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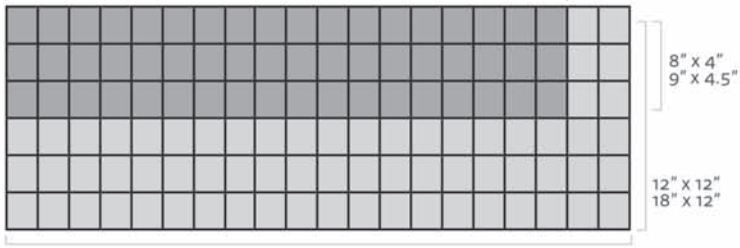

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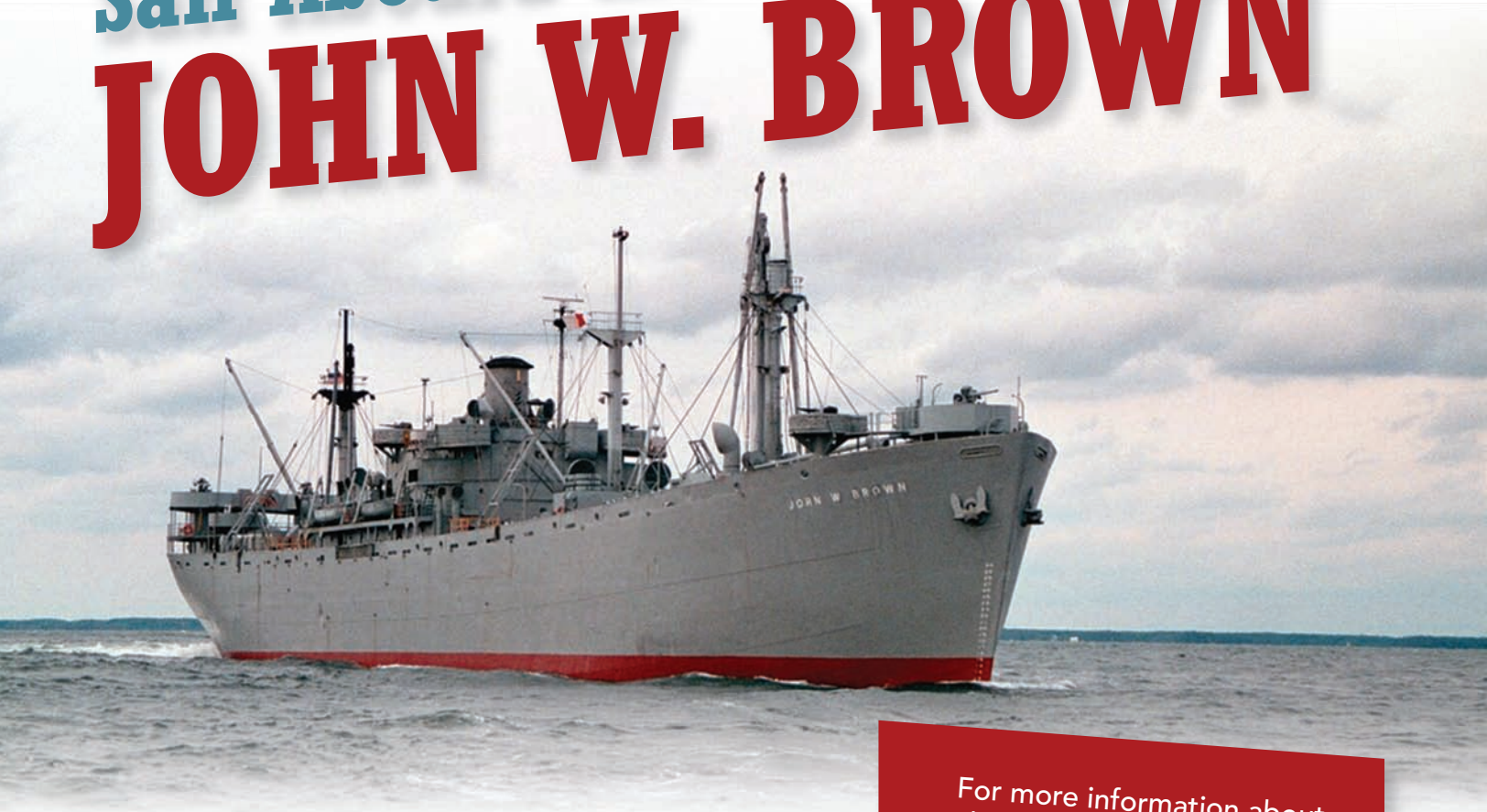

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Ten Interesting World War II Factoids

A lot of interesting information can be found on the Internet. Consider the following:

1. The first American serviceman killed in World War II was Captain Robert M. Losey from Andrew, Iowa. He was serving as a military attaché and was killed in Norway on April 21, 1940, when German aircraft bombed the Dombås railway station where he and others were awaiting transportation.

2. The first German soldier killed in the war was a Lieutenant von Schmeling, a military advisor to the Nationalist Chinese (China had been at war with Japan since 1931). He died while leading a Chinese infantry battalion in 1937.

3. Japan employed multiple types of suicide attacks during the war, including suicide submarines called Kaiten. Approximately100 of these were used, the most famous of which was used in the sinking of the USS *Underhill.*

4. In 2005, researchers from the University of Hawaii discovered the remains of a massive Japanese submarine, *I-401,* off the coast of the Hawaiian island of Kalaeloa. Built to attack the Panama Canal, it was basically an underwater aircraft carrier that measured 400 feet long, carried a crew of 144 men, and had a range of 37,000 miles. It carried three folded-up bombers inside its watertight hangar.

5. According to the AAF Statistical Digest, the U.S. Army Air Forces lost 14,903 pilots and crew in the United States—not in combat but as a result of more than 50,000 accidents during the course of the war. Another 1,000 planes disappeared en route from the U.S. to foreign countries. Air losses were so staggering during 1942-1943 that it was statistically impossible for bomber crews to complete a 25-mission tour in Europe. More men died in the U.S. Army Air Forces than in the U.S. Marine Corps.

6. More than 41,000 American servicemen were captured during the war. Of the 5,400 captured by the Japanese, half died. About 10 percent of those captured by the Germans died.

7. The Dachau concentration camp near Munich first opened in March 1933, six years before the start of the war. The Dachau camp system grew to include nearly 100 sub-camps. The Nazis ran more than 40,000 camps of various sizes.

8. Twenty percent of Poland's population died during World War II—the highest percentage of any nation.

9. The youngest U.S. serviceman was just 12 years old. Calvin Graham, a seventh-grader from Crockett, Texas, lied about his age to get into the Navy and was later wounded aboard the USS *South Dakota* at Guadalcanal. He was jailed and given a dishonorable discharge for lying about his age, although his veteran's benefits were later restored by Congress.

10. Stalin killed more people than Hitler during purges of "undesirables." He also killed an estimated 25 million people versus Hitler's 12 million. Not that either was a record to be proud of.

It's enlightening what one can find on the Internet!

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One of Germany's top aces, Adolf "Dolfo" Galland was afraid of neither the enemy nor his superiors.

Adolf Galland stroked his well-groomed mustache as he strode confidentially toward his distinctive Messerschmitt Me-109E with its brightly painted fuselage art featuring Mickey Mouse smoking a cigar and wielding a hatchet.

"The British are coming," he muttered to himself as he took off to intercept a force of sturdy, snub-nosed Bristol Blenheim bombers raiding Saint Omer. The bombers were accompanied by some 50 Spitfires and Hurricanes flying escort over northwestern France on that day, June 21, 1941.

Eight minutes after takeoff, Galland sent one Blenheim crashing to earth and a second one down in flames a mere four minutes later. Those were victories 68 and 69 for the dashing pilot who was a near "look-alike" to movie idol Errol Flynn. But then, the accompanying Spitfires caught the 29-year-old pilot in their crosshairs, shooting up his fighter and sending it into a crash landing on the nearby airfield at Calais-Marck.

He escaped unharmed and within a half an hour an Me-108 swooped down and carried him back to his squadron. The day was not done for the fearless pilot, though, because just three hours later, he was back in the air and sending a Spitfire down in flames. That gave him a third victory for the day on the eve of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union at the other side of the European continent.

Lieutenant Galland was exhilarated about his victories that day, but suddenly "all hell broke loose," as he recalled in his memoirs. Cannon fire from an enemy

ABOVE: In this painting by aviation artist Robert Taylor, Galland and his wingman Bruno Hegenauer streak through a screen of RAF Spitfires to attack Bristol Blenheim bombers in the skies above France, June 21, 1941. INSET: Colonel Adolf Galland, commander of the famed (and feared) Luftwaffe JG-26 fighter squadron, emerges from the cockpit of his Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter. He flew 705 combat missions and was shot down four times.

"Most Memorable Day," © by Robert Taylor / www.militarygallery.com


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plane ripped through his wings, and something hit his head and arm. His fuel tank and radiator leaked badly and the right side of his fuselage had been ripped away. The engine cut out, but the plane still somehow flew, and at 18,000 feet he began an attempt to glide back to base.

That was when the worst happened. The plane's fuel tank exploded and the whole fuselage became engulfed in flames, with burning fuel quickly pouring into his cockpit.

He instinctively grabbed for the cockpit canopy release, but it was jammed tight. Thinking quickly, he snapped his belt free and tried again to force the canopy open, desperately pushing his whole body up against it as the flames licked around him.

The canopy finally gave way to his desperate efforts, but he was not completely thrown free from his burning coffin. Galland's parachute was caught on the flaming plane, dragging him toward certain death. He found his arm wrapped around the plane's aerial mast as he tugged and pushed with all his energy before finally breaking free. He tumbled and managed to open his parachute and then slowly floated to earth.

"I should have landed in the Forest of Boulogne like a monkey on a tree," he recalled, "but the parachute only brushed a poplar and then folded up" as he came down in a soft, boggy meadow. Cautious French peasants collected him up and took him to a farmhouse, where he was retrieved by a German construction crew that drove him back to his base at Audembert. After a brief visit to a nearby naval hospital where he was checked over and patched up, the fortunate flyer was cleared for general ground-based duties for the time being.

Initially, the grounding after being shot down twice in one day did not bother Galland too much because his injuries, after all, had limited his mobility. Once he could get about on a cane, the hobbling officer managed to get two new aircraft and conduct some gun testing. The irrepressible pilot then took the next step in recovery, taking it "for granted that the grounding order only applied to combat flying."

On a flight on July 2, just days after his near-death experience, he had another nasty encounter with a Spitfire. He was supposedly on a "test flight" when he led with his entire wing against a gaggle of Blenheims, escorted by Spitfires, conducting a raid over Saint Omer. He led the attack on the intruders, diving through the fighters to close in on the leading Blenheim. He fired at a distance of about 200 yards as he closed to ramming distance.

Two Heinkel He-51 biplane fighters. As a member of Germany's Condor Legion, Galland flew He-51s in support of Francisco Franco's rebels during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39.

"Pieces of metal and other parts broke away from the [bomber's] fuselage and the right engine" as it went up in smoke. Then a Spitfire jumped Galland as he was chasing another fighter, shattering the German's cockpit with his gunfire and causing another head wound. Losing a substantial amount of blood and afraid of blacking out, he succeeded with great effort in shaking off the attacker and landed safely.

His life had been spared that day by his leading rigger, Sergeant Meyer, who had quietly fitted additional armor plating near the top of his cockpit. "Without that armor plating, nothing would have remained" of his head because of the Spitfire's deadly cannon fire.

The grateful Galland saw to it that Meyer got special leave and 100 Reichsmarks. "I value my head that much," he aptly noted.

At this point in the war, the British had turned back the Germans in the Battle of Britain and were now escalating their attacks on the Continent just as the Nazis were massing in the East for their fateful lunge into the Soviet Union.

The next few years would be fateful—and bloody—for all involved, especially for men like Galland who took to the skies in ongoing efforts to affect the course of the war through their singular efforts, often thousands of feet above the earth.

The charismatic Galland was one of the fortunate ones in the Luftwaffe. He flew a total of 705 combat missions, survived being shot down four times, and earned 104 aerial victories against the Western Allies, all while surviving several intrigues, many with the head of the Luftwaffe, Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, and a tangle or two with Hitler as well.

Galland, who had a fondness for cigars and brandy, began the war as a first lieutenant and ended it as a lieutenant general commanding an Me-262 jet fighter unit. In November 1941, he was named General of Fighter Pilots, making him at age 30 the youngest general in the German military. It was a position he held for nearly three turbulent years.

By mid-summer 1944, he had been reassigned from that noncombat position to command the jet fighter unit following a disagreement with Hitler and others over Galland's outspoken need for more fighter jets—not bombers—to protect the homeland.

"Dolfo" Galland was born on March 19, 1912, in Westphalia, the second of four sons of a land manager. He showed an early interest in aerodynamics, flying hand-built gliders as a youngster. In 1932, he trained at an aviation school run by Lufthansa, the German airline company, and the following year he entered what would become the Luftwaffe.

FROM *USA TODAY* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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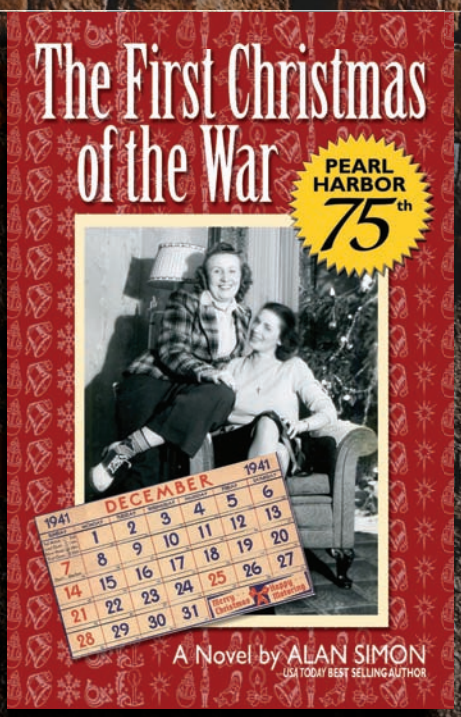

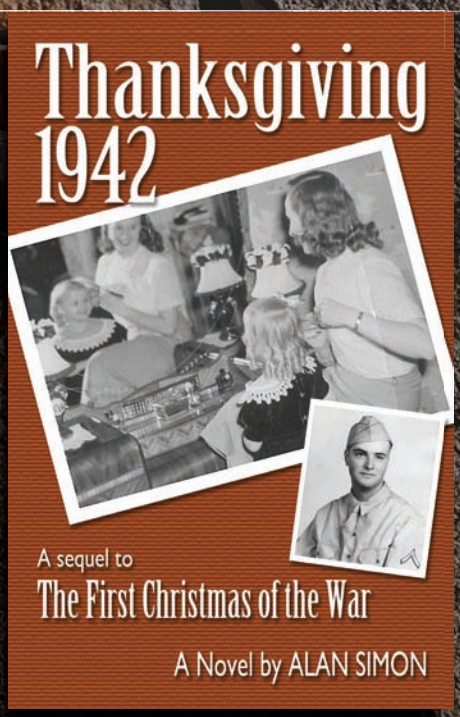

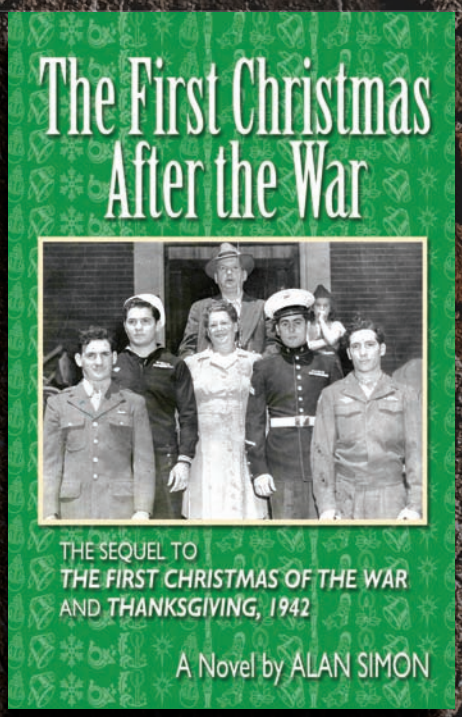

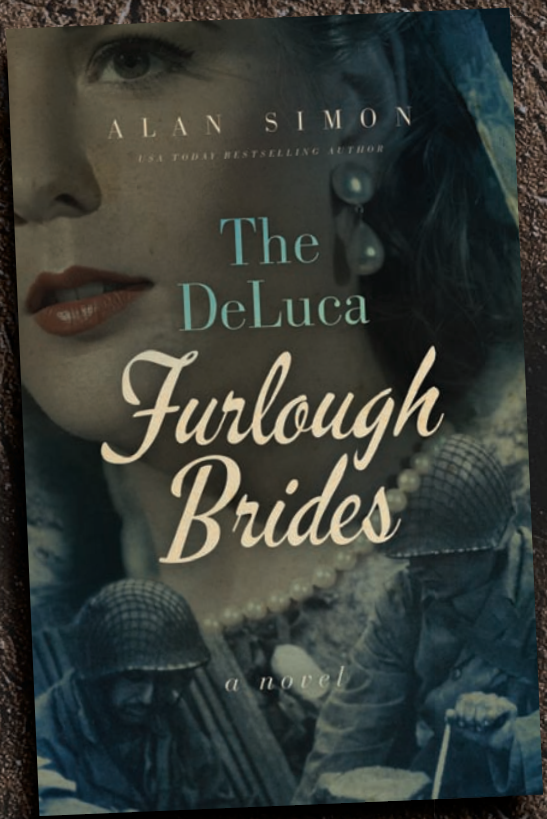

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"The Channel Dash," © by Robert Taylor / www.militarygallery.com

Robert Taylor's "Channel Dash" depicts the audacious effort planned and executed by Galland in 1942 to rush German warships from the Atlantic through the English Channel to safe harbor in northern Germany.

He survived two training crashes in the early 1930s. One resulted in a three-day coma, a fractured skull, a broken nose, and a damaged left eye that was to plague him throughout his life. The eye injury prompted the determined and resilient Galland to memorize the eye chart to pass the medical exam.

Galland was a member of Germany's Condor Legion that participated in the Spanish Civil War, where he flew Heinkel He-51 biplanes in ground-attack missions in support of the Nationalists. His 300 missions provided invaluable experience and he was awarded the Spanish Cross in gold and diamonds for his role.

Just prior to World War II, Galland was promoted to captain and he later flew 50 ground-attack missions in a biplane against Polish forces, receiving the Iron Cross Second Class at the end of that campaign. With a wink and a nod, he managed to swing over to the fighter arm of the Luftwaffe in time for the campaign in France, where he rolled up his first 14 victories and became the third fighter pilot to receive the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross medal.

He participated in the Battle of Britain, and by the end of 1940 Galland had notched 58 kills. By the following year, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and made commander of one of only two German fighter wings in France.

His bravery and dynamic leadership made him a standout, and in November 1941 Göring named him General of the Fighter Arm, replacing Werner "Vati" Mölders, who had died in a flight mishap on the way to the funeral of his predecessor, Ernst Udet, who had shot himself presumably because of heavy criticism laid at his doorstep by none other than Göring. To cover up the embarrassing episode, the German people were told that Udet had died in an accident while testing a new plane.

Mölders, who had 115 victories to his credit, died just five days after Udet. The country was shocked by the nearly back-to-back deaths of its two national heroes. Mölders, like Galland, was one of only a few pilots to hold the prestigious Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds.

It was at Mölders' funeral at the Invaliden Cemetery in Berlin that Göring beckoned Galland over and named him successor to the deceased.

"I was never in my life happy at a desk. My squadron meant everything to me. I hated everything to do with staff. I was now going to be one of those 'brass hats' for whom we had also used the most derogatory terms," admitted Galland, who cavalierly used one of his girlfriend's garters to hang his Knight's Cross around his neck.

The outspoken Galland created ripples in the Nazi hierarchy almost immediately. He opposed, for example, the decision to

dig into the Luftwaffe's training reserves to produce the flying fighter units that Hitler deemed necessary for the spring 1942 offensive in the Soviet Union.

Galland argued that the only aerial foe to be taken seriously at that point was in the West, and there was a greater need for fighter pilots there, especially because the vanguard of the U.S. Army Air Forces had started to make its buildup in England. There was also a need to step up aircraft production, especially fighters, he strenuously argued.

Training and increased pilot recruitment were especially needed in addition to increased production. "If you reduce them now instead of forcing them up, you are sawing off the branch on which we are sitting," he told anyone who would listen.

They did not. Instead, they acquiesced to Hitler's demands that full efforts be devoted immediately to subduing the Red Bear that had been driven back on its haunches in Germany's initial thrust. Galland believed Hitler was betting on a quick takedown in the East. Then the Luftwaffe and related Nazi resources could be realigned against the Western Allies.

Although he hated deskwork, the newly reassigned fighter pilot did an admirable job in planning and coordinating fighter cover for the boldly executed "Channel Dash" in early 1942 that enabled the prized battle cruisers *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*—along with the cruiser *Prinz Eugen*—to safely escape from the French port of Brest, where they were being pelted by British air attacks.

Galland memorably described the German ships in Brest as "flytraps," diverting British attacking strength away from the Reich. The Brits had made more than 295 attacks on the docked ships and had lost 43 planes and 247 airmen, according to Galland. Their aerial efforts were not without effect: *Gneisenau* was hit twice and *Scharnhorst* struck very heavily once, but both were repaired.

The ships needed to be freed for further duty, especially in light of the planned invasion of Norway. Galland demonstrated his cool thinking in working up plans for the Luftwaffe's role in a daring daytime dash through the Channel right under the eyes of

"Fighter General," © by Robert Taylor / www.militarygallery.com

ABOVE: A flight of jet-powered Me-262s, led by Galland, return to their Munich base at full throttle and hugging the deck to avoid the attentions of USAAF escort fighters. A B-24 lies crashed in a field. (Painting by Robert Taylor) BELOW: Galland (right) and Hermann Göring, head of the Luftwaffe, look over paperwork during an inspection of Galland's former fighter command in 1941. Galland had several clashes with his superiors.

the watchful British. He worked closely and under the tightest security with the German Navy.

Galland, for his part, needed to provide a well-thought-out and rather complicated system of overlapping fighter protection involving more than 300 planes and to make those detailed preparations without arousing British suspicions. Added to the defensive mix were seven covering destroyers and several speedy E-boats.

The dash commenced in the dark hours of February 11, 1942, and when dawn broke, the flotilla was off the Cotentin Peninsula. Strict radio silence was maintained initially by the Navy, as well as by the fighter pilots who skimmed the waves to avoid radar detection.

For two full hours of daylight, the force spun forward through the Channel, where no substantial British enemy force had dared to go since the 17th century. They were then spotted by a British fighter, but it was nearly another hour before the startled Brits took the report seriously and responded. The Germans then kicked in their radar interference and false radar signals that indicated the British homeland faced large numbers of incoming enemy formations.

The deceptions worked, throwing the

Brits off their game for a time. But soon, British coastal fire opened up on *Prinz Eugen*, and torpedo boats from both forces began trading shots. *Scharnhorst* then began taking damaging artillery fire and developed engine difficulties. Six slow-moving Fairey Swordfish torpedo planes, escorted by Spitfires, entered the fray. Galland's fighter planes tangled with the attackers, and the torpedo attack planes were knocked out of the sky with assistance from German naval fire.

The action lessened but did not cease as night fell, with British aircraft dropping additional mines. Both *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* hit mines during the night, but all three ships managed to reach safety in German waters by morning.

The Germans publicly claimed some 60 British aircraft destroyed and a British destroyer set aflame in the engagement for the loss of only one torpedo boat, a handful of aircraft, and no mention of the relatively light damage to two of its capital ships.

The fact remains that the "Channel Dash," conducted within range of the Home Fleet and within one of the narrowest straits in the world, was a win for the Germans and it caused consternation among the British. Not since 1690 had England seen a strong enemy force pass through that area. (See *WWII Quarterly,* Summer 2018.)

The daring daylight dash under heavy and overlapping German fighter cover proved to be a feather in Galland's cap. He proved he could handle innovative and detailed administrative duties when he set his mind to it, but throughout his career, he often proved unable to hold his tongue when it came to others above him who held differing views.

In August 1940, for example, Göring visited a Luftwaffe airfield during the Battle of Britain and verbally abused his fighter pilots for failing to defeat the British. Turning to Lieutenant Galland, he asked what was needed to finish the job. "I would like Spitfires for my group," Galland reportedly shot back, leaving the red-faced and flustered Göring speechless.

One of Galland's biggest issues with Hitler occurred over the Führer's demand that the successful fast-flying Me-262 jet be hastily reconfigured as a bomber and used in retaliatory raids against the Allies. That was the argument that got the high-scoring ace reassigned from his desk job late in the war to eventually command an Me-262 fighter unit near Munich. He performed admirably, developing new tactics for the jet fighters and putting newly developed air-to-air rockets to good use against seemingly endless armadas of incoming Allied bombers covered by Mustang and Thunderbolt fighters.

Galland's frustration and antipathy toward his superiors, especially Göring, ran deep. His efforts as early as 1942 to "explain the seriousness of the Luftwaffe's situation to the High Command miscarried.

Continued on page 98

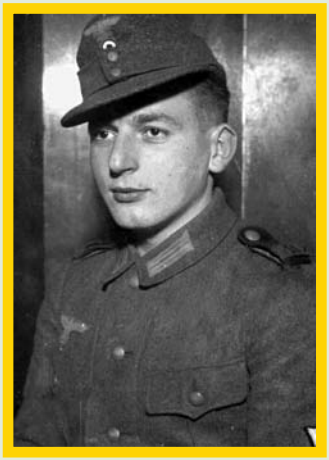
National Archives

FROM BOY TO

In the early hours of June 6, 1944, a 20-year-old German soldier hurried to his post at Wiederstandsnest 62 (WN62) overlooking Omaha Beach to man his MG 42 machine gun. Tossed around in the English Channel in front of him were over 34,000 American troops waiting for their chance to land on that beach and earn their place in history. Thanks to Cornelius Ryan, this date will always be remembered as "the longest day," but for many of these young troops, it was to become the shortest day of their lives.

For Heinrich "Hein" Severloh, son of a farmer from Baden-Württemburg who had never fired a shot in anger, it was the day he became "The Beast of Omaha." This is an account of how he conducted himself for nine hours on that day and how he lived with the consequences of his actions for the next 60 years.

"Hein, it's starting!" The voice of his lieutenant, Bernhard Frerking, woke Private Severloh from his slumbers in a small French farmhouse a few kilometers inland from the coast. Everyone from the 352nd Infantry Division had been expecting something to happen for weeks and knew how to respond. Field Marshal Rommel had always said that when the inevitable invasion occurred, the enemy had to be repulsed within 24 hours or the war would be lost. At this moment, however, Rommel was on the other side of Normandy celebrating his wife's birthday, and the Führer was enjoying a night's sleep that nobody dared to disturb.



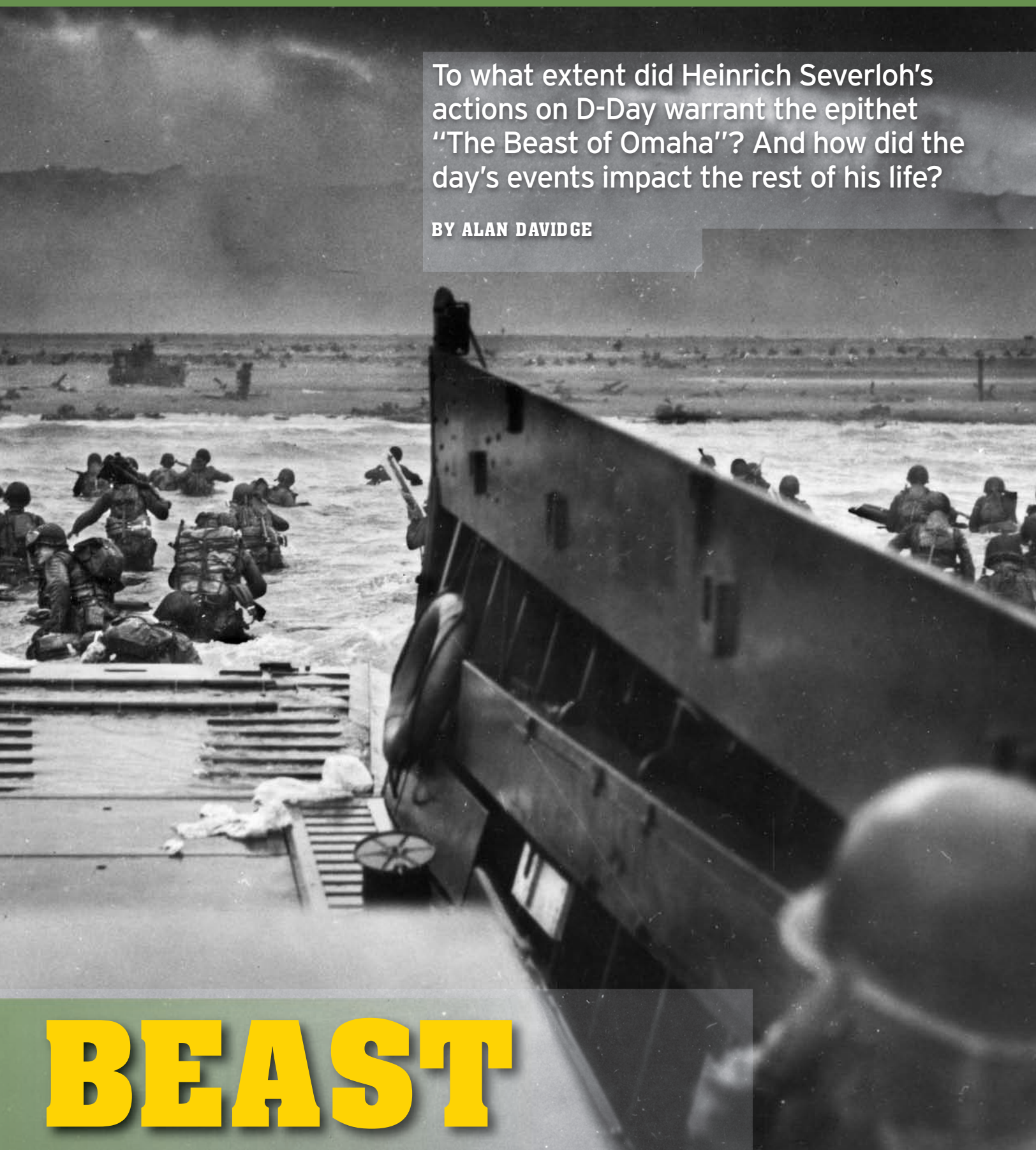
Troops from the 1st Infantry Division wade ashore toward the "Easy Red" sector of Omaha Beach while under fire from German troops on the bluffs beyond. Twenty-year-old Hein Severloh (above) of the 352nd Infantry Division was one of those trying to repel the invasion with his MG 42 machine gun.

WN 62 was the strongest of the 15 strongpoints overlooking what was to become known as Omaha Beach. They stretched from WN 60 above the Cabourg Draw (codenamed Exit F-1) near the cliffs at the eastern end to WN 74, four and a half miles to the west, just beyond the small coastal village of Vierville.

WN 62 was approximately 325 meters square and was located on the northern slope of the bluffs, giving it an excellent field of fire down onto the beach. It contained emplacements for two 75mm cannons, two 50mm antitank guns, two 50mm mortars, and several machine guns, including an MG 34 on an antiaircraft mount and two prewar water-cooled Polish pieces.

Not all of these guns were operational on June 6. The site, like many others, was a work in progress, as Hitler was continually trying to improve his Atlantic Wall. The whole area was encircled by barbed wire and protected by minefields. In addition, there was a water-filled antitank ditch to impede any invader's progress off the beach.

WN 62 was also located beside the Colleville-sur-Mer Draw (codenamed Exit E-3), which the Allies had selected as one of the main exits from the beach. It was inevitable that many assault platoons would have been given orders to land in that spot to facilitate their penetration inland.



BEAST

To what extent did Heinrich Severloh's actions on D-Day warrant the epithet "The Beast of Omaha"? And how did the day's events impact the rest of his life?

BY ALAN DAVIDGE

Both photographs courtesy of the author

ABOVE: Severloh's MG 42 was emplaced here, seven meters from the observation bunker visible at left. His field of fire was directly toward the beach and to the left, covering the eastern end of Easy Red. This photo by the author was taken at low tide, giving an indication of the "killing zone" each American soldier had to cross after leaving his landing craft. LEFT: The front of the observation bunker shows heavy damage sustained from the Allies' naval shelling.

Severloh's MG 42, capable of firing 1,200 rounds per minute, was located seven meters from the entrance to the observation post manned by Lieutenant Bernhard Frerking. In addition to repelling invaders, Hein's job was to protect his officer and enable him to carry out his crucial role of coordinating fire on the targets he identified with a telescope through the slit in his bunker.

Frerking's vital information was sent to the communications bunker equipped with a transceiver several meters up the slope. It was then passed on to the battery located farther inland at Houtteville, less than three kilometers south of Colleville-sur-Mer and close to the farm where they were billeted, so that it could launch a storm of 105mm shells onto the beach as soon as the invaders appeared. The coordinates had already been provisionally agreed, and there had been a few practice shoots with dummy shells to avoid damaging the beach obstacles carefully placed along the shoreline to rip the hulls out of any landing craft that made it to the beach. Rommel had done his best to have all angles covered.

It was down to Frerking, Severloh, and the 12 other men of the 352nd Division to keep the Allies off their section of the coast. For support, they had 27 soldiers from the 726th Grenadier Regiment and one of the best-located strongpoints on the French side of the English Channel. Strength in numbers they didn't have, but their armory was formidable and Heinrich would not let his lieutenant down. He had no idea how the day would evolve, but Hein was determined to do his duty.

Hein appears as a quiet, practical young man who could be relied upon to get a job done, capable of using his initiative, and respected by his officers. A farmer's son who was conscripted in 1942, he became a frostbite casualty on the Russian Front before seeing any action. An unfortunate comment about the failings of his company's cook resulted in a charge of insubordination, and the resulting punishment inflicted upon him made him a casualty once again. He was transferred to a hospital in Warsaw with severe tonsillitis, and when he fully recovered, he was sent for further training and did not rejoin his old unit, renamed the 352nd Division, until December 1943.

Hein was assigned to the 1st Artillery Battery as an orderly to Lieutenant Bernhard Frerking, a 32-year-old former schoolteacher with whom he immediately established a good rapport. Frerking was an officer he felt he could trust, and his loyalty was reciprocated. They were billeted together in a French manor house owned by the Legrand family in Houtteville, and he began to pick up the language, thanks mainly to Frerking, who spoke fluent French. Despite being the embodiment of Nazi Germany, they did nothing to alienate the locals, and Hein kept in touch with the Legrand family after the war.

The two soldiers arrived at WN 62 at 12:55 AM on June 6, and Frerking went straight to his observation post. A sergeant appeared with a box of ammunition and Severloh loaded his MG 42. Soldiers of the 726th Grenadier Regiment were also in position, and everyone waited for first light. The poor weather impeded visibility, but as it became

light, it was clear that the horizon was full of ships of all sizes. Not long after 6 AM, bombers from the U.S. Eighth Air Force appeared overhead, causing Hein and his comrades to dive for cover.

They were lucky. The poor visibility caused the planes to err on the side of caution as they dropped their bombs so that they landed harmlessly inland of the gun positions. Then the Allied warships opened up with rockets and large shells. The size of the armada and the volume of the ordnance being aimed in his direction told Hein that he was going to have to fight for his life that day, which meant eliminating as many of the enemy as possible.

The first landing craft came into range at around 6:30 AM. They dropped their ramps and discharged groups of GIs from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, "The Big Red One"—not Tommies as expected—who set off for dry land, believing that the Air Force had knocked out most of the opposition.

The D-Day beaches had been minutely classified in the invasion plans to facilitate landing and progression inland, and the sector just in front and to the left of WN 62 was codenamed Easy Red. Just outside Severloh's main line of fire to the right was the Fox Green sector.

Hein followed his instructions, which were to wait until the troops were knee deep in the water and then open fire. This created immediate panic and forced the survivors and wounded to seek shelter behind the beach obstacles that were designed to obstruct and damage the landing craft. Some found themselves sheltering behind the bodies of dead comrades as they drifted ashore.

