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COVER: German fallschirmjägers adjust their grenade launcher during training. Fallschirmjägers fought tenaciously at Monte Cassino, holding out against determined Allied assaults for nearly four months. See story page 60. Photo: Bundesarchiv Bild 1011-304-0628-12A; Photo: Dohm

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Lost, Now Found

A few weeks ago, a surprising story was announced: the wreckage of the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis,* which was torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese submarine *I-58* on July 30, 1945, had been located.

The long-lost wreck was discovered by a search team financed by multi-billionaire Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, in 18,000 feet of water at the bottom of the Philippine Sea.

Of course, many ships of all nations were sunk during the war, but several factors made this particular sinking—and the discovery of the wreckage—so intriguing and significant.

First, of course, was the tragic loss of life. Only about 300 of the 1,196 crewmen on board went down with the ship; the other 900 jumped into the water, clinging to flotsam, life jackets, or lifeboats. These survivors were in for a horrific fight for their lives.

Those in the water quickly began suffering from a variety of ailments: saltwater poisoning, dehydration, extreme hunger, and exposure under a brutal sun. But the worst part was the unrelenting shark attacks.

No other American ships were in the vicinity, so it took a while for anyone to realize that the *Indy* was missing. It was not until four days later that a PV-1 Ventura patrol/bomber plane on routine patrol spotted the men and radioed for immediate assistance in rescuing them.

Only 317 sailors and Marines survived their ordeal. It was the greatest loss of life from a single sinking in U.S. Navy history.

Another fascinating aspect is that the *Indy* had just delivered to the island of Tinian components needed to complete the assembly of "Little Boy"—the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan—and was heading to Leyte to join Task Force 95. Had she been sunk on the way to Tinian, the end of the war might very well have been different.

The *Indy*'s captain, Charles Butler McVay III, survived the sinking and was court-martialed for the loss of his ship. Of the 350 U.S. Navy captains whose ships were sunk during the war (including six other heavy and three light cruisers), he was the only one to be tried and convicted.

Suffering from mental health problems no doubt connected to the frightful experience, the court-martial, and his wife's recent death from cancer, McVay committed suicide in 1968. (He was posthumously exonerated by Congress and President Bill Clinton in October 2000.)

The ship's wreckage was found in August of this year by a search team and deep-water research vessel from the Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington, D.C. Allen, a well-known philanthropist and World War II history buff, footed the expedition's bills, which ran into the millions.

Several books have been written about the tragic fate of the *Indy* and, in 2016, a Hollywood film, USS *Indianapolis: Men of Courage,* starring Nicholas Cage, was released.

Although there are no plans to recover any artifacts or human remains (if any still exist), at least pinpointing the location of the wreckage solves another of World War II's many mysteries and reminds today's generation about the ongoing legacy of heroism displayed by so many seven decades ago.

—Flint Whitlock, Editor

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During World War II, more than 13,000 American aviators lost their lives in training accidents at home before they ever faced the enemy. Their sacrifice is all but forgotten today.

It was Christmas Day, 1944. A U.S. Navy C-47 Skytrain with five men aboard was en route from Naval Air Station, Olathe, Kansas, to Columbus, Ohio. It was a routine training flight. The pilot was beginning his landing approach into the Indianapolis municipal airport but a heavy fog shrouded the runway.

Realizing that he had overshot the runway, the pilot attempted to pull up but slammed into a tree. Everyone on board was killed.

A freak accident? Yes. A rare occurrence? No.

Tragically, there were far too many such accidents that took the lives of thousands of U.S. Army Air Forces, Navy, and Marine personnel during World War II. Their story, however, has gone largely unknown, their sacrifices unrecognized.

Before and After: Boeing XB-17, Model 299, the prototype for the B-17, crashed at Wright Field, Ohio, on October 30, 1935, killing the pilot and co-pilot due to a ground crewman's error. Despte the accident, the government awarded Boeing a contract to start mass producing the "Flying Fortress." INSET: The doomed passengers pose before a demonstration flight of a CG-4A glider in St. Louis, August 1, 1943. William Robertson, head of the company that built it, is pictured third from right.

As everyone knows, flight involves risk. Heavier-than-air flying machines, operated by young, inexperienced pilots (and even seasoned veterans), are subject to mechanical failure, unfavorable weather conditions, and human error—even before they arrive in an overseas combat zone, where the dangers quickly multiply.

Planes (and gliders, too) have crashed ever since they were first invented. But with the tremendous buildup of aviation forces during the war—with rushed training and a punishing manufacturing schedule to churn out planes (the aircraft plant operated by Ford Motor Company at its huge Willow Run, Michigan, facility built a complete B-24 every hour; see *WWII Quarterly,* Spring 2017), things were bound to go wrong.

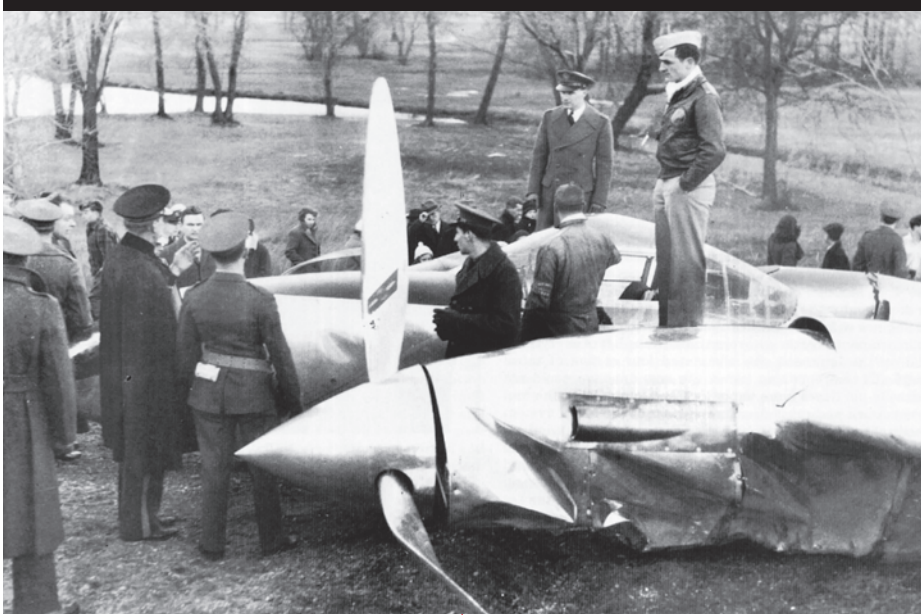
Accidents happened even before the start of the war. Boeing bet the company's future on its design for a new, four-engine bomber, the B-17. The prototype, known as Model 299, took off from Dayton's Wright Field on October 30, 1935, with Chief Test Pilot Leslie R. Tower at the controls. (The plane's maiden flight had occurred three months earlier.)

Everything went perfectly during the flight—until it was time to land. A part that was inadvertently left in a locked position

caused Model 299 to crash, killing Tower and his co-pilot, Major Pete Hill. Undeterred by the fatal mishap, the government awarded Boeing a contract to build 13 more B-17s. Eventually the company would build nearly 7,000 of them, while two other contractors built another 5,745.

In another prewar accident, on June 17, 1940, two twin-engine Douglas B-18 bombers, with 11 men on board, were flying out of Mitchel Field, Long Island, New York, when one passed too closely beneath the other. The mid-air collision resulted in airplane parts, engines, fuel, and bodies raining down on Bellerose, New York. Everyone on board was killed, as was a woman on the ground.

Gliders have their own particular dangers. On the sweltering day of August 1, 1943, a large crowd had gathered at Lambert Field, the St. Louis, Missouri, municipal airport, to watch a glider demonstration. A local company, the Robertson Aviation Corporation, had just built a CG-4A troop-carrying glider and the government was eager to show it off in hopes of



ABOVE: This Vultee BT-13A basic trainer crashed into a peach orchard near Lee Pope, Georgia, killing the solo pilot on board, April 26, 1943. BELOW: Air Force personnel and curious onlookers gather around a Lockheed XP-38 that crashed during a transcontinental flight on February 11, 1939, onto a Long Island golf course due to carburetor icing. The pilot survived.

increasing the sales of war bonds.

On board the glider were 10 of St. Louis's most prominent citizens: Mayor William Dee Becker, Thomas Dysart of the Chamber of Commerce, Judge Henry Mueller, and Max Doyne of the city's public utilities department, along with William B. Robertson, head of the company that had built the glider, and his vice-president and general manager, Harold A. Krueger. Piloting the brand new CG-4A was Captain Milton Klugh.

Robertson was a well-known figure in aviation circles. In addition to founding the municipal airport in St. Louis and the Robertson Aircraft Corporation, he also funded the design and construction of the history-making plane that Charles Lindbergh flew in 1927 from New York to Paris—a plane dubbed the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

Towed aloft by a Douglas C-47, the two conjoined aircraft circled the airport to the cheers of the crowd, estimated at about 10,000 people, before the towrope was released. Almost immediately, the right wing of the glider snapped off, and the engineless aircraft plummeted to earth, killing all on board.

A post-crash investigation revealed that a manufacturing defect in a wing strut was responsible.

Prior to the time that Pearl Harbor was attacked, the U.S. Army Air Corps had approximately 4,500 pilots, only 2,000 of which were on active duty. Once in the war, the United States greatly expanded both aircrew and ground-crew recruitment and training. By the end of the war, more than 435,000 pilots had been trained. (This number is exclusive of the thousands of Navy and Marine Corps aviators who were also trained.)

Naturally, with such high numbers, the likelihood of aviation accidents increased exponentially. Many times "hot-shot" pilots fresh out of (or still in) flight school found themselves in over their heads with a high-performance aircraft beyond their capabilities. At other times, it was a moment of inattention or simply "operator error" that spelled doom.

On October 23, 1942, over the Los Angeles area, a Lockheed B-34 Ventura bomber was being ferried from Long Beach Army Air Base to Palm Springs Army Air Field when it clipped the tail of an American Airlines DC-3 with nine passengers and a crew of three. The B-34 managed to land safely but the passenger plane smashed into a mountain in Chino Canyon, killing everyone on board, including Academy Award-winning Hollywood composer Ralph Rainger, who had composed entertainer Bob Hope's signature theme song, "Thanks for the Memories."

In 1943, Lt. Col. William E. Dyess heroically lost his life by steering his stricken plane away from homes over Burbank, California.

A post-crash investigation revealed that the B-34's pilot, William N. Wilson, was friends with the pilot of the DC-3 and was attempting to maneuver close enough to wave at him. Wilson miscalculated the distance between the two planes and his starboard engine chopped the DC-3's tail to pieces.

Ironically, the same B-34 Ventura was destroyed the following August 5 when an engine failure caused it to crash during a ferry flight into mountains in Rhode Island, killing all three crew members.

In another disaster, a B-24 bomber flying out of Wendover Army Air Base, Utah, on August 8, 1942, experienced engine failure, lost altitude, and tried to land on a desert highway seven miles east of the base. Its speed was too great and the plane slid off the highway and plowed into a freight train that was passing by, shattering 26 of the Western Pacific Railroad's boxcars like balsa wood toys.

A few minutes later, a westbound train, unaware of the accident, came along and plowed into the wreckage. Ten injured air crewmen were rescued by the train crews, but the pilot later died.

On August 10, 1942, a U.S. Navy bomber on maneuvers over Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, developed problems and crashed into a loaded bus, killing eight civilians and the three-man bomber crew.

The Lockheed P-38 Lightning was notoriously difficult to learn how to fly, and numerous P-38s crashed and many pilots died during training and ferrying operations.

On August 19, 1943, a P-38 collided with another P-38 over San Diego, causing the twin-boom fighter to crash into a house in the Mar Vista war-housing project. Three young children, playing in the front yard, were killed by the falling debris while the pilot fell from his aircraft and crashed through the roof and into the living roof, dying immediately. The other P-38 crashed into a canyon but the pilot parachuted to safety.

In another P-38 incident, Lt. Col. William E. Dyess died on December 22, 1943, after his aircraft caught fire during a flight test over Burbank, California. Refusing to bail out and risk his plane crashing into a populated area, Dyess heroically stayed with it and brought it down in a vacant lot; no one on the ground was hurt but Dyess lost his life.

Ironically, he had been captured by the Japanese on Bataan in April 1942, escaped a year later, and fought with guerrilla forces on Mindanao before being evacuated by an American submarine. Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas, was named in his honor.

On rare occasions, disasters occurred for which there seemed to be no logical explanation. For example, on January 2, 1944, while on a flight from McChord Field in Tacoma, Washington, to Los Angeles, a B-17 carrying 14 personnel exploded in the overcast skies above McClellan Field, northeast of Sacramento, California. One person escaped by parachute but the other

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13 were killed. The cause of the explosion was never determined, but an onboard fire was not ruled out.

It seemed that planes were going down all over the country on a weekly basis. On February 11, 1943, a B-17 went missing on a flight from Walla Walla, Washington. Three days later the wreckage was found; the plane had evidently crashed into a ridge in the Blue Mountains, 17 miles east of Walla Walla; all 11 on board were killed.

The next day, engine failure brought down a Consolidated B-24, flying from Biggs Field, Fort Bliss, Texas; it crashed near Roswell, New Mexico. One crewman parachuted to safety, but the other eight did not survive.

Five days later, a B-24 carrying 34 passengers crashed at Tucson Municipal Airport, killing six Consolidated employees who were on board.

On May 20, 1943, a B-24 from the 1014th Pilot Transition Training Squadron departed Tarrant Army Airfield in Texas on a four-hour flight to Chicago, which was shrouded in fog and a light rain. The pilot never saw the 500-foot-tall, 20 million-cubic-foot gasometer—the largest natural-gas storage tank of its type in the world—in front of him as he approached Chicago's Municipal Airport (today known as Midway Airport). In the ensuing massive explosion, the tank was destroyed and all 12 men aboard the bomber perished.

Four months later, a B-24 bomber, based at Lowry Field, Colorado, crashed into a residential neighborhood near the University of Denver on September 26, 1943. A witness said, "I was working in my back yard about 9:20 AM when I saw the plane coming in low from the direction of Denver University. Its left engine was dead and it apparently was having trouble trying to gain altitude.

"When it was directly overhead, the pilot must have noticed the vacant lot because it looked to me like he was trying to pancake a landing. It all happened within a split second. The plane crashed and exploded. A sheet of flame shot up about 60 feet and seemed to fall over the houses.

"The heat was so intense that you couldn't get close. I noticed wreckage flying

The top-secret prototype of a Boeing B-29 crashed into Seattle's Frye Meat Packing Plant due to an engine fire, February 18, 1943. Eleven Boeing personnel died along with 20 on the ground.

through the air over the front of the plane." At least seven airmen died in the crash.

At midnight on July 11/12, 1944, a B-24 bomber that had just taken off from Biggs Field at Fort Bliss, Texas, with eight men aboard slammed into Mount Franklin, which looms over the city of El Paso.

An eyewitness said, "The [plane's] lights showed for three or four seconds against the mountain, and then the pilot must have seen that he was about to crash into the rocks. He nosed the plane up, and it zoomed about 100 feet, then crashed head-on into the mountain. There was no fire before the plane hit, and the plane did not dive or fall. When it hit, there were three or four small fires that sprang up, then all at once a big flash and a big fire."

Another B-24 accident happened on August 1, 1944, after six B-24 Liberators took off from Muroc Army Air Field for gunnery and formation-flying training over Death Valley, California. One plane, a B-24J, collided with a B-24D and sheared off the B-24D's tail; eight men in that bomber died. One student gunner in the B-24J was able to parachute from the plummeting plane, but his fellow eight aviators perished. Scattered debris from the crash is still visible in Death Valley National Park.

Texas, with its many military airfields, saw many military aviation disasters, with one of the worst occurring on Sep-

Continued on page 96

ASSAULT GUN TANKER

Private Harry Miller had a front-row seat when the German Army's advance was stopped during the Battle of the Bulge.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

THE GERMAN PUSH WEST CAME TO A VIOLENT END.

On December 19, 1944, the Panther and King Tiger tanks of SS Lt. Col. Joachim Peiper's battle group smashed into the American tanks and tank destroyers of Lt. Col. George Rubel's 740th Tank Battalion outside the Belgian town of Stoumont. The Americans quickly knocked out three Panther tanks and stopped the Germans' progress. The Battle of the Bulge had reached its peak.

Four days later, Rubel's battalion helped drive Peiper out of the town of La Gleize, two miles east of Stoumont. While the rest of the unit attacked, Rubel organized his assault tanks in front of a chateau and provided covering fire.

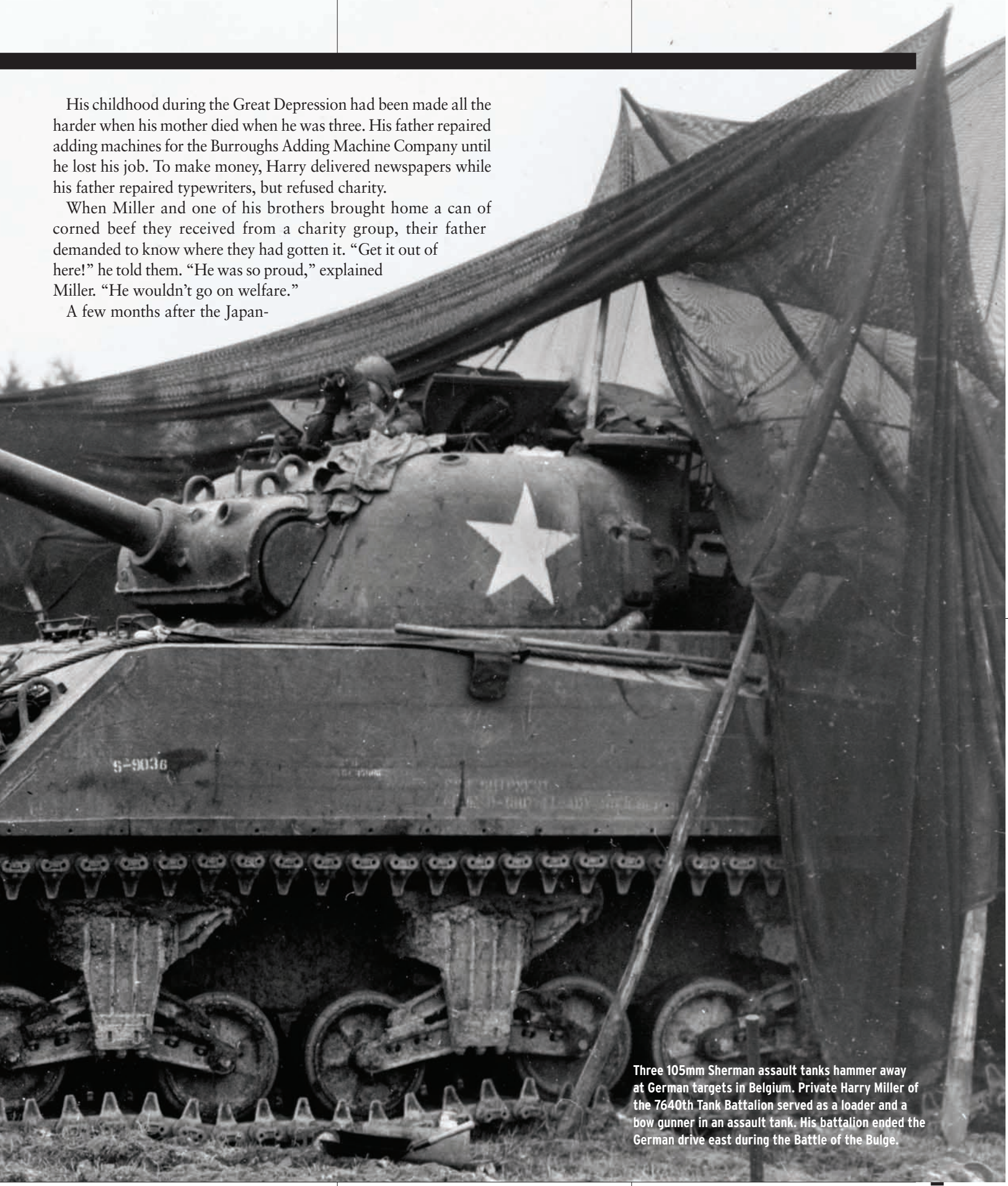
Inside one of those tanks was Private Harry F. Miller, passing 105mm shells to the gunner, who banged away at targets while Rubel stood atop a chateau wall directing fire. "He would tell us, 'Left two meters, down one meter,'" explained Miller. "We'd fire and he would tell us when to quit."

Miller had been with the battalion for only a month but was already a veteran. A native of Columbus, Ohio, Miller had always wanted to join the Army—his patriotism had been inspired as a kid while watching local World War I veterans march in parades. Miller was the youngest of six children—three boys and three girls.

His childhood during the Great Depression had been made all the harder when his mother died when he was three. His father repaired adding machines for the Burroughs Adding Machine Company until he lost his job. To make money, Harry delivered newspapers while his father repaired typewriters, but refused charity.

When Miller and one of his brothers brought home a can of corned beef they received from a charity group, their father demanded to know where they had gotten it. "Get it out of here!" he told them. "He was so proud," explained Miller. "He wouldn't go on welfare."

A few months after the Japan-



Three 105mm Sherman assault tanks hammer away at German targets in Belgium. Private Harry Miller of the 7640th Tank Battalion served as a loader and a bow gunner in an assault tank. His battalion ended the German drive east during the Battle of the Bulge.

National Archives

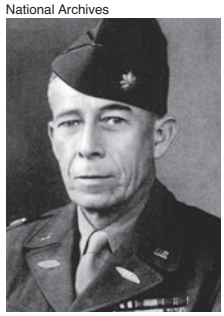
ese attacked Pearl Harbor, Miller was about to leave on his newspaper delivery route when he looked back through the home's glass door and noticed that his father looked ill. Miller asked another boy to take his route, explaining that he thought his father was going to die that day. His premonition proved correct. Without parents, Miller's oldest sister, nine years his senior, raised him. "I considered her my mother," he said.

Miller joined the Army's Enlisted Reserve Corps at age 15, claiming he was 18. He soon applied for active duty and was assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for basic training, then to Fort Ord, California, where he joined an amphibious tank unit.

He trained on every position in the M4 Sherman tank, spending most of his time as either a loader for the turret cannon or the bow gunner. "Don't bother unpacking your bags," one of his superiors told him, "you're going to Europe." Sure enough, he was assigned to move some Landing Vehicles Tracked (LVTs) east, which were then loaded onto a Liberty ship, with Miller included.

Harry Miller

National Archives



LEFT: Private Harry Miller of Dayton, Ohio, joined the Army when he was only 15. RIGHT: Lieutenant Colonel George Rubel commanded the 740th Tank Battalion.

Miller's ship arrived at Le Havre, France, in late September 1944, three months after D-Day, and he was deposited in a replacement depot named Camp Old Gold. Soon, an officer told him and his fellow replacements, "You're going to Third Army," and gave everyone Third Army patches, which Miller sewed on without much enthusiasm. "I never thought much of [General George S.] Patton," he recalled of the Third Army's commander. "I didn't care for his bravado."

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Instead, Miller was assigned to Lt. Col. George Rubel's 740th Tank Battalion, the "Daredevil" battalion, in Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges' First Army. In World War II, independent tank battalions supported infantry divisions. Unlike armored divisions, where tank battalions worked together, infantry divisions split up their tank battalions, with tanks being allotted to infantry units as needed.

Whereas armored division tankers were told to "haul ass and bypass," independent tank battalion tankers moved at the pace of the infantry and destroyed resistance points that were holding up the advance of the foot soldiers.

When Miller joined the 740th, it was encamped at Aubin-Neufchateau, Belgium, about 10 miles west of the German city of Aachen. The battalion originally had been a special unit, equipped with Canal Defense Light (CDL) tanks.

CDLs, secret weapons developed by the British, were powerful carbon-arc searchlights for night attacks and to blind the enemy. Called "canal defense lights" to hide their true purpose, American CDL tanks housed their carbon-arc lights behind two slits in the turret. According to Miller, "They'd shine the light into a concave mirror and the operator would blind the Germans."

The unit arrived in Belgium without tanks but was waiting for action. The officers lived in a castle while the enlisted men occupied school buildings, homes, and tents. The tank crews were mostly farm boys and ranchers.

When Miller arrived in mid-October, he was told, "You're in Headquarters Company and the assault gun platoon," but since there were no tanks, he trained in map and compass reading and kept his head down. "You're the new guy and they're not too sure they wanted to be with you," he explained. "I kept my mouth shut; that way, I got along." To look older, he smoked a pipe, though pipe tobacco was hard to find in war-torn Europe.

Each tank battalion contained an assault gun platoon that normally included six 105mm-armed M4A3 Sherman tanks—known as the M4A3 105 HVSS—which sacrificed anti-armor capability for the larger barreled 105mm cannon instead of the standard 75mm. They were used for infantry and assault support. Miller was assigned to one of

ABOVE: Assault tanks fire a barrage on the enemy from a tree line. Miller could often not see the targets his assault tank was firing on because of Belgium's dense woods. RIGHT: An Army ambulance rumbles by a knocked-out German Tiger Royal tank outside La Gleize, Belgium. Tigers terrified Miller and the tankers in his battalion. OPPOSITE TOP: The 105mm-armed M4A3 Sherman tank, known as the M4A3 105 HVSS, was used for infantry and assault support. Miller found the 105mm shells heavy as he passed them to the gunner.

the 105mm assault tanks.

As November turned into December, Miller often watched V1 rockets flying on their way to Antwerp. The unmanned rockets fascinated him. "It didn't look like an airplane," he said, "but it made a 'chunk, chunk, chunk' sound." Hence the nickname "Buzz Bomb."

On December 18, Miller's unit was finally ordered to the ordnance vehicle depot at Sprimont, where crews would draw their tanks. Two days earlier, three German armies had broken through the Allied lines in Belgium and Luxembourg and were charging west—the Battle of the Bulge.

The tankers arrived at the depot to find numerous damaged tanks. Men were assigned tanks and told to find parts, often taken from other tanks. "Some of the tanks didn't smell too great," recalled Miller. "Dead bodies had been in them for a while." It was a smell he never forgot.

The next day, December 19, anyone who had a functioning tank was ordered to the Stoumont railroad station where elements of the 30th Infantry Division were fighting. The men had managed to piece together three M4 Sherman tanks and an M-36 tank destroyer.

The small tank force knocked out three of Peiper's Panthers—the spearhead of the 1st SS Panzer Division attack—and halted the German counteroffensive.

Meanwhile, Miller and the rest of the men, who could hear enemy fire in the distance, worked feverishly to get their tanks ready for combat. Miller recalled that as long as the sounds of the battle stayed away, he was happy.

Two days before Christmas, Miller and his crew finished repairing their tank and drove it out of the gate. "Everybody was scared," he remembered. "Their eyes were bugged out." Miller's tank and five other 105mm Shermans rolled down a road bordered by

Both: National Archives

woods and fields, to Chateau Froid Cour on the eastern outskirts of Stoumont. Less than two miles to the west, the Germans were making their stand in La Gleize.

It was during this attack that Lt. Col. Rubel stood atop a chateau wall and directed fire. When Rubel spotted an artillery crew driving east with a towed 155mm cannon, he stopped them and had them set up behind the chateau, where they added their Shermans' 105mm fire.

As the tank's loader, Miller found the 105mm rounds surprisingly heavy. He also could not see the effects of his Sherman's fire, since the targets were too far away on the other side of a forest. He only saw explosions and La Gleize's church steeple.

Both: National Archives

Rubel's six 105s and one 155 shelled the town for about an hour, which had a profound effect on Miller. "It ruined my hearing!" he said. "I couldn't hear worth a damn."

The next day, Miller and his tank crew headed into La Gleize. "It was a mess," he recalled, "everything was down." Bodies lay strewn everywhere in the rubble, Tiger tanks and other panzers remained smoldering where they had been knocked out, but the church, although badly damaged, still stood. The only sign of life Miller saw was an American tank crew refueling next to the city hall. The Germans were retreating.

While Miller never faced off against the Germans' vaunted Tiger tanks, they haunted him. "We were scared to death of them," he admitted. Other tankers told how its powerful 88mm cannon could easily penetrate any American tank's armor. "It scared the crap out of me."

Although the Germans were retreating, the fighting continued. As snow fell, the 740th continued to support the 30th Infantry Division. Miller switched to the bow gunner position, sitting in the front of the tank next to the driver and firing the 30-caliber machine gun. He recalled firing once at some escaping Germans on the side of the road.

When he learned that Peiper's men had killed American prisoners of war at a crossroads called Baugnez—an incident known as the Malmedy Massacre—it changed his attitude toward the Germans. "The 1st SS was such a bunch of mean bastards," he said.

The brutality of war disturbed the young tanker. Once, on a narrow road, his driver rolled over some dead bodies. Miller did not know if they were Germans, Americans, or Belgians. The man standing in the turret did not look back to see the effect.

"You can't stop the column of tanks so you can go around them because the street is too narrow," he explained. "You roll over [the bodies], but it gets to you." He also saw burned bodies in destroyed tanks, but it was the smell that really bothered him. "If you dwell on that sort of stuff, you'd be climbing the walls."

There were no celebrations on Christmas Day. Instead, the unit hooked up with the 82nd Airborne Division, where Miller's platoon fired missions for the different parachute infantry regiments. Whenever the paratroopers needed indirect fire support, Miller and the other assault tanks would spread out in a field or along a tree line and fire away at targets. If they engaged in an artillery duel with the Germans, the crews draped camouflage netting over their tanks.

"The 82nd liked us," Miller said, "and we stayed with them through the Bulge and to the Siegfried Line."

Much of the fighting occurred in deep snow with overcast skies. The men tried to keep warm, often wearing multiple sweaters under their tanker jackets. "I had to beg, borrow, or steal blankets," recalled Miller. If he ever rode in a jeep, he stuck his legs into U.S. mail bags to keep warm, something the driver could not do. One day, out of boredom, he counted 20 different kinds of coats worn by his fellow tankers.

When Miller could sleep, he usually did it inside the tank. If it was warm enough outside, he slept under the tank in case of an enemy artillery air burst. He never lacked new clothes. As one of the skinniest men in the battalion, he could wear almost anything. "The supply sergeant always gave me spare shirts and pants," he explained, "because he didn't want to haul them around."

For food, Miller liked the Ten-in-One rations, but detested C-rations, canned rations, and D-bars—melt-proof chocolate made especially for the Army. "I hated all of them," he said. Whenever possible, the men enjoyed hot food prepared by their cook, a soldier

named Flood. "He could put together some good meals," recalled Miller.

The men often shared their food with Belgian children. "Having been through the Depression myself, I felt sorry for them," he explained. Unlike Miller, the children surprisingly liked D-bars. "Compared to Belgian chocolate, it was trash." Yet the free candy bars brought smiles to the children's faces. "You'd thought we'd handed them a thousand-dollar bill."

The men stole booze wherever they could, mostly from people's basements. The only problem was lugging the bottles and hiding them where they could not be stolen again. "If it had the date of 1800 on it," Miller said, "you couldn't wait to pop that open."

At the end of January 1945, Rubel's unit reached Germany and fought its way across the Siegfried Line, Germany's last man-made defense. Miller watched as a tank dozer shoved dirt over the concrete pylons known as "Dragons' Teeth," allowing tanks and other vehicles to drive over the barrier.

On February 4, the battalion was taken off the line for a break, but the rest proved short lived. Two days later it was transferred to the 8th Infantry Division in a different corps area. Once with the 8th, the Daredevils pushed forward to the city of Düren and the Roer River.

Düren had been destroyed by constant Allied bombing and artillery barrages. "It looked like a pancake," recalled Miller. But, when the Americans reached the Roer River, they found that they could not cross it. Rains, melting snow, and destroyed dams in the south put the river at flood level.

"There was nothing we could do," he said. "We couldn't get anything across." Instead, the tankers completed maintenance on their vehicles. Occasionally, the Germans shelled the American side of the river and the Americans returned fire.

In the city stood a statue of Otto von Bismarck, Germany's first chancellor, with an outstretched arm that had been pointing west, but heavy vibration from bombs and shelling had turned it so that his hand pointed east, like a signpost pointing the Yanks toward Berlin. "I was surprised no one knocked a finger off of him," Miller said, "or knocked his hand off."

BELOW: Men and vehicles make their way through a breach in the Siegfried Line's Dragon's Teeth. Miller watched as a tank dozer shoved dirt over the Dragon's Teeth, allowing the men to cross unimpeded. OPPOSITE: An assault tank rolls past soldiers of the 30th Infantry Division to drop 105mm artillery shells on German positions in Belgium. Miller and his battalion helped the 30th reenter La Gleize.

While in Düren, Miller was transferred from the 105mm Sherman to working in the battalion's message center. He operated out of a radio-supplied half-track with five other soldiers, relaying messages from the headquarters to the companies. Rubel radioed orders to Miller's half-track, which he would hand deliver to the company commanders.

The work took him closer to the front than his tank had. "Every time you went closer to the front, you didn't know if that would be the last day," he said. "Every day was exciting."

Miller often manned the half-track's ring-mounted .50-caliber machine gun and would sometimes fire it at objects for fun. "I had to be careful 'cause I didn't want to be caught."

He noted, "It was scary going through towns," as he worried about Germans dropping grenades into the half-track's open bed from second-story windows. In bad weather, the men draped the bed with a canvas tarp. "It was hotter than hell in the summertime if you had it over you."

Finally, on February 24, 1945, Rubel's battalion crossed the Roer on a Bailey bridge. On the other side, Miller noticed that the flat terrain near the river rose to become a hill that overlooked the city of Cologne to the east. The unit then advanced through the south side of Cologne, where Miller did not see a single building standing—only rubble and the smell of dead human bodies and fallen horses.

"We would go past a bombed-out building and we knew there were dead bodies in there," he recalled. "That's a smell you never forget." Dead bodies were one of three odors he identified with war. "That," he explained, "and horse shit and gasoline." Manure piles stood in almost every German town and farm.

Whenever the skies cleared, Miller saw fleets of bombers on their way to Germany. "They looked like an aluminum overcast," he said. He also saw crashed planes across the landscape, but they were always German, not American.

Miller was more impressed with Amer-

Both: National Archives

ican fighter planes, which he often saw flying in pairs or groups of three. Whenever the men spotted a dogfight above, they stopped and watched as though it were a spectator sport. Closer to the ground, American fighter aircraft dove on German roadblocks ahead of attacking columns and sometimes swung back around hit their targets a second time.

Their pilots' favorite targets were German trains and railroad stations. "I remember seeing railroad tracks tied in a knot from the blasts," he said.

One day, Miller was heading down a road in the passenger side of a jeep when a North American P-51 Mustang fighter roared straight over, only yards off the ground. "He was low enough that if I hadn't had my helmet on, my hair would have gone up," he said.

After two weeks of combat, Lt. Col. Rubel expected a break for his tankers. Instead, he received orders to help the American Seventh Army crack the Siegfried Line, for a second time. The tankers headed west to the train station in Aachen where they put their tracked vehicles on flatbed railcars to travel south to Saarbrücken. The unit detrained and joined the 70th Infantry Division, but they were not needed. "We got there but they had already crossed [the Siegfried Line]."

The Daredevils then headed farther south to assist the 63rd Infantry Division's crossing of the line. The battalion again faced Dragon's Teeth and bunkers housing 75mm high-velocity antitank guns. "We had to punch through those damn bunkers," said Miller. The unit continued to support the infantry until March 21, when it reached Homberg.

But now the battalion was needed up north. On March 30, the unit loaded onto trains once more, this time for the city of Bonn; the 8th Infantry Division had requested their help in closing the Ruhr Pocket. To reach the 8th, the battalion had to cross the Rhine River on a pontoon bridge at Bonn.

Miller did not like crossing such a powerful river on a floating bridge. "It was pretty much like riding a roller coaster," he said of up-and-down trip between each pontoon. "You'd see [the vehicles ahead of you] going down, and hope they're gonna go back up."

The 740th then joined the fight. At one point some of the tankers took on the German Luftwaffe and won. The tanks happened by an airfield where enemy planes were taxiing onto the runway. "The German planes were trying to get off the ground," described Miller. "Our tanks, as they went down the road, were shooting [at them] as they took off."

The planes made it into the air, but before they could retract their landing gear, the tanks opened fire and the planes crashed back down to earth. The men cheered at the tankers' marksmanship. "It was like a turkey shoot."

Later, Miller saw something he thought strange: enemy planes hidden in forests along the autobahn, which pilots used as an airstrip. He saw an old Junkers Ju-87 Stuka, which had once terrorized Allied armies by dive-bombing with its siren tearing the air.

He also spotted a Messerschmitt Me-262, the war's first operational jet fighter, which did not impress him. "It was an ugly looking airplane to me," he recalled.

During the campaign, word came down on April 13 that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had died the day before. "Everyone was shocked," said Miller, although the men who had seen the president in newsreels believed he looked sickly. "We thought he shouldn't have taken that fourth term [as president] because he looked so bad."

As the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket wound down at the end of April, the 740th was sent

to Düsseldorf for occupation duty. The men used the two weeks off to clean their vehicles, refurbish their supplies, and rest.

Miller enjoyed himself, finding the German women prettier than the Belgian women. "German girls were hungry for men," he said. Even though there were strict rules against "fraternization" with enemy civilians, Miller paired off with the 40-year-old widow of a German colonel. "She was nice looking," he remembered, "and she had blond hair."

On April 30, the battalion helped the 82nd Airborne and 8th Infantry Divisions cross the Elbe River. The Americans pulverized the east bank with artillery then crossed in small boats. Miller watched as Airborne engineers stretched a pontoon bridge over the river under fire.

Suddenly, the XVIII Airborne Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Matthew Ridgway, showed up, dissatisfied with the engineers' progress. "He was having a fit and cussing," said Miller. "He thought it was going too slow." Soon enough, the enemy fire slackened, the bridge was completed, and men and vehicles crossed.

Once across the river, the 82nd raced ahead, spearheading the corps' attack. "One of the tank commanders called back to say, 'The 82nd is riding horses-and-buggies and they're now passing me!'" said Miller. "Everything was hell for leather. It was go, go, go!" The war was nearing its end.

