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USMC Ret. Master Gunnery Sergeant Bob Verell takes a moment to honor those commemorated on the replica Vietnam Memorial Wall.
Photo by Thomas Wells

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Cover: A British paratrooper photographed in October 1942 during training. He carries a 9mm Sten Gun. See story page 36. Photo: Imperial War Museum

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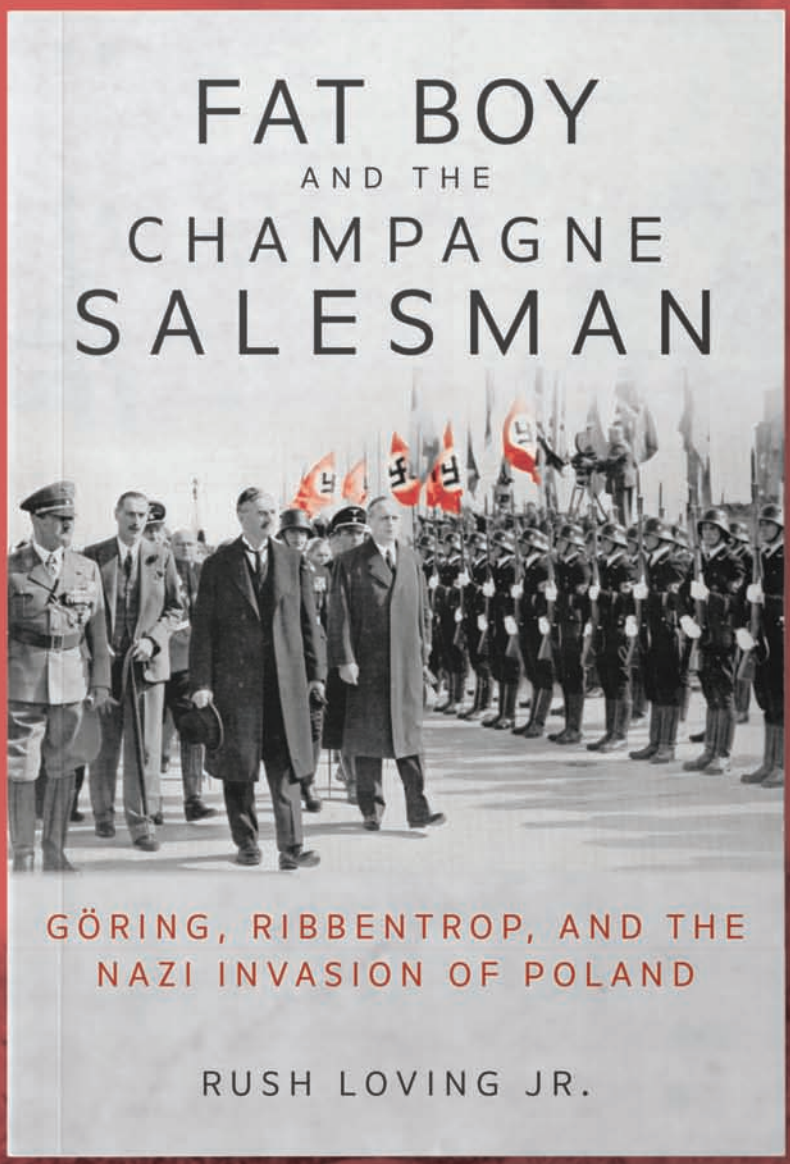

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~Walter Wells, former executive editor of the *International Herald-Tribune*

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Ukraine 2022: Echoes of 1939

Unlike the weekly current-events magazines, *WWII Quarterly* is edited, assembled, and sent off to the printer well in advance of the day you receive it in the mail or pick it up at the newsstand. Therefore, this editorial will be old news by the time you read it.

As I write, Vladimir Putin's Russian army is just a month into its invasion of Ukraine. The scenes of death and destruction are heartbreaking—burning buildings, whole towns leveled, refugees trying to escape, etc. If some of the images seen on the news were in black and white, you'd swear that they were taken some 80 years ago.

Instead of German soldiers riding atop tanks into battle on the Eastern Front, now they're Russians. And they aren't Russians repelling the German invader but rather Russian invaders trying to crush and subjugate a former part of the old Soviet Union. *Lebensraum*, anyone?

Yet, as of this writing, the Ukrainians are doing remarkably well—much better than the brave Poles of 1939—or the French, Belgians, Norwegians, etc., of 1939 and 1940. Instead of rolling over as many observers expected, the Ukrainians have put up a fierce resistance that has, at least as of this writing, stymied the aggressors.

And for what? A "false-flag" operation with echoes of Hitler's reasons for invading Poland (i.e., the faked Polish attack on a German radio station at Gleiwitz in August 1939)?

Putin's self-vaunted Russian army is proving to be a faint echo of Stalin's Red Army, which held off and then defeated Hitler's legions. Russian-army logistics are a joke, generals are getting killed, and many of the troops are deserting. Ambushes are knocking out scores of Russian tanks, and even Russian helicopters are being blown out of the air.

Nicholas Goldberg, in the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote, "In the United States, we are notoriously ignorant or forgetful of such [European] history. According to a 2018 survey, six in 10 Americans can't even name the countries we fought against in World War II." Which is appalling.

Still, the Russians have pummelled Ukrainian cities with impunity and stand-off weapons—devastating homes, apartments, schools, hospitals, and cultural centers, and killing innocent civilians.

The Ukrainians are resisting the advance of the Russians just as the Russians resisted the advance of the Germans eight decades ago.

Another interesting parallel: Before the U.S. became involved in WWII, we were shipping military goods to Britain and the Soviet Union to help them stand up to Hitler's onslaught—just as we are doing with Ukraine today.

Hitler's aggression had real force behind it; Putin's was mostly a bluff built on intimidation and a fear that his troops and tanks were as good as they were 80 years ago. His only ace in the hole is a threat to use nukes. As one observer noted, he's lost 10,000 soldiers in a month—as many as the Russian lost in Afghanistan in 10 years.

Some have suggested that Putin and his generals should be arrested and put on trial for war crimes, as the Allies did with the German and Japanese leaders after WWII ended. There is an International Criminal Court, of course, but no international police force that's going to bust down the Kremlin's doors and perp-walk Putin out into Red Square.

But how, when, and even if this unnecessary war ends is anyone's guess at this point.

