asked to be the leader of my squad at this time.

To be a sergeant was not one of my burning ambitions, and I demurred. However, when I was told that it would be either me or another soldier whom I did not think was experienced, I accepted. Thus, I was an acting sergeant and my "12-man squad" consisted of one soldier, Private Junior P. Ogle. We were not a formidable force, but we were ready.

We had the responsibility of defending a very wide stretch of the front. Foxholes were manned by two men, not three, and they were spaced about 100 feet apart. Each hole was placed to cover an open field of fire from a ridge that was to the left of the railroad tracks. We had never had such a large front to defend. If just one foxhole was penetrated, there was enough room to send an enemy company through, and we had nobody behind us in reserve in case we could not hold the line.

Forward outposts were about 50 yards in front of this main line of defense. One was to the left in an open area, and the other was to the right of the railroad tracks. Each outpost was manned by two men.

For a couple of days, we had nothing to do but prepare and wait. We were not sure when and if the Germans were going to attack. We thought that this was a time to rest while the Battle of the Bulge was being waged in the north.

We did not have anything to drink to celebrate the coming New Year. Alcohol was never issued to the men in the infantry. However, for this New Year's Eve, one bottle of beer was given to each of us.

Late in the evening of December 31, 1944, a lot of activity on the German side of the front was noticed by our forward outposts. We were not sleepy because we had been expecting some kind of attack, but we did not know how big it would be. Strangely, no one seemed to be nervous or panicky. There was just a tense calm along our line as we waited in the icy cold, exhaling clouds of vaporized breath, and moving feet and hands to keep warm. The moon was bright and the snow reflected the light, which gave an eerie grayness across the land.


Ullstein Bild

It was in the early hours of New Year's Eve when the Germans launched their attack on the Seventh Army front. Hitler called it "Operation Nordwind." Our forward outposts were hit hard by the Germans. Lapa fired the three rounds from the bazooka he had out of the right outpost and then kept firing his BAR until he had to retreat to our main line of defense.

Ernie Weinberger was hit with a bullet that pierced his cheek and mouth and exited his other cheek. Paul "Abe" Lincoln in the left outpost was also firing his BAR when they were hit. He was in a dazed state of shock when he saw his buddy, Mo Lloyd, shot through the head with blood and brains spilling out of the wound. Lincoln made it back to our line and was immediately sent back to the battalion aid station with Weinberger.

On our main line of defense we heard the firing of burp guns and rifles. We saw our men from the outposts running back to us, and we were ready. No one was asleep or drunk, as the enemy expected us to be on New Year's Eve. The Germans were yelling and screaming as they ran toward our line of foxholes, calling us all kinds of names like "dirty American bastards," but we did not mind the insults. It was the least of our worries.

Immediately, we fired a tremendous fusillade of machine-gun and rifle fire. I got out of my foxhole and crouched behind a tree to be able to see better and move easily. I fired at the gray shadows with my M1 without taking time to slowly aim and squeeze off each round. There were so many of them coming toward us that it was more important to fire as

rapidly as possible. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to see the sights on a rifle at night; careful aiming was hopeless and a waste of time.

The firing from our line was furious and harrowing. We kept shooting and shooting and shooting. It seemed to last for hours. The Germans were drunk with schnapps and gave us very little return fire. It was hard for them to yell curses at us and fire their bolt-action Mauser rifles or their machine pistols accurately while running at us.

I don't know how many enemy soldiers were hit in front of us, but I know that their attack was broken. They stopped charging and moved off to our right flank. We had held fast on our line, and it became quiet after a few hours. There was sporadic small-arms gunfire and artillery shelling during the following day as we stayed in our positions.

National Archives

ABOVE: A 399th GI dries his feet and changes socks to avoid trench foot. Officers threatened to court-martial soldiers if they developed trench foot; it was a hollow threat. BELOW: Brig. Gen. Andrew Tychsen, assistant commander of the 100th, awards the Bronze Star for Valor to the author, June 1945, at Kirschheim, Germany.

Author Photo

Late in the evening of January 2, 1945, a task force from the 63rd Infantry Division was sent up to take over our positions in Lemberg. It was dark, of course, and difficult for the new troops to orient themselves in this new location. They appeared clean-shaven with spotless uniforms and weapons. They were advance units of their division that had arrived at the Vosges Mountains front in defensive positions on December 22. We placed them in our foxholes and told them "Good luck!"

One of them who was probably 18 and just out of high school turned to me, trembling, and asked, "Where are they?" I pointed toward the enemy line and said, "They are over there about 200 yards in front." He trembled as he looked at me and sobbed quietly. There was nothing more I could say.

Later, I thought about these green, young boys sent to the front to relieve us grimy, tough, veteran dogfaces. We were all about the same age. What could I say to them? Don't worry. You'll be all right. It's only a war. Nobody gets wounded or killed. That's just noise you hear. In a little while you'll go home to your mother. Perhaps, I should have told them the philosophy of old dogfaces like me: You've got to kill or be killed!

After two months of seeing death and destruction, I was tired of it and I felt like a very old man. I had thought for some time that the war was never going to end. Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year's Day had come and gone, and there was no end in sight. What was the use of fighting? We had been living in the rain and snow during one of the coldest winters in recent European history. We shivered as we trudged out on patrols, and we never felt warm. Death would not have been a bad alternative. I did not tell my thoughts to any of my buddies. Besides, we had to move out to our next battle, and I had to forget such a stupid idea.

The front line on the Seventh Army front was skewed badly after the Nordwind offensive. The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which had been put into the line on the right flank of the 100th Infantry Division, fell back five miles when the attack came. Our Love Company held the right flank of the division line, which was now exposed and undefended. The 44th Infantry Division on our division's left flank also fell back from their defensive positions. This left our division with two vulnerable, exposed flanks, because we had held fast along most of our front.

Units of the division were moved back to straighten the line. There was a lot of movement on our side to reorganize our positions. In addition, we had to fight the enemy, who was keeping up his attack with artillery and infantry assaults. There was no time to relax and leisurely establish an orderly front.

We moved to Enchenberg on January 2. We had lost many men; among the missing was Pfc. Maurice E. Lloyd. He was never listed as killed in action because his body was not found until 30 years later. His foxhole buddy, Pfc. Paul "Abe" Lincoln, knew he had been killed but unless a body is found a soldier is listed as MIA.

Lloyd's name was engraved on the Wall of the Missing at the American Military Cemetery in Epinal, France. At the time the cemetery was planned and completed, it was thought that all the bodies of American soldiers who had been killed had been collected and buried or shipped back to the States.

In the 1970s, a man, his son, and their dog were tracking through the woods outside Lemberg when the dog led them to a log-covered dugout where they found the skeletal remains of a soldier. Wearing the uniform of an American soldier and still holding the automatic rifle he died with were the remains of Pfc. Maurice E. Lloyd. When he was killed, he probably never knew what had hit him. His identity was confirmed by his dog-tags and a religious medal inscribed by his girlfriend, "With Love to Mo from Billye."

National Archives

One of them who was probably 18 and just out of high school turned to me, trembling, and asked, "Where are they?" I pointed toward the enemy line and said, "They are over there about 200 yards in front." He trembled as he looked at me and sobbed quietly.

Men of the 399th watch from their trench line as an American tank rolls past on a forest road. By holding firm against the enemy's counterattacks and capturing Bitche in March 1945, the 100th Division earned praise from higher headquarters.

When his bones were removed for burial, the mayor and citizens of Lemberg paid homage to him in a special ceremony. Later, at a memorial service, his family participated in a ceremony at the American Military Cemetery in the Ardennes, where he was finally laid to rest. A monument was made by the people of Lemberg and placed at his foxhole—the only such dedication of a foxhole in the entire war.

Many men were going on sick call because of trench foot, which is a form of frostbite. This can result from not taking off combat boots, letting the feet dry in the air, and changing into dry socks. So many soldiers were getting trench foot that we heard that the big brass in the rear echelons threatened to court-martial soldiers who went on sick call with trench foot.

They must have thought that that was a brilliant idea, but who would be left to man the front lines? Certainly, a sick and miserable GI at the front could use a court-martial to ease his suffering. If he was a private, what could he lose in rank and pay? How unhappy would he be in a stockade, miles from the front and served hot food and given a clean bed and a roof over his head? It would have been almost as welcome as a million-dollar wound.

In reality, no one was even threatened with a court-martial because it was extremely difficult to prevent trench foot when you were always on the move with the enemy just a few hundred yards in front of you. Seldom did you take off your boots and change your socks if you even had a dry pair because you never knew when you had to move out. It snowed and rained, and nothing you wore was dry. If you took off your boots, you could not easily get them back on because your feet were swollen. At night, you slept a few hours at a time in your foxhole with your boots on and with your weapon at your side.

[Khoury's war was soon over. He came down with frostbitten feet and was evacuated to a military hospital in the town of Vittel, famous for its mineral water. He had mixed feelings about this because he did not think his injury was serious enough and did not want to leave his buddies.]

On the way to the hospital, I saw others who had wounds and ailments that were much worse than mine. I could walk while some men were on stretchers. I looked fine, while others had bandages. I could talk, while others mumbled incoherently. I was just too healthy.

[But Khoury was hospitalized for many weeks. During that time, he gained enormous respect for the nurses who tended the sick, wounded, and dying.] They worked long hours and saved so many lives that the doctors owed much of their success to these women. The men—the patients—also knew that it was the Army nurses who were always there when they needed them.

The author is offering signed copies of his self-published book, Love Company, *for $18.00 each plus $4.00 postage. Write him at: John M. Khoury, 20 Blanch Avenue E107, Harrington Park, NJ 07640.*

Naval History and Heritage Command

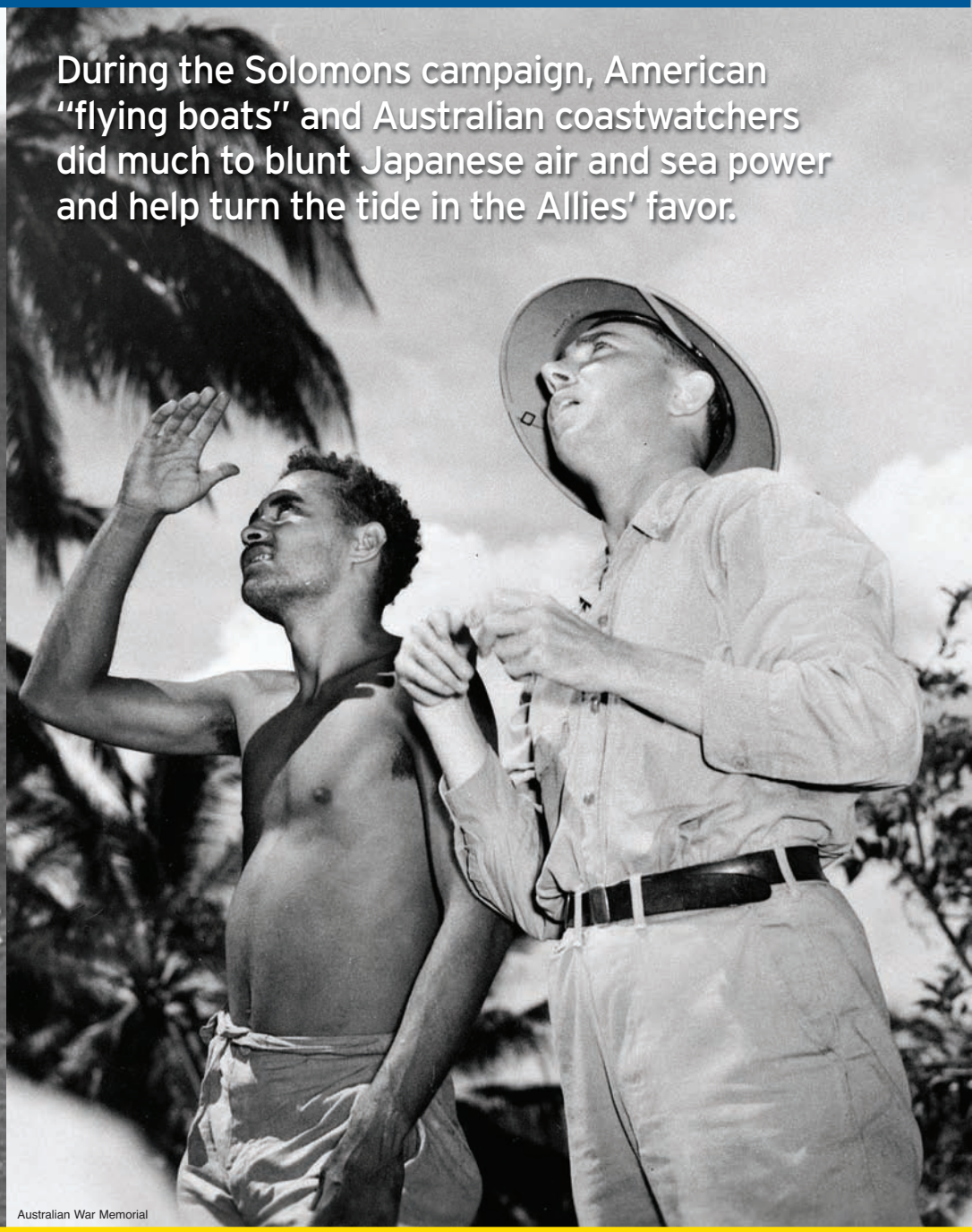
Dumbos, Black Cats, & Coastwatchers

BY WILLIAM G. DENNIS

Even after the Battle of Midway in June 1942, the Japanese were still in a commanding position in the western Pacific. They still had more of every kind of military and naval resource, but the Solomon Island campaign that had begun in January 1942 would change that. By the end of the campaign, the Japanese would lose the initiative in the Pacific and would no longer have the strength to stop Allied advances. Bloody battles lay ahead, but now it was a different war.

There were a number of reasons for the eventual Allied victory. The Japanese made some terrible strategic and tactical mistakes. Overconfidence—"victory disease"—caused many. They were willing to fight in awkward circumstances and at the end of a painfully vulnerable supply line. At the same time, the Allies' strength was growing as they deployed new units on the ground, at sea, and in the air and introduced new weapons, innovative tactics, and superior aircraft.

Allied losses during the campaign were painful, but Japanese losses were shattering. That was partly because Allied strategic and tactical moves were better thought-out than those of the Japanese. In addition, the Australian coastwatcher organization and the American "Black Cat" PBY Catalina flying boat squadrons made substantial contribu-



During the Solomons campaign, American "flying boats" and Australian coastwatchers did much to blunt Japanese air and sea power and help turn the tide in the Allies' favor.

Australian War Memorial

tions to minimizing Allied losses and ensuring that Japanese losses were ruinously high.

The coastwatchers were initially set up by the Australian government, which needed observers in Australia's sparsely inhabited Northern Territory. Local volunteers were trained and given a "telaradeo," which was capable of both voice and Morse code operations.

When the Australians gained control over the Solomons after World War I, they assigned district officers to represent the "Government." Their administration was benevolent. Intervillage warfare and head hunting were suppressed. A system of medical practitioners was set up that provided the islanders with a modicum of medical support. On the whole, the natives were sincerely appreciative of that support and had a positive attitude toward the Australian administration.

LEFT: A PBY-5 Catalina flying boat from a "Black Cat" night patrol squadron overflies the shoreline of New Guinea. These aircraft, plus Australian coastwatchers on the ground, were instrumental in blunting Japanese moves in the South Pacific. RIGHT: A native and an American radio operator, part of Donald Kennedy's coastwatcher team on New Georgia.

As war loomed, the coastwatcher system was extended into the Australian-controlled islands. District officers and selected planters and miners were enrolled—men

who had been in the islands long enough to adapt to the heat and humidity. They were people who, as one historian put it, "knew how to live in the jungle, how to handle the natives, how to fend for themselves." Events showed it was a sound policy.