The battalion was then ordered to help the British Second Army and headed north to Schwerin to block the Russians from reaching Denmark; the battalion occupied a castle on Lake Schwerin. "We were on the west side," recalled Miller, "and the Russians were on the east side." The 740th Tank Battalion remained there until the war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945.

The war's end was anticlimactic. "It wasn't a big ruckus," said Miller. "It was just a relief." Soon, Lt. Col. Rubel assembled the battalion. After the chaplain said a prayer, Rubel spoke to the men: "We will all be leaving shortly and I hope we meet again," he told them. Almost everyone wanted to go home except Miller, who had no one to go home to. His parents were dead, his oldest sister had married, and one of his brothers was in the Pacific.

BELOW: Miller eventually turned in his assault tank for a half-track and enjoyed firing the ring-mounted 50 caliber machine gun just for fun. OPPOSITE: Miller thought the German Me-262 fighter aircraft, the first operational jet of the war, looked ugly. By the end of the war, German pilots hid their planes in woods and used the autobahn as a runway.

War-torn Germany was filled with prisoners—German prisoners of war, freed Allied prisoners, and concentration camp survivors, now referred to as "D.P.s" or "displaced persons."

Miller thought the German POWs were relatively docile, except the former SS. One day, a group of SS prisoners were threatening to break out of their enclosure and he and other half-track crew members were sent to quell the unrest.

The half-tracks arrived and spread out on a field across from the camp. The American officer in charge addressed the prisoners through a bullhorn. Then he fired a .50-caliber machine gun, stitching a line across the field, and announced that if they crossed the line they would be killed. "They calmed down," recalled Miller.

The battalion transferred to Limburg, Germany, where the men spent their off-duty hours drinking. Men from the battalion's D Company raided houses to confiscate weapons and booze. If they found any surplus cognac or champagne, one of the men would send it to Miller in a large black suitcase, which he would load into his jeep and hide in a nightstand in his apartment. "If I didn't feel like going to the club," he explained, "I could stay home and knock out a bottle of cognac or champagne—and knock myself out."

The men also took over a nightclub. "It was the longest bar in the ETO," said Miller. One of the tankers, a Cherokee Indian named Hummingbird, often drank too much and became violent. One night, Miller watched as two British soldiers approached Hummingbird and told him that Great Britain had won the war.

"I heard two hits and saw the Brits sliding straight across the floor." Miller recalled. "MPs dragged the two out." It was not the only fight he witnessed. Men

heading home often got into fistfights over which army was better, Patton's Third Army or Hodges' First.

Miller was in Limburg listening to Armed Forces Radio when he heard the news that Japan had surrendered. "Everyone was beside themselves," he said. The war was over. Miller stayed in Germany.

After the outfit broke up in June 1946, Miller transferred to the 9th Infantry Division at Bad Tölz in Bavaria, near an airplane hangar where German prisoners were processed.

To prevent suicides, the Germans were brought in groups of 40 into a large room where they disrobed and were sent to another room and given new clothes. Americans then shook out the prisoners' clothing looking for weapons. "The Germans did not want to go home," said Miller. "Their families were dead and their towns bombed out."

Showing mercy on his former enemies, Miller sometimes gave his spare clothes to the hapless prisoners. His kind gesture had far-reaching effects. Decades later, his niece married an American soldier in Bad Aibling, Germany. While there, she asked an older German what he thought of Americans during the war. The man said he thought the world of an American soldier who gave him a shirt. When she asked the American's name, he told her, "Harry Miller." She later asked Miller about the incident, but he could not recall it, although the German had the correct dates and location.

When the 9th Infantry went home five months later, Miller transferred to the 2nd Constabulary Regiment, in Füssen, Germany, home of the famed Neuschwanstein Castle, which later served as the model for the Disneyland castle. Promoted to technician third grade (T/3), he worked in the message center.

When the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, Miller headed MacArthur's alert crew, which went to Korea in advance of the general whenever he visited the battlefront. For his new job, Miller took glider training with 11th Airborne Division, until gliders were declared obsolete. "It scared the crap out of us," he said. He described flying in a glider as "an instant cure for a lifetime of constipation."

Miller left Japan in April 1951, about the same time that President Harry S. Truman fired MacArthur, and transferred to the Army Security Agency near Munich, Germany, but hated his new position. "The officers were the worst people," he said. He volunteered for Korea but the Army refused because of his security clearance. He knew too much to risk capture.

Miller returned to the United States, where he joined the U.S. Air Force. "They gave me tech sergeant stripes and a blue uniform," he recalled, "and I did the same thing I had done in the Army." As a communications operations superintendent at Strategic Air Command in Omaha, Nebraska, Miller helped develop and distribute codes for B-52 bombers heading to Vietnam. He stayed in the Air Force until 1966 and retired as a senior master sergeant.

After serving his country for more than three decades in war and peace, Miller became a private investigator. Eight years later, he became the director of security and safety at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In 1969 Miller married a girl named Elva Mae "Billie" Hegsted, who had been a model and a stand-in for a movie actress. They adopted two boys, Harry Jr., born in 1954, and Joe, born in 1958. Billie constantly worried she had cancer, since it had occurred in her family. In 1975 she gave into her fears. Miller was at work when he got the same premonition he had had when his father died. He called home, but when Billie

THE 740TH CAPTURES KING TIGER TANK 332

During a tank night patrol in the Battle of the Bulge, tanker Sergeant Glenn D. George of the 740th Tank Battalion came upon a German Mark VI King Tiger tank. Assuming its crew was asleep, he ordered his gunner to fire a star shell over it. When the round burst, the German crew bolted from the tank. George opened fire with the turret-mounted .50-caliber machine gun, killing three Germans and wounding one. The other got away.

George inspected the Tiger, numbered 332. He found it in working condition and radioed Lt. Col. George Rubel, informing him that he was going to drive the tank to Berlin. Rubel refused, worried that George would be fired on by his fellow tankers, but George had other ideas.

"I'm staying with this thing as long as I can," he radioed Rubel. "Maybe I'll get in close with another Tiger and knock it out." George cruised around in his new tank but never found another Tiger. When 332 ran out of fuel, he and his crew climbed back into their own tank and he reported the Tiger's location to Rubel.

Since it was the only King Tiger captured intact, Rubel wanted to send it to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland for study. The next morning, soldiers from the 463rd Ordnance Evacuation Company hauled the tank to Spa, Belgium, for the first leg of its journey to Aberdeen. They painted "463 ORD EVAC" on its turret.

At Aberdeen, engineers studied the 332 then placed it outside, where it stood for 40 years. It was then sent to the Patton Museum of Cavalry and Armor at Fort Knox, Kentucky, where mannequins in German uniforms were placed inside and the left side of the turret and frame were cut away to display its interior. It was also painted in its correct colors. The Tiger went on display inside the museum with a plaque claiming the 463rd Ordnance Evacuation Company had captured it.

When veteran Harry Miller visited the museum in 1992, he was outraged by the misinformation on the plaque. He complained to the museum manager who claimed that veterans of the 463rd told him they had captured

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Hordes of German prisoners head west into captivity along the autobahn, while American tanks and infantry advance east. After the war, Miller literally gave the shirt off his back to a German POW, with surprising consequences.

did not answer, he immediately went home and found she had overdosed on sleeping pills. She never had cancer.

Miller was despondent and alone when a nurse at the hospital invited him to her husband's war reunion at nearby Los Alamos. He agreed, and she asked, "Is it okay if Helen goes with us?" Miller knew Helen Carrion, who looked like Rita Moreno and worked at the hospital. He agreed. The reunion included a large dance and Miller and Carrion danced every song together.

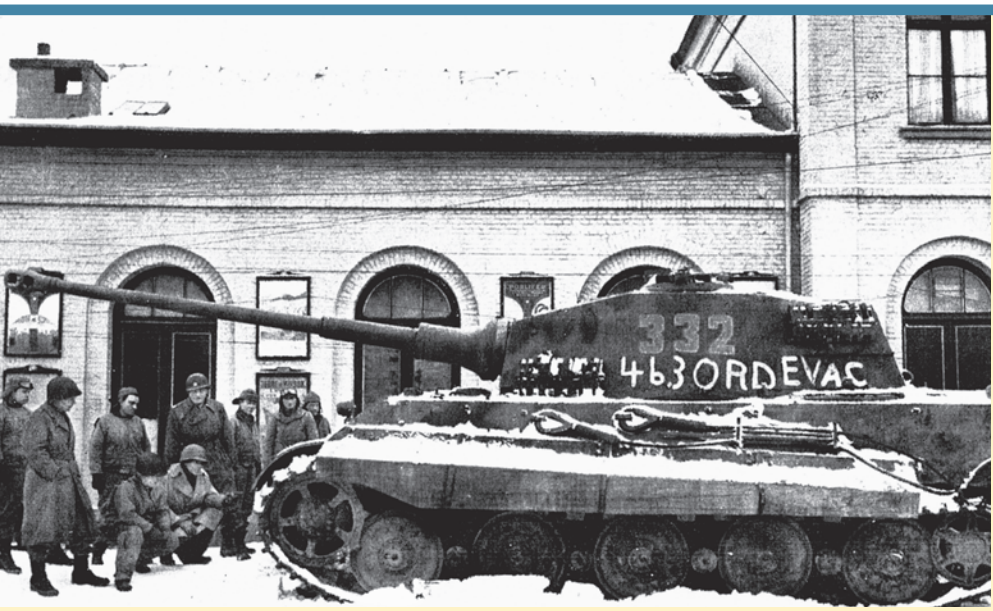
"I am telling you," he stressed, "she was a good dancer." Not wanting her to get away, Miller married her in 1975 and they stayed together until her death in 2012.

Miller always took pride in his World War II service and the men of the 740th. In early 1999, he was asked to design a memorial to the Daredevils for Aubin-Neufchateau. He and Helen designed a monument consisting of two Belgian blue stone columns connected with a slab of black granite. The names of the battalion members were etched into the columns.

A dedication to the people of Aubin-Neufchateau, written by Miller, was chiseled into the granite. "Those people really took to us and we stayed friends with them throughout the years," he explained. The monument was unveiled on April 24 of that year.

Today, at the age of 89, Miller lives at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, D.C., popularly known as the Old Soldier's Home. He proudly wears his blue World War II veterans baseball cap with the 740th patch and tank and jeep pins.

While he looks back fondly on his service, the horrors of war can always haunt him. Sometimes he wakes up with the smell of dead bodies in his nose. "I used to wonder, 'Where did I have my nose that I smelled that in bed?'" □



Harry Miller

The Tiger Royal 332, with the words "463 ORD EVA" painted on its turret, awaits pickup in Spa, Belgium. Lieutenant Colonel Rubel, squatting in a light coat, points out some of the tank's features.

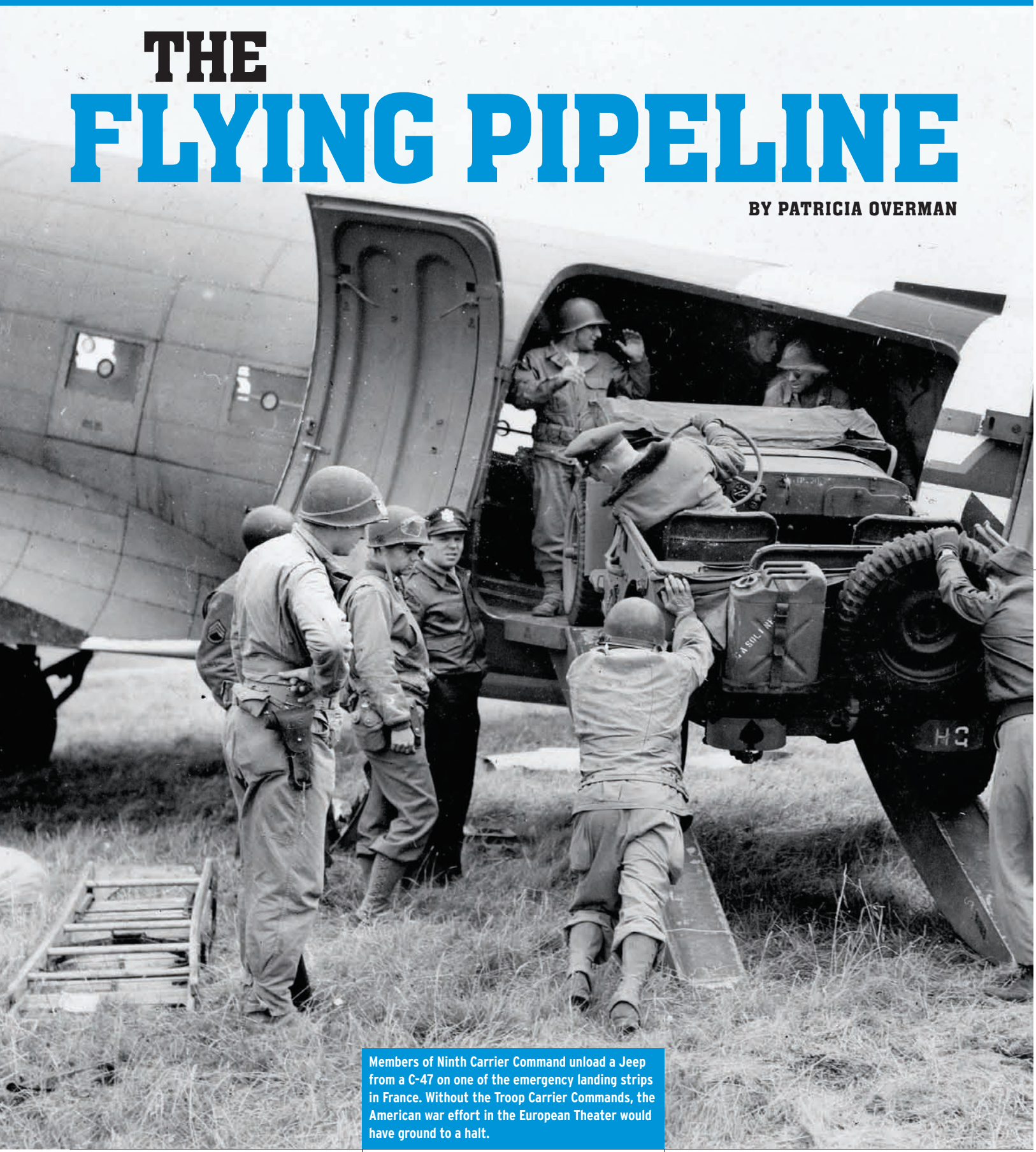
it. "I told him that ordnance troops never captured anything but a case of the clap in a rear brothel!" explained Miller.

The manager said if Miller could prove the tank had been captured by the 740th he would change the plaque. Miller shot back that he needed to read the battalion history book to see what really happened.

When he got home, Miller contacted George and told him about the 463rd getting credit for the Tiger. "No sir, by God," said George. "I got that son of a bitch!" Miller then recorded George's story and sent the tape to the manager. When Miller returned to Fort Knox, the plaque had been corrected. As of April 2017, the 332 Tiger tank was housed in a garage building at Fort Benning, Georgia, waiting for the Armor Museum there to be completed.

THE FLYING PIPELINE

BY PATRICIA OVERMAN



Members of Ninth Carrier Command unload a Jeep from a C-47 on one of the emergency landing strips in France. Without the Troop Carrier Commands, the American war effort in the European Theater would have ground to a halt.

The U.S. Army Air Forces' Troop Carrier Commands were the war's unsung heroes, doing everything from dropping paratroops, towing combat gliders, delivering vital supplies, and performing humanitarian missions.

National Archives

"Flying supply missions with the 435th Troop Carrier Group, or any tactical group of IX Troop Carrier Command, is a combination of taking a physical beating and sweating out land and aerial war hazards"

—Michael Seaman, Warweek Staff Writer, *Stars and Stripes*, April 29, 1945

By April 1945 the Allied Armies were racing east as German resistance crumbled. The U.S. Army Air Forces Troop Carrier Command (TCC), which had dropped paratroopers and towed gliders in all the airborne insertions in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) and which had, as recently as March 24, dropped and towed the entire 17th Airborne Division across the Rhine River, suddenly found its mission radically modified.

Until the port of Antwerp was opened in October 1944, the availability of supplies limited the ability of the various armies to advance and was responsible for some of the more famous conflicts between Allied generals as they competed for these critical resources. By April, however, several ports were in full swing. The problem now became the transportation of these supplies.

In early March it was recognized that Patton's Third Army supply lines would become greatly "extended and restricted" as it moved across the Rhine into Germany. The last major operation of World War II and the largest single airborne lift in the history of the war, Operation Varsity, occurred on March 24, 1945. It marked the end for the Third Reich.

From this point on the Allied army was a fast-moving force sweeping up the German Army faster than the ground supplies could keep up. By March 26, five armored and 15 infantry divisions had crossed the Rhine. The Allies soon realized just how effective their bombing campaign against the German transportation systems had been.

As predicted, no railroad bridges were in operation. The retreating Germans had destroyed most of the few remaining road bridges that crossed the Rhine and Moselle Rivers. The number of trucks available to the Americans, British, and Canadians was inadequate for the task and, even if they

BELOW: Refrigerated whole blood donated by fellow GIs is transported to frontline medical units. RIGHT: Men of the 82nd Airborne Division check each other's gear before loading onto a Carrier Group C-47 on June 5, 1944. OPPOSITE: *Bear Hug*, a Troop Carrier Command C-47, is loaded with rations, cartons of cigarettes, and candy to be donated to former Russian POWs waiting to return home.

National Archives

U.S. Air Force

had an unlimited number of vehicles, the minimal number of bridges that had been constructed or repaired were so crowded with tactical vehicles that their usual motor transport, the Redball Express, was unable to keep up with the demand.

Then, of course, there was the German Army, which had not yet given up the fight. So it fell to the IX TCC to deliver much of the most critically needed supplies. Between March 30 and May 9, 22 percent of all gasoline supplied to the Third Army was delivered by air lift.

In the weeks just before and after the final German defeat, the resupply situation was not relieved but, in fact, increased a hundred-fold. To meet this challenge, an almost inconceivable amount of material was rapidly moved to the front lines in what came to be called "The Flying Pipeline."

The beginning of every Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) report for April 1945 starts with similar words. "The month of April was the most active in the history of this troop carrier squadron."

These upbeat reports were written with pride, describing the delivery of medical supplies, litters, blood, wiring, ammunition, gasoline, food, and other supplies needed by a rapidly advancing Allied force. These were the IX TCC's most demanding days of the war as each squadron transported an unprecedented amount of supplies to the ground forces in a short amount of time, then returned with wounded troops, POWs, and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.

This was the first time in the war's history that regular resupply missions going to the front were classified as combat missions, and the time specified was March 30 through April 23, 1945. The Troop Carrier Groups (TCGs), which had been dropping paratroopers, towing gliders, and delivering supplies to combat areas were now working nonstop to supplant the ground supply line.

These crews went from flying two to three missions a week to flying two or three missions a day in tight formation through the small corridors that armored columns had created within the war zone. In addition to the dramatic increase in their workload, they faced many other challenges.

The first problem was the condition of the many liberated airfields throughout Germany. These airfields were called Advance Landing Grounds (ALGs), and most were, at least initially, captured German airfields. As soon as an ALG was "secured and repaired" by the aviation engineers attached to the corps, supplies were then called forward. These forward airfields were often only used for a couple of days. Then, as the ground forces progressed, the ALGs were moved forward, leapfrogging airfield to airfield.

According to squadron reports, "secured and repaired" was a rather optimistic description. The pilots were, in fact, landing their C-47s on bomb-rutted runways. As late as May, the 87th TCS (438th TCG) Operations Department reported, "Five tires were changed because of blowouts and six others because of bad cuts and tire bruises. These cuts and bruises were mostly caused by the condition of landing strips in Germany."

Keeping the planes flying was another problem. Ground crews were especially taxed with maintaining engines and repairing damaged planes returning from the combat zone. All mechanics were affected. The 88th TCS, 438th TCG, Maintenance Department reported for the month of April, "Due to constant flying, the radio mechanics had a difficult time keeping the aircraft radios in working order. It was necessary for them to return at nights and fix the planes as they landed."

In the war diary of the 85th TCS, 437th Group, the Engineering Department reported that all its maintenance was being done at night due to constant daytime flying: "Main-

tenance work at night, especially field maintenance, offers many problems and difficulties not encountered during the normal day, due mostly to the fact sufficient lighting equipment is difficult to obtain."

The report went on to state, "Airplanes of this unit have now been in active service as much as 16 months, during which time no task was considered too small or too great. This meant landing on the worst type of runways and hauling material of all descriptions. The airplanes have withstood this punishment well, but as is true in all equipment, constant inspection and repairs, including all echelons of repair, are needed. The strain is beginning to tell."

Due to the sheer number of daily missions being flown, luck was also against them. The more they flew, the greater the chance for accidents. The 50th TCS, 314th TCG lost five planes in one day in three separate incidents. By the end of the day the report read, "Two (2) a/c damaged, extent unknown …Three (3) a/c missing …"

By April 7 it was determined that the 50th Squadron had lost four planes and one badly damaged as well as a greater loss of 15 crew members who had died in the line of duty—all due to bad weather. The 47th TCS of the 313th TCG was also hit hard when it lost two planes in the month of April after having just lost four planes and having four others badly damaged with a loss of 11 crewmen on March 24 during Operation Varsity.

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On April 16, 1st Lt. Vincent K. Prince and his crew were returning from Grove, England, with engine trouble. While on a second landing attempt the plane crashed into a brick building outside ALG A-87, near Charleroi, France. According to reports, "Co-pilot Lt. Homer D. Anderson miraculously escaped death when he was hurled clear of the demolished plane, but the popular Lt. Prince, who had served as chairman of a committee which obtained girls for the gala officers' party the night before, and the enlisted crewmen were all killed instantly."

Again on April 27 one of five planes crashed near Hesdin, France, when the crew encountered bad weather, forcing them to fly on instruments. They crashed into a hillside a mile northwest of Hesdin, killing Lieutenant Edward Koenig and his entire crew. Fatigue was no doubt a contributing factor in many of these accidents.

Not only were the pilots flying constantly, they were getting a physical workout as well. More than one pilot and ground crew interviewed said they had never been in better physical shape than during April 1945. Once on the airfield, the entire crew helped move wiring, ammunition, medical supplies, and hundreds of five-gallon jerry cans filled with high-octane gasoline.

The pilots' idea of being in shape, however, referred to their muscles and not their overall health. They were eating poorly and lacked sleep. They grabbed a ration can whenever they could and slept on their planes when bad weather kept them from returning to their base.

The demanding pace also resulted in deadly mistakes in operational planning. Due to bad weather on April 9, a 441st TCG resupply mission to ALG R-1, Wenigenlupnitz, Germany, was cancelled until the following morning. The next morning the weather caused the cancellation of that morning's scheduled mission so the previ-

ous day's planes and the morning planes were both rescheduled for the afternoon.

Normally, mission aircraft would fly in a tight formation until about 40 to 50 miles from the field, at which time they would descend to 200 or 300 feet and form into a close single file to avoid the German radar. However, on this day, because there had not been an adjustment to the afternoon flight schedule, they arrived as a "big bunch of planes" at the crowded German airfield with no place to land.

To make matters worse, because there were so many planes in the air, their altitude was 2,000 to 3,000 feet. Of course the Germans noticed all these tantalizing targets loitering in the air. Captain Richard Mudrow, 441st TCG, would later write in his journal, "The Germans sent a fighter over who had a fine time shooting down planes. It shot down 6 or 7 before our fighters could get there. [Captain Merril] Meaker ... our flight leader ... was on the final approach when this guy shot him down. Of course the whole crew was killed on that one."

Another problem was the German Army, as these missions were being flown in the midst of battle. Planes were shot down and men unloading on the supposedly "secured" airfields were strafed, received sniper fire, or dodged mortar rounds. It was this combat environment that was the most distressing for these unarmed resupply personnel.

U.S. Air Force

At ALG R-5, Crailsheim, Germany, on April 9, a badly needed resupply mission ended in success even through sporadic mortar fire resulted in the loss of one plane. The 10th Armored Division had been cut off from its support element while spearheading a drive into Germany. Its regular supply convoy had been destroyed by the desperate enemy, and the only hope for the 10th was air resupply. The 10th called for ammunition and gasoline. The 441st TCG was assigned the mission.

During the aircrew's briefing, it was decided that the route would take them over Bad Mergentheim and they would approach Crailsheim from the north. There were 16 planes on this sortie. The first four planes were from the 301st TCS led by Captain Frederick J. Trenck, squadron operations officer, and Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter escorts rode high and alongside.

The flights crossed the enemy roadblock at Bartenstein, peeled into a single line close formation, and were on the ground at the north end of the field within seconds of each other. The first thing they encountered was enemy mortar and artillery fire. There was no place to take cover so they unloaded as the mortar rounds fell all around their planes.

Unknown to the crews on the ground, the P-47s were busy with their own problems. They were in a dogfight, shooting down 10 German fighters and losing one of their own. Just as they finished unloading, 1st Lt. John J. Keith was starting the engines of his plane, which was third in line, when he received a mortar hit that put a hole through the cabin. Another hit took off the tail, and the navigator, Lieutenant Earl H. Ritz, was hit with shrapnel in the face and legs.

According to the intelligence report, "The crews were not waiting to qualify for the 'Combat Infantryman's Badge,' and proceeded to get the hell off the field. The planes dodged shell holes as they picked up speed, then they were splattered with stones and dirt from bursts of gunfire, at which time the pilots decided not to avoid the mortar holes but to put the throttles forward and head across the field and take off from where they were."

By now Lieutenant Keith had gathered his crew, co-pilot Flight Officer William C. Minshall, Crew Chief Staff Sgt. Junior W. Day, Radio Operator Staff Sgt. Howard J. Neumann, and the wounded navigator, and they were off to the side of the runway thumbing a ride from one of the 99th Squadron planes moving down the runway. Captain Carl U. O'Neil stopped on takeoff, despite the incoming mortar rounds, to pick up Keith and his crew.

Everyone made it back to home base, and the squadron's latest replacement, Navigator Ritz, had qualified for a Purple Heart on his first combat mission. From a story in the

National Archives

ABOVE: Five gallon Jerry cans of gas or diesel were regular cargo on 442nd Troop Carrier Group aircraft. RIGHT: The pilot of a C-47 transport plane crash-landed safely after being shot down during resupply of 101st Airborne units near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

U.S. Air Force

A flight nurse cares for wounded soldiers aboard a C-47 Skytrain transport.

Stars and Stripes, published a month later, the airmen learned why the shelling was so sporadic. The German infantry had lost their air spotter when the P-47s made their presence known.

Major General Paul Williams, commander of IX TCC, conveyed a letter of commendation to the men of the 441st from Maj. Gen. Edward H. Brooks: "The supplies thus obtained by our armor contributed materially to their ability successfully to continue operations resulting in the elimination of many Germans and the capture of over 2,000. In addition, 46 of our walking wounded were evacuated.

"I consider the supply by the C-47s in this action to have been an outstanding event in the history of air-ground cooperation. With such support armor now can operate in an even more aggressive and daring role than heretofore. I salute the officers and men responsible for this splendid accomplishment."

In reading the *Stars and Stripes* article and the letter of commendation, one can clearly see the effective coordination of the various military units involved in one mission.

The reality that these were combat missions was further brought home as more resupply missions reported strafing by what was left of the Luftwaffe or being fired on by German ground forces hidden near the airfields. Interestingly, these reports of air attacks seemed to describe a pattern of only one strafing run and then the German planes would be gone.

Second Lieutenant Robert Taylor, 88th TCS, 438th TCG, was the flight leader on one such mission. He said, "As my planes flew in sight of the airfield and I was preparing to lead my Squadron to land, we encountered an Me-109 strafing the airfield. I yelled 'Scatter!' into my radio to the planes and they did just that, leaving the landing formation and flying away from the field. I was still in sight of the 109 and watched as he left after only one strafing."

Taylor wondered why the 109 didn't stay and annihilate them since the C-47s that were lined up on the airfield were unarmed. He later met some of these German pilots in a bar after the war and learned the answer: "The Luftwaffe's resources were so limited, they had only enough ammo and fuel for one run." Even though the Luftwaffe was severely restricted, the strafing still resulted in damage and casualties.

Probably the most ironic incident during these combat resupply days, at a time when the POWs were being liberated, was the downing of a C-47 resulting in the crew themselves becoming POWs for 10 days. This occurred on April 4, during a 435th TCG resupply mission to General Courtney Hodges' U.S. First Army. First Lt. Ervin E. Williams and his crew took off from ALG A-48, Bretigny, France, with 600 gallons of gasoline in five-gallon jerry cans headed to Germany. Poor visibility caused the crew to fly at an altitude of only 200 feet. About two miles past the Rhine River they encountered 20mm antiaircraft fire.

According to Williams, "One burst of flak hit the under-fuselage of the cabin, and immediately the cargo-space became a raging inferno."

Remember the 600 gallons of gasoline?

"Another burst caught us in both wings, severing our gas lines and killing our engines and now setting the entire front of the ship on fire. Luckily the four of us were in the forward part of the plane at the time of the first hit, so no one was scorched. Sgt. Wilson, our radio operator, held the cabin door closed to keep out the heat and flames, while the crew chief, T/Sgt. Winkler, removed the escape hatch above us to prepare for a quick exit on landing.

"I turned the ship into the wind, and headed for a small farm field. I had to keep my landing gear up for fear of tipping over and slid in on the ship's belly. Don't know how, but we made it. The crew quickly got out. I was the last one out and, as I left, the flames were in the cockpit and I could feel the fire on my back."

The crew made an attempt to hide in a rhubarb patch. After about 20 minutes the co-pilot, Flight Officer Clarence Collier, decided to make a run for a ravine. That was a mistake; the minute he started running he was dodging bullets and ended up in the arms of the Nazis.

The next thing Lieutenant Williams saw was a rifle barrel pointed down at him, and the entire crew was captured. They were subjected to mental torture by being lined up and given cigarettes to smoke while the German Officers dickered for their lives. In

the end they added them to 1,000 other Russian, French, English, and American POWs being marched 125 miles. As they marched they were strafed by their own P-47s again and again.

Ten days later, on April 14, they found themselves being liberated by the 78th "Lightning" Infantry Division, which stormed over a hillside while the hungry prisoners whooped with joy. Lieutenant Williams said, "Even cold K-rations tasted wonderful to us; we had been living on only black bread. However, the chicken dinner prepared for us on the following day is what made us realize that we were safe again."

As the demands on the C-47 pilots and crews reached the breaking point, another group of TC pilots found the demand for their services had come to a complete halt. A total of five combat glider missions had been flown in the ETO and, with the prospects for any further airborne operations nil, the glider pilots were determined not to be left out. They began volunteering to supplement the C-47 crews, first as auxiliary navigators (several glider pilots had completed navigator school in January and February) and as auxiliary co-pilots.

Flight Officer Claude "Chuck" Berry, a glider pilot with the 439th TCG, flew five combat missions in April as a co-pilot, logging a total of 32.5 hours. Berry would later go on to fly L-19 "Bird Dogs" in Korea and a HU-1 "Huey" helicopter in Vietnam, accumulating an Air Medal with 29 Oak Leaf Clusters over the course of the three wars.

Flight Officer Bob Swenson, who flew a glider into Germany and fought alongside the 17th Airborne in Operation Varsity while on detached service with the 435th TCG, was more proud of his contribution in delivering medical supplies and evacuating POWs as a navigator with the 434th TCG.

Although it was effective, air transportation was not exactly efficient. Three gallons of aviation gasoline were burned for every gallon delivered. However, since the deliveries were made to the forward area there was a considerable savings in time. Supply points were established at the airfields,

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: U.S. military personnel endure a long flight home aboard a Douglas C-47 in June 1945. BELOW: U.S. and British POWs stand in front of their C-47 near their prison camp, Stalag VII-A in Moosburg, Germany, prior to boarding for their return flight.

thereby alleviating the need for trucks to move gasoline to a depot for distribution. On occasion, the airfield was so close to the action that the gasoline was moved off the planes and transferred directly into armored vehicles, trucks, and jeeps.

The generals of the 3rd, 4th, 10th, and 12th Armored Divisions, as well as field commanders, testified to the 12th Army Group, which was evaluating the air supply and evacuation, that these emergency air supplies "spelled the difference between victory and stalemate. So fast were American tanks rolling through Germany that airlift became the most effective means of keeping them supplied. Without the C-47s pumping life-blood into the armored spearheads, the breakneck advance would never have been maintained."

According to the First Army's spokesman, the fuel they delivered at critical times made the difference between success and failure. General Omar Bradley pointed out two vital facts: (1) Air supply and evacuation is the logistical corollary to exploitation of a breakthrough. (2) Air lift assumed an importance far beyond the relatively small proportion

of tonnage moved because it delivered critical items at the critical time and place, and assured rapid evacuation of casualties.

The IX TCC delivered more supplies in April 1945 than it had since the beginning of the war. On one day in April the groups delivered more supplies than were delivered for the entire month of February. But as April waned, the loads began to change. While gasoline was still a major transport commodity, the amounts transported were diminishing. Although daily flight missions were still at a high level, the physical strain began transitioning into a mental strain as the crews became enmeshed in the most tragic story of the war, the discovery of the forced labor camps.

Their missions were now directed to ALGs coded R-16, R-19, R-7, R-66, R-73, R-48, and R-70 and loaded with thousands of litters, food, and medical supplies. Their return loads were British, French, Belgian, Russian, and Dutch prisoners of war, as well as slave laborers from the sub-camps within the concentration camps of Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Nordhausen, Flossenburg, Dachau, and others.

The crews could not believe what they were seeing when they landed at these camps. Every crewmember has had difficulty talking about their experience.

On April 21, the 438th TCG flew 18 planes to pick up 375 French prisoners of war from the labor camps of Nordhausen, where they had been forced to work in the underground factories building V-2 rockets. Colonel (then Major) Robert Gates, the commanding officer of the 88th TCS, remembered that day vividly 70 years later.

"I commanded the 88th Troop Carrier Squadron during the war, which was part of the 438th Troop Carrier Group that led the invasion into Normandy. During the 'Flying Pipeline,' our squadron carried 3,496 patients from France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany to Britain. We carried 10,313 POWs and enslaved civilians. We carried Displaced Persons (DP) from Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Nordhausen, and other camps.

"One of many major memories of the war is returning to Paris at Le Bourget airport with 18 airplanes of my squadron full of French civilians that had been shanghaied by the German bastards and made to work as slaves. I vividly remember one Frenchman who just that morning had the fingers on one hand smashed by a hammer-wielding Nazi guard!! General de Gaulle was there to meet us at Le Bourget Air Field with a military band playing the "Marseillaise."

"As the Frenchmen exited the plane, they kissed the ground and, although most were extremely feeble, they struggled to stand at attention as de Gaulle came by to greet each one of them. It was one helluva moving experience and not one of the crews had a dry eye."

There were many such stories in every group. Lieutenant Alan S. Boyd (who would be appointed by President Lyndon Johnson as the first U.S. Secretary of Transportation in 1967) remembered well what he experienced the first time his 436th Group picked up Russian repatriates:

"God they were scarecrows. I'll never forget they were just bags of bones. The first one came up to my plane, and as I was getting ready to help him into the plane, he fell to his knees and began kissing my shoes; it made me cry. I had no idea what to do. I was trying to get him to get up but he just kept kissing my shoes. I felt all kinds of emotions from humility, embarrassment, surprise, confusion, pride, bewilderment, anger; you can't imagine the sort of thing that humans do to each other. I cannot figure out how people can be so inhuman to other nationalities."

Flight Officer Bob Swenson said some of the repatriates they picked up from concentration camps did not survive the trip home and died on their plane. He also noted that after delivering the repatriates and returning to their bases the planes would have to be fumigated for lice.

Lieutenant George Collins of the 89th TCS, 438th TCG remembered clearly one flight in which they had Russians on board and there was a woman whose baby was crying. The altitude at which Collins was flying had severe turbulence, so he decided to leave the formation and increased his altitude to where the air was smoother. The baby stopped crying.

The crews who picked up the Russian POWs and repatriates were not allowed to fly them directly to Russia, but took them to Berlin where they would be trucked back to Russia. The crews' satisfaction in returning the Soviets was muted by the knowledge that these repatriates would not be treated well once they got home; the Soviet government held the view that their capture by the Germans tainted them as traitors.

To the men who flew these missions, it was the evacuation of the repatriates that was IX TCC's finest hour. Between April and June 1945, the pipeline became the lifeline for American, British, Russian, Greek, Polish, Australian, Belgian, Indian, Dutch, and Czech repatriates. A total of 273,843 repatriates were flown out of forced labor camps and returned to their homeland or a place of refuge.

Perhaps this operation's success is best summed up by Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower's remarks in a letter to General Paul L. Williams, dated June 15, 1945:

"The great job of flying done by your Command in moving repatriates out of Germany during April and May is one that has given me personal satisfaction of the highest order.

"While all Air Commands participated in this, some 70 percent of Allied repatriates flown from Germany were in aircraft of IX Troop Carrier Command, and your total lift in the two months passed the unbelievable figure of a quarter of a million passengers. To have done this at all is remarkable, but to have done it without a single casualty is perfect.

"Please convey to your Staff and to your crews, my sincere thanks and highest praise for this achievement. You have written a page in Air Force history and in allied cooperation that will live forever.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower." □

Angels In OLIVE DRAB

BY NATHAN N. PREFER

The U.S. Army Nurse Corps risked (and sometimes gave) their lives to care for the sick and wounded at home and close to the battlefield.

OF the many groups that fought in World War II and have been largely forgotten in the history of that great conflict, none are more neglected than the women who served and died doing their duty alongside the men of the United States Army.

Known as the United States Army Nurse Corps, they served from the first day of the war to the last, suffering deaths and wounds as they treated the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians who were wounded or sick.

Prior to the United States entering World War II there were only a few hundred nurses serving in the U.S. Army. Most of these served somewhere within the United States at Army hospitals on the larger Army bases. Nursing was, for these women, a chance at a career and an opportunity to escape the economic depression of the 1930s and early 1940s.

To accomplish their goal, they had to endure a belief current in America during that period—that nursing was not a suitable vocation for a woman of good character. It was considered "indecent" because these women treated men as well as women with the most intimate of diseases and illnesses. Yet many women felt that call to duty and risked social condemnation to become nurses.