—Flint Whitlock, Editor
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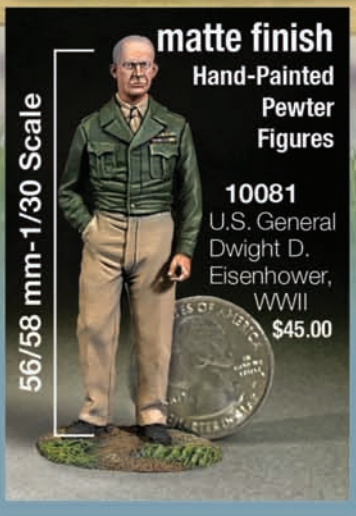

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2nd Lt. Reba Z. Whittle, flight nurse—and the only female P.O.W. in the ETO

On September 27, 1944, a C-47 Skytrain named "Mary," tail number 43-48395, prepared to depart Royal Air Force Base Wharton in Lancashire, England, filled with assorted medical supplies destined for a U.S. Army field hospital in northeast France. After delivering the supplies, "Mary" was to have been loaded with wounded American soldiers and flown back to a hospital in England.

"Mary" was under the command of 1st Lt. Ralph Parker and co-pilot 2nd Lt. David Forbes. Two enlisted men were also on board: Sergeant Harold Bonser, the flight engineer, and Corporal Chester Bright, the radio operator.

Also on board was flight nurse 2nd Lt. Reba Zitella Whittle of Rocksprings, Texas—140 miles west of San Antonio—and surgical technician Tech-3 Jonathan Hill. The 25-year-old Lieutenant Whittle was an experienced flight nurse; this was her 40th flight. While there was not much for her to do on this leg of the journey, she knew that coming back she would have her hands full caring for a planeload of wounded men, many in agony.

In the late 1930s, before the war began, Reba had completed the nursing course from Medical and Surgical Memorial Hospital's School of Nursing in San Antonio, then

National Archives

ABOVE: Nurse Reba Whittle stands at the door of a C-47 transport plane prior to departure. OPPOSITE: Army nurse 2nd Lieutenant Katherine Friedrich attends to a wounded patient aboard a Douglas C-47 transport aircraft bound for Britain. The evacuation plane had taken off from Toul, France, where Allied soldiers who were wounded in combat or ill were prepared for the flight.

invested another year at North Texas State College in Denton, Texas, studying Home Economics.

On June 10, 1941, Reba attended the Army's primary medical post at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio for an Army induction physical. Standing five-feet five-inches tall and weighing a mere 117 pounds, she was easily disqualifiable for being underweight for her height. Only under advisement of increasing her calorie intake to gain an extra seven pounds was she able to meet the requirements for military duty as a registered nurse. She was commissioned a second lieutenant and given Army serial number N-734426, with the "N" designating "Nurse." Her date of enlistment was June 13, 1941.

After serving at the Albuquerque Air Base Hospital, she spent 27 months working at the Station Hospital at Kirkland Field, New Mexico, and at Mather Field near Sacramento, California. She then volunteered for overseas duty. In August 1943, she was enrolled in the Army Air Forces School of Air Evacuation at Bowman Field, Kentucky.

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In July 1943, Lieutenant Katye Swope, a nurse with the 802nd Medical Air Evacuation Transport Squadron, prepares patients for a flight from Agrigento, Sicily, to Britain for further medical treatment. Allied air evacuation operations began during the campaign in North Africa in February 1943 and continued for the duration of World War II in every theater.

She attended the six-week school and learned a variety of duties and responsibilities that would be hers once she reached the European Theater. She graduated in November 1943 and, on January 22, 1944, joined 25 other flight nurses aboard the ocean liner HMS *Queen Mary* for the trans-Atlantic crossing to England.

Once there, she was assigned to the 813th Medical Aeromedical Evacuation Transportation Squadron (MAETS) of the 310th Ferry Squadron, 27th Air Transport Group. For the next nine months Reba found residency upon three Royal Air Force bases: RAF Nottingham, RAF Brighton, and finally RAF Grove outside of Oxford, northwest of London.

Reba came to a realization of hazards connected to being a military flight nurse when she read a book written by Juanita Redmond, who had been an Army nurse in the Philippines when Japan invaded on the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. Redmond managed to escape the islands via a U.S. submarine to write her tales in the book, *I Served on Bataan* (Lippincott, 1943). By war's end, 201 American nurses were killed. Within the collective of the 813th, nurses never openly discussed such consequences of war.

That all changed on the fateful day of September 27, 1944.

Strapped into her seat in the unheated fuselage of the cargo plane named "Mary," Reba closed her eyes for the two-hour flight, and began drifting off to sleep, lulled by the loud drone of the two Pratt & Whitney engines.

At this point of the war, the Western Allies were pushing the German Army ever eastward. Heavy fighting had taken place from September 17-25 during Operation Market Garden, a bold-but-flawed plan hatched by British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery that was intended to cross the Rhine River and push into northwest Germany.

But the operation had not gone as planned, and so the Allied drive became stalled, with heavy casualties.

The drowsy lieutenant had no idea that the plane was 60 miles off course, having overflown the airport where it was supposed to have landed and was now approaching the German city of Aachen and its protective screen of 88mm anti-aircraft gun batteries.

Since the plane, in accordance with U.S. Army policy, was not marked as a medical evacuation plane, the Germans below saw it as just another C-47, a viable air target worthy of being shot down.

Suddenly, the ear-punching booms of 88mm shells blotted out the roar of the plane's engines, and shards of white-hot shell splinters ripped through the plane's thin aluminum skin.

In her diary, Reba wrote, "Was sleeping quite soundly in the back of our hospital plane until suddenly awakened by terrific sounds of guns and cracklings of the plane as if it had gone into bits. For a few moments I hardly knew what to think.... Looked at my Surgical Tech [Hill] opposite me with blood flowing from his left leg. The noise by this time seemed to be much worse. But to see the left engine blazing away is simply more than I can express.

"Started to scream and cry as most women would, but Sgt. Hill consoled me and assured it wouldn't help—at that time I realized no value would be of benefit and he had been injured and should be the one crying. About that time he was hit in the left arm as I had my head on is left shoulder."

Jolted as though slugged with a giant boxing glove, "Mary," with six persons aboard, began a sharp descent to earth.

Luckily, the pilots were able to maintain a semblance of control and managed to bring the damaged plane in for a crash landing. Reba flew forward and smashed into the navigator's compartment head first. She wrote, "The ship was nearly blazing and holes every place, some large enough to crawl through back in the fuselage. Noticed the others crawling out the top hatch, so immediately went zooming out. Three out before I—the pilot last—who fell as if he had been badly wounded. One never came out."

German soldiers quickly surrounded the plane and watched as four of the five persons on board stumbled out; all made it except for radio operator Chester Bright. A German soldier wrapped a bandage around Reba's bleeding head. The five survivors were taken into custody as prisoners of war.

Reba Whittle was woozy from a concussion and bleeding from a gash to her forehead. Her surgical technician, Jona-

than Hill, was bleeding severely from injuries to his left arm and leg. The others—Parker, Forbes, and Bonser—were shaken but relatively uninjured.