It was also important to have old hands for the job because disease can make the islands a miserable place; yaws, dysentery, and blackwater fever are just some of the diseases that afflict people living there. When the Marines left Guadalcanal, 75 percent had malaria. There are also plenty of dangerous pests like the centipede that bit a chief scout on Rendova and left him in agony for two weeks.

At the beginning of the war, the coastwatcher operation was headed by Commander Eric Feldt, who had set up the network that extended throughout the Solomons, New Guinea, and the smaller islands north of it. Feldt codenamed the network "Ferdinand," after the Walt Disney cartoon bull character that preferred smelling flowers to fighting.

Feldt wanted his people to be covert and not engage the Japanese if at all possible. He wanted information on Japanese movements and, as the air war picked up, weather reports. He felt that the information they could provide was far more important than any pinpricks they might inflict. He was correct; their warnings would have a decisive impact on the campaign.

There were never more than about 15 coastwatchers in the Solomons, plus a few American assistants; several watchers on the northern island of Bougainville were killed. Things could quickly get hairy even in the air. When coastwatcher Dick Horton was sent to reconnoiter the Ontong Java Atoll, north of the Solomons, he flew in a PBY. On the way back, a patrolling B-17 tried to shoot it down. The Japanese had captured a PBY, so Horton's pilot was supposed to flash a recognition signal to the B-17 when the bomber challenged it. The PBY did not see the challenge, so the bomber opened fire.

The district officers continued to try to help the natives even as their control crumbled during the Japanese advance. When the coconut planters fled, they left hundreds of contract workers stranded, so the district officers made strenuous efforts to get those men back to their home islands.

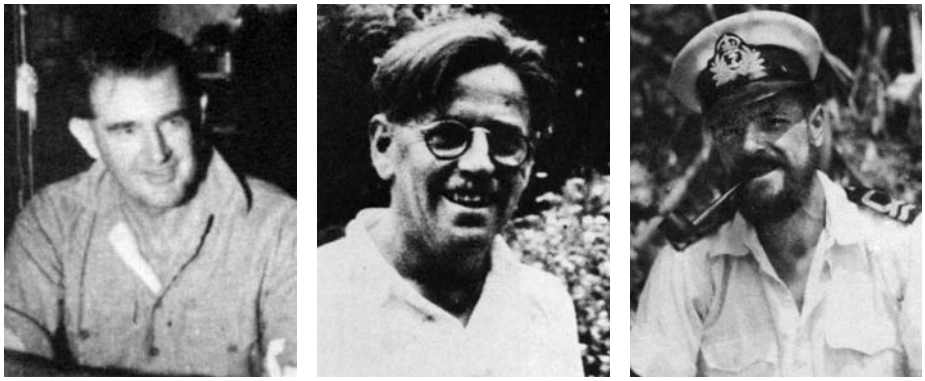
On Bougainville they were not completely successful, and coastwatchers there purchased tracts of land from the local villages so the stranded men could plant kitchen gardens. In contrast to the Japanese, the watchers were also free with their medical supplies as long as they lasted.

When Japanese pressure forced the watchers still free on Bougainville to withdraw by submarine, the coastwatcher headquarters on Guadalcanal ordered one watcher to leave his native scouts and carriers on the island, as there was not sufficient room for them on the sub. He deliberately failed to rendezvous with the submarine. A second submarine trip had to be scheduled to retrieve him—a sub with room for all his party.

The missionaries in the islands were another group that had earned the natives' respect because of the medical help they gave and their obvious good intentions, but generally they tried to stay neutral in the conflict. Japanese atrocities and random acts of cruelty directed at missionaries and natives alike made some side with the Allies.

Father Emery de Klerk on the south shore of Guadalcanal began by rescuing a

Australian War Memorial



ABOVE: (L to R): District Officer Donald Kennedy on New Georgia Island and Paul Mason and Jack Reed on Bougainville risked their lives to gather and deliver vital intelligence to Allied forces. BELOW: Guadalcanal District Officer Martin Clemens photographed with members of the island's Defense Force Scouts.

National Archives

ABOVE: A flight of Japanese Mitsubishi "Betty" bombers, possibly photographed by a coastwatcher in 1943, heads toward a distant target. BELOW: Commander Eric Feldt (circled) and a group of Australian coastwatchers pose in an undated photo. Frank Nash (bottom row, far right) was one of the few American coastwatchers.

Both: Australian War Memorial

downed American flyer. His resistance to further involvement dissolved when the Japanese wantonly slaughtered some elderly nuns. Before the Japanese evacuated the island, he was commanding his own small war band and wearing the uniform of a second lieutenant of the U.S. Army.

The coastwatchers could not have existed without the support of the natives. About 400 Melanesians served with the coastwatchers, another 680 with the Solomon Islands Protectorate Defense Force, and about 3,200 served as laborers. Most natives subsisted on produce from their communal gardens and the fish and other seafood they gathered.

Generally the people who wrote about the character of the natives were unstinting in their praise. When the Japanese landed on Guadalcanal at Lunga Point to build their airfield, the first detailed information about it came from one of the "police boys" who volunteered to serve in a Japanese kitchen.

Throughout the campaign natives took grave risks to rescue downed flyers and shipwrecked sailors. Then they often spent days of dangerous work getting them to a coastwatcher.

With a few exceptions they were encouraged to stay away from the Japanese, but that did not stop the Japanese from killing or capturing hundreds of natives. It was sometimes hard for the natives to see a reason for restraint when Japanese landing parties looted villages and pillaged gardens as happened one day when the Japanese sent eight men to set up their own coastwatcher station on the south coast of Guadalcanal. The depredations infuriated the local villagers, so they struck back a few nights later. They killed all but one radio operator, who fled into the jungle never to be seen again.

A particularly senseless atrocity prompted watcher Dick Horton to write, "This was not the only case in the Solomons in which the Japanese showed their cruelty and practiced their belief that anyone not a Japanese could be regarded as Kichibu, or beast." Watchers and scouts were sorely tempted to ambush isolated parties.

Even when cruelty was not involved, there was friction between natives and the Japanese. The occupiers paid little for the supplies they commandeered and for the labor they demanded. Often they lived in such rough and squalid circumstances that the natives had little respect for them.

It was uncertain that the watchers could remain operational after the Japanese occupied the islands, but fallback positions, where provisions and gasoline were stored, were prepared in the jungle. The watchers on Bougainville—Jack Reed in the north and Paul Mason in the south—were able to fall back and keep apprising the Allies of Japanese movements. A few weeks before the Marine landing on Guadalcanal, they were ordered off the air to minimize any chance of their being put out of action before that landing.

The campaign that most clearly demonstrated the coastwatchers' usefulness began with the battle for Guadalcanal. On August 7, 1942, a force of inadequately trained U.S. Marines landed in what they called Operation Shoestring because they had only a fraction of the supplies and equipment their leaders thought necessary. Their objective was to capture the Japanese airfield and surrounding area, finish building it, and turn it into an Allied air base.

The landing, however, managed to surprise and overwhelm the small Japanese force on the island, enabling the Marines to finish the airfield (Henderson Field) so it could be used by Marine and Army aircraft.

Both: Australian War Memorial

ABOVE: A group of native and Aussie coastwatchers aboard the American submarine USS *Dace.* The group was about to land at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea. OPPOSITE: Native scouts set out from a coastwatcher station on New Georgia with Donald Kennedy and U.S. Marines.

Over the next few months the Japanese made more landings in an effort to build up a force strong enough to expel the Americans. Finally, the Japanese effort collapsed, and the sick and starving remnants of the Japanese forces were withdrawn. Much the same sequence of events occurred on several other islands later in the campaign.

After Henderson Field on Guadalcanal became operational, Japanese naval surface forces avoided the island during the day, but after some sharp and expensive night engagements off the island the Allies ceded night control of those waters to the Japanese. This allowed the Japanese to bring in reinforcements and supplies to their troops via what was dubbed the "Tokyo Express."

Groups of fast Japanese ships would form near the Shortland Islands and would time their voyages to put them within bomber range of Guadalcanal just before dusk, run in, offload, and try to be back out of range by dawn. Information supplied by the coastwatchers, patrolling aircraft, and signal intelligence made those runs harder and less effective.

There was enormous variation between the experiences of the several watchers. District officer and coastwatcher Martin Clemens hurried back to the islands from leave in Australia when he heard about Pearl Harbor. At his insistence, he was assigned as an assistant to Dick Horton, who was then stationed on Guadalcanal. They moved back into the hills when they got the first report of the Japanese occupying the nearby island of Tulagi

Another stay behind was District Officer Donald Kennedy, who set up shop at Segi Point near the south end of New Georgia Island. He had a talent for dealing with the natives and for keeping the primitive electronics of the day working. By the time the advancing Allies reached him, he had gained a reputation as a formidable warrior.

Kennedy had recruited a "half-caste" native medical practitioner named Geoffrey Kuper, the son of a German planter and his native wife. Initially Kuper worked on getting stranded contract workers back to their home islands. On his own he rescued an aviator from theaircraft carrier USS *Enterprise,* who was shot down during a strike on Tulagi.

His rescue work was so effective that Kennedy set him up with his own coastwatcher station. He established it on Tataba just in time for the big air battles as the Japanese attempted to knock out Henderson Field; over the next few weeks Kuper and his scouts rescued dozens of downed flyers.

Signal intelligence was of paramount importance in the vast spaces of the Pacific, but the coastwatchers were invaluable in the narrow seas around the Solomons. The Allies actually began to benefit from the coastwatchers before the invasion when Paul Mason reported Japanese ships heading for the Battle of the Coral Sea.

Japanese air attacks against Guadalcanal launched from fields around Rabaul would pass over Bougainville. Once the battle for Guadalcanal began, both Mason and Read began reporting on the Japanese bombers as they headed for that island. The Allied commanders showed that they understood the value of the coastwatchers by briefing their headquarters about planned operations so that the watchers could be placed to best advantage.

After the Marines landed on Guadalcanal, the coastwatchers at large on the island came into their perimeter and set up a Solomon Islands headquarters. Feldt sent his deputy, Lt. Cmdr. Hugh Mackenzie, to take charge of that headquarters.

But Japanese naval thrusts were getting past Bougainville and New Georgia unobserved, thus showing the need for more watchers, so teams slipped into the jungles of Vella Lavella and Choiseul. Nick Waddell, who had been stationed on Choiseul previously, and Carden Seton, a former planter in the islands, were chosen for that station, while Henry Josselyn and John Keenan established the post on Vella Lavella. There was too much Japanese air activity in the area to fly them, so the teams went in by submarine.

Josselyn and Keenan made it across the coral reef that ringed the island in spite of a leaking rubber raft and not being able to find a gap in the reef. Without making any contact with the natives, they made their way to the deserted Mundi Mundi plantation house and set up shop in a camouflaged lean-to on a nearby hill, only to have their teleradeo break down almost immediately. Fortunately, friendly natives happened by so they were able to arrange for relays of canoes to take Josselyn 150 miles to Kennedy's post.

After requesting parts for the machine only to have them destroyed when dropped from an airplane, Kennedy gave Josselyn his own radio. He was sure he would be able to fix one he had pulled from a crashed Japanese plane. Eventually the natives returned Joselyn to Mundi Mundi, where the station became operational.

Waddell and Seaton had an exciting time getting to their station on Choiseul. As the submarine was moving into position to launch their rubber rafts, word came that the Tokyo Express, a fresh Japanes destroyer convoy, was running and the submarine was to take station to intercept the enemy. The submarine found the convoy, launched a torpedo attack, and was depth charged in return.

Eventually the submarine returned to the section of the coast where the men were to land. They fought their way across the fringing reef and onto shore, barely getting their supplies and the rafts under cover before daylight. The station was soon operational.

When the Japanese established a seaplane base on Santa Isabel Island, Guy Cooper and a team of native scouts were deployed to keep an eye on it. Scouts offered the Japanese at the base fish and other food and soon had the run of the whole facility. A second post was also established and manned on that island by J.A. Corrigan.

All of these posts were operational by March 1943, which put Japanese ship and air movements through the islands under almost constant surveillance. This allowed the Allies to mount attacks that seriously interfered with Japanese attempts to build up bases in the islands. When Japanese aircraft flew south from Rabaul, watchers on Bougainville could give Guadalcanal and ships in nearby waters about two hours' warning of an impending raid.

Fortunately, even without coastwatcher warnings the time of day when Japanese aerial attacks on Guadalcanal could be expected was quite predictable. The range to their targets was such that there was no fuel or time to do anything but fly the most direct route. In order to return to base before dark, the raid had to reach Guadalcanal about noon.

These distances were a long way for a damaged aircraft to fly, and a great many Japanese aircraft went down somewhere along the "Slot,"—the strait between New Georgia and Santa Isabel. If the aircrew made it safely to the surface, there was a good chance they would end up in the hands of the natives. The lucky ones were turned over to a watcher and sent back to Guadalcanal, where they were a useful source of information.

To give them more flexibility in timing their raids and to give their flyers a better chance of making it back, the Japanese began building airfields in the northern Solomons. They expanded the one the Australians had begun on Buna and began building another one near Mason's station on Matabita Hill. This forced him farther back from the coast, which interfered with some of his observations. It was also the beginning of serious Japanese efforts to capture him and Reed.

This was one of the few times the Japanese made determined efforts to eliminate coastwatchers; apparently they finally grasped the damage that Reed and Mason were doing. It was easy to see the relationship between coded messages from the interior of Bougainville soon after Japanese air raids passed overhead and the flights being intercepted as they neared Guadalcanal.

Reed's and Mason's positions were also more tenuous than those of most watchers. There were thousands of Japanese on Bougainville, and as the campaign progressed their bases were multiplying. This made Japanese claims plausible that the day of the white man in the islands was over and most of the villages were under Japanese guns.

Whatever motivated them, a number of villagers began cooperating with the Japanese, providing them with porters for their patrols and, more importantly, information on the watchers' locations. Reed and Mason retaliated by calling for air attacks on the collaborators' villages.

A watcher on Guadalcanal named McKenzie reinforced Reed with several

Australian War Memorial

ABOVE: A rare photo shows a coastwatcher occupying an observation post in a tree on New Guinea. BELOW: Australian coastwatcher Sergeant Leonard Siffleet was captured by natives and handed over to the Japanese on New Guinea in 1943. After interrogation and torture, Siffleet was beheaded by Lieutenant Yasuno Chikao. The widely circulated photo was later found on the body of a dead Japanese soldier.

National Archives

more watchers, replacing the Australian commandos that had been in the bush since the beginning of the campaign. Reed used the new arrivals to reestablish his network, but by then the growing strength of the Japanese and the disaffection of the natives made it impossible to continue.

One by one the new posts were overrun and forced off the air. Several watchers and scouts were killed in the attacks and a number captured. Some were executed on the spot and others taken prisoner to be executed later.

The decision was made to evacuate the remaining watchers and scouts. They were no longer producing useful information, and other posts were now in position to substitute for them.

Injured flyers and the remaining missionaries and Chinese merchants were also evacuated by submarine. The decision was a sound one, although there were more casualties on the way to the coast.

Another station was set up when the Japanese began building another airfield at Vita on the south coast of Kolombangara. The American attack on the big base at Munda was in the offing, and there was considerable barge traffic through that area as the Japanese moved to reinforce it.

The men sent to run the station were not the old island hands Feldt liked to recruit. One of them, Arthur Evens, had been a purser on an inter-island steamer but had little experience on shore. The man sent to work with Evens, Frank Nash, seemed an even odder choice. An American Army Air Corps corporal, he had grown up on a ranch in eastern Colorado and had been so eager to get overseas that he was ready to volunteer for the infantry. Instead, he was assigned to a signals construction company that was sent to Guadalcanal to set up communications for Henderson Field. When the company was being withdrawn, he volunteered to stay and work for the coastwatchers.