For many women, even those with nursing degrees, jobs were not easy to find during the Depression. As a result, many saw advertisements and joined the Army Nurse Corps or Navy Nurse Corps. Such jobs promised a steady salary, a chance to serve their nation and, if a nurse were adventurous enough, a chance for foreign travel. At the time, overseas assignments were strictly on a voluntary basis, but many nurses volunteered simply for the opportunity to "see the world." Upon enlistment they were immediately assigned to a hospital and went to work.

In 1941, an Army nurse had no official military uniform. Off duty, she wore her own civilian clothes. On duty, she wore the standard nurse's uniform of the day adorned with her military rank and medical insignia. Most nurses were second lieutenants but, like most women in the work force at the time, they earned less than their male counterparts.

Women of World War II / National Archives

Second Lieutenant Frankie Lewey of Dalhart, Texas, helps medical personnel treat a badly wounded Japanese soldier. Lewey herself had been taken prisoner on Corregidor by the Japanese and held for nearly three years before being freed on February 3, 1945, by the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division liberating POW camps on Luzon, Philippines. Her devotion to duty was typical of the Army Nurse Corps.

This disparity was attributable to the fact that Army Nurses were not "real" second lieutenants, but "relative lieutenants," a term that had come into usage with the Army Reorganization Act of 1920, which was intended to protect the status of the World War I nurses. As a "relative" second lieutenant, a nurse in 1941 earned $70.00 per month with an additional $18.60 subsistence allowance. A male second lieutenant in the U.S. Army in 1941 earned $140.00 plus $37.20 subsistence allowance per month.

A World War II U.S. Army nurse had no formal military training. This was because she held no true military status and did not rate a salute from either enlisted men or other officers. Initially, nurses could not advance beyond the "relative" rank of major.

The majority of U.S. Army nurses serving overseas in December 1941 were located in the Philippines. About 100 of them served in the three main Army hospitals in and around the Philippine capital, Manila. By that December, while all dependents of American military personnel had been ordered to return to the United States as the threat of war with Japan loomed large, the Army continued to send its nurses to the Philippines. Indeed, the last two convoys suppling the American forces in the Philippines before Japan attacked both brought additional nurses. The last to arrive came just nine days before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Simultaneously with the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the Philippines, the main American stronghold in the Pacific. Across the international dateline it was Monday, December 8, 1941, when Japanese planes began to bomb American and Filipino installations on the main island of Luzon.

When the attacks began, the nurses were issued outdated World War I helmets, dog tags, and gas masks. Casualties were rushed to the hospitals, including the large Stotsenberg Army Hospital, where Army nurses, wearing either civilian dresses or white uniforms, treated 85 dead and 350 wounded men. Many nurses ran out onto Clark Airfield, still under air attack, to aid wounded men lying out in the open.

By Christmas Eve, 1941, General Douglas MacArthur's plan to defend the Philippines had failed to materialize, and he ordered a withdrawal onto the Bataan Peninsula. Along with the combat and support forces, the nurses also moved to Bataan where conditions quickly became appalling. Here, for the first time, they were told to prepare themselves to be taken prisoner.

After sailing across Manila Bay to Bataan, the nurses found that the "hospitals" were mostly tents set up in clearings in the jungle. By this time the nurses were wearing mechanics' coveralls, helmets, and carrying gas masks as standard equipment. Most of the nurses, having heard of the rape and murder of British nurses in Hong Kong, had secreted a vial of morphine to use as a last resort if capture by the enemy seemed imminent.

Between shifts, which often lasted 18 hours, the nurses sheltered in foxholes like any frontline infantrymen. Hundreds, soon thousands, of casualties needed their attention. Most lay on stretchers out in the open, there being no room for them under the few tents available. Nurses went among them constantly, treating their injuries or illnesses and making them as comfortable as possible under the extreme circumstances.

Alamy

National Archives

ABOVE: An Army nurse slithers under barbed wire during basic training for medical personnel heading for the European Theater. BELOW: Happy nurses, recently liberated from the San Tomas Internment Compound, smile and wave from an Army truck. They had been taken prisoner by the Japanese after the fail of Bataan and Corregidor.

National Archives

More than 59,000 nurses served in the Army Nurse Corps in World War II. Over 11,000 women also served in the Navy Nurse Corps.

By the end of the campaign, in April 1942, the medical staff was treating thousands of sick and wounded men while being bombed and strafed by the Japanese despite the clear hospital markings on their tents. The nurses even treated wounded Japanese soldiers who had been captured and brought to their hospitals.

So bad did the enemy air attacks become that orders were issued for the medical staff to strap patients to their stretchers and take them to the nearest foxhole when an attack took place.

Losses of doctors and nurses could not be replaced. Two nurses were wounded in these attacks and transferred to the fortified island of Corregidor in Manila Bay for treatment.

On April 8, 1942, all nurses were ordered transferred to Corregidor to avoid captivity when it became clear that the Bataan garrison was about to surrender, but that only postponed the inevitable. On May 6, 1942, Corregidor itself came under ground attack and General Jonathan Wainwright, the American commander in the Philippines, had no choice but to surrender.

Several small groups of nurses had been ordered evacuated by plane and submarine shortly before Corregidor fell, but 67 Army nurses went into captivity with the rest of the American and Filipino forces. They would spend the next three years in a prison camp doing what they could to aid the sick and wounded who shared the camp with them.

The heroic story of the U.S. Army nurses in the Philippines was relayed by newspapers, radio broadcasts, advertisements at home, and eventually a Hollywood movie. Thousands of young women with nursing degrees immediately enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps. Many of these volunteered once again for overseas duty, knowing the risks.

By the end of the war, some 59,000 Army nurses had served. Yet, there were never enough. As late as December 1944, the Army's Surgeon General raised the manpower ceiling for the Army Nurse Corps to 60,000, a goal that was not reached by war's end.

The 48th Army Surgical Hospital was one of the first of its kind to go overseas, sailing for Scotland during the summer of 1942. Here, for the first time, the nursing staff received some actual military training, which consisted of marches of five and 10 miles with field packs to toughen them up for expected hardships to come.

During this period the Army also addressed the issue of clothing for the nurses. Clearly the standard white nurses uniform with a lieutenant's bar on one collar and a medical caduceus with a superimposed "N" on the other would not do for combat conditions. To remedy the situation, the Army provided blue seersucker dresses for nurses in combat theaters but

National Archives

During the Operation Torch landings, November 1942, American personnel carrying heavy medical equipment come ashore at Arzew, Algeria, to help set up the 48th Army Surgical Hospital.

since these would not be adequate in situations of cold, rain, mud, and frigid conditions, long pants were the obvious answer.

But because the Army was sympathetic to the general consensus that women did not wear pants, there was considerable delay before these were officially provided. In the interim, the nurses simply adapted the men's GI field uniforms or coveralls, as had the nurses on Bataan. Since many of the nurses could sew, the men's uniforms were adapted to the nurse's size and shape. Shoes, however, remained a problem, since the Army's supply came only in men's sizes.

Having decided that the main effort of the Allied forces would be to defeat Germany first, the U.S. Army and Navy organized their first offensive against that enemy. This was to be an amphibious landing on the coast of North Africa by British and American forces known as Operation Torch.

The Allies' plan was to land and seize French North Africa as a base for future operations further east. Included within General George S. Patton's order of battle was the 48th Army Surgical Hospital with 57 Army nurses. It would be the one—and only—time that an Army hospital unit containing nurses was landed on the invasion beaches on D-day.

As it happened, the first American nurses in the European Theater to come under attack were fired upon not by the Germans or Italians, but by the Vichy French. Although it had been hoped that the French would welcome the arrival of the Allies, they opposed the landings with artillery, small-arms and mortar fire, as well as a sortie by ships of the French Navy.

Under this fire, the nurses of the `stood off to the side while the regiments of the 1st Infantry Division went over the side into landing craft for the invasion. Soon, it was their turn. Two nurses were to land together with two medical officers and 20 enlisted men in five landing craft.

Carrying 26-pound packs, helmets, and extra equipment including surgical instruments and bandages, the nurses anxiously climbed down the same nets as the combat infantrymen and into the landing craft. Within minutes they were on the beach. Wet and shivering in the cold November air, the nurses and medical staff soon had a temporary hospital set up in an abandoned home close to the beach. Under sniper fire, they ate their first meal in combat out of a can.

The following morning a soldier brought word that three nurses were urgently needed up front at a battalion aid station. So many casualties had been received there that the staff could not handle the flow and needed help. With two male officers and two enlisted men, three nurses—Lieutenants Ruth Haskell, Edna Atkins, and Marie Kelly—moved to the front. They came under sniper fire as they moved forward until they met a jeep sent to carry them the rest of the way. After a harrowing trip under fire, they reached the aid station on the outskirts of the town of Arzew. Bullets were flying overhead.

The aid station had been a hospital before the invasion. But after being the scene of combat, it was a mess of filth and odors and broken medical equipment. There the nurses found row after row of wounded American and French soldiers needing medical aid. The nurses immediately got to work preparing patients for treatment according to the severity of their wounds. Assisted by an enlisted man, each nurse was given a section of the aid station to work.

One soldier, suddenly realizing that he was being treated by a nurse, cried "Holy cow! An American woman! Where in the world did you come from?" Lieutenant Haskell replied, "Yes, sonny! An American woman, a nurse. And there are more than 50 of us over here to take care of you and your buddies." Then she rushed the seriously wounded soldier to surgery.

Surgical conditions were miserable. The building had been bombed and all the windows blown out. Lights kept flickering on and off, so most of the surgeries were performed by flashlights held by one nurse while another assisted the doctor. The surgeries went on for hours, and the nurses and aides had to rotate duties so as to not become so fatigued that they could not continue at any one assignment.

Meanwhile, other nurses roamed the halls treating as best they could those awaiting their turn to see a doctor. Hours passed, and rest was a rarity. Finally, after 14 hours, the rest of the 48th Surgical Hospital arrived and took over. Just as the nurses moved to another building to get some sleep, enemy planes came over and bombed the area. The nurses jumped into a nearby trench only to realize that it had been used as a latrine. That

was the 48th Surgical Hospital's introduction to combat.

The French soon surrendered, and most joined the Allied forces. The battlefields moved east and so did the U.S. Army nurses. Romance blossomed between some of the American soldiers and the nurses. Some marriages would result, both in North Africa and later battlefields. Initially, if a nurse married, she would be dishonorably discharged, the same if she became pregnant. However, this policy soon changed, and marriages were permitted although husband and wife were not allowed to serve together. Unmarried nurses who became pregnant were given dishonorable discharges, a punishment usually reserved for convicted criminals; married nurses were given honorable discharges. So sensitive was this subject that the Army did not use the word "pregnant" when issuing the discharge, using instead "cyesis."

During the German counterattack at Kasserine Pass in mid-February 1943, the American medical units were ordered to retreat to avoid being overtaken by the advancing enemy. The staff, including the nurses, had to hurriedly pack up the hospital and the patients and move 40 miles to the rear, where the 9th Evacuation Hospital took them in.

No sooner had they arrived than the entire group was ordered another 30 miles to the rear. Nurses and corpsmen worked 14-hour shifts to accommodate the new influx of wounded from the fierce battles around Faid Pass and Kasserine Pass, and so close did the enemy come that part of the 48th Surgical Hospital had to be evacuated in a rush, escorted by Sherman tanks.

The German counterattack at Kasserine was their last in North Africa. The Allies resumed their advance, and the supporting medical services moved with them. By this time the medical staff had so much experience that everyone worked without comment. Incoming patients were triaged, sent to either the temporary wards or directly to surgery. Enlisted male personnel transported the patients, worked the vehicles, prepared the food, and erected the tents as the medical units were constantly on the move.

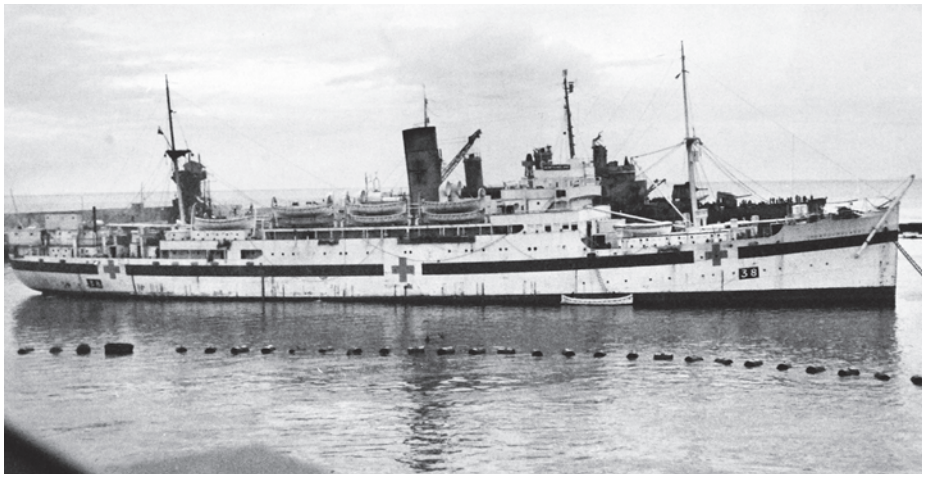
By the end of the North African campaign, the veteran medical units had a rhythm all their own. Studies of their success led to several changes, including name changes. The 48th Surgical Hospital, for example, became the 128th Evacuation Hospital. Personnel, including nurses, who showed potential and had experience were transferred to newly arriving units to share that experience.

The next campaign was Operation Husky—the invasion of Sicily. This time no nurses landed with the assault waves. The 95th Evacuation Hospital came ashore three days after the invasion and prepared to receive patients near the town of Gela.

Much like North Africa, German planes bombed and strafed nearby and the medical staff slept in foxholes. Soon battle casualties and sick soldiers were coming in on a regular basis.

The 95th was augmented by the 59th Evacuation Hospital and the 128th (formerly the 48th) Evacuation Hospital. Here the medical staffs encountered a new danger: malaria. Many doctors, nurses, and corpsmen came down with the disease and were forced to become patients themselves. As a result, the hospitals became critically shorthanded, and many staff voluntarily worked as best as they could despite their own illnesses.

Both: National Archives



ABOVE: Even well-marked hospital ships came under enemy fire. The British hospital ship HMHS *Newfoundland* was attacked and sunk by German antiship missiles on September 13, 1943, at Salerno, Italy. Six British nurses were killed. BELOW: Army personnel prepare to build a tent in the huge hospital area at Anzio. Within range of German artillery, the Anzio beachhead hospitals were continually being hit, causing loss of life to doctors, nurses, and patients.

Some of the staff, including the nurses, lost significant weight, suffered from dysentery and other ailments, but nevertheless carried on with the necessary work of treating the injured and ill.

Nurses were also witnesses to one of the more outrageous episodes of the war when General George S. Patton, commanding the Seventh U.S. Army, visited the 93rd Evacuation Hospital located near San Stefano and slapped an injured soldier being treated there. Lieutenant Vera Sheaffer from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania later wrote, "If that had been one of my patients General Patton slapped, I would have hit Patton myself. Believe me, most of the nurses felt the same way."

Next on the Allied agenda was Italy itself. While British and Canadian forces landed at the "heel" at Taranto, General Mark Clark's Fifth Army made an amphibious landing at the town of Salerno. The Germans expected a landing and made preparations to repel it.

Sailing behind the assault troops were the 16th and 95th Evacuation Hospitals and the 2nd Auxiliary Surgical Group. A week before the landings these three groups boarded the steamer SS *Duchess of Bedford* for transportation to the Salerno beachhead on August 31, 1943. They were in support of the VI Corps and the 36th (Texas) Infantry Division on the beachhead.

The British captain of the *Duchess of Bedford* objected to having women, whether they were Army nurses or not, aboard his ship. He spent two days trying to convince higher headquarters to transfer the hospitals to another ship, citing that, as a flagship for the invasion, his would be a prime target of enemy planes and shore batteries.

Eventually he won his argument, and the three medical units were transferred to the U.S. Army Hospital Ship *Acadia, a* fully equipped floating hospital. The nurses were delighted with their new accommodations. They sailed in the well-marked ship to Bizerte, where they had a brief layover as the Salerno beachhead was being established.

Once the Allies had secured the beachhead, the nurses of the 95th Evacuation

All: Women of World War II / National Archives

Left to Right: In July 1943, 2nd Lt. Ruth M. Gardiner died in an aircraft crash en route to evacuating patients in Alaska. She was the first USAAF flight nurse killed in a combat theater. Lieutenant Aleda E. Lutz flew 196 missions and evacuated more than 3,500 men. In November 1944, during an evacuation flight, her C-47 crashed, killing all aboard. She posthumously received the Distinguished Flying Cross. U.S. Army Nurse Captain Della H. Raney was the first African American nurse of the U.S. Army during World War II.

Hospital were ordered to board the HMHS *Newfoundland,* a British hospital ship, for transportation to Salerno where the rest of the hospital had already landed. The nurses, now properly attired in herringbone twill coveralls, helmets, and full field packs, boarded the ship at Tunis.

Clearly marked as a hospital ship, the *Newfoundland* sailed for Salerno while the American nurses became acquainted with the 16 British nurses aboard the ship. The voyage was uneventful, and the two groups became friends as they sailed together.

On Sunday, September 12, 1943, the ship arrived off Paestum in the Gulf of Salerno. It joined with two other British hospital ships, the HMHC *St. David* and the HMHC *St. Andrew,* preparing to receive casualties from the beachhead. From the top deck of the ship, the nurses watched as German shore batteries fired at the Allied ships around them and German planes circled the beachhead. Occasionally shells flew past the *Newfoundland*.

Then a German plane released a bomb that fell within yards of the hospital ship. One nurse remembered, "We looked up and saw a German plane heading for Paestum. The damned fool had dropped a bomb and nearly hit us by mistake. We all had a lot to say about what poor shots the Germans were." They would soon have cause to revise their opinion.

Higher authority decided that the situation was not yet right to land the nurses, and so the three hospital ships were ordered out to sea for the night. During the night, the three ships had all lights on with clearly defined Red Cross markings in accordance with the Geneva and Hague Conventions. There were no other Allied ships within 20 miles of them. The nurses expected to be landed the following day. That night they celebrated the birthday of one of their own. After the festivities the nurses and crew went to bed, many choosing to sleep on deck to catch the sea breeze.

At 5 AM some of the nurses woke up to a strange sound. They soon realized that a bomb had exploded nearby. Fifteen minutes later another explosion was heard, this one rocking the *Newfoundland*. The hospital ship had been bombed. Many among the crew and medical staff were killed or injured. At first, most could not believe that they were being deliberately targeted. After all, the ship was clearly a hospital ship and as such considered a noncombatant, not subject to attack.

Nevertheless, water was soon flooding the nurses' quarters below decks, and crew and other personnel were racing around trying to save the ship. Doors were dogged shut, trapping people below decks. Cries came telling of fire below decks. Black smoke began to fill the passageways.

When the nurses of the 16th Evacuation Hospital, also on board, reached their lifeboat stations, they found that the lifeboats had already been lowered away. They crossed over to the other side of the ship hoping to find other boats.

Seeing the situation, the *St. Andrew* sent over its own boats to assist. Nurses of the 95th Evacuation Hospital managed to lower some boats and make their way to the other ships. One of the British nurses was trapped in a burning cabin; she was one of six who died in the tragedy.

The American nurses were fortunate in that none were killed. Several were injured with broken bones, wounded by bomb fragments, smoke inhalation, and other injuries, and were taken back to Bizerte by the *St. Andrew.*

"I'll never forget our first trip to the hospital mess hall," remembered one survivor. "We looked like drowned rats! We were dressed in whatever clothes we could borrow or were fortunate enough to save from the *Newfoundland*. We looked awful! But not one person asked us a thing about the sinking."

The wounded and injured were treated at the 74th Evacuation Hospital in Mateur, Tunisia. The nurses of the 95th were replaced by those of the 93rd Evacuation Hospital at Salerno.

U.S. Army nurses served throughout the Italian campaign. In addition to the danger from accidental bombings, shelling, and snipers, the weather also produced hardships. The 16th Evacuation Hospital was enjoying a rare quiet day near Paestum on September 28, 1943, when suddenly gale force winds struck the area. Within minutes the tents were down, patients exposed to high winds and rain, and freezing hailstones began to fall.

Alamy

An LSI (Landing Ship, Infantry) discharges a group of nurses onto a beach at Normandy, June 12, 1944, six days after the Operation Overlord invasion.

One nurse was in the operating room with a patient undergoing an appendectomy when the windstorm hit. The doctor had already made his first incision when the tent began to vibrate and pull at the tent pegs holding it down. The surgeon made the decision to immediately transfer the patient to the nearby 95th Evacuation Hospital to complete the surgery. The nurses and corpsmen covered the patient in sterile sheets and rushed him to a waiting ambulance. Within moments the 16th Evacuation Hospital was out of business. Nurses from the 8th Evacuation Hospital took over while those of the 16th restored their own facilities.

The war continued in Italy for two more years, with American nurses serving throughout. At Anzio on January 23, 1944, another hospital ship was sunk with American nurses aboard. The HCMC *St. David,* with the 2nd Auxiliary Surgical Group Team Number 4 aboard, had already been bombed at Anzio, but the Germans had narrowly missed.

Throughout that attack the American surgical team had continued operating on wounded men in the ship's operating room. As usual, the *St. David* sailed out to sea that evening, fully lighted and clearly marked. The American surgical team had the night off and were awakened for their next shift at midnight. The rough waters caused seasickness, but the team operated without a break.

At noon, as the ship moved closer to shore, the rough seas prevented any wounded from being transferred to it. Again, that evening the ship sailed out to sea, and with no new patients the crew and medical personnel looked forward to an easy night. At 8 PM a loud explosion announced that a German plane had bombed the ship. The American nurses, some of whom had survived the *Newfoundland* sinking, had kept their survival equipment handy. Grabbing this gear, they moved up to the top deck and eventually abandoned ship. One of the American doctors was killed in the sinking. The survivors floated for over two hours in frigid waters before another hospital ship

came upon them.

Ashore at Anzio three American nurses were looking to report to the 95th Evacuation Hospital in the beachhead after being dropped off by a rattled truck driver. As they walked, they saw British and American troops crawling forward. Lieutenant Hazel Glidewell called out to the soldiers, inquiring how to get to the 95th Evacuation Hospital. A sergeant looked at them in disbelief. "What in hell are you women doing here? We're the front line, and you're in front of us. That puts you in no-man's-land." The nurses were quickly hustled safely to the hospital in the rear.

Three medical units set up at Anzio. The 56th, 93rd, and 95th Evacuation Hospitals soon decided to set up together to make it easier to handle overflows of wounded, which often occurred. The site was three miles east of Nettuno on a flat stretch of beach. The hospital was completely in the open and well marked. So crowded was the beachhead that there was no other suitable area available.

And no place on the beachhead was out of range of the heavy German artillery. As a result, the hospitals would spend the next three months under intermittent bombing and shelling. Many medical personnel, including nurses, were killed or wounded during these months. Lieutenant and Chief Nurse Blanche Sigman and assistant Chief Nurse Lieutenant Carrie T. Sheetz were killed in these bombings. Lieutenant Marjorie G. Morrow was mortally wounded. Ironically, all three had survived the sinking of the *Newfoundland*. Nor were the Germans finished with the American nurses.

Because the 95th Evacuation Hospital was hors de combat, the 33rd Field Hospital moved up to replace them. On the very day it arrived and set up, German artillery fire hit the area and killed Chief Nurse 1st Lt. Gertrude Spelhaug and 2nd Lt. LaVerne Farquar. Urged to seek cover in foxholes, the nurses replied, "There is not a single one of us who will let this shelling of hospitals chase us off the beach. We are here to stay."

The medical facilities at Anzio continued to come under both deliberate and accidental enemy attack. On February 10, 1944, shells fell into the crowded tents of the 33rd Field Hospital, killing one nurse and wounding several other personnel.

To lessen somewhat the likelihood of hospital patients and caregivers being killed or wounded by flying shrapnel, shallow rectangular pits were dug as far down as the high water table would allow. The tents were erected in these pits and walls of sandbags were used to build revetments and blast shields around the tents. This helped reduce casualties within the hospital areas, except for direct hits and antipersonnel butterfly bombs bursting above them.

The nurses stayed at their stations, and three of them—1st Lt. Mary L. Robert and 2nd Lts. Elaine A. Roe and Rita V. Rourke—were awarded Silver Stars.

Dozens of medical evacuation hospitals served in France and Germany as well. One such unit, the 44th Evacuation Hospital, had as its head nurse 1st Lt. Martha Nash. A veteran of the North African campaign, and with a sister who was listed as missing in action while an Army nurse in the Philippines, Lieutenant Nash was determined that her nurses would be as prepared as possible for the coming campaigns. She obtained proper uniforms for them while in England and insisted that they take classes in setting up tents, aircraft identification, map reading, and caring for wounded while under air or artillery attacks. The 44th Evacuation Hospital landed on Omaha Beach on D+13 and went right to work.

Women of World War II / National Archives

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ABOVE: An exhausted nurse at the 44th Evac Hospital in Normandy, France, 1944. It was not unusual for nurses and other medical personnel to work 18-hour shifts. LEFT: 2nd Lt. Margaret Stanfill prepares surgical dressings with the 128th Evacuation Hospital, Saint Laurent-sur-Mer, near Omaha Beach, June 15, 1944.

National Archives

Women of World War II / National Archives

LEFT: An Army nurse, far right, attends Catholic Mass in a church in Germany with GIs from the 4th Infantry Division. RIGHT: Army flight nurse Lieutenant Suella Bernard tends to patients in one of two CG-4A gliders waiting for a C-47 transport to tow them to a military hospital in France. Bernard became the only nurse known to have participated in a glider combat mission during World War II.

During the invasion of southern France in August 1944, Captain Evelyn E. Swanson, the chief nurse of the 95th Evacuation Hospital, was the first Army nurse to land. She had replaced Lieutenant Blanche Sigman, who had been killed at Anzio. Like the men they supported, the U.S. Army Nurse Corps absorbed its casualties and continued on.

The 11th Field Hospital followed close behind the 95th. The 11th was divided into three units, or platoons. Two were 120-bed hospitals and one was a 160-bed hospital. Each of these platoons was highly mobile because of the smaller size and were designed to leapfrog the others as the front moved forward. Each included six nurses whose main duties were post-operative care.

Each member of the American medical corps, as well as the frontline soldiers, were required to wear on their sleeves an American flag to prevent them being taken for Germans by the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), whose guerrilla groups were prone to shoot anyone not instantly recognized as friendly.

As did their buddies in Italy, the U.S. Army nurses in Western Europe fought their way across that continent, one campaign after another. Like their predecessors in North Africa, when the Germans launched their massive winter offensive, the Battle of the Bulge, U.S. Army nurses found themselves retreating with hundreds of wounded patients to care for while under enemy fire. The 12th Evacuation Hospital moved thousands of patients by railroad and air.

The 47th Field Hospital had an even closer call. Assured by the 2nd Infantry Division that strange lights and noises near them were nothing to worry about, they remained near Butgenbach until their commander noticed streams of American vehicles moving to the rear. Now suspicious, he ordered his unit to the rear, passing through Malmédy shortly before the infamous massacre of American soldiers took place there. One group of nurses was twice strafed by enemy aircraft during the retreat.

Another platoon of nurses from the 47th Field Hospital was captured momentarily. Stationed at Waimes, they hitchhiked with the 180th Medical Battalion during the withdrawal until two armed Germans dressed in American uniforms captured the group. While being held, the nurses continued to care for the 36 wounded men. Eventually the group was recovered by other American combat units.

Nearby, the 103rd Evacuation Hospital moved up as close as possible to be available when American forces relieved surrounded Bastogne. The hospital had to double its 400-bed capacity to accommodate the overflow.

One nurse caught up in the battle remembered, "The roads were cut off ahead, and our hospital acted as a battalion aid station for some 6,000 patients. We treated and evacuated as quickly as possible until we got them all out. Then we got ourselves and [the] equipment out. As transportation was at a premium, we left our bedrolls, clothing, and even our Christmas packages with orders that they be burned if the Germans reached the hospital."

By far the worst duty the U.S. Army nurse in Europe had to endure, once Germany had been overrun, was to try and save as many lives as possible from the Nazi concentration camps. From treating American boys wounded or sick or frostbitten, they now turned to saving inmates who were no more than skin and bones, suffering from typhus, dysentery, and a host of other diseases. Starvation was common to all.

Some, who had been in camps that the Germans tried to destroy lest the Allies find evidence of atrocities, suffered from burns, stab wounds, and gunshot wounds. Lieutenant Helen Richert recalled, "Bodies were still burning. I felt a dark cloud around me for a long time after that." Lieutenant Francis A. "Frenchie" Miernicke said, "We had no idea what we would see there before we arrived, no warning."

The end of the war in Europe, V-E Day, did not end the work of the Army Nurse Corps. There were still many thousands of people needing medical care. The 166th General Hospital was converted into a hospital to care for prisoners of war.

Lieutenant Kay Yarabinec remembered, "The reason was that most Germans ran away from the approaching Russian lines into American lines to surrender. We had to teach them how to care for their own, because medicine had fallen far behind that

of other Western countries. This was due to the fact that their best physicians and scientists had either fled from Germany or been killed in concentration camps."

Although V-E Day ended the war in Europe, the war against Japan was still raging. The Army Nurse Corps served throughout the Pacific campaigns, following General Douglas MacArthur's difficult struggle up the coast of New Guinea in the South Pacific and across the Central Pacific Theater of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. The farthest battlefields in which the nurses served were in the China-Burma-India Theater under General Joseph W. Stilwell. Ninety Army nurses of the 159th Station Hospital arrived in India in mid-1942. This totally new environment and culture came as a bit of a shock, but as always the American nurses quickly adapted. Breakfast consisted only of coffee and bread. Water was strictly rationed. Servants, however, were plentiful.

The 159th Station Hospital, later expanded into the 181st General Hospital, soon found itself treating British, Chinese, and native troops. Sleeping under mosquito nets and living in native huts, or bashas, the personnel fought off the ants, sand, mice, rats, flying roaches, and snakes, performing their duties without pause.

The vast distances in Burma, China, India, and the Pacific gave Army nurses another dangerous duty. To get the most serious cases to more sophisticated treatment facilities as quickly as possible, the Army Medical Corps had established the Medical Air Evacuation Squadrons (MAES), conducted by the Army Air Forces.

Seriously ill and wounded patients were flown out of the combat zone as soon as possible in Douglas C-47 Skytrain aircraft staffed with medical corpsmen and specially trained flight nurses. These women attended a special training course at Bowman Field near Louisville, Kentucky, and were then sent to the forward areas. Each plane held 18 litters, nine per side. There were no doctors on these flights, leaving the full responsibility for medical treatment and decisions to the flight nurse.

Women of World War II / National Archives

Because the U.S. military was segregated during the war, sick and wounded black patients were tended to by black medical personnel. Here, African American nurses in a surgical ward at the 268th Station Hospital, Base A, Milne Bay, New Guinea, look after a patient.

These nurses flew all over the Pacific and the CBI Theaters performing their jobs. One of them, 1st Lt. Anne M. Baroniak, received the Distinguished Flying Cross for a record of over 300 flights with the MAES, and many other nurses were awarded the Air Medal.

Another flight nurse, 2nd Lt. Jeanette C. "Tex" Gleason, had the rather unique distinction of being the first flight nurse to bail out of an aircraft in China. She landed 50 miles from Kweilin with only minor bruises but wandered in the mountains for four days before friendly locals took her in and guided her to safety.

The segregated U.S. Army of World War II also segregated its medical treatment facilities. As a result, the Army Nurse Corps accepted African American nurses into segregated units and deployed them overseas and at home. Up until the war, the Army had refused to accept African American nurses. But the outbreak of war brought pressure from various groups to allow them to serve, and soon African American medical units, including African American nurses, were serving at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Camp Livingston, Louisiana.

Many would later serve overseas in North Africa, Italy, Europe, and the Pacific, usually where African American combat or service units were stationed. They often were assigned to treating enemy prisoners of war. About 500 African American nurses served in the Army during World War II.

Another overlooked group was the male nurse, much more prevalent at the time than later. Male nurses were upset that, when drafted, barely 40 percent of them were assigned to medical units, thereby wasting their civilian skills. They were not allowed to join the Army Nurse Corps and thereby gain commissioned rank.

H. Richard Musser, R.N., wrote, "Men nurses throughout the country feel that they are being [sic] a great injustice in that they are not rated as women nurses are." But nothing was done about this inequity, and male nurses continued to serve as enlisted personnel and were often assigned menial duties far below their professional skill level.

In the Pacific, the war went on. The 38th Field Hospital moved to Kwajalein a few

Both: Women of World War II / National Archives

months after the Marines and Army troops had seized the atoll. There, while treating natives who had lived through the invasion, they encountered an unusual problem. Lieutenant Hannah M. Matthews reported, "When the natives were brought into our hospital, they refused to stay in our beds, but slept on the floor under the beds."

To the south, at Hollandia, New Guinea, Lieutenant Evelyn Langmuir was surprised to find comfortable quarters in the jungle, complete with a post exchange and Coke machine.

On Saipan, the 369th Station Hospital did not have it quite so luxurious. Water was in short supply. Rainwater was used for bathing. Only a few patients each day could be bathed, while others had only their faces and hands washed. Civilians who had suffered under the occupying Japanese,were often the worst cases. Aided by the 148th Station Hospital, the nurses treated more than 20,000 cases of dengue fever.

Danger existed in holdout Japanese soldiers who came out of the jungle at night to steal food and supplies and take the occasional shot at any American uniform they saw.

Saipan also received thousands of casualties from the Battle of Iwo Jima. Teams were organized to administer plasma and whole blood to the many shock cases from that battle. The 369th Station Hospital's 83 nurses found themselves caring for 1,342 patients.

As if that was not overwhelming enough, an epidemic of food poisoning knocked out so many nurses and other medical staff that Military Police had to be called in and instructed on how to care for the wounded while the medical staff recovered. Other hospitals on Guam and Tinian were also used to handle the overflow of wounded.

Even the Chief Nurse of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps in the South Pacific, Lt. Col. Nola G. Forrest, served in the combat zone, arriving on the Philippine island of Leyte with the forward groups of nurses from the 1st and 2nd Field Hospitals.

Their arrival was greeted by a typhoon that shook their transport from side to side and a couple of Japanese aircraft that attempted to bomb and strafe their ship.

Both groups of nurses set up temporary quarters at the 36th Field Hospital and soon were dealing with more than 600 patients. Later, a few nurses actually treated the Bataan nurses who had finally been rescued after three years of captivity on Luzon.

U.S. Army nurses served from the first day of the war to the last. Some of their last casualties were due to another attack on a hospital ship. The USHS *Comfort* was lying off Okinawa on April 28, 1945, preparing to sail to Saipan with a load of casualties, when a Japanese plane made its appearance.

The kamikaze dived on the well-lighted target and crashed into the superstructure, the force of impact hurling the plane's motor through the deck into the surgery area. Oxygen tanks immediately began exploding. First Lieutenant Gladys C. Trostrail of the Army Nurse Corps was tossed across the room, through the bulkhead, and found herself regaining consciousness while trying to avoid drowning from water pouring down from broken pipes. An enlisted man pulled her to safety.

In the next ward, 2nd Lt. Valerie A. Goodman was preparing penicillin injections with another nurse when she suddenly found herself trapped beneath a metal cabinet, blown over by the force of the explosions; the nurse next to her was killed.

In all, one Navy and four Army medical officers, six Army nurses, one Navy and eight Army enlisted men, and seven patients were killed by the kamikaze. Another 10 patients, seven sailors, and 31 soldiers, including four nurses, were wounded.

Nor did it end there. Ashore on Okinawa 10 field hospitals were caring for the wounded and sick soldiers, sailors, and Marines. On May 3, 1945, the 68th Field Hospital was hit by "friendly" naval artillery that wounded several patients and staff.

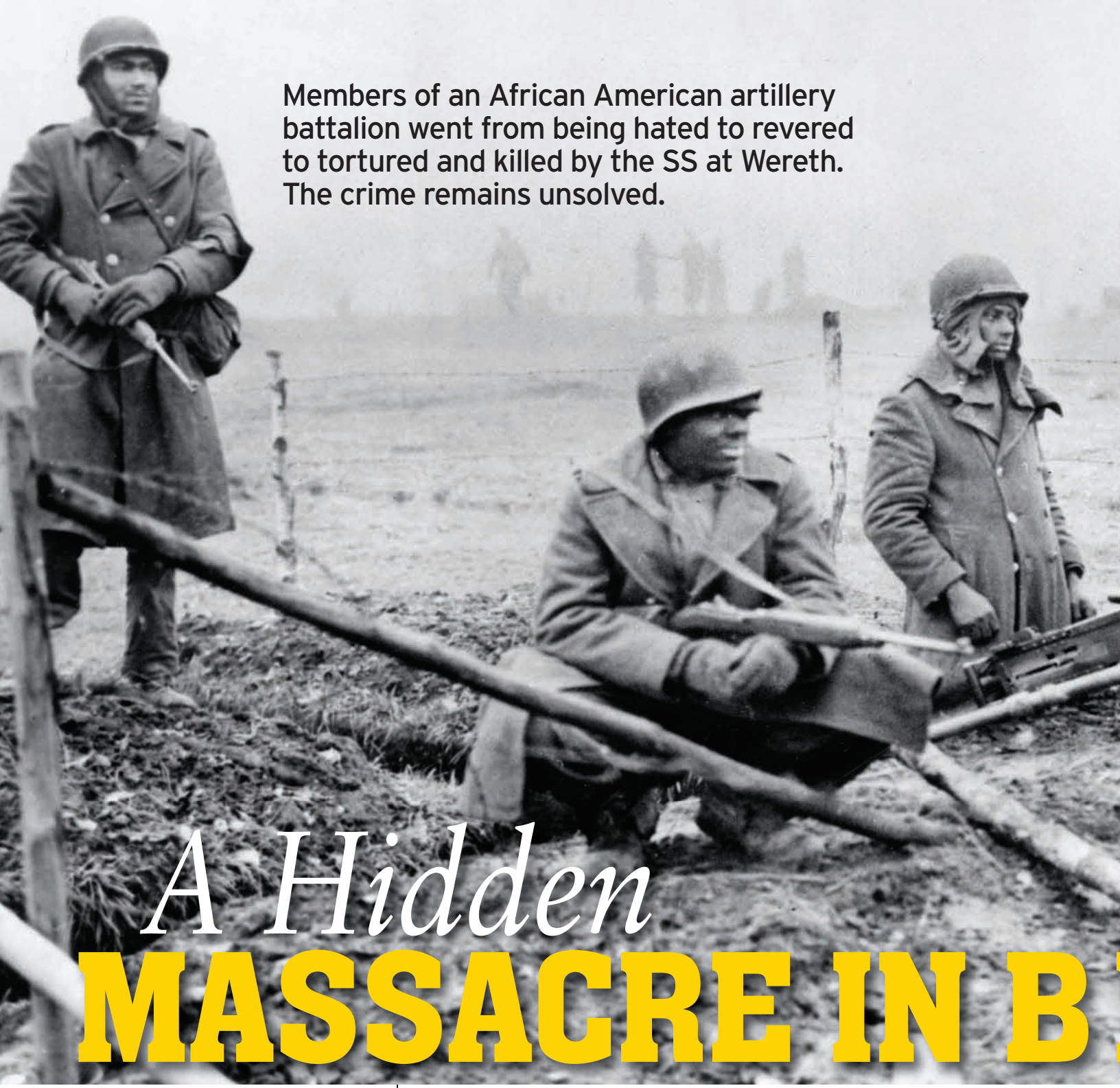
By the end of the war, 201 Army nurses had died while on duty, 16 of them from enemy action; dozens of others had been wounded. Some 1,600 earned decorations for meritorious service.