With weapons drawn, the German troops herded the Americans together and marched them to a house "where we went into a dank dungeon cellar which really looked very spooky and smelled very bad." A doctor came in and provided some immediate first aid.

The group was then marched for two or three miles to a village on the outskirts of Aachen, then stopped at a brick house. Reba wrote, "Marched us in where four or five German officers sat in this office. There we stood like dummies and them giving us terrific glares. They showed us immediately to another room where the guard gave the Sgt. a glass of wine. Before he had time to complete his wine, they pushed us outside. There we sat on the ground shivering as it was rather cold . . . We had to sit outside there for some time, until a queer-looking truck came up and they motioned for us to get in.

"Never a word between the guards and us as neither could understand," she said. The truck arrived at a larger village and the prisoners were herded into a barn, where they were given some pears to eat. An officer who spoke good English came in and brought them into the kitchen of the farmhouse and gave them some more food and drink. Being a woman, Reba was of particular interest to the officers.

After their meal, the POWs were taken on a 40-minute bus ride to "a huge-looking place surrounded by a very high metal fence and a guard at the gate to let us in." After more food, the five Americans were led to dirty rooms, where Reba was allowed her own room (with straw mattress) and the four men in another; afraid of being alone, she moved in with the four men.

An interrogator arrived and began asking questions. "The air-raid alarm came and he said, 'Well, too bad—you might be bombed by your own people.' And out he went. This night was the longest I ever spent."

The next day the group was taken by truck, and prisoner Reba was subjected to stares by the villagers in each town they

National Archives; Inset: U.S. Air Force

ABOVE: Lieutenant Pauline Curry, and medical technician, Sergeant Lewis Marker, see to the comfort of a patient during an evacuation flight in the skies over India. Approximately 500 nurses served in 31 medical air evacuation squadrons during World War II. RIGHT: Lieutenant Whittle photographed shortly after her release from a German prison camp.

passed through. At one stop a German doctor looked at her and shook his head. "Too bad having a woman, as you are the first one and no one knows exactly what to do," he said in English.

For nearly five months, none of the Germans knew what to do with Reba Whittle. Germany was signatory to the Geneva Accords pertaining to the health and welfare of POWs and felt compelled to provide some degrees of safety and comfort as best as war conditions allowed.

The journey continued, with the truck finally arriving at an airfield. Reba noted, "The city was very badly damaged. Could hardly see a house or building that wasn't torn up."

By now her injuries and fear of the unknown were getting the best of her. She was put alone into the room of a house. "This is when I really first let down and cried. They couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. So I asked for my Surg. Tech [Hill] to be put in there with me. Felt much better when he came in but couldn't stop crying for quite awhile."

For the next few hours, Reba and the others were questioned by their captors, then sent by night train to Frankfurt am Main—and a Luftwaffe intelligence center at Oberursal, just outside Frankfurt. Reba was separated from her male companions and locked in a cell. "Extremely depressing," she said. "The more I thought of being in a cell and wondering what would happen next, I became terrified and started crying. Felt more like screaming and a perfect wonder I didn't."

A couple of German officers came in. "Took my name and said how sorry they were to have a nurse as a POW as they had no facilities at all. [They] asked some questions and said I would go to a hospital nearby, and they had a few of our boys there."

Reba was taken to the hospital, where she was allowed to bathe. A British gentleman, possibly a doctor, gave her clean men's clothing for her to change into. After he left, she was locked into a room and became hysterical. Gradually she calmed down and the nurses there brought her flowers, fruit, and bobby pins for her hair.

On the morning of October 6, Reba was taken on an all-day trip to a hospital in Obermassfeld, near Weimar. She said, "This was a British and American [POW] hospital run by British doctors." Here she was asked by the doctors if she would be able to perform some nursing duties; she agreed. "All the boys seeming very glad to see an American nurse," she wrote, "plus being greatly surprised and all anxious to hear how I was taken [prisoner]."

Reba recalled, "Shall never forget one of our boys by the name of Davis from Dallas who had lost his right arm. His kind words and hospitality was really appreciated. Then to see how he made himself so useful after having an arm off was remarkable."

Soon she was off to another hospital, this one in Meiningen—Stalag 9-C—between Frankfurt and Leipzig. The hospital was a large building that had been a concert hall before the war; the patients were a mixture of Americans and Brits. She said that she "felt very out of place being among 500 men." She went to work in the Burn Unit and wherever else she was needed.

The staff of the hospital went out of their way to make her comfortable—hung framed pictures on the wall in her room, installed curtains, brought in or made a table, cupboard, and even an easy chair. A South African gave her a bottle of perfume that he had carried through Sicily and Italy; he had been a POW for four years. Someone came up with a tube of lipstick. "They all actually were too good to me. Always trying to get or make something to be more comfortable and make me happy," she wrote.

In late October a group from the International Red Cross inspected the hospital. As stipulated within the Geneva Accords, such visits were routine in determining which disabled prisoners could be repatri-

Continued on page 96

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During World War II, the U.S. Army determined that the typical frontline infantryman couldn't take much more than 200 to 240 days of combat before mentally falling apart. By April 1945, 1st Lt. Philip B. Larimore, Jr., of the 3rd Infantry Division's 30th Infantry Regiment, had already trudged through 416 days of frontline combat, and he wondered if he was fighting on borrowed time.

After landing in Naples, Italy, in late February 1944, Phil had led his Ammunition & Pioneer Platoon through the Anzio "Bitch-Head," marched into a liberated Rome, and participated in Operation Dragoon, the amphibious assault on southern France that began on August 15, 1944.

In the fall of 1944, Phil took a sniper bullet to the right hip in a ferocious battle with the German Wehrmacht outside St. Diè in northeastern France—his second major wound in the war. He was lucky to be alive. He recovered in an officer's ward next to Audie Murphy, another 3rd Division dogface and the most decorated American combat soldier of World War II. Murphy was to receive every military combat award for valor available from the U.S. Army, while Phil would be awarded most of them.

Phil returned to active duty on Christmas Eve 1944 and participated in intense firefights on the frozen Colmar plains, almost being overrun by elite German troops in the near-disaster of the Battle for the Maison Rouge Bridge. He was promoted, becoming one of the youngest company commanders in the war. The Allies crossed the Rhine River with the goal of beating the Russians to Berlin.

In the first days of April 1945, Phil completed a top-secret, one-day mission into

National Archives

1st Lt. Philip B. Larimore, Jr., the youngest graduate of Fort Benning's Officer Candidate School during World War II, had one of the most dangerous jobs—frontline combat with the 3rd Infantry Division.

BY WALT LARIMORE AND MIKE YORKEY

Czechoslovakia, far behind enemy lines, to confirm Hitler's secret horse farm, which housed most of the breeding population of the world-famous and critically endangered Lipizzan horses—all later rescued by U.S. Army forces in the secret and potentially illegal Operation Cowboy.