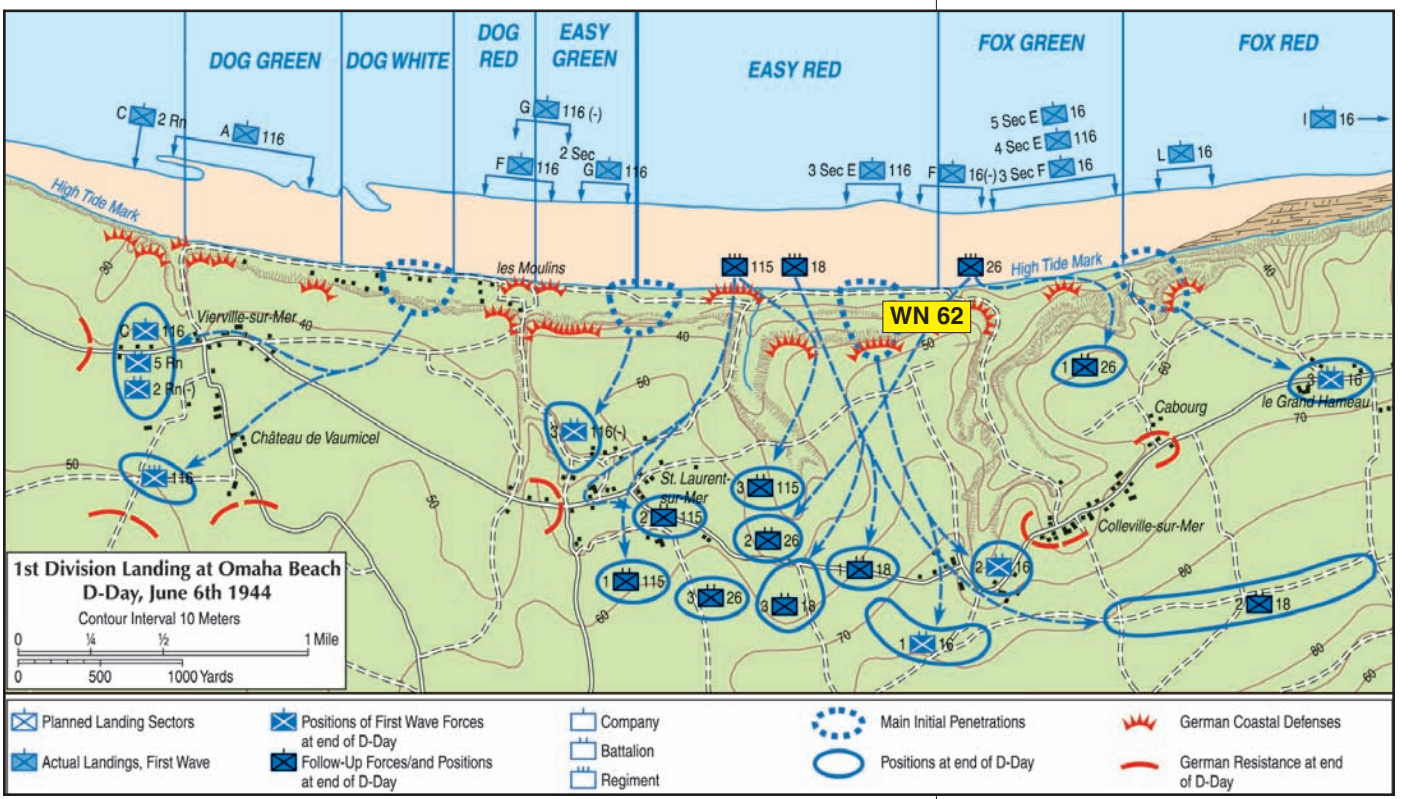
Farther below, closer to the shoreline, there were operational problems with an MG 34, so it was Hein's gun that did most of the damage. (Sometime after the war, Hein met another gunner from the 726th Regiment, Franz Glöckl, who was operating a pre-war water-cooled Polish machine gun. Franz was only 18, even younger than Hein, but a hand injury put him out of action after a few hours.)

The first American troops who arrived at low tide were at a range of about 450 meters, and subsequent waves came progressively closer as the tide rose, making them easier to hit. Each dropped ramp revealed 30 potential targets at a time, and an accurate short burst of about three seconds was enough to decimate a platoon.

Given the rate at which the gun discharged its rounds, if one bullet found a target, it was likely to be followed by a couple more. (After the war, Hein met up with an American soldier who had been hit three times as he disembarked onto the beach, making him almost certainly one of Hein's victims.)

The lull between waves enabled the MG 42's barrel to cool a little, but nevertheless it had to be swapped regularly. When it was not operational, Hein simply used his Mauser K98 rifle, which he estimated that he fired 400 times that day. He was never short of a target, since the strong west-to-east current drove many of the small land-

Intermingled units of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions were landed on the five-mile stretch of coastline codenamed Omaha Beach in the early morning hours of June 6, 1944. Severloh's position at WN62 is marked by the yellow box on this map.



Both photographs courtesy of the author

ing craft farther along the coast away from their planned landing sites. This meant that even more of them beached within range of Hein's gun.

Lieutenant Frerking and the remainder of the team were almost totally occupied with identifying targets, setting coordinates, and communicating messages through the zigzag trenches so that the battery in Houtteville could do its work.

Severloh was understandably absorbed in his own task, but he became aware during the course of the morning that his was the only machine gun firing on that part of the beach. (Many years later, he was able to check the German military archives and discovered that a message at 10:12 that morning stated that there was only one machine gun operating at WN 62, which, of course, was his. This also made him think about his personal responsibility for the number of casualties on Easy Red.)

In Severloh's account of the day, he recalled several waves consisting of 10 to 15 landing craft heading toward his stretch of beach and estimated that six of these appeared before noon. Along the full length of Omaha Beach, each wave totalled about 50 craft, a mixture of wooden-sided LCVPs with an armored ramp and LCAs, which had more substantial protection. When it was clear that the fall of each ramp would be followed by the arrival of about 50 machine-gun rounds, many troops made a premature exit over the sides of the boats, often into water too deep for their heavily laden bodies.

Machine guns are used most effectively when fired into groups, especially in confined spaces. Once the occupants of the landing craft had been targeted this way, the remainder were picked off by rifle fire. One incident that was to haunt Hein Severloh for many years afterward took place when he had switched to his rifle.

Opposite WN 62's position on the beach today, there stand two concrete blocks. These were originally part of a mill for crushing the beach pebbles into material to construct the bunkers. One American survivor with a flamethrower on his back tried to seek shelter behind this feature, but

ABOVE: The view from Severloh's position looking east across the wide mouth of the Colleville Draw (Exit E3), guarded by WN61 and WN60. BELOW: Looking west from Severloh's position, with the Vierville Draw at the far end of the beach.

Severloh brought him down with a shot through his helmet. The individual drama of this event somehow made a more lasting impression on him than the sight of soldiers collapsing in numbers from his machine-gun bursts, and he relived it many times in his dreams after the war.

After about 2 PM, Hein noticed a number of Sherman tanks farther to the west, toward Exit E-1 at St. Laurent, which were moving toward his section of beach. The major components of WN 65 that were guarding the St. Laurent exit had been successfully put out of action by late morning, and columns of American soldiers were ascending various parts of the bluffs.

Hein had used up his allocation of 12,000 machine-gun rounds and had no alternative but to use less-lethal tracer bullets. This carried the risk of highlighting his position, especially to the American warships that were sailing closer to the shore, taking advantage of the rising tide.

It was not long before a shell exploded in front of his position, and he sustained a painful facial wound. By 3 PM, Lieutenant Frerking decided there was no alternative but to abandon WN 62. Many of the 726th Regiment had already been wounded or retreated up the slopes, and his observation post had just sustained shell damage. It was time for the remaining soldiers in his team to exit via the communication trench,

which afforded some immediate protection.

Frerking ordered Hein out first and said he would follow. Severloh remembered this as a particularly poignant moment, as his officer used the familiar Du form in addressing him, something that would have been outside the disciplinary code. He took off down the trench as quickly as he could, carrying a hot machine gun and a belt of ammunition.

The first edition of Hein Severloh's book, *WN 62,* did not appear till 2000, with the first English edition being published in 2011. Up to that point, the main insight into the day's events had come from a number of American eyewitness accounts, which are still very accessible and well known. Sifting through these, it is possible to get a good impression of what it was like to be at the receiving end of an MG 42, and also to chart the gradual incursions off the beach that resulted in the strongpoint becoming virtually surrounded.

At H-Hour, 6:30 AM, LCVPs containing troops from E and F Company, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division arrived on the beach opposite the Colleville exit. Company E commander Captain Ed Wozenski reported that as soon as the men left their craft to wade ashore, they came under intense machine-gun fire, falling into the bloody water until only a few of them reached the shingle bank.

They were followed by several LCVPs containing men from the 116th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, who should have landed much farther to the west but had been pushed farther eastward by the currents and foul weather. For these men, their landing strategy was shelved in favor of survival.

Within an hour, the headquarters company of the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry landed to the left of Easy Red, just below Severloh, under intense automatic weapons fire and found survivors of the first waves pinned down on the beach. A reserve regiment from the 18th Regiment, 1st Division was due to land before noon, and they sent in an early reconnaissance team that had to revise their schedule when they realized the intensity of the fire from WN 62.

Unknown to Hein at the time, he was also firing at a celebrity target. Robert Capa, one of the best known photojournalists of the war, had hitched a ride on an LCVP, and his heroics with a camera to bring home some of the most graphic images of the day were nearly brought to an end by Private Severloh. Around 11 AM, Ernest Hemingway, never destined for a quiet retirement, approached Easy Red, but the pilot of his boat veered off to a different section of the beach when he realized how dangerous it was to land there.

In addition to the infantry, the early waves contained men from the 5th Special Engineer Brigade, who reported very heavy fire between Colleville and the next beach exit to the west at St. Laurent-sur-Mer, codenamed E-1. Severloh later confirmed this by mentioning that in a lull between waves, he saw a red flag that one survivor had placed in the sand below him to guide subsequent landing craft.

Around the same time, a few duplex-drive Sherman tanks had arrived on the beach, and one succeeded in knocking out two 75mm guns on the other side of the Colleville exit, enabling troops to make progress up the bluffs. Below Severloh, however, there was no movement off the beach, and the situation had become so critical by 8 AM that the cancellation of the assault on Omaha had become a real possibility.

Observers peering through binoculars from vessels offshore, though, could see that small groups of men had begun climbing the bluffs farther east in the areas of WN 61 and WN 60. Despite the hang-ups at Omaha, they could see that the invasion plan was working. Hein wouldn't know until years later that his dogged determination to prevent passage off the beach could have changed the course of events that day.

Of course, the mortar and artillery fire directed from WN 62 played a major role in the carnage on this section of the sand, but Hein also facilitated this indirectly by providing the covering fire that allowed his lieutenant and the rest of his team to do their jobs effectively and send back the coordinates for these targets.

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LCVPs and other Allied landing craft approach Omaha Beach across a choppy sea. The strong current pulled many landing craft far from their intended landing zones, causing many boats to pile up in front of Severloh's gun.

What Hein and his comrades didn't know was that as early as 1:15 PM, Captain Joe Dawson and a group from G Company, 16th Infantry were already on the outskirts of the little town of Colleville, directly inland of him at the head of the draw. During the course of the morning, Dawson had found a route up the bluffs to the west. This, together with the earlier incursions up the other side of the Colleville Draw, meant that Frerking's

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ABOVE: With the bluffs shrouded in smoke, 1st Division troops make their way toward shore. Omaha Beach became so overcrowded with men, casualties, and disabled craft that landings had to be temporarily suspended. OPPOSITE: This dramatic photo, one of several taken by Robert Capa, shows troops crawling through the bloody surf with antiship obstacles their only cover. It's possible that Capa took this photo while under fire from Severloh, who expended his entire allotment of 12,000 machine gun rounds on D-Day.

decision to fall back at 3 PM was not a moment too soon. Effectively, they were surrounded.

Hein's escape route out of WN 62 took the line of least resistance: trenches, craters, anything that helped him keep his head down. After a while, he dropped into the sunken lane leading to the village of St. Laurent-sur-Mer and waited for the rest of his team. Only one appeared: Kurt Wernecke the radio operator, who relayed the shocking news that all the others, including Frerking, had been killed. Within a couple of minutes, they were themselves caught by a burst of machine-gun fire, delivering painful flesh wounds, but they managed to stumble on to WN 63, where a medic administered first aid.

They recuperated for a while, but by midnight the whole group, including a wagon full of wounded and some American prisoners (one of whom coincidentally had German parents and spoke a familiar dialect) decided to move inland under cover of darkness. Shortly before dawn, they came under fire again, and it was clear that they were surrounded. Reluctantly and ironically, they asked their own prisoners to accept their surrender.

The GIs who took them prisoner were from the 16th Infantry, the main regiment at which Severloh's machine gun had been firing all morning, so he had to be very careful not to give away too much information about himself.

One of the men captured at the same time had been based at WN 61 on the other side of the Colleville Draw, and he provided Hein with a graphic but discreet description of the damage his gun had inflicted on American troops. In an area below his position, and invisible to him at the time, were hundreds of bodies piled up where the sea had left them.

Although wounded, Hein spent the next couple of days helping others less fortunate than himself in a temporary POW camp at Vierville at the opposite end of Omaha Beach. He was then shipped to England and from there to the United States to work in a variety of camps along the East Coast from Boston down to Florida, mostly to help with harvesting crops, including potatoes and cotton.

In his book, he recalls another incident that stirred his conscience about events on D-Day when he and a friend discovered an old copy of *Star* magazine that contained a graphic description of a place he knew well: "Men carrying weapons could not get to the beach on Easy Red because the bloody mess floating around was so high that the soldiers couldn't wade through it and kept sliding."

Severloh remained a POW after the war, and in March 1946, he was sent to Belgium and then to England and Scotland. Finally, after his aging father pleaded for help on the farm, Hein was released in April 1947.

Hein did his best to settle back into farm life when he returned home, but there was no way he could bottle up his wartime experiences forever. Many of them demanded some kind of closure, however difficult that was going to be.

First of all, he had to contact Lieutenant Frerking's family. His parents managed to set up a visit from Frerking's mother two weeks after his arrival. Her son was still listed as missing, but Hein was able to confirm his fate as reported to him by Karl Wernecke.

He then sent a sketch of WN 62 to the Legrand family with whom he had been billeted and asked if there was any trace of a grave on the site. Fernand Legrand was soon able to visit the site, where he discovered a wooden marker. After consulting the authorities, he traced Frerking to a cemetery constructed above the beach. (A number of temporary cemeteries were created in the area that frequently contained both American and

German dead. Eventually, the majority of German remains were transferred to a cemetery at La Cambe, just a few miles due south of Omaha Beach in the late 1950s. This is Frerking's final resting place.)

The most positive event for Hein Severloh upon returning home was a meeting with Lisa, a girl he first met just before being posted to France. They were able to pick up where they had left off in 1943 and were eventually married in 1949. For a while, she became the only person to whom he could talk about the war, as he became very depressed, remorseful, and introspective.

The memory of the single flamethrower-carrying soldier he had shot with his rifle at the gravel mill on the beach strangely affected him more than the carnage he created with his MG 42, and he suffered frequent sleep deprivation. He became very anti-establishment and even joined the Association of Conscientious Objectors in Hannover.

Like many returning soldiers, Hein tried to forget about the past, but he found it impossible to ignore the popular magazine articles entitled "*Sie Kommen*" ("They're Coming") by Paul Carell that appeared in 1959. Perplexed as to why none referred to his area of Omaha Beach, he contacted the author, who saw him as a valuable witness to the liberation, and helped him to contact other comrades as the magazine developed into a book (*Invasion—They're Coming!*).

In 1961, Hein made his first visit back to Normandy for the opening of the German military cemetery at La Cambe, accompanied by Frerking's mother and widow. He also visited the site of WN 62, which was completely overgrown. (Today, the main features have been exposed again so that it is possible to trace the bunkers and trenches.)

He also met the Legrand family for the first time since D-Day and discovered that Frerking had telephoned them at 7 AM from his bunker, warning them of the invasion and advising them to drive to Bayeux for safety, 10 kilometers away. His view was that both the Germans and the Allies would respect the city as an historical monument, making it less likely to be shelled or bombed.

This gesture demonstrates the relationship they had with the people whose house and village they had occupied. Although the Legrands were a respected family locally, they were taking a risk by being friendly with the Germans since they knew (rightly, as it turned out) how the French would deal with collaborators.

Mister Legrand then made Hein an astonishing offer by asking him, as an experienced farmer, to take over his own farm in Houtteville, as his only son had tragically died young, and he and his wife were of advanced years. After much consideration, Hein felt that he had to decline the offer because of the logistics involved, but he kept in touch with the Legrands for the rest of their lives.

Hein Severloh continued to make new contacts as a result of his relationship with Paul Carell. The most significant of these came when Paul gave Hein the first edition of *The Longest Day* by Cornelius Ryan, which was to become the classic D-Day account.

In it, Hein read the story of David Silva, who had come under heavy fire in front of Easy Red Beach at Colleville in the early afternoon. He was hit three times by a machine gun firing tracers, which meant there could have been only one person responsible: Private Heinrich Severloh!

Hein was now on a mission. He discovered that David Silva had become a priest and moved to Akron, Ohio, but his letters were returned due to frequent changes of address. He eventually tracked him down in Karlsruhe, Germany, and it was not long before the two veterans were engaged in an emotional and cathartic reunion that was to spawn a friendship and respect for each other that lasted forever.

As the years passed, many more contacts were made with D-Day veterans. In 1984, Hein received a call from Franz Glöckl, the 18-year-old soldier of the 726th Grenadier Regiment who had been firing from a position just below him.

National Archives

Glöckl had arranged a reunion with men from WNs 60, 61, 62, and 63 and invited him along. This helped to fill in many of the gaps in his knowledge of what took place on June 6, 1944, helped Hein come to terms with the trauma he had faced.

On one visit, he met Jack Borman, whose duplex-drive Sherman he remembered as being caught in the shingle below him on the beach. It was his tank that had taken out one of the 75mm artillery pieces on WN 62, and Jack's expression of remorse for the casualties he had caused was a further reminder to Hein that war affects soldiers on both sides in similar ways.

From as early as 1960, when Paul Carell's book, *Invasion—They're Coming!*, was first published, Hein received attention from a number of quarters, especially authors and journalists. But the most bizarre encounter occurred in 1984 when an English reenactment group invited him to the United Kingdom. It called itself the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Honor of the German Wehrmacht Soldiers. Its members wore uniforms very precisely decorated with medals and insignia and observed very accurately the military procedures with which Hein was all too familiar.

They also went as far as presenting him with a medal similar to a Purple Heart to which he was entitled by virtue of the wounds he sustained on D-Day. He politely accepted and took his leave, totally bewildered and wondering why anyone would want to play-act events that had brought so much misery to him and so many others.

There were other authors who, in his opinion, sought to sensationalize him and failed to stress the antiwar message that he was trying to get across. He also received offers to appear in a number of documentaries and requests for interviews with French and German magazines. Despite his best attempts to maintain control, he found journalists all too ready to put words into his mouth and ask leading questions.

At the end of one interview following the 40-year anniversary in 1984 with the American ABC network, he was persistently asked on camera how many men he had brought down, and as he declined to reply, a figure of 1,000 was suggested to him. Possibly to end the interview, he conceded it was likely and that it may have been twice that figure. This admission helped to unburden him a little, but it also gave him the notoriety that brought even more attention from journalists, authors, and filmmakers.

In 1999, he was contacted by a leading D-Day author, Helmut Konrad Baron von Keusgen, who soon realized the crucial role that Hein had played on that day, and he offered to help him write his own personal account. Thus began a friendship that allowed Hein to unburden himself 55 years after D-Day of the traumas he endured, and this friendship finally gave birth to the book *WN 62*, which told the full story.

Not surprisingly, this created further interest from journalists and filmmakers, but it was an invitation to appear in a film in 2003 that brought everything to a head for him. Hein was taken to the beach below WN 62 and asked to start walking toward another man farther along the shoreline. As they got closer, he realized it was David Silva, the man who had taken three bullets from his gun on D-Day and who Hein had tracked down after discovering his account in *The Longest Day*. It was 39 years since their first reunion.

Hein and David spent four emotionally charged days together filming, reliving the events that brought them together and catching up on all that had happened since. A visit to the American cemetery near WN 62 made particular demands on their emotional reserves, and both decided that this would be their last trip to Normandy, which indirectly guaranteed that they would never meet again in this life. Hein's health finally failed him in 2006. David lived till 2010.

Hein Severloh's assessment of the carnage he caused on D-Day was based on his own

National Archives

The bodies of fallen American soldiers lie sprawled on the shingle at water's edge on Omaha Beach. After the war, Severloh became friends with one of the men he had wounded.

National Archives

The detritus of war lines Omaha Beach on D-Day, when Hitler's vaunted "Atlantic Wall" was breached in the span of the morning. Although Severloh thought that he had personally killed or wounded as many as 1,000 Americans on Omaha Beach on D-Day, it is impossible to know for certain.

observation of that section of the beach below his firing position and on what he learned from other soldiers he met some time afterward who saw bodies piled up within his field of fire, some of which may have drifted along the coast. This was reinforced by stories in the media that could have exaggerated his contribution to the casualty list, and it is only fairly recently that any detailed work has been done on the figures.

In his very comprehensive account *Omaha Beach* (2004), Joe Balkoski estimates the total U.S. casualties (killed, wounded, missing) on D-Day at around 4,700. To try and understand Hein Severloh's role in this final roll call, it is important to look at the total defenses.

The beach was protected by 15 Wiederstandsnest bunkers, as well as large-caliber guns located farther inland. Severloh himself states that there were 85 machine guns in position along the beach, although not all of them were operational that day.

In addition to German weaponry, there were natural factors that caused loss of life. The waters of the English Channel claimed many crew members of the duplex-drive Sherman tanks that launched unsuccessfully offshore, and then there were the infantrymen who jumped off of landing craft into deep water before the ramps went down to avoid exposure to heavy fire, causing them to drown.

Omaha Beach is more than six kilometers long. The 29th Infantry Division landed in the western half, although the weather and currents certainly carried some of their 116th Infantry boats down to Easy Red. The 29th suffered about 1,350 casualties. The 1st Division, which landed in the eastern half stretching from a point west of WN 65 to below WN 60, suffered only 70 fewer casualties. The remaining units who landed along the full length of the beach, chiefly engineers, completed the casualty list.

After just a brief study of the casualty figures, it becomes clear that only a limited proportion of them could have arrived in a location that brought them within Severloh's sights. Those that did could also have become victims of shells, mortar bombs, and a variety of other machine-gun and rifle fire that was also aimed in their direction. To try and investigate any further, I believe, would be an essentially academic exercise and would do nothing more for the memory of those men whose lives were brutally cut short on D-Day or to enhance the study of history.

It nonetheless seems reasonable to state that, without the intervention of Private Heinrich Severloh, the U.S. Army would have been around a battalion stronger when it left the Normandy beachhead.

The publicity that Severloh attracted in later life, which bestowed upon him the title "The Beast of Omaha," was largely of his own making. He could have returned home and continued where he left off in his local farming community and kept his thoughts to himself. But his curiosity and his conscience got the better of him and took him down a path that brought him face to face, again and again, with the most shocking and terrible day of his life.

From his writings and the many interviews that we can now easily retrieve from the Internet, there is no evidence of him trying to glorify what took place. He does not appear to try and cast himself as yet another victim of the war or to ask for sympathy. In exposing his guilt, he took many risks and, in his regular visits to Normandy, could have encountered others who still sought revenge.

Hein's contribution to World War II is something that he would have preferred to forget. But he couldn't. Instead, he chose to reveal it to the world so that we are all aware of the consequences of one country declaring war on another, thereby challenging us to look for better solutions to conflict unless we can justify it all happening again. □

Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery is best known for defeating Germany's famed commander, Erwin Rommel, at the Battle of El Alamein in 1942. Known as "Monty" to his troops, he reclaimed North Africa for the British in a series of lightning-fast battles using intelligence gained through codebreaking and experience honed by a career of hard struggles.

One of Montgomery's arguably more important achievements was his crossing of the Rhine and seizure of northern Germany in the spring of 1945, which he accomplished with the same lightning-fast decisiveness as in Africa. Montgomery's Rhine crossing and his subsequent decisions led to further military successes and advances in Allied governing policies.

Monty Crosses THE RHINE

How Field Marshal Montgomery bridged Germany's toughest river, liberated a concentration camp, and forced a decisive surrender.

BY ZITA BALLINGER FLETCHER

He carefully planned Operation Plunder, a complex yet efficient Rhine crossing that created a springboard for one million Allied soldiers straight into Germany's heartland across this heavily fortified river which, throughout Germany's history, had been a fortress unto itself. Montgomery's choice of Scots Highland "River Sweeper" soldiers contributed to the operation's success.

One of Montgomery's greatest achievements following the Rhine crossing was on a humanitarian level. He personally participated in the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Montgomery entered the camp with his troops and punished Nazi war criminals with a trial and execution process prior to the Nuremberg Trials. He ordered the gathering of evidence from the camp and denied clemency requests from the guilty. He also made the controversial decision to execute female war criminals. Montgomery's actions ensured that Nazis responsible for torture and genocide in his zone of occupation did not escape punishment.

Finally, Montgomery's steely acceptance of the German surrender at Lüneburg Heath helped end the war in Europe quickly and shaped Allied policy toward Germans in the British-occupied zone. Montgomery forced the Germans to negotiate on his terms and make concessions when they were not prepared to do so. He achieved this through deliberate psychological tricks, which fellow British officers remembered long afterward.

Bernard Montgomery is often typed as "headstrong" and "cocky" by modern critics, yet those characterizations fail to see beyond the surface of this complicated man, who made unparalleled achievements in military history through great personal sacrifice. Montgomery's home country, Britain, suffered many losses during World War II that affected him.

His professional life was not easy. He described his career as a "constant struggle linked to many setbacks and disappointments." This was no exaggeration. A closer look at Montgomery's life prior to the 1945 Rhine crossing reveals a soldier hardened by storms of adversity. Undoubtedly, challenges contributed to his strong mindset and will to achieve victory.

Montgomery's decision to become a soldier was a battle in itself. On his father's side, he was of Northern Irish stock and identified with that part of his family. Growing up,

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Wearing the beret, camouflage scarf, and jump smock of the Parachute Regiment, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery poses for a portrait after being appointed to be Honorary Colonel commandant of the Parachute Regiment in 1944. A complex, outspoken personality, Monty had plenty of both admirers and detractors, but he was forever proud of the role that he and his soldiers played in defeating Nazi Germany.

National Archives

ABOVE: Monty watches his tanks advance during the second battle of El Alamein, Egypt, November 1942. Having faced danger on many occasions, he was never afraid to be up front with his troops. OPPOSITE: Monty stands on the hood of a jeep to address men of the Royal Ulster Rifles during training for the D-Day landings. Most of his men held him in high regard.

he was a rowdy boy with great curiosity and a mischievous sense of humor. His mother, an austere and controlling Englishwoman, frequently beat him with a heavy cane for minor "offenses" such as climbing trees and picking mulberries.

She was, however, unable to curb his spirit. Montgomery channeled his energy into sports. He was a talented athlete who excelled at rugby and captained several teams. He set his heart on a military profession after seeing uniformed soldiers marching off to fight the Boer War in South Africa. Although his relatives strongly disapproved of his decision to join the military, Montgomery, fiercely independent, stood by his choice.

Montgomery chose to join the infantry. Joining the British Army's Royal Warwickshire Regiment, he distanced himself from his family. He had the symbol of his regiment—an antelope—tattooed on his left forearm. "If I had my life over again, I would not choose differently," he later wrote. "I would be a soldier."

Montgomery was a highly analytical thinker with a calculating mind. When not in action, he immersed himself in studying military history and leadership and sought to hone his skills by fighting. While other British officers passed their careers quietly in the colonies, Montgomery found his way into the thick of every major conflict affecting the British Empire prior to World War II, including not only World War I but violent insurgencies in Ireland and Palestine.

He had many brushes with death. During World War I, then Lieutenant Montgomery nearly died after being shot through the lung by a German sniper. He fell, unable to move, and experienced harrowing moments as the sniper continued to target him. When another soldier rushed to his aid, the sniper shot the soldier dead and continued to target Montgomery.

He was shot again in the knee as he was pinned beneath the dead soldier's body, which absorbed additional bullets intended for him. Montgomery's gunshot wound to the lung should have been fatal, and indeed, his platoon abandoned him for dead. Medical staff expected him to die and dug a grave for him. It is a testament to Montgomery's willpower that he escaped being buried alive. Against all odds, he made a full recovery.

The *London Gazette* noted Montgomery was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for "conspicuous gallant leading" at the time he was shot, and he was promoted to the rank of captain. Later in life, Montgomery described this battle experience but rarely mentioned receiving the DSO award. Returning to the field, he continued to demonstrate military talent as a young man. By 1918, he had become a chief of staff.

Montgomery saw further action against the Irish Republican Army during the Irish Civil War in the 1920s. The IRA led an insurgency against British authority, its tactics including assassinations and guerrilla attacks. Like many Northern Irish people, Montgomery identified himself as both British and Irish according to interviews and writings.

He saw further combat against violent insurgents in Palestine in 1938 and 1939. He successfully spearheaded efforts to counter an explosive civil rebellion. During this time, Montgomery had a tuberculosis scare, which made him deathly ill and put him in the hospital. Again, he made a complete recovery.

Montgomery's hardships were not over; in fact, the chaos he experienced increased at the onset of World War II. A widower, Montgomery lost all his worldly possessions to Luftwaffe bombs when the Germans attacked the city of Portsmouth where Montgomery was garrisoned in an air raid on January 10, 1941.

This scenario was repeated in 1944, when his headquarters in France was targeted by German bombs, destroying additional personal property.

For all his hard knocks, Montgomery remained a tough and high-spirited man. He believed it was a commander's duty to inspire optimism in subordinates, regardless of difficult personal emotions. Therefore, he did his utmost to radiate confidence and never

permitted himself to show signs of uncertainty.

As a soldier, Montgomery was strict and self-disciplined, and he demanded the same discipline from others. He remained a zealous athlete throughout his life. In North Africa, he required "total fitness" from his troops in the hot climate. The athleticism he personally maintained during tropical service in India and Palestine allowed them no excuses. Some exercises he ordered for officers and men included running up and down stairs and a seven-mile march every week.

Although Montgomery was a firm and demanding leader, he did not view fear or threatening behavior as effective in motivating troops. His goal was to inspire his men through communication. He wrote that his method was to make soldiers "partners" with him in tasks and show them personal confidence.

Introducing himself as "Monty," he used to climb onto the hood of his jeep to address his men, telling irreverent jokes and talking sports between discussing his battle plans.

"I used to talk to the soldiers, addressing them in large gatherings and telling them what we were going to do, my plans for doing it, and their part in the whole affair," he described his approach. "Once the soldiers knew what was required of them and why and when, they never failed to do their stuff."

At the time he prepared to cross the Rhine in 1945, Montgomery had experienced a dizzying rise in his career and in responsibility. He had transformed from an obscure British commander to an international public figure entrusted with the lives of literally millions of soldiers from the British Empire and Allied countries.

Imperial War Museum

As a tactician, Montgomery possessed a strange combination of meticulousness and boldness. His victory at El Alamein showcased his approach to combat. His enemy, Erwin Rommel, seeking to hold German positions in North Africa in 1942, cleverly wedged his Afrika Korps between natural obstacles and a potent minefield. Montgomery responded to this, after calm and careful preparation, by distracting German attention in the wrong direction then literally pulling up the minefield and advancing through it during a blinding artillery barrage.

The complex assault was perfectly executed. The horrified Germans quickly lost ground. Besides the attack, Montgomery's showmanship and the "shock value" of his sudden appearance were also effective. General Georg Stumme, then leading the Afrika Korps in Rommel's absence, literally dropped dead of a heart attack.

Bridging the Rhine would be a much more difficult task. For centuries, the Rhine had been a German stronghold, a natural defense barrier, a prized water transport route, and a cultural symbol of Germany. Montgomery was about to shatter the spirit of German victory that surrounded the river for hundreds of years with another intricate yet ruthlessly efficient plan called Operation Plunder. He planned to break across the Rhine in a direct frontal assault.

The main attack of Operation Plunder began at 7 PM on March 23, 1945. The crossing was led by Scots of the 51st Highland Division, who drifted across the water under a thick pall of smoke, while Germans defending the Rhine beaches attempted to sink the intruders with mortar fire. Aiming at the Allied invaders was no easy task. Prior to the attack, Montgomery had created a vast, opaque smoke screen stretching over 65 miles long.

The Germans were keenly aware of the Allied ambition to cross the Rhine and had attempted to bolster its defenses. In November 1944, Hitler ordered the fortification of the Rhine from Emmerich to Karlsruhe. Bridgehead defenses were concentrated along the major Rhine cities and bends in the river. River fortifications of this new Rhein-Stellung were to be booby-trapped with a 18-mile-deep obstacle field.

Between December 1944 and January 1945, German Army Group H attempted to bulwark Rhine defenses from the Nijmegen area to Wesel. A bitter winter of defeat and Allied strikes in the spring slowed progress on these defenses, ensuring that most of Hitler's planned Rhein-Stellung never saw the light of day. The Germans had, on the other hand, already destroyed Rhine bridges and progressed on defensive outworks as Montgomery and his men set their sights on gaining a firm foothold on the river's shores.

Operation Plunder was an ambitious and massive offensive, and is considered the largest amphibious assault river crossing in history. It was carried out in conjunction with Operation Varsity, a devastating air assault launched on Rhine

All: Imperial War Museum

defenses to obliterate enemy positions and demoralize potential resistance from the local Volksturm militias. Montgomery led both operations.

At the same time, he managed a third offensive called Operation Archway, sending SAS Special Forces troopers across the river behind enemy lines to scout and break German resistance. This complex, meticulous, and forceful approach was typical of Montgomery. Under his command, an estimated 16,000 soldiers from Britain, the United States, and Canada successfully carried off joint air and river-crossing operations with precision and a shattering element of surprise.

Montgomery showed discretion in choosing which British divisions to send into certain areas of battle. He believed that his men, gathered from diverse areas, were endowed with special fighting skills unique to their home regions.

"The miners from Durham and Newcastle, the men from the Midlands, the Cockneys, the farmers from the West Country, the Scot, the Welshman—all are different," he wrote. "Some men are good at night; others prefer to fight in daylight. Some are best at the fluid and mobile battle; others are more temperamentally adapted to the solid killing match in close country. Therefore, all divisions are different."

Montgomery chose troops from the 15th and 51st Highland Divisions to lead the amphibious assault. Montgomery held the Scots in high esteem and prized their toughness and rugged spirit. He praised their achievements in North Africa and said that an unforgettable experience in his life was witnessing his Scottish soldiers march in a victory parade in Tripoli in February 1943. "Every man an emperor," he said of their battle pride.

The Scots were proven to be skilled at river fighting and were dubbed "River Sweepers" by comrades following previous successes during Operation Veritable (February 8-March 11, 1945) through the watery Reichswald, or Imperial Forest, near Kleve. Infantrymen of Scotland's famous Black Watch battalion were first to cross Germany's legendary Rhine under cover of

ABOVE: Having reached the Rhine River on March 25, 1945, an amphibious Buffalo landing craft heads toward the heavily defended eastern bank. BELOW: Wearing their distinctive berets, men of the 1st Commando Brigade fire their Vickers water-cooled machine guns toward German positions outside the German town of Wesel. BOTTOM: A duplex drive (DD) Sherman tank, with its inflatable skirt lowered after fording the Rhine, passes a line of Universal carriers and men of the 6th Kings Own Scottish Borderers. By this time in the war, German resistance was crumbling.

smoke and darkness in rafts and amphibious armored vehicles called Buffaloes.

The Operation Plunder attack, launched across a 25-mile front, began with what the Associated Press described as an "earth-shaking" artillery barrage, accompanied by bombing and strafing. British commandos slipped over the river and crept within 1,500 yards of the city of Wesel as the RAF pounded the city into flaming rubble.

Entrenched German soldiers of the First Parachute and Fifteenth Armies made desperate attempts with artillery to stave off the British. Germans in the city of Rees fought back with grim determination and inflicted casualties on the Highlanders. Following aerial bombardments, British infantrymen stormed the ruined Rhine cities, shooting defenders and taking prisoners.

It was within Montgomery's power to have the Nazi torturers detained in prison indefinitely or executed by firing squad. Instead, he called for a trial. Montgomery told his aides he wished to demonstrate British justice to Germans. He wanted to prove that, in contrast to Nazi barbarism, the British conducted themselves fairly and civilly.

It was not long before German resistance over the hallowed Rhine River collapsed. Montgomery's forces quickly secured the east bank of the river near Rees and Wesel and established four crossing points. It took a mere nine hours for Allied forces to create bridges across the river, and a million Allied soldiers swarmed across the river that had guarded the German homeland for centuries. Allied troops began a rapid advance across open country.

Operation Plunder, although complex, was carried off successfully and with comparatively low Allied casualties. Earlier in March 1945, Third Reich spokesmen had issued public statements insisting Germany would keep fighting. This resolve quickly disintegrated after the Rhine was completely breached at the end of the month.

Immediately after Operation Plunder, Montgomery gained new territory and new challenges. His advance was accompanied by roving SAS guerrillas who crossed the Rhine on March 25 to penetrate enemy lines. These intrepid Special Forces troopers brought Nazi atrocities to Montgomery's attention and created a demand for him to exercise wartime authority in an unprecedented way.

One of Montgomery's most significant wartime achievements after crossing the Rhine was not actually made in battle. Merely two miles from his mobile headquarters at Lüneburg Heath lurked a hidden horror: the infamous concentration camp Bergen-Belsen, discovered accidentally by British soldiers. A famous personality who perished there was teenage diarist Anne Frank, who died in the camp just weeks before Montgomery and his troops arrived.

Soon, Montgomery was drawn into the thick of the toxic atmosphere and forced to create order from the chaos. This led him to initiate a tough crackdown against Nazi war criminals, culminating in court proceedings that influenced the Allied approach to the Holocaust and war crimes.

"During the years of the Nazi regime in Germany, things happened which could not find a parallel in the most debased days of the Roman or Mongol empires, crimes were committed which most people could not imagine, unless they had seen a place like Belsen, which I entered on the day of its liberation by my troops in April 1945," Montgomery wrote, adding, "The wholesale liquidation of civilians was unprecedented."

At that time, concentration camps had only begun to be discovered. News of atrocities in these camps had just begun to leak out. The Red Army had discovered the remains of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in January 1945. Despite this, skepticism remained about Russian claims because the horrors were not verified by Western observers.

April 1945 brought a major turning point, however, as British and American forces began literally stumbling across concentration camps in their line of advance. Moving southwest into Germany in April, U.S. troops discovered forced labor camps, most notably the sprawling complex of Buchenwald. A delay in action resulted. American military leaders toured the camp in shock. Reporters flew to tour the scene. Meanwhile, the prisoners and the guilty remained in disorganization.