By September 30, 1946, only 8,500 Army nurses remained on duty, the others having decided to return to civilian life. Many married and raised families. Nearly all remained in the nursing profession. Their service had convinced the U.S. Army that it needed a permanent Nurse Corps, and in 1947, Congress created the permanent Nurse Corps in the Medical Department of the Regular Army.

ABOVE: Two American nurses carry heavy combat packs on an eight-mile hike through the jungle of the India-Burma border area as part of their training before taking up frontline war assignments. BELOW: 2nd. Lt. Susie E. Sumner, one of the first nurses on Okinawa, with wounded Marine.

They also granted their nurses permanent commissioned officer status. On June 19, 1947, Colonel Florence Blanchfield was given Army Serial Number N-1 and commissioned as a lieutenant colonel, a permanent commission in the U.S. Army.

The U.S. Army nurse was here to stay. □



Members of an African American artillery battalion went from being hated to revered to tortured and killed by the SS at Wereth. The crime remains unsolved.

A Hidden
MASSACRE IN B

In the winter of 1944-1945, within Belgium's Ardennes Forest, better known as the launching pad of the Battle of the Bulge, two war crimes were committed. The better known one—the "Malmedy Massacre"—resulted in the deaths of at least 85 defenseless GIs who surrendered. They were herded into a snow-covered field near Baugnez and machine gunned to death. Then the perpetrators walked among survivors, calmly shooting them again at point-blank range. This atrocity made worldwide headlines.

One month later, a second, lesser known mass execution occurred. This one took place at Wereth, involved 11 GIs from the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion, and led to a two-year U. S. Army investigation, from February 1945-February 1947. The Army's conclusion: Shut the case down, close it up, and keep it, literally, top secret for decades.

Why such a discrepancy in investigating two major war crimes? The first, the Malmedy Massacre, involved all white GIs. The second, known as the Wereth 11 Massacre, involved 11 black GIs. Would the words "white" and "black" have any meaning here?

BY STEPHEN D. LUTZ

ELGIUM

Bundled up against the cold, soldiers of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion stand guard by their .50-caliber machine gun in a Belgian field. The Germans would soon attack through the Ardennes Forest to launch the Battle of the Bulge and devastate the 333rd.

Or were some other factors involved?

The 333rd Field Artillery Battalion got its start on paper on August 5, 1942. A month later it was established at Camp Gruber in Muskogee, Oklahoma. The Army determined the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion would be equipped with M-114 155mm "Long Tom" howitzers and be manned by "colored" troops, according to the Army's classification at the time.

Camp Gruber reflected America's racial tensions and attitudes common to that era. The camp was 18 miles outside Muskogee and 61 miles southeast of Tulsa. As the future members of the 333rd filtered into camp they were well aware of "Jim Crow" laws that dictated every facet of African American life, especially in the deep Southern states.

With Oklahoma being more of a border state, the black soldiers were hopeful that they would not be subject to the Jim Crow traditions. Culturally and heritage-wise, the soldiers were two generations removed from slavery. But perhaps they were unaware of an event that had occurred 21 years earlier in Tulsa, in a neighborhood known as Greenwood—an economically thriving, predominantly African American district of private, commercial, and professional businesses.

On May 31, 1921, under exaggerated, grossly out of control half-truths, an African American man was arrested. The purported charge was that he had offended or molested a white woman. Within 24 hours, a gang of white Tulsa residents burned nearly 40 blocks of the Greenwood neighborhood and killed 300 of that neighborhood's citizens.

Tulsa, along with the help of the State of Oklahoma, acted quickly to minimize and restrict news of the horrific incident, so it did not get much notice in the national press. Twenty-one years following that murderous rampage, many of those arriving at Camp Gruber had no idea the event had occurred.

Two infantry divisions—the 42nd "Rainbow" and the 88th "Blue Devils"—were also activated at Camp Gruber, as it could house 35,000 military residents. When the raw recruits who would form the basis of the 333rd began arriving, they found three swimming pools, a lake for fishing, 10 baseball diamonds, and facilities for basketball, boxing, volleyball, weightlifting, and football. They also found the sentiments of a racially divided region; most of the facilities were segregated. Still, training had to proceed.

This story focuses on 11 trainees in particular. Tech. Sgt. William Pritchett was

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Members of the 349th Field Artillery Battalion pose for a photo during pre-war training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The U.S. Army was dubious about the fighting qualities of "colored" units and many African American soldiers never expected to see combat.

from Wilcox County, Alabama. He was born May 5, 1922. He may never have married but was known to have had a daughter. Corporal Mager Bradley, an enlistee, was born April 21, 1917, in Bolivar County, Mississippi. On December 2, 1943, he married 20-year-old Eva Marie James in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Jimmie Lee Leatherwood was born March 15, 1922, in Tupelo, Mississippi. While living in Texas, he married and the couple had one daughter who would never meet her father. Other members of the 11 were Georgia-born Corporal Robert Green, Private Nathaniel Moss from Texas, and Curtis Adams, a 32-year-old medic from Columbia, South Carolina. He was a newly married GI upon arrival at Camp Gruber and a new father.

At age 36, Tech. Sgt. James Aubrey Stewart was a more seasoned GI. Born in 1906, he had nearly 20 years of pitching baseballs for the Piedmont, West Virginia, semi-pro team, the Piedmont Colored Giants. Many who knew him openly wondered why he never moved forward with the professional Negro Baseball League. He enlisted in the Army in December 1942. His baseball skills were highly prized at Camp Gruber.

Private First Class George Davis was short in stature and was lovingly known by his comrades as "Li'l Georgie." He was born in 1922 and drafted in May 1942. Before leaving home, Davis took a newspaper picture of Jesse Owens from the 1936 Olympics as an inspiration. Private First Class Due W. Turner was born in Columbia County, Arkansas, on March 11, 1922, but little else is known about him.

Another, more senior veteran soldier was Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Forte who was a cook in the 333rd; he was born in 1915 in Hinds County, Mississippi. Prior to joining the 333rd he had a simple, impoverished wedding on January 19, 1942, in Louisiana. All he could afford was a tin wedding ring. The farthest he got in school was completing grammar school. The last of these 11 was Pfc. George W. Motten, who was born in Texas, but other biographical information is lacking.

These 11 joined 540 other GIs to make up the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion.

A World War II 155mm howitzer battalion, at least according to the manual, consisted of 550 enlisted soldiers and 30 officers. Considering the demands of war, that number sometimes fluctuated.

This structure was divided into five batteries of four guns, or "tubes," each: Able (A), Baker (B), Charley (C), Service Battery, and Headquarters Battery. According to the Table of Authorization, it took 120 soldiers to fill in a battery and 11 soldiers to efficiently operate a 155mm howitzer that weighed 12,000 pounds. Most typically, a lieutenant colonel commanded a battalion. The 333rd's commander was 49-year-old Lt. Col. Harmon S. Kelsey from San Bruno, California—a veteran artillery officer who had served in World War I.

As with all African American units in the segregated Army the officers were predominately white. Kelsey, as was also usual, was not happy commanding a mostly black battalion. The overwhelming philosophy for the Jim Crow-era army was that African Americans were inept, undereducated soldiers, incapable of mastering the finer skills and demands of soldiering, and were generally worthless in combat.

Most white officers posted to lead black units found it a dead-end career path. None felt that such a unit, regardless of service and arms, would ever see actual combat. That is where Kelsey stood, and he had no qualms about expressing those sentiments. In regard to the 333rd personnel, he saw them in two colors; green and colored. He told them the only way to get out of the 333rd would be to be killed. In his mind, that would never happen. He was convinced the 333rd would never see combat. In due time this lieutenant colonel would have a major reversal of beliefs about his soldiers.

Most of the 333rd's other 29 officers were white. The most influential of these junior officers was 21-year-old, Oklahoma-born Captain William Gene McLeod, son of a World War I veteran. At age 16, McLeod joined the Oklahoma National Guard's 45th Infantry Division, which used to the older style French 75mm howitzer from World War I. He became a sergeant, was eventually accepted into Officer Candidate School, and became a lieutenant in the artillery. In terms of personality, he was every bit the opposite of Kelsey.

One incident stands out. Curtis Adams, the black medic, was visited by his wife, Catherine, and their newborn son. Kelsey avoided the child, refusing to hold the infant. He told the parents an Army camp was no place for a baby, or a mother. But McLeod had no hesitations in cuddling the baby. McLeod saw the privileges of being white, but he stood by his trainees at every step of their training. He believed in his men, and they came to believe in him. Soldiers preferred to approach him over any other officer.

When German prisoners of war arrived at Camp Gruber, Tech. Sgt. William Edward Pritchett was compelled to deliver a concern to his captain. The men of the 333rd noticed the POWs were fed better than the 333rd and that white GIs showed more courtesy and respect for the Germans than to their fellow black comrades. McLeod forwarded those remarks to Kelsey, but they were shooed aside.

The turning point for the 333rd at Camp Gruber came in the summer of 1943. Having spent months fumbling and blundering, with one mishap after another, the men seemed incapable of learning the intricacies of the six-ton weapon. The ultimate goal was to complete a 100-pound shell firing sequence within four minutes before beginning the next firing sequence. But the 333rd trainees themselves felt that was an unimaginable goal to reach. Even worse was Kelsey's nonstop attitude of the 333rd not being good enough to make it to the front until after the war ended.

During a break on the firing range one summer day, George Davis took to humming a tune his mother often sang to him. Before long his comrades started humming along. The rhythm was off a beat or two, and it took a while to identify the song. It was "Roll, Jordan, Roll," at which point everybody pitched in with their voices. James Aubrey Stewart found the tune a bit sluggish and suggested speeding the beat up. Then suggestions came for adapting other popular tunes of their times. The overwhelming majority wanted "Roll, Jordan, Roll" kept.

Going back to their firing sessions, the song continued and became a beat by which the men loaded and fired their cannons. Within weeks they came to master the 155mm howitzer, and "Roll, Jordan, Roll" became the battle hymn for the 333rd from then on. Once in France, they would adapt the lyrics, but the basic tune remained.

Prior to leaving Camp Gruber, a few events transpired common to any GI in any war or era. On April 18, 1943, Mager Bradley received a package of edible delights from his wife, Eva Marie, that he was eager to share with his comrades. Within this particular package, however, was a bar of Woodbury soap, which he secreted away, unopened.

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Around that same period, Private Nathaniel Moss showed that he had difficulty throwing a hand grenade. It was a frightening learning experience knowing the consequences of a fumbled toss was having it explode within an arm's distance. Former baseball player Tech. Sgt. James Aubrey Stewart stepped in with a bunch of baseballs. As a former semi-pro pitcher, he was well noted for his handling of baseballs, so he imparted some of that skill to Moss. After practicing numerous throws with a baseball, Moss was able to toss live hand grenades like a pro.

On February 2, 1944, the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion sailed for England, landing 17 days later. As an independent artillery battalion, it existed as its own entity. Depending on the combat situation, they would be assigned to support units within the VIII Corps of Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton. That meant the 333rd could provide artillery support at any time and anywhere for the 2nd, 4th, and 8th Infantry Divisions and either the 82nd or 101st Airborne Divisions.

Stars and Stripes

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ABOVE: Sergeant William Pritchett of Alabama, left, and Corporal Robert Green of Georgia were two of the 11 artillerymen murdered at Wereth, Belgium. LEFT: While training in the U.S. in 1943, an African American artillery battalion lines up for chow in the field. Both in training and in combat, units were strictly segregated.

On June 6, 1944, the Allies began landing 176,000 soldiers on France's Normandy coast at landing spots identified as Omaha, Utah, Juno, Gold, and Sword Beaches. It would take six days of massive bleeding, suffering, and deaths to consolidate those beaches before moving inland. When the 333rd FAB arrived on Utah

Beach, those bloody scenes were well cleaned up. All seemed settled into a typical naval beach unloading operation.

Once collected, the 333rd found themselves in a familiar slot as an African American unit: nobody wanted them under their feet. Kelsey retained his original sentiments as well.

On the plus side, the 333rd, as an independent artillery battalion within VIII Corps, would be able to move here and there on call whenever big guns were needed. Whether the 333rd realized any differences in those two points or not still meant they would be doing a lot of moving across France to support the divisions within VIII Corps.

Shortly after arriving in France, the 333rd got its first call for a fire mission on behalf of the 82nd Airborne Division besieging Pont-L'Abbé—a 600-year-old city that had a church with a tall steeple. The 82nd's approach into the city was repeatedly halted by at least one sniper nestled in that steeple. The 82nd had also been taking accurate, well-placed enemy artillery shelling. The steeple afforded an artillery spotter a perfect setting.

Once called, receiving coordinates from nearly nine miles out, the 333rd zeroed in while singing, "Rommel, count your men." The guns were fired with the second chorus coming, "Rommel, how many men you got now?" Within a span of 90 seconds, four 155mm rounds boomed out, the first being the range finder/marker. The next three precisely hit the church roof and steeple. In answer to the 333rd's song, "Rommel" lost at least one, if not two or three men. In turn, the 333rd suffered their first combat injury; somehow, Captain John G. Workizer was seriously wounded by friendly fire.

Another event took place during this same period. Since June 6, 1942, the U. S. Army had been publishing its own magazine, *YANK*. It became a weekly presentation to GIs about their world, their home front, and why they were doing what they were doing. It was *YANK* that introduced its readers to a new cartoon soldier named "Private Sad Sack," who became a popular character in the magazine's pages.

As the 333rd commenced its first firing mission that July 1, one of the *YANK* writers, Sergeant Bill Davidson, was on hand. The 333rd knew of Davidson's presence but paid little attention to what he was doing. A few months later the 333rd would learn they were featured in an article in *YANK*.

On July 2, 1944, the 333rd again was called into action. With the 90th Infantry Division now trying to subdue resistance in Pont-L'Abbé, the 333rd supported it as well as the 82nd Airborne. At noon on July 4, 1944, all artillery units in VIII Corps fired their guns on target simultaneously, creating an Independence Day celebration far beyond mere fireworks.

Five days later, the 333rd moved farther south into Normandy, then west toward La Haye-du-Puits on the Brittany Peninsula—a distance of 244 miles—a route that took the 333rd deeper into dreaded hedgerow territory. Those rows of nurtured bushes stood for centuries as boundary markers between farmers' fields and also as corrals to keep their flocks of cows, sheep, and goats from wandering off.

At this stage the Luftwaffe retained some presence in the air, subjecting American ground forces to aerial assaults. Upon arrival, the 333rd shot down one Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter that was strafing them. Shortly thereafter, three members of the 333rd were laying communication wire and came upon a well-hidden German Tiger tank. The panzer got off two rounds, which only knocked the three GIs off their feet. Rather than flee, one got on the phone and called the 333rd Headquarters Battery, giving marking range.

Charley Battery sent out three 155mm rounds. The first round, as expected, fell short, requiring an adjustment. The second landed directly on top of the tank. The third hit it again, splitting the 54-ton behemoth in two. At that point even the 333rd's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Harmon S. Kelsey, had to acknowledge his unit's accuracy and quickness of firing. He gloated that the 333rd was on its way to "setting new records" with that and the previous firing mission against the church steeple.

In the middle of July 1944, the reality of war sank in. Captain Workizer died from complications of his abdominal wounds, and Private James Erves also died during a firing mishap when one of the big guns' recoils struck him.

By the end of July, the 333rd had tagged along with the 90th Infantry Division to Saint Sauver-Lenden and back to Saint-Aubind d'Aubige, where they settled alongside the 4th Armored Division.

In that area, although not an antiaircraft unit, the 333rd knocked down several more planes. They also started collecting prisoners of war. Arriving at Rennes, the 333rd shared shooting time with the 8th Infantry Division artillery while singing out, "Stand Back! Ready! Rommel, count your men! Fire! Rommel, how many men you got now?"

All across the VIII Corps area of operations adulation was coming the 333rd's way. More and more infantry units vied for their support, knowing their quickness to fire, adjust, fire again, and how few rounds they needed to expend before hitting the mark.

At some point as they gained proficiency, the 333rd fired off three 155mm rounds from one tube within 45 seconds, while it took most other crews three to four minutes to fire just one round.

It was time to move again, this time to Saint-Malo, France, a 2,000-year-old fortress city on the coast of the Brittany Peninsula, most often referred to as Saint-Malo Citadel. The 83rd "Thunderbolt" Infantry Division had already lost one battalion while attempting a traditional frontal assault on the town. On August 13, 1944, the 333rd arrived and set up its guns 10,000 yards—5½ miles—from the massive walled city that encompassed 865 standing buildings.

The Germans holding the city, under the command of Colonel Andreas von Aulock, had a network of tunnels 50 to 60 feet underneath the streets. With such extensive tunneling, the Germans would often emerge and hit the batteries of the 333rd and then dis-

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Men of the 333rd emplace one of their 155mm howitzers in a Normandy field, June 28, 1944. The battalion soon proved its worth in battle and their services were in high demand by white infantry units.

appear again. It became obvious that von Aulock had no intention of surrendering.

Lieutenant Colonel Kelsey had his batteries move forward to within 1,500 yards of the city and kept up the battering for two days. Finally, on August 17, von Aulock, his ears ringing from the constant shelling, came out of his 60-foot-deep hole to surrender directly to Kelsey. Only 182 buildings remained standing.

At that point, all within the 333rd thought that it was time to turn eastward and charge on Berlin, but they were greatly disappointed when they were ordered to turn west toward the port city of Brest. With all the complaints and questions coming at him, Captain William G. McLeod told his gunners that Brest was too important to bypass and, once under new management, it would become a vital Allied seaport. Once that happened, the German Navy would lose its most cherished U-boat facility on the Atlantic.

On August 25, 1944, Middleton's VIII Corps had all of its three infantry divisions go up against Brest: the 2nd, 8th, and 29th. For this engagement the 333rd was hampered by fog and rain. At times they were literally firing blind, unable to see or adjust their guns. At times they had no idea if they were hitting the 30-foot-high, 15-foot-thick walls of the city, going over those walls, or falling short.

It would not be until September 18, 1944, that Brest was taken from Herman-Bernhard Ramcke and his Germans. During this melee, the 333rd fired 1,500 155mm rounds within a 24-hour period.

Two days after securing Brest, the 333rd was in Lesneven, France, for an extended break and their first USO show. Bing Crosby was leading a whirlwind tour that included blues performers Early Baxter and Buck Harris along with other well-known white actors and actresses. The next day the 333rd returned to the war.

On September 28, the 333rd began a 500-mile road trip, taking them to the final destination for many of them. The VIII Corps, including another black field artillery battalion, the 969th, received orders to head for Belgium. In the first day's travel, the 333rd covered 165 miles, reaching their "old stomping ground" of Saint Aubin-d'Aubigne, north of Rennes. There they were greeted as heroes. It was such a welcoming event that medic Curtis Adams told his comrades he would love to come back to that region once peace had been restored.

Continuing their northeasterly trek, the 333rd eventually entered Paris. Even though passing through meant only a short stay, all looked forward to seeing the town. Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Forte decided to do some shopping. Having given his bride a cheap tin ring as a wedding band, he needed time to find a reasonably priced, real diamond ring to take home. Shaking his pockets inside out, he realized he could ill afford anything proper. George Davis, Robert Green, William Pritchett, and Mager Bradley dug into their own pockets and generously gave Sergeant Forte enough funds to buy Mrs. Forte a proper wedding ring.

Pushing forward, the 333rd made its last stop in France at Saint Quentin, where the

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ABOVE: An artilleryman of the 333rd sets the fuse of a 155mm round near Schlausenbach, Germany, October 1944. OPPOSITE: Men of C Battery, 333rd, pose for a photo with Captain William G. McLeod, center, in a wintry landscape about the time the massacre occurred. McLeod greatly respected his men and the feeling was mutual.

German Army had resided until only a week before. Another 97 miles and they would step onto Belgium soil.

On the last day of September 1944, Lt. Col. Kelsey assembled his battalion for a formal gathering. When in formation the cannoneers noticed hundreds of GIs, black and white, surrounding them. Kelsey informed them, as well their audience, that Sergeant Bill Davidson's article on the 333rd had just been published in *YANK* magazine. Kelsey proudly called his battalion together to read it to them.

Apparently Davidson not only witnessed the 333rd's shooting capabilities upon the church steeple at Pont-L'Abbé on July 1, but had kept tabs on their ongoing activities. He also wrote about the 333rd's firing its 10,000th round. Then there was that 24-hour period when they fired 1,500 rounds.

Kelsey announced for all to hear that the 333rd was the first African American combat unit to face off with the Germans. And they were still doing it, a feat that had not gone unnoticed by the Germans. It was there and then acknowledged that all the infantry units wanted the 333rd backing them. However proud Lt. Col. Kelsey was at the performance of his soldiers, Captain William G. McLeod was in tears—tears of joy.

In the first week of October 1944, the 333rd split itself between the west and east side of the Our River. The ground the 333rd stood on is called Schnee Eifel (Snow Mountains). The area is heavily forested, with its highest peak being 2,300 feet. This region is also known as the Ardennes. Kelsey's men were there to support their partners in the 2nd Infantry Division; the two units had forged a well-established, deeply trusting working relationship.

Components of the 2nd moved into some of the 18,000 abandoned bunkers and pillboxes that made up the Siegfried Line or, as the Germans called it, the West Wall—the 1936 brainchild of Adolf Hitler that became the defensive line between his Third Reich and the Western European countries. Its flat-topped concrete pyramid-shaped tank obstacles known as "dragon's teeth," guarded by concrete pillboxes, extended for 390 miles.

From Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower down the chain of command, the prevailing belief was that this was a line where the Allies could take a winter break, lick their wounds, and be reinforced and resupplied for a resumption of hostilities come spring. In earlier wars it would be called winter camp, since it would be too snowy and cold for any right-minded military man to want to fight a war.

Farther down that chain of command voices spoke out against such an archaic way of thinking. Hushed disagreements flew back and forth. General George Patton knew the history of the Ardennes—Germany had used that same route when attacking France in 1870, then again 45 years later in World War I. That was also the route Nazi Germany had used in its 1940 invasion of France.

Throughout October and November the 333rd would spend a day firing off 150 rounds just to keep themselves busy and show the enemy that the Americans were still around. For many of the men from the Deep South, winter in the Ardennes was the first time they stood in snow up to their knees.

The Battle of the Bulge of December 1944-January 1945 is notorious for what it was;

the Allied high command never expected a massive, well-coordinated enemy attack in the middle of December by a battered German Army that was on the run, seemingly on the verge of collapse.

On December 16, 1944, the Germans charged en masse out of the Ardennes just as George Patton expected they would. The American defenders were hit, fell back, and-collapsed. Never before would so many American fighting men be taken prisoner in one battle so quickly. This included the 333rd.

As the inexperienced 106th Infantry Division fell apart, so did the infantry cover for the 333rd that was spread out across the Our River. The 106th lost two regiments, the 422nd and 423rd, to captivity.

On the west side of the Our River was the 333rd's Headquarters Battery and half its Service Battery. Seeing the rapidity of the attack, Captain McLeod commandeered a jeep and rushed east over the bridge in an effort to bring Batteries A, B, and C and the other half of the Service Battery back across.

No matter which direction any GI ran, he ran into Germans. In these first 48 to 72 hours of fighting, or not fighting, more than 20,000 GIs were marched away as prisoners, including most of the 333rd, but 11 men managed to avoid capture and scurry away through the forest. Among them they had only two rifles and little ammunition. They needed a place to hide, to warm up, and hopefully to eat.

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In the little hamlet of Wereth, Belgium, Mathias and Maria Langer and their six children lived in a community that consisted of only nine permanent residences, with Mathias being its mayor. Up until 1919, the region where Wereth sat, known as Eupen-Malmedy, belonged to Germany. In the aftermath of defeat in World War I, Germany was required to give that region to Belgium. For the next 25 years the vast majority within the Eupen-Malmedy region resented that act, clinging to their German history and heritage.

As Hitler's Nazi regime enlarged its power base, however vile and corrupt, those of Eupen-Malmedy overlooked such transgressions upon humanity. They were Germans before all else. If it was good for Germany, it would be good for them.

The Langer family did not support Germany's war effort and desire for world domination, and the Langers' neighbors were aware of their anti-German sentiments. As Nazi aggression expanded, and the fate of Jews became more recognized, the Langers participated in hiding refugees and passing them along to evade persecution and death. They even took in fellow Belgian countrymen escaping German military conscription. With Wereth being such a small community, the Langers' neighbors were always suspicious of oddities going on within the Langer household and kept close tabs on the family.

After nearly 30 hours of running through the forest, unfed, barely protected from winter weather, the 11 GIs reached Wereth in mid-afternoon, December 17, 1944. They knew nothing of the community. Their immediate needs were to get out of the cold and wet conditions before freezing to death. They needed to dry out, eat, and then somehow get back to friendly lines.

It will never be known how many, or which homes, the 11 viewed while hidden amid the trees. Each one looked warm and inviting. As soon as they decided on the Langer home, they were spotted through a window by Hermann Langer, at the same moment James Aubrey Stewart saw him. That decided their approach. Without anything resembling a white flag of surrender, Curtis Adams unwrapped a field dressing and waved it. This was the first time Langer family had ever seen anyone of African descent.

When the tired soldiers reached the door, Mathias had no reservations about welcoming them. Maria may have been more hesitant since two other guests were hidden in their basement—two fellow countrymen who were evading German conscription. The 11 GIs may not have known that.

Technical Sergeant Stewart spoke up. "Sir, my name's Sergeant Aubrey Stewart with the U.S. 333rd Field Artillery Battalion. We just escaped from Germans who ambushed us. We're on our way to American lines to meet our troops. We're cold, hungry, and exhausted. Would you please help us? We won't cause any trouble."

Langer, who may or may not have spoken a little English, invited them in; extra wood was tossed into the stove. Maria put on coffee and passed out bread, butter, and jam. The children offered up their own blankets. Mathias had the 11 remove their boots and socks to dry them out. For just over an hour the Langers hosted their 11

unexpected guests as best they could. Knowing the best escape routes, Mathias told the soldiers that upon leaving his house they should head for Meyerode, 4 1/2 miles to the southwest.

Thomas Forte, George Davis, and Curtis Adams dug into their pockets for what currency they had—mostly French and German coins—to repay the Langers for their hospitality. The Langers refused the offer with Mathias saying they might need that money for their next leg of the journey. Instead, Stewart divided what Chiclets gum he had for the children. Mager

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-2005-0076; Photo: Scheck

A still frame from a German newsreel showing members of the 333rd after they were captured during the Battle of the Bulge. More than half the members of the battalion were taken prisoner.

Bradley readily gave Maria his unused bar of Woodbury soap that he had received back at Camp Gruber.

Suddenly, a vehicle was heard driving up. Four Germans parked a Volkswagen Type 166 (an amphibious vehicle known as a Schwimmwagen) within yards of the Langers' front door. An officer of unknown rank got out and pounded on the door, giving indication he knew the 11 soldiers were inside. Since the Americans had been at the Langer house for just over an hour, it became apparent that an unknown pro-German neighbor saw the black soldiers approach and reported that sighting to SS soldiers belonging to Kampfgruppe Hansen of the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler.

It seems Tech. Sgt. Stewart may have led the way in surrrendering to the Germans, as there was no way to escape. The 11 men were removed from the Langer house and held under guard on the road outside as the sun set and the temperature dropped. The SS soldiers questioned the Langers and helped themselves to what was left over from the meal just shared with the Americans. They would eventually leave, never knowing that two Belgian refugees remained hidden in the basement.

The Langers expressed their concern about the welfare of the 11, but the German officer told them not to worry—pretty soon they would not be feeling the coldness. The Langers' last view of the Americans, at about 7 PM on December 17, 1944, was of them running ahead of the Schwimmwagen into the evening darkness.

Evidence concludes the 11 were run about 900 yards into a cow pasture far from the eyes of those within the hamlet. Shortly thereafter, residents claimed to hear automatic gunfire. Then silence.

It would be well over a month before the bodies of the 11 were discovered. By the beginning of February 1945, the winter snow was melting. Knowing, generally, of the Americans' fate, residents of Wereth led advancing GIs to where the 11 had lain undisturbed for nearly two months, buried under snow. Some had gone to view the bodies on December 18, but would say and do nothing about it.

The Germans were in, out, and about the area so often that nobody knew who was winning the battle; many felt the SS could easily reappear. When it became obvious that the Germans were gone for good and the American forces would take up a more permanent residency themselves, the Langer children took a patrol from the 395th Regiment to show them the bodies.

Corporal Ewall Seida was the first American to lay eyes on them on February 13. His findings went back to Major James L. Baldwin, regimental S-2 (Intelligence Officer). On February 15, the bodies were laid before medical examiner Captain William Everett. By that time, the evidence of the December 17, 1944, mass murder at Malmedy was well known, but there was a major difference between this murder and the 85 killed at Malmedy.

The bodies at Malmedy showed no evidence of mutilations, nor prolonged torture or suffering from abuse while alive. Most still had personal valuables such as rings with them. It was a murderous act followed by a quick exodus of the perpetrators. For the Wereth 11, there was an abundance of evidence of torture and mutilation—whether alive or following death. Some had one finger cut off, that being the most expedient manner of removing a valuable ring from a dead body when the object refuses to slide off easily.

This does not explain why Sergeant Thomas J. Forte had four fingers literally ripped off one hand. Other corpses had so many broken bones they would not even have been able to crawl. The backs of their skulls were crushed from massive strikes. Teeth were knocked out. Many bodies showed tire tracks—evidence of being run over by a vehicle. One died clutching a field dressing, as if attempting to bind another's wound. The worst evidence was clear signs of bayonet wounds into their empty eye sockets. Whether alive

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LEFT: Bodies of the 11 men of the 333rd killed by the Germans at the Langer farm. Many showed signs of torture and mutilation before being shot by the SS. After investigating the incident, the Army quietly closed the case. BELOW: Memorial ceremony held on May 23, 2004, for the Wereth 11 near the place they were murdered.

US Africa Command

or already dead at that moment, they were bayoneted in the eyes.

Seven of the victims were buried in the American Cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, while the other four were returned to their families for burial in the United States after the war. Batteries A and B of the 333rd made it to the town of Bastogne, where they joined their fellow segregated unit, the 969th, and fought courageously in that historic defense. While supporting the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, the 333rd suffered the highest casualty rate of any artillery unit in the VIII Corps with six officers and 222 men killed.

The U.S. Army spent two years investigating the Wereth mass murder, but authorities stated they could find no one responsible for the deaths—no one could be identified as a murderer. No witnesses testified, and there was never enough evidence—no unit insignia, vehicle numbers, etc.—to charge anyone.

In all likelihood those who committed the crime may not have even survived the war. The Army's answer to settling it all: cover it up, bury it.

Why the difference between Malmedy and Wereth? In dealing with any SS group as diehard, ardent believers in Nazism, race will always be the obvious excuse; the victims did not necessarily have to be of African descent. What may be another underlying cause of the Wereth killings was the history of the 333rd as known by their German enemies.

The 333rd had acquired an excellent reputation within the U.S. Army. They became news in *YANK* magazine, and *Stars and Stripes,* too, even if their accomplishments did not hit the mainstream media back home. The Germans would have had access to this story from basic military intelligence-gathering sources.

Well over half of the 333rd were taken prisoner and survived when captured within larger masses of GIs. The Wereth 11 had the misfortune of being caught off on their own and away from witnesses.

However sordid such a crime becomes, another crime followed in 1947. The U.S. Army invested two years investigating the Wereth 11 Massacre. In February 1947, almost two years to the day of the tragedy itself, the Army closed its investigation. Whoever committed the murders was never identified or located. The Langers were not sure of the specific SS unit. At that point the Army officially labeled the findings "Top Secret" and closed the files, hiding them away for decades. In 1949, the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee investigated a dozen recognized war crimes of this nature in Europe. They never knew about the Wereth 11.

Today the crime has yet to be solved. And it may never be.

After the war, the massacre of the Wereth 11 faded into obscurity. But the Langer family, a few historians, and Dr. Norman S. Lichtenfeld, an orthopedic surgeon in Mobile, Alabama, and the son of a 106th Infantry Division veteran, formed a group to raise funds to create a memorial to the 11 victims. Their dreams were realized on May 23, 2004, when a memorial to the "Wereth 11"—the only memorial to black American soldiers of World War II in Europe—was formally dedicated on the Langer property near the location where the massacre took place and where the bodies were found.

Dr. Lichtenfeld, who passed away in 2016, was writing a book about the 333rd and 969th, but it remains unfinished. A TV docudrama, *The Wereth Eleven*, written and directed by Robert Child, premiered in 2011. □

Pearl Harbor BOMBSHELL

Did State Department employees falsify the historical record to cover up evidence that would blame them for intelligence failures before Pearl Harbor? The long-hidden "Bally's Project" documents say they did.

BY SUSAN ZIMMERMAN

BACKSTORY: *Although for the past 75 years history has had little to say about "Bally's Project," an effort to falsify State Department records to remove evidence of gross miscalculations prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor—the author recently discovered a small file of documents in the Frank A. Schuler, Jr. Papers, 1932-1991, at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York, that corroborates the existence of Bally's Project and details the deception that went on behind locked doors.*

"The alteration of the U.S.-Japan documents after Pearl Harbor became something of a legend among the old Far Eastern hands. Diplomats who had knowledge of the scheme to varying degrees are no longer alive. I was told about the 'project,' as it was referred to, by an old friend and senior colleague from my Japan days, William Turner. Bill, both taciturn and cautious, would never have disclosed unsubstantial information."

So wrote Frank A. Schuler, Jr., a former U.S. foreign service officer in pre-World War II Japan, in his unpublished 1980 memoir, *Pearl Harbor Myths and Realities*.

This bombshell statement was a long time in coming. It was 1946 when Schuler first learned of the sleight-of-hand activities going on behind closed doors. "After Pearl Harbor," he wrote, "the officials in the Division had secretly removed from official documents any and all incriminating evidence which would place blame on those responsible for the misguided advice given to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Roosevelt which led to the disaster at Pearl Harbor."

Insinuations arose immediately that Roosevelt knew the attack was coming, a fact acknowledged by his Presidential Library, which states, "Almost as soon as the attacks occurred, conspiracy theorists began claiming that President Roosevelt had prior knowledge of the assault on Pearl Harbor. Others have claimed he tricked the Japanese into starting a war with the United States [see sidebar on the McCollum Memo] as a "back door" way to go to war with Japan's ally, Nazi Germany.

"However, after nearly [75] years, no document or credible witness has been discovered that prove either claim. Most scholars view Pearl Harbor as the consequence of missed clues, intelligence errors, and overconfidence."

The horror of the 75-minute attack on American Army, Navy, and Air Corps facilities in Hawaii that left in its wake more than 2,400 U.S. personnel killed, almost 20 U.S. Navy ships (including eight battleships) damaged or destroyed, and almost 200 planes destroyed still triggers shockwaves. Since December 1941 Americans have wanted someone held accountable for the day of infamy.

The blame for being unprepared for the attack was quickly laid on the shoulders of Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short, the U.S. military commander responsible for the defense of installations in Hawaii. Both were found guilty of "dereliction of duty" by the Roberts Commission in 1942.

The Dorn Report in 1995 later concluded, "The responsibility ... should not fall solely on the shoulders of Admiral Kimmel and [General] Short; it should be broadly shared." While all eyes were on the commanders of the fleet after the attack, a "project" was put into motion that flew completely under the radar.

The individuals involved were diplomats who took matters into their own hands by

The surprise Japanese attack on December 7, 1941, left the U.S. Pacific Fleet temporarily crippled at Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii, and propelled America into World War II. Diplomatic documents were apparently altered or destroyed by certain individuals to prevent them and the U.S. State Department from being blamed for the debacle, thereby shifting responsibility for the tragedy squarely on the military.

National Archives

Courtesy of the author

Former Foreign Service officer Frank Schuler, Jr., uncovered evidence that pointed to a cover-up of State Department bungling in assessing the Japanese threat, then was demoted.

Getty Images

Ambassador Joseph Grew, left, with Japan's Foreign Minister Teijiro Toyoda, are all smiles during a meeting in Japan, October 2, 1941. "Bally's Project" implicated Grew in the efforts to whitewash the intelligence failures of the State Department and U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

literally rewriting history. Their motive for this was to erase any trace of culpability in the attack that could be attributed to their intelligence failures. Although these diplomats are long gone, there is no expiration date on the truth; the time is now to tell the truth about Bally's Project.