The two men actually worked well together. They had their most memorable moment when they woke to find four Japanese destroyers offshore that had run into a newly laid American minefield. One had sunk, two were damaged, and the fourth was picking up survivors. Evens and Nash called in aircraft that sank the two damaged ships and shot up the fourth. They also had the distinction of being the watchers who made contact with John F. Kennedy and the crew of *PT-109* in August 1943.)

About the only criticism of their work was that the few natives in the area could not spare much food and the two were not up to foraging in the jungle; they subsisted mostly on Spam and C-rations.

In the early days of primitive radar, the difference between the available American and Japanese fighters made the coastwatchers' warnings crucial to holding Guadalcanal. Japan's dominant fighter in the campaign was the Mitsubishi Zero. It was a fast, agile aircraft that could climb quickly. To achieve this, it was built with a light airframe and was not constructed with armor or self-sealing gas tanks. Like most Japanese aircraft, the Zero was somewhat fragile and vulnerable to gunfire. The fragility of Japanese aircraft actually became a bigger problem as the war went on and metal shortages worsened.

America opted for sturdy airplanes that could take great punishment, equipping them with self-sealing gas tanks and some armor. Most of them were armed with multiple Browning .50-caliber machine guns, which outranged anything on Japanese airplanes.

In a typical engagement, the watchers on Bougainville would sight formations of bombers coming in from the fields around Rabaul, joined by fighters from the field on Buna. When the Japanese formations reached the vicinity of Guadalcanal, the Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters would dive out of the sun and rake the bombers. If a Zero got on a single Wildcat's tail, the Wildcat's pilot could go into a fast dive; if a Zero attempted to dive as fast as a Wildcat, its wings might tear off.

American aircraft regularly savaged Japanese raids. Typically the kill ratio in such an engagement was "wildly disproportionate" in favor of the Allies. Later in the Solomons campaign, the Wildcat was superseded by more modern aircraft like the Lockheed P-38 Lightning and the Vought F4U Corsair that could outperform the Zero in every way but in making tight turns.

Few sources agree on how many Japanese aircraft were brought down during the first series of raids on August 6 and 7, 1942. Eric Feldt puts the casualties for the first

unescorted raid at 23 of the 24 Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bombers making the attack. Reed and Mason, who had reported the oncoming raid as it passed over Bougainville, listened in on the chatter during the fight that took place just north of Guadalcanal. At one point about eight Japanese aircraft were simultaneously falling out of the sky. Hearing that the results were so dramatically in the Allies' favor must have made Reed and Mason feel the risks they were taking were justified.

Whatever the actual losses, they were unsustainable, and after a few days the attacks ceased while the Japanese brought in additional aircraft from the Carolines. The Japanese would periodically renew the raids as they made another attempt to reconquer the island; the heavy losses would continue.

The coastwatchers assisted the Allies in a variety of other ways besides air raid warnings. They kept tabs on Japanese supply and reinforcement movements throughout the islands. During the first half of 1943, the campaign became a war of attrition for the Japanese as they suffered severe losses because of the intelligence coastwatchers supplied. Once the Allies began moving north, the coastwatchers moved in close to targeted bases to provide detailed information and even acted as guides for Allied troops.

Assistance with search and rescue of flyers and mariners was important at all stages of the campaign. Clemens on Guadalcanal began rescuing flyers before U.S. forces landed there. The most spectacular example was the rescue of 165 crewmen of the light cruiser USS *Helena*, whom the watchers hid until the Navy could rescue them.

There was one major exception to Ferdinand's policy of avoiding contact with the Japanese: Donald Kennedy at Segi Point, who became very active in rescuing flyers. His station became the collecting point for downed flyers in much of the central Solomons. His central location also made him extremely effective in providing information on Japanese movements.

His base was no hut hidden in the jungle but rather a full camp, with mess hall, arsenal, and even a prisoner of war compound. His post could be in the open because it was hard to approach. It was backed by swamps, and naval charts warned mariners of unmapped reefs and shallows.

National Archives

Natives help offload supplies from a PBY-5 for a coastwatcher station.

The Japanese decided to send small patrols to find Kennedy's compound, but Kennedy knew that if the patrols did not return the secret of his location would be safe. Accordingly, he established a "forbidden zone" around his post and adopted a policy of ambushing the Japanese and killing or capturing all that came within it.

When a scout reported two Japanese supply barges tied up five miles away, Kennedy gathered a force of 23 men, including a downed flyer awaiting rescue, and attacked. All of the enemy crews were killed, weapons and supplies were taken, and the barges sunk in deep water. Presumably the Japanese never learned what happened to them.

Another mysterious disappearance took place when old and nearly blind Chief Ngatu learned of a Japanese post on an island 30 miles from Kennedy's camp. With the Aussies' permission, Ngato and six of his men slipped into the Japanese camp and slipped out with their rifles. The next morning Ngatu's men used them to take the Japanese prisoner.

Action of this sort boosted Kennedy's standing with the natives; Ferdinand might be a bit of an abstraction to them, but a good fight was always fun. The chief of the Mindi-Mindi Islands enlisted as a scout and was given a rifle. He ambushed enough Japanese and collected enough rifles to put 32 armed men at Kennedy's service.

In this way Kennedy built up a force armed mostly with captured Japanese weapons and even more when PBYs came in to pick up Allied personnel; captured Japanese were flown out with rescued flyers. The combination of anger at the Japanese and Kennedy's example encouraged natives to ambush any small enemy parties that came within reach.

The Japanese continued to push their net of bases farther south. But Kennedy did not move his base even when the Japanese set up an emergency airstrip and base a few miles away at Viru; he continued to ambush their patrols.

Another Japanese air base was established at Munda on the other end of New Georgia from Seti Point and had extremely tight operational security. It was hidden in a coconut plantation where Japanese engineers had wired the tops of coconut palms together and cut off the trunks where the runway was to be, thus suspending the tops in the air and preventing aerial reconnaissance from observing the activities beneath.

Initially, native scouts simply could not get

Naval History and Heritage Command

A "Black Cat" squadron on patrol in the Southwest Pacific, May 1944. Besides scouting duties, the versatile PBYs also engaged in bombing, strafing, and rescue missions.

close enough to find out what the Japanese were up to; it took weeks to finally penetrate the base. But their reports were not corroborated until the engineers got careless about replacing the coconut tree tops as they dried out, and sharp-eyed photo interpreters on Guadalcanal spotted the ruse.

Once it was clear that a major Japanese base was being built there, Dick Horton was sent to keep watch on it. From a spot on neighboring Rendova Island, he was able to provide detailed information about activities on the base. Eventually a Marine reconnaissance team slipped into his station. Their observations and the information supplied by the coastwatcher/scout team helped the Marines to plan a landing on beaches close to the base.

Kennedy's problems with the base at Viru continued to increase. After several patrols and scouting vessels failed to return from trying to penetrate Kennedy's forbidden zone, the Japanese prepared to send a whole battalion. Kennedy was forced to seek help, but by then he had been instrumental in saving so many flyers that he probably could have asked for anything he wanted.

Almost as soon as Kennedy asked for help, fast attack transports were loading Marine Raiders and an airfield engineering advance party. The move fit well with Allied strategy. Given the aggressive but disjointed Japanese response to the landing on Guadalcanal, it seemed a good plan to land on New Georgia, get an airfield up and running, and let the Japanese waste their strength trying to drive the Allies off. An airfield at Kennedy's base at Segi Point and an attack on their base at Viru, seemed to be good ways to provoke them.

Construction crews and equipment were soon on the way; within 10 days of the arrival of the main body of engineering troops, aircraft were landing on the field.

The Marines' attack on the Viru base met a spirited defense, but once it was captured the Allies used its field to pound the larger base at Munda until they were ready to assault it. As on Guadalcanal, once Munda was captured the Allies let the Japanese wear themselves out trying to drive the Allies off. They maintained enough of an offensive posture to keep the Japanese off balance while they strangled their supply lines. Eventually the Japanese tired of the pounding and abandoned the island.

The lumbering PBY flying boats built by Consolidated looked ungainly, so they quickly earned the nickname "Dumbo," after the popular Walt Disney cartoon character—the elephant with huge ears that could fly. But this Dumbo—a very effective scout, rescue plane, and ship killer—was a workhorse.

The PBY Catalina squadrons based on and around Guadalcanal became an Allied resource that complemented the coastwatchers' efforts. The PBY had two engines mounted on a wing above the fuselage. It cruised at a stately 90 knots while carrying a fair load of bombs or torpedoes and could do so for about 24 hours at a stretch.

Its crews had complete confidence in it, although its defensive armament was not heavy enough to make the Zeros keep their distance; a Zero could fly rings around a PBY. If caught by one, the best hope for a PBY was to dive for the water's surface, turning repeatedly. A Zero diving on a PBY had great difficulty staying on target and stood a good chance of flying into the sea.

When they were first deployed to the Solomons, the PBYs were assigned a variety of duties such as spotting enemy artillery positions when Allied ships shelled Japanese bases. As Allied strength grew, the American squadrons concentrated on bombing and search and rescue operations. Australian squadrons handled a variety of duties and provided coastwatcher support.

As commerce raiders, the PBYs could be deployed well north of Guadalcanal—at least on moonlit nights. A veteran of the Catalinas told the author that if he had known they were going 600 miles behind Japanese lines he would not have gone! The same time and distance constraints that meant that Japanese raids on Guadalcanal arrived around noon meant that Japanese convoys that wanted to be in one of their protected anchorages by dawn would be passing through narrow straits at predictable times.

When signal intelligence or coastwatcher reports heralded the approach of a convoy to a PBY, the "Cat" would loiter above the narrow strait and try to spot the convoy.

Japanese sailors knew they were in for it when they heard a PBY's engine noises and then those noises suddenly cut off. It had throttled back to glide down into a low-elevation release of a bomb or torpedo just before it passed over a ship. The crew of at least one plane scrounged up something to use for nonreflective coating to minimize the effectiveness of Japanese searchlights and make such an attack slightly less hazardous. The Navy was impressed, and shortly after the landings on Guadalcanal a more effective version of the PBY with a nonreflective paint job began appearing, making it perhaps the first "stealth" plane.

More importantly, the PBY came with radar good enough to spot ships and barges on dark nights. Dubbed the "Black Cats," the radar-equipped PBYs made the aircraft an effective ship killer; one squadron destroyed 157,000 tons of Japanese shipping. The countermeasures the Japanese attempted—night fighter cover for convoys and patrol boats stationed to intercept Cats flying into a Japanese-controlled harbor—made it clear that they hurt the Japanese.

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: A waist gunner at one of the .30-caliber gun "blister" positions that extended beyond the plane's hull, thus allowing the gunners to fire at more acute angles. BELOW: Although one of the strangest looking planes of all time, the PBY-5 was a dependable, versatile workhorse.

The Allies' ability to predict the locations of Japanese conveys improved once Henry Josslyn and John Keenan slipped onto Vella Lavella and Nick Waddell and Carden Seton took up a post on Choiseul. Between the Black Cats, PT boats, and occasional forays by bigger ships, running the Tokyo Express became an expensive proposition. On average, Japanese destroyers assigned to the Solomons lasted about two months before they were sunk.

One Japanese countermeasure was to start moving much of their maritime traffic in barges and other small vessels. If they stayed close to land, they were hard to pick out on radar, and they were so small it was hard to put a bomb close enough to do damage.

The PBYs' answer to the barges was a locally produced mount that added four Browning .50s to the two machine guns already in the nose. Barges were an ideal target for the quad .50s. Black Cats sank dozens of enemy barges. One Cat sank 25 in a single mission.

The Black Cats squadrons rotated between night bombing and other duties. Dumbo flights picking up downed Allied flyers were welcome, if nerve-wracking, missions. If a formation raided a Japanese target and a plane went down, there was usually another plane on the same raid that knew about it and could call for a PBY to pick up any crew that got out.

In other cases, damaged planes tried to limp back to base alone and went down without search and rescue having a clear idea where they were. But friendly natives, coastwatchers, and Black Cats kept these sorts of losses down. A Black Cat veteran proudly told the author that his squadron alone picked up 258 downed flyers.

When a crippled B-17 went down near Bagga Island, most of the crew got ashore, and the natives were there in minutes. A couple of hours later, coastwatcher Jack Keenan arrived with K rations and first aid supplies. As soon as it got dark, the crew was taken to Vella Lavella, where the chief of the village of Paramata had arranged for a hot meal and beds. The next day a PBY picked the men up there and took them to Guadalcanal.

When the coastwatchers got word to headquarters on Guadalcanal that they had people to be picked up, a PBY escorted by fighters would usually be there within a day or two. The wounded got even faster service, and an especially crucial squadron commander was back at Henderson Field the same day he was shot down.

On one occasion the survivors of a sunken destroyer were spotted by a Dumbo. It located another vessel close by and gave it directions to the site. Within an hour the men were picked up.

In a similar situation later in the war, a pilot assumed that there would be heavy losses by the time a surface vessel arrived, so the Dumbo landed and picked 114 shipwrecked sailors out of the water; the overloaded airplane sat there until a destroyer relieved it of its passengers.

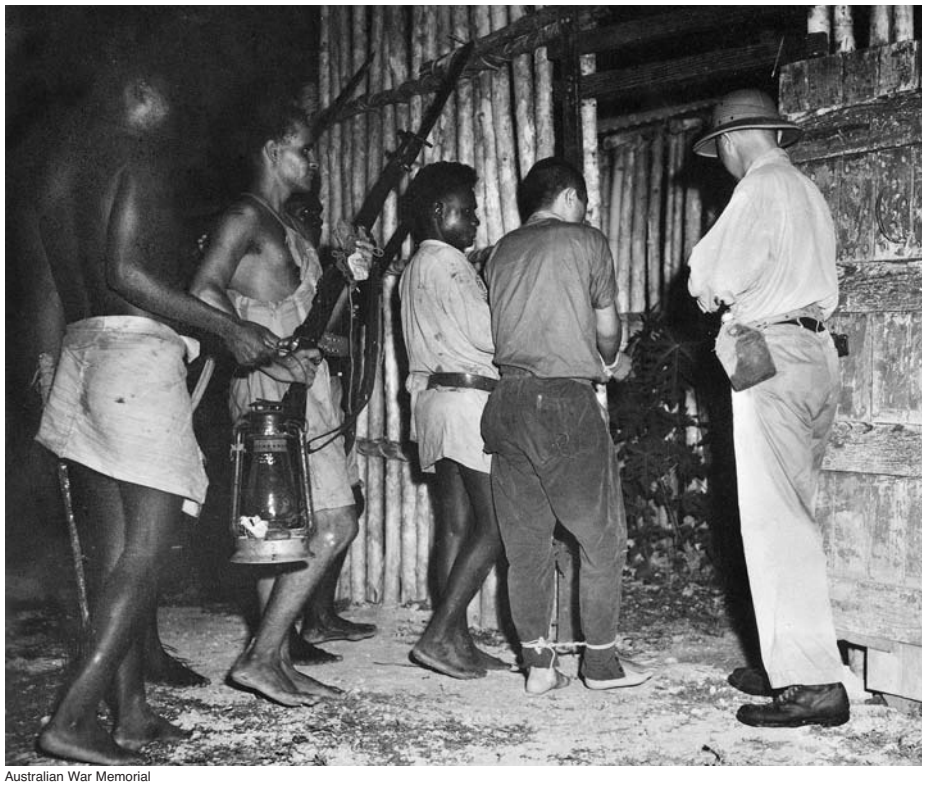
On still another occasion, the call for help came in the aftermath of a raid on Kavieng Harbor on New Ireland. Before the mission was over, the PBY landed four times in the harbor, under Japanese shellfire, and on three of those occasions had to stop its engines to get the survivors into the aircraft. All told, 15 flyers were rescued.

Between the coastwatchers and the Dumbos, an airman who made it safely to the surface stood virtually a 100 percent chance of making it back to Allied lines. This had a tremendous impact on morale and helped make the wastage of trained, experienced people far smaller for the Allies than for the Japanese.