Phil was proud to return to the "Rock of the Marne" 3rd Infantry Division, which was awarded one-fourth of all the Medals of Honor presented during the war and suffered more casualties than any other division in the U.S. Army—over 34,000 altogether—with over 80 percent being riflemen. More than 80 percent of officers killed were front-line first or second lieutenants. It was the only infantry division in WWII to receive the Distinguished Unit Citation.

After returning to his unit, Love Company, part of the 30th Infantry's 3rd Battalion, they met heavy resistance entering the town of Wolfsmünster, Germany—between Frankfurt-am-Main, to the west, and Nuremberg, to the southeast. When a sniper shot one of Phil's officers through the head, instantly killing him, he and his executive officer, Abe Fitterman, ran up and found their men crouched behind a downtown building. The officer's body was lying in the middle of the street; what was left of his head rested in a pool of blood.

"Helluva sniper," the sergeant warned

INSET: Captain Phil Larimore served with the 3rd Infantry Division and was one of the youngest American company commanders in the European Theater. TOP: On March 20, 1944, soldiers of the 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division proceed cautiously through the rubble of Zweibrucken, Germany. Some fires still burn in the devastated city.

them. "He can shoot a fly off the top of your helmet. We think he's shooting from the town square—maybe an office building or the church. About 250, 300 yards up the road. Want to call in artillery?"

Phil took off his helmet, leaned over his sergeant, who was kneeling, and slowly pushed his helmet around the corner. He was not surprised when the helmet was cracked out of his hand by a sniper bullet.

"Damn! He *is* good!" Then again, Phil knew that most German snipers were accurate up to 400 yards.

"German sniper rifles have a five-round internal box magazine, right?" Abe asked.

"Haven't seen one with more," Phil answered. "Yet."

"If he didn't reload, and I doubt he did, he's got four shots left."

Abe came around Phil and crouched down behind him and the kneeling sergeant. "I've got an idea, Lieutenant."

"I'm all ears."

"You guys each have a 15-round magazine in your Garands?"

Phil and the sergeant nodded.

"Sergeant, you take the low position. Phil, you take high. On my signal, aim your rifles around the building and begin rapid fire toward the church, but don't expose any body parts and only release six or seven shots."

"What do you have in mind?" Phil asked.

"After he shoots back, I'm going to sprint across the street and see if I can get a bead on the guy. I ought to have a better angle from over there. Cover me by blasting out the rest of your magazines."

Phil remembered the "three-second rule" that one of his A&P platoon sergeants taught him at Anzio, where the men had been pinned down for over four months. If an enemy soldier drew a bead on you during a firefight, it took him three-fourths of a second to locate you. Then it took him another second and a half to raise his weapon and another half a second to put you in his sights. Three seconds was all you had to get cover.

Phil nodded and moved into position alongside his sergeant, their rifles poised.

"On the count of three," Abe instructed. "One-two-three!"

Phil and the sergeant began firing blindly. Within seconds, three or four sniper bullets blasted the corner of the brick building, spraying fragments over the men, who pulled their guns back. A second later, Abe hotfooted it to the other side of the street without drawing a shot.

The three-second rule, Phil thought, happy that Abe had just enough time to sprint across the narrow road.

Then Abe pulled a hand mirror out of his belt pack. "On my signal, do the helmet trick again."

"Damn, Abe! We're gonna run out of helmets before the bastard runs out of ammo!"

Abe smiled as he lay on the ground, positioning the mirror around the edge of the

Photo courtesy the author

ABOVE: Posing atop the massive German railroad gun nicknamed 'Anzio Annie,' Lieutenant Abraham Fitterman takes a seat. Fitterman served as Larimore's executive officer while he commanded Company L, 3rd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment. OPPOSITE: Infantrymen of the 3rd Division pick their way through the rubble of Mignano, Italy, after heavy shelling by both German and American artillery. Larimore joined the division in Naples in February 1944.

National Archives

building so he could examine the street. Several blocks away, on the other side of the town square, sat an ancient stone church with a rectangular stone steeple and a stone balcony around it.

"Okay!" he yelled. "Now!"

The sniper took the bait and easily nailed the sergeant's helmet, allowing Fitterman to see the muzzle flash.

"He's in the top of the church steeple. About three blocks up."

"I'll call in two bazooka squads and a tank to come up pronto," Phil said.

Within a matter of minutes, all arrived. Phil signaled the tank to go around the corner and take out the steeple.

Machine-gun, rifle, and small-arms fire erupted from buildings on either side of the street, ricocheting off the tank's front and turret. Phil knew the sniper would not fire on the tank and give away his position.

The Sherman moved up to—but not over—the officer's body. The tank barrel slowly raised. Phil smiled as he realized the sniper now knew he'd been found out. *Probably crapping in his pants and jumping down the steps as fast as possible,* Phil thought. *But we're gonna nail his ass!*

With a single blast from the tank's 76-mm cannon, the steeple disintegrated. Fragments of lumber and limestone rained onto the town center. As if in slow motion, Phil watched the sniper tumble through the air until the lifeless body thudded onto the cobblestones.

Phil had the tank provide cover while he ordered one bazooka team and half his men to cross the street quickly. By the time they reached the town square, where all resistance had ended, the men had killed five, wounded 11, and captured 125 German soldiers.

As they walked into the town square, Abe checked out the dead sniper. He was rolling the corpse over when Phil walked up.

"Well, I'll be!" Phil exclaimed as he and the men gathered around. At their feet was a young and attractive woman dressed in civilian clothes. The GIs had seen increasing numbers of civilian snipers, but this was the first German female fighter any of the men had seen.

"Why the hell didn't she shoot and scoot?" Abe asked.

"Maybe an SS mistress?" wondered one. "No matter. Her sorry ass is dead."

"Let's move out!" Phil barked.

Throughout the night, the regiment advanced east and northeast, taking all assigned objectives en route, inflicting severe damage to enemy equipment and taking many more POWs.

The following day, April 6, 1945, a cobalt-blue sky couldn't decide whether to issue sprinkles or deliver a dousing rain shower.

Love Company joined Item Company in clearing several villages before moving out toward the east. Their goal for the day: the village of Oberthulba. That morning, they passed upturned and bombed-out enemy vehicles with dead drivers and crew scattered about, the result of sweeping strikes from P-47 Thunderbolts that strafed and bombed the German column to oblivion. Phil watched impassively as two gray-haired civilian men struggled to lift and toss the stiffening corpses onto a horse-drawn wagon.

Phil studied his map, which showed pastureland bordered by thick forests on each side. He assigned his 1st Platoon to penetrate the forest to the north and his 3rd Pla-

toon to the south. His 2nd Platoon, trailed by tanks and tank destroyers (TDs), would stay with him and follow a single-lane road slicing through green pastureland. From his vantage point, he observed flanking riflemen working their way slowly through thick underbrush and woods. The platoons stayed in touch with him by radio but encountered no resistance.