Belsen was the first major Nazi concentration camp to shake the international public consciousness. This was largely due to the handling of the situation by Montgomery, who took a direct approach to eradicating the camp, in contrast to his Allied counterparts.

Referred to as "hell on earth," Belsen contained the worst examples of Nazi sadism. Prisoners there were primarily Jewish. Large numbers were women. Most were civilians. Among the worst female criminals in history tormented victims at this camp. These female Nazis were sadists who committed violent sexual torture against inmates, including mutilation and torturing pregnant women. They set attack dogs on wounded inmates, stripped prisoners naked and whipped them bloody.

Piles of corpses were everywhere. Survivors were covered in insects. When British soldiers discovered the camp, they

Imperial War Museum

Monty reached the infamous Bergen-Belsen concentration camp shortly after the first troops arrived and was horrified by the evidence of atrocities. Here, a British Comet tank of the 11th Armoured Division passes the main entrance of the camp.

witnessed starving inmates committing cannibalism. A suffocating stench stretched far down the road from the camp. German villagers living downwind pretended ignorance.

Montgomery quickly entered the scene with his troops. Many soldiers who entered Belsen with him that day were later unwilling or unable to describe what they witnessed. Like other British soldiers shocked by the experience, Montgomery did not describe atrocities in detail. Instead, after mentioning his firsthand discovery of Belsen in his postwar writings, he wrote the following emotional passage:

"All of these things were the responsibility of one evil man: Hitler. Millions starved and died while he and his followers feasted. He parted the wife from her husband, the maid from her lover, the child from its parents. If he had lived, he could never have given back what he had taken from those he had so cruelly wronged: years of life and health and happiness, wives and children, loved ones and friends. If he had ten thousand lives, they could not atone, even though each was dragged out to the bitter end in the misery which he meted out to others."

Many British soldiers who liberated Belsen were young men in their 20s who remained traumatized for decades by what they saw. They were no doubt completely at a loss about what to do in the situation. Montgomery was faced with the immediate demand for a response.

The British could have postponed handling Belsen for a later date as they focused on military advances. They could have allowed prisoners to remain interned in the camp, assigned Germans onsite to burial duty, and let guilty Nazis slip through their fingers, as happened elsewhere.

Montgomery's troops plunged into the fray. Under his orders, soldiers provided firsthand care to victims. The British took clothing from the homes of German villagers and used it to clothe naked prisoners. Beds were gathered. Nearby German Army barracks were transformed into makeshift hospitals. British soldiers washed and deloused victims, a gruesome task as most victims were covered in bugs and sores.

Soldiers also fed starved inmates with their own rations, which accidentally caused systemic shocks to camp survivors, who had been starving for a long time. Some died merely from eating ordinary food.

One British soldier serving under Montgomery defended his troops from postwar criticism about this, saying the soldiers behaved according to conscience. He described the prisoners as ravenously hungry and said the idea of withholding food from them was unimaginable then.

Large numbers of inmates were stricken with typhus. When medical personnel were summoned to the scene, they attempted to use intravenous methods to heal the starved and bony prisoners, but the victims of Nazi brutality became hysterical at the sight of needles. Rehabilitating these severely wounded people was a difficult undertaking.

Even while his men worked to revive the prisoners, Montgomery ordered evidence taken from the scene. He summoned Army photographers to document the atrocities and layout of the camp with pictures and notes.

He also ordered the imprisonment of all Nazi authorities at the camp. Witnesses pointed out who held roles of responsibility. Montgomery ordered some Nazi torturers to bury the corpses of people they had killed. British soldiers enforced this burial duty at gunpoint. Other concentration camp leaders were immediately taken into custody. To raise public awareness about the atrocities, Montgomery sent high-priority orders for the photographs of the camp and details about the crimes to be widely publicized. (The movie film of a British soldier bulldozing a pile of corpses is one of the most horrific scenes ever recorded.)

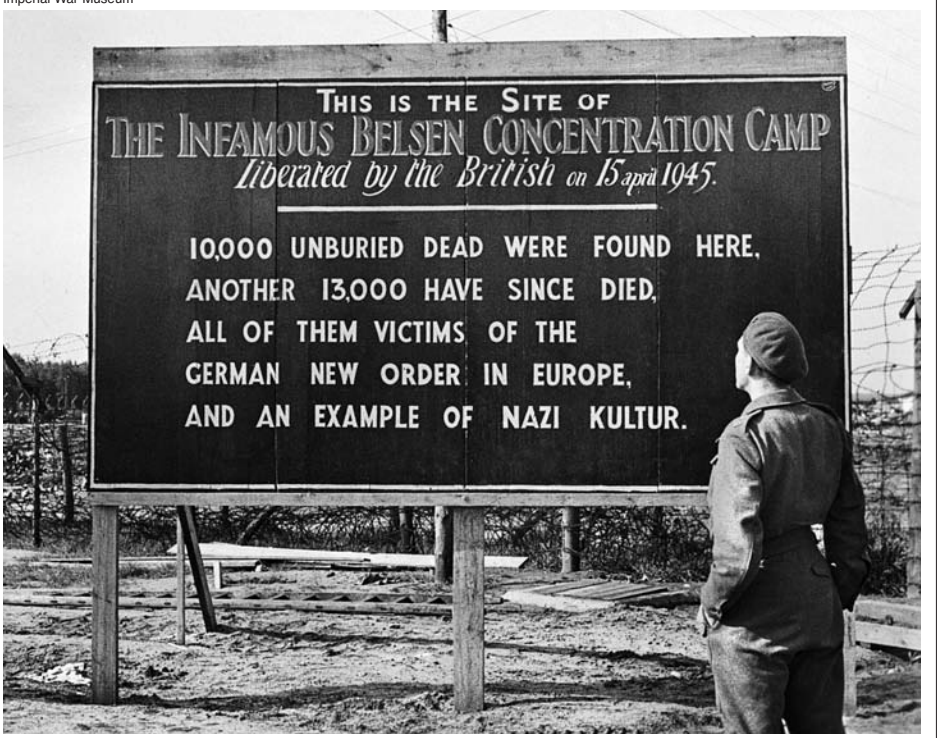
It was within Montgomery's power to have the Nazi torturers detained in prison indefinitely or executed by firing squad. Instead, he called for a trial. Montgomery told his aides he wished to demonstrate British justice to Germans. He wanted to prove that, in contrast to Nazi barbarism, the British conducted themselves fairly and civilly.

Belsen thus became one of the most shocking Nazi death centers unveiled to the world. The trial was held in September 1945 at the town gymnasium in Lüneburg, which had been converted into a courtroom 10 days prior. A British military tribunal presided over the proceedings, which got underway as preparations were being made for the Nuremberg Trials. The Belsen Trial influenced public consciousness of Nazi cruelty and doubtlessly encouraged the strict legal atmosphere of the Nuremberg Trials.

Hundreds of reporters covered the Belsen Trial. The public first heard detailed evidence about crimes committed at Auschwitz, since many prisoners and guards had previously been at Auschwitz.

Unlike at Nuremberg, the Belsen Trial did not attempt to set new precedents by charging defendants with genocide or crimes against humanity. Instead, defendants were charged based on existing international laws of war at the time offenses were committed. Also, they were charged for offenses committed against specific, named victims. In this manner, British military authorities under Montgomery's leadership ensured the perpetrators would be punished.

Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: This sign posted by Montgomery in front of Bergen-Belsen camp was photographed shortly before the camp buildings were ordered burnt to the ground. TOP: While a British soldier stands guard, Bergen-Belsen camp doctor Fritz Klein is photographed surrounded by corpses in a mass grave at Bergen-Belsen. Klein was later convicted of committing war crimes and executed in December 1945.

The trial also exposed previously unheard criminal defense arguments including brainwashing, propaganda, and the "following orders" excuses made by Nazi war criminals, all used as the basis for not-guilty pleas. In addition to the male defendants, female defendants were also charged with historically unparalleled crimes; three of them were sentenced to death.

The trial lasted only 54 days. All condemned had held camp leadership positions. Defense teams argued that the British broke the terms of the German surrender agreement by ordering executions. These arguments fell on deaf ears. According to the surrender terms, these members of the Nazi SS were eligible to be tried and punished.

Montgomery made arrangements for the criminals' sentences to be carried out. He requested Britain's top executioner, Albert Pierrepoint, to fly to Germany via special aircraft to hang the criminals at Hameln Prison in the fall of 1945.

Nine of the condemned appealed for clemency. One who campaigned hardest for Montgomery's mercy was 22-year-old Irma Grese. The whip-toting, boot-wearing blonde systematically tortured female prisoners. A former Nazi medical experimenter with a vicious temperament, Grese was described by many inmates as deriving sexual satisfaction from acts of cruelty. She was unremorseful and contemptuous when captured.

After flaunting her neatness and control, Grese changed her act as her chances of survival waned. She wept, disheveled her hair, and regarded war correspondents with jitters and blinking red eyes to win pity. Her sister testified on her behalf as a "character witness," blaming Grese's behavior on a difficult childhood. Grese's defense team told the press that, until the very last, she hoped Montgomery would commute her death sentence. (See *WWII Quarterly*, Winter 2012.)

Montgomery was merciless in this matter. He swiftly denied Grese's appeal and sentenced her to hang. His decision made history, as Grese was the youngest woman

ever executed under British jurisdiction. He quickly denied all other appeals, personally signing the death warrants. All 11 Belsen ringleaders perished on the same day (December 13, 1945), and within half-hour intervals of each other. Montgomery wrote, "Justice cannot prevail without the sanction of force."

The camp remnants were destroyed. Under Montgomery's watch, the British Army evacuated all inmates to makeshift hospital facilities and burned down camp barracks to prevent the spread of disease. More than 1,000 former prisoners per day relocated to new shelters. On May 21, 1945, Montgomery authorized what was described as a "ceremonial burning" of the last of the camp barracks.

National Archives

A British soldier with a Sten gun guards two captured members of a Hitler Youth infantry unit. The young German soldiers, trained to attack Allied armored formations, were captured while riding bicycles with antitank Panzerfaust weapons attached.

Flame-throwing tanks demolished the last trace of the Belsen horror camp in a purging fire. Photos show British soldiers and former inmates watching the place of torment disintegrate. It is unknown whether witnessing the destruction of this hellish prison gave victims relief. It is likely that Montgomery, with his emphasis on psychology and morale, intended the "ceremonial burning" to have psychological and symbolic value.

Later he ordered a huge billboard installed at the site. The large sign stated in English and in German a message in Montgomery's typical blunt style: "This is the site of the infamous Belsen concentration camp, liberated by the British on 15 April 1945. Ten thousand unburied dead were found here. Another 13,000 have since died. All of them victims of the German New Order in Europe and an example of Nazi Kultur." It was now impossible for locals to deny the existence of the camp or its conditions. Reality was visually inescapable.

Due to Montgomery's swift actions, the guilty did not escape. None of the Nazi architects of horror at Belsen had a chance to sneak away to South America or disappear into the scenery. The trial was cold and civil, and justice was strongly delivered. "The true soldier is the enemy of the beast in man and of none other," Montgomery later wrote. Evidently, the human bestiality he witnessed at the concentration camp remained with him for life.

After Montgomery's Rhine crossing, the German government quickly deteriorated. Leadership of Germany quickly split into factions. Tensions that had existed for some time split open and divided the nation's power. Ambitious Nazi leaders, including Heinrich Himmler and Hermann Göring, vied for status as Hitler's successor before their supposedly beloved leader even drew his last breath. As the tattered but battle-ready Soviet Army advanced steadily from the east, a raving Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945, followed in rapid succession by several delusional followers. His successors continued to mislead the German people, announcing via radio that Hitler died fighting "at the head of his troops." The truth of Hitler's demise was not discovered until later.

Meanwhile, sizable German forces remained armed and ready to defend their besieged Fatherland. Although surviving Nazi leaders diverged in personal ambitions and plans, their determination was united in one thing: they did not want Germany to be completely overrun, and above all, not by the Russians.

As Nazi heirs apparent, Heinrich Himmler and Hermann Göring darted cross-country in different directions to save their lives and possessions, while the respected Admiral Karl Dönitz took the reins as head of state and approached the Allies in an attempt to wield control over Germany's fate.

Dönitz chose to contact Montgomery, notorious in Germany as the formidable vanquisher of German war hero Erwin Rommel. The raffish charm that made "Monty" loved by and inspiring to his troops was lost in translation on the Germans, who had never been able to grasp Montgomery's cutting sense of humor. The Germans perceived him as a fierce and pitiless man. That assessment was not entirely incorrect, and, when it came to negotiating surrender, Monty would live up to it.

Montgomery was encamped on Lüneburg Heath, a dense woodland in northern

Imperial War Museum

Under the Union Jack, Montgomery receives German Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg and other members of the surrender delegation at 21st Army Group headquarters near Lüneburg, May 3, 1945. Friedeburg committed suicide 20 days later.

Germany. On the front lines, Monty lived a gypsy lifestyle. He kept close to troops in the thick of forward battle areas. To accomplish this, he traveled in a fleet of caravans (trailers) and jeeps.

His tactical headquarters consisted of camouflaged vehicles suited for different purposes. One was a map room, one was his office, and one was his bedroom. There was also a mobile mess and a radio communications station that established contact with Allied forces and intercepted enemy messages. The fleet was jockeyed by a posse of men accustomed to Montgomery's semi-nomadic habits. He was known to "nest" his headquarters in obscure areas, keeping everything shrouded with drapes of camouflage. He usually required an open area for a landing strip in case he needed to travel by air.

On May 2, 1945, Montgomery received a message that the German Army facing his troops would surrender the next day. Upon hearing this news, he informed fellow British commanders that he expected something greater would actually happen. His prediction was right. At 8 AM the next day, he received news that a delegation of four German officers was coming to seek a compromise. They wished to surrender, if agreeable terms could be reached.

Montgomery was left without much time to prepare for the negotiations. As usual, he reacted with decisiveness and a heavy dose of psychology. Summoning German interpreters, he ordered that a Union Jack be hoisted on a flagpole outside where he would receive the delegation.

According to witnesses, including interpreter Derek Knee, Montgomery ordered that the Germans be forced to stand under the British flag and wait for his arrival. Montgomery deliberately kept them waiting for half an hour before materializing.

When Montgomery arrived, he was dismissive and pretended not to know who the Germans were or what they wanted. He was belittling, demonstrating that their ranks and insignias were unimportant to him.

All of this might have seemed merely like arrogant behavior had not Montgomery's aides testified to the deliberateness with which he planned it. His jabs were designed to knock the Germans off balance. In his writings, Montgomery expressed his battle philosophy: "The enemy must be forced to dance to your tune all the time." The negotiations at Lüneburg Heath were certainly an awkward dance for the Germans.

The Germans attempted to bargain with Montgomery to advance their own military interests. They wanted to surrender troops on the Eastern Front to Montgomery to spare them from Russian captivity. They also wanted to keep forces in northern Germany in play, as Admiral Dönitz, Hitler's successor, was setting up a new government in Flensburg. They believed they held leverage against Montgomery and tried to exercise it.

Montgomery replied he had no interest in their terms. "The only matter that I am concerned with is that all the German forces facing me surrender unconditionally," he interrupted. "If you don't want to do that, you can go home."

The Germans, displeased, tried to appeal to Montgomery's conscience to accept their terms to save civilian lives. The remarks angered Montgomery. According to eyewitness Ronald Playforth, Monty gave the German delegation a "tongue lashing" via interpreter about atrocities.

"Do you remember a little town in England called Coventry? It no longer exists," said Montgomery, bringing up the bombing of England. Coventry was so badly devastated that it became a byword for destruction. Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels had even used it to invent a new German word—*coventriert*, or Coventrated—to describe bomb-flattened Allied cities.

Montgomery also cited his recent visit

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill meet with Monty at his field headquarters in Normandy following the D-Day invasion, June 1944. BELOW: German Rear Admiral Gerhard von Wagner and Admiral von Friedeburg listen glumly as Montgomery, right, reads the terms of surrender to them, May 3, 1945. Monty deliberately belittled the admirals to demorailze them.

to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, adding the withering comment, "You are not the slightest bit interested in civilian lives."

He threatened to give immediate orders for up to 10,000 bombers to begin heavy day and night raids on German territory that would kill civilians if unconditional surrender were not given. The Germans balked at the suggestion, claiming they had no authority to surrender unconditionally on the spot. "We're not making any progress," said Montgomery, and suggested the delegation consider the matter over lunch.

By inviting the Germans to lunch, Montgomery began another elaborate ruse he had prepared. Prior to the delegation's arrival, British officers scrambled around on Montgomery's orders to scrape rations into an illusory feast. Tables were decked with Army blankets and set with flowers. A buffet-style offering of coffee, brandy, and wine was spread out. Montgomery wanted to give the impression of idle luxury.

Witnesses said the war-weary Germans were shocked by the cornucopia of food available to the British upon entering the mess tent. They complimented the "wonderful meal." .

Using an interpreter, Montgomery dismissed the comforts as commonplace. It is unknown whether Montgomery wished to emphasize that the British were supplied enough to hold up a long siege, or whether he wished to remind the Germans of their own food shortages. Perhaps he intended both. In any case, his wiles were effective in demoralizing the Germans.

Montgomery also set up a battle map, which he showed the Germans after lunch. He proceeded very calmly to illustrate Germany's desperate position by describing strong Allied formations—including and especially the Russians—and pointing out key spots on the map. This final blow shattered the Germans' resolve. They became visibly despondent. One German officer, in a rare show of despair, collapsed into tears.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Montgomery made his demand again with a concise speech. "You must understand three things. Firstly, you must surrender to me unconditionally all the German forces in Holland, Friesen, and the Frisian Islands and Helgoland and all other islands in Schleswig-Holstein and in Denmark," he said.

"Secondly, when you have done that, I am prepared to discuss with you the implications of your surrender: how we will dispose of those surrendered troops, how we will occupy the surrendered territory, how we will deal with the civilians, and so forth." The climax came next. "And my third point: If you do not agree to Point 1, the surrender, then I will go on with the war and I will be delighted to do so," he declared boldly. "All

of your soldiers and civilians may be killed," he added.

The Germans had approached Montgomery intending to bargain. By the time Montgomery finished his subterfuges, they had lost faith in their own power. They agreed to present his surrender terms to Dönitz without requesting further negotiations.

The delegation returned the next day, cameras were in place and reporters were present. Montgomery also arranged a flyover. The Germans on the hill were buzzed by a British bomber swooping low over their heads. Montgomery's aides later claimed he did this to spook the Germans from having any defiant thoughts. He punctiliously edited the surrender document in preparation. In a historic moment captured on film, the Germans signed this document in Montgomery's tent on Timeloberg Hill.

The surrender paved the way for VE Day in Europe as the Germans, collapsing like dominoes, surrendered to the Allied powers. Not long after the formal surrender, British troops captured Dönitz and his Flensburg government, subjugating Germany and ending the Third Reich.

The world celebrated, but Montgomery's war was not over. He found himself in command of a zone of Germany as military governor, a task he, as a career soldier, personally loathed. The zone was beset with looting transients, refugees, and Nazi conspiracies. Also, the SS had been very active in the region, and their supporters did not disappear overnight. Infrastructure was nonexistent. Everything had been destroyed. Homes, businesses, and industries were in complete ruins. Nothing functioned. People were hungry, restless, and idle.

Imperial War Museum

Montgomery, center, is flanked by Soviet Marshals Georgy Zhukov, left, and Konstantin Rokossovsky as a British-Soviet contingent marches triumphantly through Berlin, July 1945.

British soldiers attempted to establish cordial relations with the locals. Supreme Allied Command orders to penalize the German civilians for Nazism, though, complicated this. Montgomery felt conflicted about having to follow these directives. "I had never liked the orders which we had had to issue, but it was the Allied policy," he wrote.

He was required to forbid Allied soldiers to even wave or smile at German civilians or to interact with children. The German civilians reacted badly to this hostility and became restive. To prevent an outbreak of conflict, Montgomery issued the following explanation to the civilian population:

"Many of you seemed to think that when our soldiers arrived, you could be friends with them at once, as if nothing much had happened, but too much has happened for that," he stated, describing hardships soldiers under his command had endured during the war. "For those things, you will say you are not responsible—it was your rulers," his order continued. "But they were found by the German nation. Every nation is responsible for its rulers, and while they were successful, you cheered and laughed. That is why our soldiers do not smile at you…. It will not always be so. For we are Christian, forgiving people…. Our object is to destroy the evil of the Nazi system. It is too soon to be sure that this has been done."

Montgomery wrote that it eventually became impossible to prevent British soldiers from interacting with local civilians.

His attitude in this matter indicates that, surprisingly, Montgomery did not cultivate a hatred of Germans. Many men who liberated the Belsen camp with him wrote that they blamed the entire German race for what happened there and would never forgive the Germans as a people. Montgomery's writings and expressions indicate that he had a different mindset.

He had studied and admired the writings of German thinkers during his life. His favorite music, according to a postwar interview he gave the BBC, included German operetta. Instead of denouncing Germans as racially monstrous at war's end—which many people were then doing—Montgomery appears to have consigned guilt to individuals and focused on rebuilding his zone of occupation.

Montgomery wrote that he believed no progress could be made for peace as long as an atmosphere of hostility remained toward Germans, citing the aftermath of

Continued on page 98

Marshall B. Haugen was born July 8, 1917, and raised in Duluth, Minnesota–one of four brothers, all of whom served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Marshall was a technical sergeant, radio operator, mechanic, and aerial gunner on B-17 Flying Fortress bombers. Fortunately, Marshall kept a detailed diary during his time in the service, allowing us an intimate look into the harrowing life of a bomber crewman in World War II.

Haugen had registered with the draft but was deferred since he was in college. He tried to enlist as a flying cadet but was not able to pass the physical exam due to a nose injury. Failing that, he enlisted in the Army on August 29, 1941, at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, with his friends Bud Forgette and Bob Lyons.

Five days after Pearl Harbor, Haugen was sent to radio school. He arrived at Scott Field, 25 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri, on December 12, then was transferred on May 26, 1942, to MacDill Field at Tampa, Florida. In the end, he was assigned to the

FIFTY MISSIONS OVER THE REICH

A B-17 CREWMAN FROM MINNESOTA FOUGHT IN THE AIR WAR FROM DAY ONE UNTIL VE DAY.

BY ALLYN VANNOY

322nd Bombardment Squadron.

He recalled, "The sight of seeing a B-17 and my first flight are a couple things I will never forget." Haugen was flying day and night and enjoying it. In late June, the squadron was transferred to Walla Walla, Washington, as it went into advance training in preparation for combat. While there, Haugen was promoted to sergeant. In August, the group left for Bangor, Maine, to obtain new planes and prepare for deploying to Europe.

On the morning of September 20, the unit departed for Gander, Newfoundland, ultimately destined for Bassingbourne, England, via Prestwick, Scotland, and Kimbolten,

With both starboard engines out of commission, a B-17 Flying Fortress of the 91st Bombardment Group, escorted by P-51 Mustangs, makes an emergency landing in an English farm field, as depicted in *Out of Fuel and Safely Home* by aviation artist Robert Taylor. Statistically, a crew member had only a 25 percent chance of surviving 25 missions.

England. The squadron, now part of the 91st Bomb Group, reached its base of operations at Bassingbourne (just southwest of Cambridge), one of the best in England, where they would gain the nicknames "The Ragged Irregulars" or "Wray's Ragged Irregulars" (a riff on its commander's last name). The 91st (consisting of the 322nd, 323rd, 324th, and 401st Bomb Squadrons) was outfitted with the latest Boeing B-17F model. Haugen's bomber was given the moniker *Chief Sly*.

On November 7, 1942, the 91st Bomb Group got its first mission, on which they would hit the German U-boat base at Brest, France (near the western tip of Brittany), with 23 B-17s and 11 Consolidated B-24 Liberators. By 9:30 AM, the bombers, each loaded with 5,000 pounds of bombs, were on their way.

Unfortunately, four of the .50-caliber machine guns on Haugen's B-17 failed during test firing over the English Channel, forcing them to turn back. The rest of the aircraft in the group continued the mission, and all returned safely.

In 1942, the German submarine force became a key target of the Allied air offensive as the Battle of the Atlantic was reaching a new level of intensity, with U-boats sinking between 400,000 and more than 700,000 tons of Allied shipping a month.

On November 14, the group was dispatched to hit the U-boat pens in the La Pallice district of La Rochelle, France, but the target was covered by heavy clouds, so 15 B-17s and nine B-24s were directed to hit a secondary target, the nearby port area at St. Nazaire. Only four aircraft from the 322nd took part, each loaded with two 2,000-pound bombs with which to crack the thick concrete roofs of the sub pens. This was Haugen's first combat mission.

Though the flak was intense, all the aircraft came through. On the return flight, the group landed at another field, Davistin Moore. Weather delayed the return to the group's home base for two days.

During the flight back to Bassingbourne, one of the life rafts on Haugen's bomber broke loose and became lodged in the horizontal stabilizer. The plane went into a dive and was only brought under control through the extreme efforts of the pilots. The crew prepared to abandon ship, but the B-17 was too low to jump by the time they were ready. One of the waist gunners managed to shoot the raft loose, or at least relieve some of the pressure, and they were able to make an emergency landing. That same day, Haugen discovered he had been promoted to technical sergeant.

On December 6, the group was ordered to hit the Atelier d'Hellemmes locomotive carriage works at Lille in northern France, dispatching 22 aircraft as part of the 103 heavy bombers taking part in the mission. When Haugen's crew test-fired their guns after takeoff, they found that the top turret was not working and were forced to turn back.

On December 12, the group was sent to hit an aircraft depot 75 miles southeast of Paris at Romilly-sur-Seine as part of a 90-bomber attack force. The mission crews anticipated that it would be a "hot trip" as it was a long way without fighter protection. The target, though, was hidden under heavy cloud cover, so the strike was rerouted to hit a secondary target: the marshaling yards at Sotteville-les-Rouen, northwest of Paris along the Seine. Of the 19 planes of the group that took off, only six reached the target as part of the 78 bombers that made the strike. Haugen's B-17 was forced to turn back due to engine trouble.

Both: Photo courtesy the Haugen family

ABOVE: Sgt. 1st Class Marshall "Mush" Haugen. He beat the odds by surviving 50 combat missions over Europe. BELOW: The Haugen brothers (left to right): Ed, Bud, and Marshall photographed while on home leave in Minnesota, 1943.

On December 20, 80 B-17s and 21 B-24s of the Eighth Air Force's First Wing were dispatched again to hit the Luftwaffe air depot at Romilly-sur-Seine. Of the 91st Bomb Group's 17 planes that took off, all reached the target. German fighters were encountered 30 miles from the coast and engaged the bombers from there to the target and back to the coast.

The group lost two aircraft, both to enemy fighters. Another caught fire after taking a hit to its no. 3 engine, forcing it to fall out of formation. Two others, including Haugen's, followed the wounded bird in to provide cover. Of the 72 bombers that struck the target, six were lost to German fighters.

"We beat off frequent attacks all the way to the target and all the way back," Haugen wrote. "Two planes from the 401st Squadron went down on the way in. They were flying in the element directly behind us. We made it to the target and dropped our bombs okay. It was on our way back that we really ran into trouble. The lead plane in our element was hit and started to lag behind, so we stayed with it while the others went on ahead. That is when all the

ABOVE: Lieutenant B.D. Barton and the crew of *Chief Sly II* (aircraft number 42-5139). Haugen is standing at far left. BELOW: Personnel inspect a B-17 from the 91st Bomb Group after it made a forced landing near Bassingbourne, July 1943. Haugen's plane was badly damaged during a raid on Romilly-sur-Seine, France. Unable to make it back to Bassingbourn, Lieutenant Barton was forced to land in a farmer's field.

Both: National Archives

FW's [Focke-Wulf 190s] in France started to pick on us. The main attack started 12 minutes from the Channel, and they swarmed around us like bees. Soon, our plane was riddled with holes, and our no. 3 engine was out.

"Then our no. 4 was hit, and practically the whole tail assembly was shot away. During the onslaught, a 20mm cannon [shell] exploded within a foot of my head, but I wasn't scratched. The radio room was full of holes. We were unable to stay with the other two planes in our element and went into a dive. As luck would have it, we ducked into a cloud and thus shook off the pursuing fighters. Just as we disappeared into the cloud, a fighter let go on a final blast that hit our navigator in the leg.

"During the heat of the battle, our gunners shot down at least six fighters, but I didn't get a shot. All of the attacks came at the nose, and I was unable to get my guns in that direction. My gun shot only to the rear to protect against tail attacks. The plane was so badly damaged that we were all set to make a belly landing in the water; however, our pilot, Lt. Barton, and co-pilot, Lt. Reynolds, got the plane under control, and they decided to try their darnedest to make England.

"It sure was a sweet sight to see land, but we still had the problem of putting the plane down. Most of the radio equipment was shot away and so we were unable to make contact with any airdromes. Time was the main thing, as we didn't know how long we could keep going on two engines. We looked for an airdrome, but being unable to find one, our pilot had to belly-land in a field. We landed in a plowed field, and the plane didn't even break in half. As a matter of fact, it hardly jarred us."

Chief Sly had holes everywhere, and the tail was practically gone. One 20mm shell left a hole eight feet by three feet in the vertical stabilizer. Additionally, the ship's attackers had peppered it with numerous .30 caliber bullet holes. The aircraft was written off as a loss, and eventually *Chief Sly* was replaced by *Chief Sly 2nd*.

On December 29, an RAF Short Sterling (a four-engine heavy bomber) was flying near Haugen's airfield when it developed engine trouble and tried to land. But it fell out of control at about 200 feet, then plunged to the ground and burst into flames, impacting just 200 yards from where Haugen was standing. Haugen ran to the wreckage to help, but the only survivor of the seven-man crew was the pilot, who was thrown clear.

Five days later, on January 3, 1943, Haugen was assigned to fly with another crew for a raid on St. Nazaire, his seventh mission. He was not anxious to fly with his new crew. The primary target was the St. Nazaire U-boat base. The 1st Bombardment Wing dispatched 85 B-17s from the 91st, 303rd, 305th, and 306th Bombardment Groups and 13 B-24s of the 44th Bombardment Group of the 4th Bombardment Wing.

National Archives

They encountered heavy flak for some eight minutes and were harassed by enemy fighters in large numbers from the target to some 45 minutes out over the Atlantic on the return flight. The groups participating in the raid lost seven aircraft. While Haugen's Fortress took frequent flak hits, no one was wounded. Formation, instead of individual, precision bombing was used for the first time, with considerable damage done to the dock area.

The first raid by American bombers into Germany came on January 27, 1943. The 1st Wing dispatched 25 aircraft, of which the 91st Group provided 17, four coming from the 322nd Squadron. Haugen had looked forward to striking Germany, but when the bomber was within 50 miles of the German border, its no. 2 engine began running rough, forcing the crew to abort.

Haugen's second mission to Germany came on February 4, with the squadron commander, Captain Fishburne, in his plane's co-pilot seat. The group dispatched 17 aircraft loaded with 10 500-pounders as part of a strike by 65 B-17s of the 1st Bombardment Wing and 21 B-24s of the 2nd Bombardment Wing against the railroad marshaling yards at Hamm, Germany.

The B-24s turned back before reaching the Dutch coast when the temperature dropped to -40 degrees Celsius. Because of cloud cover at Hamm, the B-17s were redirected to Emden, Germany, instead. The squadron's daily report indicated that they were attacked by 75 to 80 enemy aircraft for an hour and 15 minutes. It was also noted that the bombers were opposed for the first time by Ju-88 and Me-110 twin-engine fighters.

"We had a perfect position in the formation as we led the second element," wrote Haugen. "The overcast was heavy, and we were unable to bomb our primary target. Just what we finally bombed I don't know. We had comparatively light flak over the target, but fighters picked us up shortly before reaching the target and followed us 78 miles back out over the North Sea.

"Our group lost two planes, both from the 323rd Squadron. One of the radio operators lost was a fellow Minnesotan and a close friend, Cyril Curb. We were in the same barracks at Scott and we graduated together…. Our plane had a couple flak holes. It looks like Germany will be our main target from now on."

Haugen next spent a 48-hour pass in London, his crew getting together at the Regent Palace. "A lot of fun was had by all," he noted.

On February 13, Haugen and three members of his crew took part in a CBS network radio broadcast, with CBS's Robert (Bob) Trout as the reporter. Trout lived on the base for two days and interviewed the crew before deciding to put them on the air.

The next day, February 14, they were directed to the Ruhr.

Haugen wrote, "We got in far enough to have flak shot at us. It must have been aimed by use of radio, as they certainly couldn't see us. The altitude of the flak was perfect, but it was quite some distance behind us."

On the next raid, February 16, 71 B-17s of the 1st Bombardment Wing and 18 B-24s of the 2nd Bombardment Wing were dispatched against the locks and U-boat base at St. Nazaire. The bombers that reached the target dropped 160 tons of bombs. The bombing was reported as excellent, the flak accurate along with 50 to 60 enemy aircraft appearing.

The crews claimed 20 Luftwaffe aircraft destroyed, 12 probables and two damaged, while bomber losses were six B-17s and two B-24s, with 28 B-17s and two B-24s damaged. All of Haugen's group returned safely.

On February 26, the group headed to Bremen in northern Germany to hit the Focke-Wulf factory there, but due to overcast had to settle for the docks and surrounding areas of Wilhelmshaven on the coast. Seventeen aircraft of the 91st Group, commanded by Lt. Col. Baskin L. Lawrence, attacked the secondary target. The lead of the group was assigned to the 322nd. Bombing results were reported as fair, with the group losing two aircraft.

Haugen noted, "It was a fairly easy raid for us, as we flew a tight formation and the fighters didn't bother us. The first attack from fighters came one and a half hours before we reached the target and continued until we were halfway home over the North Sea. Captain Barton flew the plane perfectly, continually dodging flak. We didn't have a single hole in our plane. The bombing altitude was 26,500 feet, which was the highest thus far. It was a six-hour mission, and about four hours of it was under oxygen."

The records of the Eighth Air Force noted that the Luftwaffe attempted air-to-air bombing with fighter aircraft and the use of parachute bombs fired by antiaircraft artillery.

Haugen hoped that the next mission would be an easy one. "We were scheduled to fly Captain Campbell's plane as his compass was more accurate than ours, and as we were to lead the entire group, it was necessary to have an accurate one. However, after looking at the [aircraft's] guns, our pilot, Captain Barton, refused to fly the plane."

This B-17F was damaged by flak and downed by three German fighters near Saarbrücken, Germany, on January 7, 1944. More than 10,500 bombers of the U.S. Eighth Air Force were lost during the war.

The mission progressed well until they became separated from the other groups in heavy overcast. Though unable to locate the other groups, they continued on to the target, the marshaling yards at Hamm. This was the first Eighth Air Force attack on a Ruhr industrial target.

The wing's daily report indicated that the 303rd, 305th, and 306th Groups aborted while the 91st attacked the target. Some 75 enemy aircraft were reported to have made numerous "skilled and vigorous attacks."

Haugen wrote, "We found the weather perfect over Germany and made a swell bombing run on the primary target. We fought off fighters on the way in, but it wasn't until we were about 30 minutes from the target on the way back that the fireworks really began.

"The sky was full of fighters, and there were only 17 Fortresses to fight them off. We left with 20 planes, but two of them returned early with engine trouble and one went down over the target. In the battle that took place during the next 45 minutes, three more Fortresses went down including our left wing ship…. I had been out the night before with three of the fellows from the plane…. It was the second plane [that] our squadron has lost since we went into operations [on] November 7. Our plane returned without a single hole. I feel very fortunate to be back."

Two days later, on March 6, Haugen and his crewmates found themselves as "Tail End Charlie" on a raid. Seventy-one B-17s of the 1st Bombardment Wing were dispatched against the power plant, bridge, and port area at Lorient, France. Three B-17s were lost.

Approaching from over the ocean, they took the defenders by surprise—the flak was light and only six fighters were encountered. "I saw the bombs hit, and it looked like a swell job of bombing," Haugen said.

On March 8, a raid was launched at 10 AM. On the way to the target—the marshaling yards at Rennes, France—the lead plane was forced to drop out of formation. Haugen's B-17 was leading B Flight, so it took the lead for the second time in three raids. Haugen felt that for the first time the escort of RAF Spitfires had performed well. The raid was successful, and all the aircraft of the 91st returned safely, while other groups lost six aircraft to flak.

A raid on the rail yards at Amiens on March 13 was Haugen's 15th mission. The weather was overcast, making bombing accuracy questionable. The operation was provided with heavy Spitfire cover, allowing 44 of the 80 B-17s that had been dispatched to hit the target and return safely.

Haugen wished for "10 more easy ones, and then go home." But this was going to be difficult. On March 17, his plane was called back as they started across the Channel. The next day, trouble with the plane's hydraulic system prevented takeoff. The following day there was a last-minute mission cancellation.

March 22 brought another raid to bomb the docks at Wilhelmshaven. The flak was

heavy over the target, but there was little fighter opposition. After releasing their bomb load, the bomb bay doors were halfway closed when a flak round burst inside the bomb bay and sprung the doors, preventing them from closing. During a subsequent attack by a German fighter from beneath the plane, the ball-turret gunner did further damage to the doors, putting several holes in them, but they managed to return safely.

Haugen's second mission to Paris occurred on April 4, but this was his first time there to drop bombs. The target: the Renault motor and armament works. No enemy fighters were encountered prior to the bombing. "It was a perfect day, and it really was a sightseeing trip. We could see the Channel from over Paris. The bombing was perfect."