By mid-November 1942, the South Pacific was getting major air and sea reinforcements, and by that point in the campaign the coastwatchers were operating at maximum efficiency. They were keeping headquarters well informed and quickly picking up downed flyers and shipwrecked

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: Women and children in an outrigger canoe prepare to be rescued by a PBY-5 in northwestern New Guinea. BELOW: Armed native scouts trained and commanded by Captain Donald Kennedy escort a captured Japanese pilot into captivity at the Segi coastwatchers' station on New Georgia, March 1943.



Australian War Memorial

mariners. The Black Cats had shown that they could handle maritime targets from the smallest barge to the biggest capital ships. The Cactus Air Force, as the squadrons based on Guadalcanal were known, had grown to 200 airplanes, half of them fighters.

As the battle for Guadalcanal progressed, the relative strength of the adversaries shifted sharply in favor of the Allies. A look at the Japanese attempts to retake the island illustrates this point; the reinforcements usually took heavy casualties during their trips down the Slot.

After the battalion the Japanese sent on their first attempt to recapture Guadalcanal was destroyed, a regiment was committed. Later a brigade was sent. Finally a whole division, the 38th, was committed. The last attempt was made with the reinforced Hiroshima Division.

The Japanese force assembled off the south end of Bougainville. There were 61 ships there, including six cruisers, 33 destroyers, 17 transports, one large cargo liner, and many smaller vessels; another force of two battleships and escorts was also involved.

Signal intelligence warned of their coming, and the watchers on Bougainville spotted them on November 10, 1943. The coastwatchers and the Black Cats kept tabs on this force as it advanced down the Slot. There was a running fight all the way to the shore of Guadalcanal. Henderson Field was in the fight all day with planes shuttling from the field to the convoy and back again.

Both sides lost naval vessels. The U.S. Navy lost more vessels, but the Japanese lost more tonnage, including two irreplaceable battleships. The Japanese also lost 11 of their transports, and much of the Hiroshima Division drowned. Japanese destroyers picked up about 5,000 shocked, demoralized men without most of their uniforms and none of their weapons and equipment. Three of the transports were beached, and another, already on fire, attempted to beach. All the ships were taken under fire by Marine artillery and essentially destroyed.

This was really the end of Japanese hopes to hold Guadalcanal. A few weeks later, the evacuation began. For the rest of the campaign, the Allies would be moving north through the island chain.

The coastwatchers and the Black Cats, working in concert, played an important part in keeping Allied casualties disproportionately low. Both groups provided vital intelligence. Both inflicted significant casualties, the Cats directly and the coastwatchers by calling in aircraft. And, finally, both were directly involved in search and rescue.

Granted, Black Cats and coastwatchers were not the only reason Japanese losses were so hugely disproportionate to those of the Allies. Signal intelligence complemented the

coastwatchers' input, and cultural factors made the Japanese more willing to take losses; against Westerners, their infantry tactics were insanely aggressive.

The Allied leaders also consistently made good use of the mobility their naval and air strength gave them. The strategy of bypassing Japanese bases and giving the Japanese the choice of expensive evacuations or having their forces wither on the vine was used repeatedly.

Also, Japanese action on Guadalcanal seemed to suggest that if the Allies could build a perimeter on a major island the Japanese could be expected to take heavy casualties trying to break through it and drive them off. An effective Allied response involved limited attacks and choking off the enemy's supplies. Eventually the Japanese would give up and withdraw. That strategy was used on Vella Lavella, New Georgia, and Bougainville. The Japanese never developed an effective counter to it.

Instead, Japanese leaders regularly put their troops in positions where they were nearly impossible to supply. As Emperor Hirohito put it, "I am tired of hearing that the troops fought heroically and then starved to death."

Operation Shoestring gives lie to the myth that the Allies simply used their industrial power to bludgeon their way across the Pacific. But the main significance of the Solomon Islands campaign is the aforementioned change in the relative power of the Allies and their Japanese adversaries during that campaign.

Perhaps that change was least obvious on the ground. The Imperial Japanese Army began the war in the Pacific with around 50 battle-ready divisions. The Solomons campaign and the simultaneous fighting in the islands to the west whittled that down considerably. By late 1943, the building of a chain of air bases around Rabaul was complete; the Allies isolated it and took the troops there off the board, obviating the need for a bloody invasion.

Two Japanese divisions, two separate brigades, a tank regiment, a huge force of artillery, and a large number of service troops totaling about 100,000 men were trapped there and spent the rest of the war trying to grow enough vegetables to survive.

In and on the water the change in relative strength was more pronounced. Japan could not begin to replace the major fleet units it lost. Destroyers took less time to build than capital ships, and up to this point in the war 40 new Japanese destroyers joined its fleet—the same number they lost by the end of the campaign.

America lost the same number of destroyers but commissioned 200 new ones during that period. Moreover, using submarines and bombers to run supplies to Guadalcanal and destroyers to get critical parts and personnel to Rabaul removed them from the Japanese order of battle just as if they had been destroyed.

American ships were becoming more numerous and, more importantly, more capable. Take one narrow facet of naval power: the ability to locate one's enemy at night and engage it effectively. Japan's training program for night lookouts was unequaled and its equipment was first rate.

In a night fight between surface ships, the Japanese could open fire first and fire more accurately than comparable U.S. units. They could usually hit more effectively because the Long Lance torpedo was more accurate and longer ranged that the American equivalent. The Long Lance remained a formidable weapon, better than even improved versions of American torpedoes.

Radar reversed the balance in night combat. American ships could usually see farther than the Japanese, and the fall of their shells was controlled by the increasingly available SG radar. As Captain Hanima of the destroyer *Amagiri* put it, "U.S. forces were using radar and we were powerless to prevent them from approaching ... guns blazing."

With the deployment of radar-equipped aircraft, Americans could now see even farther at night, and aircraft could alert American vessels to the location of Japanese ships well over the horizon. The improvement was so pronounced that had it happened earlier the pattern of daytime American control of waters around Guadalcanal and Japanese control at night might not have developed.

The change was most pronounced in the air. The Japanese air arm was strained even before the beginning of the Solomons campaign. At Midway the Japanese had lost four aircraft carriers. The incursion into the Indian Ocean and attacks on British installations on Ceylon cost Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's air groups more pilots. The Battle of the Coral Sea had cost the Japanese an aircraft carrier, including pilots and the nonflying members of the air groups, and rendered still another carrier combat ineffective since it, too, had lost most of its pilots.

Whatever the total losses in Japanese bombers were in those first raids on Guadalcanal, it is clear that the rate of loss was unsustainable. After two days of raids there was a pause in the air activity while additional aircraft were flown in. On several occasions the air groups were temporarily stripped from the Combined Fleet, Japan's main striking force. It, too, was gravely weakened. This was especially serious since training a pilot to be carrier qualified was so difficult. The last time the Japanese deployed carrier planes to Rabaul, they sent 173 aircraft of which only 53 returned.

By one account the Japanese lost 1,467 fighters and 1,199 torpedo and dive bombers during the campaign. Most of the aircrews were lost, too. It is fair to say Japan squandered its air assets by making so many long-range raids into the teeth of an effective American air defense.

As Japanese air power shriveled, American air power became increasingly dominant. At the beginning of the campaign, aircraft were sinking about one tenth of the Japanese supplies shipped; by the end, it was up to 25 percent. During October 1943 alone, Allied aircraft carried out about 5,600 sorties.

The Japanese policy of keeping an airman in combat until he was killed hurt their air arm gravely. American fighter pilots were in combat for a limited period of time. In the Army Air Forces, it was a certain num-

Continued on page 98

SHOOTING THE WAR

BY SUSAN ZIMMERMAN

American combat photographers captured indelible images of the war, but their contributions to the historical record usually went unrecognized.

Much of what we know today about World War II are the visual images—both still and moving—that combat photographers took to document all phases of this costly human tragedy.

Millions of images were taken by professional and amateur photographers alike. Men who had been professional photographers before the war were enlisted by their governments to continue to ply their trade in uniform. Others were sent by their magazines, newspapers, and photo agencies to bring back dramatic scenes.

Even before U.S. involvement, the Germans were doing an excellent job of documenting their war in photographs and motion pictures. Formed into Propaganda Kompanies (PK), still- and motion-picture cameramen went everywhere the troops went, and their images often turned up in newsreels and such military magazines as *Signal* and *Der Adler,* not to mention the popular press.

The British, too, were devoted to making a photographic record of the war, and created the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) to do so.

As one can imagine, going into combat armed with only a camera was not without its hazards. Countless photographers were killed or wounded trying to cover the action, trying to get that quintessential shot that would tell people back home what war was really all about.

For example, of 1,400 U.S. Army Signal Corps cameramen in Western Europe during World War II, 32 were killed in action and more than 100 were wounded. Other lensmen serving with the Navy and Marine Corps also lost their lives trying to get "the shot." Civilian photographers were not immune from danger; of 21 *Life* magazine cameramen sent overseas, five were wounded and 12 contracted malaria.

Two months after Pearl Harbor, as the war expanded and the Army's photographic needs increased, the U.S. Army took over the former Paramount Studios in Long Island City, New York, and turned it into the Signal Corps Photographic Center—later the Army Pictorial Center—which became home to filmmakers and still photographers who covered the war and who professionally produced hundreds of training films.

Once the center was established, the Army Pictorial Service became a major film producer. By either volunteering or being drafted, some of Hollywood's finest directors, cameramen, writers, and technicians were assigned to the center, where they could apply their specialized talents. Many others with still photography backgrounds—newspaper and magazine photographers, editors, and darkroom technicians—also arrived.

By 1943, images from around the globe were pouring into the center by the tens of thousands, and the facility needed to greatly enlarge its storage capacity. By the end of the war, the library's holdings amounted to more than 500,000 images.

World War II was the most visually documented event in history. There were millions of photographs taken by thousands of photographers during the conflict. Many photographs became famous, iconic. Who today doesn't know Joe Rosenthal's Iwo Jima

Coast Guard cinematographer Charles W. Bossert shows off the damage to his Bell & Howell Eyemo 35mm movie camera caused by shrapnel from a Japanese mortar on Iwo Jima. Many combat photographers were killed or wounded while trying to get "the shot" and visually document the war.

National Archives

flag-raising photo, Robert Capa's blurry D-Day photo of a soldier struggling in the surf at Normandy, or Margaret Bourke-White's searing image of emaciated survivors at Buchenwald staring with blank expressions at their Allied liberators?

These photographers, working for magazines or the wire services, had their photos published in magazines such as *Life, Time,* and *U.S. News and World Report*. They were called war correspondents and considered "civilian employees of the U.S. War Department," so they wore officers' uniforms with special insignia that indicated that they were official photographers.

But their military counterparts behind the lens have, for the most part, remained anonymous. Their photos simply bore the credit line "Official U.S. Army photograph" or "Official U.S. Navy photograph."

"Most of our problem in the Army Pictorial Service was due to the fact that we were never credited when our photographs were published," remembered William R. Wilson, a former lieutenant in the 162nd Signal Company, Photographic Company, Army Pictorial Service, during a 2002 interview. "Individual [Signal Corps] photographers were never allowed to be credited by name."

Let us recognize four previously "anonymous" war photographers who deserve to have their names known and their work credited. A photo credit for one is a credit for all the thousands and thousands of unknown camera soldiers. The recollections of these four camera soldiers illustrate what it took to get the picture.

William T. Barr

William T. Barr, Photographer's Mate First Class, served from 1942 to 1945 on Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, Leyte Island and Luzon in the Philippines, as well as in Formosa, China, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Ulithi in the Carolines, and Japan.

"I was a first-class photographer and one of my jobs was to man a movie camera which was mounted on the superstructure aimed toward the back end of the ship.… When the planes were landing ... many of them were badly shot-up, [so] my job was to photograph the planes that were having difficulty landing, and take pictures of whatever happened. I did get movies of several crash scenes and some of those showed up later in the United States in a movie called the *The Fighting Lady.*

"Other jobs that I had, when we were under attack, we would grab cameras and go onto the flight deck and take pictures of ourselves being attacked and the Japanese planes coming at us, but primarily we would take pictures of the [enemy] planes hitting nearby carriers and nearby ships, and we got a lot of excellent pictures of such action."

One day a Japanese plane dropped a bomb onto the flight deck of the *Enterprise,* but it failed to explode. Barr recalled, "Our planes were coming back from a strike and they were in pretty good shape so I was not assigned to the movie camera at that time. I was wandering around on the superstructure with a camera in my hand, and our planes were landing one after another. In came the last plane, and to everybody's horror, they realized it was a Japanese plane.

"He had simply gotten into the landing pattern and nobody noticed it. [He] came roaring over the *Enterprise* and dropped a bomb but, because of his low altitude, the bomb didn't have time to point downward. When a bomb hits a ship, it's usually coming straight down, and the explosion is activated by a device in the front of the bomb.

Both: National Archives

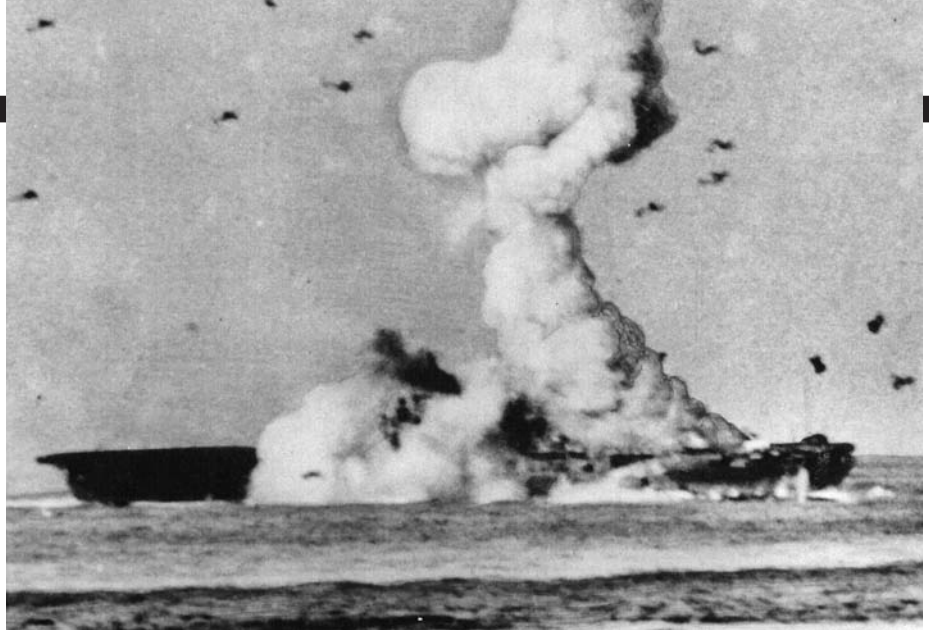
ABOVE: Corporal Hugh McHugh, shown with his 4x5 Speed Graphic PH-104, was killed by a sniper January 15, 1945 in Belgium. BELOW: A German newsreel cameraman focuses on an armored column moving into the Soviet Union. Like their American and British counterparts, German cameramen superbly documented the war.

"So this bomb landed on its side and bounced and bounced and came to a stop. And I am looking down at it with horror from the superstructure, and I figured it was a time bomb. And so I thought I'd better get the heck out of here, but the gunnery officer spotted me and he said, 'Barr, you go down there and get a close-up of that bomb. I want a close-up of the markings on the bomb.'

"And I said, 'But sir, it's a time bomb. It will go off any second.' And he said, 'Bosh, it's not a time bomb. Get down there and get the pictures.' So with my heart in my mouth I went down to the flight deck and got as close as I could to the bomb, took the pictures, and raced at top speed away from it. The pictures came out, and they were sent back to the United States and, of course, copies were given to the gunnery officer.

"[It turned out] it was not a time bomb. And to give you an idea of the courage of the men on the ship, after I had taken the pictures, about 10 men calmly came up to the bomb and rolled it off the back end of the ship, into the water."