Phil was apprehensive that they might be walking into a trap—and wished his command had given him time to send scouting patrols up front. As the men moved out of the woods, however, an enormous eruption of small-arms and machine-gun fire burst out from the woods directly ahead.

The GIs instinctively hit the ground and returned fire. A tsunami of bullets whistled overhead and was so concentrated that Phil couldn't initially differentiate between friendly and enemy fire. He motioned to Fitterman and the rest of his Command Post (CP) staff to follow him as he moved them up and into a gully.

Then the enemy fire suddenly stopped. Only an occasional rifle shot could be heard. He called the platoon leaders to determine what was happening.

"Hit a thick line of Krauts," answered one of his lieutenants. "Damnedest thing. Looks like a company made up of young boys and old men."

"I don't care what their ages are. We gotta take them out," Phil said.

Yelling to one of the radiomen, he issued an order: "Call battalion. Get the A&P platoon up here pronto with as much M1 and BAR ammo as they can carry." Next, he radioed his up-front men and found out that both platoons had taken a few casualties but were intact and ready for orders.

"Ammo's coming up," Phil said. "We need to advance immediately, before those bastards have time to reach the protection of Oberthulba. What about moving forward with marching fire?" he asked.

Phil had trained his men to use their M1s, BARs, and even machine guns while employing marching fire. Infantrymen kept the butt of their rifles halfway between their belts and their right armpits, shooting one round every two to three steps. For machine-gun units, one man carried and fired the heavy gun while another walked alongside him with the ammo belt.

"Hell, yes, we can do that," his lieutenant answered.

"When mortar fire and tanks start firing over your heads, that's your go signal."

"Roger."

On Phil's command, the mortars began their fire, followed by powerful fusillades from the tank and TD machine guns. As their tracers lit up the air, the riflemen separated into one long skirmish line. After a minute or two of fierce covering fire, Phil gave the attack order. The men rose in unison and walked forward with an unremitting march of fire.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: At the age of 19, 2nd Lieutenant Larimore commanded an ammunition and pioneer platoon (A&P) during the bitter fighting at Anzio. OPPOSITE: After landing in southern France in August 1944, a mortar squad of 3rd Infantry Division soldiers fires at entrenched German defenders. By this time Larimore and his soldiers of the 3rd Division were hardened combat veterans.

"Damn!" Phil exclaimed as he watched the action through his field binoculars, "What a beautiful thing."

Together, he and Fitterman saw virtually no return fire as the infantrymen moved quickly up to and into the forest that had been shredded by the covering fire.

Radio reports streamed back to Phil. No casualties on the American side, but many enemy soldiers were killed or giving up. The rest were racing to Oberthulba, where they could regroup and reorganize.

Phil jumped into a company jeep, followed by Fitterman. Up ahead was Oberthulba, a quaint farming village of a couple thousand people, smack dab in the middle of Germany.

Phil and Abe drew up a quick battle plan for a three-platoon frontal attack. The time was four o'clock in the afternoon. Phil relayed the news to his subordinates that if the attack went well, then they would billet inside a lovely home in Oberthulba that night.

Phil knew the idea of a hot bath and a soft bed would keep his men motivated and morale high for one more day. War was a day-by-day proposition, wasn't it?

Approaching Oberthulba, Phil had three Shermans and TDs at his disposal, one for each platoon. Using the tanks as cover, the three platoon leaders set up machine-gun nests in shallow ditches.

As the platoons began to move forward, significant fire came from enemy machine guns in the forests on both sides of the village. Phil's tanks and heavy machine gunners quickly silenced them.

Phil's flanking platoons used their BARs and light machine guns to lay down suppressing fire along the forest edge. Then he looked at his watch. In two minutes, a 10-minute-long artillery barrage would commence, and the shelling aimed at the town center would give him and his men a distinct advantage. He called the timing to his platoon leaders and heard the roar of tanks as they prepared to move forward with the infantrymen advancing behind them.

"Do not move forward until 1708 hours, two minutes before the artillery ends," Phil

barked into the radio handset. The goal was for the men and tanks to hit the edge of town just as the barrage ended.

Precisely on time, at 1700 hours—5:00 p.m.—the preparatory barrage began. Like all front-line men, Phil loved the sound of artillery—as long as it was his own. Wave after wave of shells whistled overhead, as if taking flight from the forest directly behind them, sailing over the treetops and the advancing men, and pouring into the town in one roaring explosion after another. A cacophony of smaller eruptions from 81mm mortars joined in the fiery mayhem. Then an unusual and unexpected surprise descended upon the Germans.

A half dozen shiny P-47 Thunderbolts emerged from the skies, the setting sun's rays reflected on their silver bodies and wings. They swooped down over the village and unleashed their .50-caliber machine guns while raining down more bombs. In a few short minutes, the combination of artillery and air firepower had turned Oberthulba into a fiery inferno.

The P-47s roared back up into the sky, each steeply banking, and then returned for a second strafing run with their machine guns and cannons unloading a hailstorm of red-hot lead and explosive shells before disappearing to the west. Meanwhile, artillery continued to whistle overhead and explode in the town.

Two minutes before the artillery was scheduled to stop, Phil radioed out commands to prepare to seize the village. He could see his trained veterans, with scattered but now battle-tested replacements, crouched and ready to spring. Phil wondered how anyone could have survived the thrashing the town had taken, but he knew that the stone buildings contained cellars where the enemy could patiently wait out the barrage.

The tanks began to rev their engines. Phil counted down the seconds: ten, nine, eight …

"Attack!" he yelled into the radio. "All platoons attack!"

He prayed he had the timing right as artillery shells continued to fall. The tanks edged forward with some of the men following behind them. Other soldiers spread out, using marching fire in their approach formation. The tanks, spewing fire, moved slowly enough for the men to keep up. Time almost seemed to stand still. Rounds from the machine guns, punctuated by tracers, once again formed an umbrella of molten lead and steel over the advancing men's heads.

When the men were within 50 yards of the town's outer edge, the artillery fire stopped. Beyond thick billows of swirling smoke, orange flames reached into the air from an untold number of burning buildings.

Phil's chest swelled with pride, and his spirit overflowed with gratitude. The coordination and formations of men, air power, artillery, and armor were textbook-perfect. He hadn't seen an attack this precise and well-coordinated carried out for the entire war. He wished his superiors

were here to see his men perform.

Phil and his CP men, including his XO, began to double-time toward the village center. To his surprise, the main road was littered with dead and dying Germans of every imaginable age—from young teens to older men.

So, this is what the end looks like.