It started nine days after the Pearl Harbor attack with a document dated December 16, 1941, on Department of State letterhead and initialed S.K.H. (for Stanley K. Hornbeck, political adviser to Secretary of State Cordell Hull). It read: "Mr. Secretary: We have arranged with Mr. Spaulding for him to take charge of and set three or four men to work upon compilation of documents in United States-Japanese relations for the period September 18, 1931 to December 7, 1941. Mr. [Maxwell] Hamilton, Mr. [Joseph W.] Ballantine, Mr. [Alger] Hiss and I will keep in close touch with this work as it proceeds. Mr. Ballantine will have special charge of the data relating to the exploratory conversations of this year." [A note on the document indicates that Alger Hiss initialed the document for Hornbeck.]

In Frank Schuler's personal account, he named his superiors (three of whom were involved in the "compilation of documents") and their errors of judgment. "Before World War II, the military depended upon the Department of State for their political intelligence. Ambassador Joseph C. Grew in Tokyo; Stanley K. Hornbeck, Political Advisor to the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull; and Maxwell Hamilton, Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, and Joseph W. Ballantine, Advisor on Far Eastern Affairs, totally misread the Japanese threat.

"These men were duped by the Japanese into thinking that they could secure a secret, negotiated détente with the Japanese. On the other hand, the Japanese were trying to bluff the United States into thinking they were prepared to limit their demands in Asia…."

The following excerpt from a personal 1971 letter from William (Bill) Turner to Schuler provides specifics about a colleague who was required to participate in falsifying the records to remove evidence of his superior's "gross miscalculations" prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"Some time during the years 1943-44, when I was 'on loan' to the Navy Department, my old friend and fellow Japan-hand Max W. Bishop came to my house for dinner. He was then on duty as a subordinate officer in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (FE) of the Department of State. During the evening he told me in some detail and with unconcealed wrath that after the Pearl Harbor debacle he, and as I remember, other subordinates in FE had been required by Dr. Stanley K. Hornbeck, the then-Chief of FE, to comb through the office files and to extract copies of all Dr. Hornbeck's memoranda to the Secretary of State dealing with Japan.

"At this point of time my memory is not clear as to Hornbeck's intended disposition of these papers, but my impression is that, according to Max, he meant to expunge from the files the record of his [Hornbeck's] gross miscalculations as to Japan's intentions and capabilities in the pre-Pearl Harbor days.

"I would suggest that if you want to pursue this matter further, you might get in touch with Max, who I feel sure, would be glad to give you a first-hand account of his unwilling part in an episode which aroused in him so much chagrin and ire…."

The discovery of the documents in the Schuler Papers held at the Roosevelt Presidential Library revealed bombshell after bombshell about Bally's Project. One of the many critical

revelations came from Helen Shaffer, a former secretary who worked in the Far Eastern Division of the Department of State from 1940-1941.

In 1963, Shaffer, who was an old acquaintance of Schuler and his wife Olive from their State Department days in 1941, "revealed she was the secretary assigned to Ballantine on the project. She had been told that it was a 'secret' project; admonished she was not to tell anyone what she was doing; that she had worked in a locked room in which no one other than the few involved were permitted to enter; also that the room was filled with filing cabinets which had been transported there from the central files."

In one of her several affidavits, Olive Schuler recounted a discussion she had with Shaffer about her unwitting role in altering documents. "She stated she clearly recalled shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack being required to retype memoranda and communications 'as though from hindsight,' isolated in a room made inaccessible to others with the explanation that her assignment was highly confidential."

Although these accounts from Helen Shaffer are documented in several affidavits, Shaffer herself would not go on record. In this same affidavit, Olive Schuler recalled that when she asked Shaffer about this, "She advised me that under no circumstances did she want to become involved. The reason, she stated, was that she was presently employed by the State Department and she did not 'want what happened to Frank [Schuler] to happen to me.'"

After Helen Shaffer adamantly refused to get involved, the following conversation (contained in an affidavit dated December 12, 1994, by Helen Thomas and Olive Schuler in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library) between Helen Shaffer and Helen Thomas (a United Press International reporter for almost 60 years and family friend of the Schulers) ensued:

Helen Thomas: "Why would they have been out to get [Frank]?"

Helen Shaffer: "Because he opposed the policy. They thought he was interfering."

Thomas: "But he turned out to be right!"

Shaffer: "That was the problem! And they felt they had to do something about that."

Thomas: "Olive told me you had said that they rewrote documents from hindsight, that, in fact, you did the retyping."

Shaffer: "Yes, I did. I got so tired of retyping those damned, long documents on those clumsy typewriters. Not only that, but they revised parts of the Foreign Relations Series. I finally asked for a transfer out of the Division."

Thomas: "But what they did was a crime! How could they have done that?"

Shaffer: "Well, I guess they felt that was the only way they could absolve themselves of blame."

Shaffer's remark about "what happened to Frank" involved a memo that became the underpinnings for Frank Schuler's unrelenting search for the truth. Three months before Pearl Harbor, on September 13, 1941, Schuler and five others in the Far Eastern Affairs office who had recently been in Japan drafted a memo that stated Japan's negotiations with the United States were a bluff and that war was imminent.

Getty Images

Library of Congress

Naval History and Heritage Command

(Left to right): Stanley K. Hornbeck, special adviser to Secretary of State Cordell Hull; Hornbeck's aide and Communist spy Alger Hiss; Admiral Husband Kimmel, C-in-C, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The six who signed the memo were Cabot Coville, John R. Davies, Herbert Fales, Joseph M. Jones, Frank A. Schuler, and E. Paul Tenney. Although the memo did eventually reach Secretary of State Cordell Hull, the five were reprimanded for their insubordination by Maxwell Hamilton, the chief of their department. Of the six signers, only Schuler would not apologize.

That September 13 memo changed the course of Schuler's life. While the fate of Schuler's five other colleagues is unknown, his career was damaged from then on, and the repercussions were serious.

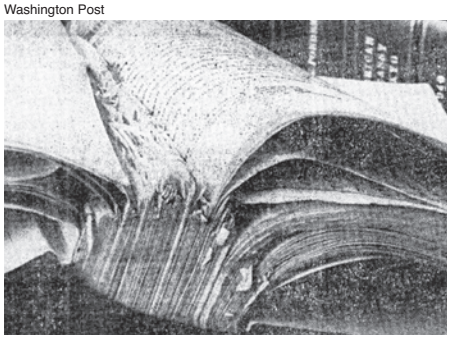
Perhaps in retribution he was transferred to the island of Antigua in the Caribbean, ostensibly to establish a consulate there. Despite his appeals for an assignment that would draw on his Japanese language skills and background in the national effort against the Japanese, he remained on Antigua until 1943. He was then transferred to the U.S. Consulate in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. In 1944, Schuler was informed that he would be transferred again, this time to Noumea, New Caledonia, in the South Pacific, to work with the Office of War Information (OWI).

But when he arrived in Noumea on June 27, 1944, he discovered that OWI had never maintained any operations in Noumea and that he was in fact expected to replace the resident American consul there. Disgusted with his treatment by the State Department, Schuler decided to resign from the Foreign Service that day, and on the following day he sent a telegram to the Secretary of State with that message.

In a telegram that reached Schuler on June 30, the chief of the Division of Foreign Service Personnel directed him to remain at his post, but when the Secretary of State did not reply to the resignation message by July 4, Schuler left Noumea. He was terminated for "abandoning his post."

In 1976, Schuler brought a suit against

Washington Post



This photo of the State Department records with pages crudely ripped out appeared in the *Washington Post* and hints at a cover-up.

the Department of State seeking "both correction of his State Department personnel file and an award of monetary benefits lost due to the government's allegedly improper treatment of him between 1944 and 1953."

In the suit, Schuler's lawyer asserted that "on September 13, 1941, a memorandum signed by Schuler and five associates was circulated at the State Department. The memorandum reportedly called for a re-evaluation of our policy toward Japan and warned of the nation's hostility toward [the U.S.].

"The chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs strongly reprimanded the authors of the document and demanded an apology, which Schuler says he did not offer. On November 7, 1941, he was transferred to the Caribbean to establish a consulate on the island of Antigua." (Schuler's request to restore his pension was also denied.)

Although Schuler was defeated in the courts, he hit pay dirt at the National Archives, where he discovered altered documents. The January 26, 1977, *Washington Post* article by Michael Kernan, "The Schuler Files: Life Under a Cloud," described finding these documents.

Kernan writes, "Last year, with the aid of his youngest son Peter, 27, a recent graduate of William and Mary Law School who is devoting full time to the cause, Schuler made a telling discovery: In the [National] Archives at Suitland, Maryland, the nearly 100 volumes of State Department records covering 1936-40 and the loose material for 1941 had been chopped up so badly that when one held a book by the binding, bits of paper rained out like confetti. The Schulers were so excited they had a picture taken of the sight. They also found evidence that other papers had been rewritten and revised."

Olive Schuler also remembered: "The foregoing activity of attempting to retype documents became clearly evident as a result of comparison with numerous originals and their 'superseded' versions obtained from the Archives in the search that was conducted by my son, Peter, and my husband, Frank in 1976."

In several July 2016 email messages this author exchanged with Peter Schuler, he remembered the research: "I saw the records at the National Archives and they were indeed quite obviously either ripped out of the '41 volume or, from my father's telling, key despatches skillfully altered to present disingenuous views that the majority of Embassy staff, Ambassador Grew and others, were actually prescient, ever watchful, and fully appreciated the Japanese threat."

In a follow-up email, Peter Schuler recalled, "I'm amazed I remembered the name but it was the late Fred Maroon, one of the top Washington news photographers of the time and a close friend of Helen Thomas [UPI White House correspondent], who took the photos at the National Archives facility in Suitland, Maryland."

Evidence of missing papers can be traced back to 1941. Foreign Service officer Max W. Bishop (later U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, 1955-1958), who was involved in assisting Secretary of State Cordell Hull, recalled the disappearance of pre-Pearl Harbor files in this 1993 interview conducted by Thomas F. Conlon:

Conlon: "Well, then you returned to the Japan Desk, and, as I recall you saying, you were involved in taking notes or otherwise assisting Secretary Hull in the negotiations with Admiral [Kichisaburo] Nomura [ambassador to the U.S. in 1941] and, later, Ambassador [Saburo] Kurusu, in 1941?

Bishop: "Yes, that was my principal job. I kept all of the pre-Pearl Harbor files in my office in a filing cabinet which had a lock on it, the same as almost every filing cabinet in the Department of State and throughout the government."

Conlon: "Was this a combination or a key lock?"

Bishop: "A key lock. When you left the Department, you took your keys down to a board near the front door of the State Department and hung them up there."

Conlon: "There was nobody watching the keys?"

Bishop: "Oh, yes, there was somebody there all the time, but nothing was well-protected. And I don't think that anybody particularly cared. Classified material was protected—it wasn't left out in the open, or anything of that sort. I don't know whether we had Communist agents in the Department at the time. As you know from the 'Pumpkin Papers….'"

(Note: The 1938 Pumpkin Papers consisted of 65 pages of retyped secret State Department documents, four pages in Hiss's own handwriting of State Department cables, and five rolls of undeveloped film. They were dubbed the Pumpkin Papers because FBI informant and ex-communist Whittaker Chambers kept them hidden in a pumpkin in his garden. During Senator Joseph McCarthy's hunt for communists within the government, Hiss was accused of being a Soviet spy in 1948. He was convicted of perjury regarding testimony about his alleged involvement in a Soviet spy ring before and during World War II. He spent four years in prison.)

Conlon: "Well, this could have been the time when those documents were taken from the Department."

Bishop: "Alger Hiss was in the Department. Whenever Alger Hiss went on leave, I took his place, in Stanley Hornbeck's office, where he was principal aide to Hornbeck. [Hiss] was a very fine man, a person you would enjoy talking with. But I noticed that, once in a while, he had some dubious, Left Wing characters in the office. But that's another story." [Note: From 1939 to 1944, Hiss was an assistant to Stanley Hornbeck, a special adviser to Secretary of State Cordell Hull on Far Eastern affairs.]

As noted in the December 16, 1941, State Department memo, the arrangement was

for "three or four men to work upon compilation of documents in United States-Japanese relations for the period September 18, 1931 to December 7, 1941." Joseph Ballantine, Alger Hiss, and Stanley Hornbeck were three of the four individuals named in the memo whose job it was to "keep in close touch with this work as it proceeds."

"Bally, [Joseph Ballantine] as he was referred to, would eventually become useful in the cover-up activity," wrote Olive Schuler in a later memo.

Although the Schulers had a vested interest in Bally's Project, there were other colleagues of Frank's, though they had nothing to gain, who confirmed this. The following document (from the Schuler Papers held at the Roosevelt Presidential Library), identified "As tho' from hindsight in 1945," addresses the falsification of documents:

"Schuler had been told by a colleague (Bill Turner) (about five years after Pearl Harbor) that the documents exchanged between State and the Embassy in Tokyo re pre-Pearl Harbor negotiations and relations with Japan had been 'amended, rewritten, destroyed, etc.'

"In the fall of 1971, Schuler, having already started his research, decided to get in touch with people who might have some personal knowledge on the subject…. The alteration and/or destruction of the files was accomplished in a very secretive manner with Grew manipulating it in such a way that each was working independently of the other making it more difficult for any of them to know the whole story of what was going on.

"In 1963-64, Helen Shaffer told Schuler's wife that she had retyped documents written before Pearl Harbor for Joseph Ballantine which were being rewritten 'as though from hindsight.' She had no idea what was going on, she said, as it never occurred to her that files were being altered.…"

In Schuler's unpublished 1980 memoir, *Pearl Harbor Myths and Realities,* he further described the behind-the-scenes machinations: "After Pearl Harbor these State Department officials, Mr. Hull's 'principal advisors,' and subordinates working for them, altered and withheld diplomatic documents so as to manipulate the evidence available to the investigative bodies that sat from 1942 thru 1946 to investigate the blame for the disaster. Unlike their military counterparts, these diplomats successfully avoided any intense scrutiny and in so doing saved their careers.…"

These diplomats "dodged the bullet" on blame and allowed for a grave miscarriage of justice that wrongly accused Kimmel and Short of "dereliction of duty," a charge that would have been rightly served on them, i.e., the diplomats.

Frank and Olive Schuler's effort to set the record straight was an uphill battle. As Frank recalled in his memoirs, "I began my research in 1970 after which my wife joined to help me, she having worked in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs of the Department of State as well. I am convinced that the cause of the worst military disaster in our history remains unresolved because of the highly successful cover-up by the diplomats involved. What happened can only be reconstructed by someone who was 'on the scene' at this time. My wife and I were."

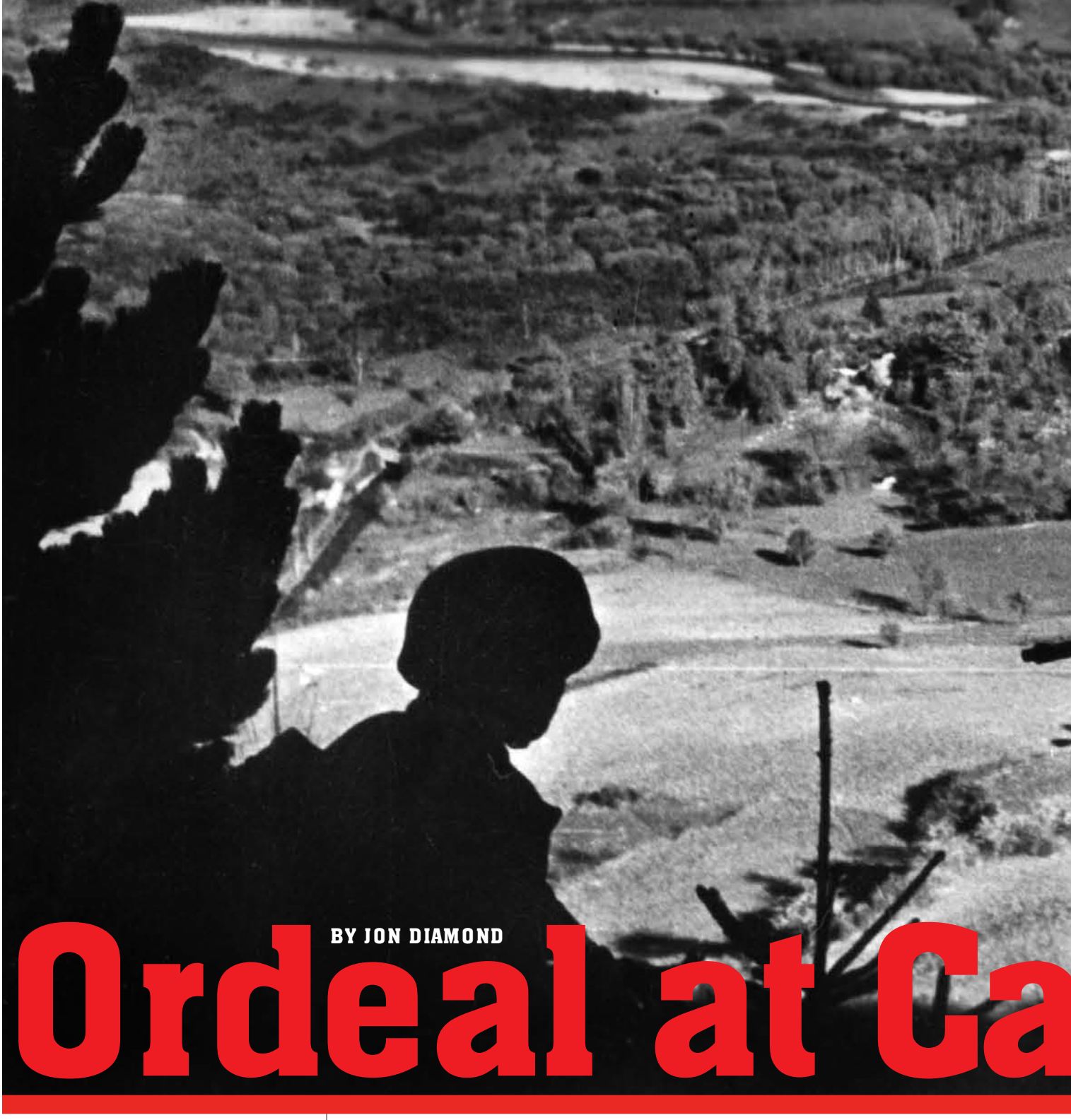
Early on, Schuler was reaching out to both colleagues and friends to gather information. On October 6, 1973, he penned the following letter to family friend Jeanne Dixon, a well-known astrologist who consulted with President Richard Nixon:

"Dear Jeanne: You have asked me why I felt it was important that the truth about Pearl Harbor be revealed at this time. In the first place, and in my humble judgment,

Continued on page 98

Japanese airmen take to their planes for "Operation Hawaii," the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese fleet sailed through storm and fog across the North Pacific and away from the normal sea lanes to arrive undetected 200 miles from Hawaii early on the morning of December 7.

National Archives



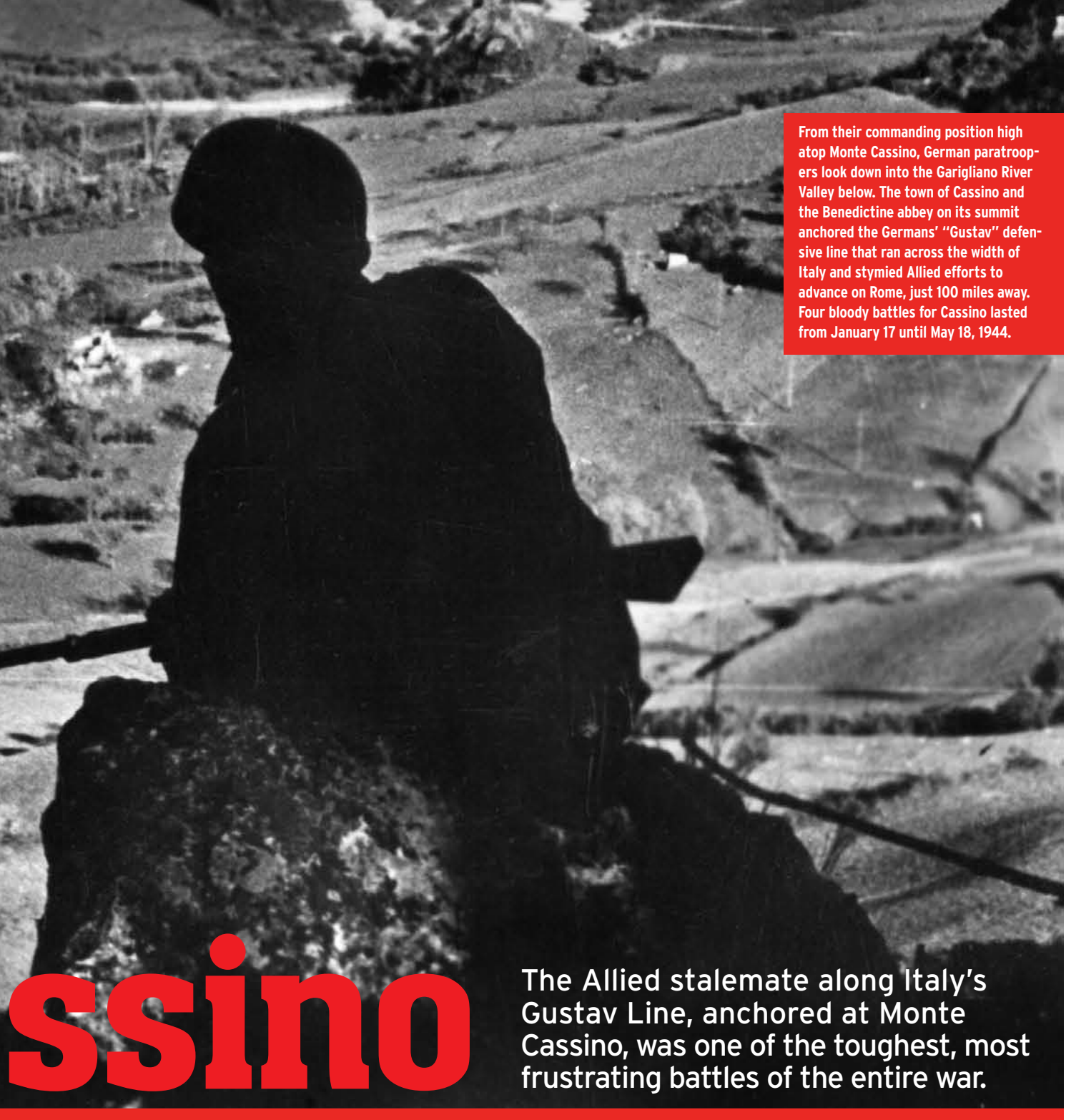
BY JON DIAMOND

Ordeal at Ca

As Lt. Gen. Mark Clark's Fifth Army, comprising the U.S. VI and British X Corps, headed north from the Salerno battlefield in September 1943, German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of Army Group C in southern Italy, implemented new defensive tactics and fortifications.

These were to be more effective at delaying an Allied advance than the panzer counterattacks that had transpired during the invasion of the Italian mainland. After the German withdrawal from Salerno to north of Naples, the stated aim of General Sir Harold Alexander's Allied 15th Army Group, which included Lt. Gen. Bernard Montgomery's Eighth British Army, was the destruction of General Heinrich von Vietinghoff's Tenth Army south of Rome—not simply the capture of the "Eternal City."

Geopolitically, Rome's seizure, to some like British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, would show the Soviets that the Anglo-American alliance was fighting the Germans on a "second front." Strategically, the Allied Italian campaign would also



From their commanding position high atop Monte Cassino, German paratroopers look down into the Garigliano River Valley below. The town of Cassino and the Benedictine abbey on its summit anchored the Germans' "Gustav" defensive line that ran across the width of Italy and stymied Allied efforts to advance on Rome, just 100 miles away. Four bloody battles for Cassino lasted from January 17 until May 18, 1944.

ssino

The Allied stalemate along Italy's Gustav Line, anchored at Monte Cassino, was one of the toughest, most frustrating battles of the entire war.

prevent Kesselring from transferring divisions to France to defend against the Allies' anticipated cross-Channel invasion.

However, geographically, the Allies had to move into the Liri Valley for the thrust to Rome. To thwart an Allied armored advance on Rome, Kesselring wanted Alexander's divisions to "break their teeth" on his now completed Gustav Line—notably at Monte Cassino with its 6th-century Benedictine abbey atop Monastery Hill, which guarded the entrance to the Liri Valley.

The Gustav Line spanned the Italian peninsula's narrowest point for roughly 100 miles—from where the Garigliano River flows into the Tyrrhenian Sea extending east through Apennine Mountains to the Adriatic coast.

As Clark's Fifth Army moved north of the Volturno River in mid-October, the Germans demonstrated continued expertise, honed during the invasion of Sicily, at erecting fortifications and using terrain to delay the Allied movement along the entire front. German automatic-weapons bunkers

Alamy

mutually supporting locations, as well as mortar pits buried deeply within the rock formations, covered every Allied advance route. German minefields were sown on roads and trails as well as in the valleys and gullies between the mountains.

When the Allies contested German forces in Italian towns and villages, they encountered a different element of enemy defense. Stone houses were transformed into small forts requiring both indirect- and direct-fire artillery and tanks to reduce them. Street fighting became a necessity. Booby traps and mines were ubiquitous delaying tactics in all of these village strongpoints.

In addition to an orderly withdrawal, the Germans destroyed almost every major bridge. This compelled the Allies to ford a series of rivers and streams and build temporary Bailey and treadway bridges under harassing enemy fire.

National Archives

Mines also dotted the riverbanks. For example, the Germans placed 24,000 mines along the Garigliano at the western end of the Gustav Line, and German engineers diverted waterways to create flooded areas to delay the Allies. With some rivers at flood stage or above, the Allies used flimsy assault boats for waterway crossing as there was no time for temporary bridging.

During the campaign's mountain warfare south of Rome, control of the heights above determined which combatant was to dominate the valley below. German defensive positions atop mountain peaks were "force multipliers" for Kesselring as well as providing German forward observation posts from which every Allied movement during daylight hours could be targeted.

Thus, much of Fifth Army's advances had to be made under the cover of darkness or smoke. German howitzers and long-range guns, often self-propelled and well-defiladed behind protecting crests, reached nearly every area held by Allied troops and placed them under near constant harassing shellfire. Each heavily defended mountain would have to be captured, each valley below cleared, and the process repeated.

Exploiting the rugged terrain, the Germans used well-chosen strongpoints to slow the numerically superior Allied forces almost to a standstill north of the Volturno River to the approaches of the Gustav Line. Kesselring proved to be a master at moving his forces along interior lines from one threatened position to another to repeatedly stop an Allied thrust.

Without a suitable road network in the Italian mountains, the Allies resorted to manhandling and using sure-footed pack mules as primary methods for resupply. This was a major Allied logistical hurdle, especially north of the town of Cassino and the monastery.

This German fortification zone incorporated some of the best defensive terrain features available. No single key position presented an opportunity for an Allied coup de main that could break the entire system.

Rugged mountainous terrain led up to Cassino and the Gustav Line. The 5,000-foot sparsely inhabited Monte Cairo massif, with its lower heights ranging from 1,500 to 3,000 feet, was the Liri Valley's northern shoulder and ran southeast to 1,700-foot Monte Cassino, which is situated along the western banks of the Rapido and Gari Rivers guarding the valley's entrance.

The Monte Cairo massif was almost devoid of natural routes of communication for a Fifth Army advance. Only two tortuous and narrow roads traversed this desolate landscape. The first one ran to Sant' Elia Fiumerapido, north of Cassino, while the second one coursed from where the Rapido made a northeastward bend to a mountainous area between Colle Belvedere and Monte Cifalco, then northwestward to Atina.

Fifth Army troops that attempted to debouch into the Rapido Valley also faced two isolated hills—Montes Trocchio and Porchia at 1,400 and 800 feet, respectively. Both of these smaller heights were directly on the approach to Cassino and flanked the plain leading across the Rapido River into the Liri Valley. Furthermore, the German diversion of the river upstream had turned the approaches to the Rapido opposite Cassino to a sea of mud.

From the high ground on the far bank of the Rapido, the Germans observed and could bring fire on the entire area below. Any small-scale Fifth Army attack across the Rapido was likely to fail as long as Monte Cassino, along with the hill country to the north and west, was in German possession. Here the Germans had well-sighted artillery and mortar emplacements poised to bring fire on the entire Allied offensive area and large parts of the rear area of U.S. II Corps near Montes Trocchio and Porchia.

The Gari River began just south of the town of Cassino and met the Rapido River near Sant' Angelo. The Rapido, roughly 25 to 50 feet wide with steep banks, had a swift-flowing current and coursed from its mountainous origin north of Monte Cassino,

National Archives

ABOVE: American infantrymen moving up the mountainous Italian peninsula had to battle for nearly every city, town, and village. OPPOSITE: GIs with pack animals haul supplies past a knocked-out German Sturmgeschütz 40 Ausf.F (STuG 40) assault gun while heading toward another town in the Apennine Mountains of Italy.

weaving in a southerly direction in front of the heavily fortified town of Cassino, making it a formidable natural obstacle.

Kesselring had supplemented this Rapido River zone with interlocking minefields, machine-gun pillboxes, concrete and steel entrenchments for field ordnance, barbed wire, and rifle pits.

Several miles downstream, the Rapido flowed into the Liri River near Sant' Ambroglio with the confluence of both waterways becoming the Garigliano River at the southern end of the Liri Valley. Here, the Rapido-Garigliano floodplain constituted one obstacle to the advancing Fifth Army while another five-mile-wide floodplain was situated on the eastern side of the Garigliano's mouth, which made an attack across this area hazardous.

Steep upland mountains, which bordered the western bank of the Garigliano, ended on the southern slopes of Monte Maio and then continued south of the village of Castelforte along high ground north of Minturno to the Tyrrhenian Sea, constituting the western end of the Gustav Line.

Throughout a horrific autumn campaign, marked by violent mountain combat and disastrous river crossings, Clark's Fifth Army slowly forced the German Tenth Army's XIV Panzer Corps, under General Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin, into the Gustav Line's defenses and across the Rapido River. British Eighth Army's XIII and V Corps divisions formed north of the Sangro and Moro Rivers after the gruesome battles for Orsogna and Ortona. The Adriatic sector became static south of the Rome Line.

But it was Monte Cassino that was, indeed, the Gustav Line's centerpiece. Kesselring's defense of this sector, from late January to mid-May 1944, denied a swift Allied entry into the Liri Valley and access to Highway 6 for an advance to Rome. During these four months, the ordeal of the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Battles for Cassino transpired. Despite all his advantages, Kesselring realized that the Gustav Line could not contain the Fifth and Eighth Armies south of Rome indefinitely; however, he reasoned that a delay of several months to an Allied breakthrough along the Gustav Line would forestall the strategically more important crossing of the Northern Apennines' Gothic Line into the Po Valley and northern Italy, which constituted the industrial and agricultural centers of Italy.

Toward the end of December 1943, experienced troop strength changed within Fifth Army. The men of the 45th U.S. "Thunderbird" Division, veterans of the Sicily and Salerno invasions, were relieved by the French Expeditionary Corps' (FEC) 3rd Algerian Division because the 45th, along with the combat-hardened 3rd U.S. Division, were readying for the amphibious end-run assault north of the Gustav Line at Anzio—Operation Shingle, scheduled for January 22, 1944.

Shingle's aim was to force a German withdrawal from the Gustav Line by inserting the U.S. VI Corps behind the Tenth Army. Once the Germans abandoned the Gustav Line, it was assumed, the Allies would be able to make a rapid advance to Rome.

Thus, in January 1944, the U.S. II Corps' 34th and 36th U.S. Divisions, along with the FEC's 2nd Moroccan and 3rd Algerian Divisions, became the Fifth Army's assault divisions to attack across the Rapido as it curved north of Cassino.

On January 16, six days before Shingle was to commence, General Geoffrey Keyes' U.S. II Corps had secured Monte Trocchio, the last high ground before the Rapido River, southwest of Cassino. This vantage point gave the Allies a commanding view of the positions held by the German 44th Infantry and 15th Panzergrenadier Divisions.

Clark's plan was to initially assault the Gustav Line by throwing the U.S. II Corps and British X Corps into the attack, crossing the fast-flowing waters of the Rapido, Garigliano, and Liri Rivers, and then breaking into the Liri Valley from the south. British General Richard McCreery's X Corps had more than a month to rest and to reconnoiter the Garigliano crossings. The 5th British Division, brought in from the Adriatic sector on January 15, took up positions on the Tyrrhenian coast and joined the 56th and 46th Divisions in the center and far right of X Corps' sector, respectively.

On the evening of January 17, X Corps artillery fired across the Garigliano while Allied ships in the Gulf of Gaeta pounded German positions to the rear of the north-

ern bank, but the XIV Panzer Corps did not recoil. The 5th British Division crossed the river at the narrow estuary in landing craft around the Garigliano's mouth and then moved on Minturno and Tufo at the entrance to the Ausente River Valley.

The 56th British Division also successfully crossed the Garigliano and attacked through German positions toward Castelforte and the foothills of the Aurunci Mountains. Next, the 46th British Division attempted the river crossing on either side of Sant' Ambrogio, just to the south of the confluence of the three rivers, where it would serve as the left flank of the U.S. II Corps.

But the 46th's river assault fared poorly, was turned back by heavy enemy fire, and had to be postponed until the next day. By the morning of January 18, all of the 5th and 56th British Divisions' attacking formations were across the river and had established bridgeheads after compelling a retreat of elements of the German 94th Infantry Division in the foothills of the northern bank. The 46th Division was moved south of the abortive crossing of Sant' Ambrogio to join the British 5th and 56th Divisions and defend against enemy counterattacks.

On January 20, Clark ordered two of Maj. Gen. Fred Walker's veteran 36th "Texas" Division's regiments (the 141st and 143rd) to cross the Rapido south of Cassino to keep the Germans occupied on the Gustav Line and prevent them from being transferred to Anzio once Shingle got underway. Clark also wanted his army to break into the Liri Valley toward Frosinone so it could join up with the Anzio invasion force moving inland.

Under the cover of darkness, the "Texas" Division also brought forward assault boats, bridging equipment, ammunition, and smoke pots—the latter to help mask the upcoming river crossing from the overlooking German positions.

However, by the night of the 20th, American attempts to clear mines and mark paths to the river's edge were inadequate at best. From January 20-22, the 36th's 141st and 143rd Infantry Regiments tried to cross the Rapido River to force an entrance into the Liri Valley without success. Casualties were disastrous. By the morning of the 21st, only a handful of platoons from the 143rd had managed to cross to the south of Sant'Angelo and were tenuously holding onto a portion of the river's western bank.

After a German counterattack, the assaulting elements of the regiment's 1st Battalion had to retreat back across the river under enemy fire. To the north of Sant' Angelo, two companies from the 36th's 141st Infantry established a small bridgehead, but it, too, proved impossible to strongly reinforce, as only six rifle companies made it to the west bank. Eventually, only a few dozen survivors of these companies of the 141st would withdraw back to the eastern side of the Rapido.

As one historian has written, "When General Clark received the news of this failure, he insisted that the Texans try again, supported by tanks," ordering Keyes to resume the

ABOVE: Advancing with Bren guns, British soldiers use the cover of a stone wall on a terraced hillside to advance against German positions near the town of Cassino, January 1944. It took the Allies four major assaults to finally secure Monastery Hill. BELOW: American and French colonial troops pick their way through a village destroyed by the German Luftwaffe near Cassino, January 14, 1944.

Both: National Archives

National Archives

Men of the U.S. 36th Division form a firing line in a shallow ditch during the disastrous attempt to cross the Rapido River and outflank the Cassino defenses.

attack with the surviving battalions of the 143rd Infantry Regiment. At 4 PM on January 21, the 143rd, under a heavy artillery screen, made a second river crossing attempt.

A total of five infantry companies comprised the American bridgehead on the western side of the Rapido River; however, before dawn the next day this salient was eliminated by a German counterattack.

The Fifth Army's initial assault on the Gustav Line and access to the Liri Valley south of Cassino, after initial optimism at Clark's headquarters, came to a halt on January 22. General Walker noted, "Yesterday two regiments of this division were wrecked on the west bank of the Rapido. Thank the Lord, General Keyes finally changed his mind and authorized me to call off the attack…."

The "wreckage" was severe, with American losses in the Rapido crossing amounting to more than 140 dead, roughly 700 wounded, and almost 900 missing.

Operation Shingle, launched on the 22nd, caught the Germans by surprise, but VI Corps commander John Lucas feared a German counterattack, as had earlier occurred at Salerno, and kept his forces close to the beachhead. His reluctance to aggressively push inland allowed Kesselring time to bottle up the Allies by bringing in enough fresh units without weakening his Gustav Line.

The failed crossing of the Rapido on January 20-22 also changed the axis of the FEC's advance. Two of General Alphonse Juin's four divisions, the 2nd Moroccan and 3rd Algerian, began their offensive to the north of the 34th U.S. Division on January 24.

The Moroccans breached the Gustav Line near Monte Santa Croce, while the Algerians crossed the Rapido River in the vicinity of Sant' Elia Fiumerapido and turned southwest to parallel the 34th's movements, advancing on Colle Belvedere and then Monte Abate, in the process severing the road to Atina to the north on January 26.

At Monte Abate, the FEC forces were soon counterattacked by elements of the German 44th Infantry Division, which evicted the Tunisian 4th Rifle Regiment from the mountain and kept Juin from retaking the height.

Keyes reinforced the Algerians with the 36th Division's 142nd Infantry Regiment (which had not participated in the Rapido crossing debacle days before) to advance southward on Monte Cassino from the Colle Belvedere area. But from their elevated observation posts German gunners could direct artillery and mortar fire onto any Allied approach toward Monte Cassino.

Keyes' exhausted, combat-depleted Fifth Army's II Corps now needed Lt. Gen. Oliver Leese's Eighth Army (Montgomery had just departed for England) to assist with the stalled Gustav Line offensive. The combat-experienced 2nd New Zealand Division was brought west across the Apennines and combined with Maj. Gen. Francis Tuker's veteran 4th Indian Division to form the II New Zealand Corps under Lt. Gen. Bernard Freyberg on January 30.