When he was not involved in taking photos or making movies, Barr was observing life aboard a carrier in an active war zone. "While I was stationed on [the *Enterprise*], we were involved in eight battles: the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the attacks on the island of Luzon, the attacks on the island of For-



ABOVE: Navy photographer William Barr snapped this dramatic moment as a kamikaze exploded on the flight deck of the USS *Enterprise,* May 14, 1945. BELOW: Barr also took this shot after a TBM Avenger missed the arresting wire during landing and crashed into parked planes onboard the *Enterprise,* April 11, 1945.

Both: Library of Congress

mosa, the attacks on the China coast—all of which were occupied by the Japanese. Then we raided the Japanese island of Honshu and also the Japanese island of Nansei Shoto.

"Then we were stationed off of Iwo Jima, so we were involved in that battle, bombing the Japanese positions at night. At that time we were a night carrier. And then the Japanese island of Okinawa; we were off the huge island for about six weeks, constantly bombing the Japanese positions at night. That was the last one I was in.

"[I remember] in December of '44, Air Group 90 came aboard, and they had been trained in operating at night using the radar screen in their airplanes, and so our ship worked with them closely to finish up their training. Beginning in January they began bombing Japanese positions at night and flying at night using simply their radar to locate the Japanese islands and to locate the targets; it turned out to be quite successful.

"The *Enterprise,* with this Air Group 90, was the only ship that was specifically trained in night operations…. These night operations were successful insofar as they not only did a lot of damage but they kept the Japanese awake all night long, and that must have been very hard on their morale—they never had a chance to sleep."

Barr noted that, of the 22 battles the *Enterprise* was in, the worst damage was done on May 14, 1945. "[General] quarters sounded, and we were up on the ship with cameras. I just happened to be in the photo lab at the time the Japanese planes came at us. [It's] interesting down in the photo lab; you couldn't see what was happening but you could hear the 5-inch guns, which could shoot a long way. You could hear them pounding away, and we figured, well, the Japanese are 15 miles away.

"Then the 5-inch guns would stop, and the 40mm guns would start firing; their [range] is about two miles. So we knew that the Japanese were within two miles of our fleet. They were aiming for the carriers, which were in the middle of the fleet. We were surrounded by smaller ships extending out, oh, 10, 15 miles.

"While we were all looking at each other worried, the Japanese were getting close. Then the 20-millimeters started, the ones that fire at incoming planes. They're very effective for up to, let's say, a half a mile, so we knew the Japanese were diving on us, and then we felt the ship shudder.

"We didn't hear the explosion, but we felt the ship shudder and we knew we had been hit. So we grabbed cameras and went up on the deck, and we photographed what we could of the flames, and the fire and the damage. The whole fire was put out in about a half hour, but the nearby ships took some great pictures of the *Enterprise* aflame.

"One Japanese kamikaze had dived in beside our no. 91 elevator; [it] went down about five decks before his bomb exploded just below the no. 1 elevator. It must have been a 1,500-pound bomb, maybe a 2,000, but it blew a large chunk of the elevator up and up and up into the air. One of the nearby ships took a picture of that huge chunk of elevator 400 feet up in the air. Other ships kept taking pictures, and ultimately I got a picture of it, that elevator over 800 feet up in the air."

The carrier was badly damaged. Barr said, "We were able to keep moving, but

Library of Congress

Emil Edgren shot this image of an American GI with a Browning Automatic Rifle looking at a B-17 that crash-landed in a Belgian field.

we were unable to operate any guns. After about two hours the Japanese retired, and we headed for an island called Mog Mog, which had a huge harbor where we would be safe. So we went to this island of, well, actually it was the Ulithi Anchorage—Mog Mog was just one of the islands. And from there we were sent back to the United States to be repaired."

Barr recalled another incident: "It was at night, and the whole fleet was surrounding us, while the Japanese were looking for the American Fleet. So the entire fleet was blacked out—not a light was shining because, obviously, if you turned on a white light, the Japanese would spot it and would head for it. The only lights that were visible were these dim red lights, so we got around on the ship with these dim red fights and it was safe.

"But [one of our] planes had come in. It was badly damaged, and dusk had fallen and they were about to push the damaged plane over the side when somebody said, "That is a photo plane and the gun camera has pictures of the shoreline where the Marines want to land. This gun camera has movies of the shoreline revealing any hazards, so that is a badly needed movie film that the Marines need to see if it is safe to land there—if there are any huge rocks or anything."

"So the captain said, 'Okay, get the gun camera out of there and then we will push the ship [plane] over the side.' They looked around for a photographer to get the gun camera, and there was I. So they said, 'Go down there and get the gun camera out of that plane,' and I said, 'Well, I can't do it [without] a flashlight or a spotlight,' and someone said, 'If we turn on a light the Japanese might spot us.' And then the captain said, 'We will turn the searchlight on that plane, and you go down and get that gun camera out of the plane.'

"So I got down to the plane and I climbed up to where the gun camera was and they switched the searchlight on me. Here in this giant area of the Pacific with the Japanese looking for us, any plane up in the sky would see this spotlight shining on the plane [with] some dumb photographer trying to remove it.

"Anyway, I was able to quickly get the gun camera disengaged and got safely away from the plane. They turned the searchlight out, and you can bet I was quite frightened because, you know, if the Japanese had been even within a mile they would have spotted that light and come right at us. So I was lucky."

Throughout the war, whenever carriers were attacked, often the flight deck was covered with planes loaded with fuel, bombs, rockets, and other ordnance, ready to take off. During an attack, these flammables and ordnance could catch fire, resulting in countless explosions and casualties.

"Most of the time when the *Enterprise* was hit, they did not have a flight deck full of gassed-up planes, and so probably an element of luck there," Barr said. "We were badly damaged several times, but we also had an unbelievably well-trained deck crew. The minute we were hit with a bomb, they would race out there with their hoses and extinguish the fires, like on May 14 when we were hit by this kamikaze that basically took us out of the war. They put that fire out in under 17 minutes—it was incredible.

"We got a lot of pictures of the flight deck covered with men fighting the flames and the fire, and it's just magnificent to see how fast they worked. So true, we were lucky, but we also had a highly trained crew."

Emil Edgren

Emil Edgren, U.S. Army Technician 4th Class, served in Iceland, England, France, and elsewhere in the European Theater while assigned to the 3908th Signal Service Battalion from 1941 to 1945.

He recalled that while stationed in England his assignment was to cover the bombers returning from raids over Germany. "It was not a very good sight to see the damaged planes return and some of the crew being removed lifeless from the B-17 Flying Fortresses. As the planes came in, I held my breath and said a prayer. Those guys in the planes were the real heroes. When some were given a pass to London, they would have one hell of a time and rightly deserved it, glad to be alive.

"One day a fellow photographer came up to me and said he was to fly with a plane

to deliver supplies to some troops. 'It will be nice,' he said, 'as they will open a side door so we can [take] photos of the drop. Why don't you come along?' I told him not this time, as I was working on my camera. I was trying to cover some of the chrome on my Speed Graphic 4x5 camera. It would be a real target if I got near any enemy.

"He was the nicest guy from New York. He left on the plane but never returned. He was shot down somewhere in France. It shook me to think how close I had come, and I never again took another day for granted. I can still see his smile that day and hear his voice coaxing me to go along. It was the price of war and a reminder that even a photographer was at risk. Enemy fire did not discriminate."

That wasn't the only time Edgren wondered if he had a personal angel watching over him. One day he was late for breakfast. "It was not long after the plane incident that I left my billet to walk several blocks for breakfast. What greeted me was a gaping, smoldering hole where the dining room and kitchen had been. A V1 rocket had hit it, taking with it the staff and the GIs gathering for breakfast. If I had been on time.… I tried not to think of that as I stood there in horror, watching the smoke rise and listening to the sirens. That is the kind of picture that lingers in the mind.

"While in Salisbury, the editor of the local paper asked if someone could take some photos for the paper as the Duchess of Kent would be visiting Salisbury. The paper had managed to stay in business, but its photographer had been lost to war. It was another slice of fortune for me, and I was in the right place at the right time. I made some points there, and the general's public relations man, Lieutenant Berger, wrote me a nice commendation.

"Soon after that event, I got my transfer to London to the Army Pictorial Service [Army Signal Corps]. After all the kicking around, London was like heaven. We were billeted in some nice quarters with good chow. My company commander was Major McAlister, and his secretary, Virginia, was a WAC [Women's Army Corp]. We were given assignments and sent all over Europe, sometimes by plane or jeep."

Dodging buzz bombs in London was as routine as walking on the beach in Seaside, California, during basic training at Fort Ord. At least Edgren was where he wanted to be and doing what he wanted to do: photography.

He had been in London about eight months when he had the privilege of photographing the Queen Consort, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, wife of George VI. "She wasn't the least bit standoffish or elitist," he recalled. "I was surprised that she was pleasant to me, a foreign Army photographer. I talked to Her Majesty and told her about California."

Both: Library of Congress

A helmetless American paratrooper from the 82nd Airborne Division carrying a tommygun in full gallop across a Belgian field was captured by the lens of Emil Edgren, as was the dead German soldier below.

Finally, after Paris had been liberated in August 1944, Edgren's outfit got orders to ship off to France. "I did not know it at the time, but I was on the last leg of my journey to the Place de la Concorde [in Paris]. Fates were set in motion for that one moment in time when history would unfold in front of my lens.

"While the Nazi presence wasn't as pronounced as it had been, there were still signs that they had been there and always the threat that they would return. The French weren't convinced that the Nazis were gone. The war still went on, and the echo of the bombs stayed with them, even if the sound was only in memory. It was not a memory anyone wanted repeated. There was an uneasiness about Paris that superseded any pleasure of being there.

"The [photographic] battalion was set up in the heart of Paris. Our living quarters were nothing like regular Army. It was a beautiful apartment with maid service to make up our beds. I was on the third floor, and rarely did the maid make it up there, especially if she was good looking. The Rothschild Mansion was just a block away—an example of the fancy area we were in. Just as in England, the luxury did not hide the scars of war or the fact that the war was still ablaze around us.

"At our office, five of us waited for assignments. As we got an assignment, Major McAlister's secretary, Virginia, made all the arrangements, such as transportation and length of time to do the job. If you were nice to Virginia, she would tack on a few extra days. It was great, so when you got back, you didn't need to report until your time was up.

"The war was still going on. My assignment was to join the 82nd Airborne Division on a glider operation into Holland. I was at an English airfield and briefed on where we were to land. Three times, I sat in the glider, but each flight was aborted due to bad weather. I called the major and he said to come in. I left in a jeep, and the next day the invasion took place. It was a disaster. I was lucky on that one. My angel

was still with me.

"Later, I was sent with a movie man, Herb Shannon. We were to report to the 82nd Airborne, as the Battle of the Bulge had started. We were pretty much on our own. We latched up with regimental headquarters and ended up in a small, deserted village in Belgium. Everyone had left, so we had our choice of houses.

"It was December and very cold. Winter in Belgium took second place only to winter in Iceland. We picked a house and put our sleeping bags upstairs for the night. In the morning, we grabbed our mess kits and headed for the field kitchen. Help! The whole regiment had moved out during the night!

"There we were, on our own, with the Germans on the march in our direction. I fancied I could hear the German regiment. I was positive they were out there, right beyond the edge of the trees. Shannon and I hurried out of there, looking over our shoulders at every sound, expecting at any moment to hear a German voice shouting, HALT! We finally followed the tracks in the mud and caught up with the regiment.

Library of Congress

This photo of General Douglas MacArthur at the microphone was taken by Charles Restifo during the Japanese surrender ceremony aboard the USS *Missouri*.

"While covering the front line, I was able to get a good photo of one of the 82nd guys running to help his buddy as the Germans were firing at us. In that exchange, several of the enemy were killed and no one on our side was killed or injured.

"It had been about a week, terribly cold, and I was dreaming about Paris. Finally, a new lieutenant from headquarters found us. 'Been trying to find you guys. I have a message, and you guys are to report to Eagle.'

"I knew this guy did not know about Eagle. Great! 'Eagle' was the code name for Paris. 'Well, if you guys say so.' We jumped in our jeep and off to Paris we went.

"We reported to Major McAlister in Paris. 'What are you guys doing here?' he said.

"We said, 'Lieutenant Sheldon told us to return.' We found out later Eagle was not Paris but an Army Corps headquarters. I always felt rather bad. We no doubt got the lieutenant in trouble.

"In retrospect, it's strange how pieces of fate fell into place. I was in the right place at the right time, and on May 8, 1945, I stood in the Place de la Concorde and swept my camera over the gathering crowd. General Charles de Gaulle's voice came over the loud speakers from the opera house. 'The war in Europe is ended. Germany has surrendered. 'Vive la France.'"

Charles Rosario Restifo

Charles Rosario Restifo was stationed in the Pacific Theater, Philippines, and Japan while serving as a staff sergeant in the Army Signal Corps from 1942 to 1945. There he was assigned to follow General Douglas MacArthur, then later sent to photograph Hiroshima immediately after it was bombed.

"As a combat photographer in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in charge of our unit in Bougainville," Restifo said, "I was present at meetings in March 1944 with Maj. Gen. Oscar Griswold and Colonel Harry C. Hull during planning sessions for landings on Leyte and Luzon in the Philippines. These landings were part of General Douglas MacArthur's plan to return to the Philippines, liberate the Americans who were left there in 1942, and ultimately to use the Philippines as a stepping stone for a landing in Japan. I received a letter of orders dated March 21, 1944, that I would be attached to XIV Corps Headquarters, under the command of General Walter Krueger.

"The master plan was a huge operation and would include land, sea, and air equipment and personnel. Three men of our Photo Corps would remain in Bougainville with the trailers and equipment. Three men and I were to go to the Philippines—to Leyte, Lingayen Gulf on Luzon, and eventually south to Manila, over 2,000 miles from Bougainville.

"October 20, 1944, was marked as 'A-Day' for landing on Leyte. This was the first return of the Americans in the Philippines since leaving in defeat in early 1942. After bombarding the shore and an exchange of fire between American troops and the Japanese on the Leyte shore, General MacArthur descended from his cruiser over 30 months after he left the Philippines humiliated by the loss and waded ashore in knee-deep water, accompanied by Philippine President Sergio Osmena and Resident Commissioner Carlos Romulo.

"Even though gunfire was still evident, MacArthur walked to the beach with his landing party with only a pistol in his right-hand pants pocket. This was a very emotional moment for MacArthur, and he wanted to let the Filipinos know he had set foot on their

Both: Library of Congress

ABOVE: Charles Restifo behind his 4x5 PH-104 camera. Although big and bulky, the PH-104 used large-format sheet film that resulted in crisp, detailed photos. LEFT: Charles Restifo's photograph of the desolation at Hiroshima. He was one of the first photographers allowed into the destroyed, radioactive city.

land. Therefore, he immediately broadcast from a field radio with President Osmena next to him, 'People of the Philippines, I have returned.…'

"Now MacArthur's giant preparations for landing on the western side of the Philippines at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, could begin. Almost 1,000 ships, 3,000 landing craft, and 208,000 men were assembled. General Krueger, who had been at Leyte, was the leader of the Sixth Army ground forces.

"The actual landing was at two points on the Lingayen Gulf beach. I was with Maj. Gen. Oscar Griswold's XIV Corps, and we were to hit the western beach. Air cover was also ready. S-Day was 0700, January 9, 1945.

"I was aboard the USS *Mount Olympus,* a communication ship skippered by Admiral Ted Wilkinson. The trip from Leyte to Luzon was about 400 miles by land but more by sea. At dawn on S-Day I was awake at 0400. In the dim light I saw hundreds of ships of all types as far as the eye could see: aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, landing craft, etc. It was quite a spectacle.

"All ships were on red alert. Numerous kamikaze planes and small suicide boats were hitting our ships and causing havoc. At precisely 0700, heavy battering from the U.S. ships hit the shoreline. Flares went up indicating General Krueger could commence sending his men to the beach in small landing craft.