Phil had heard from Colonel Lionel C. McGarr, the commander of the 30th Infantry Regiment, that the German High Command had ordered fanatical "last man" stands at every town to give the Nazis more time to prepare defenses in larger cities. The Germans were sending their least effective soldiers—the very old and very young, known as the *Volkssturm*—to the front lines, no doubt saving their best troops for the very end.

As Phil entered the main road into the burning village at 5:30, he spotted his men herding a parade of around 100 dazed and shocked German soldiers to the rear, their hands clasped behind their heads. Many were wounded and bleeding. All seemed stunned and confused. As Phil and Abe moved down the street, his men were shoving other German prisoners out of buildings on either side of the road. The German soldiers looked terrified as the GIs shouted commands and pushed them forward with the tips of their rifle barrels.

The enlisted prisoners were generally easy to handle, but Phil knew that it was the officers he had to watch out for, especially those who were part of the SS, the military branch of the Nazi Party's organization. There were stories about SS officers shooting fellow German soldiers who waved white flags, advanced toward the Allied lines with their hands up, or surrendered. Maybe that's why these prisoners looked so nervous.

Phil recalled how just a week earlier, in the center of one small German town, one of his men had brought out an older man, a German civilian, in a crumpled suit, carrying a small white handkerchief that he waved over his head. "He's the mayor," the private explained. "Here to surrender."

The town mayor kept looking nervously over his shoulder, which aroused Phil's instincts. He put his hand on his holstered Colt .45, unlatched the holster flap, lifted the gun slightly, and clicked off the safety. At that moment, an SS officer stepped out of the shadows with his 9mm Luger drawn.

The German SS soldier shot the old man in the head, to everyone's shock. Then he immediately swerved to fire at Phil when Phil rapidly fired twice. The SS man's forehead and chest exploded as he was blown backward, dead before he hit the pavement. Phil's men were not surprised; they had seen his expert marksmanship many times.

In Oberthulba, four SS officers were shoved out of a building and onto the street by several GIs. Suddenly, an SS officer lunged at one of his men's rifles. The GI hit the German in the shoulder with the steel butt plate of his Garand, knocking him to the ground.

Like an angry bull, the frenzied SS officer leaped off the ground and attacked. The GI hit him again in the head with the butt plate, sending him reeling to the cobblestoned street a second time. The SS officer, dazed and bloody, slowly pulled himself to his knees and then charged again.

This time the German soldier was struck so hard in the head that he never got up.

"Damn," Abe Fitterman muttered to Phil. "SS officers are unpredictable SOBs."

That evening, after everything was buttoned up in Oberthulba, Phil was hoping for orders to find a CP and billet for the night, but it was not to be. The men were ordered to keep moving. Three miles further east, the company arrived just outside the town of Albertshausen at midnight, where they were met by light enemy resistance. By 2:25 a.m. on the morning of April 7, Love Company had taken and cleared the town. The men's morale was excellent. It had been, by all counts, a perfect day.

Phil made sure his men were billeted in the best houses in town. Residents were awakened with a loud knock and were told they had *fünf minuten*—five minutes—to leave. Following one family's hasty departure, Phil and his men entered the home, where one of the men started a fire in the living room fireplace. Smoke began to fill the room. Turned out the chimney wasn't drawing.

After opening the damper and clearing the air, one of his men investigated and found the chimney flue stuffed with smoked hams and sausages that the family had tried to hide. The banquet was shared with several houses. With full tummies, the GIs luxuriated with hot showers and slept in duvet-covered beds with thick, soft mattresses.

For some reason, though, Phil couldn't sleep, even though he was pleased most of his men were inside a warm home with a full stomach and a comfortable bed. He spent time visiting each of the sentries and men in the outposts.

He loved leading his company, loved his guys, and admired the tenacity they were showing in the last stages of a long war; but now that victory was in sight, he just wanted the fighting to be over and go home.

At 1:15 p.m. on April 7, Phil received an unusual radio call from one of his platoon leaders, Lieutenant Emil T. Byke, who was leading a reconnaissance patrol outside the town of Bad Kissingen, a world-famed spa before the war.

Byke began, "One of my squad leaders reported a vehicle just outside Bad Kissingen, displaying a white flag. I went to verify the report and found three German military personnel in the vehicle. I approached the Germans with coverage all around and was greeted by two German officers who, in broken English, asked if I would go into the town of Bad Kissingen with them and meet their commander. They want to surrender."

"Were the officers SS?" Phil asked. The memories of what had happened in Oberthulba the day before were fresh in his mind.

"Nope."

"Permission granted. Just be sure to take a well-armed jeep or two with you."

"Yes, sir."

Byke radioed back an hour later. "Phil, the damnedest thing just happened."

"What?"

National Archives

Lieutenant Colonel Chaney Christopher accepts the surrender of German forces in the town of Bad Kissingen, Germany, while standing in front of the local hospital. Larimore and his command found American casualties in the hospital after capturing the town.

"When we arrived in Bad Kissingen, we were met by a German soldier who couldn't have been more than 14 years old. He was carrying a white flag and spoke excellent English. We followed him to the town square, which was filled with German soldiers who had stacked their arms in piles before us. Two bodies were hanging from the city hall balcony. They were two local officials who wanted to surrender. SS troopers had hung them as traitors."

"Are the SS guys still around?" Phil asked.

"Flew the coop," Byke replied. "The German officers presented me to their commander. Through the kid, this commander told me that he wished to surrender and wants me to convey the message up the ladder. I agreed to do that, but before we departed, he took us to a nearby hospital.

"We found a bunch of our wounded GIs in a German military hospital. They were all crying with joy at seeing us. Some of the boys hugged me and wanted to know if they were going home. I told them that we were at the gates of the city and that I would return as fast as possible."

"Good work, Byke," Phil said.

Phil radioed battalion and was put in touch with Lt. Col. James E. Chaney, the battalion commander. After relaying the news, Chaney told Phil to meet him outside of town at Byke's jeep.

When Phil and Abe arrived, they found Lieutenant Byke had placed his men at advantageous points on the hills surrounding Bad Kissingen. At the same time, Company M, commanded by 1st Lt. Harold J. Saine, had brought up mortars and placed them in firing position "just in case." He then sent two squads inside the city for reconnaissance.

Just then, Colonel Chaney's jeep screeched to a halt. Phil and Byke updated him on the latest developments. It was looking like they could safely meet the German commander in the town center to discuss terms of the surrender. With two squads of riflemen providing protection, they slowly drove their jeeps into the resort town, encountering no hostile fire. Their delegation was met at the center of town in front of city hall, where a German general and his command officers were waiting for their arrival. All were unarmed.

After handshakes, they sat down in an office. The first question Colonel Chaney asked was this: "Do you understand what unconditional surrender is?"

The reply from the German side was affirmative.