Changes were also made in II Corps. After the bloody repulse of the "Texas" Division at the Rapido, Maj. Gen. Charles Ryder's 34th "Red Bull" Infantry Division, with the 36th's 142nd Regiment attached, was brought up and prepared to attack across the river north of Cassino.

The 34th Division's attack commenced on January 24 near the bend of the waterway's course, with its 133rd and 135th Infantry Regiments advancing into flooded terrain. But extensive minefields and interlocking machine-gun fire necessitated a withdrawal.

However, on January 26-27, the 34th's 168th Infantry Regiment, supported by a handful of tanks from the 756th U.S. Tank Battalion, managed to establish a bridgehead across the Rapido opposite Caira farther to the north of the 133rd and 135th Regiments, and captured two small hills and enemy bunkers.

Over the next few days, tank-infantry cooperation enabled the 34th to take Caira, forcing Kesselring to bring in his 90th Panzergrenadier and 1st Parachute Divisions from the Adriatic coast to slow the 34th's penetration. The 135th Infantry Regiment then passed through the 168th to advance up the hills behind the Abbey

and reach Highway 6.

Slow progress was made by the Allies in the northern outskirts of Cassino during the first few days of February 1944 amid logistically challenged combat in the Monte Cairo massif, as the 34th's regiments tried to outflank German defenses at Cassino. On February 1, the 133rd drove west toward Cassino and cleared the Monte Villa Barracks.

The 135th also seized the commanding height of Monte Castellone, just to Caira's southwest. The next day, the 34th, accompanied by American tanks, began the attack from the north of the town but met with fierce resistance.

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Fortified masonry houses served as bunkers, along with antitank gun positions along the Caruso Road's intersections, which stopped the American advance.

Four days later, elements of the 135th Infantry Regiment, despite withering fire, captured an area near Hill 593, which overlooked the abbey, 1,000 yards away. The 168th came to within several hundred yards of Mount Calvary, a tactical key point overlooking Monte Cassino, which was to change hands among the combatants during the first few days of February as fresh panzergrenadier and paratroop reinforcements launched their counterattacks.

During the night of February 5-6, the 168th directly assaulted Monte Cassino via a deep gorge and, although some Germans were captured from a Monastery Hill cave, the Red Bulls had to pull back because of heavy German fire.

Resupply of the 34th's positions was difficult as combat exhaustion and casualties mounted. The remaining battalions of the 34th Division were ineffective in a renewed assault on February 11 to seize Monastery Hill and the town of Cassino as German artillery and mortars stopped them within a few hundred yards of their rocky positions.

The American attack was ebbing. By February 12, some areas to the north of the town were gained by the Americans as a small portion of the Gustav Line was pierced, but there was no general advance.

From February 12-14, after three weeks of constant fighting, elements of the II NZ Corps' 4th Indian Division took over the 34th U.S. Division's positions near Hill 593 and other heights overlooking Cassino from the north. Only 25 percent of the combined 3,200-man initial strength of the 34th's 135th and 168th Infantry Regiments now remained.

If the reinforced 34th Division and the FEC could succeed in their attack, the 4th Indian and 2nd NZ Divisions were to move through them and exploit the breakthrough. However, Freyberg's NZ and Indian troops were held in reserve rather than committed to the tail end of the hard-pressed Allied mountain attack north of the town and monastery during the First Battle of Cassino.

These battle-hardened Eighth Army troops instead served only to evacuate the dead and wounded American troops and take over the hard-fought, costly ground that they had won. The First Battle of Cassino ended with the Germans still in possession of most of the town, the monastery, and the surrounding heights just to the west.

After the unsuccessful U.S. II Corps attempts to break through the Gustav Line north and south of Cassino, Clark deployed the II NZ Corps to, perhaps belatedly, follow up on the ground gained by the 34th U.S. Division's three attacking regiments and the attached 142nd Infantry from the 36th Division. American lines in the vicinity of Snakeshead Ridge, northwest of the abbey and to the north of the town, were held by the remnants of these four U.S. II Corps regiments.

Both Tuker and Freyberg had convinced the Allied chain of command—Alexander, Clark, and Field Marshal Henry Wilson, commander of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO)—that the monastery's obliteration was a prerequisite for a successful attack, as they (wrongly) believed the Germans were overlooking their moves from within the abbey. Clark was opposed, but was overruled.

Unknown to the Allies, the Germans weren't inside the monastery, but they did have positions ringing it; German XIV Corps commanding general Senger und Etterlin forbade the Abbey's use, except for the wounded.

After dropping leaflets notifying anyone in the monastery that it was going to be bombed, the Second Battle of Cassino, Operation Avenger, began on February 15 with

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ABOVE: Clouds of dust and smoke obscure this aerial view above Monastery Hill, where St. Benedict established the monastery in AD 529. The New Zealand commander had demanded that the abbey be destroyed before he would send his men to attack the hill. BELOW: Fighting their way uphill past a shattered building, two New Zealanders attempt to dislodge the enemy. Like all the other units at Monte Cassino, the Kiwis suffered heavy casualties for little gain. OPPOSITE: Looming 1,700 feet above Cassino town (shown being shelled by the Allies), the Benedictine abbey offered unrestricted views of the entire area but was not occupied by the Germans until after it was destroyed on February 15.

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a massive four-hour air raid by Allied medium and heavy bombers, followed by an artillery bombardment. Advanced units of the 4th Indian Division's 7th Brigade, receiving little warning of the aerial assault, incurred some "friendly fire" casualties.

The monastery's outer walls were destroyed by the bombardment of February 15, while the west wing and cellars remained intact. After sundown, the Germans transformed the ruins into a defensive bastion.

Freyberg's unimaginative plan was a continuation of Cassino's first battle, and he gave it only a 50 percent chance of success. Its scope was extremely small in terms of the size of the forces deployed. The 4th Indian Division was to attack in battalion strength southward past the American positions, which they relieved on February 12, to seize Hills 593, 569, 444, and 516 as a prelude to assaulting the monastery and then advance down the hill and cut the road to the town of Cassino.

The 28th Maori Battalion of the 2nd NZ Division was to separately cross the Rapido River in the vicinity of the town's railway station, to ultimately rendezvous with the anticipated victorious Indians, thereby gaining an entry into the Liri Valley via Highway 6.

But two separate attacks by the 7th Indian Brigade failed to capture Hill 593 on February 15-16. Other elements of the 4th Indian Division continued the attack on the monastery on the 17th and 18th; however, with units of the German 1st Parachute Division situated behind minefields and barbed wire, the Indians lost almost 650 officers and men killed, wounded, or missing.

Using bridges and causeways that sappers had repaired under fire, two companies of Maoris crossed the Rapido-soaked fields and fought their way into Cassino's railway station on February 17.

Despite an extensive smokescreen to mask the engineers' work from German observers, crucial bridges that would support Allied armor were not repaired, limiting the attack to only a Maori battalion-sized infantry assault. The customary counterattack with some panzers ensued, and the Maoris withdrew, their ammunition exhausted. The short-lived Second Battle for Cassino ended like the first—with the Germans in command of the town and now occupying the ruins of the monastery atop Monte Cassino.

The Third Battle of Cassino, Operation Dickens, began on March 15, 1944. Freyberg realized that it was vital to attack the town of Cassino and monastery from multiple directions and get both tanks and infantry assaulting simultaneously.

He now believed that assaults solely from Snakeshead Ridge and the various nearby hills northwest of Monte Cassino

would fail, thus an Indian effort to capture the heights below the monastery was essential in conjunction with the New Zealanders' assault on the town.

If they could capture the town, the New Zealanders were to dislodge the Germans along the heights by outflanking them in southward and westward movements to seize Cassino town and, perhaps, a portion of Highway 6. The Kiwi advances were to facilitate the Indian units in reaching their elevated points to capture the monastery and, perhaps, seal the German escape into the Liri Valley.

In Freyberg's final planning for Dickens, the town of Cassino was also to be bombed during the morning of March 15 by 500 Allied heavy and medium bombers, followed by a creeping artillery barrage behind which the New Zealanders would launch their ground attack.

The plan of attack was ambitious; two infantry companies and an armored squadron would hit the northern part of town and advance to the Hotel Continental. Another infantry company would seize Castle Hill (Hill 193) and then be relieved by part of the 5th Indian Brigade, 4th Indian Division, which would then continue on to assault its next objective, Hill 165.

Castle Hill was to serve as an advance point for other battalion-sized units from the 5th Indian Brigade to assault the hillsides above the town. Then elements of the NZ 24th and 26th Battalions, 6th NZ Infantry Brigade, with Allied tanks, were to attack the town from the east.

The bombing of Cassino on the morning of March 15 was stupendous. During the spectacle, one British soldier said, "After a few minutes I felt like shouting, 'That's enough!' but it went on and on until our eardrums were bursting and our senses befuddled."

The Germans on the receiving end were even more shocked. One soldier recalled, "This time we were in the midst of it. The air vibrated, and it was as if a huge hand was shaking the town."

Another German wrote in his diary, "Today hell is let loose at Cassino." An awe-struck American officer said, "We have

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fumigated Cassino," believing no one was left alive.

The Allied bombing and barrage leveled the town, creating huge piles of rubble and up to 60-foot-deep craters that were impassable to tanks. However, there were survivors, and the host of ruins became fortified defensive positions for them. Smoke and dust clouded the ruins as snipers killed runners and signalers to disrupt communications.

On that day, a platoon of Company D of the NZ 25th Battalion captured Hill 165, only to take fire from Castle Hill (Hill 193) on one side and from Hill 236 above them. Two other platoons from Company D took the castle; however, the 5th Indian Brigade's men did not reach the castle until midnight, several hours after the Kiwis' attack. It would not be until early on March 16 that the Indians reinforced Hill 165.

Two other companies of the NZ 25th Battalion moved south toward the Hotel Continental while receiving enemy sniper, machine-gun, and Nebelwerfer fire from the town and nearby hills, which delayed their advance.

There were insufficient numbers of Kiwi infantry to press the attack, as the NZ 6th Brigade's 24th and 26th Battalions were delayed in their assault from the east. Even the German ground commanders at Cassino were perplexed by such massive firepower being employed only to be followed by a paltry infantry assault of a few battalions and tanks.

On March 16, almost 24 hours behind schedule, other elements of the 5th Indian Brigade went into action. Two companies of the 1/6th Rajputana Rifles attempted to attack Hill 236, but they were driven back to the castle, while two other companies from this battalion were lost to German Nebelwerfer fire and had not secured the intervening Hills 236 and 202 to cover the 1/9th Gurkha Rifles' attack on Hangman's Hill (Hill 435).

Nonetheless, platoon-sized elements of the 1/9th Gurkha Rifles ascended Hangman's Hill and clambered to within 300 yards of the monastery's walls under the cover of darkness. The attack stalled, and they were to remain there in a precarious situation, reinforced only by the continued gradual arrival of other small units from this battalion and receiving supplies only by airdrop or manhandling them up the height.

On March 16, Kesselring transferred elements of the 4th Parachute Regiment to Cassino from nearby Colle Sant' Angelo located west of Snakeshead Ridge and north of Highway 6.

The weather also changed that evening as rain began to fall. The next day saw the Third Battle for Cassino end in stagnation as terrain, debris, and a need for low casualties forced both the Indians and New Zealanders to fight in small groups with limited armored support.

Fortunately, by March 17 the railway station was occupied by units from the NZ 26th Battalion that had advanced southward against a tenacious defense put up by elements of the German 2nd Parachute Battalion. On the 18th, other units from the NZ 25th Battalion, which had kept moving south from Hill 165, failed to capture the Hotel Continental, but the railway station and other parts of Cassino were to remain in Kiwi control despite strong German counterattacks.

On March 18-19, German parachutists attacked the 5th Indian Brigade atop Castle Hill as they were deploying to reinforce their Gurkha comrades on Hangman's Hill. Ferocious close-quarter combat ensued, with the Germans eventually withdrawing.

A converging Allied attack on Monastery Hill was to be launched from two disparate locales on the morning of March 19. From Hangman's Hill, elements of the 1/9th Gurkha Rifles were to comprise one salient of the assault. However, with persistent and determined German small-arms and mortar fire from parachutists above them, and without adequate 4th Indian Division reinforcements, the attack was called off.

A second, simultaneous assault on Monastery Hill from the west was launched with 19 M4 medium Sherman and 21 M3 Stuart light tanks assembled from the U.S. 760th Tank Battalion, 20th NZ Armored Brigade, and a 7th Indian Brigade Reconnaissance Squadron.

This armored element advanced down the Cavendish Road to the west of Snakeshead Ridge near the Albaneta Farm. The Germans were initially stunned by this bold thrust; however, the opportunity created by the Allied armored attack was halted due to an absence of accompanying infantry to support the tanks, poor local Allied leadership, and enemy minefields that were hastily sown but still managed to destroy almost a score of tanks.

By the close of March 19, both New Zealanders and Germans were still wrestling for control of Cassino town. The 28th Maori Battalion of the 5th NZ Brigade attacked from the east but again failed to capture the Hotel Continental and the Hotel des Roses. Four more days of limited but fierce combat at separate locales continued until Alexander called off further II NZ Corps attacks on March 23.

Freyberg's troops solidified their limited gains within the ruins of the town of Cassino, while the Gurkha and Rajputana Rifles abandoned their blood-soaked positions on Hangman's Hill and the intervening territory between Hills 236 and 202 without any further casualties on the night of the 24th. The German paratroopers, however, had also been decimated out of proportion to the scope of the fighting.

With a compelling need for a new attack scheme to reverse the three-month-long string of failed Allied efforts to break the Gustav Line, General Alexander began his operational planning for a May 1944 offensive called Operation Diadem, of which the battle for Cassino would become a finale. Coordinated with Operation Buffalo, a plan for VI Corps to break out of the Anzio beachhead, the Allies were hopeful that this time they would

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ABOVE: A mortar crew of the outnumbered but tough 1st Fallschirm Division prepares to fire their weapon near Monte Cassino, February 1944. LEFT: Operating with an American jeep and Sherman tank, elements of the New Zealand 4th Armoured Brigade move through the rubble of Cassino, May 18, 1944. The total destruction of the town inhibited the Allies' progress through it. OPPOSITE: Members of the 9th Ghurka Regiment, 5th Indian Brigade, 4th Indian Division move through the ruins of Cassino. During the four-month-long battle, the Allies had eight different nationalities represented in their ranks.

succeed on both fronts.

The Fifth and Eighth Armies were to attack the Gustav Line on May 11 under Alexander's unified command and his planned three-to-one numerical superiority in infantry. It was to be a return to the "set-piece" British-style offensive.

Set-piece offensives involved the profligate expenditure of artillery. During the run-up to Diadem, Fifth Army guns fired 170,000 rounds within four hours. A Polish lieutenant said, "Apart from 1,100 pieces of artillery, there were the mortars and antitank guns blazing away—the noise deafened us."

After recovering from battle wounds sustained while commanding 7th Armoured Division in North Africa, Lt. Gen. A.F. "John" Harding, an experienced staff officer and desert field commander in Montgomery's Eighth Army, arrived in the MTO on New Year's Day 1944 to become Alexander's chief of staff.

Harding saw that a major offensive on the Gustav Line along the Cassino-Garigliano front was more likely to strategically break the months-long deadlock than on the Adriatic side, so he recommended that Eighth Army's commanding general Leese redeploy British Lt. Gen. Sidney Kirkman's XIII Corps west across the Central Apennines to occupy an area from the Liri River up to the south of Cassino on the eastern bank of the Rapido River.

Kirkman's XIII Corps was composed of 8th Indian and British 4th Infantry Divisions in line for the attack, with the British 78th Infantry and 6th Armoured Divisions in reserve on the left flank of its zone south of Cassino. To the right of XIII Corps and facing Monte Cassino and extending north opposite the Monte Cairo massif was Lt. Gen. Wladyslaw Anders' Polish II Corps' 3rd Carpathian Rifles and 5th Kresowa Divisions, with the Polish 2nd Armoured Brigade in support.

McCreery's British X Corps had been transferred from the Garigliano sector to the northern Rapido zone—a desolate, virtually impassable mountainous wilderness area along the Central Apennines—to become the right flank for the Polish II Corps.

Freyberg's II NZ Corps divisions, which were out of the line for rest and refitting, were ordered back into the new British X Corps sector along with a division-sized formation of Italian troops now fighting for the Allies; Lt. Gen. Charles Allfrey's British V Corps remained on the Adriatic coast.

Alexander shifted Clark's U.S. Fifth Army, composed of the U.S. II Corps and FEC, to the southern end of the Gustav Line. From the Tyrrhenian seacoast Keyes commanded II Corps' newly arrived 85th and 88th U.S. Infantry Divisions with the now four FEC divisions (Algerian 3rd Infantry, Moroccan 4th Mountain and 2nd Infantry, and French 1st Motorized) on their right flank facing Castelforte, Montes Maio and Faito, as well as the Ausente River Valley, which ran parallel to the Castelforte-Ausonia road. Juin's FEC would strike into the mountains forming the southern wall of the Liri Valley.

Lieutenant General E.L.M. Burns' I Canadian Corps, with its 5th Armoured Division and 1st Independent Canadian Armoured Brigade supporting the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, along with the 6th South African Armoured Division, was held in reserve, ready to exploit a breakthrough into the Liri Valley.

Alexander and Harding wanted to wait until mid-May to launch the Gustav Line

ullstein bild

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ABOVE: Once a sacred religious site, the abbey was reduced to a pile of rubble. After the war it was completely rebuilt to resemble its previous glory and today is a much visited tourist and pilgrimage site. OPPOSITE: A pair of German paratroopers use the rubble of the destroyed abbey as an ideal position for their MG42.

offensive, as drier weather and clearer skies would amplify the Allied advantages in armor and air power. But Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of France at Normandy, was fast approaching; Clark and Churchill both desperately wanted to take Rome before Overlord wiped the Italian campaign off the front pages.

Strategically, Operation Diadem was designed to engage German divisions that might be moved to meet the upcoming Allied invasion at Normandy. Also, it was Alexander and Harding's intent to destroy the German Tenth Army along the Gustav Line, not merely push it back to the next of Kesselring's defensive positions nor simply capture Rome.

Unlike the Second and Third Battles for Cassino, where only companies and battalions were deployed, the two British generals planned to initially hurl two Allied corps—the British XIII and Polish II—against the Cassino fortifications along seven to eight miles of front extending from the foot of Monte Cassino to the Liri River, the locus of previous failed Rapido and Garigliano River assaults. This attack route for Diadem was selected as the only portion of the Gustav Line against which Allied armor of up to 2,000 tanks could be unleashed in strength.

Vietinghoff's German Tenth Army had to hold the sector extending from Monte Cassino south to the Liri River to prevent its bisection. Eighth Army's divisions were to be pitted against tenacious German parachutists amid the piles of stone rubble defenses in Cassino. The Allied front was directly observed and covered by German artillery and mortars.

Once they broke through the Gustav Line, Frosinone and Valmontone to the northwest, both within the Liri Valley along Highway 6, were the main goals of Alexander and Harding. The British commanders believed that an Allied linkup with VI Corps, now under Maj. Gen. Lucian Truscott, breaking out of the Anzio beachhead, and the formations attacking through the Liri Valley at Valmontone had the potential of destroying the entire German Tenth Army.

The British XIII Corps was to batter the German defenses and force a Rapido River crossing at Sant' Angelo under artillery bombardment. The Polish II Corps was assigned the capture the heights of Monte Cassino and then move on to Piedimonte San Germano, the northern anchor of the Hitler Line, several miles beyond the Gustav Line's defenses. After breeching the Gustav Line just to the south of Cassino, Burns' I Canadian Corps was to enter the Liri Valley and advance onto the Hitler Line (also known as the Senger, Dora, or Orange Line) defenses, with British XIII Corps on its right flank.

Facing the Allies were the German XIV Corps' 94th, 71st, and 15th Panzergrenadier Divisions. The two divisions of the U.S. II Corps would go up against the German 94th Division, while the FEC Corps, comprising four divisions including more than 7,000 irregular mountain troops from the Maghreb, was to be pitted against the German 71st Division.

The Wehrmacht's LI Mountain Corps, under General Valentin Feuerstein, faced the British X, Polish II, and British XIII Corps and defended the northern half of the Liri Valley up to the southern escarpment between Monte Cassino and Piedimonte San Germano.

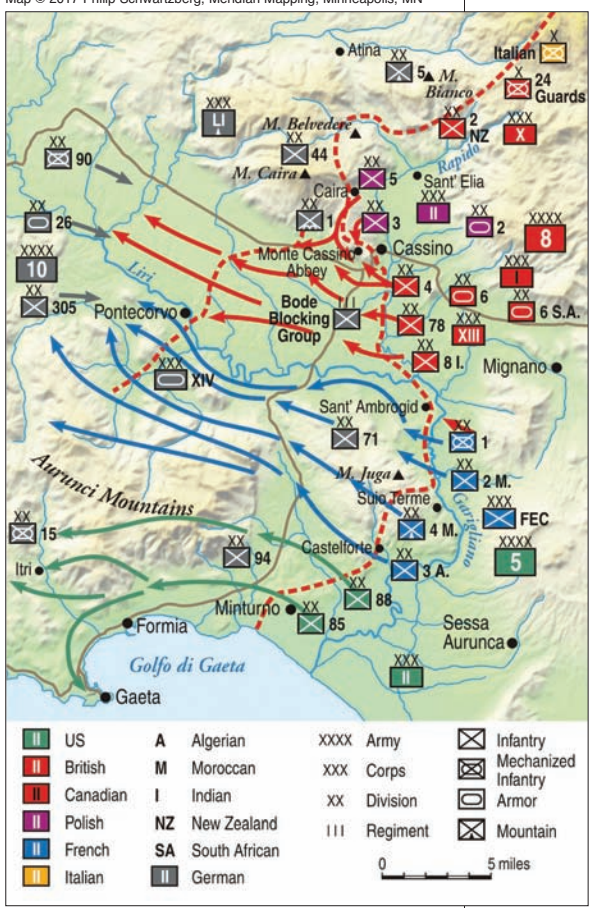
This mountain corps was composed of the 44th Division on the southern bank of the Liri River; battalions of the 1st Parachute Division in the town of Cassino and within the monastery; the 5th Mountain Division; and elements of the 114th Jäger Division to the north of the paratroops. Group Hauke, a corps-sized formation formed by the 334th and 305th Infantry Divisions, constituted the German Tenth Army's left flank extending toward the Adriatic seacoast guarding against the British V Corps.

At 11:45 PM on May 11, the British XIII Corps' attack by leading elements of its 8th Indian and 4th British Infantry Divisions initially appeared to be yet another failed Rapido River assault as the swift waterways' current capsized and swept assault boats downstream. However, other attacking battalions were able to make it across to form a limited bridgehead.

Further advance was stalled by a lack of

heavy weapons or armor support against a deep and continuous network of German field and concrete fortifications and minefields. Although the 8th Indian Division had two bridges spanning the Rapido near Sant' Angelo by morning on May 12, insufficient tank-bearing bridges had been built due to accurate enemy artillery and gunfire driving the engineers into cover.

Kesselring, recognizing that his Tenth Army's defenses were penetrated near Sant' Angelo, fed in only piecemeal reinforcements to contest the British bridgehead. It



The fourth and final assault (Operation Diadem), begun on May 11 by the British Eighth Army, resulted in a breakthrough of the Gustav Line and the Allied push up into the Liri Valley. Rome fell on June 4, 1944.

was not until 5 AM on May 13 that the 4th British Division was able to erect a bridge.

The next day Leese committed the 78th British Division from reserve to reinforce the 2,000-yard-deep bridgehead despite vehicle congestion and muddy terrain. After three days of unrelenting combat, Kirkman's XIII Corps was still unable to penetrate the Gustav Line south of Cassino, so Leese ordered the I Canadian Corps to take over the front of the 8th Indian Division on May 15.

The Polish II Corps' two infantry divisions had also struggled for two weeks on the Monte Cassino-Monte Cairo massif before Diadem's start. The rocky ground forced the Poles to burrow into the protection of small stone sangars with any movement drawing German fire. The Polish assault battalions had begun their attack at 1 AM on May 12, incurring a casualty rate of 20 percent, and were tardy seizing their objectives.

Without proper reconnaissance, there had been no coordinated preliminary artillery bombardment of German positions. Enemy minefields prevented close Polish armor support, causing heavy casualties among the engineers trying to clear them. Finally, the Poles were pitted against the ferocity of the German parachutists.

Within 12 hours of the start of the Polish II Corps assault, the tactical situation had become completely confused, and the attack was temporarily postponed for reorganization. Nonetheless, by May 16, the Poles eliminated several defensive positions in a brutal struggle of attrition.

Along the Tyrrhenian coastal area, the U.S. II Corps attacks at the start of Operation Diadem on May 11-12 emanating from Tufo and Minturno had failed. Near San Maria Infante, a battalion from the 339th Infantry Regiment, 85th Division suffered over 75 percent casualties from German artillery bombardments and a stout 94th Infantry Division defense.

The next three days saw little American progress, but suddenly on May 15, the Germans began withdrawing due to the stunning FEC breakthrough of the Gustav Line from Castelforte to the Liri River and into the barren hilly terrain of the Aurunci Mountains.

The German commanders had deemed the FEC attack zone impassable, but elements of the 2nd Moroccan Division surprised them by advancing four miles within 24 hours of Diadem's start, taking Monte Maio on May 13. As German forces were thin in this mountainous terrain, FEC units broke through all along this sector.

Elements of the French 1st Motorized Division then arrived on high ground near Sant' Apollinare and were poised to move into the Liri Valley on May 14. The Germans never recovered from this breakthrough; the Wehrmacht's 71st Division disintegrated after its flanks were enveloped, causing heavy casualties and 2,000 men captured. The remnants of the 71st withdrew to the Hitler Line on May 14, numbering only 100 combat-effective infantrymen by May 18.

As a result of the FEC success, the U.S. 85th and 88th Divisions progressed nine miles beyond the Garigliano River's mouth toward Formia against the hard-pressed German 94th Division. On the 15th, Kesselring agreed to a general withdrawal in the Tyrrhenian coastal sector.

On May 17, Polish infantry battalions, under the cover of Allied fighter bomber sorties, again failed to dislodge the Germans from Monte Cassino. Although the German paratroopers continued to fight with fury, the Poles, after being initially halted, renewed their assault along Phantom Ridge and Snakeshead Ridge as the British XIII Corps worked its way behind Monte Cassino. Polish armor then began rolling down Cavendish Road and attacked Albeneta Farm.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, the German paratroopers pulled out during the night and retreated to the Hitler Line; the Poles had taken the monastery and the heights. The banner of the 12th Podolski Lancers was hoisted above the ruined abbey on the morning of May 18. Fourth British Infantry Division units cleared Cassino town, and sappers, including a South African engineer unit, began clearing Highway

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ABOVE: Polish soldiers of the 3rd Carpathian Division haul ammunition up the steep, rocky terrain of Monastery Hill in May 1944. After other divisions had tried and failed, Lt. Gen. Wladyslaw Anders' Poles finally claimed the abbey after the Germans withdrew from the heights. RIGHT: After the monastery was bombed, German paratroopers moved into the ruins, which proved to be useful for defensive operations.

6 of rubble for the movement of Allied armor.

The Poles had suffered heavily: almost 300 officers and more than 3,500 other ranks, with over 800 deaths. But their attack worked.

Meanwhile, U.S. II Corps divisions had taken Gaeta and Itri on May 19, and FEC forces on that day crossed the Itri-Pico Road, which connected Highways 6 and 7, and entered the Ausoni mountain range. The next day, American infantrymen entered Fondi as the French continued their thrust toward Pico on the Hitler Line, the latter threatening to trap the German Tenth Army in the Liri Valley.

Terracina was captured on the 22nd, and three days later a special group of the Allied VI Corps beachhead forces from Anzio finally made contact at Borgo Grappa with troops coming up from the Gustav Line. Clark was there to observe the linkup—and to have his picture taken by Army photographers. The race to Rome could now begin in earnest.

But the Liri Valley's terrain of thickets, vegetation, and muddy ditches provided excellent German defensive cover, making travel on Highway 6 hazardous. The German defensive order of battle was the depleted 1st Parachute and 90th Panzergrenadier Divisions, with some tanks from the 26th Panzer Division. The strength of the German position in the Liri Valley was in its fortifications, especially the buried Panzer V turrets (Panzerturm) which, with their 75mm long-barreled guns, were Allied tank killers.

After the British XIII Corps initially pierced the Gustav Line, the I Canadian Corps—consisting of the 5th Armoured Division and 1st Independent Canadian Armoured Brigade supporting the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, along with the 6th South African Armoured Division—received orders to advance to the Hitler Line, several miles up the Liri Valley from the Rapido River.

The Canadians had made probing attacks against the Hitler Line on May 19-20, then the 1st Canadian Infantry Division launched its major attack, Operation Chesterfield, on the morning of May 23 at Pontecorvo, supported by Eighth Army's 700 guns.

The Canadians broke the German defenses in a day's combat; however, there were steep casualties—900 infantrymen and 80 Royal Tank Regiment crewmen. A followup assault by British XIII Corps the next day broke this defensive belt completely despite counterattacks by the German 26th Panzer and 305th Infantry Divisions.

On May 25, Canadian motorized columns crossed the Melfa River farther up the Liri Valley, while elements of the British 78th and 8th Indian Divisions took Aquino. On May 31, the Canadians captured Frosinone on Highway 6.

A united Allied front was soon established for the drive to Rome, but Mark Clark did everything in his power to keep the British and other Allied troops from

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taking part in the capture of the city, which took place on June 4—two days before Overlord was launched.

It had been a bitter and costly four-month ordeal to pierce the Gustav Line and seize Monte Cassino, enabling the Allied entry into the Liri Valley; with great sacrifice the Allies did it. But there were still 11 more months of hard fighting in Italy before peace was declared. □

The relatively small but effective 6th South African Division made a significant contribution to victory in Italy.

from TOBRUK *to* MILAN

BY BRIG. GEN. (RET.) RAYMOND E. BELL

The contribution of the Union of South Africa's armed forces to the winning of World War II is little known outside South Africa itself. Yet the country sent significant numbers of troops into battle against the Axis powers, both in the air and on the ground, where their contribution has largely been overshadowed by that of their allies and their leaders.

In the Italian campaign, the combat record of the 6th South African Armoured Division remains largely hidden, along with those records of the 1st Brazilian Expeditionary Force, the all-black 92nd U.S. Infantry Division, and various Italian combat groups fighting on the Allied side. It was only in the last years of the war in Italy that the South African division emerged in battle histories as being worthy of recognition for its effective and significant wartime participation.

Initially, the Union of South Africa was not a willing participant in the conflict. The British suppression of two of the former countries constituting the union—the South African Republic and the Orange Free State—in 1902 still rankled among many of their citizens. The South African burghers, as they were called, had fought the British to a standstill, only to

Imperial War Museum

6th South African Armoured Division M4 Shermans firing at Monte Sole during the breakthrough to Bologna, April 1945. After early victories in North Africa, the South African contingent was kept in reserve until after the fall of Rome, June 4, 1944. The men then really proved their mettle.

be literally starved into submission.

Foremost among those who enthusiastically supported the Allied cause in the war was the former South African general and prime minister, later field marshal, Jan Christian Smuts. His influence initially bore fruit in the formation of the Union Brigade—some 10,000 men drawn from the reserve units of the South African Army.

The brigade, which initially deployed to Kenya, took time to train to a standard of combat effectiveness. It later moved to the island of Madagascar, a French colony controlled in 1940 by the Vichy-French government. Besides the ground unit,

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South Africa sent pilots that fought gallantly alongside the British Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain air campaign against Germany. South African ships also sailed with their Allied counterparts.

With a paucity of army divisions in Africa in 1940, the British sought additional contributions from their Dominion countries. The South African response was to organize and train two infantry divisions that were pitted against the Germans and Italians in North Africa.

The better part of the 2nd South African Infantry Division was compelled to surrender in 1942 when German General Erwin Rommel attacked and captured the coastal Libyan city of Tobruk. The 1st South African Infantry Division attacked along with other Allied formations at the Battle of El Alamein in November 1942.

After the breakthrough and rout of the Germans and Italians by the British Eighth Army, the South African land contingent was withdrawn to be converted into what would become the 6th South African Armoured Division.

In April 1943, the nascent division began landing at the Italian port of Taranto equipped with American arms, especially M4 Sherman tanks, and equipment. Except for the artillery, the division was not to see real action until after Rome was captured by the Americans on June 4, 1944.

The division had been kept as a reserve formation under British Eighth Army control and then under the U.S. Fifth Army until the end of the war. The division earned its plaudits during the advance north from Rome in the late summer of 1944 until its breakthrough of German defenses in northern Italy in May 1945. On July 18, 1942, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent a note to then Maj. Gen. Hastings L. Ismay, who was considering converting the two South African infantry divisions into armored divisions; 300 new Sherman tanks had become available to equip new armored forces, such as the South African units.

Before he agreed to allocating what he called a "windfall," however, Churchill wanted to know on "what scale" or how the divisions would be organized. He asked if the divisions would be organized with one armored brigade and one motorized infantry brigade. This "new scale" would require only 200 tanks as opposed to the "old 350-tank scale."

Churchill's communication is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. First, its timing. The query came when General Sir Claude Auchinleck's troops had been pushed back into Egypt with his Dominion forces at El Alamein, and he was preparing to launch an attack on Rommel. Unwilling to rush into an assault without additional preparation, Auchinleck was relieved on August 13, 1942, by General Harold R.L.G. Alexander with Lt. Gen. Bernard L. Montgomery as the new Eighth Army commander.

Conversion of divisions, although agreed upon, could not be accomplished in time for Montgomery's October offensive, which ended with the Axis forces being pushed back into Tunisia. It remained until December 21, 1942, when the South African infantry divisions were withdrawn from Eighth Army before any conversion could begin, and then, instead of two armored divisions, only one—the 6th—was organized, equipped, and trained using mostly American matériel.

Second, Churchill's concern for the organization and thus the number of tanks in a division reflected on the realization that the balance between the number of tanks in an armored division and the amount of infantry was akimbo. The Americans had determined that their "heavy" armored divisions—consisting of two tank regiments of three battalions each and one mechanized (armored) infantry regiment of three battalions—should be reconfigured so that the division had only three tank battalions and three armored infantry battalions.

Alamy

ABOVE: German vehicles, knocked out by South African forces, burn in the Libyan desert, 1941. After North Africa was secured, the South African forces went through a massive reorganization to prepare them for fighting in Italy. OPPOSITE: South African soldiers celebrate the capture of Hobok Fort in Abyssinia from Italian forces, February 1941.

In September 1942, the British had two types of armored divisions, of which one was then stationed in Britain and known as the Home Forces division, and the other type fighting in North Africa. The Home Forces division had 201 tanks while the division in North Africa might have as many as 350 armored fighting vehicles. Eventually the smaller division organization prevailed, which was how the 6th South African Armoured Division was organized.

The rationale for reconfiguring the South African divisions from infantry to armor soon became open to question. In the desert environment, armored formations with their high mobility were preferred combat organizations. After a major penetration or envelopment was achieved, it was important to insert a fast-moving unit into the breach to exploit any success.

An armored division's primary mission was to dash forward, preferably into enemy rear areas in a pursuit mode. If the proposed two South African armored divisions were to be employed solely in North Africa, such reorganization was a plausible solution. But in December 1942, barely a month after Montgomery launched his assault against Rommel, the South Africans were relieved from the British Eighth Army to be organized into an armored formation.

Was the intent to retrain and reorganize the division or divisions in time to participate at a later date in Montgomery's offensive? The question appears not to have been resolved if, in fact, it was even considered, since reorganizing and retraining a large combat formation would have taken many months to make it an effective fighting unit.

The South African infantry divisions, by the time they were detached from Eighth Army, had suffered sufficient casualties that only one armored division could be formed. The core of the division was made up of veterans of the infantry divisions, and its cadre was supplemented by other volunteers. All had to be retrained to execute the mobile tactics demanded of large-scale armored formations.

The new order of battle for the 6th South African Armoured Division reflected the battle losses of the infantry divisions. Several of the reorganized infantry battalions and tank regiments (designated battalions in some cases) were amalgamated organizations and had dual regimental names. The motorized infantry battalion in the 11th Armored Brigade, for example, was known as the First City/Capetown Highlanders, an amalgamation of two formerly reserve regiments (battalions).

When the division landed in Italy, it consisted of two brigades, the 11th Armoured and the 12th Armoured (Motorized) Infantry. It maintained this configuration until after the capture of Rome in June 1944, after which it was joined by the British 24th Guards Infantry Brigade. The now infantry-heavy division was so organized as to fight more effectively in the mountainous terrain encountered by the Allies when they advanced north to the Po River Valley.

The 11th Armored Brigade as it advanced north from Rome consisted of the division's mechanized reconnaissance regiment, the Natal Mounted Rifles with 72 Stuart light tanks and Dingo armored cars, plus three tank regiments/battalions and a motorized infantry battalion. The tank units of 55 Sherman M4s each were the 1st Prince Alfred's Guards, the 1st Spe-

Both: Imperial War Museum

cial Services Battalion, and the Pretoria Regiment/Princess Alice's Own. The motorized infantry battalion was the aforementioned First City/Capetown Highlanders.

The division's motorized infantry brigade consisted of four infantry battalions——one more than the comparable American infantry organization in its downsized armored division. More so than the tank units, the motorized infantry battalions consisted of amalgamated units. These were the Imperial Light Horse/Kimberly Regiment, the Witwatersrand Rifles/De La Rey Regiment, the 1st Natal Carbineers, and the Durban Light Infantry.

When the 24th Guards Brigade joined the division, it brought with it three of its British Majesty's own "household" elite infantry battalions. These were the 1st Scots Guards, the 3rd Coldstream Guards, which had fought in North Africa, and the 5th Grenadier Guards. These formations thus gave the armored division additional infantry troops to beef up the type of force needed to defeat the dug-in Germans in northern Italy. Upon attachment to the South Africans, the Guards soon became integral to the armored division.