"I was preparing to climb over the side of the ladder to a small boat when a kamikaze plane hit the deck and was splashed.

"The men landed on the beach in hundreds of landing barges that opened in the front to enable the men and equipment to exit and wade to shore departing about five to 10 minutes apart.

"I was on the fourth wave. I wanted to photograph the backs of the men and the landing craft as they reached the shore as well as the Japanese on the beach. Some men in the second wave hit a sandbar. Then the coxswain opened the landing gate too soon, and some men stepped into six to eight feet of water. I could see them scrambling to get out from under their heavy equipment. A few men were drowned. There was very little gunfire returned by the Japanese. Most of them had run inland after the bombing from the ships and took cover in the trees and foliage."

With the liberation of the Philippines, the fall of Japan was not far behind.

Restifo continued, "After the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima [on August 6, 1945], we did not know what it was all about, as we had never heard of an atom bomb. I was ordered to go to Japan in charge of two photographers to take photos of the area. We were the third plane to land in Yokohama, Japan, from Manila. In order to get on board, my group bumped about 50 other personnel off the plane who were high rank but lower priority. Besides ourselves, we needed space for a jeep and equipment to go with us.

"The rendezvous was to fly to Guadalcanal, then from there at 0300 to board a C-47 for the four-hour flight to Yokohama. On arrival at 0700 in Yokohama we found the Japanese lined with vehicles to transport us. They had been ordered to do so by General MacArthur from Manila. They were pale and scared, as they had been told by their supervisors that the United States forces would execute them all.

"We flew to Hiroshima and took photos. The city was still smoldering, charred to the ground from the fires that devastated it after the actual bombing. An occasional wall remained of a huge city. Japanese were dazed and in a state of confusion, running, crying, wailing. They displayed many burns and blisters. Some were carrying umbrel-

Both: Library of Congress

las against the drizzly rain. The ground was wet. Many were dead. We took our movies and photos. Some Canadian photographers had run out of film, so we gave them some of ours.

"There was an American medical group that approached our photographic team, requesting photographic coverage. They were asking Washington for 200-, 400-bed hospital units to be flown to Hiroshima to be [supplied] by the SeaBees. The hospitals would include medical teams, nurses, beds, supplies, medicines, and shelter.

"After all, we were just as interested as to what happened here as the Japanese were. There had never been an atomic bomb explosion over a populated area before. The U.S. wanted to help as well as find out about injuries and effects on the human body from atomic bombs.

"Within the week after the bomb explosion, all preparations from the hospitals were underway. A few days after my visit, bulldozers flown in by the U.S. Army were clearing the land and rubble. The Army had gathered the survivors into tents. Generators were giving power, and food was made available. The mighty power of the USA was about to care for and treat the very persons they had bombed and who had bombed us in Pearl Harbor. My personal assignment was to return to Tokyo."

In Tokyo, Restifo requested permission to photograph the Imperial Palace and was able to record a meeting between Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur. "The palace was surrounded with the remains of a beautiful garden and moats with a cross bridge. The Emperor wore a formal top hat, black suit with tails, and MacArthur in his usual tans with his battlefield squashed, peaked cap, open-neck shirt, and no tie.

"In between the bombing of Hiroshima and the signing of the surrender, our mission was to record conditions in the city and surrounding areas including the Diet [the Japanese Parliament].

"On September 2, 1945, the day of the signing of the surrender of the Japanese on board the USS *Missouri,* two men and I headed for the ship. On deck was General MacArthur in his open-collar tans and the

ABOVE: Lieutenant WIlliam Wilson chats with a medic. Note the jeep windshield frame that says it belongs to the Army Pictorial Service. OPPOSITE: William Wilson's color photograph of a temporary U.S. war cemetery on the northern coast of Sicily, 1944.

Japanese representatives in formal attire with top hats, along with several Japanese generals. Top brass from each branch of our armed services and Allies were present. Hanging over the rails watching the historic event were thousands of sailors and soldiers who had been in the Pacific for so very long being shot at by the Japanese and who had lost many comrades." Restifo's photographs of the signing ceremony continue to appear in various publications.

William R. Wilson

Lieutenant (later Captain) William R. Wilson served in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy while serving in the 162nd Signal Company of the Army Pictorial Service from 1941-1945. He recalled the influences from Hollywood photographers and the issue of photo credits.

"One morning, Hollywood's gift to the American Army—the name was Daryl Zanuck; you may have heard of him—had the idea of shooting both still and motion pictures of the invasion of North Africa when he came aboard the *Derbyshire* and found my men and me. He was the only full colonel—what we call a chicken colonel—who ever wore diamond-studded shoulder insignia!

"At that time, all of our equipment consisted of Speed Graphic 4x5 cameras and Bell and Howell Eyemo motion picture cameras, but Colonel Zanuck brought us 35mm Kodak 35s, all metal and painted olive drab. My unit got three of those, I believe, and a beautiful scenic Kodak special 16mm movie camera, which later wound up on the bottom of the Kasserine River. My sergeant, Larry Mueller, threw the camera in the river and then swam the river to get away from the Germans during the Battle of Kasserine Pass.

"During my postwar encounter with a lady in the Pentagon, she said, 'The photographs that you produced during World War II are the finest that we have in our files.' And I said, 'Well, do you know why that was?' She said, 'No, why was it?' I said, 'Because they were all shot on 4x5 negatives.'

"They weren't shot on 35mm film as most of my unofficial pictures were, but they included an air raid picture which was picked as one of 26 great photographs of World War II. It was published in a booklet, printed by the manufacturer of our Speed Graphic

cameras—I have several copies of that publication. On the cover was a picture of an exploding depth charge made by a Navy photographer. My picture, which I entitled 'Hell over Oran,' was the double-face centerfold in the booklet.

"You know, everything was not sweetness and light with the Army Pictorial Service because there were two factions of Army photographers. There were the photographers from the old school, including some that were graduates of the Signal Corps Photographic School of Astoria on Long Island, and then there was the Hollywood gang that came out of California, and there was very little respect between the two groups. Most of our problem in the Army Pictorial Service was due to the fact that we were never credited when our photographs were published. Individual photographers were never allowed to be credited by name.

"I'll tell you the story about the one Signal Corps photographer who received credit for his pictures when they were published. He was from the 165th Signal Photographic Company. He conceived the idea that when he went on the Normandy invasion on June 6, 1944, he was going to take with him a carrier pigeon and he was going to shoot a roll of 35mm film and then attach the little film canister to one of the legs of this carrier pigeon, and then he would aim the pigeon toward England and toss him up in the air and in due time he would arrive in England along with the first combat photos of the D-Day invasion."

Wilson continued, "But the best laid plans, you know, sometimes have a way of not working out. The pigeon became disoriented and, instead of flying north toward England, he flew south over the German lines. A subsequent issue of the German Army newspaper published a splendid layout of American Army photographs complete with identification of the young lieutenant from the 165th who shot the pictures, and that was the only instance I heard of where an Army Pictorial Service photographer got credit."

Emil Edgren remembered that one of his buddies, Sergeant Frank Kaye, was the one involved in that incident. He said that Kaye "had a 35mm camera and a small cage of trained pigeons on his back during the landing. Upon landing, with a roll of film attached to the pigeon, he sent the birds off to London. No way. The pigeons were never trained to fly over water, so he watched helplessly as they flew back in the direction of Germany, not over the English Channel. I think Frank was never the same after that snafu. I always wondered if the Germans developed the film."

Wilson concluded, "Official photographs that my unit made carried a complete caption and the name of the photographer. But not until we got home and went through the World War II copies of *Life* magazine that we had all missed in Europe did we recognize some of our own pictures published in *Life* and *Look* and various other sources, including the Army's official photographic history of the Mediterranean Theater part of World War II."

The widow of Charles Restifo, Beatrice, told this author, "My husband followed MacArthur; some of [his] photographs are famous, some of them are not. He was very proud of being in the Army. I still have his jacket that says 'war photographer.' All those photographers, so many have passed away. They all had a lot of stories ... they died with them."

But not all is forgotten. The stories of these four camera soldiers honor those hundreds of others who shot the war and toiled in anonymity for the benefit of history and humanity.

As one combat photographer said, "The people of today, of my time, and the people of tomorrow, and the tomorrows thereafter, will see this historic moment that I saw. They will see it through my eyes."

POSTSCRIPT: The Veteran's History Project (created by the Library of Congress) collected these firsthand remembrances of American wartime veterans used with permission of the Veteran's History Project. William T. Barr's excerpts are from a 2002 interview with his daughter Sally Ainsley. William R. Wilson's excerpts are from a 2002 interview.

Excerpts from Emil Edgren's self-published book *3:01 P.M. Pacific War Time: A Photographic Memoir—Victory in Europe,* as told to Gale Geurin, are used with the author's permission. Excerpts from *Autobiography of Charles Restifo* are used with permission from his widow Beatrice Restifo.

BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS in the Far East in World War II started badly and went downhill from there. Years of underfunding in defense meant that Britain simply did not have the means to defend its huge empire, and for 18 months prior to the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, it had stood alone against Nazi Germany.

The Royal Navy was primarily committed to the Battle of the Atlantic, keeping open the all important sea lanes upon which the island nation's survival depended. In the Far East, there were only token naval forces available to meet the Japanese attack, and in that part of the world Britannia's claim to rule the ocean waves was immediately exposed for the empty rhetoric it had become.

After December 1941, what remained of the Eastern Fleet retreated into the Indian Ocean for three years. Only in 1945, with Germany on the verge of defeat and the Nazi U-boat threat virtually eliminated, was Britain secure and strong enough to send a fleet back into the Pacific to join the United States in the war against the Japanese Empire.

The new British fleet was the largest single force the Royal Navy had ever assembled, and it arrived in time in theater to play an important part in the battle for Okinawa and in the preparation for the invasion of Japan. It operated alongside the U.S. Navy, which by then had grown into a force of colossal size and power.

The Royal Navy was, naturally and inevitably, in the position of a valued but very junior partner in the struggle against Japan. Nevertheless, it returned there in time to fight and be there at the finish, which was the outcome the politicians wanted. But, because it was late on the scene and totally overshadowed by the massive U.S. Navy its contributions have been largely forgotten—despite the fact that by VJ Day most of the Royal Navy was in the Pacific, and poised to take part in the final battles against Japan.

The new realities of naval warfare came home to the British with a vengeance with

Wreckage from a kamikaze strike litters the flight deck of the HMS *Formidable* during operations off the Sakishima Gunto Islands in support of the American Okinawa attacks, March 1945. Because of their steel flight decks, British carriers could be repaired and put back into operation faster than their American counterparts.

Imperial War Museum

THE Forgotten FLEET

BY ARNOLD BLUMBERG

The Royal Navy was struggling to overcome its failure earlier in the Pacific, but during 1945, this forgotten fleet fought back dramatically to stand with the U.S. Navy against a storm of kamikaze attacks.

the destruction of Britain's Force Z in the South China Sea only a few days after the Japanese air raid on Pearl Harbor. In October 1941, the British decided to send a naval task force to deter Tokyo from attacking British-held Malaya and Singapore. The main elements of Force Z were meant to be the aircraft carrier HMS *Indomitable,* the battleship *Prince of Wale*s (a King George V-class battleship), and the battle cruiser *Repulse*. These vessels were all that London could spare from the defense of the United Kingdom at that stage of the war.

Clearly, sending this small contingent against the Imperial Japanese Navy was a grave risk, driven by the political need to make a demonstration of intent rather than an assessment of the military realities. In fact, the risk became a gamble after the *Indomitable* was damaged in an accident and could not join the force being dispatched. When the Japanese invaded Malaya, the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* left Singapore to confront the new enemy.

Along with them sailed just three destroyer escorts; no fleet air cover was available. The Admiralty hoped that ground-based Royal Air Force squadrons would be able to defend the ships, but this early on proved to be merely wishful thinking. The British planes were too few in number in the area and too busy with supporting Commonwealth troops in the ground war in Malaya to provide even a modicum of maritime air cover.

Naval History and Heritage Command

Force Z was spotted by the Japanese submarine *I-165* on December 9, 1941, and attacked by the submarine *I-156* in the early hours of December 10. For the moment, Force Z was lucky. All the Japanese torpedoes missed their targets. However, a few hours later an enemy reconnaissance aircraft discovered them, and, at 11:15 AM planes from Admiral Matsunaga Sadaichi's First Air Force based in French Indochina attacked. Up to that time the British ships had maintained radio silence.

For some reason, unknown to this day, no emergency message was sent out by the small fleet until almost noon, too late for the British to organize any air support from their land bases to aid their doomed fleet.

War correspondent Cecil Brown, aboard the *Repulse,* was a witness to the Japanese aerial assault. He recorded: "At 11:45 hours the [Japanese twin engine] torpedo bombers are coming in. We are putting up [a] beautiful [antiaircraft gun] barrage, a wall of fire. But the bombers come on, in a long glide, from all angles, not simultaneously but alternatively. Some come head-on, some astern and from all positions on both sides of the ship. They level out; the torpedoes seem small, dropping flat into the water sending up splashes, then streaking towards us. The bombers are so close you can almost see the color of the pilots' eyes ... machine gunning our decks as they come in."

By 11:51, the *Prince of Wales* was dead in the water, her steering gear and propellers smashed. As the battleship absorbed its death blows, the *Repulse* and the accompanying destroyers circled the flagship in a vain attempt to shield it from further damage. Then a second wave of enemy aircraft appeared and homed in on the stricken man-of-war "like a pack of wolves on a wounded buck," recalled one British survivor of the battle. The same eyewitness noted the end of the battle wagon: "I saw one plane drop a torpedo. It fell nose-heavy into the sea and churned-up a thin wake as it drove straight at the immobile *Prince of Wales*. It exploded against her bows. A couple of seconds later another hit—and another."

Vice Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, Force Z commander, and Captain John Leach, commander of the *Prince of Wales,* went down with the ship. Last seen on the bridge, Captain Leach was heard to call out to his crew, "Goodbye. Thank you. Good luck. God bless you." The *Repulse* sank at 12:33 PM. The *Prince of Wales* finally went down 50 minutes later; 840 British sailors lost their lives.

The two ships were among the best and most modern in the Royal Navy inventory, and their demise was a body blow to British morale. A commentator in Singapore soon wrote of the tragedy that it caused a "chill sense of calamity" as well as a feeling of vulnerability: "For the first time, we had an inkling of the true balance of factors in this Pacific war ... blown away at one fell swoop was one of the main pillars on which our security rested."

The December 1941 sortie made by Force Z from Singapore was the Royal Navy's last major operation in the Pacific for the next three years. After the fall of Singapore in February 1942, the British maintained only a small oceangoing force in the Indian Ocean for defensive purposes. This naval element, named the Eastern Fleet, was headed by Admiral Sir James Somerville. It was composed of one modern and four obsolete battleships, two fleet and one light aircraft carriers, six cruisers, and about 12 destroyers. In addition, attached to the Eastern Fleet was the antiaircraft cruiser *Heenskirk,* the remnant of the Royal Dutch Navy operating in the Far East at the start of the Pacific War.

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: After being attacked by land-based Japanese planes, the crew of the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* abandons ship near Kauntan in the South China Sea, December 10, 1941; 327 sailors perished. RIGHT: A Japanese photo shows HMS *Prince of Wales* (top) turning while a bomb hits the battlecruiser HMS *Repulse*, December 10, 1941. Both ships were sunk on the same day. OPPOSITE: An obsolescent Fairy Swordfish torpedo bomber approaches the HMS *Victorious* during operations. The ship was hit by three kamikazes during the Okinawa operation but survived.

On taking command, Somerville quipped, "So this is the Eastern Fleet. Never mind. There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle." He went on to say, "I considered making a revised will as I reckoned that if the old battleship met a Japanese fleet we would be in for it." Almost immediately, the British intention to carry out defensive operations using the Eastern Fleet changed to one of exclusively carrying out evasive actions.