"As you know," Chaney continued, "Bad Kissingen is an important rail and highway center. Because its spacious buildings can easily accommodate thousands of troops, Bad Kissingen is a highly desirable military prize. I must emphasize that the 3rd Division will not accept Bad Kissingen as an 'open city,' however. It will be used as a military base for United States troops. Is that acceptable?"

As if you have a choice, buster, Phil thought.

The general nodded his approval, and that was that.

After the surrender, Phil, Abe, and several of their men walked around the town, rifles slung over their shoulders. They came across a factory that manufactured dress suits. They went inside the factory,

where they took turns putting on high hats and bow ties with their dirty uniforms, laughing at the incongruous look.

There were also bolts and bolts of silk fabric—white, shiny, and smooth to the touch. The men didn't have the foggiest idea why the Germans were still making such finery in time of war. The men cut off pieces of the satiny fabric to make handsome scarves, which they draped around their necks and under their collars, giving a regal appearance.

For a fleeting moment, the war was forgotten.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion rounded up German prisoners in Bad Kissingen, capturing 2,825 that day, a record for the division. That night, the Regimental CP set up in a beautiful hotel just on the outskirts of town. When Colonel McGarr arrived, he made the men wipe their feet before they walked into the marble-floored lobby.

Phil and his men stayed in a ritzy hotel in the center of town that night. After placing guards and outposts, the men were served a hot meal, received clean clothes, and were handed their mail. Most of the men were nearly giddy with the opportunity to read letters and enjoy some decent food. For the second night in a row, they slept on mattresses.

The Love Company officers enjoyed a nightcap and cigars together, dog-tired but proud of the battles and victories of the three previous days. In many ways, everything had gone perfectly.

Abe blew a ring of smoke and looked at Phil. "I can feel it in my bones," he said. "This damn war is almost over."

"Hope you're right, Abe," Phil said softly. "Hope you're right."

As Phil and his men slept, Colonel McGarr received orders just after midnight that jump-off was scheduled for 7:30 a.m. the next morning, April 8. An intelligence officer, however, warned McGarr that his troops had better be prepared to enter a long-predicted buzzsaw as they continued their easterly advance. American forces could expect to meet considerable artillery and anti-tank fire and even more fanatical infantry.

ABOVE: German soldiers captured when 3rd Division troops secured a town sit streetside and await instructions from their captors. These men were sniping at the Americans and were lucky to survive. BELOW: In this photo, taken in the midst of a firefight in Kohlshed, Germany, 3rd Division soldiers fire a machine gun through a hole in a wall at enemy soldiers hidden in a barn 300 yards away.

Both: National Archives

Phil and his command officers were awakened at 3:00 a.m. to receive their orders and prepare for a difficult day. During the briefing, the men were told that the Germans could be expected to try, once again, to slow the 3rd Division's relentless attack, most likely to give the Nazi "bigwigs" a chance to withdraw to the rumored "National Redoubt" area in the Bavarian Alps.

What lay ahead for Phil was a day he would never forget.

On the morning of April 8, 1945, Phil and Love Company jumped off from Bad Kissingen at 7:30 with King Company on their right flank. Passing through pastureland bordered by forests, they reached several successive objectives with minimal resistance, overcoming a small firefight at 9:50 a.m. and another at 10:05, followed by defeating Germans at three log roadblocks and bypassing another two.

Several of the skirmishes involved hand-to-hand fighting to the death—in this case, resulting in all German deaths. Phil had to take out a German officer at point-blank range when he tried to draw his Luger in the process of surrendering. The pistol never left the German's holster before he crashed to the ground, killed instantly by Phil's quick-draw response.

By 1:30, both lead companies began encountering significant machine-gun and small-arms fire from forested areas bordering their zone of advance. Phil hated hearing the guttural blasts from the German Schmeisser MP 40 (*Maschinenpistole* 40) machine guns that GIs called "burp guns." After 15 months of nonstop fighting, he detested the fact that Schmeissers fired at twice the rate of their best American-made counterparts, giving the Germans a battlefield advantage.

Phil called in heavy artillery time and time again, which stalled progress—a development that neither his officers nor NCOs liked. At 6 p.m., they found themselves moving slowly through a wooded section outside the tiny village of Rotterhausen.

As the light began to fade, Phil's company made a flanking move through the dense thicket of trees. They slowed their advance and moved carefully. Phil found the silence of the woods unnerving. The tension was sky-high among his men—higher than any time in the last three days. None of Phil's soldiers wanted to be the last to die in this war.

These were desperate times for the enemy. Intelligence indicated that trigger-happy Germans were infesting the countryside, especially in forested areas, setting up traps and ambushes. Phil was greatly concerned about a dangerous situation developing. His men crept low, darting from tree to tree, most with fingers on their rifles' triggers, others hand-signaling man to man.

Death could be lurking anywhere in the forest surrounding them. Snipers could be nestled in towering firs or behind their massive bases. Machine-gun nests might be hidden behind a camouflage of evergreen boughs, prepared to annihilate Phil's frontline troops in a hailstorm of gunfire. On top of that, one well-hidden artillery piece could fire its rounds into the tree canopy, raining white-hot shrapnel and splintered wood that would rip through flesh. Death lurked in every direction.

Three of Phil's fast-moving platoons advanced to the south and east as he, Fitterman, and his radioman followed. Phil had his compass in one hand and a field map in the other, continually scanning it with trained eyes and an intuition gained from over a year's experience fighting Germans. He almost always knew what the Germans were thinking and doing.

Suddenly, Phil saw something he had missed—a small clearing ahead, surrounded by a forest edge that was slightly elevated over a small meadow. He had Fitterman radio the point men to skirt the field and remain in the forest. The woods ahead suddenly crackled with small-arms fire and the deep rasping sounds from the German burp guns.

Damn, he thought. *Too late!*

Suddenly, his radioman's backpack SCR-300 sizzled with distress—it was one of his point-squad leaders. "We've been ambushed in a glade! There are nine of us and probably 150 Krauts around us. The rest of the platoon behind us is pinned down. We have four wounded. We're low on ammo. We're in a clearing. Help needed now, sir!"

"Shit," Phil whispered to himself, remembering it was one of his least-experienced squads. He could hear German potato-masher grenades exploding, answered by American grenades and machine-gun fire, adding to the pandemonium. Projecting a calmness he didn't feel, Phil ordered the 1st Platoon on the left flank and the 3rd Platoon on the right to begin an immediate pincer move to save the trapped squad. He also called for a tank. "I need a medium can now!" he bellowed into the radio handset.

As the battle sounds intensified, Phil spread his field map on the ground and studied it with Fitterman and their artillery FO (Forward Observer), who had just come to the front.

"Our trapped squad must be here." Phil pointed to the northwest edge of the only nearby clearing. Turning to his FO, he said, "I need fire massed on the other side of the clearing."