Another raid was made on the U-boat base at Lorient on April 16 by 83 B-17s. Flak was moderate and inaccurate, but the attack was hindered by a smoke screen and strong fighter opposition. Bombing accuracy was "fair," and there were no casualties, as all aircraft returned safely.

Haugen noted, "When I rolled out of bed at 5:30, I knew that it was going to be a long, tough one, but it even exceeded my expectations. Our group and the 306th really took a beating. We were first over the target and were flying at 26,000 feet. The others were behind [us] and flying at 28,000 feet. The flak and fighters concentrated on us, and as a result, six planes from our group and 10 from the 306th were shot down. We returned with a few flak holes but were fortunate to escape further damage from fighters."

All the planes lost were from the 401st Squadron. Roland Hale, a good friend of Haugen's and a top turret operator in another Fortress, was killed. Hale's plane had just a single .30-caliber hole in the aircraft, the only lingering trace of the round that hit Hale in the chest and punctured his heart.

The next raid struck the Focke-Wulf factory at Bremen, with 29 aircraft from the 91st Group and 73 from other groups. It was the Eighth Air Force's largest mission

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Immediately after every mission, all crews were debriefed about the results of the raid: bombing results, effectiveness of enemy antiaircraft measures, other problems encountered, personnel deserving awards, etc. OPPOSITE: Three 91st B-17s release their bombs over the target. White contrails may indicate bombers that have been shot down.

to date. Flak was heavy and accurate, and a mass of fighters attacked during the bombing run. Of the 102 Fortresses, 16 were lost: six from the 91st and 10 from the 305th. Bombing results were considered excellent, even as an estimated 150 enemy fighters made the heaviest attacks to date.

Haugen was worried. "It was the most bombers we have ever lost, and we couldn't stand to lose that many very often. The 401st had really taken a beating since they left the States. I believe it was the 12th crew to go down in their squadron."

On April 30, Haugen received a seven-day furlough and headed for London. While there, he and three of his friends played tourist: sleeping in until noon each day, going

to the movies, and visiting London Bridge, the Tower of London, and Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum.

Two weeks later, it was back to the deadly business of bombing the enemy. On May 13, Haugen's unit was scheduled to hit the Avions Potez aircraft factory at Meaulte, France, between Lille and Paris. It was Haugen's 21st mission. Bombing results were reported as good.

The next day, the group struck the U-boat yards at Kiel, Germany. Haugen's B-17 was the highest in the formation and neither flak nor fighters bothered it.

"When we reached the target area, the sky was black, and planes were going down all around us. About two minutes before 'bombs away,' they had our range, and while I was looking out the window at our wing ship, a barrage knocked the wing ship out of the sky. A piece came through the window and hit me in the face. About that time our group was really taking a beating."

The Eighth Air Force made a maximum effort as 154 B-17s, 21 B-24s, and 12 B-26s were dispatched against four targets: Kiel; the former Ford and General Motors plants at Antwerp, Belgium; the Courtrai Airfield, France; and the Velsen power station at Ijmuiden, the Netherlands.

The following day, May 15, Haugen was awakened at 3:30 AM. His crew had been selected to lead the 91st and the other groups as well. The target was supposed to be the submarine construction yards at Wilhelmshaven, but due to overcast skies, they were forced to switch to the naval base and airdrome on Heligoland Island. Enemy opposition included approximately 100 Me-109s, Me-110s, FW-190s and Ju-88s, attacking in formations starting at 10:30 AM and continuing for 20 minutes. Fortunately, all the bombers managed to return.

A May 19 raid on the Deutsche Werke Kiel, A.G. at Kiel, Germany, was Haugen's 25th mission, making him one of the first individuals in the squadron to reach that mark. His plane had a good position in the formation, the chief worry being flak. They were rocked by a few near misses, but they had no serious opposition, and returned safely.

"There's nothing like finishing my tour on a tough mission to Germany," he wrote. "There is naturally a certain amount of tenseness that goes with the last mission, and I don't mind telling you it was good to leave the target area and start out over the North Sea knowing that you had now completed your active duty and had seen flak and fighters for the last time."

Haugen recorded on May 21: "The *Chief* [*Sly 2nd*] took off for the first time without me in the radio room. After she left, I almost wished that I was along, as it sure was tough sweating them out…. The raid was to Wilhelmshaven, and again, it was a tough mission. The 324th lost three planes and among the crew members were five on their last mission."

During the next couple of days, all but two of Haugen's crewmates would complete their 25th mission. Haugen: "My only hope is that they can all see it through, and I know we will have a grand get-together after this war is over."

The 91st Bomb Group (which had included the famous *Memphis Belle*) suffered the greatest number of losses of any heavy bomb group in World War II while flying its 340 bombing missions, earning two Distinguished Unit Citations in the process. Of the original 35 crews, 17 were lost in combat.

With his tour completed, Haugen hoped to be sent home or become an instructor, but he received orders to go on detached service to the 92nd Bomb Group to fly with a tow target detachment.

"Our pilot and co-pilot were from our squadron, so I didn't mind too much flying," he noted. "However, the idea of pulling a tow target for a bunch of shoe clerks, etc., to practice [shooting] on wasn't exactly what I called a rest. It really turned out to be a snap, as we spent most of our time in town. We kept sweating out the boys that were still on operations."

On June 7, 1943, Haugen was presented the Distinguished Flying Cross but turned down a commission, as he was anxious to return to the States. He departed England on July 3 aboard the *Queen Mary,* docking five and a half days later in New York.

After 36 days at home in Minnesota in the summer of 1943, Haugen reported to Salt Lake City for his next assignment: the 318th Squadron, 88th Bomb Group at Walla Walla, Washington. Transfers to Redmond, Oregon, and Avon Park, Florida, followed.

"I stayed there doing various jobs until September 1, 1944, at which time I decided to stretch my luck a little further and go back to combat."

He returned with a handpicked crew made up entirely of former instructors and combat veterans. These included Lieutenant Peter E. Stene, Jr., whom Haugen considered an exceptional pilot; Lieutenant Branch, co-pilot and a former infantry officer; John J. Liana, bombardier; and Bill Welch, navigator.

The enlisted members of the crew included Mike Malone, top turret gunner and flight engineer, a veteran of 46 combat missions with the 97th Bomb Group in England and North Africa; Dick Schuttler, tail gunner, and a veteran of 25 missions with the 94th Bomb Group in England; and Commodore Bullard, Jr., the ball-turret gunner, a veteran of 50 missions with the 97th in Africa. George C. McMurtrey and Walt McCardel were the waist gunners. Haugen wrote, "We were out to beat the law of averages."

Haugen's break in combat service ran from May 19, 1943, to October 15, 1944, and much had changed during that year and a half. Long-range P-51 escort aircraft were now a common part of missions as the Eighth Air Force conducted daily strikes against multiple targets. Allied ground forces, having landed in France in June and July 1944, were driving across France and Belgium as bombers pounded away at the Reich.

Haugen and his crew's new assignment was with the 571st Squadron, 390th Bomb Group based at Framlingham, Essex, which had been operating from England since August 1943. On October 15, they took off on their first mission as part of the 390th to "Flak City": Cologne, Germany. The raid included a force of 754 bombers and 464 fighters to hit industrial, oil, and rail targets, bombing by PFF (Pathfinder Force) methods. It turned out to be an easy mission. The flight path took them along the Rhine, where some flak was encountered, a small piece passing through Haugen's radio operator's table.

On October 19, Haugen's crew took on the role of weather ship. The crew was awakened at 3:30 AM. They flew six and a half hours as they checked weather conditions to the target and operating altitudes and sent back information on cloud formations to be avoided.

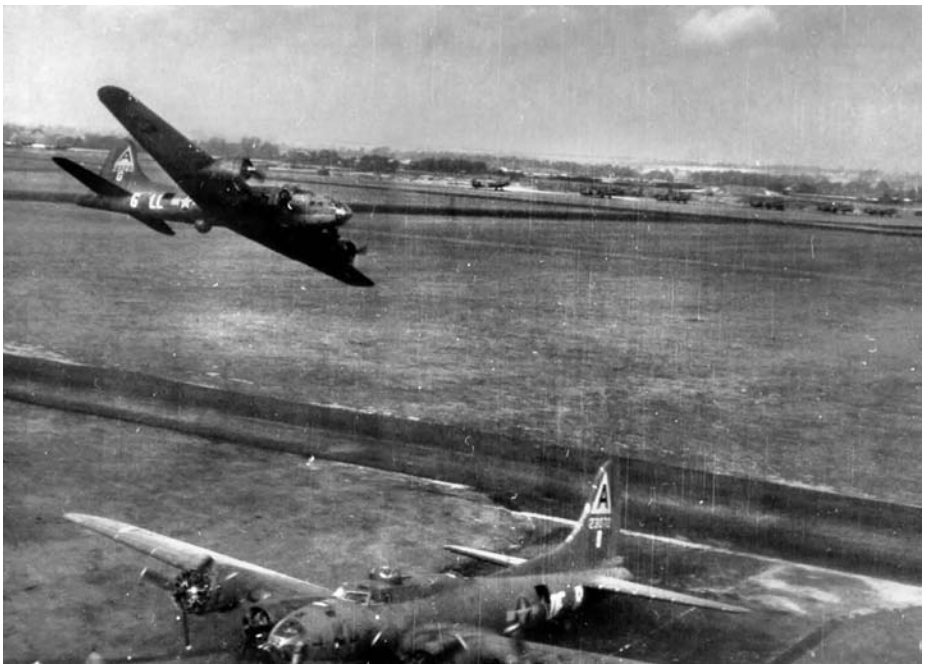
This was the Eighth Air Force's 683rd mission, this time dispatching 1,022 bombers and 753 fighters to hit the diesel engine and armored vehicle plant at Gustavsburg (at the junction of the Rhine and Main Rivers) and multiple secondary targets.

A larger formation—1,131 bombers with fighter escorts—were sent to Germany on October 22 to hit military vehicle plants at Hannover/Hanomag and Brunswick/Bussing, along with marshaling yards at Hamm and Münster. The takeoff of Haugen's group was delayed until 10 AM. His plane led the second element in the lead group, which was the first in the division over the target. There was no fighter opposition and flak was limited.

That day, they were carrying a new piece of equipment called "carpet," which was supposed to throw off enemy radar and, consequently, their antiaircraft guns. Radio operators aboard the bombers also threw out chaff—strips of aluminum foil—to disrupt German radar. All the group's planes returned safely from the strike.

On November 26, another raid on the marshaling yard at Hamm included 381 bombers with an escort of 132 P-51 Mustangs. Guided by radar, they made individual

Both: National Archives



ABOVE: The crew of B-17F *Hell Belle* celebrate their 25th mission by buzzing the airfield at Bassingbourne. After completing his 25 missions, Haugen volunteered for 25 more, admitting that he was "out to beat the law of averages." TOP: Two B-17s lead a raid on synthetic oil plants and railroad facilities at Merseburg, Germany, which Haugen described as one of the toughest missions of his 50.

National Archives

A stick of 500-pound high-explosive bombs (lower right) plunges toward its target, the Hispano-Suiza aircraft engine factory and Compagnie d'Applications Mécaniques in the Parisian suburb of Bois-Colombes. The raid was conducted by B-17 Flying Fortresses of the 390th Bomb Group.

runs on the target. Because of the overcast, the results were not observed. Haugen's Fortress, which had led the low squadron of their group during the raid, received only a few minor holes from flak.

Four days later, the target was Merseburg, which was not considered a milk run. Nearly 1,300 bombers and 1,000 fighters were dispatched to hit heavily defended synthetic oil plants and rail targets. Intense and accurate flak brought down 29 bombers.

"It wasn't bad enough to be headed for such a rough target," Haugen mused to his diary, "but it was delayed an extra hour to make it worse. Once again, we were leading the low group and things went okay until we were 67 miles from the target. At that time, we started to pick up flak, and it continued and got worse the closer we got to the target.

"When we reached the target area, the sky was black, and planes were going down all around us. About two minutes before 'bombs away,' they had our range, and while I was looking out the window at our wing ship, a barrage knocked the wing ship out of the sky. A piece came through the window and hit me in the face. About that time our group was really taking a beating.

"The lead [plane] of the lead [group] and his left wing ship were hit and ran together in the air and went down in flames. [Lieutenant] Branch was flying in that ship as formation control. The lead of the high [group] was hit and started to lose altitude with only two engines working. We continued on and released our bombs and sneaked out of the flak area to lick our wounds.

"At that time I advised [Lieutenant] Stene that I had been hit and Conroy gave me first aid. We also took a hit in the oxygen line on the opposite side of the radio room, so I had to throw Conroy a walk-around bottle. With the other two lead ships gone, the boys all joined on to us, that is, what was left. We counted 21 planes out of the 38 that took off on the mission."

The final count for Haugen's group was nine Fortresses lost. Upon return, Haugen was treated for a cut to his left cornea. His aircraft's hydraulic system was also damaged, leaving only enough fluid to brake once or twice. As a result, they were the last to land. They had also been hit in a fuel tank, which caused them to leak fuel all the way back to base from the target.

On December 12, they were part of 461 bombers sent to hit the marshaling yards at Darmstadt, "a milk run." There was no flak as they made a visual run on the target. The bombing was good, but being fifth in the bomber stream, there wasn't much left to hit by the time they got there.

Only a few days later, the Germans launched Operation Watch on the Rhine—the Battle of the Bulge, which lasted from December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945—the last major German offensive on the Western Front. On Christmas Eve, the 390th Bomb Group was sent to hit the airfield at Zellhausen east of Frankfurt as part of the effort to relieve pressure on American forces in the Bulge. The sky had finally cleared, allowing the Eighth Air Force to launch a maximum effort against enemy airfields and communications across western Germany. This was the largest air strike of the war, with 2,034 bombers and 853 fighters hitting numerous targets, including airfields at Darmstadt, Frankfurt-Rhein, Bilbis, Babenhausen, Zellhausen, and Gross Ostheim, along with marshaling yards at Pforzheim, Kaiserslautern, and Haildraum, and the Merzhausen air depot.

Haugen noted, "Maybe it was a morale factor for the boys in the Bulge, but we

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flew right down the middle of that 40-mile stretch. The target was an airfield that was the base for the planes that were giving our boys hell. We ran into plenty of flak flying down the Bulge and got banged up somewhat.

"However, we kept going, and when we were practically at the IP [Initial Point, where the bombs are released], the no. 2 engine started to run rough…. We had to reduce air speed to lessen the vibrating, and the rest of the boys couldn't stay with us. Also, no. 3 was throwing oil all the way back to the horizontal stabilizer…. By this time, we had penetrated about 200 miles beyond the lines, and we had to cover all that distance alone without protection."

On December 31, the entire Eighth Air Force was sent to hit both strategic and tactical targets in western Germany, encountering some 150 Luftwaffe fighters in the process, mostly in the Hamburg area. Twenty-seven bombers and 10 escort fighters were lost. Targets included the Wilhemsburg and Grassbruk refineries at Hamburg, the Misburg refinery, and the industrial area at Wenzendorf, as well as the marshaling yards at Neuss and Krefeld-Urdingen, the Kordel railroad at Ehrang, communications targets at Buzburg, Prum, and Blumenthal, and the Lutzweiler Bridge at Koblenz and the Remagen Bridge.

Haugen: "We bombed downwind and had a ground speed of 315 mph, but still the flak was finding the mark. I don't think the Jerries wasted a single shell. About all we had left were four engines, as the rest of the plane was riddled. One close burst made several holes in the radio room. I was practically wrapped in flak suits, but still two pieces hit me in the left arm. One entered [my] elbow and another the forearm…. I remained in the hospital until January 15, and after returning to the base, got another flak leave of seven days."

On January 28, 1945, Haugen wrote, "It looks like we will be flying quite often from now on, as there is a shortage of lead crews."

On February 1, Haugen was surprised at how late that day's mission got underway. They were leading the high group and were the first to get airborne at 11:45 AM, on target at 3:15 PM, return to base at 5:10. Their target was a bridge at Wesel on the Rhine, but results were questionable.

A force of 699 B-17s and 328 P-51s were dispatched to hit rail targets and bridges in western Germany using Micro-H and H2X radar, hitting marshaling yards at Mannheim and Ludwigshafen, the highway and rail bridge at Mannheim, and the rail bridge at Wesel. No losses resulted.

A mission to Leipzig on February 17 was redirected to Frankfurt due to weather, shortening the operation by three hours. "We know definitely that we plastered the town, but just what we hit is a mystery." A force of 895 bombers and 183 fighters had been dispatched to hit synthetic oil plants as well as the Frankfurt marshaling yard. Deteriorating weather forced the recall of 261 B-17s and 288 B-24s. The weather was so bad that several aircraft had to jettison their bomb loads during assembly. Unfortunately for Lieutenant Stene, who was flying his first mission as command pilot, his plane caught fire over the North Sea.

"Three men bailed out and then the plane went into a spin," Haugen wrote. "There is practically no hope for Stene…. We're still sweating, but have practically given up hope. His loss will really be felt."

On February 22, operations switched from high-altitude to medium for a series of strikes. A total of 1,428 bombers and 862 fighters commenced Operation Clarion, a joint operation of the RAF and the U.S. Eighth, Ninth, and Fifteenth Air Forces to paralyze the already decimated German rail and road system. Most attacks were made visually, as bombing was conducted from just 10,000 to 12,000 feet to achieve maximum accuracy on targets without flak defenses.

Haugen noted, "We broke up into small groups and went after marshaling yards in small towns. It seems that all the large cities have been hit day after day, and consequently, Jerry was depending on passing most of his goods through the smaller towns…. We crossed the front lines at 20,000 feet and then let down to 17,500 to bomb. Some groups went in as low as 12,000 feet. There wasn't a single burst of flak over the target. As a matter of fact, I didn't see a burst all day…. We completely smothered the yards with bombs."

Two days later, two groups were sent after the only important bridge still standing over

A Flying Fortress returns to Bassingbourne from a mission over Europe. The 91st Bomb Group grew from 35 aircraft and 1,800 personnel in 1942 to 72 aircraft and 2,200 personnel by war's end, and conducted 340 combat missions. One of its planes was the famed *Memphis Belle.*

the Rhine at Wesel. The target was well defended as the approaching aircraft encountered flak about 30 seconds before bomb release. Seventy B-17s hit the Wesel rail bridge, with 22 bombers suffering damage.

In his diary, Haugen wrote, "It was really accurate, bursting all around our plane. One piece came in over the bombardier's head and hit the navigator, Lieutenant Welsh, in the right arm. The tail gunner had a narrow escape as a bit piece of flak missed his head by less than six inches. That piece knocked out the oxygen system on the right side from the radio room….

"One 1,000-pound [bomb] failed to release over the target, so we took it back to the base. When we landed, it jarred loose from the bomb bay and went through the doors. It went down the runway behind us and it was only a miracle that it didn't go off. I believe we have learned our lesson and from now on we will drop all extra bombs in the North Sea.

"After a 'flak leave' of eight days and a couple of days extra to recuperate, we were once again after the Hun. We figured that a group lead was in the making…. As far as I am concerned, I hope we stay in that spot."

Haugen's group was part of a strike on March 18, 1945, as 1,329 bombers and 733 fighters were dispatched to hit targets in the Berlin area: the Schlesischer and Nord rail stations and the Tegel and Henningsdorf tank factories. The Luftwaffe made concentrated attacks on the bombers with their Me-262 jet fighters.

"It had been my desire to go to the big city and it finally came true…. Luckily, we had only a couple passes by jet jobs, and they didn't hit anything but air…. We were in flak for about 12 minutes, and they really had our range. We sustained some battle damage…. One bomb hung up, and we had to drop it manually after we came off the target. The group lost three planes."

On April 4, 1,431 bombers and 866 fighters were dispatched to hit airfields, a shipyard, and a U-boat construction yard at Kiel. Haugen's Fortress again led the group, intending to make the bombing run using H2X radar, but a few seconds of breaks in the overcast were enough to allow them to plaster the target.

A week later, Haugen wrote, "Again, we led the group to the marshaling yards at Landshut." Forty miles north of Munich, there was no flak, the weather perfect, as bombing was made from 17,800 feet. "The entire 8th went in the Munich area, and by the time we left, the entire area seemed to be burning." More than 500 B-17s were sent to hit a munitions depot, airfields, and marshaling yards, 82 to hit the marshaling yard at Landshut.

Haugen's 50th and final mission was flown on April 20, targeting the marshaling yards at Oranienburg, just north of Berlin. "We expected plenty of flak, as the target was in the outskirts of Berlin. However, it was like a sightseeing trip, as there wasn't any enemy action along the entire route. We came back at low altitude and had the chance to view the ruins of Germany. Practically all the towns seem to be flattened."

The April 20th mission was the Eighth Air Force's 962nd; it included 837 bombers and 890 fighters, dispatched to hit rail targets north-northwest to south-southwest of Berlin, as well as in Bavaria and Czechoslovakia. Eighty-two B-17s targeted Oranienburg.

The Third Reich surrendered on May 8.

A second tour completed, Haugen would end the war with the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with seven Oak Leaf Clusters, Presidential Unit Citation, Air Crew Badge, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four bronze battle stars, World War II Victory Medal, and three overseas service bars. He was honorably discharged October 12, 1945.

After the war, Haugen coached and taught physical education at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, from 1949 to 1951, then taught history and coached football at Logan High School in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Marshall B. Haugen, one of the very few bomber crewmen to survive 50 combat missions, passed away on December 13, 1998. □

THE THUNDER OF OPERATION GALLOP

BY PAT MCTAGGART

WITH VICTORY AT STALINGRAD CLOSE AT HAND, THE SOVIETS LAUNCHED AN EFFORT TO LIBERATE THE LOWER DON BASIN.

As Adolf Hitler's vaunted Sixth Army lay in its death throes in the ruins of Stalingrad, German forces to the west of the city faced their own kind of hell. The inner ring of the Russians' iron grip at Stalingrad was tasked with the total destruction of German and other Axis troops within the city, but Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin wanted more. In conjunction with the Soviet High Command (STAVKA), Stalin set forth an ambitious plan designed to liberate the Don Basin from Kursk in the north to the Sea of Azov in the south, bringing the vital agricultural and mineral-rich area once more under Russian control.

Germany's allied armies were a shambles. The Hungarian Second Army and the Italian Eighth Army, positioned along the upper Don River, were shattered by General Filipp Ivanovich Golikov's Voronezh Front, causing a yawning gap south of the German Second Army, which was assigned to defend the Voronezh area.

Farther south, General Nikolai Fyodorovich Vatutin's South West Front, despite heavy opposition, moved toward Voroshilovgrad and Starobelsk. In the Caucasus and along the Donets River, the German troops of Heeresgruppe A (Army Group A) were in a race to the death to escape being trapped by advancing armies of the Trans-Caucasus and the Stalingrad Fronts.

In mid-January, Stalin and STAVKA saw a very distinct possibility of forcing the entire southern flank of the German Army in the east to collapse. With a victory at Stalingrad all but assured, Soviet military planners developed operations aimed at pushing the Germans back to the Dniepr River. The more optimistic planners, including Stalin, hoped for an even bigger push.

A two-pronged attack was finally approved. Operation Skachok (Gallop) would use Vatutin's South West Front to clear the southern Don Basin of the enemy and push him back to the Dniepr. On Vatutin's right flank, Golikov's Voronezh Front was ordered to take Kharkov and then follow the retreating Germans as far west as possible in an operation called Zvezda (Star).

The German forces facing Vatutin had been ground down by weeks of fighting and retreat. Lt. Gen. Fedor Mikhailovich Kharitonov's Sixth Army and Lt. Gen. Vasilii I. Kuznetsov's First Guards Army were fast approaching the Aydar River in the Starobelsk area, while the Third Guards Army under Lt. Gen. Dmitri Danilovich Lelyushenko was threatening to cross the Donets River west of Voroshilovgrad. South of Lelyushenko, Lt. Gen. Ivan Timofeevich Schlemin's Fifth Tank Army was also moving toward the eastern bank of the Donets.

Vatutin also had a combined arms group commanded by Lt. Gen. Markian Mikhailovich Popov, which contained nearly half of the South West Front's armor. In total,

(U.S. Army Art Collection)

In the 1942 painting *Shell Fire Near Trench Position* by W. Rensellek, German soldiers duck for cover as a Russian shell explodes near their machine gun position. Dressed in white camouflage uniform covers, these Germans were subjected to fierce bombardment during the Soviet winter offensive.

Vatutin had more than 500 tanks and about 325,000 men to fulfill his mission.

Facing the South West Front was a hodgepodge of German units in the process of trying to regain some kind of defensive line and command control. About 160,000 men and 100 tanks from several decimated divisions struggled to pull themselves into some kind of cohesive force to meet the advancing Soviet forces.

ABOVE: During the catastrophic German defeat at Stalingrad, a Wehrmacht soldier peers from cover through a telescopic viewer. The distant Soviet Red Army tightened the ring of steel around the Germans at Stalingrad until they capitulated in February 1943. OPPOSITE: Uniformed against the cold, soldiers of the Red Army gather around a campfire during a lull in fighting on the Eastern Front. The Soviet effort to liberate the Don Basin, Operation Gallop, proved overly ambitious.

The First Panzer Army, commanded by General Eberhard von Mackensen, was just arriving from a grueling retreat from the Caucasus. It had about 40 combat-ready tanks and an estimated 40,000 troops. Army Abteilung Hollidt was a conglomeration of infantry and panzer division remnants. Commanded by General Karl Hollidt, the unit had about 100,000 men and 60 tanks. Another 20,000 troops came from various support and garrison units.

Aware of the enemy disorganization facing him, Vatutin planned his actions accordingly. Born in 1901, Vatutin joined the Red Army in 1920. He saw service during the Russian Civil War and then attended the Frunze Academy, graduating in 1929. Furthering his career, Vatutin attended and graduated from the General Staff Academy and served on the General Staff from 1937-1940. During the Battle for Moscow, he distinguished himself as chief of staff of the Northwestern Front, and in 1942 he was named commander of the South West Front.

Vatutin was considered a gifted strategist, and his opinions were highly valued. He was enthusiastic about the possibility of liberating the Lower Don Basin and destroying the German units defending it, and STAVKA gave him great latitude in forming his plan of attack, which he worked out with his army commanders and staff.

The main blow was to come from the First Guards and Third Guards Armies, which would take Stalino and then Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. This action, supported by Group Popov and the Fifth Tank Army, would trap most of the German units on the Donets River Line south of Kharkov. Divisions of the Southern Front, on Vatutin's left flank, would cooperate by advancing along the Sea of Azov to Rostov and beyond.

In theory, the plan was a good one. Intelligence reports indicated that the Germans were in a state of near panic. Other reports stated that enemy troops were hastily withdrawing from the entire area, which gave Vatutin the view that his operation was a means to crush a beaten and demoralized foe.

The Soviet assessments were wrong to a large degree. Although the Germans were disorganized, commanders were working together to retain a viable fighting force. German supply lines were much closer since the retreat from the Stalingrad sector, and the ability to form ad hoc units around regimental and divisional cadre was succeeding.

There was also another major factor working for the Germans. Field Marshal Erich von Manstein was in command of the area slated for the Soviet offensive. Architect of the 1940 Ardennes strike against France and the conqueror of Sevastopol in 1942, von Manstein was regarded as having one of the best strategic and tactical minds in the Wehrmacht.

Although the divisions of his Heeresgruppe (Army Group) Don, which became Heeresgruppe Süd (South) in mid-February, were battered, the German commander was already planning a response for what he correctly assumed to be a major Soviet attack in the Don Basin. He knew the Red Army supply lines had greatly lengthened as his own decreased, making it difficult for Soviet armor to receive proper fuel and ammunition replenishment. He also knew that although the Russians had superiority in manpower and equipment their reserves were lacking in numbers for a prolonged attack and breakthrough.

Von Manstein was also lucky in another regard. While the debacle at Stalingrad was still being played out, he had managed to talk Hitler into allowing most of the German forces in the Caucasus to withdraw before being cut off. By the end of January, many of those units, including the First Panzer Army, were regrouping in the Don Basin. The Fourth Panzer Army, commanded by Col. Gen. Hermann Hoth, was also in the process of getting out of the Soviet trap.

As he pressed the issue of the vulnerability of the entire southern sector of the Eastern Front, von Manstein persuaded the OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht–German Armed Forces High Command) to release six divisions and two infantry brigades from Western Europe and send them to Heeresgruppe Süd. Among the divisions released were three superbly equipped SS divisions, which had been resting and refitting after the hard-fought 1942 campaign.

On February 1, 1943, Golikov's Voronezh Front began its attack to liberate Kharkov. Excellent progress was made during the first days of the offensive, with General Ivan Danilovich Chernyakowskii's 60th Army taking Kursk on February 8. As Kursk fell, Golikov's 40th and 69th Armies, along with the Third Tank Army, advanced on Kharkov, slamming their way through the undermanned defenses of the German Second Army.

Two days before Golikov's offensive began, Vatutin launched Operation Gallop. On January 29, Kuznetsov's First Guards Army crossed the Aydar River and hit General Gustav Schmidt's 19th Panzer Division in the Kabanye–Kromennaya area along the Dnester River. Reeling under a series of hammer blows, the Germans were forced to retreat under a constant barrage of Soviet artillery.

On Kuznetsov's right flank, Kharitonov's Sixth Army, after crossing the Aydar, smashed into elements of Colonel Herbert Michaelis's 298th Infantry Division. With the bulk of the 298th dug in along the Krasnaya River, the forward elements of the division were brushed aside by the advancing Soviets.

Pursuing the retreating Germans, Kharitonov's 15th Rifle Corps made it to the Krasnaya before being stopped by the 298th's makeshift defenses on the western bank. Under heavy fire, the 350th Rifle Division forced crossings north and south of Kupyansk and established bridgeheads on the German side of the river, but further progress was retarded until reinforcements arrived on the scene.

January 30 found the First Guards Army crossing the Krasnaya near the town of Krasny Liman. Pleased with the progress of his assault troops, Vatutin ordered Group Popov to advance and form up at the juncture of the First Guards and Sixth Armies in order to exploit any major breaches in the German line.

For the next few days, Vatutin continued to receive good news from the front. His planning of Gallop seemed to be validated as reports came from the First Guards Army stating that Kremennaya had fallen, the 19th Panzer Division was retreating toward Lisichansk to the south, and that Krasny Liman was also taken.

In the Sixth Army sector, Kharitonov finally crossed the Krasnaya River after the 298th Infantry Division, fearing encirclement by advancing units of the Sixth Army and the Voronezh Front's Third Tank Army, abandoned its positions on the eastern bank. From February 2-5, the 298th fought through Soviet units already in its rear before finally reaching a new defensive

(All Photos: National Archives)

line around Chuguyev on the Northern Donets River.

Sixth Army units also forced General Georg Postel's 320th Infantry Division to retreat from the Krasnaya. While the Sixth Rifle Division attempted to surround Postel's division, the 267th Rifle Division and 106th Rifle Brigade drove on to Izyum, which would fall on February 5.

Sensing victory, Vatutin sent in Group Popov to act as the vanguard of the Soviet attack. A counterattack by some of the First Panzer Army's XL Panzer Corps, commanded by General Sigfrid Henrici, halted Popov's advance in several areas. Other elements of Henrici's corps struck the First Guards Army around Slavyansk, forcing Kuznetsov to halt his attack. Farther south, Lelyushenko's Third Guards Army had now crossed the Donets River near Voroshilovgrad and was engaged in breaking through the defenses of Army Abteilung Hollidt.

The battle around Slavyansk was pivotal for the Germans trying to stop Vatutin's push westward. As long as the town was in von Manstein's hands, Vatutin would have to extend his forces to bypass it, lengthening his supply lines and offering his flanks to German counterattacks.

By February 4, Vatutin found himself facing an increasingly stubborn opponent. Elements of Henrici's XL Panzer Corps were clinging to Slavyansk, fending off the First Guards Army with vicious counterattacks. Kuznetzov threw more units into the battle for the town, but Henrici's men held firm.

About 55 kilometers east of Slavyansk, the First Guards Army's Sixth Guards Rifle Corps, commanded by General Ivan Prokofevich Alferov, was embroiled in a savage fight for control of Lisichansk. General Maximilian Fretter-Pico's XXX Army Corps was charged with the defense of the sectors north and south of the town.

General Karl Casper's 335th Infantry Division, newly arrived from France, was one of the divisions tasked with defending the area south of Lisichansk near the town of Krymskoye. Alferov's 44th Guards Rifle Division gained a small bridgehead on the western bank of the Donets and fought off

ABOVE: Wearing hooded camouflage uniforms, a pair of Red Army soldiers fires an antiquated machine gun at German positions. The winter weather created a no-man's-land of snow and ice between opposing lines. OPPOSITE: Visiting the Kertsch Front on May 20, 1942, General Erich von Manstein takes stock of the condition of his troops. Manstein developed a reputation as a superb strategist and was one of the most respected generals in the German Army.

repeated counterattacks by the 335th. Seeing that further assaults were a waste of manpower, Casper ordered his men to cordon off the bridgehead, hoping that reinforcements would be sent to break the Soviet line.

At Lisichansk, Alferov's 78th Rifle Division tried an end run. The 78th crossed the Northern Donets at several points, but once again German forces moved in to seal them off. For the moment, it was a stalemate.

Frustrated, Vatutin threw the 41st Guards Rifle Division into the Lisichansk battle. Defended by Schmidt's 19th Panzer, the Soviets had to clear the town street by bloody street. Aided by elements of the 78th Guards and 44th Guards Rifle Divisions, the Russians finally forced Schmidt's men out of the town to positions in the southwest. The Sixth Guards Rifle Corps followed fast on their heels, but Schmidt was able to work his units like a boxer, bobbing, weaving, and shifting constantly to frustrate any further breakthrough.

On February 6, Hitler called von Manstein to his headquarters at Zaporozhye. The German leader was surprisingly docile, almost apologetic, as he opened the conversation by taking full responsibility for the Stalingrad disaster. Von Manstein was taken aback by the statement because Hitler never blamed himself for any of the misfortunes suffered by the German Army.

With the surprising admission out of the way, the two men turned to the situation at hand. Von Manstein was blunt as he began explaining the position of his Army Group. He told Hitler that under no circumstances could the area between the Don and the Donets be held with the existing forces available.

"The only question is whether, in trying to hang on to the whole basin, we want to not only lose the area but also Heeresgruppe Don," he said. "We will also eventually lose Heeresgruppe A. The alternative is to abandon part of the Basin at the right moment to avert the catastrophe threatening to overtake us."

According to von Manstein, Hitler remained "utterly composed" during the ensuing conversation. Continuing, he told Hitler that trying to hold the entire Basin would allow the Soviets to send strong enough forces to slice through the thinly held German line and envelop the entire southern wing of the Eastern Front. Therefore, he proposed using the First Panzer Army and the Fourth Panzer Army, which were facing General Andrei Ivanovich Yeremenko's Southern Front, to form a strike force to intercept the forces that Vatutin undoubtedly already had in mind for his continued advance.

Moving the Fourth Panzer Army back from the Lower Don would mean giving up the area between the Lower Don and the Mius River to the armies of Yeremenko's Southern Front, but it would also shorten the German line. To protect the southern flank, Army Abteilung Hollidt would also have to withdraw to the Mius. It was a risky plan, but the alternative meant almost certain disaster.

When von Manstein finished, it was Hitler's turn. The Führer could find no flaws in the plan, but his aversion to giving up ground to the enemy was still paramount. He argued that every foot of land cost the Russians men and materials—much more than it cost the Germans. There were also political considerations, such as the effect such a withdrawal would have on Turkey, which was watching developments in Southern Russia very carefully.

Hitler promised reinforcements, cajoled, and used his famous charm and eloquence to convince von Manstein to remain on the Don, but von Manstein would not budge. The impasse went on most of the afternoon, but then Hitler suddenly gave in. Finally having the Führer's blessing, von Manstein hurriedly flew back to his Stalino headquarters to begin issuing orders for the retreat.

Unless an early thaw suddenly hit the area, armored and mechanized units scheduled to pull back would have little problem reaching the Mius ahead of the Soviets. The infantry units of the Fourth Panzer Army and Army Abteilung Hollidt were a different matter. Vulnerable to Russian armored and mechanized forces, the retreating infantry would have to leave a rear guard to conduct a fighting withdrawal while main elements of the division remained on guard against Soviet ambushes and armored raids.

The Soviets were by no means idle as the Germans prepared to withdraw to the shorter Mius Line. The South Front's 44th

WE WILL ALSO EVENTUALLY LOSE HEERESGRUPPE A. THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO ABANDON PART OF THE BASIN AT THE RIGHT MOMENT TO AVERT THE CATASTROPHE THREATENING TO OVERTAKE US.

Spread across the wintry landscape of the Soviet Union, German armored vehicles advance eastward toward the major cities of Russia. The German timetable was upset by tenacious Soviet defenses and then compounded by horrific winter weather.

Army took the city of Azov-on-the-Don. Around Salvyansk, where fighting was still raging, Red Army units also took the town of Kramatorsk, some 15 kilometers south of the city.

The following day, February 8, Kharitonov's Sixth Army liberated Andreyevka on the eastern bank of the Northern Donets, about 50 miles southeast of Kharkov. The Soviet commander then turned his forces northeast to strike at Zmiyev, which was on the river's western bank. If Kharitonov could take the town and hold it, the way would be open for an attack on Kharkov from the south.

Kharitonov's spearhead ran headlong into the 2nd Regiment of the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (LSSAH) Panzergrenadier Division commanded by SS Standartenführer (Colonel) Theodore Wisch. Wisch's 1st Battalion, under SS Sturmbannführer (Major) Hugo Kraas, gave the advancing Russians a bloody nose at a small village northeast of Zmiyev. Supported by assault guns, Kraas's men counterattacked, driving the Soviets back.