After driving the British out of Southeast Asia, the Japanese considered their options. The Navy favored an invasion of Ceylon in the hope that a major defeat there would destroy the entire position of the British in India. They were probably on the mark since London's authority in the subcontinent was extremely fragile at the time. However, the incursion was never sanctioned and the Army refused to provide any troops for such an operation.

This failure of the two branches of the Japanese military to cooperate was one of many examples of interservice squabbling during World War II, which time and time again marked and derailed Japanese strategy. The Navy settled instead for a raid on the island, which occurred in April 1942. Six aircraft carriers accompanied by four battleships forayed into the Indian Ocean, attacked bases in Ceylon, and shelled a number of towns on the Indian coast.

Admiral Somerville, very sensibly, did not desire a full-scale engagement against such an overwhelming enemy force, but he felt he had to do something to respond to the Japanese move. His riposte to the Japanese raid on Ceylon was to send his fleet out in hopes of tracking the Japanese and inflicting some measure of damage on them through torpedo attacks delivered at night.

But the British aircraft carrier's planes were obsolete and no match for their Nipponese opponents in an open-water fight. Fortunately for the British, the two antagonists did not find each other on the high seas. The Japanese, however, did manage to catch and sink two British cruisers, one destroyer, and the HMS *Hermes*, an old light aircraft carrier, as well as 19 tankers and supply freighters.

The Japanese raid on Ceylon convinced the British admiral that his long-term aim should be to keep his motley force intact so that it could continue to defend the vital and numerous supply lines between India, the Middle East, and South Africa. This important task was humbling but necessary. It was akin to the "fleet-in-being" concept that had traditionally been the last resort of lesser naval powers that might regard their fleet as too precious to risk in battle (Nazi Germany also came to that conclusion).

Following his distasteful but only sound course of action in the face of his enemy's sea power, Somerville withdrew his Eastern Fleet to naval bases in East Africa, where it would be out of harm's way from Japanese surface ships and naval air threats. His deputy noted, "In all, we had lost control of the Indian Ocean, except perhaps the area around Ceylon. However, the bulk of the Eastern Fleet had been preserved."

Imperial War Museum

With the exception of a commando raid on Phuket and two air raids on Sumatra and Java, all of which occurred in 1944, the Eastern Fleet remained on the defensive until the last year of the war.

When the Royal Navy finally returned to the Pacific Ocean in 1945, it was no mere token force, despite being dwarfed by the American Pacific Fleet. There had been much politicking over the last three years as to where it should operate and how and under whose control.

In September 1944, at the Allied Quebec Conference, Prime Minister Winston Churchill offered to send British forces to take part in the proposed invasion of mainland Japan. Churchill promised that English and Commonwealth forces would move to the Pacific Theater as soon as they could be spared from the war against Nazi Germany.

However, there were some in Washington who were less than enthusiastic about British naval participation in the Pacific Ocean when they learned that the British were coming. There was also some dissent in London to the idea of committing major British Empire forces to the Pacific War; it was correctly argued that it would require a massive logistic undertaking. The British minister in charge of transport expressed misgivings as to whether it could even be done.

Ultimately, it was Churchill's political drive that saw the effort through—and he was right. The restoration of British influence in Asia, and especially influence in the shaping of the postwar world, depended on her playing a significant role in the final defeat of Japan. The senior Allied political leaders mostly accepted that fact, and, at the fleet level relations between the American and British combat heads were respectful, even warm.

Logistics was the key issue for the Royal Navy regarding conducting any meaningful operations in the Pacific. It would never be completely independent of the America support chain, but the aim was that it should be as self-sustaining as possible, for practical as well as political reasons. This did create some problems. The sensible choice for a fleet base was Sydney, Australia, because of its large dock and repair facilities. But Sydney was about 2,000 miles from Okinawa, so forward naval bases were also required.

At various times the fleet, now being called Task Force 57 to fit in with the U.S. Navy order of battle, used the Admiralty Islands and the massive U.S. bases at Ulithi Atoll in the Caroline Island chain and Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. This did not solve the supply problem; keeping the force at sea, on station, and in line with the frenetic tempo of American naval operations was a real challenge for the Royal Navy. For a variety of reasons, it never quite made it. The situation might have improved with the arrival of a second British task force, but that force turned up only in time for the Japanese surrender.

The Royal Navy's supply difficulties stemmed in part from the sort of navy it was and partly from the totally inadequate resources it possessed. Historically, it had been designed to operate from fixed bases and, because of the size of the British Empire, it could do that and still have a virtual global reach. This meant that the Royal Navy was a long way behind the Americans in the techniques of replacement and replenishment at sea.

Also, the Pacific Ocean had never been a main operating area for the Royal Navy, so it was not geared or experienced for that sea's vast distances in the way the U.S. Navy was; its vessels did not have the same cruising ranges and could not remain on station as long as the Yanks. So Task Force 57 started its operational life at a distinct disadvantage. This was compounded by having an inadequate supply fleet.

Its "fleet train" was not only too small, it was also a rather motley collection of vessels cobbled together from a variety of sources. Replenishment at sea often took an embarrassingly long time to complete.

On one occasion, the force had to refuel from two oilers, neither of which had carried out this complex and demanding maneuver before. To add insult to injury, one of the oilers was a clapped-out craft capable of making a speed of only seven knots. The

British did learn and improve quickly, but their supply systems and procedures never matched the scale, professionalism, and efficiency of their American counterparts, which had had three years of experience supported by almost limitless resources to build up to that level.

Because of the nature of the war it had been fighting in the Atlantic, the Royal Navy also had relatively little experience in large-scale carrier operations against land targets, which were the bread and butter of the U.S. Navy. For that reason, Task Force 57 practiced against targets in Sumatra when en route to the Pacific to gain experience and at the same time wreck some Japanese oil refineries.

For the Americans the issue was how best to employ Task Force 57 in the next battle against Japan, which would be for the island of Okinawa. The ideal solution would have been to allow the task force to operate more or less independently from the main American fleet. This was considered the best idea because of the separate logistical setups the two fleets used and because it was desirable for the British to perform a mission considered both creditable and important enough to satisfy British sensitivities and make the most of a valuable naval asset.

In this vein, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the senior American naval officer in the Pacific, gave Task Force 57 a gracious welcome, signaling, "The British Carrier Task Force and attached units will increase our striking power and demonstrate our unity of purpose against Japan. The U.S. Pacific Fleet welcomes you."

It was certainly not a token contribution. The combat elements of Task Force 57 at that time comprised four fleet carriers embarking 207 combat aircraft, two battleships, five cruisers, and 11 destroyers. There were also six escort aircraft carriers guarding the fleet train and ferrying replacement aircraft.

Commanding this formidable naval armament was Vice Admiral Sir Henry B.H. Rawlings. He and Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, at the helm of the American Fifth Fleet and directly in charge of all naval forces at Okinawa, worked well together.

Since the exact command relationship for operations against Japan was a politically sensitive issue, the two senior commanding officers came to an effective agreement early on. Rawlings accepted an offer to put the British fleet close to the main action against the enemy. He had no qualms about taking direction from Halsey, although his orders had to be described as "suggestions."

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: An auxiliary ship of Task Force 57 (center) refuels a British destroyer at sea. The Royal Navy struggled with logistics and resupply over the vast distances of the Pacific. OPPOSITE: A British-marked Grumman TBM Avenger aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm, returning from an attack on Sakishima Gunto, flies above the HMS *Indomitable* in March 1945.

The main task—or "suggestion"—given to Rawlings by Halsey was to cordon off and isolate the Sakashima Gunto Islands which lie midway between Okinawa and Formosa (modern Taiwan). The operation, dubbed Operation Iceberg I, commenced on March 26, 1945. The two main islands in the group had three airstrips that the Japanese used as staging posts, allowing planes from Formosa to operate over and bring reinforcement to Okinawa.

Neutralizing the island was, therefore, an important mission. Achieving it meant keeping all six airfields out of commission for as long as possible. However, two major problems soon became apparent. First, the airfields were all defended by strong antiaircraft artillery assets. Second, the Japanese proved adept at repairing damage around the clock to the airfields and getting them operational once more.

The pilots of Task Force 57 were also surprised at the enemy's talent for deception. Mock-ups, decoys, and well-camouflaged installations made both effective targeting and battle damage assessment more difficult than anticipated.

The British had no night-flying capability because there had been insufficient time to train air crews in the skills required, and no "blind-landing" aids were fitted, although all the British carriers had flight-deck lighting. Unworried about night attacks, enemy engineers were able to repair the runways as soon as it grew dark.

The fleet's only counter to this was to use a mixture of fuses, both immediate and delayed action, so that the latter would continue to detonate throughout the night and interfere with the repair work. Unfortunately, this attempt to prevent the timely maintenance of the Japanese airdromes had little effect.

In addition to the regular air raids, for

several days the force bombarded the islands without provoking much response from the Japanese. However, that all changed on April 2, 1945, the day after American troops stormed ashore on Okinawa.

Operational routine called for a preliminary fighter sweep over the target area before the bombers went in. The fighter sweep had just taken off when the destroyers on radar picket duty detected an enemy air attack coming in. The British fighters were recalled and directed onto the attackers. The Japanese planes broke formation about 40 miles out and four Japanese bandits were shot down, but several more got through to the carriers. One passed over the HMS *Indomitable,* raking the ship's flight deck with machine-gun fire before strafing the upper works of the battleship HMS *King George V.* The damage was slight, but the next attacker proved to be a dreaded kamikaze.

Naval History and Heritage Command

A Royal Navy Vought F4U Corsair fighter photographed during training in Massachusetts during the war. Many of the Royal Navy's carrier-based aircraft were supplied by the United States.

After a near vertical dive, the suicide aircraft smashed into the aircraft carrier HMS *Indefatigable,* hitting the base of the ship's command and control island and killing 14 crew members. The Flight Deck Officer, Lt. Cmdr. Pat Chambers, was seriously wounded in this strike. He later reported, "The picture I retain of the scene is quite vivid; the starboard wing of the Japanese plane burning on the island aft of the funnel and a great gap from there to the flight deck where the whole lot had blown up, leaving a hole about eight feet long in the island sickbay. Our kamikaze had a bomb of about 250 pounds on him."

What followed brought the carrier design philosophies of the British and American navies into stark contrast and amazed the U.S. liaison officers who were stationed aboard the *Indefatigable.* An attack of that nature would normally have put an American carrier out of action. But the *Indefatigable* was operational again within minutes of being hit by the Japanese plane.

The reason was that all American carriers had wooden flight decks, whereas the British carriers employed armored flight decks. This meant that Royal Navy carriers, size-for-size, could carry fewer aircraft, but by the end of the Okinawa campaign, although all of Task Forces 57's fleet carriers had been struck by kamikazes, all were still fully operational.

April 2 proved to be a busy day for Task Force 57 as a second kamikaze broke through the protective screen surrounding the fleet. Once again going for a carrier, the Japanese plane dived for HMS *Victorious,* which was taking evasive action in a hard turn. The kamikaze clipped the flight deck and spun into the sea.

The carrier was undamaged, but apparently its flight deck was littered with body parts of the enemy pilot and pieces of his aircraft. The debris included the dead aviator's briefing notes, which confirmed what all American and British naval leaders in the region had assumed: the British and American carriers were the top priority targets of the Japanese air attacks.

Although that revelation may not have been surprising to the Allies, it was noteworthy that so many of the attackers chose instead, in the heat of the moment, to assault smaller targets, especially Allied destroyers on radar picket duty.

Supply problems came to the fore for the British again on the following day when the force broke off to rendezvous with the fleet train and refuel. This was delayed by bad weather and by what had now become the usual "problems" for the British Pacific Fleet.

After three frustrating days trying to take on fuel, ammunition, and provisions, Admiral Rawlings set course for the combat zone again with some of his vessels only partly refueled. It was a calculated risk on the admiral's part driven by the need to honor his promise to be back on station by April 6.

During the first day of renewed attacks against Sakashima Gunto, another Japanese aerial counterattack was broken up by the fleet's antiaircraft fire ably supported by combat air patrols; only one plane penetrated the fleet's protective screen. This kamikaze went after the carrier HMS *Illustrious*; a combination of evasive maneuvering and antiaircraft fire put the enemy pilot off his aim. One wing of his plane clipped the ship's island before he crashed into the ocean.

Meanwhile, off the coast of Okinawa the U.S. fleet was being pummeled by 700 Japanese aircraft, about half of which were kamikaze attackers, the other half conventional air strikes. Several destroyers were lost and more than 30 U.S. Navy ships were damaged.

On April 10, 1945, the Royal Navy's mission in the Pacific changed. It was then known that the Japanese were flying directly from Formosa to Okinawa. American land-based aircraft had tried to interdict this air traffic by strafing and bombing the airfields on Formosa with little success. Task Force 57 was then asked to tackle the job, and it started operations against Formosa on April 12.

Two busy days of combat followed with British planes strafing and bombing anything they saw on the island before the force was ordered back to Sakashima Gunto.

After a month of activity there, Task Force 57 sailed to Leyte to take on needed stores.

When the British Pacific Fleet departed Sakashima Gunto on April 20, 1945, it had spent 12 days in action out of the 26 that it had spent in the combat zone and had flown a total of 2,444 aircraft sorties. Of these, 1,961 were by fighters and 483 by Grumma Avenger bombers. Aircraft had dropped 412 tons of bombs on the airfields and fired 315 rockets at a variety of targets.

The final total of enemy aircraft destroyed or damaged in Iceberg I was 134, including those due to air-to-air combat and those destroyed on the ground. More than 100 enemy sampans and other small coastal boats were sunk or critically damaged. Against this loss to the Japanese, the fleet suffered 68 planes lost and 34 aircrew killed.

Imperial War Museum

Barracks at Tokishuma airfield, Shikoku Province, in the Japanese home islands, under attack by British naval aircraft, July 24, 1945. The planes were launched by HMS V*ictorious, Formidable, Indefatigable,* and *Implacable*.

The verdict on Task Force 57's actions so far was generally considered "not bad." The British were on a steep learning curve, getting used to a type of operation for which they were not properly equipped or trained. It had to refuel and resupply more frequently than the U.S. Navy and were still having serious problems with replenishment at sea.

Another serious issue was the Royal Navy's main strike fighter aircraft: the Supermarine Mk XV Seafire, the maritime version of the Spitfire, It was not performing well. Mechanical problems and a lack of spare parts for repairs prevented them from getting into the air to perform combat missions.

Further, the Seafire's long nose, which blocked the pilot's vision, made strafing, bombing runs, and carrier landings a challenge. Most of the other airplane types Task Force 57 was operating were American models: the Vought F4U-1D Corsair and Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat fighters and the Grumman TBF-1 Avenger Torpedo Bomber. These were reliable, simple, sturdy, and effective machines.

Nevertheless, Admiral Nimitz fiercely resisted a proposal offered by Washington to have Task Force 57 move to support the Australian landings in Borneo. He wanted to keep it where the main action was since the British armored carriers had clearly and repeatedly shown their worth.

As a result, Task Force 57 returned to Sakashima Gunto on May 4 to resume operations against enemy airfields and installations there; this new mission was called Operation Iceberg II. The kamikazes were waiting for them. Whether by accident or design, a Japanese aerial group managed to penetrate the defensive ring surrounding the British fleet when the task force's battleships, with their heavy antiaircraft artillery batteries, were away from the rest of the fleet on a coastal bombardment mission.

Upon the approach of the enemy, the fleet went to "Flash Red" alert just as a kamikaze hit the fight deck of the carrier HMS *Formidable,* causing an explosion that penetrated the ship's armored deck and tore through a number of parked airplanes and putting the vessel's radar out of action. Eight men were killed and 47 others were wounded in the blast, and because it had blown a gaping hole in the deck the explosion sent shrapnel and metal splinters into several internal ship compartments, including the central boiler room.