The enhanced organization with the attached Guards Brigade proved itself as the division moved north toward Florence. The mountainous Apennine terrain soon began to favor the determined German withdrawal north, and Allied tanks became support weapons to the advance of infantry. By doubling the amount of infantry available to the division, it was able to maintain the momentum that kept the Germans retreating and abandoning successive defense lines until the Gothic Line, protecting the approaches to the Po River Valley, was reached and winter stalemate ensued.

The 6th South African Armoured Division entered Italy before the Allied 1944 assaults beginning around Monte Cassino south of Rome were being made. There was no role for a full armored division in reducing that major stumbling block to the northern advance to Rome. If employed in its proper role, the division would have

ABOVE: While waiting anxiously for a further combat role, troops of the 6th South African Armoured Division train in the Middle East sands with Grant, Crusader, and Sherman tanks. OPPOSITE: Although woefully inferior to German panzers, the British Crusader tank was issued to the South African division until greater numbers of Shermans were available. Here a Crusader Mk.1 with its relatively ineffective 6-pounder gun and its crew train in a Middle East desert.

exploited the penetration of the German Hitler and Caesar Lines and been prepared to take part in the capture of Rome.

Once the Caesar Line was cracked and pursuit became feasible, the British and American forces became entangled, however, so that the South African division bringing up the rear was forced to give way to other Allied units encroaching on its axis of advance. Thus did the division approach Rome at the tail of other troops racing to claim the capture of the Eternal City.

Once clear of Rome, with the Guards Brigade attached, the division forged ahead, receiving what amounted to its combat baptism in the seizing of the key railroad junction below the town of Chiusi located on the Albert Line near the site of the Battle of

Without effective antitank weapons, the Highlanders fought back with machine guns and small arms, but ultimately to no effect. Late in the morning the embattled South Africans were forced to surrender. The losses were high for the Highlanders as 17 soldiers were killed and 27 wounded, with 75 missing—the majority of whom were captured. It was a bitter first defeat in battle for the South African troops.

Trasimene Lake—Hannibal's victory over the Romans in 217 BC.

The town itself sits on the hillside overlooking the railroad station in the valley, and occupation of the town dominated the station and rail yard. The division's mission was to capture the town and the rail complex, which were occupied by retreating German troops.

On June 20, German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring had decreed that the town was to be held at all costs to delay the Allied advance. The South Africans were not expecting any strong resistance, least of all a battalion from the Luftwaffe's Hermann Göring Parachute-Panzer Division, which was fighting subordinate to German Army command.

To the inexperienced South Africans, the mission was initially misinterpreted and resulted in a significant measure of confusion among the advancing troops. Once it was realized that the mission encompassed not only the rail yard, an attack on the hill town was planned for June 21.

At dawn that day the South African attack stalled in the face of well-planned heavy German artillery fire. Not realizing the German resolve to hold the town and underestimating potential resistance, it was decided that a night attack would be launched upon the arrival of the First City/Capetown Highlander Infantry Battalion.

Unfortunately, as it turned out the Highlanders had already arrived during daylight on June 21 and had gone into the attack without proper reconnaissance or coordination. By midnight the South Africans of the battalion's Company A were well on the way to the objective. At 1 AM on June 22 it made its first contact with the enemy, which turned out to be from one of three companies of the Sturm Battalion of the Hermann Göring Division's 3rd Regiment supported by tanks.

By 2:30 AM Company A was in the middle of Chiusi, positioned at its theater, in a local winery, and in several buildings nearby. There the troops established a defensive perimeter and awaited reinforcements. The reinforcements, which were to be from Companies B and D, however, were blocked by the intense German artillery fire and failed to arrive.

The Germans were not about to let the South Africans consolidate their positions in the town and early on a cold, misty dawn began to infiltrate around Company A's positions. Enemy tanks rambled around in the town's streets, and at about 6 PM a panzer in the town square began firing point-blank into houses and the theater occupied by the South Africans.

The theater was a special enemy target and was battered to the point where its roof collapsed. Without effective antitank weapons, the Highlanders fought back with machine guns and small arms, but ultimately to no effect. Late in the morning the embattled South Africans were forced to surrender. The losses were high for the Highlanders as 17 soldiers were killed and 27 wounded, with 75 missing—the majority of whom were captured. It was a bitter first defeat in battle for the South African troops.

On June 26, the Royal Natal Carbineers finally wrested Chiusi from the Hermann Göring Division's soldiers. The stout South African troops quickly recovered from their setback, however, and began moving along the north-south rail line as the Germans, having gained considerable time in defending Chiusi, also moved quickly to take advantage of their delaying action.

The advance north from Rome was now becoming arduous as the terrain became less and less favorable to the employment of large armored formations. Motorized reconnaissance elements preceded columns of vehicles where possible, but because the Germans were experts in the use of explosives, mines, and booby traps, Allied progress was often slow and halting.

The enemy fought a stubborn rear action with the intent of withdrawing to the northern Gothic Line, where the height of the hills, the insufficiency of the road network, and the lack of passes into the Po River Valley favored prolonged defense.

The sector in which the South Africans moved toward Florence was quite undeveloped as far as roads were concerned. Except for a few, the roads were narrow and unpaved. This made the railroads important avenues of advance and was why Chiusi was so key to the German withdrawal. Its retention allowed their units more time to retreat north.

The preponderance of Allied air power restricted German movement north, and

so for the enemy traveling at night became important. Traversing terrain cross-country meant that the few good roads and the railroad had to be secured at all costs—especially since at night it was easy to get lost in the hills, and the dense undergrowth made wandering from the narrow paths dangerous and time consuming.

The South Africans, many of whom came from their native rough countryside, quickly got on the tails of the retreating Germans despite enemy delaying tactics. The division, with the Guards brigade, liberated Chianciano Terme on June 28, moving over difficult terrain with infantry supported by a few tanks.

The next day Montepulciano was liberated and the South Africans, carefully making their way on routes west of the north-south railroad, reached Castelinuovo Berardenga on July 4. The Germans employed patrols skillfully, which often resulted in deadly confrontations with the likewise patrolling British and South Africans as they stumbled into each other.

Of the German prisoners, many were young, highly motivated soldiers of the Kampfschule-Sturm-Battalion of the Hermann Göring Division, who fought with a special tenacity.

By July 14, with progress over rough terrain and against scattered German resistance slow, patrols of the Grenadier Guards' 5th Battalion had overrun the temporary German Hilde Line between the towns of Gaiole in Chianti and Castelinuovo Berardenga. Three days later, Gaiole and Radda in Chianti were liberated, with the Royal Natal Carbineers being received joyfully in Radda by a town contingent led by the local priest.

In the meantime, the Hermann Göring Division had been withdrawn from the front lines and dispatched to Poland to help defend against the Soviets on the Vistula River.

With the departure of the elite German division, Kesselring sent elements of the 15th Panzergrenadier Division (armored infantry) and the 1st Fallschirmjäger Division (parachute infantry) against the advancing South Africans and British Guardsmen. Both German divisions contained above average, capable soldiers although the paratroopers were technically airmen since they were German Air Force (Luftwaffe) not German Army troops.

The armored infantry soldiers were also considered to be relatively high-quality men, although replacements for the German Army units in 1944 were becoming mostly older men and those of limited fighting ability. Yet, all the enemy made for a tenacious foe while its units slowly withdrew north to the Gothic Line.

It was strange for the local Italian population to watch the Germans leave and the South Africans and British arrive. Having suffered harshly under what amounted to German occupation, it was hard to believe that their lives were about to change again. To this day, elder inhabitants of the country, no less than in the province of Chianti in

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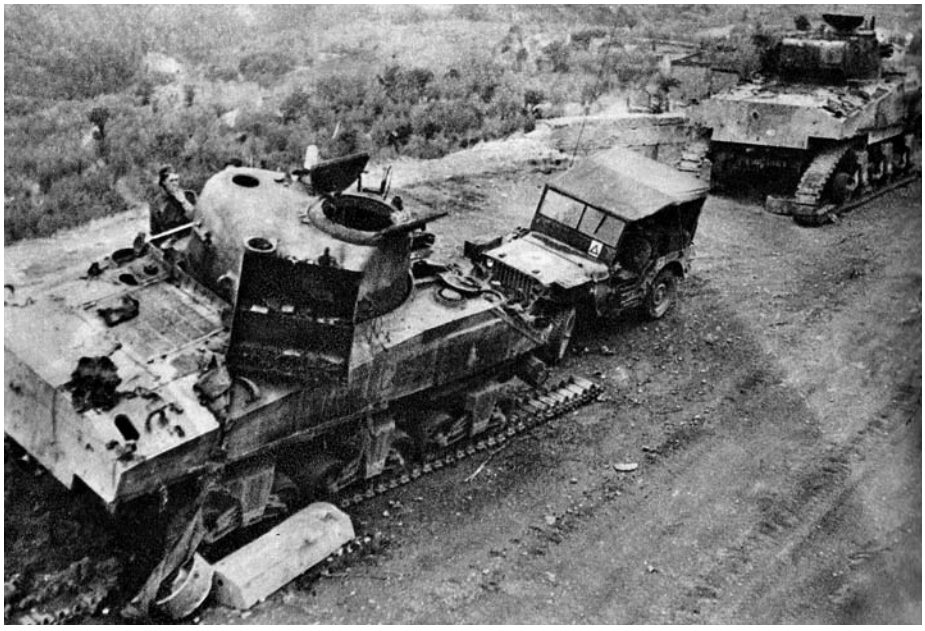

ABOVE: After training for a year in Egypt, troops of the 6th South African Armoured Division arrive in Taranto, Italy, April 1944. BELOW: Two Shermans of the 6th Armoured Division sit disabled after the battle to take the Perugia highlands north of Rome, June 1944.

The Image Works

South African soldiers from the 6th Armoured Division, now a part of the U.S. II Corps, patrol the streets of Florence, August 1944.

north central Italy, still speak of their own or their relatives' experiences during this hostile time.

So it was on July 19, Guardsmen of the 1st Scots Guards encountered a welcoming population as they advanced on Monte Querciabella, north of the town of Radda. Memories of their arrival with bagpipes blaring are still fresh among the local population of that region.

The South African movement north now was from one prominent terrain feature to another. Progress was measured in terms of mountains assaulted, as on July 20, when Monte San Michele was attacked and the 1st Scots Guards were again confronted by the enemy paratroopers and armored infantrymen.

On July 22, the 12th Armored Infantry Brigade's Witswatersrand/De La Rey Regiment and the Royal Durban Light Infantry in a coordinated move attacked and threw the foe off Monte Fili, which overlooked the large town of Greve on the road to Florence.

The 3rd Coldstream Guards, at the same time, captured Monte Domini which also overlooked Greve in what has been termed a textbook assault. Two days later, Greve itself was liberated by the First City/Capetown Highlanders,which had use of the major road running north through the town. But progress was still slow.

Not until July 29 was Monte Scalari taken. This was a tough battle because the terrain feature was the boundary between the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies, a critical military seam. The famous old and culturally rich city of Florence was now almost in sight and, on July 30, the South African troopsexperienced fighting close to the city.

On August 1, the Scots Guards captured Poggio ai Mandorli, which anchored the Germans' last defense line on the Arno River before Florence, the so-called Paula-Mädchen Line.

Florence was not liberated easily. The South African Division was to add the city's liberation to their unofficial battle honors, but the blown bridges in and around Florence, along with skillful demolitions designed to impede Allied progress, stood in the way. Only the Ponte Vecchio of the Florentine bridges, one of Hitler's favorites, was spared, and even its use by infantry was made difficult as the buildings next to it on either side of the Arno River were destroyed, leaving huge piles of rubble to be negotiated.

It is asserted that Kesselring had ordered the bridges over the Arno River to be destroyed because he felt he had made a mistake in not doing so when Rome was liberated and thus had lost valuable time in retreating north.

When the South African infantrymen of the Imperial Light Horse/Kimberly Regiment reached the famous Ponte Vecchio on the morning of August 4, they found that the German engineers had skillfully carried out Kesselring's August 3 order of destruction during the previous night.

Still, in liberating Florence the South Africans had accomplished a mission that British Prime Minister Churchill had expressly sought. It was also time for a pause for vehicle and equipment maintenance—and rest, which was greatly needed after battling through the tortuous terrain of the Chianti province.

Other momentous events were also taking place for the Allies that August. A much disputed invasion of southern France saw the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps and several veteran American divisions from Italy to participate in the action—Operation Dragoon.

The British were especially unhappy that Italy was to be left with just enough Allied troops to continue pressing an enemy that was withdrawing to its final defense line in Italy, the Gothic Line at the top of the Apennine mountain chain with its back to the Po River Valley.

There was also a major change for the 6th South African Armoured Division. It was assigned to the U.S. II Corps of the American Fifth Army. In addition, the division was soon to be placed in reserve as its mobile firepower gave way to a slugging battle of attrition.

The oncoming fall and winter, along with combat fatigue and difficult terrain, preceded a time in the spring of 1945 when the division was to again be employed to exploit its speed and combat power. It was among those armored troops that would bring the war in Italy to a successful conclusion in May of that year.

After Florence was liberated, the division was deployed south to Siena. The French

Moroccan Mountain Division had caused major problems with the civilian populace before the unit was redeployed for the invasion of southern France. The presence of the more ethically oriented South Africans helped heal the bitterness left by the French colonial troops.

The South African soldiers now got a dose of Americanism. Concerts were given by 28-year-old Frank Sinatra, bringing with him his nom de guerre, "The Voice." The bewitching actress Katherine Hepburn came to meet and greet the soldiers when she could get away from the officers who often monopolized visiting entertainers. Theater performances open to all helped to stifle enlisted mens' complaints about the officers' conduct.

While the troops were relaxing, resting, maintaining equipment, replacing lost items, and doing a bit of training, the division staff was preparing for employment under American command.

On August 26, after a three-week Allied pause in operations, the South African Division crossed the Arno River, which had been held by light German outposts. Passing northward through the magnificent vineyards of Poggibonsi and Certaldo, the division crossed the Arno at the city of Empoli. Before entering the Apennines again, the troops crossed over the southward-flowing Bisenzio River at Prato on September 1.

The movement now was eastward so the division could get into position to take part in a II Corps offensive later that month. Once in position, the South Africans were diverted westward, and on September 11 they arrived at the Gothic Line outside the city of Lucca, just a short distance from the east coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Remaining there for almost two weeks, the division again turned east and was at Pistoia on September 27. Taking part in the II Corps offensive, division troops fought for Monte Stanco north of Pistoia on October 13.

By now the Allies were becoming exhausted and haunted by rising casualties, poor weather, and few replacements. On October 20 the Allied offensive in Italy

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: With victory in Italy less than a month away, 6th Armoured Division vehicles advance along a rubble-strewn road near Bologna, April 1945. Fighting in Italy ended on May 2, 1945. OPPOSITE: Crews of U.S.-supplied M-10 Tank Destroyers replenish ammunition stocks and perform maintenance in the Gothic Line-Monte Sole area near Bologna, December 1944.

ground to a halt. On October 26 the South Africans pulled back and went into winter quarters near the town of Veggio.

On February 23, 1945, the 6th South African Armoured Division was back in the war, but it was not until the spring that it was again committed to combat. Now it was the final push to end the war, and the division's mobile armored firepower was about to be brought to bear. It was once more operating as part of the U.S. II Corps of the Fifth Army.

To get into the fight, the division left its rear-area assembly location and followed the main road east through Pistoia to Prato. There it turned north on the main road to Bologna, where it would debauch into the Po River Valley. But first the other corps infantry divisions would have to deal with a well-dug-in enemy effectively using mountainous terrain.

On April 15, II Corps advanced into the battle making but small gains. Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott had massed his Fifth Army divisions on a relatively narrow front to force entry into the Po River Valley. But it took the elite infantry of the 10th Mountain Division, using its high-country expertise, to crack stubborn but ultimately futile enemy resistance.

By April 17, the mountaineers were out of the hills and moving to outflank Bologna, with the rest of II Corps close behind. By April 20 II Corps broke out into open country and raced for the Po River.

For their part on April 15 and 16, the South Africans attacking up the Florence-Bologna railroad liberated a number of small towns as they began their initial push of the offensive. Bringing its armor-protected mobility to bear on April 22, the division captured a key bridge east of Camposanto on the Panaro River. The pursuit of the withdrawing German forces was going full steam.

German resistance was spotty as the troops tried to escape over the major east-west-flowing rivers. Hoping to delay the swiftly advancing Allies, key crossing sites were held

by the few remaining intact enemy combat units to allow a withdrawal northward. The lack of German bridging equipment hampered these efforts, while the Allies, having prepared in advance to deal with the rivers as obstacles, had plenty of bridging material moving forward with the advancing troops.

The enemy, experiencing great difficulty getting vehicles across the Po River and its tributaries, was easily caught by the highly motorized and mechanized Allies. Italian partisans in the river valley did not make the German retreat any easier as they seized important municipalities, thus denying the enemy key facilities and impeding German movement.

By April 23, the 6th South African Armoured Division was outside Bondeno close to the Po River. There elements of the division met units of the British V Corps advancing from the Italian east coast. The move encircled much of the enemy north of Bologna and facilitated the crossing of the Po.

The fast-moving South Africans established a bridgehead over the Po on April 25 west of the city of Felonica. Then it was a race to the Adige River west of Mantua, which was crossed on April 27. By now German resistance had almost ended as enemy troops surrendered in droves as they stumbled aimlessly north.

Once over the Adige River, the division pushed on to Camposampiero north of Padua, arriving there on April 30; this was their farthest advance east, as alleged significant German resistance in the region around Milan saw the division then ordered westward.

The resistance proved to be nonexistent, partly because the Italian partisans were intent on doing as much damage as possible to the German occupiers, especially the Gestapo, German sympathizers, and special SS troops formerly engaged in atrocities and murder.

On May 2, 1945, the war in Italy officially ended as the German high command surrendered to the Allies. The next day found the South Africans concentrated around Milan, where they absorbed the news that the war in Italy was finally over.

As with all the Allied forces, the termination of hostilities meant a fretful peace had arrived. While there was no longer any fighting, Italian reprisals were frequent, and the situation meant real peace was not yet at hand. It would take some time to bring daily life back to normal.

For the South Africans, however, the war was truly over. They sailed back to a country not physically ravaged but still suffering many casualties, both physical and mental. The 6th South African Armoured Division had suffered 711 killed in action, 2,675 wounded, and 157 missing—either as prisoners of war or being otherwise unaccounted for.

The losses were significant in light of those already suffered in the North African campaign and also since the soldiers who fought in Italy were volunteers because there was no conscription in the Union of South Africa.

Coming to the aid of Great Britain on land, in the air, and at sea spoke volumes for a country that not 50 years earlier had succumbed to the British Empire in the Boer War.

That the South Africans rallied against an aggressor located thousands of miles away, however, did not go unnoticed in the Free World, which applauded the Union of South Africa's voluntary participation in the Allied victory. □

National Archives

Linchpin of the Mediterra

BY MARK SIMMONS

IN 1940, THE TINY ISLAND OF MALTA BECAME A VITAL FOCAL POINT BETWEEN BRITAIN, ITALY, GERMANY, AND VICHY FRANCE.

IT was the humid season on Malta that September of 1943. The hot Sirocco winds from North Africa blow from August to October across the cool sea, raising humidity. The local sailors do not like them because the seas have time to build up and on land they can bring bad dust storms to the Maltese islands and Sicily. However, the weather was clear on the day the Italian fleet came to surrender.

On September 11, Admiral Andrew Browne Cunningham, commander of the British Mediterranean Fleet, known affectionately as ABC, was able to signal the Admiralty in London: "Be pleased to inform their Lordships that the Italian Battle Fleet now lies at anchor under the guns of the fortress of Malta."

The people of the island rejoiced as the Italians surrendered. Malta was en fete, with the people wild with jubilation and many of the streets draped in flags. Among others, the parish priest of shattered Senglea contiguous to the dockyard and therefore one of the main targets of air attack announced the Italian surrender from his pulpit.

The outlook in June 1940 could hardly have been more different; on June 10 Mussolini had declared war on the side of Germany at midnight, and the first air raid on Malta by Italian bombers took place at 6:55 the next morning. Admiral Cunningham had withdrawn the heavy units of the fleet to Alexandria some time before, thus there was little to resist the air attackers who bombed at will.

Two weeks later France fell, and the whole balance of naval power in the Mediterranean changed. The western half of the sea, previously covered by the French, was laid wide open; a Royal Navy squadron, later to be named Force H, was formed at Gibraltar to cover it. The battleships of the Mediterranean Fleet, without air cover, could not operate from Malta.

The high command in London considered abandoning the island and the eastern half of the sea. In the inter-war years the island had been written off as indefensible by the British Royal Air Force and Army given the financial constraints of the time—against the protests of the Navy. However, Prime Minister Winston Churchill overruled this, ordering that Malta must be held.

So began the epic struggle to keep Malta supplied and to build up its striking power. The islands of Malta consist of Malta, Gozo, and Comino and have an area of about 100 square miles.

The Maltese archipelago has been a coveted possession through the ages as they lie right across the main sea routes of the Mediterranean, being about equal distance from Gibraltar (1,150 miles) and Alexandria (960 miles), as well as being central on the route from mainland Italy to North Africa (about 400 miles), and only 60 from Sicily. The island, according to one historian, has one of the "largest and finest of natural harbours in the Mediterranean." In 1940 the population was around 250,000, 95 percent of which were Maltese.

Admiral Cunningham early on argued that the Mediterranean Fleet must be reinforced and seen to be active in the eastern and central areas. He soon decided to keep Malta in the fight, but he needed to deliver two convoys each month of 40,000 tons of stores,

A fanciful Italian newspaper illustration of the period shows Italian warplanes bombing British war headquarters in the fortified city of Valletta at Malta's Grand Harbour. The small island, located between Sicily and Libya, was a British colony in the Mediterranean and considered strategically vital by the warring European powers.

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Bombs from an enemy air raid rock Valletta. Because its British air and naval bases threatened German and Italian shipping lanes in the Mediterranean, it became a prime target in June 1940.

a formidable target.

On a personal note, he was glad when his wife and daughters evacuated to Alexandria from Malta: "I was delighted to get my wife and the two girls out of Malta. Bombed practically every night and often by day, they had not enjoyed it. My wife had chalked up 72 raids from the day Italy entered the war until the time she left, a period of 29 days."

The inability of the RAF and Army to garrison Malta while there was still time was matched by the Italian failure to capture the island while they had overwhelming forces available.

Commander Marc Antonio Bragadin wrote in his *History of the Italian Navy in World War II,* "As for Malta, its ports and airfields were practically in the very heart of Italy's most strategic area. In fact, since 1938 the Navy had maintained that the occupation of the island was a primary and indispensable condition for conducting any such war as the present one against Great Britain. When it first appeared possible that Italy would take part in the war, the Navy presented a plan for the conquest of Malta to the Supreme Command.

"But the Supreme Command gave up the idea because of the presupposition that the war would be a short one, and also because it was believed that the Italian Air Force would be able to neutralize the island's military usefulness."

So the British felt they could not hold Malta because they did not have the means to do so, while the Italians with the means to invade did not think they needed to occupy the island.

However, the British ability to make do and muddle through came to the fore. Eight crated fighter aircraft (in crates marked "Boxed Spares—Property of the Royal Navy") were found in a hangar at the naval air station at Marsaxlokk Bay. They were obsolete Gloster Gladiator fighter biplanes, left behind by the aircraft carrier *Glorious* when she had left Malta for the Norwegian campaign. Four were immediately turned over to the RAF and quickly assembled; they were soon in the air fighting the Italian bombers, albeit against heavy odds.

For weeks these aircraft fought valiantly, bringing down several of the raiders for the loss of one of their number. The other three were nicknamed Faith, Hope and Charity; they soon became a symbol of Malta's growing resistance. They were joined in July by five Hawker Hurricane fighters which had arrived, staged through France and Tunis shortly before the French collapse.

No. 830 Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm, with nine Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers originally based at Toulon to work with the French Navy, arrived and became the islands' only offensive arm. Antiaircraft gun defenses for Malta amounted to only 34 heavy and eight light guns, with one radar set.

Mrs. Queenie Lee was on the island during the entire siege and spoke of the early days during a broadcast on June 29, 1943: "In June 1940 when Italy came into the war, no one quite knew what to expect. Our first raid was six hours after war was declared––at dawn on June 11. There was what seemed then a terrific amount of noise. I didn't know the difference between guns and bombs, as I sat in an old boathouse under some fortifications with other women at war work. We felt comparatively safe as we'd been told it was an air raid shelter and we could sleep there.

"There was excitement in the Island that June ... families seemed to think that movement was the solution to all problems. Hundreds of them packed up a few possessions and went to seek safety in the centre of the Island, and the squares near the coast and harbour were dead except for battalions of hungry cats.

"I remember going along the seafront between raids, and seeing no-one but a solitary old man sitting on the edge of a bomb crater, serene in the belief that two bombs never fall in the same place.... In a few weeks, raiders were treated with contempt and most people returned to their homes and life became normal except for the inactivity in the

creeks and harbours."

Early in July, Cunningham's fleet put to sea to cover two convoys from Malta to Alexandria. On July 8, after 22 air attacks, observers on the flagship, the battleship HMS *Warspite,* counted no fewer than 300 bombs dropped around her.

Late the next day, the cruiser *Gloucester* of the 7th Cruiser Squadron was hit, the bomb falling on the bridge and killing the captain and 17 men. However, the Italian Air Force was unable to prevent Royal Navy operations during daylight in the central Mediterranean.

That afternoon Cunningham learned that the Italian Fleet was at sea. He hoped to bring it to action by placing his fleet between the enemy and its base; he therefore steered toward Taranto. The Italian command ordered their fleet commander, Admiral Inigo Campiani, to avoid action until the next day when the British would be within range of more Italian bombers from mainland airfields.

At 3:50 PM the next day the two fleets clashed, both sides exchanging fire; the Italian battleship *Cesare* was hit by a 15-inch shell from *Warspite*. Campiani withdrew under smoke screens. At about 4:40 Cunningham turned away, concerned about destroyer or submarine ambushes. Indeed, Campiani's plan had been to try and lure the British across a line of submarines; however, these craft were far to the south.

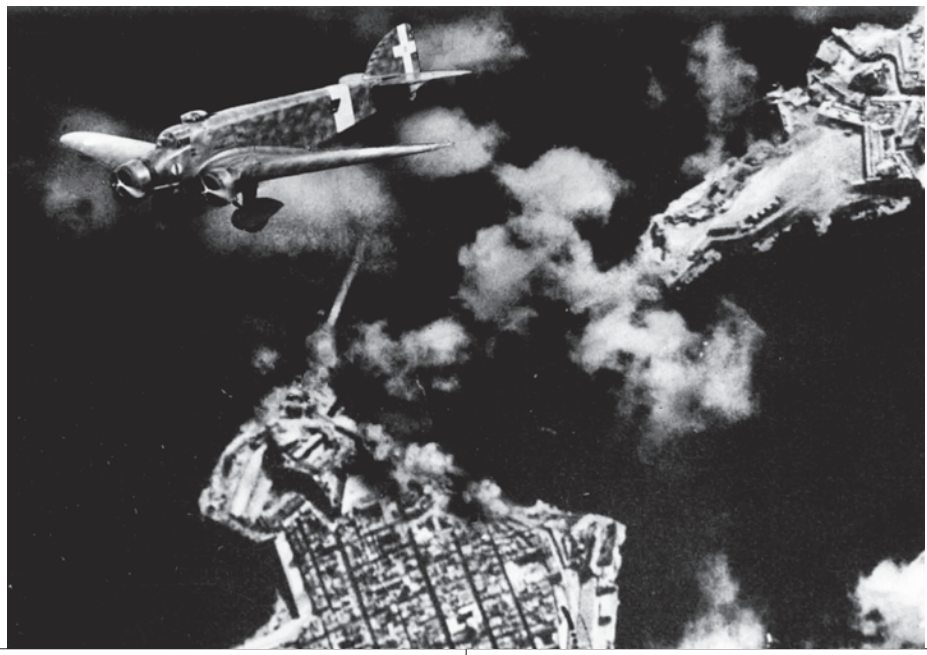
By this time the British fleet was only 25 miles from the coast of Calabria. More high-level bombing attacks developed over the next four hours, during which the Regia Aeronautica (Italian Air Force) even managed to bomb its own fleet—much to the fury of Campioni—although failing to hit any ships.

The safe arrival of the British fleet and two convoys in Alexandria brought the operation to an end. Material damage to both sides had been negligible, but what had happened clearly demonstrated the problems facing both sides, though at the time neither fully understood it.

Captain Donald Macintyre wrote, "To both it was demonstrated that a British fleet operating from Alexandria could not prevent the safe passage of Italian supply convoys to Africa. From the Italian point of view, this supported their contention that there was nothing to be gained from sending their battle fleet out to seek action as an end in itself.

"What the Italians failed to see was that this situation must sooner or later force the British to strain every nerve to restore Malta ... as an air and naval base from which to attack their convoys to Libya. The only certain way to prevent this was by capturing it while it yet lay virtually defenceless.... But both the Italian and German Supreme Commands believed they could achieve their object merely by neutralising the island by air attack. It was to prove a fatal mistake."

An Italian Savoia Marchetti SM 79 torpedo bomber attacks Malta's Grand Harbour, June 1941. The siege of Malta lasted 29 months, but the island's defenders never capitulated, carrying on "cheerfully."



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The lack of British fighter aircraft on Malta had become critical, so in August the old carrier *Argus,* operating with Force H from Gibraltar, flew in 12 Hurricanes from a position south of Sardinia in Operation Hurry. In November *Argus* flew in 12 more in Operation White; however, due to navigational problems, only four of these arrived.

On Malta a general call-up had taken place and a Home Guard formed. Both the island's regiments—the Royal Malta Artillery and the King's Own Malta Regiment—had been expanded. Steps were taken to prevent hoarding food. Stray cats and dogs were destroyed. Agriculture was stimulated, and even the precious golf courses and polo grounds were dug up to produce crops.

The air raids continued; there were more than 200 in 1940. Fortunately, military and civilian casualties were few. Social life continued with dances at clubs. The popular cinemas remained open, although electricity was restricted to the projection rooms, the public having to grope their way in and out. Bars remained popular, although prices rose as stocks dwindled.

On October 28, Italy invaded Greece unprovoked. By November 6, Count Galeazzo Ciano, Benito Mussolini's son-in-law, wrote in his diary that the unexpected counterattack "by the Greeks is slowing down and they had no reserves." On November 12 he wrote, "A black day. The British have attacked the Italian Fleet at anchor in Taranto."

Swordfish torpedo bombers from the carrier *Illustrious* had struck the Italian Fleet at its base at Taranto in a night raid. Out of five serviceable battleships, three had been severely damaged, and the

Imperial War Museum

Maltese civilians inspect the ruins of the opera house in Valletta after heavy Axis aerial blitz, April 7, 1942. The British called Malta "the most-bombed island in the world."

Cavour beached after being hit and was never to be seaworthy again.

While General Archibald Wavell's desert army pushed the Italians back to the Libyan border in the Western Desert, Admiral Cunningham, after covering another convoy, sailed his fleet back to Malta, taking the flagship *Warspite* into Grand Harbour on December 20.

"As we moved in with our band playing and guard paraded," Wavell wrote, "the Barracas and other points of vantage were black with wildly cheering Maltese. Our reception was touchingly overwhelming. It was good to know that they realised that though the fleet could not use Malta for the time being, we had them well in mind."

The next day Wavell went to the dockyard where he "was mobbed by crowds of excited workmen," and "I had difficulty in preventing myself from being carried around, and had to make more than a dozen impromptu speeches telling all and sundry how greatly the fleet depended on them."

Ominous movements, however, were beginning to take place that would test Maltese and British resolve to keep the island in the war during the coming year. Germany was coming to the aid of her Italian ally. In December orders were issued for Fliegerkorps X from Norway, a unit that had specialized in attacks on shipping, to move to airfields in southern Italy. By mid-January 1941, 186 aircraft of all types were established on Sicilian airfields. Their first priority was to attack British shipping, with the carrier *Illustrious* high on the list of targets. Next was to neutralize Malta.

However, the RAF struck first when Vickers Wellington bombers of No. 148 Squadron from Malta bombed the Italian harbors of Brindisi, Bari, and Taranto where supplies for the Axis armies in Greece were shipped. Naples, where the Italian Navy was now concentrated, was also hit; the cruiser *Pola* and battleship *Cesare* were damaged, which resulted in the capital ships being moved north to Genoa. Thus, for the time being, the operations of both British fleets were relieved of the threat from large Italian surface ships.

On January 10 the entire Mediterranean Fleet was at sea to take over escorting an eastbound convoy from Gibraltar, a maneuver called Operation Excess. Force H took the convoy as far as the Sicilian narrows, where Italian aircraft bombed the convoy with no success, losing two aircraft to the carrier *Ark Royal*'s Fairey Fulmar fighters.

As the convoy neared Malta with its close escort, Cunningham's fleet took over with the battleships *Warspite* and *Valiant* and the carrier *Illustrious.* At about 1 PM a host of aircraft was seen gathering. These were Junkers Ju-87 (Stuka) dive bombers followed by Ju-88 bombers. *Illustrious* flew off more fighters to join the standing patrol, but they needed time to gain altitude. The Stukas attacked first, concentrating on *Illustrious*. In precision attacks they hit the carrier six times, sank a cruiser, and damaged another.

Stoker Albert Jones of *Illustrious* recalled, "Things then began to happen so fast and changed to near chaos as the Germans began to score hits on us. With each successive explosion and the gunfire up top, a horrendous cacophony could be heard.... Suddenly there was a tremendous explosion and the ship shuddered from stem to stern under the impact, as if some unknown force had struck us with a gigantic sledgehammer."

By 1:30, *Illustrious* was severely damaged. Bombs had wrecked the flight deck, destroyed nine aircraft, put half her guns out of action, and set the ship afire fore and aft. For three hours the crew struggled to regain control; the steering gear was disabled and the ship turned in circles. Control was finally regained using the engines to steer.

With great difficulty the carrier was nursed into Grand Harbour and berthed at Parlatorio wharf in French Creek. When she was damaged, 12 of her Fulmar fighters were in the air; these had flown to Malta, refueled and rearmed, and were in the air again to cover the ship.

Malta struck back on the night of January 12, 1941. RAF Wellingtons bombed the Luftwaffe airfields at Catania in Sicily. Buildings were hit and 30 aircraft destroyed on the ground.

On January 16 the first attacks by Fliegerkorps X began on the harbors of Malta and on *Illustrious,* as her crew and the dockyard workers struggled to make her ready for sea. The carrier was hit again but suffered only minor damage. The same could not be said for the surrounding area.

Civilian Joseph Caruana watched the plight of *Illustrious*: "The aircraft carrier was across the creek from Senglea, and my town was well within the target area. The noise and commotion was fantastic and my memories are a kaleidoscope of terror. The whining war cry of the diving Stukas, the loud and incessant firing of the AA guns; the terrifying shaking of the ground and house with each explosion....

"After the raid I remember people staring, dazed and awed, at the destruction while others worked with frantic haste to rescue people buried under the demolished houses ... while that area of the town abreast the moorings of *Illustrious* was pulverised into a carpet of rubble. *Illustrious* was still afloat and apparently undamaged."

Kathleen Norman, a naval wife, recorded the scenes around and on board *Illustrious*: "Each day, as we came in at the gate, there was some fresh scene of devastation. Workshops lay piled in rubble and glass. Iron girders were twisted and torn.... [The crew] had lost most of their gear. They were dressed in old boiler overalls, in grey flannel trousers and sweaters—any old garment they had managed to rescue from the wrecks of their cabins. The surgeon of the ship had done wonderful work in the battle at sea. He was pale, and his face was very, very, sad."

Surgeon-Commander John J. Keevil was awarded the DSO for his work on *Illustrious* and ashore on Malta. Mrs. Norman went on board the battered carrier: "It was the first time I had ever been on board a wounded ship. When I saw *Illustrious*'s great torn decks, the aching chasm that reached into her bowels, the little sickbay that had known such horror, I felt almost as near to tears as when I talked with her tired seamen."

Three days later the attack was renewed by swarms of Stukas and fighters. They concentrated on Malta's airfields at Hal Far and Luqa; six aircraft were destroyed on the ground and many damaged. *Illustrious,* it was hoped, would sail on the 20th, but heavy attacks on the 19th in the dockyard areas resulted in underwater damage to her keel plating, requiring further repairs. Finally the Vice Admiral at Malta, Sir Wilbraham Ford, was able to report the carrier ready for sea on the evening of January 23.

At dusk that day, *Illustrious* crept out of the harbor unobserved by the enemy. At Suda Bay, destroyers and cruisers had been assembled to cover her passage. Two merchant ships left just before her to take advantage of this cover as well. That night she ran up to 24 knots. The cruisers and destroyers missed her, not expecting such a turn of speed from the patched-up vessel. They came under attack by enemy aircraft but suffered no heavy damage. *Illustrious* escaped unscathed, helped by poor visibility. At noon on the 25th, *Illustrious* steamed into Alexandria harbor, to be cheered by every ship there.

Admiral Cunningham noted, "I sent a message to the Vice-Admiral at Malta expressing our warmest appreciation of the work done under conditions of great difficulty to get the ship away. The men of Malta dockyard deserved all the praise we could give them."

After the departure of *Illustrious* from Malta, Fliegerkorps X's first onslaught on the island abated. Hitler's directive No. 22 to the air fleet said to attack British naval forces in the eastern and western Mediterranean to protect Axis transports crossing to Africa and to attack British forces in Cyrenaica. Erwin Rommel, by February 1941, was ashore in Africa and demanding more air units transferred to support his troops.

The Germans first had to neutralize Malta. The strength of Fliegerkorps X had increased from 243 aircraft in February to a peak of 443 at the end of March; however, it suffered heavy losses and could not fulfil all its tasks.

In January 1941, there had been 58 air raids on Malta, with bombers concentrating on warships and dockyards. No. 2 drydock was badly damaged, and No. 3 drydock was also damaged, as was the destroyer *Imperial,* in it at the time. Unexploded bombs were widespread and had to be dealt with; a wide range of storage facilities were also damaged.

In February, the Germans changed tactics. Instead of daylight raids, they hit the island every night with up to 45 bombers. On moonlit nights, the airfields at Luqa and Hal Far came in for particular attention. On February 12, Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters started daylight sweeps with the object of destroying Malta's fighter force while bombers began dropping mines in the harbors.