Late morning found the Russians launching wave after wave of infantry against the village, but the SS held firm. The Soviets then proceeded to attack up and down the line of Wisch's regiment. Supported by assault guns, some panzer companies, engineers, and a flak unit, Wisch successfully held his positions while causing heavy casualties to the Soviet 111th Rifle Division.

Meanwhile, the battle for Slavyansk continued unabated. General Hans Freiherr von Funck's 7th Panzer Division was charged with holding the town. The division was down to only 35 serviceable tanks as it fought to defend Slavyansk against units of General Nikolai Aleksandrovich Gagen's 4th Guards Rifle Corps.

Born in 1895, Gagen was a tough no-nonsense commander who had fought in the brutal battles in the winter of 1941-1942 along the Volkhov River. He was determined to drive the Germans out of the town at whatever the cost. Gagen's 195th Rifle Division had been roughly handled by the 7th Panzer as it tried to fight its way into the eastern part of the town. The Soviet general threw in the 57th Guards Rifle Division in an attempt to take the town from the north and west, but the Germans continued to hold, counterattacking when the situation required it.

Overhead, Red Air Force bombers and ground attack aircraft roamed the skies over the embattled town. German flak batteries tried to drive them away, but the Soviet pilots pressed on, dropping their deadly cargo on von Funck's position. Red Army artillery also kept up a deadly fire, but the German panzergrenadiers and the engineers of the division were still able to hold the Russians at bay.

Holding Slavyansk helped give other units of the First Panzer Army a chance in their move westward. More of Henrici's XL Panzer Corps was already arriving in the area to

bolster the 7th Panzer. Although General Hermann Balck's 11th Panzer Division had little more than a dozen tanks, it was a welcome sight to the men of von Funck's command. Colonel Gerhard Grassman's 333rd Infantry Division was in similar shape, having been savaged in earlier actions.

Both sides realized the value of the area between Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, where the German defenses ran along the Krivoy Torets River. If the Soviets could force the Germans from their tenuous positions, Vatutin could use Group Popov's forces to make a deep thrust to the southwest, which would basically cut off the First and Fourth Panzer Armies from the rest of von Manstein's Heeresgruppe. Accordingly, Vatutin pushed more artillery units into the area to give his troops an added punch.

Henrici's XL Panzer Corps, weak as it was, defended the area with great skill. Coordinated attacks by the 4th Guards Tank Corps, 3rd Tank Corps, and the 4th Guards Rifle Corps were repulsed again and again. Balck's 11th Panzer brazenly counterattacked Soviet armor with its few remaining tanks, leaving several T-34s blazing furiously on the battlefield, while the 7th Panzer fended off combined armored-infantry attacks, leaving hundreds of Red Army soldiers dead in the snow.

Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich-Carl von Steinkeller, commanding the 7th Panzer's 7th Panzergrenadier Regiment, was in the thick of the fighting. Keeping on the move, von Steinkeller went from company to company urging his men to hold firm. An artillery observer followed him, ready to call in fire as the situation demanded. He would later receive the Knight's Cross, in part for his actions during the battle.

Popov's 4th Guards Tank Corps, commanded by Pavel Pavlovich Poluboyarov, succeeded in crossing the Krivoy Torets, threatening the rear of the 7th Panzer Division. Henrici immediately ordered Balck's 11th Panzer Division, supported by a regiment from the 333rd Infantry Division, to counterattack. The Germans were met with the blazing guns of Poluboyarov's tanks in front and from dug-in antitank weapons firing from the eastern bank of the Krivoy Torets.

Despite the Soviet fire, Balck and his infantry support were able to push the 4th Guards back along the river valley. Russian infantry accompanying Poluboyarov's tanks panicked and fled, forcing the armor to fend for itself. German sources indicate that 45 Russian tanks were destroyed during the fighting—a significant loss that could only partially be made good by the reinforcements that were trickling in after a grueling journey over extended supply roads.

Vatutin, fed up with the inability of his forces to take Slavyansk and the positions along the Krivoy Torets, reshuffled his units for an all-out assault. Kuznetsov's First Guards Army was ordered to coordinate with Popov for the attack, while Red Air Force units were given orders to support the operation at all costs.

ABOVE: General Nikolai Vatutin commanded the Soviet Red Army's South West Front during the fighting in the winter of 1942, which included Operation Gallop. TOP LEFT: General Sigfrid Henrici commanded the German XL Panzer Corps during Operation Gallop. TOP RIGHT: General Eberhard von Mackensen commanded the German 1st Panzer Army during the hard fighting on the Eastern Front in 1942.

The westward movement of German units, as per von Manstein's plan, had given Vatutin, Golikov, and STAVKA a false sense of optimism. Hitler never conceded territory—every Russian commander knew that. He had shown it by letting his army freeze at the gates of Moscow and the stubborn refusal to retreat from Stalingrad only reinforced that view.

To the Russian mind the retreat of Heeresgruppe Don from the eastern Don Basin could only be viewed as a somewhat panicked rout. The stubborn resistance around Slavyansk was seen as a desperate attempt to save the fleeing German divisions from being overwhelmed by troops of the South West Front and the South Front, and it was assumed that once the Krivoy Torets line was taken the enemy would collapse.

To crack the German defenses Vatutin ordered the First Guards Army to shift south toward the Krasnoarmeiskoya sector, about 60 kilometers southwest of Slavyansk, to threaten the enemy rear. While that move was taking place, the 35th Guards Rifle Division of Gagen's 4th Guards Rifle Corps forced units of the 333rd Infantry Division out of Lozovaya, a key rail center and supply dump located about 120 kilometers west of Slavyansk. Although the 35th Guards did not press their attack further, taking the town created a dangerous new bulge in the already extended and increasingly confusing lines of battle.

Part of Vatutin's plan was to use Popov's 4th Guards Tank and 3rd Tank Corps to smash their way into Slavyansk, paving the way for the 18th and 10th Tank Corps to strike southwest toward Artemovsk. With Slavyansk secured, the 4th Guards Tank and 3rd Tank Corps were to advance to link up with the First Guards Army at Krasnoarmeiskoye. Together, the two tank corps and units of the First Guards Army would then move southeast to Stalino to trap German units retreating from the eastern Don Basin.

As Vatutin prepared his operation, he received new orders from STAVKA.

Golikov's forces were making good progress toward Kharkov and, lulled by the belief that the Germans were indeed in the midst of a massive disorganized withdrawal to the Dniepr, Moscow saw a new chance to bag several enemy divisions in an even bigger pocket than Vatutin had planned.

Vatutin was therefore given the task of setting up blocking forces to prevent an enemy withdrawal to Zaporozhye and Dnepropetrovsk. At the same time, he was ordered to advance southwest to cut off German and Axis forces in the Crimea. The STAVKA plan was overly ambitious by a wide margin, considering that the South West Front had already been in combat for more than two weeks and had received little in the way of supplies or reinforcements.

With Kharitonov's Sixth Guards Army already supporting Golikov's drive on Kharkov, it would again fall to Kuznetsov and Popov, along with Lelyushenko's Third Guards Army, to accomplish this new mission. The First Guards Army would have the dual tasks of taking Slavyansk with Alferov's Sixth Guards Rifle Corps while other units continued on a westward drive toward Zaporozhye. While this was occurring, Group Popov would make a lightning strike to Krasnoarmeiskoye, taking the town's rail center and threatening the German rear.

Both Kuznetsov and Popov had voiced doubts about Vatutin's earlier proposal. Their units had been manhandled by the Germans, and losses in men and equipment had still not been made good. The two Soviet generals had even graver doubts about the new plan. Supplying their forces as they moved south and west would be a nightmare with the existing supply line, which was already stretched to the limit.

Popov, in making his dash to the south, would have a total of about 180 tanks spread between his four tank corps. He had enough fuel for one refueling and ammunition for two resupplies. The infantry units in his command were in even worse shape. Despite STAVKA's assertions that the Germans were on the run, the field commanders had a more cautious view of the situation.

Vatutin brushed aside his commanders' doubts. These were orders from Moscow and had to be obeyed. The consequences of disobedience were well known, and no Soviet general in his right mind would think about going against the Kremlin at this stage of the war.

Poluboyarov's 4th Guards Tank Corps was chosen to spearhead the new attack. In the early hours of February 11, the Soviet armor began its 85 kilometer charge to Krasnoarmeiskoye. Led by the 14th Guards Tank Brigade, Polubarov's forces cut through the German defenses and moved quickly down the one good road in the area. Following fast on the heels of the 14th were the 3rd Guards Mechanized Brigade, the 7th Ski Brigade, the 9th Guards Tank Brigade, and other corps units.

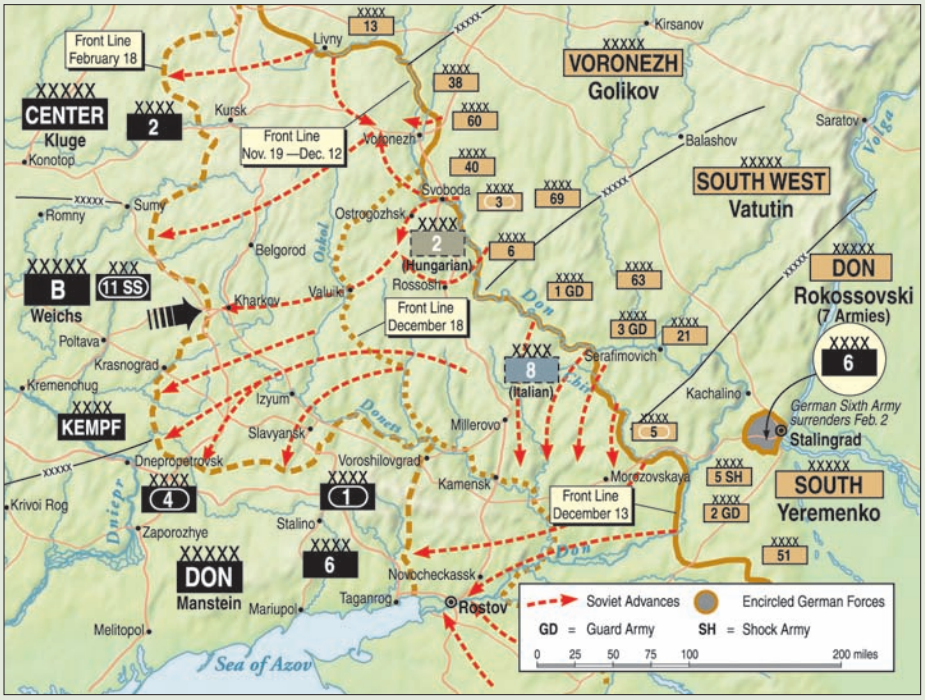
The deep thrust caught the Germans off guard, and by mid-morning the 14th Guards Tank Brigade had taken Krasnoarmeiskoye. With the town secured, the victorious Soviet troops helped themselves to the supplies left in a supply dump by the retreating enemy. The loot, especially the fuel and rations, was a welcome sight to the exhausted Russians.

Another important benefit, not readily apparent to the troops at the scene, was the severing of a vital German supply and communications line. With the capture of Krasnoarmeiskoye, the important Dnepropetrovsk-Mariupol rail line was rendered useless, leaving units of the First Panzer Army and Army Abteilung Hollidt in dire straits.

Group Popov's dramatic march to Krasnoarmeiskoye threw German plans for defending the western Don Basin into disorder. The defense of Slavyansk was now in jeopardy due to the Soviet units to the south and west of the position. Von Mackensen was also in the midst of planning an attack to recapture Kramatorsk, but that too had to be put on hold in light of Popov's success.

Realizing the precarious position of the German troops holding the river lines to the east of Krasnoarmeiskoye, von Mackensen called upon the 5th SS Panzergrenadier Division Wiking. Commanded by SS Gruppenführer (Major General) Felix Steiner, the Wiking was a multinational division made up of Germans, Norwegians, Danes, Swiss, Finns,

Encouraged by their victory at Stalingrad, the Soviets attempted to free the Lower Don Basin. The Germans, many on retreat from the Caucasus, put up a stiff fight and were able to retake all of the territory they had lost early in the battle. OPPOSITE: Battling the intense cold and winter weather as well as the invading Germans, a Soviet patrol and its armored half-track forge their way through a snowy field on the Russian steppe during the winter of 1942.



Walloons, and Estonians. It had just arrived in the Don Basin after an arduous retreat from the Caucasus, and its troops were exhausted.

As elements of the division were just passing through Stalino, Steiner received the following message: "PanzerArmy H.Q. to Division Wiking Urgent! Powerful enemy forces, Popov Tank Group, across the Donets near Izyum advancing southward toward Krasnoarmeiskoye. Wiking Division to immediately turn to the west. Attack toward Krasnoarmeiskoye. Contain the Popov Tank Group. (signed) von Mackensen"

Steiner immediately ordered his division to halt. His original orders were to head north from Stalino to the Konstantinovka area, and the advance units of his Germania Regiment were already headed in that direction. With his chief of staff, Steiner hastily issued new orders. Artillery was regrouped, and the Nordland Regiment was ordered to take the lead in the new westward advance while Germania turned its units around. The division's Westland Regiment was also readied to join in the mad race to stop the Soviets.

With Nordland's reconnaissance platoon leading the way, the regiment hastened toward Krasnoarmeiskoye. By the end of the day, the advance guard under SS Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant Colonel) Wolfgang Joerchel had overpowered weak Russian forward positions and taken Hill 180, which overlooked the entire Krasnoarmeiskoye sector. Joerchel quickly sent for other battalions of the regiment, which deployed south and west of the town to contain any further Soviet expansion in those directions.

Much of Group Popov was spread out along the road from Kramatorsk to Krasnoarmeiskoye in defensive positions. Von Mackensen realized that Wiking did not have the capability to contain and destroy the Red Army units along the entire length of the road, so he issued new orders to other divisions of his command.

The occupation of Slavyansk was still of utmost importance. Shuffling his forces, von Mackensen ordered two regiments of the 333rd Infantry Division to make a forced march toward Krasnoarmeiskoye. As the weary infantry slogged toward its new goal, the 7th Panzer and 11th Panzer, which were fighting in the areas around Slavyansk and east of the Krivoy Torets River, were ordered to turn their units westward. The 3rd Panzer Division was ordered to extend its line to take over the defensive positions of the two departing divisions. Von Mackensen planned to use the two divisions to strike at Group Popov's extended supply line while Wiking and the two regiments of the 333rd kept up the pressure at Krasnoarmeiskoye.

The movements of the German divisions to their assembly areas were surprisingly fast, and the attack on the supply line began in the early hours of February 12. Soviet defense positions had been set up in each village along the supply road from Kramatorsk, and several strong antitank companies had been brought forward to reinforce the village bastions.

At Krasnoarmeiskoye Steiner planned to use the Germania to flank the town from the west. Supported by the two regiments of the 333rd, Germania was ordered to take the village of Grischino, northwest of the town. While the other Wiking regiments assaulted Krasnoarmeiskoye from the south, elements of von Funck's 7th Panzer would attack from the east and secure the town's northern flank.

Polubayarov, knowing his precarious position, had kept the units of his 4th Guards Tank Corps on high alert. Each subordinate commander was told to be ready for a German counterattack, and orders were given down to company level to fortify lines of approach that could be used by the enemy. Each soldier was to make the Germans pay for every meter of land, every house, and every hill that the Red Army had recently liberated on its valiant march to Krasmoarmeiskoye.

SS Standartenführer (Colonel) Jürgen Wagner commanded the Germania Regiment. His men stormed forward into a withering fire from the Soviet positions as they began the assault. Rifle and machine gun bullets slapped around them like angry bees, while tank and antitank shells tore into their ranks. Grenadiers fell, their blood turning the churned up snow a bright crimson, but Wagner continued to urge his men to attack.

The artillery commander of the Wiking, SS Oberführer (Senior Colonel) Herbert-Otto Gille, deftly moved his artillery bat-

talions closer to support the attacks on Krasnoarmeiskoye and Grischino. Supported by flak units, Gille's artillery smashed one Soviet position after another, giving the Germans a chance to rush forward.

Wagner swung his regiment around Grischino and finally broke into the northern edge of the town. At the South West Front headquarters a frantic radio message, which must have been garbled in transmission, was received from the Russian commander defending Grischino. "Have been attacked by 5 SS Panzer Divisions, can only hold out with difficulty. Assistance urgently required. Long live Stalin!"

Once inside the town, Wagner's men found themselves bogged down in house-to-house fighting. It was the same for the other Wiking regiments at Krasnoarmeiskoye. In the close fighting, Gille's artillery was of little use. The lines were too close, and the Soviets used every house as a strongpoint. For the time being the battle for both towns was a stalemate.

North of Krasnoaremiskoye elements of the 7th and 11th Panzer Divisions drove westward in a forced march. The Germans ran headlong into the 10th Tank Corps and the 41st Guards Rifle Division. Heavy defensive fire from the Russians forced the panzers to slow and finally stop their attack. Seeing that the Soviets could not be broken, the divisions turned toward Kramatorsk to prepare for a new attack on that town.

At Grischino and Krasnoarmeiskoye the battle continued unabated. Wiking had now been joined by the two regiments of the 333rd, and Gille's artillery was hammering the Russian rear areas. In addition, the Soviets were now running short of supplies.

Although Henrici's XL Panzer Corps had its various units involved in several actions stretching from Kramatorsk to Krasnoarmeiskoye, he still had the opportunity to disrupt the supply line to the 4th Guards Tank Corps. Armored reconnaissance companies fought running battles with Soviet supply columns trying to make their way south, and the roads were soon littered with flaming trucks. The hit-and-run tactics of the Germans struck as the Russians were spread out in single file and usually ended with the destruction of most of the supplies.

Poluboyarov, growing desperate, ordered the 9th Independent Guards Tank Brigade to try and breach the closing ring around Krasnoarmeiskoye. The 9th hit the Westland Regiment north of Krasnoarmeiskoye near the village of Rovny. More than a dozen tanks with mounted infantry pierced the German line and made a push toward the center of the village.

The regimental commander, SS Sturmbannführer Erwin Reichel, had just taken over after SS Sturmbannführer Harry Polewacz was killed in combat. Reichel ordered a battery of 88mm guns supported by Panzergrenadiers into the center of Rovny as the Soviets approached. When the Russians reached the interior of the village, the 88s destroyed almost all of the tanks. The stunned Russian survivors fled, leaving 12 blazing hulks and dozens of dead behind.

Vatutin was not about to give up on Group Popov. Gathering all available reserves, the Soviet general sent them to reinforce the spearhead at Krasnoarmeiskoye. When word was received that Russian reinforcements were headed south, new orders were sent to the scattered German forces of the First Panzer Army. The Wiking and the 11th Panzer Division were told to halt their attacks on February 14 and attempt to pin down the Russian forces at Krasnoarmeiskoye and Kramatorsk. Meanwhile, the battle to hold the Slavyansk area would continue. Von Mackensen also ordered Henrici to use whatever resources necessary to keep pressure on the supply columns following the reinforcements heading toward Poluboyarov's 4th Guards Tank Corps.

Henrici angrily replied to the order, "What am I supposed to use? My men are stretched to the limit already."

"Just do it," von Mackensen replied. "Throw everything in. I don't care how you do it—just get it done!"

While things were strained in the First Panzer Army, the situation around Kharkov was at a critical stage. By February 10, Golikov's 40th and 69th Armies were battling on the outskirts of the city, with the recently arrived II SS Panzer Corps putting up fierce resistance. Bitter fighting raged for the next five days, and Hitler personally intervened, ordering the corps commander, SS Obergruppenführer (Lieutenant General) Paul Hausser, to hold the city at all costs.

Infuriated at what amounted to a death sentence for his men, Hausser disregarded the order and pulled his SS divisions out of Kharkov, forcing other defending German units to disengage as well. On February 16, Golikov reported to Moscow that Kharkov was once again in Soviet hands.

Logistically, both sides were facing a quartermaster's nightmare and both the German and Soviet commanders were in dire straits. With Kharkov gone and the Russians occupying Grischino and Krasnoarmeiskoye, the only supply line open to the First Panzer Army and Army Abteilung Hollidt was the railway that ran through Zaporozhye. The task of supplying German units by this route was hampered by the fact that a main bridge spanning the Dniepr River, destroyed during the 1941 Soviet retreat, had not yet reopened. Supplies had to be unloaded from trains and reloaded to trucks and wagons before making their way farther eastward.

Group Popov was in a similar situation. Reinforcements were trickling in to the 4th Guards Tank Corps but supplies were a different matter. Von Mackensen's orders to Henrici were being carried out by ad hoc units and units taken away from their parent regiments. Although the Soviet armored columns came under some fire as they strove to reach Krasnoarmeiskoye, the supply formations continued to bear the brunt of the German attacks.

Some good news came to Vatutin on February 16 when the rest of the 7th Panzer Division, finally ordered to give up its defense of Slavyansk, pulled out and headed toward

Krasnoarmeiskoye. Units of the First Guards Army finally were able to occupy the entire town, but the victorious Soviets were in no condition to pursue the 7th. The 3rd Panzer Division quickly lengthened its lines to cover the 7th as it raced southwest to join elements of the division already engaging Gagen's 4th Tank Corps.

On February 17, Hitler flew to meet von Manstein at Zaporozhye. Not one to mince words, von Manstein laid out the situation as follows: "Army Abteilung Hollidt had just occupied the Mius River Line, followed closely by the South Front. For the time being, the line could be effectively defended."

The First Panzer Army had halted the Soviets at Grischino and Krasmoarmeiskoye, but the issue there had still not been decided. Von Mackensen's panzer army was also still involved in heavy fighting at Kramotorsk, Lisichansk, and the Slavyansk area, with the issue in all three sectors still in doubt. The forces retreating from Kharkov, now gathered under Army Abteilung Kempf, were withdrawing southwest toward Poltava and the Mozh River.

At first, Hitler refused to believe the seriousness of the situation. Already furious at the loss of Stalingrad, and then Kharkov, he could not believe that the Soviets still had the men and equipment to carry out another operation that could threaten the entire southern wing of his eastern armies. Von Manstein let him rant for a while before submitting a plan to save his threatened Heeresgruppe.

Von Manstein played his hand masterfully, laying out his formula to retake Kharkov. At the mention of recapturing the city, Hitler immediately calmed down and began to listen intently.

Kharkov could only be taken if the southern flank of the Heeresgruppe was secure, so von Manstein proposed consolidating Hausser's SS Panzer Corps into one striking force, taking it away from the Kharkov sector and sending it southeast toward Pavlograd. This action would prevent any further Russian advance on Dnepropetrovsk.

THE COMBINATION OF SOVIET AMBITION AND VON MANSTEIN'S BRILLIANT HANDLING OF THE BATTLE CULMINATED IN A BLOODY DEFEAT FOR THE RED ARMY.

At the same time, Col. Gen. Hermann Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, which had made the bitter retreat from the Caucasus, would concentrate its units west of Zaporozhye. Together, the two forces would strike the elements of the First Guards Army and the Sixth Army that were advancing toward the vital Dniepr crossings while the First Panzer Army would once again take on Group Popov.

Throughout his briefing, von Manstein continuously played on the premise that the one condition necessary to retake Kharkov was the survival of the First Panzer Army and Army Abteilung Hollidt. When the Soviet threat in the southern Don Basin was eliminated, the Kharkov operation could begin.

Although Hitler was swayed by von Manstein's argument, he was not totally convinced of the plan. The following day, February 18, he again met with von Manstein to discuss the operation. Von Manstein was essentially calling for freedom to maneuver without micromanagement from Hitler or Berlin.

In another heated exchange, Hitler once again voiced his opinion that, although the number of Soviet units facing von Manstein looked impressive on paper, they were really burned-out shells of what were once divisions and brigades. Although he was partially correct, the armies that had taken Stalingrad were already on the move and the threat of the South Front bursting through Army Abteilung Hollidt's Mius River line would more than overpower the existing German forces in the southern Don Basin.

In the midst of the meeting, von Manstein received reports that units of the First Guards Army had taken Pavlograd and Novomosskovsk, bringing the Soviets to within 20 kilometers of Dnepropetrovsk. Army Abteilung Hollidt also reported several small enemy penetrations along its Mius River defenses. The report also indicated that the Russians were consolidating around Kharkov while sending spearheads farther westward.

A report from Krasnoarmeiskoye indicated that the newly arrived elements of the 7th Panzer Division were trying to break the 4th Guards Tank Corps. Overcoming

Motioning to his troops to follow quickly, a German soldier leads a detachment through a wooded area of Russia. The winter weather took a heavy toll on the unprepared Germans.

fierce resistance from the 14th Guards Tank Brigade, units of the 7th succeeded in taking the town center before being stopped by a Russian counterattack. On the western side of the town the Wiking Division ran headlong into defenses set up by the 12th Guards Tank Brigade and was immediately stalled by heavy defensive fire.

Von Manstein used these developments to hammer home his ideas for destroying the Soviet incursion in the Don Basin. He pointed out that once the muddy season arrived operations at the front would grind to a halt and the Russians could use their rail lines to resupply and reinforce their divisions holding positions deep inside the German lines.

With their men and materiél built up once more, the southern German forces would be in even greater danger of being pinned against the Sea of Azov, and Kharkov would be virtually untouchable. The next day, Hitler suddenly gave von Manstein what amounted to a carte blanche for operations in southern Russia and then climbed aboard his transport plane and left.

The German field marshal wasted no time in implementing his plan. Krasnoarmeiskoye was hit hard by the 333rd Infantry Division and the Wiking Division, while the 7th Panzer Division swung north of the town. Poluboyarov's units in the town were now caught in a vise that could only be loosened by attacks from the outside. Popov had already ordered his 3rd Tank Corps to relieve the embattled forces in the town as quickly as possible, but that attempt was soon thwarted.

While the 3rd Tank Corps was racing south, Balck's 11th Panzer Division moved into blocking positions south of Kramatorsk near the village of Gavrilovka. As the 3rd Tank Corps sped toward Krasnoarmeiskoye its flank was shattered by a full-scale attack from Balck's division. Burning Soviet tanks littered the landscape as the Russians desperately tried to regroup to meet the attack, but Balck's men had already achieved their objective of halting the rescue attempt.

By the end of the day, Krasmoarmeiskoye was all but in German hands, Grischino had fallen, and Poluboyarov's 4th Guards Tank Corps was nothing more than a skeleton of a unit with almost all of its tanks destroyed. Leaving the 333rd to mop up Poluboyarov's corps, von Manstein ordered the Wiking to join the 7th Panzer and head north toward the leading elements of Group Popov's 10th Tank Corps, which had moved into defensive positions around the town of Dobropolye.

ABOVE: Advancing through a deserted Russian town, German soldiers trek eastward toward the enemy and their crushing defeat at Stalingrad. Although their momentum was halted, the Germans still delivered a bloody repulse to Soviet Operation Gallop. OPPOSITE: Assuming the offensive, Red Army soldiers exploit a breakthrough in the German lines as they ride aboard Soviet T-34 tanks.

February 20 was the final day for the Russian forces inside Krasnoarmeiskoye. Down to only 12 tanks, the Soviets could do little against the pressure brought to bear by the 333rd. In small groups, some of the Red Army soldiers were able to break through gaps in the German line and head north toward the 13th Guards Tank Brigade, which was guarding the area around Barvenkovo.

STAVKA's plan was falling apart, but no one seemed to want to face that reality. Krasnoarmeiskoye was once again in German hands, and the First Panzer Army was hammering away at the Soviet units stretched out on the road south of Kramatorsk. In the north, von Manstein had sent Hausser's SS Panzer Corps to link up with General Otto von Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps, which was part of the Fourth Panzer Army. Together, the two corps struck the Sixth Army near Krasnograd.

In the air, Field Marshal Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen's Luftflotte 4 hit the Soviets with about 1,000 sorties that precluded any attempt by the Russians to form a coherent defense. The increasingly frantic calls from his commanders prompted Popov to ask Vatutin for permission to withdraw his forces. The request was forcefully denied.

Despite the troubling news coming from the Don Basin, Stalin and his general staff still believed they were on the verge of a great victory. New intelligence reports concerning German concentrations were ignored by STAVKA, which was still in a state of euphoria after the victory at Stalingrad. The unrealistic goals set for the Don Basin offensive were part of that euphoria, and it was now costing the Red Army dearly.

By February 21, it was clear to the Germans that the Soviets had been caught flat footed. Fretter Pico's XXX Army Corps moved toward Stalino, while von Knobelsdorff's XLVIII and General Friedrich Kirchner's LVII Panzer Corps advanced on Pavlograd and Lozovaya. Soviet forces around Pavlograd were also under pressure from the II SS Panzer Corps, Corps Raus, and elements of the Fourth Panzer Army. As long as Army Abteilung

Hollidt vigorously defended the Mius River line, Vatutin's forces were going to be in a great deal of trouble.

On February 22, oblivious to the real situation, STAVKA ordered Kharitonov's Sixth Army and the Voronezh Front's Third Tank Army even farther westward. They were met head on by the full power of Hausser's panzers, which smashed Khartinov's center and right wing. Despite the pounding he was taking, Kharitonov ordered his mobile reserves into the battle in a futile attempt to follow the orders from Moscow.

Meanwhile, Group Popov was reeling under the attacks from Henrici's XL Panzer Corps. Desperate for supplies, the Russians no longer had the fuel and ammunition to hold out against the German armored and infantry units. Air supply was tried by the Red Air Force, but von Richthofen's fighters shot the transport aircraft out of the sky at an alarming rate.

Khartinov's Sixth Army was in no better shape. His 25th Tank Corps, which had been ordered to advance in front of the main army, was stretched out almost 100 kilometers to the west when the Germans struck. On February 23, Khartinov was hit on both flanks by the 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Division Das Reich and the Sixth Panzer Division. Pounded by the Luftwaffe as well, the 25th Tank Corps disintegrated, its surviving personnel abandoning their equipment and fleeing toward the northeast.

By now, even STAVKA started to notice that something was going very wrong. Reports coming from Popov and Kharitonov painted a picture of panic among their troops, and their commanders begged for something to be done before they were all annihilated.

With his Sixth Army almost in ruins, Vatutin sent a rifle corps from the First Guards Army to support Kharitonov. To the north, Golikov, sensing the impending danger to his left flank, ordered his 69th and Third Tank Armies to swing southward to add to that support, but it was already too late to stop the German momentum.

On February 24, von Manstein sent the II SS Panzer Corps toward Pavlograd. The attack rolled over the 1st Guards Tank Corps and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, which had been sent to defend the town. They were Vatutin's last reserves. After a sharp battle, SS forces occupied the town and went on to pursue the fleeing Russians, who had left most of their equipment behind.

Now fully aware of the consequences of the German attacks, Vatutin ordered the Sixth Army to take a defensive posture. The sad truth was that Khartinov had little resources left with which to defend his sector. With Hausser's divisions surging forward, most of the Sixth Army was already in full flight.

During the next two days the units of the First Panzer and Fourth Panzer Armies retook much of the land lost in the early days of February. By February 27, Group Popov had all but been destroyed and the Sixth Army was on the verge of disintegration. The First Guards Army had also suffered heavily under continued German attacks.

It was now painfully clear to Moscow that Operation Gallop was finished. Orders were sent to the remnants of the Sixth Army and the First Guards Army to withdraw and set up new lines on the Northern Donets River. Any thoughts of renewing the attack in the near future were shattered in the first days of March, when the II SS Panzer Corps essentially destroyed the Third Tank Army.

The combination of Soviet ambition and von Manstein's brilliant handling of the battle culminated in a bloody defeat for the Red Army. The stage was now set for one of von Manstein's greatest accomplishments—the recapture of Kharkov—which would take place in mid-March.

That achievement has largely overshadowed the desperate February struggle for the Lower Don Basin. However, without the defeat of the Red Army on the Donets-Dniepr battlefield, the German reoccupation of Kharkov would probably never have been possible. □

Against ALL ODDS

The 28th Infantry Division's 110th Regimental Combat Team covered itself in glory in Luxembourg during the Battle of the Bulge.

By Walter S. Zapotoczny, Jr.

The Battle of the Bulge lasted from December 16, 1944, until January 25, 1945, and stands as one of the classic stories of true grit and defiance against a strong and determined enemy.

Much has been written about the 101st Airborne Division's heroic defense of Bastogne. However, another unit gets little attention from historians: Colonel Hurley E. Fuller's 110th Regimental Combat Team of the 28th Infantry Division, originally the Pennsylvania National Guard. Without their brave stand at the onset of the German offensive, the 101st Airborne might not have reached Bastogne in time.

German intelligence had done a good job of determining the American forces opposing Hitler's forces. At the dividing line between Lt. Gen. Miles C. Dempsey's Second British Army and Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges' First U.S. Army in the northwest of Aachen stood the troops of Maj. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem, Jr.'s XIII Corps; Maj. Gen. Raymond S. McLain's XIX Corps; Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins's VII Corps; and Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow's V Corps, with the 18th Cavalry Squadron and the 99th Infantry Division thinly spread across 19 miles of the Belgian-German border.

South of the Schnee Eifel, and right in the bull's-eye of General Erich Brandenburger's Seventh German Army's objective area, Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton's VIII Corps occupied positions next to the Our River alongside the 106th Division's 424th Infantry Regiment, and to its south, the 28th Infantry Division.

Many of the men who had been with the 28th since it landed in Normandy on July 22, 1944, were wrapping themselves in wool blankets and huddling around fires to keep warm, struggling to recall the day in August, four months earlier, when they had paraded through the streets of Paris to the cheers of millions. The division was immediately packed up and trucked to the rapidly moving front to the east, where it became the first American division to crack—temporarily—the Siegfried Line, or West Wall. Then came the horror of the Hürtgen Forest.

After suffering more than 6,000 casualties in heavy fighting in the Hürtgen Forest during the autumn of 1944, Maj. Gen. Norman Cota's 28th "Keystone" Division was sent to an area that First Army thought would be a quiet sector to rest and replace their losses.

The division was spread out along a 30-mile front on the west bank of the Our River in Luxembourg. While 30 miles was about three times the amount of ground an infantry division could be reasonably expected to cover, no one at higher headquarters seemed too worried. The Germans were, after all, as good as beaten.

The division's three regiments were in a line, with the 112th, 110th, and 109th Infantry Regiments aligned north to south. But only the 1st (Lt. Col. Donald Paul) and 3rd (Major Harold Milton) Battalions of the 110th were on the line, while the remaining 2nd Battalion (Lt. Col. Ross C. Henbest) was held in division reserve at Doennange and Wiltz, eight miles to the southwest.

The 110th had six company-sized strongpoints composed of infantry troops and engineers on either side of a ridge flanked by the Our River on the east and the Clerf River to the west, which the GIs called "Skyline Drive." Along the ridge ran the St.Vith-Diekirch Highway, a road that led directly from St. Vith in the north to Bastogne. The fight for the many villages along this route would soon become known as the Battle of Skyline Drive.

No one knew that German dictator Adolf Hitler had ordered a massive counteroffensive against American and British forces gathering on Germany's western border and had placed the entire 200,000-man operation, the goal of which was to plunge through the supposedly "impenetrable" Ardennes Forest, in the hands of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt.

In the early morning hours of December 16, 1944, General Josef "Sepp" Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army, along with General Heinrich von Lüttwitz's XLVII Panzer Corps of General Hasso-Eccard von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army, shattered the quiet with tremendous

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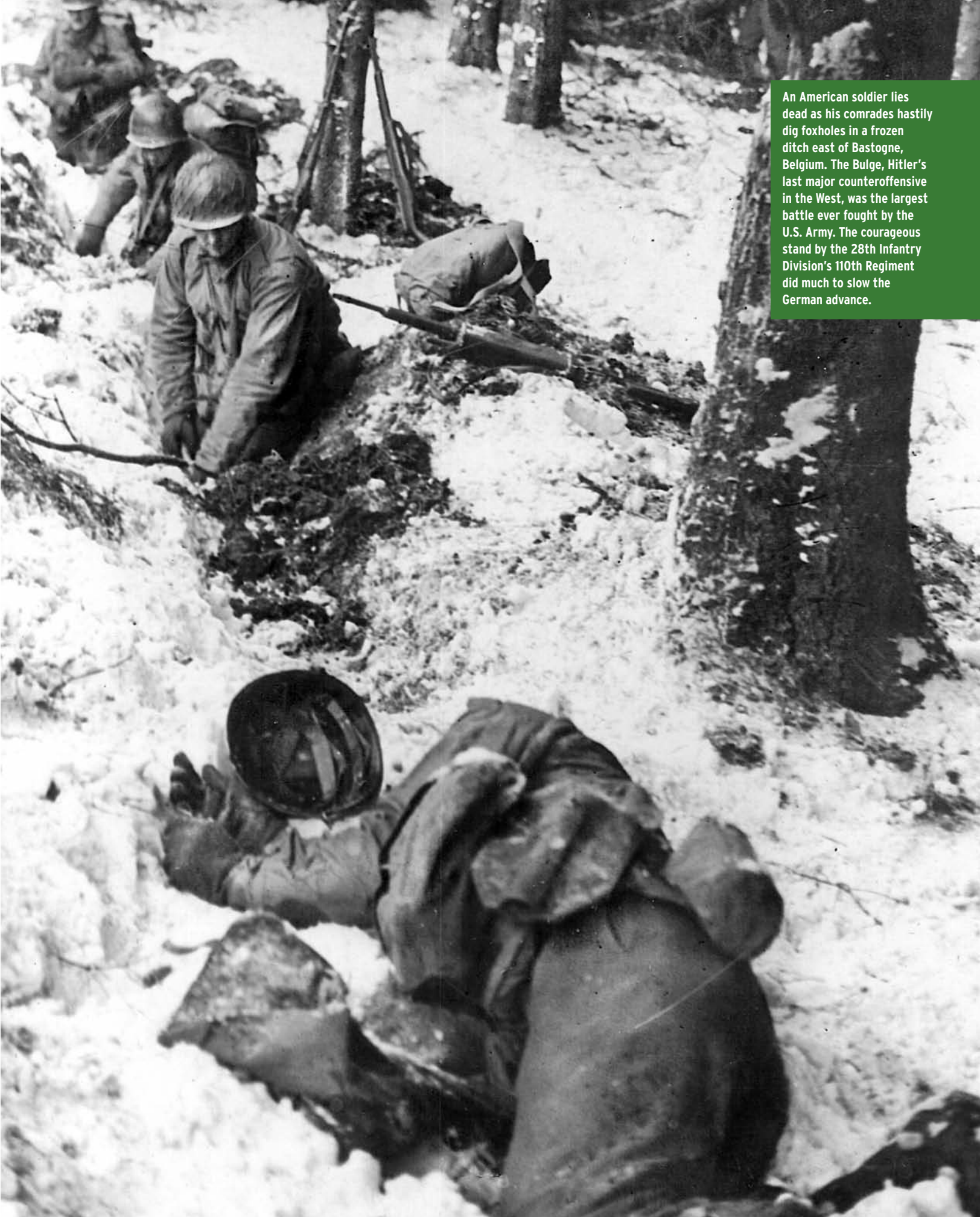


An American soldier lies dead as his comrades hastily dig foxholes in a frozen ditch east of Bastogne, Belgium. The Bulge, Hitler's last major counteroffensive in the West, was the largest battle ever fought by the U.S. Army. The courageous stand by the 28th Infantry Division's 110th Regiment did much to slow the German advance.

ullstein bild

German Mark V Panther tanks pause along a snowy roadway during the opening phase of the Battle of the Bulge, called the "Ardennes Offensive" by the Germans. Stubborn resistance by elements of the scattered 28th Infantry Division threw off the Germans' timetable for victory.

artillery barrages, followed by infantry and armor attacks all along the front.