Within three minutes, two more suicide planes came in, heading for the nearby *Indomitable*. One attacker was brought down by gunfire less than 30 yards from the carrier, but the other plane held its course through an awesome barrage of antiaircraft shot and shell. Fortunately, its drive was too shallow, and it skidded across the flight deck and over the other side of the ship before exploding. The damage was slight.

It took 90 minutes to bring the fires on the *Formidable* under control, but within six hours she was operating her aircraft again normally, the hole in her flight deck having been filled with steel plate and cement. An impact of that force and nature would have put an American carrier out of action for months and would have caused absolute carnage below decks.

On May 9, after a break to refuel and because of adverse weather, Task Force 57 was back in action and facing the kamikaze once again. This time the *Victorious* was hit. The attacker kept coming,even though his airplane was disintegrating around him as a result of

repeated and devastating strikes from antiaircraft weapons.

The pilot managed to strike the carrier's forward elevator, holing the flight deck and putting the elevator motors out of action, as well as destroying the catapult and gun turret. Firefighters were hard at work containing the resulting blaze when a few minutes later a second kamikaze appeared.

This one was much less effective than the first attack; deflected by antiaircraft fire, the single kamikaze hit the deck at such a shallow angle it skidded over the side of the vessel after smashing through some parked planes.

Soon two more kamikazes dived on the *Formidable*. One was cut to pieces by flak from the battleship HMS *Howe*. However, the second marauder passed through the barrage even as parts of the burning plane were falling into the sea. The Japanese aviator managed somehow to steer his dying machine into the deck of the carrier and into a group of parked planes. Although the resulting explosion did not penetrate the ship's flight deck, it did manage to incinerate 25 British fighters and bombers.

Imperial War Museum

Five British aircraft carriers at anchor at war's end: HMS *Indefatigable, Unicorn, Illustrious, Victorious,* and *Formidable.*

The only casualty of this enemy attack was a petty officer gunner. He stayed at his post even as the enemy flew directly at him. As the plane passed over the sailor, one of its wheels decapitated him a split second before the aircraft impacted the ship's deck.

Both the *Formidable* and *Victorious* were back in action the same day as the attack,

Submarine Operations of the Forgotten Fleet

After the Royal Navy's traumatic departure from the Pacific Ocean in early 1942, the 4th Submarine Flotilla and its depot ship, the HMS *Adamant,* operated with the Eastern Fleet based at Trincomalee—a large, natural harbor located on the coast of Sri Lanka in the heart of the Indian Ocean. Dutch submarines joined them and were placed under British operational control after the fall of the Dutch East Indies to the Japanese.

The number of operational boats remained small, sometimes no more than four at any one time, until after the Italian surrender in September 1943 when reinforcements began to be deployed to the Indian Ocean. By late 1944 a maximum of 40 submarines were active with the Eastern Fleet. However, the length of individual boat deployment was limited by the fact that they could not be refitted in India and had to return to Britain for major repairs.

During all of 1944 through January 1945, three British subs were sunk and one severely damaged by enemy action in the Indian Ocean. In September 1944 British submarines commenced combat patrols in the Pacific under the command of Vice Admiral Thomas. C. Kinkaid, commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

Since British subs were smaller and had less endurance than American boats, they were considered more suitable for inshore operations in the Southwest Pacific. By this stage of the war the force had grown to three flotillas: the 2nd, 4th, and 8th. The last moved to Fremantle, Australia, and comprised six "S" and three "T' class vessels. The former operated in the Java Sea, the latter in the Sea of China.

The "S " class had a speed of 10 nautical knots and a range of up to 7,000 miles and carried enough supplies on board to allow it to remain at sea for 30 days. "T" class subs, having roughly the same performance capability as the latest American submarines, could cover 12,000 miles and stay at sea for 50 days.

American subs had been based at Fremantle since 1942, and the 8th Flotilla had to fit in with the established American routines and practices. This was greatly facilitated when the U.S. Navy made available to their British counterparts Fremantle's repair facilities as well as two U.S. Navy submarine tenders.

The 8th Flotilla's day-to-day activities were controlled by the Commander Submarines U.S. Seventh Fleet, Rear Admiral J. Fife, who was headquartered at Perth. In April 1945, he moved his command post along with the 8th Flotilla to Subic Bay in the Philippines; the 8th Flotilla was replaced at Fremantle by the 4th Flotilla. At Subic Bay the Americans did all they could to share their repair facilities with the British submariners.

On April 1, 1945, the 2nd and 8th Submarine Flotillas were transferred to the administrative control of the British Pacific Fleet, although they still came under the operational control of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. Rather more than half the days on patrol were spent on passage, and by mid-1945 there were few Japanese targets to intercept.

albeit at a somewhat reduced rate of effectiveness.

Task Force 57 completed Operation Iceberg II on May 26 in support of the American capture of Okinawa. During the operation the British planes had flown 4,893 sorties, of which 2,073 had been strikes, 202 had been forced to return to their carriers before their mission was completed, and the rest were fighting combat air patrol sorties.

A further 470 flights had been flown by combat air patrols and carrier replenishment sorties. Aircraft had dropped 958 tons of bombs and fired 950 rockets. British aircraft losses amounted to 160 from all causes, including 26 planes shot down and 72 more damaged by operating accidents. Royal Navy aircrew losses were 41 killed and missing, with another 44 men killed and 83 wounded in various ship companies.

Finally in late May 1945, Task Force 57 broke off after 62 days at sea, returning to base to refit, resupply, and repair battle damage. Its first major missions of the Pacific War were over. There would be more action to come, including Operation Inmate (June 14-16), involving air attacks on the main Japanese naval bastion at Truk in the western Caroline Islands, as well as raids on Japan itself in the run up to the planned invasion.

The British raids—both by air and shore bombardment—continued right up to August 15, 1945, and the Japanese surrender to the Allies; the second British task force, built around another four fleet carriers and one battleship squadron, arrived too late to take part in the fighting. By VJ Day, the Royal Navy Pacific Fleet had 80 principal warships (including nine large and nine escort aircraft carriers), 30 smaller combat vessels, and 29 submarines.

Had the invasion of the Japanese home islands been carried out by the Allied powers, there can be little doubt that this fleet would have played a significant role in any naval operations.

Task Force 57's wartime activities sometimes had touches of farce on the logistical side of the equation since the Royal Navy clearly was not designed to operate for long periods of time or distances from its established bases—a vital prerequisite for any war-making capacity in the Pacific Ocean. It had also been trained and geared for the very different forms of warfare that prevailed in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea.

Regardless, it acquitted itself well during the last year of the war in the Pacific. Whether its relatively small contribution in that theater gave Britain a position of greater honor at the end of the conflict in Asia is a moot point. The fact remains that the officers and sailors of Task Force 57 did exactly what was asked of them. The U.S. Navy is given credit for winning the war in the Pacific, but their British ally was there—and was with them at the end. □

Imperial War Museum

HMS *Trenchant*, one of dozens of British submarines that served in the Pacific. Although fewer in number than American subs, they nonetheless made significant contributions to the war effort.

British submarines were capable of operating a "wolf pack," or coordinated patrol by two or more submarines working together. In this way they achieved success against low-speed targets. During this time, they sank 13 vessels, of which six were warships, in the Java and Flores Seas.

One of these victims was the heavy cruiser *Ashigara,* the last major Japanese-warship to be sunk by a submarine in World War II. She was sunk by HMS *Trenchant,* which had sailed on patrol to Pulo Tengol in May 1945. Five of eight aimed torpedoes from the British sub fired at 4,000 yards found their mark, and the Japanese vessel sank 30 minutes after the attack. She had been carrying a large number of soldiers from Java intended to reinforce the Japanese garrison at Singapore; most of them went down with the ship.

In addition to looking for enemy shipping to sink, a number of submarines carried out special operations. These included landing clandestine parties on islands involved in intelligence work and resupplying or recovering them.

The sphere where submarines interfaced most closely with the British Pacific Fleet's surface task forces was in the provision of air and sea rescue to retrieve downed Allied pilots. These boats normally operated near enemy-held coasts, and the proximity to Japanese territory posed grave danger to them.

A typical example of this type of sub operation was the 55-day patrol (the longest for a British submarine during World War II) of the *Tantalus,* part of the 8th Flotilla. From early January to late February 1945, she prowled the South China Sea looking for downed Allied pilots. Although she was never called upon to rescue any ditched airmen, her travels took her across the paths of several enemy luggers, lighters, and a tug boat, which she destroyed using gunfire.

Coastwatchers

Continued from page 77

ber of missions. Navy squadrons were regularly broken up, and the surviving flyers were usually posted back stateside. There they were used to impart their experience to fledgling pilots. Not so the Japanese. The splendidly chosen and trained airmen were replaced by less qualified pilots.

As a result, when American forces assaulted the Caroline Islands a few months after the Solomons campaign, the combined Japanese fleet could not sortie. The same thing happened when MacArthur's forces breached the Bismarck barrier farther west.

A few months later came the next attack in the Central Pacific and the Battle of the Philippine Sea. By this time American flyers who had been flying for two years before being assigned to a carrier air group were facing Japanese flyers whose training had been for three to six months and were stale from more months sitting idly in harbor.

The Americans were flying a new generation of aircraft with substantially better performance than the F4F, while Japanese industry had been unable to produce significant numbers of their planned followup to the Zero. The Americans calledthe Battle of the Philippine Sea the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.

From the beginning of the conflict, Japan's only hope of winning in the Pacific was to make the cost in Allied lives so high that the Allies would accept a negotiated peace. Dumbos and coastwatchers were among the factors that helped keep the Allies' human cost relatively low. Poor choices on where to fight and hyper-agressive infantry tactics resulted in high Japanese casualties. Clear strategic thinking by the Allies combined with innovative weapons and tactics also contributed to Japans horrendous casualties.

Japan's ill-advised decision to fight in such unfavorable circumstances in the Solomons broke the back of its air power and seriously weakened its army and navy, thus paving the way for Allied victory in the battles to come. □

EXPERIENCE THE ACTION OF WORLD WAR II AFLOAT!

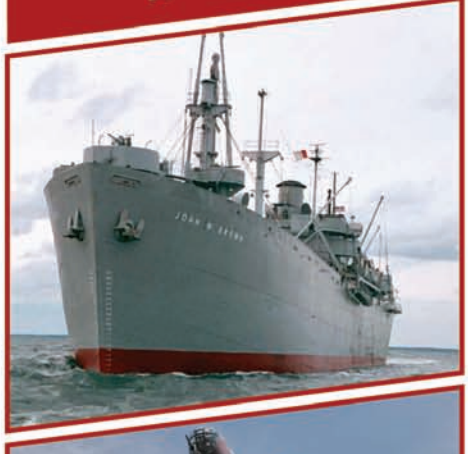
Aboard the Liberty Ship JOHN W. BROWN

2017 Cruises

From Baltimore on the Chesapeake Bay

Saturday, May 6
★ Celebrating VE Day ★

Saturday, September 9
★ Celebrating 75 Years
1942 - 2017 ★



The SS JOHN W. BROWN *is one of the last operating survivors from the great fleet of over 2,700 war-built Liberty Ships and the last operational troopship of World War II. The ship is a maritime museum and a memorial to the shipyard workers who built, merchant mariners who sailed, and the U.S. Navy Armed Guard who defended the Liberty ships during World War II. The JOHN W. BROWN is fully restored and maintained as close as possible to her World War II configuration. Visitors must be able to walk up steps to board the ship.*

This exciting 6 hour day cruise *includes lunch, music of the 40's, period entertainment and flybys (conditions permitting) of wartime aircraft. Tour on-board museums, crew quarters, bridge and much more. See the magnificent 140-ton triple-expansion steam engine as it powers the ship through the water.*

★ **Order your tickets online at: www.ssjohnwbrown.org**
★ **For information call: 410-558-0164**
Visit www.ssjohnwbrown.org for special pricing, group rates, gift certificates and more.

Last day to order tickets is 14 days before the cruise. Conditions and penalties apply to cancellations.
Project Liberty Ship is a Baltimore based, all volunteer, nonprofit organization.

Find us on Facebook

LIBERTY SHIP
JOHN W. BROWN

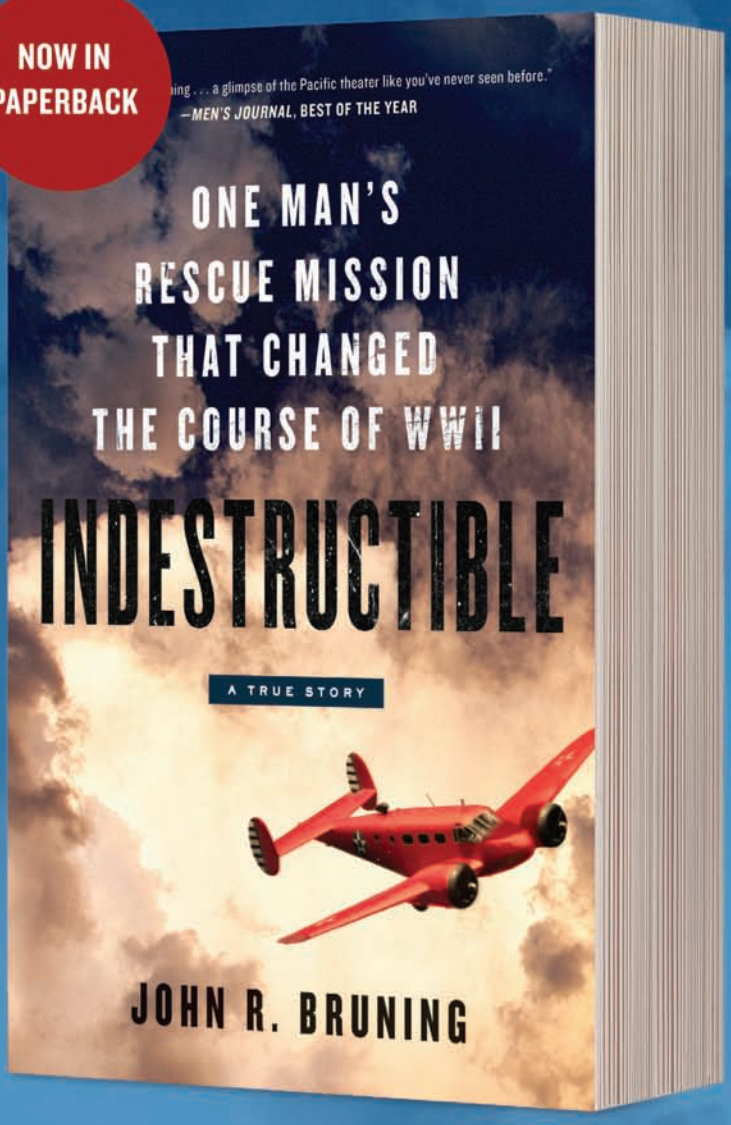
INCREDIBLE. INSPIRING. *INDESTRUCTIBLE.*

SOON TO BE A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

"*Indestructible* offers a glimpse of the Pacific theater like you've never before seen.... Fast-paced, page-turning...complete with a heart-wrenching love story and heroic conclusion."

—*MEN'S JOURNAL*

NOW IN PAPERBACK



"A gripping portrait of a uniquely American hero...who fought two wars—one for this country and one to rescue his wife and children."

—JAMES BRADLEY, author of *FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS*

"Love, war, treachery, adventure... Does justice to the legend of Colonel Paul 'Pappy' Gunn, a giant among heroes of World War II."

—ADAM MAKOS, author of *A HIGHER CALL* and *DEVOTION*

hachette BOOK GROUP hachette BOOKS

NOW IN PAPERBACK, EBOOK AND AUDIOBOOK WHEREVER GOOD BOOKS ARE SOLD.

FACEBOOK/AUTHORJOHNRBRUNING

@JOHNRBRUNING