The U.S. aircraft carrier *Wasp* brought 47 Spitfires to Malta on May 9, 1942, where they were used to counterstrike German and Italian ships and aircraft. Here a Spitfire, with a Grumman F4F Wildcat in the background, prepares to launch.

Toward the end of the month, bombers returned to daylight raids, destroying six Wellingtons on the ground. After heavy raids on March 5 and 7, Air Vice Marshal Forster Maynard advised that the Sunderland flying boats and Wellingtons should

leave; both squadrons departed for Egypt during the month.

However, the island's submarine force was by this time hitting the Axis convoys to Africa. On average, three or four submarines were on patrol at any one time, and 16 successful attacks were made in January through April, while the Swordfish of No. 830 Squadron sank two ships.

Force K arrived at Malta in April to join the striking forces, consisting of the 14th Destroyer Flotilla supported by the cruiser *Gloucester*. On arrival the ships refueled and went out after an Axis convoy but missed it. The next day a southbound convoy was located, but again the flotilla failed to intercept it and was bombed on the return in the Comino Channel between Malta and Gozo.

However, on April 15, they did catch a convoy and sank five heavily laden transports and their escort of three Italian destroyers, for the loss of the destroyer *Mohawk*.

Fighter aircraft reinforcements also were beginning to arrive through a series of operations; 600 new fighters were delivered in less than two years by aircraft carriers. On April 3, 12 Hurricanes were delivered by *Argus* with *Ark Royal* supporting.

Ark Royal was well known to the Maltese before the war; she would help deliver 327 fighters to the island until her loss in November 1941, when she was torpedoed by a German U-boat east of Gibraltar on the return from one of these ferrying operations.

In March 1941, the Mediterranean Fleet scored a notable one-sided victory over the Italian Fleet at Matapan. Ultra decodes of Enigma signals between the Italian Fleet and the Luftwaffe gave Admiral Cunningham a marked advantage in the battle, which he exploited to the full, the first use in action of the famous Enigma decodes.

However, it was imperative that this advantage was not discovered by the enemy. Thus a Sunderland flying boat was ordered to track the Italian Fleet and make herself visible to the enemy. Meanwhile, Cunningham's fleet was actually at sea moving to intercept hours before the Sunderland was even in the air.

Ewen Montagu wrote about the success of attacks on Axis shipping from Malta using Enigma decodes from Room 13 at the Admiralty: "We got a huge series of messages with convoys carrying urgently needed petrol, ammunition, etc., across the Mediterranean to Rommel. These were included in the Orange Summaries because of their background value on whether Rommel could or could not carry out his plans, but they were dealt with operationally simultaneously by the O.I.C. (Operational Intelligence Centre). These enabled us to sink a large proportion of these supplies than we would otherwise have done, and thus cripple Rommel's Army.

"Incidentally, much praise is due to those who so managed our operations that they drained Rommel of supplies without compromising our sources of information; no naval sweep, no submarine patrol, and no bombing flight was ordered to be right on the spot at the right time to intercept. Either one of several air reconnaissance sent to different areas—including, of course, the right one—sighted the German-Italian convoy first or seaborne sweeps were ordered which would 'just happen' to reach the right spot at the right time, on a neat piece of navigational planning."

(Orange Summaries were the summaries of nonoperational deciphered signals with comments provided to the First Sea Lord and the heads of naval operational staff twice a day by Section 17M (M for Montague). None of the operational ships, submarines, or aircraft on reconnaissance knew they were working with the benefit of Ultra intercepts.)

On one occasion, a convoy of five Italian ships sailed from Naples with vital supplies for the Afrika Korps. In this case there was no time for reconnaissance—the decision to attack solely based on Ultra went directly to Winston Churchill. The ships were all sunk by a precise attack that aroused Axis suspicions. To cover this, a radio message was sent to a fictitious spy in Naples, congratulating him for his success—a message that was known the Germans would be able to decode.

In May, the battle for Crete took place; by June 1 the British had evacuated Crete after a disastrous defense. The Royal Navy had suffered severe damage supporting the Army with virtually no air cover. Three cruisers and six destroyers had been sunk, two battleships and a carrier damaged beyond hope of local repair, and a further three cruisers and six destroyers damaged.

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Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Firemen douse a burning Hurricane, destroyed in a raid on a Malta airfield. The British lost many planes but kept on fighting. OPPOSITE: The *Wasp*'s deck is filled with parked Spitfires as the carrier docks at Malta, May 1942. The *Wasp* was sunk a few months later in the Pacific by the Japanese.

However, the losses suffered by the German airborne forces were enough to convince Hitler that no further such operations would take place—such as the proposed invasion of Malta and/or Cyprus.

Also, Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia, was about to start. Fliegerkorps VIII, which had been involved in the campaign against Greece and Crete, was withdrawn for Russia along with elements of Fliegerkorps X; the remainder now took over cover for the rest of the Central and Eastern Mediterranean.

With a total of 351 aircraft, and with so many commitments, the Germans could barely keep 200 of these aircraft operational. They were based mainly in southern Greece and Crete, giving up their Sicilian airfields—but this was to prove a costly mistake. Air raids on Malta fell by a third and were mostly carried out by Italian aircraft. Malta was bolstered by more Hurricanes arriving from the decks of *Ark Royal, Furious,* and *Victorious*.

A trickle of supplies to Malta was maintained by cargo submarines. However, in July, six large, fast merchant ships were assembled at Gibraltar to run through in Operation Substance. It was known that the Italians now had five battleships and 10 cruisers ready for service, so Force H was strengthened by ships from the Home Fleet: the battleship *Nelson* and three cruisers. Bristol Beaufighters from Malta would come out to cover the convoy once *Ark Royal* and the heavy ships turned back short of the narrows; eight submarines sailed from Malta to watch for the Italian fleet movements, while Wellington bombers attacked the Sicilian airfields.

The convoy got through with some light losses. However, an Italian MTB (motor torpedo boat) managed to torpedo the merchantman *Sydney Star*; damaged, she reached Malta down by the bows but still under her own power. The convoy brought in 65,000 tons of stores including torpedoes, Hurricane engines, antiaircraft guns, and a large stock of foodstuffs to feed the population and garrison. It was a major landmark in Malta's survival.

Just after the convoy arrived on the night of July 26, the Italian 10th Light Flotilla, under Commander Vittorio Moccagatta launched a daring raid on Grand Harbour. The dispatch boat *Diana* was loaded with nine explosive motor boats and sailed from Augusta, Sicily, on July 25. The objective of the raid was to blow a way into the harbor through the bridge on the St. Elmo arm of the breakwater, attack the recently arrived ships, and plant underwater charges on the submarines.

The operation did not go well. Once again the Italian Navy was let down by the Air Force, which was supposed to raid Valletta at 1:45 AM to give the attacking craft direction and launch two later raids to cause a distraction. The first raid did not take place, and the other two were late.

The leading human-piloted torpedoes were to blow a gap in the bridge, but once launched they were never seen again, so two explosive motorboats and their pilots were blown up trying to force a way in. However, all they succeeded in doing was bringing the bridge down. By now the shore guns opened up on the remaining MTBs, and all were sunk; *Diana* escaped back to Sicily. Fifteen of the raiders including Commander Moccagatta were killed and 18 captured.

Commander Marc Antonio Bragadin wrote of the raid, "So ended the Malta failure, the cruellest and bloodiest of all the operations ever undertaken by the crews of the assault craft, but also the focal point of circumstances so extraordinary as to render it without doubt the most glorious of failures; so glorious that any navy in the world would be proud of it."

At the end of July, further troop reinforcements arrived on the island. Malta's striking force of submarines and aircraft continued to take a heavy toll of the Axis convoys. From June-October 1941, these forces sank 38 enemy ships totaling 176,588 tons. Malta had survived its first great crisis and was hitting back.

Oliver Ormond was an RAF Pilot Officer of 19 when he flew his Hurricane off the carrier *Argus* on November 12, landing at the Hal Far airfield on Malta. "This island is odd. It protrudes abruptly out of the sea, yet no point on the island rises to any great height. It is like a uniformly even piece of rock at a distance from the air.

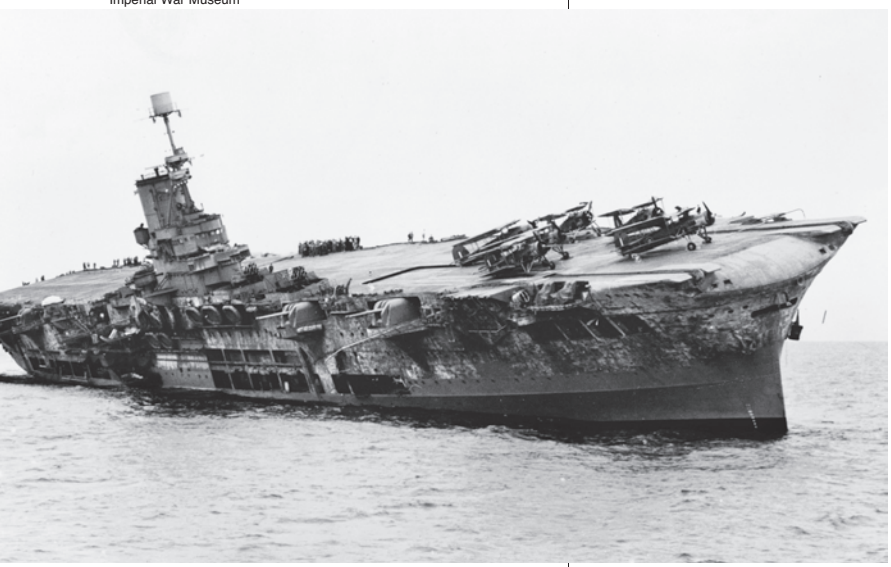
"Four of us share a large, comfortable ante-room.... This is a building called Hal

Far House. Maltese architecture is rather pleasing.... The stone buildings seem to resist air raids well, for it just chips bits off instead of the whole building collapsing."

Two days later Ormond made his first trip into Valetta in a petrol truck. "The petrol lorry was very antique and the driver persisted in sounding his horn at frequent intervals for little or no apparent reason. The town seemed full of happy little children ... while goats amused me by disappearing through the front doors of houses or standing haughtily on the pavements."

In October Malta's strike forces ratcheted up the pressure on the Axis convoys, and the submarines patrols were increased.

Imperial War Museum



A new Fleet Air Arm Squadron of Albacore aircraft arrived at Hal Far. No enemy sea traffic from Sicily to Tripoli was detected after October 18, and Force K with the cruisers *Aurora* and *Penelope* and two big fleet destroyers returned to Malta after a five-month absence. Three large cargo submarines arrived to maintain supplies. On each trip one of these boats could carry enough aviation fuel to keep the aircraft based on the island in the air for three days. Air raids remained at a fairly low level, 56 during the month.

The Axis supply convoys were suspended due to the losses. However, Rommel's troops were desperate for reinforcements and supplies because only a trickle could be flown in. So a convoy of seven merchant ships sailed from Sicily on November 8 for Tripoli, and strong forces were sent to cover the convoy. Enemy submarines were on patrol around Malta to detect the sailing of Force K, and six destroyers were with the convoy, while a covering force of two cruisers and four destroyers was in support.

The convoy was spotted late in the afternoon, and Force K put to sea promptly at dusk; the Italian submarines missed their sailing. That night, in a brilliant moonlight action, Force K attacked the convoy and sank all the supply ships plus two destroyers, while two other destroyers were damaged.

The British ships used their advantage of radar to the utmost. Force K returned to Grand Harbour having suffered neither damage nor casualties. Near dawn, Lt. Cmdr. Malcolm David Wanklyn's submarine *Upholder* sank the Italian destroyer *Lebeccio*.

In November Axis losses had risen to 63 percent of ships sailing to North Africa. The situation had become intolerable; the Italian Merchant Marine was being wiped out and Rommel was crippled by lack of supplies, which led to his defeat by the British Eighth Army in Operation Crusader, followed by the relief of the Tobruk siege in December.

The year 1941 ended with Axis air raids on the island increasing, in particular daylight attacks on the airfields, which met with some success. It had become clear to Hitler that to win the war in the Mediterranean Malta had to be subdued. On December 2, he ordered Fliegerkorps II transferred from Russia to Sicily. Together with Fliegerkorps X, it would form Luftflotte 2 under the command of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring. Four German U-boats were ordered to join six that had entered the Mediterranean in September.

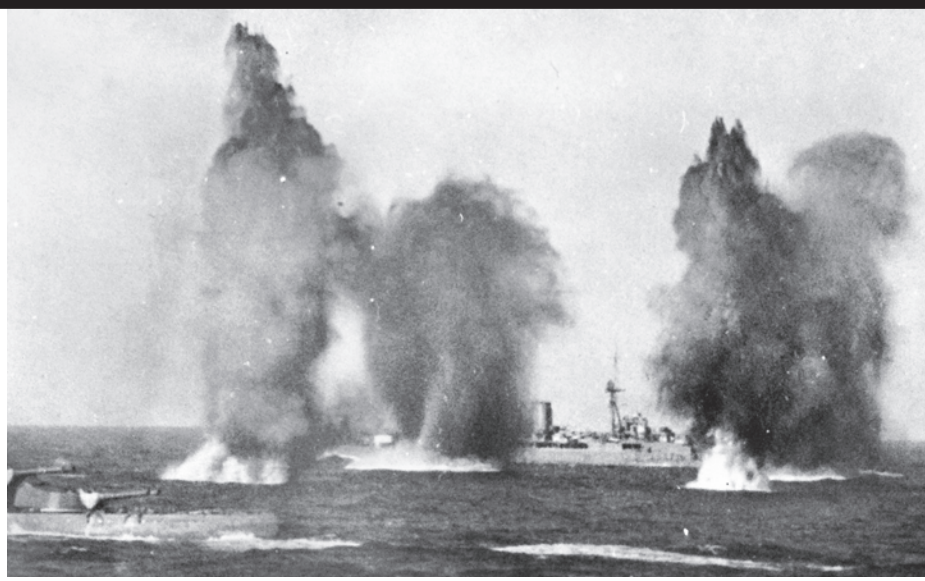
U-81 sank the carrier *Ark Royal* within sight of Gibraltar on November 13; at that time the British had no modern carrier available to take her place, thus the ability of Force H to cover convoys and fly fighters into Malta was greatly reduced. Twelve days later the battleship *Barham* was sunk by *U-331*. She was hit by three torpedoes, and a cataclysmic explosion tore the ship apart; 868 men went down with her—the loss of life at that time only second to the loss of the battlecruiser *Hood*. This fact was kept from the British public for some months.

The Germans also resurrected the planned invasion of Malta, codenamed Herkules. The landings would take place in two phases; first paratroops would land in the south of the island away from Grand Harbour and would spread out to capture the three main airfields, thus allowing gliders full of troops to land (the small, stone-walled fields of Malta would not allow gliders to land elsewhere). Then a strong Italian force would land by sea in Marsaxlokk Bay.

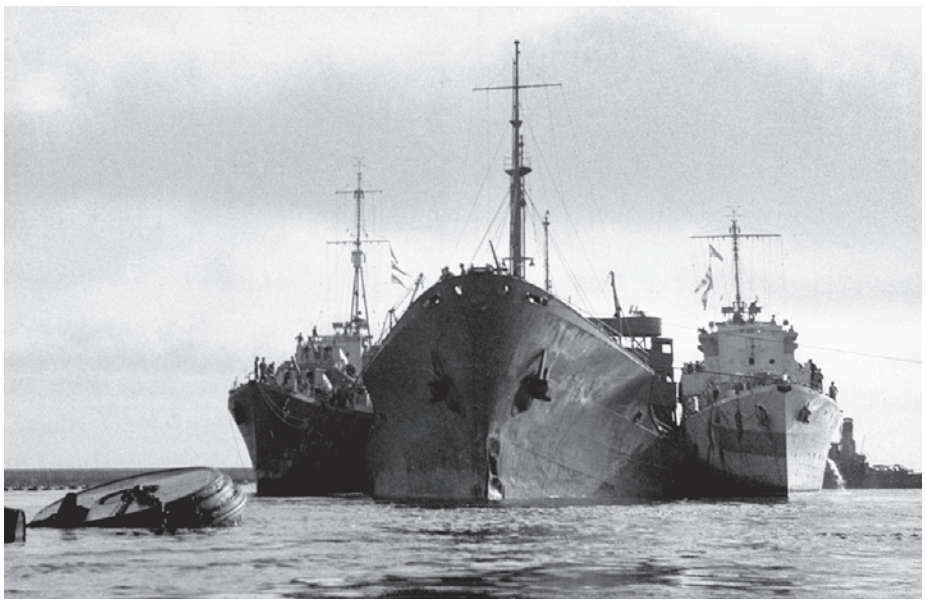
The Germans even carried out a beach reconnaissance, but little was learned and one party was captured. However, doubts soon gathered in Hitler's mind: the heavy losses the paratroops had suffered in Crete, the lack of landing craft, and the strong defences of the island.

Count Ciano spoke with the Italian Chief of Staff Marshal Ugo Cavallero on a trip to Salzburg. "During the trip, Cavallero talks to me about the Malta operation. He realizes that it is a tough nut. The preparations under way are being made with a maximum of attention and care, and with the conviction that the attack must take place.

"This is to give the maximum incentive to those concerned with planning. But whether the operation will take place, and when, is another matter, and in this regard Cavallero makes no commitment. As is his nature, he hides behind a great quantity of ifs and buts."



ABOVE: A British convoy of desperately needed supplies comes under aerial attack in this photo by Royal Navy Captain Robert Sydney Hutchinson. The King of England later twice awarded the island the George Cross for its heroic defense. BELOW: American oil tanker *Ohio* is supported by two Royal Navy destroyers as it approaches Malta following epic voyage through the Mediterranean, August 1942. Having surviving torpedos, aerial bombardment, and a fire, the *Ohio,* manned by a British crew, was called "the ship that wouldn't die." OPPOSITE: British aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal* lists heavily after being torpedoed off Gibraltar by *U-81,* November 13, 1941, necessitating American carriers to ferry aircraft to Malta in 1942.



Imperial War Museum

Rommel's successful advance in North Africa was continuing, thus the invasion was postponed. Mussolini proclaimed that the advance on Cairo and Suez was the first priority, although Kesselring and Cavallero continued to see the supply route the main necessity.

Now came the climax of Malta's epic battle as the air assault intensified. In a period of six weeks the towns in the small area around Grand Harbour received a total of 6,700 tons of bombs (by comparison, the November 14, 1940, blitz on Coventry did not exceed 250 tons). In the same period, 21 Royal Navy ships were sunk in the harbors and approaches, and another 13 were damaged. There were 275 raids in March and 283 in May.

On April 14, 1942, Malta lost probably her most famous submarine, the *Upholder,* with Wanklyn in command, set out on his 28th patrol. The submarine and crew were not seen again and were believed to have been sunk by Italian warships. During 15 months of operations, *Upholder* sank 11 Axis merchant ships and damaged four others. Also it sank one destroyer and a minesweeper and damaged a cruiser and, remarkably, two Italian submarines—amounting to 128,353 tons of Axis shipping.

For sinking the heavily defended troop transport *Conte Rosso* a year earlier on May 24, 1941, without a working ASDIC (the British version of SONAR), Wanklyn was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Pilot Officer Oliver Ormond wrote in his diary on Sunday, April 19, 1942: "Yes! I have been awarded the DFC. Today being Sunday, I must wait until tomorrow to go to Valetta to send my mother a cable and buy the ribbon." That was the last entry in his war diary. He was 20 years and three days old when shot down over the island. His body was not found for five months, as it had landed on a roof. He is buried on Malta at the Capuccini Naval Cemetery.

King George VI would also award the George Cross to Malta to "bear witness to the heroism and devotion of its people." The medal was displayed in the villages and towns of the island so that every citizen could see it and be aware of their share in earning it.

The Germans also escalated their efforts, increasing the number and size of their raids and sweeping across the island using the latest Messerschmitt fighters, to which the Hurricanes were inferior. Air Vice Marshal Hugh Lloyd arrived to take command of the air defense; he knew the battle would be lost if he did not obtain more Supermarine Spitfires.

In late February the first Spitfires had been flown in from *Eagle* and *Argus,* then came two large batches flown in from the carrier USS *Wasp,* which brought them directly from the UK. After a direct appeal for help by Winston Churchill to President Franklin Roosevelt, the prime minister congratulated the *Wasp* after her second trip: "Many thanks to you all for your timely help. Who said a wasp couldn't sting twice?"

Wasp delivered 47 Spitfires in March

and a further 61 with *Eagle* in April. The arrival of the first group from *Wasp* was tracked by the German radar on Sicily; they reacted quickly. Ninety minutes after the fighters had landed, bombers raided the airfields. Every serviceable Spitfire was put into the air, but nine were destroyed on the ground and a further 29 damaged by rock splinters. The Stukas were diving on each individual plane on the ground, and only pens built of rocks and sand-filled petrol cans prevented much heavier losses. In that one day the Luftwaffe dropped 1,470 tons of bombs on the two main fighter bases.

Argus and *Eagle* were to fly in 225 more Spitfires in the next four months, while *Furious* added another 100.

Imperial War Museum

Meanwhile, the Maltese population, holding on amid the shattered buildings, continued with their fast. As the food situation went from bad to worse, superhuman efforts were required, as Joseph Attard noted: "The guns kept firing and shooting down the enemy with the same precision, the fighters kept flying and fighting against bigger odds. Troops, policemen, and civilians—Maltese and British—worked around the clock on airfields filling craters and clearing debris to keep them serviceable. Farmers toiled in their blackened fields, trying to do the impossible."

The cities of Senglea, Vittoriosa, Valetta, and Floriana were being systematically destroyed. The people had taken to living underground in the great fortress of the Cottonera Lines behind the cities, and ancient tunnels and galleries were enlarged to house thousands of people; caves were dug into rocks, while the disused railway tunnel under the ancient bastions became home for more.

The food situation was rapidly becoming precarious, along with oil and antiaircraft ammunition. The governor estimated that Malta could only hold out until the end of June.

In May the 10th Submarine Flotilla was forced to withdraw to Alexandria as its boats were now being attacked and sunk in harbor. Malta was losing its sting; Italian convoys were passing to North Africa in relative safety with light escorts.

By June it was decided two convoys would be passed through to Malta to ease the situation. Escorting one was the submarine HMS *Vigorous* from Alexandria with 11 merchant ships, and *Harpoon* from Gibraltar with six escorted the other. *Vigorous,* faced with Italian surface forces, including battleships, and heavy air attacks, was forced to turn back. *Harpoon,* with the benefit of carrier air cover, managed to get two ships through to the beleaguered island and unloaded 43,000 tons of stores, easing the pressure on Malta.

However, much of the supplies were war materials; fuel and food remained strictly rationed. Malta's weekly ration in mid-1942 consisted of 73 ounces of bread, 3 ounces of fats, 1.75 ounces of cheese, 1.25 ounces of coffee, 3 pints goats milk, 3 pounds of tomatoes, 1.5 pounds of potatoes, plus 8 gallons of water per day. There was no sugar, tea, oil, butter, soap, or meat, and, when the coal ran out, no electricity; the staple diet for months was soup and bread. The only other supplies arriving after *Harpoon* came from the fast minelayer *Welshman* and from two cargo submarines, which could get in and out during hours of darkness.

In July there were 188 air raids. However, with 100 operational Spitfires, it was becoming increasingly costly for the Axis air forces (153 of their aircraft were shot down that same month). With better air defenses, the 10th Submarine Flotilla returned early in July. Beaufort torpedo bombers also made successful sorties, sinking 48 ships that month totaling 100,000 tons.

Yet Malta still desperately needed another convoy. Food was becoming critical; if supplies in bulk did not reach the island soon the residents would be starved into surrender. Thus a large convoy was planned; clearly such a big undertaking came to the attention of the enemy. Extra bomber squadrons, E-boats, and submarines were deployed to meet it.

The convoy escort for Operation Pedestal was large: two battleships (*Nelson* and *Rodney*), three aircraft carriers (*Indomitable, Victorious,* and *Eagle*), three cruisers, and 14 destroyers. The convoy's close escort, which would sail right through to Malta, consisted of four cruisers and 11 destroyers. The carrier *Furious* with destroyer escort would deliver another 38 Spitfires to Malta. The 14 merchant ships were all fast, modern vessels.

The Pedestal convoy sailed from the Clyde and Scapa Flow on August 2/3, passing

US Navy History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: When Italy capitulated in September 1943, Italian Admiral Alberto da Zara (third from left, dark pants) surrendered the Italian fleet to Royal Navy Commodore Royer M. Dick at the Malta Harbour. OPPOSITE: A Bristol Beaufighter of the Fleet Air Arm, flying from Malta, attacks German flak vessels in the Mediterranean.

through the Straits of Gibraltar during the night of August 9/10. Early the next day they were spotted by an Italian submarine and the battle was on. The first loss was the carrier *Eagle* to *U-73*. The ship had played a large role in the defense of Malta and was a sad loss. By August 15, after an epic struggle, five merchant ships reached the island.

When the American tanker *Ohio* came slowly into Grand Harbour with a destroyer lashed on each side to keep her afloat after being hit by a torpedo and bombs, she was met by a large crowd, bands were playing and flags waving everywhere along the ancient ramparts and the Barracca Gardens.

The stores (12,000 tons of fuel oil, 3,600 tons of diesel fuel, and 32,000 tons of general cargo) were rapidly unloaded and the tanker pumped out as she settled on the harbor bed. The cost had been high: nine merchant ships, one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, and one destroyer were sunk. Badly damaged were one aircraft carrier, two cruisers and a destroyer—500 men lost.

The supplies brought in with Pedestal at such a heavy cost did not raise the siege, but they did increase the people's rations and brought fresh hope. Pedestal was the beginning of the end.

The Italian and German Air Forces were now diverted away from Malta to combat the increasing Allied attacks on the convoys from Italy and Sicily to Libya, and several German squadrons were diverted to the Russian Front. The number of raids rapidly dropped in September; there were 20 raid-free nights.

In October there was a brief return to the intensity of air raids suffered in the worse periods, with 1,400 sorties flown against Malta in the first week; 114 Axis aircraft were shot down for the loss of 27 Spitfires. This was during the great battle of El Alamein when the Axis tried to neutralize Malta's strike forces. Yet, in this month 40 percent of the supplies sent to the Afrika Korps were lost.

In the autmun of the epic year 1942, in which the Axis forces had tried to subdue Malta, knowing that if they failed they would lose North Africa, the *Times of Malta* clearly identified the island's role shortly after the victory of El Alamein on October 26: "El Alamein delivered Malta, but Malta delivered Egypt."

Then in November came Operation Stoneage; four merchant ships, covered by cruisers and destroyers from Alexandria, got through intact, and this convoy did raise the siege. The next convoy, Portcullis, arrived the following month—again with no trouble.

Commander Bragadin, in his *History of the Italian Navy in World War II,* wrote, "Malta proved to be without doubt the principal factor in the Allied victory in the Mediterranean—on land, at sea, and in the air."

On June 20, 1943, after the defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa and before the invasion of Sicily the following month, King George VI visited Malta. It was only a year since the island had been on the point of surrender. Admiral Cunningham accompanied the king on his visit. They sailed on the battle-scarred *Aurora* that had been involved in so many of the Malta convoys and actions in the Mediterranean.

Cunningham wrote, "For obvious reasons the visit had been kept a dead secret, but at 5 AM the Maltese were informed of His Majesty's impending arrival. It was time enough. The Baraccas and all other vantage points were thick with cheering people as the *Aurora,* flying the Royal Standard, passed through the breakwater at 8 AM and moved to her buoys. The king stood on a special platform built in front of the bridge so that all could see him.

"I have witnessed many memorable spectacles; but this was the most impressive of them all. The dense throngs of loyal Maltese men, women and children were wild with enthusiasm. I have never heard such cheering, and all the bells in the many churches started ringing when he landed....

"The King made an extensive tour of the island and we all lunched with the Governor, Field Marshal Viscount Gort, at Verdala Palace. It was the first time a Sovereign had landed on Malta since 1911, and the effect on the inhabitants was tremendous."

The siege of Malta had cost the Maltese population dearly—1,300 of their number had been killed and 30,000 buildings destroyed or damaged, and it had lasted almost 2½ years—from June 1940-November 1942. But the steadfastness of the people, along with the courage and determination of those who came to save the island, was one of the great British achievements of World War II. □

Continued from page 13

tember 10, 1943, 40 miles off the shore of Galveston. Two B-17s, with 11 men in each plane, had taken off from Alexandria (Louisiana) Air Base for gunnery practice over the Gulf of Mexico but, for unknown reasons, collided in mid-air. Investigators believed that one of the planes may have lost its position in the formation and, in an attempt to maneuver back, collided with the other ship. One plane exploded and both sank into Gulf waters immediately afterward. All 22 men were lost.

Learning to fly was dangerous to both students and instructors. On April 14, 1943, two crashes occurred a few hours apart that took three lives from the Air Corps Basic Flying School in San Angelo, Texas. In the first, Cadet Raymond L. Stephenson was soloing when his AT-6 crashed at a ranch about 25 miles east of the air base.

The second crash involved a cadet and an instructor; both were killed when their trainer, for unexplained reasons, fell from an altitude of about 700 feet and burst into flames upon impact with the ground; both bodies were burned beyond recognition.

On October 2, 1943, a training plane from the Army Navigation School at Hondo, Texas, crashed into a home, killing five Army officers, two enlisted men, and a civilian navigation instructor. Fortunately, no one was home at the time.

In another Texas crash, this one involving a four-engine bomber from the Big Spring Bombardier School, a pilot instructor and four students died when their plane hit a mountain 11 miles east of Big Spring on February 14, 1944.

It wasn't only bombers that were falling out of the sky; the same thing was happening regularly with fighter planes. On March 23, 1943, a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt took off from Mitchel Field, New York, developed mechanical troubles shortly after takeoff, and crashed into Barnard Hall at Hofstra College in Hempstead, Long Island, New York, killing the pilot and setting the building on fire. Luckily, no one else was killed or injured.

In 1939, the Heisman Trophy, emblematic of the country's best college football player, was awarded to the University of Iowa's Nile C. Kinnick, who was also the student body president. After graduation, he received a commission in the Navy and went on to flight school.

On June 2, 1942, while on a training mission off the coast of Venezuela, his Grumman F4F Wildcat lost oil pressure and he was forced to ditch in the sea four miles from his carrier, the USS *Lexington*; his body was never recovered. In 1972, the University of Iowa renamed their football stadium "Kinnick Stadium" in his honor.

On September 12, 1942, another F4F Wildcat flew too closely to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge; it ran into a suspension cable that sliced off the tail and a wing, raining debris down on the motorists below. Miraculously, no civilians were hurt, but the pilot died.

On May 5, 1945, nine officers and an enlisted man were killed and two enlisted men were injured when a Navy Catalina flying boat crashed into a fog-shrouded hill southwest of Sausalito, California. Two enlisted men, who suffered first-degree burns, were thrown clear of the plane and survived.

The B-29 Superfortress was not immune from mechanical failure. On February 18, 1943, a prototype of the big bomber had one of its engines catch fire, causing it to crash into meat packing plant in Seattle. All 10 men on board were killed, as well as 20 people on the ground.

On July 2, 1945, another B-29 was flying east from Davis-Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona, when it went down in rugged country about 20 miles east of Salt Flat, Texas. None of the 12 men on board—seven officers and five enlisted men—survived.

American fliers weren't the only ones going down; the U.S.'s northern neighbor, too, saw its fair share of fatal accidents and disasters. On October 12, 1943, a B-24 Liberator bomber carrying 24 Royal Canadian Air Force personnel from eastern air stations to Montreal crashed into the St. Lawrence River. It was announced that poor weather conditions likely contributed to the crash and the deaths of all aboard.

Seven days later, another B-24 belonging to the RCAF was en route from Gander, Newfoundland, to Mont-Joli, Quebec, with 24 people on board. Due to weather and a navigation error, the plane slammed into a Quebec mountain, killing everyone. The wreckage went undiscovered for two years.

Tragedies also happened to foreign fliers in the United States. Two experienced pilots from Britain's Royal Air Force—Squadron Leaders Basil B.W. Howe and R.S. Harmon—were in the United States to serve as trainers; both had taken part in many combat missions (Howe had already completed 27 bombing missions over Germany). On January 14, 1944, they were flying from Dayton, Ohio, to Washington, D.C., when their plane developed serious engine problems.

While Howe tried to control the stricken craft, Harmon safely bailed out; Howe then followed but landed in the icy Ohio River. The plane crashed near St. Mary's, on the West Virginia side of the river. After struggling in the water for about 15 minutes, Howe went under, a victim of exhaustion and hypothermia. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

In 1942, in order to free up more men for combat, the United States instituted a program called the Women Airforce Service Pilots—WASP for short. The program was designed to train women to fly military aircraft from the factories where they were built to the U.S. air bases where they were put into service. More than 1,100 women were accepted into the WASPs—and 38 lost their lives in flying accidents.

A National Public Radio story said that one of those killed was 26-year-old Mabel Rawlinson, the daughter of a minister in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She was stationed at Camp Davis in North Carolina and was coming back from a night training exercise with her male instructor on August 23, 1943, when the plane, a Douglas A-24 Banshee dive bomber, made a fiery crash-landing at the base. Upon hitting the ground, the instructor was thrown from the plane and suffered serious injuries, but Rawlinson's hatch was jammed, preventing her from escaping.

A fellow WASP was there: "I knew

ABOVE: Smoke billows from a 20-million-gallon natural-gas storage tank in Chicago after a B-24 crashed into it on May 20, 1943, killing all 12 men aboard. BELOW: Even after the war accidents continued to occur. Here a C-47 transport plane burns after going down near Billings, Montana, December 8, 1945. Seventeen servicemen died.

Mabel very well. We were both scheduled to check out on a night flight in the A-24. My time preceded hers, but she offered to go first because I hadn't had dinner yet. We were in the dining room and heard the siren that indicated a crash. We ran out onto the field. We saw the front of her plane engulfed in fire, and we could hear Mabel screaming. It was a nightmare."

Because Rawlinson was a civilian, the military was not required to pay for her funeral or pay for her remains to be sent home, so her fellow pilots raised the money to ship her body back to Kalamazoo.

Even after the war in Europe ended in May 1945, aviation tragedies continued. In a well-known incident, on July 28, 1945, an Army Air Force B-25 Mitchell bomber slammed into the 79th floor of New York City's Empire State Building, then the world's tallest building (see *WWII Quarterly,* Fall 2010). The pilot was attempting to land at La Guardia Field on Long Island but became lost in fog and was seen flying between skyscrapers in Manhattan seconds before the crash.

The disaster killed the pilot, two other crewmen, and 11 people in the building. Debris—parts of the plane and the building—rained down on the street below. The death toll would likely have been much higher had it occurred on a weekday instead of a Saturday.

On December 8, 1945, a C-47 transport plane, carrying 21 o verseas veterans flying from Newark, New Jersey, to Seattle, Washington, for discharge or reassignment, crashed a mile west of Billings, Montana; four men survived.

A newspaper account described the horrific scene: "Screams of the dying and injured could be heard as the police officers approached the field, where in the glare of the burning plane were six army men and one of the pilots. The other pilot was under the ship's motor, which had been torn loose in the crash….

"The blaze was extinguished by city firemen while smoke still curled from the twisted mass. City and county officers began extricating bodies from the wreckage. Twelve smoldering black and red charred forms, some with their arms and legs still in sitting positions, were carried out and placed in metal boxes for removal to local funeral homes."

From 1940 through 1945, according to statistics gathered by Anthony J. Mireles, the U.S. Army Air Corps/Air Force suffered 6,351 fatal accidents, with more than 13,600 fatalities and the loss of more than 7,000 aircraft. Most of the fatal accidents (2,101) occurred in primary, basic, and advanced trainers, while 2,796 aviators died in the 490 fatal B-24 accidents, followed by 1,757 who died in 284 B-17 crashes.

Of the fighter plane accidents, 455 pilots died in 404 crashes involving P-47 Thunderbolts, while 369 and 337 lost their lives in P-39 and P-38 accidents, respectively.

The U.S. Eighth Air Force in Europe suffered more than 26,000 men killed due to enemy action, mechanical problems, and accidents during the war. But training, as we have seen, was just as hazardous, with more than 15,500 losing their lives in service to their country before they were ever able to face the enemy.

Unfortunately, their sacrifices were seldom noted. At a few places around the country, a simple plaque or marker or monument lists the names of those who died but, because they did not die due to enemy action, they were not eligible to receive the Purple Heart medal, posthumously.

For the most part, their sacrifices are forgotten by the nation they had sworn to serve and protect. □

Bombshell

Continued from page 59

President Nixon has been deceived by his advisors in almost the same fashion that President Roosevelt was deceived with respect to Pearl Harbor.

"If ever there was a time in the history of this nation when Americans need and should be made aware that the Office of the Presidency can, and should be, the ultimate repository of historical truth, it is now!

"In the second place, most of the principals involved in concealing the truth about Pearl Harbor (the destruction, alteration, and rewriting of documents) have passed on. Those left are obviously determined to carry the secret with them to their graves—unless forced to do otherwise. On my part, I am the only one left of officer rank who knew not only what took place but, as well, the men who did it.

"In the third place, and possibly most important of all is the obligation owed to the American people that the true story of why and how Pearl Harbor happened be recorded for posterity.

"Finally, revelation of the true story of Pearl Harbor is a debt owed not only to the memory of those who died there and the thousands who died needlessly thereafter, but to the military services in general, as well as to the memory of Admiral Kimmel and General Short (dear friends of yours I know) who went to their graves with the guilt of Pearl Harbor still upon them.

"As you are aware, I have kept silent on this matter for many years because of my deep seated belief that the truth would eventually come out. Since it has not, and since you told me many years ago that in God's timing I was to reveal the truth of a great American tragedy, perhaps you will understand better than any of us that the time is now."

When Frank Schuler died in 1996, his work was unresolved, but he left a trail of clues. Although, as he states, the diplomats involved are long gone, their illicit activities certainly should be recorded for posterity. A new chapter awaits the history books. □

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