The 110th Infantry was in the center of the 28th Division line, and Cota knew that the center had to hold or all would be lost. He called Fuller and told him in no uncertain terms, "No one comes back." Fuller knew what that meant. "No one comes back, sir," he replied to Cota.

All across the Keystone Division's front, men began the painful art of trading space for time.

From the moment the first German artillery rounds began to fall onto their positions, the Americans knew they were in for hard times. The Battle of the Bulge had begun. Lüttwitz was throwing more than 200 tanks and 27,000 men at the 5,000-man 110th Infantry Regiment.

William Shapiro, a medic in the 110th Infantry, recalled, "We were on the … Skyline Drive near Marnach. After digging in with several infantrymen around me, we just laid there, awaiting orders…. The high ridge road blocked our view in front of us. We could not see the Our River, which the Germans had to cross to enter Luxembourg. It was all quiet, and it was dawn. Suddenly, there was a tremendous barrage of German artillery from across the river.

"Despite the knowledge that I was expecting it to occur, the sudden loudness and massive amounts of flashes lighting up the sky on the other side of the river shocks you into reality. You hear many repeating explosions as the shells land one after the other. The machine-gun firings, mortar shell bursts, and 'Screaming Meemies' are all about you as you dig deeper and deeper into your foxhole. You are helpless and alone."

Suddenly, a shell went off near Shapiro, knocking him unconscious. Although evacuated to an aid station, he was soon taken prisoner and would spend the rest of the war as a POW.

The attack was so intense that by the time word of the assault reached Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group headquarters at 10:30 that morning, several of the 110th's small outposts were fighting for their lives as they took the brunt of Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army attack. Spread so thinly over so much ground, many of the men of the 110th were surrounded. Adding to their peril was the coldest European winter in centuries. Some of the veterans recalled, "God, was it cold! If a canteen was left outside just a few minutes, it would freeze. So would wet feet, and all of us had a pair of them."

From 5:30 on the morning of December 16 until some time in the afternoon of the 18th, the soldiers of the 110th Regimental Combat Team fought and held, giving ground only when forced out, all the while buying time for General Dwight D. Eisenhower to find and move reserves forward from deep in France. At the onset of the Battle of the Bulge, General Bradley did not have one division in reserve due to the fact that the U.S. Army was so short of manpower. The few units that could be found had to be alerted, procure transportation, load their equipment, and moved into position behind the overwhelmed—but still holding—thin 28th Division line.

Determined to preserve the details of the battles, the Cercle d'Études sur la Bataille des Ardennes (Study Group on the Battle of the Bulge, or CEBA) in Luxembourg was formed shortly after the war. The group disseminates information on all aspects of the Battle of the Bulge and provides educational materials for schools and students of history. Many CEBA members were in the Luxembourg villages at the time of the battles. The following are summaries from CEBA's records of the 110th Regimental Combat Team's actions in eight Luxembourg villages beginning on December 16, 1944.

Weiler

In the small village of Weiler, Company I of the 3rd/110th Infantry (less its 1st Platoon) was in its defensive positions when the offensive by the 26th Volksgrenadier Division began. Soon after the enormous deluge of artillery fire fell on the village, the first Germans approached the village. The resistance of Company I was so fierce and savage that the Germans twice asked for and were given permission to send stretcher-bearers to pick up the wounded under a white flag. The battle had to be interrupted twice thereafter.

Around 1:30 PM, the defenders of Weiler were amazed to see another German soldier

approaching the village, carrying a white flag. The emissary asked that the village be honorably surrendered. The defenders, who were waiting for tank support, refused. When late in the evening those tanks had not arrived, the brave American defenders ran into difficulties, for their situation had grown worse every hour. The situation became desperate when the ammunition was practically exhausted; however, the surviving defenders continued to fight on into the night.

Although the German 26th Volksgrenadier Division's strength was overwhelming, the brave men of Company I defended the village of Weiler—not only on the first day but also during the day of December 17—as if it was their own hometown. Only on December 18 did their lack of ammunition compel them to stop fighting, but even then they did not surrender. Divided into two groups, they managed to infiltrate westward through German lines. The Germans were amazed at the determined American resistance in Weiler during the almost three-day fight.

Initially catching their opponents by surprise, the Germans plunged across the Belgian and Luxembourg borders and knifed through American lines along Skyline Drive before they were stopped short of their goal: Antwerp.

Wahlhausen

This village was defended on December 16 by the 1st Platoon of Company I, about 41 GIs commanded by a lieutenant named Fisher. From their outpost, they directed artillery fire from the 109th Field Artillery Battalion's Battery C in Bockholtz onto the enemy troops approaching the village. The Germans' original plan was not to tangle with the Americans here but instead storm forward to the Clervaux bridges; however, two German regiments became involved in fierce combat with the American platoon.

As the platoon beat off attack after attack, the ammunition began to run out. Although the Americans were supported from time to time by some counterattacks by their comrades in Weiler, the Germans moved to surround the village. About noon, the almost encircled 1st Platoon was barely holding out and urgently ordered a resupply of ammunition. This request was in vain because the American tank crews would not take the risk of advancing so far east.

Late in the afternoon of December 16, Wahlhausen was not only surrounded but also partially occupied by the Germans, with the 1st Platoon defenders caught in the middle. By 6:30 PM, Lieutenant Fisher contacted the Company I command post for the last time and ordered artillery fire on his own position. Forty GIs and more than 100 Germans fell to the disastrous fire, while only one GI survived and escaped.

Marnach

The command post of the 110th's 1st Battalion, along with Company B and five antitank guns, were in Marnach with Lt. Col. Donald Paul in command. At 5:30 AM on the 16th, the Germans unleashed a huge barrage with artillery, antiaircraft guns, and mortars against the battalion. As the German infantry advanced on the village, many were caught in a minefield and killed. At 8 AM, the Germans launched a major attack on Marnach with 12 companies, but they were met with stiff resistance by Paul's defenders. Two hours later, Paul asked regiment for reinforcements. None were forthcoming.

In the afternoon, the situation got worse

for Company B. The self-propelled and towed artillery at Heinerscheid had broken down, and by 4 AM the next morning, German engineers had finished with the construction of a 60-ton bridge over the Our River at Dasbourg that allowed panzers, assault guns, and heavy weapons to cross the river and advance toward the American positions. At nightfall, Lt. Col. Paul sent his last radio message: "German tanks are just going on to enter Marnach."

The Germans advanced and attacked violently and incessantly with artillery and heavy tanks against the Company B infantrymen. Twice, a few German tanks entered Marnach and rolled to the local church, but they were repulsed on both occasions. Although the German superiority in men and matériel was overwhelming, the GIs could not be demoralized in spite of their precarious situation. Marnach was a very important and strategic place with roads leading in several directions.

In the area of Marnach and Munshausen, the 110th Regiment found itself fighting against five German armored regiments. Colonel Meinrad von Lauchert, commander of the 2nd Panzer Division, said after the war, "During the first attacks on Marnach, we found that all our preliminary fire on that village had no effect for our assault troops. The American soldiers there defended the village foolhardily and with a never-experienced defiance of death."

Munshausen

Munshausen is a small village less than two miles southeast of Clervaux and about four miles southwest of Marnach; it was one of the 110th Infantry's vital strongpoints protecting Clervaux. Company C's 1st Battalion had dug in around the village before the German attacks had begun, and their supporting artillery was emplaced west of the village.

On the morning of December 16, the defenders sent out a patrol through the forest to the east looking for the Germans' approach. They did not have to look very long. When the enemy attack started on the village, the men of Company C defended it skillfully and had the situation well in hand from the beginning. During the entire day, the defenders of Company C fought like "wild warriors" and killed or wounded many Germans.

Six supporting M5 Stuart light tanks left Munshausen in the morning to help the Marnach garrison that was protecting the important Dasbourg-Clervaux Road. On the way to Marnach, five of the tanks were hit by German shells and immobilized. Only one tank was able to return to Munshausen.

On Sunday, December 17, a group of enemy soldiers appeared on the northern outskirts of Munshausen from the direction of Marnach. They were furious at the Americans because of the casualties they received as they tried to break through overturned trucks and a large wire barricade the defenders had erected. As the Germans cleared the barricade, they became perfect targets for American snipers. When the Germans did at last break through the perimeter of the village, the valiant defenders fired at them from every window, forcing the Germans to request support from the panzers fighting at Marnach.

Besides tanks, the Germans needed a new plan to conquer the village, so their artillery began bombarding it with phosphorous shells that set fire to the houses and barns in an effort to burn out the men of Company C. Unfazed, the GIs continued to fire their machine guns and rifles from windows and cellar doors at the German tanks and armored infantry accompanying them. During two full days of battle, every house in Munshausen had to be stormed by the Germans at a high cost in casualties.

Finally, at 4 AM on Monday, December 18, the valiant American defenders had to be withdrawn because of the flood of German tanks pouring into the village. Although

Courtesy of the Archives of Hosingen, Luxembourg

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: An American GI inspects a captured German machine gun in front of an Esso gas station following the December battle in Marnach, Luxembourg. BELOW: The 110th waited for armor support, but many American tanks, like these, had already been captured or destroyed by the Germans. OPPOSITE: Buildings in the center of Hosingen show heavy damage from the fierce fighting. Hotel Schmitz, where Company K had its command post during the battle, is at right. After putting up a brave defense for two days, the GIs were forced to surrender.

they could not stop the German advance, the GIs were able to tie up many German tanks and infantry for more than two days, seriously throwing off the German timetable for their counteroffensive.

Hosingen

The early hours of December 16 were hell in Hosingen as German artillery shattered the village—located on Skyline Drive three miles east-southeast of Munshausen—with high-explosive and phosphorous rounds and flamethrowers. Five houses caught fire and seven deuce-and-a-half trucks belonging to Company H, 110th Infantry, and Company B, 103rd Engineers were destroyed. The Germans planned to soften up the defenders and destroy their spirit of combat all in one go, but the American garrison withstood and resisted with resolution.

One company of Maj. Gen. Heinz Kokott's 26th Volksgrenadier Division advanced south of Hosingen in the direction of Bockholtz, while three companies arrived at the village. The American defenders fought off the first German assault on the village, with four Sherman tanks firing into the German infantry, creating deep gaps in their attack groups. The situation turned so bad for the Germans that they fell back, leaving 32 dead.

Not to be deterred, the German encirclement around Hosingen tightened and Wehrmacht troops tried to enter the village, coming from three directions with bicycles and artillery pulled by horses. Company K fired their mortars at the advancing enemy, delaying them for about two hours. At 10 AM, the Germans lobbed mortar rounds into the village center and destroyed three more American trucks.

As the German infantry entered the village, the Americans withdrew to the western side of Hosingen, setting fire to many houses to prevent the Germans from occupying them. By 2 AM on Monday, December 18, a German group with two machine guns was spotted approaching the command post of Company B, 103rd Engineers. They were eliminated by submachine guns and hand grenades.

The tough resistance of the Americans was so violent that at first the Germans had to bypass Hosingen to the north and south. They then assembled more than 20 tanks and armored cars around the village, taking aim at the houses. After destroying a few of the enemy's tanks, the GIs realized they were completely surrounded and out of ammunition.

The situation was hopeless, so Captain Feiker of Company K, 110th Infantry and Captain Jarret of Company B, 103rd Engineers fashioned a white flag made of white toilet paper on a stick with which they approached the German line. With a heavy heart, the Americans surrendered to the Germans, but not before destroying much of their equipment and delaying them for two days.

Clervaux

Once the important road center at Marnach had been lost to the Germans on

December 17, the attack on the vital town of Clervaux began. Thirty German heavy tanks and half-tracks moved slowly down the steep and winding road from Marnach to the town set deep in a valley.

At the first hairpin bend, a few Sherman tanks from the 2nd Platoon of Company A, 707th Tank Battalion lay in wait. The American Shermans were no match for the German Mark V Panthers, and after a fierce duel, several destroyed U.S. tanks—as well as German ones—blocked the road. The Germans pushed them down the precipice, and their infantry finally reached the entrance to the town. It was tough going, though, for Colonel Lauchert and his 2nd Panzer Division. At noon, dogged street fighting started.

National Archives

A Sherman tank from the 707th Tank Battalion lies on its side behind a destroyed German Sturmgeschütz outside the Luxembourg town of Clervaux (known in German as Clerf). Four German and three American tanks were knocked out at Clervaux.

The commander of VIII Corps, Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton, had ordered a detachment of armor to Clervaux to support Colonel Hurley E. Fuller's 110th Infantry in the defense of the town. Fuller's command post was located in the Hotel Claravallis next to the important Clerve Bridge. The bridge was guarded by the regimental headquarters company, which had set up in the old castle nearby.

At the hotel, which was being shelled by artillery and Nebelwerfer rockets, Fuller tried to get a picture of what was happening at his forward outposts, but learned that all communications to his companies had been severed.

The Germans fought with a tremendous toughness and occupied the slope to the east of the town next to the Hotel du Parc. From there, they could bring fire on the defenders in the town and at the castle. A German report of the action stated, "Especially from an old fortress tower, the Americans fired with towering rage so that our infantrymen couldn't advance without bad casualties. Only when we brought two AAA guns [88mm] into action did we manage to fight these GIs powerfully."

On the afternoon of December 17, American armor, antitank guns, and snipers dominated the area around the Clerve Bridge. At this time, a German reconnaissance patrol tried to enter the town from the north without success. Finally, that evening, German tanks and mounted infantrymen fought their way across the Clerve Bridge and entered the town.

When tanks from Lauchert's 2nd Panzer Division—regarded by the Americans as Germany's best armored division—rolled up to Fuller's command post and stuck their barrels into the windows before firing, he was forced to evacuate. Along with a small group of wounded survivors, Fuller left the crumbling hotel from a third-floor window at the rear of the building by way of a narrow iron footbridge (while holding a blinded soldier by the hand) in an attempt to escape over the rocks in the direction of Doennange, a few miles away. He and his group were taken prisoner the following day, but still, the resistance of the Americans did not end.

In the ruins of the 12th-century castle located high above the town, about 100 American officers and men continued to resist against the Germans who tried entering the castle yard but were greeted by a flurry of gunfire. About 100 civilians from Clervaux were taking shelter in the castle's huge cellar at the same time. The town was teeming with Germans when, finally, the Americans' situation in the cellar below the castle became critical.

As a last resort, the Germans bombed the castle with phosphorous rounds, trying to burn the defenders out, and they broke down the gates with panzers. At this point, the Yanks had no choice but to stop fighting. Most escaped, while some were killed and 80 were captured. At last, the Germans managed the conquest of Clervaux but, in the process, the 2nd German Panzer Division was almost three days behind schedule.

Holzthum and Consthum

At about 6:15 AM on Saturday, December 16, the German 26th Volksgrenadier Division approached the tiny hamlet of Holzthum, four miles south of Marnach. Even after several attacks on this day, the Germans could not conquer the village, as each attempt was repelled by the men of Company L, 3rd Battalion.

That night, the Germans decided to bypass the strongly defended village and advanced in the direction of Consthum, a little over a mile to the southwest of Holzthum. The Company L men delayed the German advance and gave their comrades in Consthum time to prepare a defense. Based on Company L's actions in Holzthum, Company M in Consthum had enough time to organize cooks, clerks, and drivers into a defense against the

Germans. The men could not believe it when the Germans stopped short of their positions. They were able to inflict tremendous damage on the 26th Volksgrenadier and Panzer Lehr Divisions before they moved on to the important transportation hub of Wiltz, where the 28th Division had its headquarters.

Camille P. Kohn, the president of CEBA, wrote this about the 110th's action: "I do not know any other regiment that has accomplished such a performance in Luxembourg than the 110th Infantry! This outstanding unit deserves really an appropriate mark of distinction, if only for those indescribable achievements in Luxembourg during the dark days of 1944. In their combat zone, they contributed in a very rare manner to prevent the Hitler aggressors to conquer Bastogne, and last but not least, reach the final objective: the harbor of Antwerp."

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: After overrunning Marnach, the Germans continued on to Clervaux, where they clashed with the 110th Infantry and 707th Tank Battalion. Colonel Fuller and his 110th Regimental headquarters staff held out in the Clervaux castle (center) before being overrun. BELOW: Having slowed the German onslaught, men of the 28th Division, separated from their companies, temporarily halt in Bastogne to reorganize before pulling back farther. Unlike many American soldiers, these men have retained their weapons in order to continue to fight.

That the 28th Division's scattered and battered units could hold out against such odds, delaying the Germans as long as they did, was by any standard an incredible feat. The 110th Regiment alone fought elements of three German divisions; the 28th Division would identify nine German divisions in their sector before the fighting was over.

The German pressure continued to build increasingly in the form of tanks and armored vehicles carrying more German infantry. Nonetheless, the 110th, hunkered down with nowhere to go right in the middle of the Germans' chosen route through Luxembourg, hung on. Small, determined units, running low on ammunition, food, water, medical supplies, and antitank weapons, continued to stand and fight until they were forced to retreat, were killed, or were captured.

The toll on the Germans was so costly in men, equipment, and time that Hitler's race for Bastogne was lost right where it began among the widely scattered outposts of the 110th Regimental Combat Team. The 110th Infantry's self-sacrifice gained crucial time that allowed the arriving 101st Airborne Division to move into positions to the rear of the exhausted 28th Division around Bastogne.

When all the smoke from Bastogne had cleared and the cleaning up of the battlefield was done, the 101st Airborne Division and its attached units had halted the German push to Antwerp and the 110th Regimental Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division was left with few survivors, yet it had done its job when the chips were down, and had done much to help the Americans achieve victory in the Battle of the Bulge. □

Bloody Struggle at SWORD BEACH

ON D-DAY, THE BRITISH 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION HELPED SECURE THE INVASION AREA'S EASTERNMOST BEACH. BY MASON B. WEBB

THE easternmost Allied landing beach of the Normandy invasion of June 6, 1944, was code-named Sword. It was the responsibility of British Maj. Gen. Thomas Gordon Rennie's 3rd Infantry Division, part of Lt. Gen. Miles Dempsey's British Second Army and augmented by several special units that brought the total number of men who landed at Sword by nightfall up to 29,000.

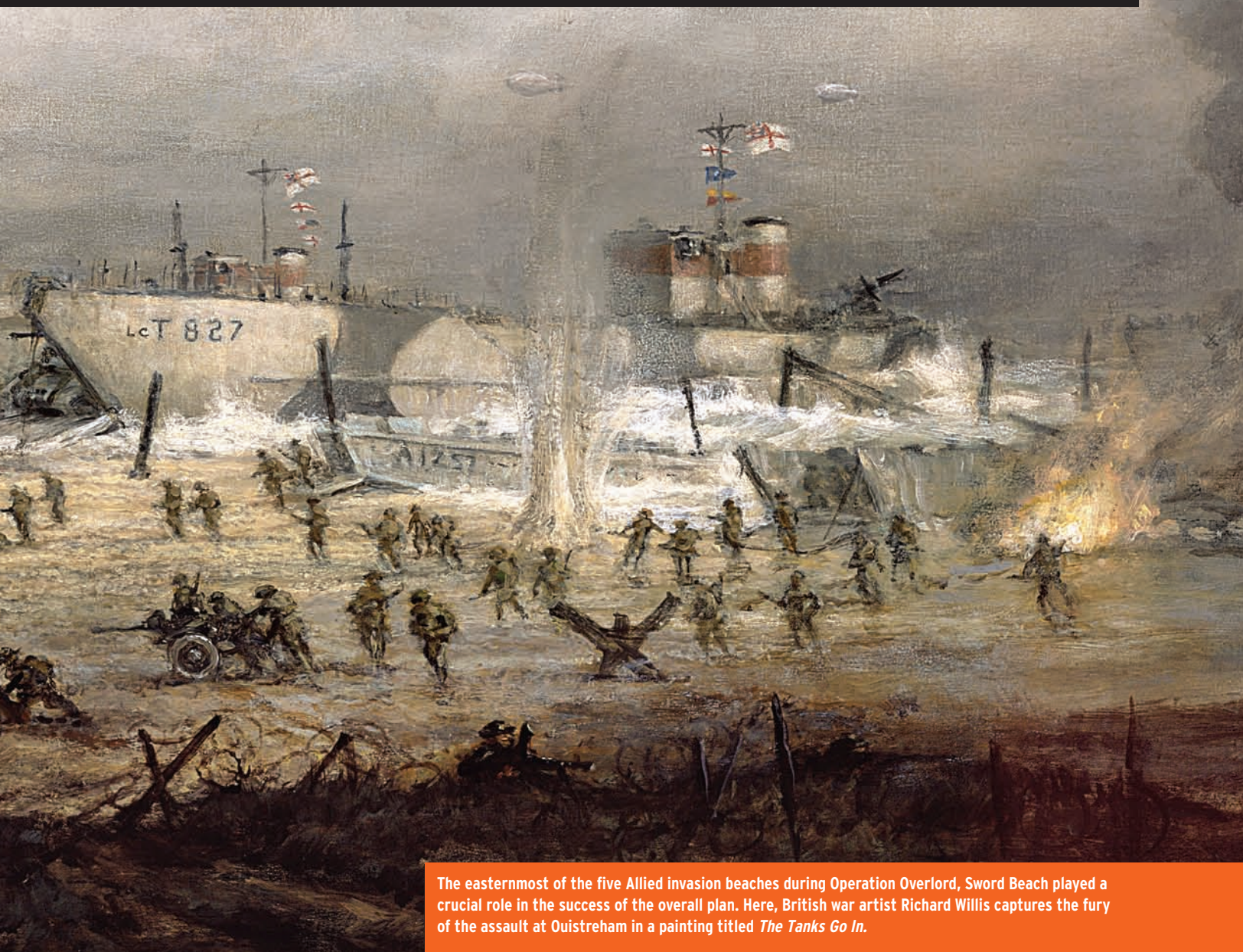
Rennie's mission was to establish a bridgehead between Ouistreham and Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer. Once that was done, the 3rd would drive inland to be in position, along with the rest of the British, Canadian, and French forces landing at adjacent Gold and Juno Beaches, to take the city of Caen, 10 miles south of the coast.

Sword was divided into four sectors labeled (from west to east) Oboe, Peter, Queen, and Roger. It was approximately six miles in width, a mile wider than Omaha Beach in the American sector.

No one knew how the German defenders would react. Informants had told the Allies that one division—the 716th Infantry Division—was stationed in the area, and it was known through spies and aerial reconnaissance that there were numerous fortified bunkers and other fighting positions.

One position in particular was worrisome: a four-gun battery at Merville, on the very eastern edge of Sword Beach across the Orne River from Ouistreham. The caliber of the guns was unknown, but the best guess was that they were 155mm with a range of 10.5 miles, powerful enough to do serious damage to seaborne troops coming ashore.

The task of putting this battery out of commission through the use of both a para-



The easternmost of the five Allied invasion beaches during Operation Overlord, Sword Beach played a crucial role in the success of the overall plan. Here, British war artist Richard Willis captures the fury of the assault at Ouistreham in a painting titled *The Tanks Go In.*

chute drop and a glider landing had fallen to Lt. Col. Terence Otway and his 9th Parachute Battalion. Aerial photos revealed that encircling the battery were a 20mm antiaircraft gun, several bunkers, fighting trenches, and a partially completed antitank ditch. The position was surrounded by a cattle fence enclosing a minefield with a depth of 100 yards, the inner border of which consisted of a barbed-wire fence 15 feet thick and five feet high. In places, this inner fence was doubled, and within it, the battery position itself was intersected by cross wire.

Everyone at SHAEF was convinced that the Germans would not have poured so much concrete and so heavily defended the battery if what it housed was insignificant, and so it was added to the list of primary objectives. Since it was believed that the casemates of the battery were immune to aerial assault, SHAEF realized that only a ground assault by a large number of troops could neutralize it. Thus was Otway's battalion selected and trained for the event.

A few miles farther south of the coast west of Ranville, two vital bridges spanned the Orne River and the parallel Orne Canal. Both of them would need to be captured by a small glider force and held long enough for the amphibious troops to fight their way to them.

Chosen for this task was Major John Howard and his D Company, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Infantry (Ox and Bucks), who would rush in silently in gliders, land close to their target bridges, and overwhelm the Germans guarding them. It seemed a preposterously dangerous thing to do, and the odds of success seemed preposterously small. Nonetheless, Howard and his men, like Otway's, set about training to accomplish just that.

Comprising the amphibious force of Rennie's 3rd Division were three infantry brigades: the 8th, 9th, and 185th Infantry, plus the attached 29th Armored Brigade and the 1st and 4th Special Service (Commando) Brigades. Attached to No. 4 Commando was Captain Philippe Kieffer's 177-man Free French Commando troop.

All was as ready as it could be. Two years of exacting planning had gone into this moment. If any part of the invasion plan failed, then the Allied invasion of the Continent was in jeopardy. No one knew if there would ever be a second chance to plunge the dagger into the heart of Hitler's Third Reich.

At 3 AM on June 6 (the invasion had been postponed for 24 hours because of a strong storm raging through the English Channel), the invasion at Sword Beach was heralded by a shelling and bombardment of German positions by Allied naval and air forces. This was followed four hours later by a large armada of landing craft full of apprehensive soldiers heading toward shore.

One of them, Major John Shaw of the Royal Fusiliers, who was on an LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry), recalled, "At dawn on 6 June, I went on deck, and then, as senior army

British paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines to take out German positions that threatened the amphibious landings at Sword Beach. Here, heavily laden paras, weighted down with all the supplies and equipment they would need, anxiously await their jump on June 6, 1944.

Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

A veteran of Operations Torch (North Africa), Husky (Sicily), and Avalanche (Salerno, Italy), HMS *Roberts* fires on German positions in the vicinity of Sword Beach with its 15-inch guns.

officer on board, I went on to the bridge. To my delight, the meteorologists had been right: the storm had died down. The view I saw from the bridge was one never to be forgotten. The whole of the Channel was full of head-to-tail lines of landing craft of various sorts. We were the most easterly line, and as far as I could see to the west, there were landing ships and escort vehicles. It was a most incredible sight, such as a child might lay out with his toys."

Shaw added that at 7:25 AM, the men of his Royal Fusiliers company began disembarking and wading ashore. "We could hear the guns firing from the beaches. We duly got into shallow water, and the ramps went down on either side. All the troops on board were supposed to go down them into two feet of water to wade ashore, but I found some of the men were still in the toilets, feeling too ill to get off the craft, and I had some difficulty getting them ashore."

The Royal Fusiliers and Shaw, who had been wounded in 1940 at Dunkirk, were part of a contingent of nearly 29,000 British troops heading for Gold, Juno, and Sword Beaches.

Among the huge contingent sailing across the English Channel was Major R.G.H. Brocklehurst of the 1st Battalion, Ox and Bucks. He said, "Our vessel was an American boat, quite small and converted for our landing by the simple addition of long wooden ramps that could be lowered on each side of the bows. Since we had reduced our first-stage needs to items that could be carried on foot, the only awkward ones were the company's and platoon's bicycles, which had been retained for message-taking along the road we knew ran behind the dunes of Ouistreham Beach."

Brocklehurst was awed at the sight of the massive armada: "As we were on the left flank of the whole expedition, we could see a series of naval vessels patrolling to ensure that German MTBs [Motor Torpedo Boats, also known as E-boats] could not interfere should our armada be detected.

"The RAF had ensured clear skies from the Luftwaffe, and so, to our right as far as the horizon, we could see on this clear day orderly lines of vessels of all shapes, sizes, and types. They seemed no more than 500 yards apart, and steadily, we ploughed our way through a gentle swell towards the French coast. The total discipline and control fired enormous pride in those who were privileged to be a part of this mighty venture."

Private Walter Scott, Royal Army Medical Corps, remembered, "Dawn had just broken, but I was instantly awake. As far as the eye could see, the Channel was full of ships, and they were not quiet. The noise was tremendous as the Navy blasted the German defences on the coast of France. I was not then afraid, after all, they were on our side. Fear would come later. I knew that history was being made, and I was part of it."

In other landing craft were men of the 1st Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment. One of them, a sergeant major named Brooks, told a BBC interviewer in October 1944, "Every man in our battalion who went on the job was briefed. He wasn't only told about the place he was going to, he was shown aerial photographs and ordnance maps and a large-scale model of the beach. We knew everything except the name of the country and the names of the places. Those were written in code.

"On the night of June 3rd, we embarked. On the whole of the 4th, we stayed in harbor on our LCI. In the evening, we pulled out into the Channel. We didn't know until later that the show had been postponed 24 hours.

"The fellows didn't worry much. We had a sing-song on board, and everybody was cheerful. We stayed there in the Channel all night, and then on the 5th of June, we sailed. By this time, maps had been issued to us, and we all knew exactly where we were going. They were proper maps this time, maps with names on them.

"We knew that this was the real thing, and we were all very glad to know that soon British troops would be on French soil again and hitting the Boche so hard that he would wonder how it all happened. The Channel was rough, and most of us were pretty seasick, but even that never dampened our spirits."

Ray Buck, a member of the Merchant Navy, said that he was assigned to the *Empire Capulet,* one of 864 merchant ships involved in the operation, and one that was full of tanks, trucks, and ammunition. On D-Day, he noted, "We joined a vast convoy and sailed to Sword Beach … the objective of the British 3rd Division.

"Overhead, the skies were filled with Allied aircraft. We anchored close to the battleships HMS *Warspite* and HMS *Ramillies* and were surrounded by cruisers, destroyers, and rocket-firing landing craft … all firing continuously. Earlier that morning, a Norwegian destroyer, the *Svenner,* had been sunk in our anchorage by German torpedo boats, causing very heavy loss of life. The torpedoes passed between *War–*

spite and *Ramillies*, hitting the *Svenner* in the boiler room. The torpedoes broke its back, and the ship sank.

"We also had a German coastal battery firing at us. Every now and again, a destroyer would go in at full speed and engage it. Although the German Air Force constituted no major threat to the landings, there were at least 22 sorties by [enemy] aircraft over the beaches. We were unlucky enough to be targeted by one. Cannon shells hit the Rhinos [big, square pontoons with an engine on the corner] that were tied alongside, and full of men and transport. This caused a fire and many injuries."

Harry Lemon was a gunner aboard an LCI. Together with thousands of other ships, his craft sailed for Normandy. His was carrying soldiers from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He said, "As we went in towards the beach [Sword Beach], something happened: we were blown up. We lost both ramps on each side of the ship, and there was a big hole in the bow below the water line. That was the only wet landing we gave the Warwicks!

"We had a full complement of men on board, and their equipment, too. They had their packs and rifles on, and because of the loss of the ramps, they had to climb down rope ladders, which was very tricky, despite the fact the water was only about six feet deep at the time.

"Once on the beach, we were stuck for 15 hours until the tide turned and we could be towed off. A craft behind us took a direct hit, and that was all panic. We were firing at a house way back on the beach. The skipper had said fire at that house because the Germans are in there, so we did and blew half the wall away. The Germans came tumbling out, and then they were no more.

"I had a colleague who lost a leg, and we were all covered in shrapnel. Bullets were pinging off the metal side of the gun I was manning.

"Once the Warwicks had left the beach, there were only about 20 of us on board. Much of the time, we were pulling soldiers out of the sea. A lot had their 'Mae Wests' [life vests] on under their packs, and as soon as they hit the water, they turned turtle and were easily drowned. That was the longest day, really the longest day."

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: A British landing craft burns after being hit by a German shell off Sword Beach. BELOW: Men of the British 3rd Infantry Division take cover from enemy fire behind vehicles after arriving at the Queen sector of Sword Beach. A wounded solider (lower left) is tended to as the unit prepares to assault the German bunker in the distance.

Asked to describe what the invasion was like, Lemon replied, "Have you seen *Saving Private Ryan*? If you have, the opening scenes on the beach really do give an idea of what it was like. The sea literally was red with blood."

Britain's Royal Navy played an indispensible role in the invasion. Twenty-year-old Petty Officer Lesley Friday was aboard the minesweeper HMS *Gazelle,* whose mission was to clear a section of the Channel of German mines. He was working down in the ship's engine room throughout the morning of D-Day but could hear the constant rumble of the armada's guns.

Coming up on deck some hours later, he was stunned by the sight of scores of dead men floating face down in the water, evidently having drowned before they could reach shore. He told an interviewer, "I am proud to have been there on D-Day, but I don't reflect on the glory. You can't, if you have seen the things I saw."

Sailor Dennis Chaffer said that June 5 found him sailing from Southampton aboard

Landing Craft, Flak 34, which was one of the invasion force escorts: "Just before dawn on the morning of June 6, we could hear loud explosions and see gun flashes. Our captain said that everything was going to plan. Whether he was right or wrong, we all knew that somebody was catching hell.

"As dawn broke, we found that we had been joined by other forces, and the English Channel was covered by a blanket of landing craft of all shapes and sizes. When we did reach the beach, we found that everything was going to plan. In fact, it was 10 PM that night before we fired a shot. We did help to shoot down a German bomber. This was the start of our battle with the Germans.

"E-Boats, human torpedoes, and radio-controlled explosive motor launches were thrown at us. We managed to overcome these problems, plus a direct bombing attack and intermittent shelling from coastal guns.

"For the next few weeks (two hours sleep a day for the first two weeks), nobody got any sleep at night. German planes dropped parachute mines which, if they touched the side of any ship or landing craft, would blow up."

Richard Barnett, a member of a Scottish artillery regiment equipped with self-propelled Priests—basically an American 105mm gun mounted on a Sherman tank chassis—said, "Dawn revealed the full extent of the operation, with vessels of all shapes and sizes as far as the eye could see. Our training stood us in good stead as we ran in on the beaches with all guns firing to provide the protective barrage for the infantry regiment ahead of us.

"We were due to beach at H+1 hours—one hour after the initial assault—and precisely on schedule, the wonderfully efficient Navy grounded the LCT without mishap. Down went the huge ramp in a few feet of water, and our moment had arrived. All four guns and numerous other vehicles were driven off to add to an already cluttered beach.

"For reasons I have never fully understood, we were unable to get away from the beach for several hours, and it soon became clear that it was an unhealthy place to be. Not only were we open to the occasional attack from the air, but the few enemy guns still firing were targeted at the beach.

"As it was, our guns were soon called into action where they stood in a few feet of water, as we were by that time in direct support of the 6th Airborne Division, which had started the whole operation in the early hours. It was late afternoon before we were finally able to get away from the beach and head inland."

The airborne had indeed started the operation. Parachute and glider troops from Maj. Gen. Richard Gales' British 6th Air-

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-2006-0103; Photo: Scheck

Near the Orne Estuary, a British soldier (foreground) lies dead while German troops prepare to repel another assault.

Imperial War Museum

In one of the most familiar photos taken during the Sword Beach landings, Lord Lovat's Commandos and the 1st Battalion, Suffolk Regiment hit the Queen beach sector at approximately 8:30 AM. Sappers of the 84th Field Company, Royal Engineers are in the foreground.

borne Division were landed shortly after midnight onto the eastern flank of the invasion area to isolate the battlefield so that the seaborne invasion force landing at Sword Beach would not be hit by a counterattack coming from the east.

The units comprising the 6th Airborne Division were Brigadier Nigel Poett's 5th Parachute Brigade and Brigadier S. James Hill's 3rd Parachute Brigade, the latter made up of Lt. Col. George Bradbrooke's 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, Lt. Col. Alastair Pearson's 8th Parachute Battalion, and Lt. Col. Terence Otway's 9th Parachute Battalion. They were given the greatest number of missions that had to be accomplished if the British, French, and Canadian seaborne forces were to enjoy a successful landing at Gold, Juno, and Sword Beaches.

Harold Packham, a 28-year-old craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), recalled, "We were held up for two days due to bad weather just off the Isle of Wight. We traveled in darkness, and I was very seasick, but when dawn came, it was lovely weather, and we saw the French coast. Our warships were bombing the French coast, and the Germans were shelling us, and many craft were sunk.

"We should have gone in at zero 45 but, because so many craft had been lost, we went in at the first assault. We landed in six foot of water at Lion-sur-Mer on the extreme left flank next to the River Orne. Our job was to get the vehicles and equipment ashore.

"It was very difficult for the soldiers who were carrying heavy equipment and dropped in deep water, and many of them drowned. We tried to save some of them, but over the loudhailer, we heard, 'Guns and equipment first,' so we concentrated on getting the equipment ashore.

"For days, we landed vehicles and equipment, and our mechanics cleaned them and readied them for fighting. We felt constantly in fear of our lives, but we were so busy we just got on with it. Field Marshal Rommel had said this would be Tommy's longest day but in fact, to me, it was one of the shortest. We were so busy, the time just flew."

Another member of the REME was Scotsman John McOwan, an instrument mechanic. He said that his most vivid memory was "the armada of ships lying offshore. They stretched for as far as the eye could see.

"We waited for what seemed like an interminable amount of time before we could go on shore. We felt like easy targets for the Luftwaffe. A couple of ships were hit, and we just hoped and prayed that ours would not be one of the next ones. I remember that I did not even get my feet wet when we eventually came on shore as we were

on landing-craft vehicles."

Twenty-two-year-old Ken Oakley, an assistant to the beach master with a Royal Navy commando unit, noted, "Our job was to get everything organized on the beach, mark where the landing craft should come in, and call in supplies.

"The night before D-Day, the senior Army officer said to us, 'You're with the first of several waves. If you do not survive, we will send in the second wave, and if they do not survive, we will send in a third wave, and so on until we have captured the beach.' That was a very nice thought to go to bed with.

"At 3:30 AM on D-Day, we were woken up and told to get ready. At 5 AM, we got into the Landing Craft, Assault to make for Sword Beach. There were several other LCAs around us. The sea was choppy, and many of the soldiers were sick. We were looking out for the dreaded stakes with bombs or mines attached to them, and when they came into sight, the coxswain steered towards a gap to our right. It was very, very tight, but he did a marvelous job and just missed one shell that would have blown us completely out of the water. And then, bang, we were on the beach, down the ramp.

"Everything had been kept so secret, we didn't know what was going on around us at the time. We just saw our own landing. I was the beach master's bodyguard, and the two of us ran forwards up to the beach. We were targeted by multiple mortars, and the fire from them was very, very heavy. All around us were landing craft coming in: bang, crash, wallop, and out you get, and everything was absolute chaos. It was 6:10 AM, and we were among the first wave to hit the beach.

"A bit later, the commander came up to me and said that my mate Sid had been severely wounded, and could I help him. I went along the beach, and Sid was lying in the sand, very badly wounded. I pushed his kidney back into his body, and told him to be careful, I didn't want him to spill that out again. I managed to get him along to the first aid post and they looked after him. Sid made a good recovery and was eventually the best man at my wedding!"

Imperial War Museum

Royal Marine Commandos of 1st Special Service Brigade move inland from Queen Red beach. A Churchill AVRE tank with raised girder bridge is visible in the background.

The bulk of the initial wave of seaborne forces landed at 7:25 AM, led by the amphibious DD (duplex-drive) tanks of the 13th/18th Hussars that began churning their way toward shore. Wading in their wakes were the men of the 8th Infantry Brigade. A whole procession of Royal Engineers riding in AVREs (Armored Vehicle Royal Engineers)—the specialized armored vehicles called Hobart's Funnies, named after their creator Maj. Gen. Percy Hobart—were also rolling toward shore.

All sorts of armored contraptions had been created by Hobart's fertile military mind: the DD (duplex-drive) amphibious tank that could be launched some distance from shore and "swim" toward land; a Fascine tank that laid down a bundle of poles to fill in tank traps; a Crab tank that had a rotating drum with chains attached that beat the ground and detonated mines; a Bobbin tank that unrolled a giant roll of material to allow vehicles to drive across soft sand; the flame-throwing Crocodile tank; and a Plough tank that had two angled bulldozer blades on the front designed to unearth landmines.

Nineteen-year-old Ron Smith was a wireman aboard Landing Craft, Tank 947 that arrived at Sword Beach at 7:35 AM with some of Hobart's Funnies on board. As the ramp went down, a German shell screamed in and hit one of the tanks on the landing craft, disabling it and totally blocking the craft's exit ramp. Torpedoes carried on the landing craft then exploded, killing the colonel on board and three others. Smith helped wrap up the bodies as the battered LCT was forced to retreat and make its way back to Portsmouth.

"I helped to lay three of them out," he said. One was Lt. Col. Arthur D.B. Cocks, commander of the 5th Assault Regiment Royal Engineers, the first British officer killed in the landings.

Naval Lieutenant Lambton Burn, who was also aboard LCT-947, recalled, "Shells are bursting all round. They are not friendly shorts from bombardment warships, but vicious stabs from an enemy who has held his fire until the final 200 yards. He is shooting well, shooting often. Mortar shells whine and burst with sickening inevitability. An LCT to port goes up in flames.

Imperial War Museum

Universal carriers (right) of the 2nd Middlesex Regiment pass one of "Hobart's Funnies"—a Churchill AVRE with a 290mm spigot mortar—of the 5th Assault Regiment in the town of La Bréche d'Hermanville.

"There is a sudden jerk as our bows hit the beach. Down goes the ramp, with Sub-Lieutenant Monty Glengarry, RNZNVR [Royal New Zealand Navy Volunteer Reserve] and his party working like madmen at the bows. There is a roar of acceleration and Donald Robertson in Stornoway (the first Crab that managed to disembark) is away like a relay runner.

"Dunbar (the second Crab) moves forward. Colonel Cocks leans from his turret (he had elected to command from the Plough) and motions the other tank commanders to follow. But enemy fire is now concentrated on us. There are bursts on both sides and then—snap—two direct hits on our bows, followed by a third snap like a whip cracking over the tank hold.

"The first lieutenant is flung sideways against a bulkhead and lies stunned. Dunbar stops in her tracks, slews sideways, blocks the door. Another and greater explosion as the bangalore shafts of Barbarian (the Log Carpet AVRE, Captain Fairie in command) explode with a flash of red.

"Colonel Cocks is killed as he stands, and there is a scream from within his tank. Cold with anger, Tom Fairie moves Barbarian forward, tries to edge Dunbar to the ramp, but fails. He vaults from his turret and is joined by other tank men who strain furiously to bring chain and tackle to bear."

Bob Littlar, 2nd Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI), said, "By late May, we knew that the assault would happen within 10 days or so, depending on the weather conditions, although no one still knew the exact date. We were told that another brigade had been selected for the initial assault, and that we would go in second as the penetration brigade, to get inland.

"On 2 June, the Friday before D-Day, they told us to be ready to go the following day. They shipped us down to New Haven harbor, where the LCAs were waiting for us to get on board. I think the idea was that we would sail out of New Haven at about 9 PM, but then the departure was postponed because of bad weather. So we were still in the harbor on Sunday morning, and they took us off the LCAs and fed us a fantastic lunch. We got back onto the boats at about teatime, feeling very happy because we had been so well fed!

"At about 9 PM that night, the four LCAs carrying our battalion quietly slipped out of the harbor and into the English Channel. We spent the entire Monday at sea, and we could see ships from horizon to horizon, all along the Channel. We'd all been issued with French francs, and to pass the time at sea, the lads were playing cards and gambling with the foreign currency.

"It was barely light at that time of the morning, but we could see that we were among warships of all sorts. As we got closer to the coast of Normandy, we could see smoke on the shoreline from the long-range battleship assault. We were all looking at this incredible sight when we were ordered to go below decks."

Littlar added, "We had been issued with waterproof waders that can keep you dry up to the chest, like the ones fishermen wear. In theory this was great, but in practice it only worked if the water came up to your waist. Chaps were going under water and trying to wade out with these waterproofs absolutely filled to bursting.

"I got out a knife and started slicing the waterproofs of the chaps that were struggling to walk on shore wearing these things. I did this for about seven or eight blokes, the men in my group. Then I looked around and saw a sea wall, about two or three foot high, and I sheltered behind it on my own. My sergeant came up to me and said, 'You're not going to win this war on your own, get your men.'"

Shortly after 10 AM, the men of the 2nd Battalion, KSLI, landed on Sword Beach near Hermanville-sur-Mer. They were supposed to ride atop the Sherman tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry and advance inland, but because of the logjam on and off the beach, the tanks were delayed. The men moved inland on foot down the D60 road without accompanying armor.

Littler continued, "I could see smoke, and smoldering tanks that had been blown up earlier. The seafront area had already been taken, but there was still some resistance and we were still being fired on."

By 5:30 PM, Major Peter Steel's company had reached German-held Lebisey, north of Caen. The KSLI's advance had created a dangerous salient, so the unit was ordered to pull back, but not before Major Steel was killed.

Another KSLI soldier was Ernie Goodman, driving a Universal carrier that towed a 6-pounder antitank gun. "I was scared stiff," he admitted. "I think most people were." He made it through D-Day without a scratch, but had terrible memories of an incident that occurred a few weeks later when the rest of his gun team were all killed or wounded.

"A shell hit an apple tree above their trench, and the blast went straight down and killed two of them and injured the other," he said. "The next night, they jumped in this trench thinking the same thing would never happen in the same place. And it did. I was the only one left."

Ted Varley, a member of the 3rd Division Signal Regiment said that he was one of the first men to reach Sword Beach and vividly recalled the confusion and carnage: "I saw quite a lot of bodies floating along in the water, and people running around all over the place, and this and that flying around in the air. It was a bit chaotic, but it got sorted out. I was 20. I wasn't frightened, I was apprehensive. You didn't think about it, you just got on and did it."

Sergeant Major Brooks, 1st Battalion, Royal Norfolks, recalled, "At about 9:45 AM, the word came down from the bridge to make ready. This was followed by a few minutes stand-by. I made my way to the deck ready to lead my part of battalion headquarters ashore, and I had a good view of what was going on. Never before had I seen so many ships of all sizes and shapes as I saw that morning. Some were already returning from the shore empty, and others like ourselves were waiting their turn to go in.

"All types of naval craft were being used, and it was thanks to their skill that we never even thought about any opposition from the German Navy. As we closed into the shore, I could see houses and a narrow strip of beach, just like the models and photos we'd been shown at the briefing."

Imperial War Museum

Troops and vehicles from the British 3rd Division take a break along a narrow-gauge railroad track before advancing farther inland toward Caen, an objective that would elude them for over a month.

Brooks noted that there was considerable enemy fire being directed his way. "I saw fountains of water suddenly shooting up on either side of us and I realized that for the first time in my Army career, I was under fire.

"Our battalion was sailing in three LCIs, and were now moving slowly forward, all in line. Then we hit the beach, and I saw the ramps go down, and the leading platoon was already running up the gangways and going ashore. Within five minutes, our party was on the beach, and we moved forward to our exit where a bulldozer was already at work making a roadway."

Brooks continued, "We turned right and made our way along the road, where our battalion formed up ready for the march inland. There were several Sherman tanks moving slowly forward as the roads were cleared by sappers of the antitank mines along them. One of my sergeants major trod on one of these antitank mines, and it lifted him clean up and flung him into a hedge. He was completely unharmed—he was lucky."

Brooks' battalion marched about a mile south and then settled in while the commanding officer went to see the brigade commander. On the CO's return, the battalion resumed the march until it came to a small village. "As we entered the village, the Boche began throwing a few shells over, and it was there we had our first casualties.

"As we hadn't yet established a regimental aid post, our wounded were evacuated straight back to the beach. The village was cleared of the enemy by the commandos and our own assault brigade. We passed through it and took up a battle formation. To reach our next objective, we had to cross open ground. This was mostly cornfields, and we were under fire all the time from enemy machine guns.

"We didn't even notice it much—we were all keyed up. The enemy was soon cleared, and after searching a wood, we went into it and waited for further orders to march on. So far, everything seemed to have gone like any field exercise, except that I knew our casualties were real ones this time, and there were no umpires about."

Brooks' unit had taken several prisoners. He said, "They looked a sorry lot and were dirty and untidy. I learned later that they were mostly Poles and Czech slave troops, and only their officers and NCOs were Germans. Then at 5:00, we received orders to move forward again and relieve the Royal Warwicks, who had met with some strong opposition on their particular objective.

"We went through two small villages. The snipers were still active, but we had no time to deal with them, and after crossing some marshy ground, we began to climb up a corn-covered slope towards our objective, but it was much too strongly held by the enemy. Through the coolness and efficiency of our CO, who was the last to leave, we withdrew and took up an all-round defensive position for the night. And so ended D-Day and my first day of battle."

Imperial War Museum

With a foothold secured at Sword Beach, British troops and naval beach parties set about cleaning up the beach in prepration for the landing of follow-on troops.

Another unit that landed at Sword Beach was Philippe Kieffer's Free French Commando force. One of the last surviving members of that unit, Hubert Fauré, told a British reporter in 2014, "On May 25th, Kieffer gathered everybody and said we were going to carry out a decisive operation that would take us into France. He said half of those who went would fall, and that anyone who wanted to quit had to do so immediately. No one backed down, so we went to Southampton."

After 10 more days of intense training, the men marched to their landing barges. "We were to leave as quickly as possible so everyone would get a bit of sleep," Fauré said, "but it wasn't possible, because the sea was too rough. All night long, all around us, the Allied planes were flying, dropping bombs on the coast. You can imagine the atmosphere."

They arrived off Sword Beach just after 7:00 in the morning, timing their landing with the low tide. Fauré noted, "We were under fire, some men were killed. So we had to jump into the water, with 30 kilos of supplies, weapons, and ammunition."

Fauré's memories of the day were filled with the sights and sounds of flying munitions, smokescreens, battleships, and warplanes roaring overhead. The British reporter wrote, "The commandos separated and regrouped, lost their radio communications and made contact with civilians. Their mission was to disarm a casino transformed into a blockhouse, and doing so meant advancing through mine fields and blockades. Finally, when the day was over, their general gathered them in a café."

"The general welcomed us," recalled Fauré, "and said he was happy we made it. He gave each of us a glass of champagne, and we made a toast with the general."

Another French commando was Leon Gautier, who was 17 in the spring of 1940 when Hitler's forces marched in and occupied France. He managed to escape to England on one of the last French warships to sail and joined the Free French Forces under General Charles de Gaulle.

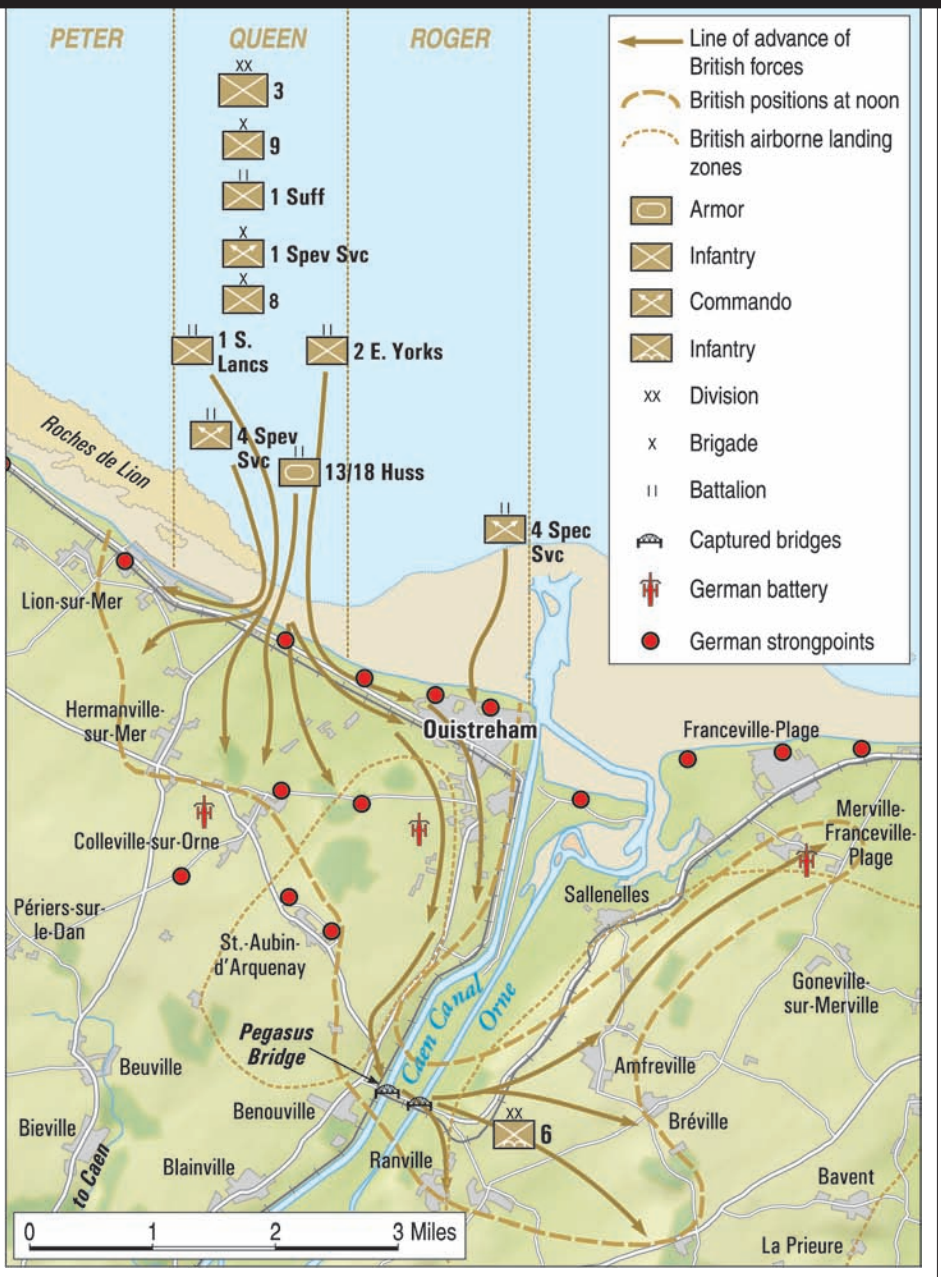
On D-Day, Gautier recalled British Lt. Col. Robert Dawson, commander of No. 4 Commando (of which Kieffer's unit was a part) telling the French commandos that he wanted them to be the first on French soil. "We went in only a few seconds ahead. It was a symbolic gesture," Gautier said.

Armed with a Thompson .45-caliber submachine gun, Gautier waded ashore, and with some of his comrades, headed for a concrete bunker that was spitting machine-gun bullets. Somehow, he escaped being hit and helped neutralize the enemy position.

Gautier grew reflective. "War is a misery. Not all that long ago, I would think that perhaps I killed a young lad, perhaps I orphaned children, perhaps I widowed a woman or made a mother cry. I didn't want that, I'm not a bad man. You kill a man who's done nothing to you. That's war. You do it for your country."

The French commandos, attached to Dawson's No. 4 Commando, ran into tough resistance in Ouistreham, but they managed to clear it of enemy strongpoints. One particularly knotty problem was the remains of a casino at the nearby seaside resort town of Riva Bella. The Germans had leveled the building in 1942 and turned its foundations into a bunker.

Pinned down at an antitank wall by intense enemy fire, the commandos were taking casualties and unable to move. Kieffer learned by radio that six Sherman DD tanks of the 13/18 Hussars were approaching, so he decided to go find one but was wounded in the attempt. Still, he found a tank and guided it to Riva Bella, where it proceeded to



British invasion beaches. Knocking out the Merville Battery (right) and bridges over the Orne Canal and River (lower right) were essential elements of the invasion plan.

destroy the casino/bunker. The French commandos were then able to storm the wreckage and clear the town of snipers.

Kieffer's commandos suffered 44 casualties on D-Day, including 10 killed. They had died pour la France.

By 8 AM, the first wave of invaders had overcome the defenders and was pushing inland. Eighteen-year-old Bill Fitzgerald, 1st Battalion, Suffolk Regiment, recalled the boat ride in: "We were the third in on the day. We got so far in, and then we hit something underneath, so we knew we were going to get wet. The beach master was there shouting: 'Get off this bloody beach and don't get killed!'

"The water was full of bodies, and they were mostly all Marine Commandos, but you couldn't take too much notice. All you were thinking of was helping each other," he said. "Looking at the bodies, you felt sorry about it, but you had a job to get on that beach and wait for your friends."

William Hudson Harber, in charge of an American Rhino ferry, had sailed from the Isle of Wight at dawn on D-Day. He said, "The Rhino was carrying about 20 cars and lorries [trucks]. As we approached [our beach], there were three Marine landing craft already there. I said to my crew, 'We have an easy landing here.'

"After discharging the cargo, I went for a walk along the beach towards the other landing craft. As I was walking, a German plane came and tried to machine-gun me down. I ran towards the landing craft to escape being killed. I then dived into a Marine command barge to save my life. All of the crew were dead. I had dived onto a pile of dead bodies.

"I returned to my landing craft and took it back out to sea to the other ships, along with my crew. I worked on the beach in Normandy for about two months, bringing supplies backwards and forwards. It was a daily occurrence to see floating body parts in the sea and washed up on the beach. Many snipers tried to kill us during our time in Normandy."

Royal Engineers Corporal Frank Mouqué, who called himself "a little cog in a big wheel," had the dangerous job of defusing mines and other unexploded ordnance on the beach. He said, "We approached Sword Beach in a landing craft. We had all of our gear on our backs and a rubber ring around our stomachs to help keep us afloat. Let's face it: the landing was very gory. You didn't have time to think. The survival instinct kicked in.

"After reaching the beach, I ran up towards a parapet and searched for mines. After 12 hours of being on the go, we were exhausted and then had to dig a foxhole to sleep in."

A Scottish soldier, James Churm, was a medic on a landing craft. He recalled, "My overriding feeling was one of terrible trepidation. Nobody knew what was happening until we got there. The amount of shipping in the Channel was fantastic, though. Every type of vessel you could think of was there."

Another Scotsman, Jim Glennie, who landed at Sword Beach, remembered, "We

didn't see ourselves as heroes. We were just doing a job and we did what we got told to do." He added, "I always wonder what the French people thought that morning when they woke up and saw all of the ships."

A few days after arriving in France, Glennie was wounded, captured, and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp, Stalag 4b.

Major R.G.H. Brocklehurst of the 1st Battalion, Ox and Bucks, recalled that as he and his company ran ashore, they were taken under fire by a machine gun in a bunker, but, "The men swore that some of the sniping was from French women, 'collaborateurs' during the German occupation, who were none too pleased that we had arrived to chuck their boyfriends out!

"It was now 3 PM, and the tide was low, giving a wide expanse of wet sand over which all manner of men and machines were struggling to carry out their appointed duties. As [a soldier named] Page and I were a little way up towards our destination beside the right-hand exit, we were surprised to hear the sound of planes to our left. Coming in low were the only two Messerschmitt dive-bombers that evaded the RAF that day, I believe.

"We heard the rattle of their guns and saw the spurt of bullets in the sand ahead of us, apparently doing little, if any, damage. But as they were nearly overhead, we could clearly see the two wretched little bombs they carried released from under their wings to sail in a gentle curve down towards us.

"We flopped down on our bellies, and the bombs plopped into the sand a short distance away. Fortunately, the sand and mud which the River Orne had deposited over time immemorial was far too soft to detonate them on contact, and they sank to explode after a second or two and squirt up a column of disgusting mud, which broke up and came pattering down all over our backs. We did feel that to be excessively drenched on landing and then covered in mud into the bargain was a bit much!

"We crawled forward cautiously for a while, then I got fed up, stood up and started to walk forward, whereupon I was dragged down by Page who swore the snipers would get me."

Imperial War Museum

TOP: The bascule bridge raised over the Orne Canal became one of the most storied episodes of the entire operation. Captured just minutes after dawn on June 6 by British glider forces, it soon acquired the name "Pegasus Bridge" after the British airborne troops' sleeve insignia. BOTTOM: The gun embrasure of Casemate 1 at the Merville Battery. Heavy casualties were incurred by both sides during the fight for this position, which did not contain the expected heavy guns.

As the struggle for the beachhead continued, the battles for the Merville battery and Orne bridges were nearly over. The 9th Parachute Battalion's assault on the Merville battery had not gone well. In fact, it had verged on disaster. Only about 150 of the 750 paratroopers who had left England had reached the battery. The rest were scattered for miles around. When Otway realized that no more men were going to suddenly appear, he ordered his men to attack the four casemates. It was a brave and bloody affair, but in the end, Otway and his men had accomplished their mission.

By contrast, Major John Howard's glider assault on the Orne Canal bridge that would later be named Pegasus, in tribute to the British Airborne's sleeve insignia, had gone off with barely a hitch. Within 15 minutes, the coup de main had succeeded, and several feeble German counterattacks had been halted. All Howard had to do now was hold onto the prize until Lord Lovat's 1st Special Service Brigade, made up of the 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 45th (Marine) Commandos arrived.

After fighting their way ashore under heavy German fire, Lovat's men reached the 6th

Airborne Division glider troops that had seized two bridges over the Orne waterways—Pegasus Bridge at Bénouville and Horsa Bridge at Ranville—at about 1 PM on June 6.

Lovat's arrival was heralded by bagpipes being played by Private Bill Millen of Glasgow, Scotland. After Millen's death at age 88 in September 2010, a British newspaper reported, "The unarmed, 21-yr-old piper marched up and down [Sword] Beach playing 'Highland Laddie.' He continued to play as his friends fell around him and later moved inland to pipe the troops to Pegasus Bridge.

"'When you're young, you do things you wouldn't dream of doing when you're older,' Millen said in an interview long after he war.

"Walking among the wounded on the beach made Mr. Millen feel 'helpless,' he said, but for others, his music boosted morale at a critical time. The military high command had ordered pipers not to play because of fears over the level of casualties. That decision, though, was ignored by the brigade's commander, Lord Lovat, who ordered Mr. Millen to lead his troops ashore to the skirl of the pipes."

Lovat, the hereditary chief of the Clan Fraser, told Millen to play "Highland Laddie," "Blue Bonnets over the Border," and "Road to the Isles."

Millen, who portrayed himself in the 1961 film *The Longest Day,* said, "Lord Lovat was seriously wounded at Normandy a week after we landed, hit by a lump of shrapnel. After the landings, I got to know him even better, and we became very good friends after the war, as I would often go up to see him at his home in Beauly near Inverness," he said. "And when he died a few years ago, I played at his funeral."

His famous pipes—which were silenced four days later by a piece of shrapnel—were donated to the National War Museum of Scotland, but they have since been relocated to the Pegasus Memorial Museum adjacent to Pegasus Bridge at Bénouville, France.

By the end of D-Day, some 28,845 men had come ashore at Sword Beach. Thankfully, British casualties—630 men killed and wounded—were relatively light (compared to Omaha Beach in the U.S. sector). But what had started out as a brilliant, well-planned, and perfectly executed amphibious operation soon turned into an exasperating slog. The drive toward Caen, just 10 miles away, quickly ground to a halt as the Germans put up a stubborn defense in the villages and fields north of the city. The British and Canadians failed to take Caen within 24 hours of the landings as they had hoped and planned.

As dusk on June 6 approached, so did the tanks of the 21st Panzer Division, which had been positioned at Caen. They were soon joined by those of the 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend. After being pounded by British artillery, naval guns, and warplanes, the Germans pulled back to Caen, where they formed a steel shield around the city. At Tilly-sur-Seulles three days later, the Panzer Lehr Division arrived and lent its armored might to the defense, effectively blunting the British advance toward Caen.

In a further attempt to take Caen, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery sent the 7th Armoured Division—the famed "Desert Rats" of the battles in Libya—toward Caen, but a detachment of Tiger tanks halted them at Villers-Bocage on June 13.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-493-3355-10; Photo: Siedel

A Panzer IV Ausf. J of the 12th SS Panzer Division ("Hitlerjugend") on a Normandy road. After being pushed back from the coast, the Germans regrouped and frustrated Montgomery's efforts to swiftly take Caen.

The historian Antony Beevor wrote, "If Montgomery had intended to seize [Caen] as he stated, then he failed to put in place the equipment and organization of his forces to carry out such a daring stroke." Beevor went on to say that Monty "would have needed to send forward at least two battle groups, each with an armored regiment and an infantry battalion."

It would not be until July 20 that the city, or what was left of it, was declared secured. An estimated 3,000 local residents died in the crossfire.

The few remaining veterans of the Normandy invasion are now in their 90s and bent with age, beset with fading eyesight and mobility issues, and battling their last remaining enemy: time. But they will always look back upon June 6, 1944, as their finest hour.

As one British veteran, George Cutterham, remembered, "Everybody was frightened. Anyone who says they weren't frightened must be telling a few fibs. But I wouldn't have missed it for the world." □

A Douglas TBD-1 Devastator torpedo plane from USS *Enterprise* flies over Wake Island, part of the Marshall Islands group, 2,300 miles west of Hawaii, during an air raid on February 24, 1942. The Japanese had invaded and captured Wake Island on December 23, 1941, and the United States was determined to win it back, although that goal was not accomplished until September 1945 when the starving garrison surrendered.

Shortly after the Pearl Harbor disaster, the U.S. Navy went on the offensive and scored an early victory in the Marshalls.

BY GLENN BARNETT

SHOWDOWN IN THE Marshall Islands

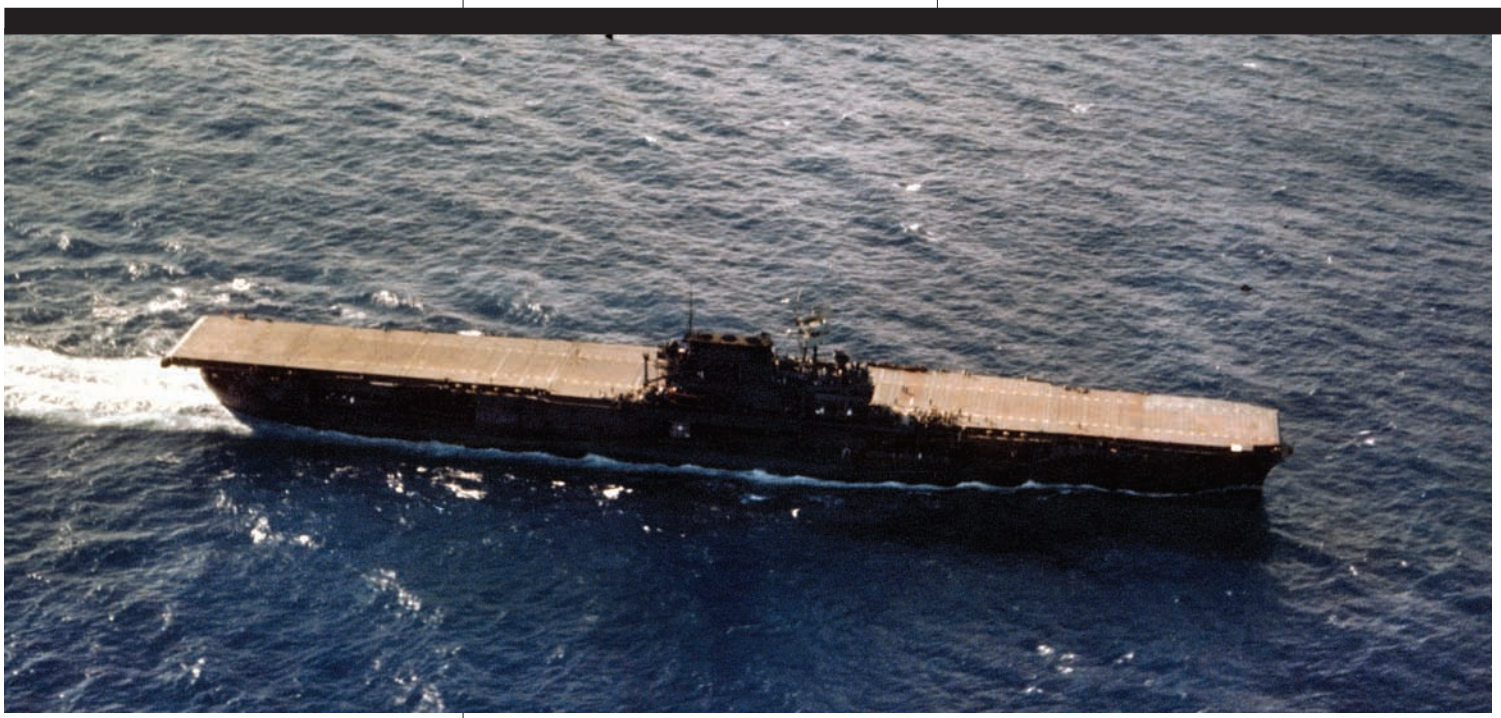
On the night of November 11, 1940, an event occurred that would change naval warfare for all time. The British Royal Navy launched a raid against the main base of the Italian Navy, the Regia Marina, at Taranto, located in the arch of the Italian boot. It was the first time that torpedo bombers, launched from an aircraft carrier, HMS *Illustrious*, would sink capital ships while they rested in port.

In May 1941, the carrier HMS *Ark Royal* would launch the same types of outdated Fairey Swordfish biplane torpedo bombers used at Taranto against *Bismarck*, pride of the German fleet. In the dying embers of day, a Swordfish torpedo would jam *Bismarck*'s rudder, leaving her helpless and doomed on the open sea. All planes returned safely to *Ark Royal* in the growing darkness.

At the time, only three nations boasted operational aircraft carriers: Great Britain, the United States, and the Empire of Japan. The Japanese would apply the lessons learned from these British victories to make the aircraft carrier the centerpiece of their attack force. Instead of one carrier, they would employ six of the 10 they had against Pearl Harbor. The attacking squadron was supported by two battleships, three cruisers, and nine destroyers. By the end of 1941, the battleship, queen of the oceans just two years previously, would be relegated to a support role. There were many lessons to be learned, and the United States learned them well.

While the smoke still drifted over Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Navy brass began to real-

All: Naval History and Heritage Command



USS *Enterprise* photographed in June 1941. The wooden flight deck was painted blue as a camouflage measure shorty after this photo was taken.

ize how lucky they were that none of their aircraft carriers had been in port that day. In Tokyo, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the planner of the attack, worried that he had not destroyed America's carriers. He knew how valuable this new class of ships had become. Japan, in fact, was in the process of building five more carriers and converting two large passenger ships to carriers.

Of America's six fleet carriers (and one escort carrier), three were in the Pacific Ocean on December 7. One of them, *Saratoga* (CV-3), was taking aboard planes at San Diego. Her sister ship, *Lexington* (CV-2), commanded by Vice Admiral Wilson Brown, was leading an escort of three heavy cruisers and five destroyers from Pearl Harbor to deliver 18 Vought SB2U Vindicator dive bombers to Midway Island for the island's defense.

The third carrier, *Enterprise,* had just delivered 12 F4F-3 Wildcat fighters and their pilots to Wake Island and was returning to Pearl. Had bad weather not delayed *Enterprise* on her homeward voyage, she, like the battleships, would have been caught in the carnage.

Just as important as the survival of the carriers for the Navy was the failure of the

ABOVE: USS *Yorktown*, also photographed before the war. Although the carrier played a key role in the Marshalls Islands operation, she would be lost during the Battle of Midway in June 1942. OPPOSITE: An *Enterprise*-based Devastator drops a Mark XIII aerial torpedo during training in 1941.

Japanese to destroy the fuel stocks and their storage tanks at Pearl Harbor. This allowed the remnants of the Pacific Fleet to engage in immediate and continuous operations, setting up the upcoming American offensives much sooner than they would have if the fuel oil and the holding tanks had been destroyed.

Still, by the end of that day of infamy, the three flattops in the Pacific and their escorts were all that remained between Japan and the West Coast of the United States. The next day, *Saratoga* hurriedly departed San Diego and rushed to Hawaii. Upon arrival, she was assigned the task of reinforcing Wake Island, which was threatened with invasion. Delays, setbacks, and indecision resulted in Wake's loss to the enemy before *Saratoga* and her supporting squadron could arrive.

Returning to Pearl, *Saratoga* and the other two carriers were assigned to mundane patrol and escort duties. The inaction did not sit well with officers or crew. They wanted to fight. Fortunately, changes were afoot.

On December 16, *Yorktown* (CV-5), the sister ship of *Enterprise,* weighed anchor at Norfolk, Virginia, for the Pacific Ocean to reinforce the decimated Pacific Fleet. *Yorktown* had previously been in the Pacific and had made the move with the fleet from San Diego to Pearl Harbor in 1940. With increased threats from German U-boats in the Atlantic, however, she was transferred there in April 1941. Now she was headed back to Pearl as fast as she could steam.

Prewar naval planners and architects had been directed to design the hulls of all capital ships so that they would be able to pass through the Panama Canal. While it limited the size of new ships because of the rigid width and length requirements of their hulls, it allowed the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets to be mutually supportive. *Yorktown* made the timesaving passage through the canal and arrived at San Diego Bay on December 30.

There, she became the flagship of Rear Admiral Frank Fletcher's Task Force 17 (TF17). His command also included the destroyers *Hughes, Sims, Russell,* and *Walke,* as well as the heavy cruiser *Louisville* and the light cruiser *St. Louis*.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the axe fell on the prewar commanders in Hawaii. On December 17, in a shakeup of personnel, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Admiral Chester Nimitz commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, effective December 31. The beginning of offensive operations was starting to take shape.

Admiral Nimitz and his staff immediately began developing plans for going from defensive to offensive war. The emotional choice at home would be to reinforce or rescue General Douglas MacArthur's stranded army in the besieged Philippines, but this could be disastrous. The Philippines were 4,500 miles from Hawaii, deep within Japanese-controlled waters. This would make any American relief effort easily surrounded, cut off, and destroyed. Nimitz had to strike in such a way that his invaluable carriers had an escape route. That meant that the Philippines could not be saved.

Nimitz's orders from Washington were first and foremost to protect the shipping lanes from the United States to Australia. The greatest threat to this vital lifeline at this time was the Japanese-held islands in the Marshall and Gilbert groups of islets and atolls spread over hundreds of miles of ocean. But Nimitz needed to know what to expect on and around those islands, and he needed to know quickly.

To find out, he dispatched the submarine *Dolphin* (SS-169) to recon the Marshalls without delay. In compliance with his orders, *Dolphin*'s captain weighed anchor and left Pearl Harbor on Christmas Eve.

The Marshall Islands had been in Japanese hands since World War I when they were wrested from German control. The island group became part of the League of Nations mandate that awarded them to Japanese administration.

The Gilberts (now known as Kiribati), farther south and within striking distance of Fiji and Samoa, were occupied by the Japanese after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Several of the islands in these two groups were being fortified with naval and air assets. From there, the American lifeline to Australia (4,000 miles from Hawaii) would be threatened by long-range flying boats and by submarines that could refuel at these advanced bases, the easternmost outposts of the Japanese Empire.

Nimitz believed that a raid on these islands could materially slow the progress and offensive capability of the enemy and, at the same time, relieve some of the Japanese pressure on the Philippines and the East Indies. A successful raid would also reassure the American public that the Navy was hitting back. Some of his advisers were skeptical, not wanting to risk the valuable aircraft carriers.

One concern was the unknown location of Japanese carriers, which, if near the Marshalls and Gilberts, could seriously threaten the American carriers. Code breakers and intelligence analysts, however, were reasonably sure that the Japanese flattops were in the western Pacific, supporting their major offensives.

Fortunately for Nimitz, *Enterprise* put into Pearl Harbor on January 7. Advised of the plan, the commander of the *Enterprise* task force (TF8), Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, was enthusiastic, and with his confident bravado, blunted all objections. His military philosophy was, "Hit hard, hit fast, and hit often," and that was just what he now proposed.

While these discussions were going on in Hawaii, the first task assigned to Fletcher and *Yorktown* in San Diego was to escort the troop ships carrying 5,000 men of the 8th Marine Regiment to American Samoa for garrison duty and jungle training.

Nimitz and Halsey planned that the convoy would be met upon arrival by *Enterprise*.

While *Yorktown* and the slower transports were steaming toward Samoa, Nimitz developed plans to make a carrier strike against Japanese-occupied islands in the Marshall and Gilbert groups.

With Halsey in overall command, *Enterprise* (known as the "Big E" to her crew) would attack islands in the northern Marshalls, while *Yorktown* would hit the Gilberts and southern Marshalls. As part of the plan, *Lexington* was to make a third raid on Wake Island as a diversion, while *Saratoga* was to perform a defensive patrol west of Hawaii.

Ironically, this strategy had already been spelled out in prewar planning. Many scenarios involving potential allies and enemies had been considered. The plan, named Rainbow 5, called for raids against the Japanese-occupied Marshall Islands.

In this scenario, three aircraft carriers and supporting cruisers and destroyers would bombard Japanese installations in the Marshalls by air and sea then fall back on three waiting battleships for protection. Nimitz and Halsey now planned a version of Rainbow 5 without the battleships, which were no longer available.

On January 10, 1942, *Enterprise* began to fuel and provision for a long voyage. The work went on all night. She departed Pearl Harbor the next day with her Task Force (TF8), including the heavy cruisers *Northampton, Salt Lake City,* and *Chester,* along with their destroyer escorts.

Halsey wanted to add more punch to his air strike, so he ordered his screening cruisers to bombard some of the target islands—just as the Rainbow 5 plan envisioned it. This task fell to Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, who was in command of the cruiser group.

No sooner had TF8 left Pearl Harbor for the rendezvous with *Yorktown* and TF17 than things began to go wrong. That night (January 11), *Saratoga,* while screening Hawaii, was struck by a single torpedo from the Japanese submarine *I-6*. Damage was serious enough that she had to withdraw to the West Coast for repairs and would be sidelined from the war for several months.

A Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat fighter has its six .50-caliber machine guns tested on the *Enterprise*'s flight deck. The Wildcat's guns had the unfortunate habit of jamming during combat.

Then, while *Lexington* was steaming 2,000 miles toward Wake Island and her part in the upcoming raid, she received bad news. There was only one aging oiler available to refuel the carrier and her thirsty task force after the raid. Without refueling, the *Lexington* squadron could not make it back to Pearl Harbor.

The oiler assigned to *Lexington* was the old and slow *Neches* (AO-5), whose keel was originally laid down in 1919. Early on the morning of January 23, *Neches,* while steaming around the planned rendezvous point, was hit and sunk by two torpedoes from another Japanese submarine, *I-72*. Without access to fuel oil, *Lexington* had to bow out of her role in the coming offensive raid.

Before the raid even began, half of the Pacific's Fleet carriers were out of action. But that did not deter the aggressive Halsey or the eager support of Admiral Nimitz. The raid was still on. On January 23, *Yorktown* and the troop transports arrived off of Samoa where *Enterprise* was waiting. The Marines with their artillery and equipment were safely disembarked, and by the 25th, the two carrier groups steamed northward together toward their twin objectives.

Both carriers had a decided advantage over most other U.S. Navy ships and all Japanese ships. They were among the very first American warships to be outfitted with radar. The Japanese would not have access to this technology until much later in the war, by which time it was too late to make a difference.

All ships of the two task forces were refueled at sea on January 28. *Enterprise* did not begin refueling until after dark, a process that would last for more than five hours. Nighttime refueling at sea was a new and dangerous venture at this point in the war, and it was not until later that frequent rehearsal would make it routine. On this night, however, it was an experiment of necessity. Arrangements were also made for the ships of both carrier groups to refuel once more after the raid before making the 2,250-mile run back to Pearl Harbor.

Halsey assigned Fletcher and TF17 the job of attacking the reported Japanese positions on Makin Island in the Gilbert group and Jaluit and Mili Atoll at the southern end of the Marshalls. *Enterprise*, meanwhile, would concentrate its air power on Wotje and

Taroa in the Maloelap Atoll in the northern end of the Marshall Island chain (Taroa is not to be confused with the more famous island of Tarawa in the Gilbert group). On January 29, the two carrier squadrons parted company to carry out their assignments.

As Nimitz's plans were being firmed up in January, a report came from the submarine *Dolphin* that there was a considerable Japanese build-up of both sea and air resources on the atoll of Kwajalein, which was about 150 miles west of Wotje. As a result of this new intelligence, Kwajalein could not be overlooked, as aircraft from there could be a significant threat to TF8. This additional island would, of necessity, also have to be targeted.

As for the Japanese, their main objectives in the war at this time were the stubbornly defended Philippines, the oil-rich East Indies, and the battle for strategic Singapore. With the American Pacific Fleet neutralized at Pearl Harbor, the Marshalls and Gilberts seemed to be a safe backwater in their war plans.

Although the island groups were the easternmost outposts of the empire, they were sparsely defended. Only some gunboats and a single light cruiser represented naval interests there. Air assets included 33 older, fixed-gear fighters (only one modern Zero fighter would be encountered), nine land-based, twin-engine bombers, and nine four-engine flying boats of the 24th Air Flotilla. Most of the assets of the 24th were based at Truk and recently conquered Rabaul. The exact composition of these forces was unknown to the Americans.

The air attack plans of the two U.S. carriers were coordinated so that the first wave of aircraft from both ships would arrive over their respective targets at the same time: 15 minutes before dawn on February 1, just seven weeks after the raid on Pearl Harbor.

After leaving Samoa, both carrier squadrons had search planes constantly in the air during daylight hours to spot any lurking enemy planes, ships, or submarines. Radar continued the surveillance at night. Radio silence was strictly enforced. Only daytime semaphore flags and signal lights at night offered inter-ship communication.

As *Yorktown* drew nearer to her assigned targets, her escorting destroyers were detached to form a scouting line in defense of the carrier. The cruisers maintained continuous, close-in screening of the flattop.

At 4:15 AM on February 1, *Yorktown* began launching operations. Eleven Douglas Devastator torpedo bombers and 17 Dauntless dive bombers were hurled into the predawn skies. The first target was the island of Jaluit, from which the Japanese administered the Marshall Islands.

The approach was difficult. Darkness, high winds, and rain squalls hid the attacking planes from the ground but also from each other. By the time the island was reached and a gray dawn at last appeared, the wind-tossed planes had been scattered, and the military installations were "socked in" by storm clouds.

An armorer aboard *Enterprise* carries belts of .50-caliber ammunition toward a line of Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bombers being prepared for the attack on the Marshall Islands, February 1, 1942.

Coordinated attacks were impossible under these conditions. Each pilot did his best on his own. The pounding weather, darkness, and high fuel usage were responsible for six planes not returning to their carrier.

A major factor in the aircraft losses for both carriers was the lack of training in flying at night or in stormy weather. Pilots under the stress of their first combat missions became disoriented in the windy gloom.

As it was, little was done in the way of damage on the targeted islands, but the Japanese were totally shocked and terrified that they could be attacked so easily. On the other hand, Americans were delighted once the news reached home.

The weather was better over Makin Atoll, where two long-range, four-engine Kawasaki H6K seaplanes (Allied designation Mavis) were demolished while sitting on the water. A gunboat was also badly damaged, and as at Jaluit, Japanese nerves and confidence were severely strained. The third island, Mili Atoll, was found to be deserted, and pilots assigned to it had nothing to attack.

Enemy response was late and ineffective. Three H6K seaplanes, however, were able to take off from Jaluit when the raid was over. One of them spotted the destroyer *Sims,* which was searching for the crewmen of a ditched plane. The Mavis made a diving attack on *Sims,* but its stick of bombs landed harmlessly in the destroyer's wake as the speeding ship tacked violently. Antiaircraft fire chased the plane into nearby clouds. (*Sims* would later be sunk at the Battle of the Coral Sea.)

The destroyers, now in harm's way, called upon *Yorktown* for air support. Six rugged Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters of the carrier's combat air patrol (CAP) were sent against the flying boats, but no contacts were made near the destroyers. Shortly after 1 PM, however, *Yorktown*'s radar (for the first time in combat) picked up an incoming plane. The Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters of the combat air patrol were vectored in that direction.

When the Mavis came out of the clouds, it was within 15,000 yards of the carrier. As the Kawasaki closed for an attack, it was set upon by Wildcats flown by Ensign E. Scott McCluskey and his wingman, Ensign John Adams.

One of them put a burst into the enemy's wing root, causing it to explode in midair. On *Yorktown,* the open PA system allowed the relieved crew to hear the jubilant McCluskey exclaim over his intercom, "We just shot his ass off." (McClusky would go on to score five victories at the Battle of Midway in a desperate effort to protect the ill-fated *Yorktown.*)

For the limited damage in the Gilberts, *Yorktown* lost seven planes and 16 aviators, mostly due to accidents. After his first round of attacks, Admiral Fletcher was prepared to move off to refuel and then renew the attack, but Halsey ordered him back to Pearl Harbor. Surprise in the hit-and-run attack had been achieved, and he did not want to risk defeat by an alerted enemy.

At the same time, *Yorktown* was launching its planes into the darkness, as was the distant *Enterprise*. In preparation for the raid, Halsey ordered every ship to be rigged for towing and being towed. If a ship was damaged, he wanted to be able to tow it to safety without losing time to do the preparation work under duress.

During the trip from Hawaii, the Wildcat pilots had talked the ship's outfitters into installing steel plating from boilerplate behind their cockpit seats to protect against enemy machine guns. The steel added weight to the planes, but it would save lives.

When darkness settled in on the eve of the raid, TF8 made its final run to the target at 25-30 knots to arrive undetected at the launch point before dawn. When *Enterprise* arrived on station, she was 156 miles from Kwajalein, 106 miles from Taroa, and just 36 miles from Wotje. Like *Yorktown,* she turned into the wind for a 4:15 AM launch time.

Six Wildcats were the first planes in the sky. They would serve as combat air patrol and would rotate with fresh fighters when low on fuel. This went on continuously until after sunset that day.

Next, dive bombers and torpedo planes (armed with three 500-pound bombs rather than a torpedo) roared aloft and buzzed toward distant Kwajalein Atoll. When they were away, more planes were launched toward Taroa and then Wotje. If all went well, the first wave of planes would arrive above all three island targets at roughly the same time, just before 7 AM.

As with Y*orktown,* the pilots on *Enterprise* lacked practice in nighttime operations. Forming up in the darkness once airborne proved difficult, and at least one fighter was lost in the dark when it crashed into the sea.

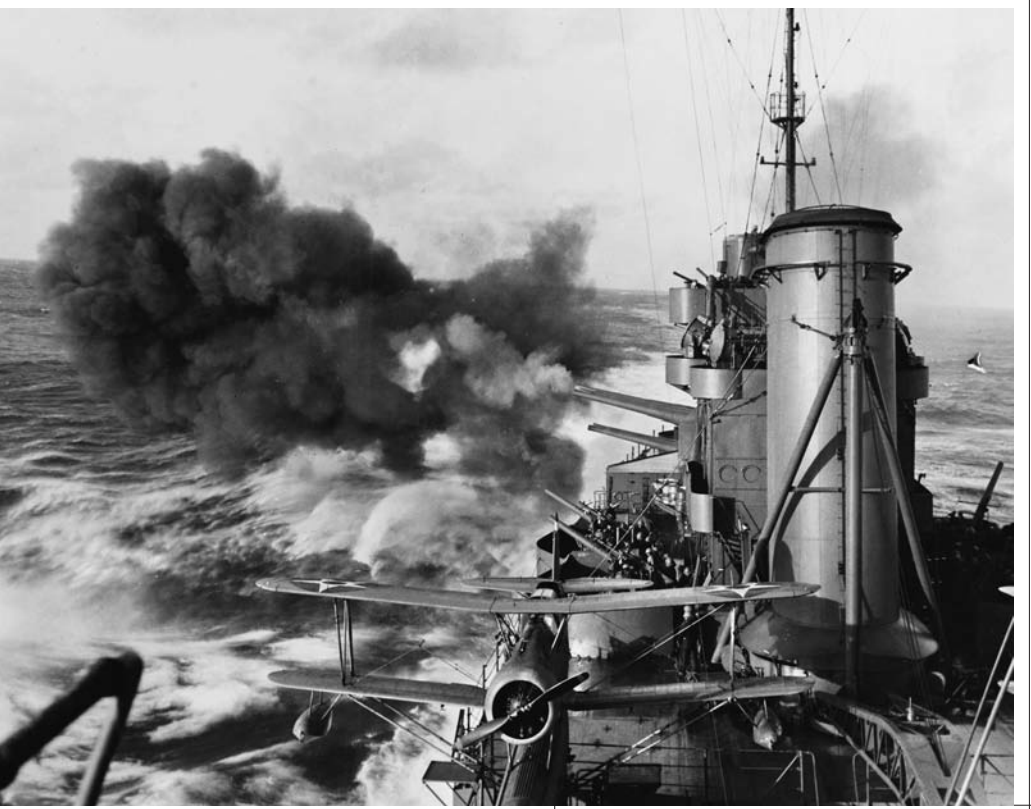
During takeoff, Halsey anxiously watched the planes and their pilots from the admiral's bridge. The man in overall command remained standing there, chain-smoking, drinking countless cups of coffee, and chewing his nails until the last plane was recovered in the afternoon. It was the kind of stress that would eventually result in a painful rash from shingles that sidelined him from the Battle of Midway.

While the flattop flung her planes into the darkness, Admiral Spruance led two of his cruisers, *Northampton* and *Salt Lake City,* close to Wotje Island for naval bombardment. Wotje was chosen for this special treatment partly because flying boats from there had assisted in the invasion of Wake Island. (A month later, on March 4, 1942, the only Japanese bombing of Oahu after the December 7 attack would come from two four-engine Kawanishi H8K Emily flying boats based at Wotje.)

The Japanese on Wotje were in for a pounding by air and sea. Meanwhile, Spruance sent Chester and two destroyers to supplement aerial bombing on Taroa as well.

As the American planes approached Kwajalein, the torpedo bombers peeled off from the formation of bombers and fighters to locate any ships within the shelter of the atoll. The dive bombers followed, looking for fortifications on the northern island of Roi, home of the atoll's air base. The Japanese were alerted at the sound of incoming engines and rushed to antiaircraft guns as their fighter pilots desperately sought to get their planes off the ground.

Six SBDs made the initial attack, destroying the base radio station, at least one ammunition dump, and two small hangars. Four of the SBDs were shot down, but the Wildcats got the best of three Mitsubishi A5M Claude naval fighters with outdated fixed landing gear in the ensuing dogfights.



ABOVE: (Left): Lieutenant Wilson Bartlett returned to USS *Chester* after flying his SOC Seagull to spot gunfire for his ship's bombardment of Taroa Island. (Right): Lieutenant Scott McCluskey shot down a Japanese Kawanishi H6K "Mavis" flying boat that attacked *Yorktown*. LEFT: The cruiser USS *Salt Lake City* shells Japanese-held Wotje Island, February 1, 1942, where there was "a bonanza of enemy aircraft." OPPOSITE: A Curtiss SOC Seagull scout-observation floatplane (left) flies over Wotje Island during the attack on the enemy airfield, February 1, 1942. Guns from the USS *Salt Lake City* and USS *Northampton* destroyed two fuel dumps and an ammunition storage facility.

Meanwhile, the anchorage at Kwajalein was found to house several merchant ships, some submarines, and the light cruiser *Katori*, which had been stationed there even before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The initial attack caught the enemy by surprise. Little defensive fire rose up in the hazy dawn. Bombs damaged a merchant

ship and sub-chaser. American pilots radioed *Enterprise* that they had found a "target-rich environment." More planes were launched toward the anchorage.

Meanwhile, another bombing squadron found an unfinished airstrip on Wotje Island. The runway was pitted with bombs and the surrounding support buildings were shot up, but there were few assets there to target.

On Taroa Island, however, there was a bonanza of enemy aircraft. Taroa was the farthest east of all Japanese air bases and was close to being fully operational. It had active aircraft and two runways of more than a mile long.

Not expecting a major enemy base to be on the small island, only five Wildcat fighters (a sixth, mentioned above, was lost on takeoff), each carrying twin 100-pound bombs, were dispatched in the first wave. The leading plane mistakenly dropped its bombs on the deserted island of Tjan, some 15 miles from Taroa. The blast alerted the defenders, who had time to begin defensive measures. Worse, Taroa was just over 100 miles distant from the exposed *Enterprise*.

The Wildcats dropped their remaining bombs and then began strafing buildings and planes on the ground. Damage was limited because the attackers were not equipped with incendiary rounds. Despite the fire from four .50 caliber guns on each plane, eight enemy fighters made it into the air, but three of the Claudes were shot down in the brief skirmish.

It was now in the most critical moment that a flaw in the F4F's .50-caliber machine guns became evident. They were prone to jam, and jam they did. Weaponless, the Wildcats broke off the dogfight with the Claudes and ran for home. One returning plane suffered 30 holes and dents in the newly installed seat armor, which saved the pilot's life. All five Wildcats returned to *Enterprise*.

By 7:15 AM, the attacking American planes over Wotje broke off and flew back to the carrier. It was the sign for Admiral Spruance to unleash his cruisers. *Northampton* and *Salt Lake City* opened up with their 8-inch guns on the island facilities and some frantic Japanese merchantmen who were trying to escape the anchorage for the open ocean. (*Northampton* would be sunk in November 1942 at the Battle of Tassafaronga. *Salt Lake City* would survive the war and two nuclear bombs at Bikini Atoll before being sunk as a target hull in 1948.)

At Taroa, *Chester* and destroyers *Balch* and *Maury* approached within 10 miles and proceeded in line ahead at 20 knots with *Balch* in the lead. At 7:15 AM, they opened up on the beehive that was now the fully awake enemy airfields. Vengeful and humiliated Japanese pilots turned their attention to the cruiser. *Chester* took one bomb hit on her well deck. Eight men were killed and 38 injured. Another wave of bombers targeted but missed her altogether. The near misses were enough to convince the cruiser to withdraw at speed. (*Chester* would survive the war and be sold for scrap in 1959.)

On *Enterprise,* returning pilots were debriefed. It became evident that Taroa needed more destructive attention. The remaining Wildcats were exempted because they were all now required to fly CAP and protect the all-important carrier. Nine Dauntless torpedo bombers, this time armed with torpedoes, were on their way to Kwajalein to deal with shipping there. They were not equipped to deal with the aircraft at Taroa and so were not ordered to that island. Fortunately, there were others.

After 35 minutes of refueling and rearming, nine SBDs were launched against Taroa at 9:35 AM. When this second wave reached the island, most of the Japanese planes were on the ground refueling and rearming. The incoming pilots could not ascertain any damage from the first raid. The diving attack came out of the sun from 13,000 feet and

damaged or destroyed two brand-new, uncamouflaged hangars and some other buildings thought to be barracks or administration huts. Other bombs incinerated nine planes on the ground. A few Claudes tried to engage the invaders but were brushed aside. All nine SBDs returned home, but no one could yet rest.

All the while, *Enterprise* maneuvered to catch and launch her planes, sometimes coming within sight of Wotje Island. During the raid, the *Big E* launched planes a total of 21 times, requiring a turn into the prevailing wind each time.

Again, planes were hurriedly refueled and rearmed for a third strike at Taroa at 10:15. The rearmed and refueled SBDs again flew into the wind and disappeared over the horizon to appear again over Taroa. This time, enemy fighters were waiting for them, and antiaircraft fire erupted immediately when the SBDs came within range. Fuel tanks, the radio station, and other Japanese assets were set ablaze. The enraged enemy pilots were relentless and downed one plane for the loss of two of their own. The SBDs did not seek out combat, but fired defensively before racing into the clouds that were 2,000-4,000 feet above the island. Only one modern Zero fighter was spotted, but no one engaged it.

When *Enterprise* had recovered all of her planes, including those on a second strike to Wotje, Admiral Halsey ordered all of his ships to make a hasty retreat. The Japanese had focused on the incoming planes and the bombarding cruiser *Chester*. Halsey did not want to press his luck: the raid had been a hit-and-run attack, and it was time to run. Task Force 8 headed on a northerly course at full speed, 30 knots. The sailors and airmen, exhausted by their labors but exultant in their victory, liked to call these rapid withdrawals after a raid "Hauling ass with Halsey!"

As they raced to safety, radar picked up incoming aircraft at 1:30 PM. They turned out to be five Mitsubishi G3M, Type 96, twin-engine bombers, which the Allies called Nell.

ABOVE: *Enterprise* crewmen fire their .50-caliber antiaircraft guns at incoming Japanese planes, February 1, 1942. OPPOSITE: A Dauntless SBD-3 dive bomber returns to *Lexington* after one of the raids. At right, a "tail hook" crewman dashes to release the arresting wire. Luckily, both *Lexington* and *Enterprise* had been at sea during the Pearl Harbor attack and so escaped destruction.

Each Nell was loaded with three 132-pound bombs.

Somehow, they had armed and taken off from the smoking wreckage of Taroa airfield, intent on doing the same to the *Big E*. Four of the CAP fighters were vectored to intercept them. Once again the jamming problem that plagued the Wildcat's .50-caliber guns was visited upon the American defenders, and the Nells slipped into the safety of a scud of nearby clouds.

When the Nells came out of the clouds, they were only 3,500 yards off *Enterprise*'s starboard bow. Every ship's gun that could be brought to bear engulfed the attackers in a torrent of lead. The ship's captain, George Murray, a naval aviator since 1915, ordered a hard turn to port followed by a hard turn to starboard. The wriggling carrier and the wall of lead threw off the bombers' aim, causing all of the bombs to fall into the sea and explode. Damage was confined to a single gasoline hose, which burst, caught fire, and fatally burned a crewman.

Four of the bombers turned impotently for home. The fifth Nell, piloted by Lieutenant Kazuo Nakai, trailed smoke and was too damaged for the flight home. Instead, Nakai determined to crash his plane into the carrier.

A hail of bullets and shells marked his approach. Then a crew member on the carrier leaped into action. Aviation Machinist Mate 3rd Class Bruno Gaido left his watch station and jumped into the rear gunner's seat of a Dauntless dive bomber. This was Gaido's station when the plane was in the air, but not when it was on deck. He fired off the plane's twin .30-caliber rear guns at the incoming suicide bomber.

At the last moment, an alert Captain Murray ordered another hard starboard swivel. The combination of the hard turn and Gaido's shooting point-blank into the cockpit of the incoming plane caused the death-bent bomber to miss the deck and fall into the sea. Its wing, however, clipped and severed the tail of Gaido's SBD, which was parked on the edge of the flight deck.

The plane spun around but remained on deck. Gaido calmly climbed out of the

ruined plane and helped put out a small fire from the near miss before disappearing below decks. He was afraid he would be punished for leaving his assigned post.

From the admiral's bridge, Halsey had seen the whole thing and ordered that whoever it was in the rear gunner's seat be brought to him on the bridge. When Gaido nervously appeared before his admiral, Halsey asked, "What is your rank son?" Gaido answered, "AMM 3rd Class, sir." Halsey, beaming with pride, replied, "Well, you are AMM 1st Class, now," and he promoted him on the spot.

There is a sad postscript to Gaido's heroism. At the Battle of Midway, his SBD crash-landed into the sea, riddled with bullet holes. He and his pilot, Ensign Frank W. O'Flaherty, were picked up by the Japanese destroyer *Makigumo* and interrogated. Frustrated by the Americans' unwillingness to divulge information and the humiliating loss of their carriers, their captors threw the two airmen into the vast, empty ocean, where they drowned. Their fate was not learned until the end of the war.

After the near miss from the Nells, the *Big E* and her task force continued their northward flight. Halsey figured that the Japanese would look for the raiders in the direction of Hawaii, so he steamed on this course until dark. It all played out as originally planned in Rainbow 5, except there were no battleships to fall back on.

The enemy was not yet done. A seaplane stalked the task force at a distance until the CAP fighters were able to force it into the sea. Then, at 3 PM, two more Nells made a bombing run at *Enterprise*. Again, heavy fire and nimble maneuvering resulted in near misses for the attacking bombers. The CAP fighters shot down one of the attackers and left the other trailing smoke on its homeward flight.

After dark, but under a full moon, Halsey retrieved his CAP fighters and maneuvered to the northwest until he found low-hanging clouds to hide under. After a few hours with no radar sightings, he finally turned for home.

After refueling, TF8 arrived at Pearl Harbor on February 5. *Yorktown* and TF17 arrived the next day. Their exploits preceded them, filling hearts with pride. The crews of ships at anchor amid the wreckage of Battleship Row sounded their whistles, and sailors cheered the victorious raiders of both carriers and their escorts.

It was the first American offensive victory in the Pacific War and was trumpeted across the nation as long-sought good news. Inflated accounts of the damage done to the Japanese swelled with the telling. It would not be until after the war that more modest assessments would be realized.

In Japan, the raid came as both a shock and a cautionary tale. Admiral Isoroku

Yamamoto, the mastermind of the Pearl Harbor attack, had estimated that his navy would have six months after that attack to dominate a Pacific war unhindered. As it was, Japanese total domination had lasted less than two months. The raid did not slow the Japanese juggernaut in the Far East, but it did make clear to their naval planners that American aircraft carriers would have to be dealt with and soon.

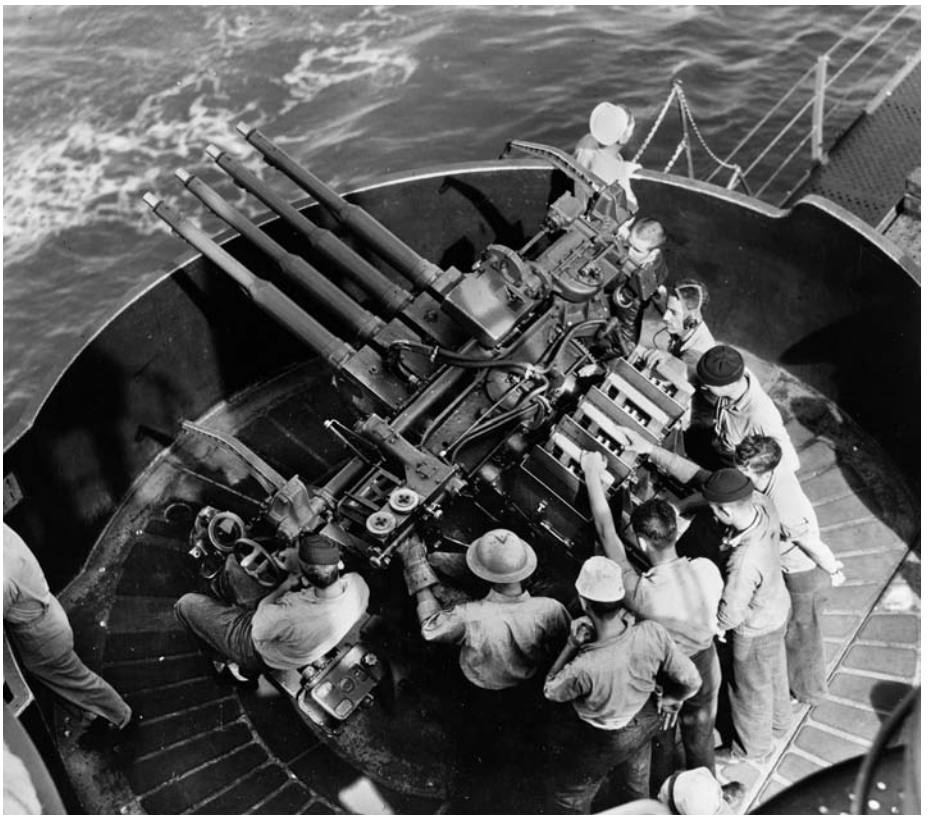
The Marshalls-Gilberts raid was just the beginning. A more audacious raid was planned for February 20. This time, *Lexington,* with a strong escort of four cruisers and 10 destroyers, steamed far into enemy waters to bomb recently occupied Rabaul.

Unfortunately, the squadron was spotted while still 350 miles from its objective. Enemy bombers soon appeared over the closest of the ships. In a violent struggle, 18 Japanese planes were shot down for the loss of two of *Lexington*'s fighters. No bomb hits were made on the carrier but several came near. It was a close call. Rather than press their attack on Rabaul or press their luck, the Americans withdrew.

Following his successful raid on the Marshalls, Admiral Halsey was directed to conduct a raid on Wake Island. *Enterprise* was to be supported by two cruisers and seven destroyers. *Yorktown* was also to participate, but was diverted for another task, forcing Halsey to proceed without her. *Northampton, Salt Lake City, Balch,* and *Maury,* all veterans of the bombardment of Wotje and Taroa, were to bombard Peale Island, a part of the Wake Atoll.

Halsey's squadron arrived on station before dawn on February 24. Due to bad weather, the launch of planes was delayed so that the shore bombardment by the cruisers and destroyers occurred before the carrier planes could arrive. Fortunately, the Americans met with almost no fighter or bomber opposition.

BELOW: An *Enterprise* gun crew prepares to repel Japanese attackers with their quad 28mm antiaircraft gun, February 24, 1942. The Marshall Islands raid boosted American morale, gave valuable combat experience to the U.S. Navy, and worried Japanese leaders who realized that they faced a powerful foe. LEFT: The flight deck of *Enterprise* is crowded with Dauntless dive bombers as they prepare to attack Wake Island, February 24, 1942. The cruiser *Salt Lake City* and an unidentified destroyer trail the carrier.



A great deal of damage was done to Japanese installations for the loss of only three planes, two due to accidents and one to sporadic antiaircraft fire. No ships were hit. The raid was considered a success, and another one was planned.

This time, the target was the Japanese-held Minami-Tori-shima Island, known in the West as Marcus Island. This spot of land was 600 miles northwest of Wake and that much closer to the Japanese homeland. This time, only *Northampton* and *Salt Lake City* accompanied *Enterprise*.

During a full moon before dawn, *Enterprise* launched her planes only 125 miles from the island. Again, the SBDs carried 100- and 500-pound bombs. With thick clouds obscuring the island, *Enterprise*'s radar operator vectored the planes to their target—a new tactic at the time. No enemy planes were spotted, and only one attacking plane was lost to antiaircraft fire. Once again, an audacious raid, regardless of the limited extent of damage, proved that aircraft carriers could strike at will anywhere in the Pacific.

Admiral Halsey's next mission would be to escort Colonel Jimmy Doolittle on his raid against Tokyo. Japan's response would be the attack on Midway, where they hoped to draw out the American carriers and sink them. Instead, the epic carrier battle of World War II would end by blunting Japanese striking capabilities and naval dominance beyond repair.

The slugfest of the two navies around Guadalcanal later in 1942 would find each side locked in a war of attrition from which neither side would flinch and each would inflict heavy punishment on the other.

Slowly, the American production miracle overwhelmed the Japanese, hastening its inevitable conclusion. The U.S. manufacturing juggernaut would produce 17 fleet carriers, nine light fleet carriers, and a staggering 78 escort carriers. The Japanese, under increasing pressure from a dominant enemy, could not keep up. □

Personality

Continued from page 15

After the failure of our air offensive on England, they embarked upon a path of criminal carelessness. They did not want to see the danger, because they would have had to admit their many omissions and neglects."

"Unpleasant reminders," he added, perhaps referring to himself, "were regarded as a great nuisance."

Interestingly, it was Galland's frankness and directness that made him such an asset when captured in May 1945 by American forces. He proved open and helpful, and his interrogation reports provided straightforward insights and assessments of German tactics, strategies, and military capabilities. Even today, more than seven decades after the bitter war, one is taken aback by the objective observations and insights that Galland provided.

The examples are numerous in his postwar comments, including an October 15, 1945, interrogation in which he stated, "Göring often appeared in operational units and made spot promotions of NCOs to officers for little or no reason, thereby burdening the Luftwaffe with some unqualified officers."

In the same interview, he noted that fighter pilots were not held in high esteem by the upper levels of the Luftwaffe, which was composed largely of bombardment personnel. His assessments of Allied fighters and their strategies also proved insightful, providing new ways to train pilots and arm planes for future conflicts.

Galland also produced German statistics to his captors from early in the war that showed that, when a larger number of attacking planes participated in a raid, the percentage of losses decreased. Interestingly, as Allied raiding strength increased as the war progressed, the percentage of Allied losses indeed decreased.

Taken captive after the war, he was released by the Americans in 1947, after which the energetic Galland went on to a successful career as an aviation consultant, first serving seven years with the Argentine Air Force before returning to Germany. He passed away quietly in Germany on February 9, 1996. □

Monty

Continued from page 37

the World War I as an example. His priority as military governor was to delegate work to unemployed Germans. He conjectured that a healthy Germany largely depended on economic revival. His theory about Germany's revival process ended up proving true as Germany, reconstructing itself with the aid of the Marshall Plan, transformed into an economic powerhouse in the postwar era.

The period Montgomery spent in Germany as a military governor was hazardous. The local population was not, in many cases, peaceful. He described many Germans in the region as "all-out Nazis." Indeed, a conspiracy against British military occupiers was unearthed. Despite this, Montgomery did not adopt draconian measures. He maintained a firm grip on the occupied population, cultivating reconstruction without being too severe.

Montgomery made many personal sacrifices equal to those of his men. He spent literally years on the front lines without reprieve. The war left him with injuries, property loss, and hard memories that impacted the rest of his life.

Montgomery was injured in an August 1945 plane crash. He was traveling in a Miles Messenger aircraft when the engine stopped running in midair approaching a landing strip, and the plane dropped from the sky. Two other men in the small aircraft were unscathed, but Montgomery was badly injured with many bruises and two broken lumbar vertebrae.

Never one to show worry, Montgomery dismissed the painful injuries and took another flight the same day. However, he was weakened by five years on battlefronts and contracted influenza and pleurisy. Devoted to his work, Montgomery took only a single month of leave in 1946 to recover before continuing his duties. The crash caused back problems that took many years to recuperate from.

Montgomery was homeless by the war's end. Most of his property was lost during the conflict—in addition to his destroyed belongings, even his pet terrier that traveled with him on the front lines was killed in 1944. His only living quarters were the mobile military caravans he had traveled in for the last several years. Returning to England, he lived in his vehicles parked outside for a period and used his savings to buy and refurbish an abandoned old mill in the countryside. The governments of Australia and Tasmania numbered among donors who supplied him with construction materials.

Montgomery's grim wartime experiences left deep impressions on him. "In my adult life, during two world wars, there has been the most incredible cruelty inflicted on humanity by nations calling themselves civilized," he wrote. As postwar tensions developed, Montgomery became disillusioned with the outcome of World War II. He wrote that he feared the peace his troops fought and died to achieve was a dimming prospect and that another war would render his men's sacrifices made in vain.

At 71, Montgomery retired after more than 50 years of active-duty military service, an unprecedented accomplishment in British military history. In reality, the energetic general was far from retired. He devoted the rest of his life to actively promoting peace.

"The aim of the general must be not only to win wars but also to play his part in preventing them," he wrote. "Nobody knows better than a soldier the overwhelming value of that prize, because nobody knows better than a soldier the monster called War."

The fiery career fighter, however, was no pacifist. "Much good as well as evil is released in war," he wrote. "When men are inspired to offer themselves to a high and noble cause, the hardships of war draw out of them their best qualities: comradeship, endurance, courage, self-sacrifice, willingness to die."

He remained proud that he and his soldiers accomplished something good by defeating the Nazi system. "The peace we now enjoy is the peace of victory over the beast in men," he wrote, "and this victory will not survive if the virtues which gained and sustain it are lost." □

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