He ran his finger along what appeared to be a forest lane on the map. "Abe, you take over the CP staff. When the first tank gets here, I'll take it to the clearing to get to my guys."

"I'll go," Abe offered. "We need you back here."

"Nope. This one's on me, Abe."

Phil radioed the trapped patrol. "Fire coming in. Ammo is on its way. First and 3rd platoons are pinching toward you now."

Surprised to hear the rumble of three Sherman tanks behind him instead of the one he'd called for, he radioed his frontline men. "We've got three cans here. We're coming up now!"

The reply was filled with panic. "We're pinned down with marching fire! We need help fast!"

As the lead Sherman pulled up, Phil yelled, "Abe, I'm hopping a ride on the lead can! Get artillery firing now!"

Before Abe could object, Phil jumped up on the back of the tank with his radioman in tow. Climbing in behind the turret, he had his radioman hand him an intercom handset that was kept in an empty ammunition container on the back of the tank and stretch the long cord up to him. That would allow him to communicate with the tank commander inside as he signaled to his radioman to hunker down behind him.

As the tank lurched forward, Phil prepared the turret-mounted .50-caliber machine gun, unlocking the safety and cocking it. There was not a lot of ammo, but he hoped it would be enough.

His head snapped up at whistling sounds whizzing overhead. The German MG42 medium machine guns—nicknamed "Hitler's buzz-saw" by American GIs—continued erupting at 1,000 to 1,200 rounds per minute to his front. His own men's machine guns gave studied answers at less than half the rate—the American guns sounding like Model Ts compared to the murderous reverberation of the enemy's heavy automatic firearm.

Approaching the clearing, Phil crouched behind the turret as green tracer bullets from enemy machine guns sliced through

the air from the front, while friendly red tracers came from behind on either side of the tank.

"Our guys are 50 yards ahead! Friendly platoons are coming up from behind on our left and right!" Phil called to the tank commander. Into the radio, he yelled, "Second Platoon, send up all three of your squads, pronto! One behind each can as we move up!"

His men sprinted from the forest to the shelter of the tanks, fanning out across the western edge of the clearing, one on his left flank and the other to his right, bullets churning up dirt around them.

"Shermans, move into the clearing!" Phil commanded into the tank handset. He quickly identified three machine-gun nests on the other side of the clearing. The tanks lurched forward as fire poured in, the bullets from multiple snipers missing him by only inches.

Phil ordered the gunners inside the tanks to use their 76mm cannons and .30-caliber machine guns to lay down suppressing fire while he manned the 100-pound, turret-mounted .50-caliber machine gun, firing and taking fire all the way. He sprayed bursts across the forest line, silencing several snipers and destroying at least three machine-gun nests, momentarily quelling the enemy attack.

"I see our guys!" Phil shouted into the SCR-300 handset to the other platoons. "Between the center and left cans! Twenty yards ahead. Let's get 'em outta here!"

His men emerged from behind the protection of the tanks. As he had trained them, his forward troops laid down a torrent of marching fire as they advanced toward the trapped soldiers, while others ran up and grabbed the wounded. Enemy fire erupted again, and Phil emptied his remaining ammunition, killing several German soldiers and drawing more hostile fire; his squads used the diversion to withdraw.

Out of machine-gun ammunition, Phil jumped off the tank to direct his men, miraculously eluding another hail of bullets, dozens missing him by inches. Suddenly the back of his head took a stunning blow as a sniper's bullet blew his helmet from his head and knocked him to the ground. Phil, seeing stars, was momentarily stunned.

As if on autopilot, his eyes quickly scanned the trees as he swung his M1 in the direction of the enemy. Spotting a solitary German sniper in a tree, he took aim and triggered several rounds. The sniper's head exploded, and his body crashed to the earth.

"Got the sonofabitch!" Phil screamed.

His radioman jumped off the tank and pulled Phil closer to the Sherman's hull so they could take cover. The radioman then knelt down and carefully ran his hands through Phil's hair, soaked with blood.

"Just nicked your scalp, Lieutenant, but it's bleeding like hell." He reached into his overcoat, tore the wrapper off a gauze bandage, and pressed it against the wound. He tied the gauze cloth in a knot as another flurry of bullets ricocheted off the tank.

"You okay, sir?" the radioman asked.

Phil refocused his eyes as he became more alert. "Yeah," he said. "Just a scratch."

"It's more than that, sir, but we gotta get out of this hellhole!" the radioman exclaimed.

As Phil and the radioman moved back between the tanks and retreating men laying down suppressing fire, enemy fire from the far side of the clearing intensified, coming from three directions. The other men started running as fast as they could for the protection of the trees. Phil was beside the last tank backing out of the clearing, rapidly firing his M1 Garand as bullets shredded the earth around him.

"Take cover!" Phil yelled. He and the radioman grabbed their M1s. The radioman made it behind the rear of tank's hull as Phil followed. Bullets whooshed through the air, just inches away.

"Sniper! Eleven o'clock!" the radioman yelled.

Phil quickly turned and spotted movement in another tree 100 yards away.

Another bastard is aiming at us!

In a practiced motion, he raised his M1 and squeezed off two swift rounds. The sniper tumbled out of the tree, hitting the ground like a limp rag doll.

His action drew more fire in their direction, intensifying by the second and coming from a wider radius. Phil quickly realized that their position was being overrun. They were too exposed. They needed to get to the safety of the trees.

"We're surrounded! Get the hell outta here! That's an order!" Phil cried out to his radioman. "I'll suppress 'em!"

Phil began rapid fire as the tank moved backward and the radioman started sprinting for the wooded forest behind them, a distance of 50 yards. As Phil took one step from behind the tank to get a better angle on another sniper, a sudden, burning pain seared just below his right knee, as if someone had hit him with a giant club.

He instantly knew he'd been shot in the leg. A second later, he crashed to the ground, groaning in pain. His entire right leg felt numb as blood gushed from a massive wound. Fear surged through him as warm liquid filled his boot.

Then his training kicked in. Phil ripped off his belt and tightened it around his upper leg. Relief flooded him as the spurting flow of blood slowed, but the searing pain brought on nausea.

Looking up, he saw his radioman had also been hit and had fallen to his knees a few yards away. He was holding his hand over an oozing shoulder wound.

"You okay?" Phil yelled.

"Yes, sir. I think it's a through-and-through. Almost no bleeding."

Suddenly, out of the clearing, angels appeared. A number of men from Headquarters and Headquarters Company rushed to their defense and laid down a curtain of suppressing fire, giving his executive officer, Abe Fitterman, enough time to come to Phil's aid.

Fitterman squatted next to Phil and pulled up his pants leg. What he saw caused the

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Advancing warily, soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division take cover behind armored vehicles against potential incoming German fire. The 3rd Division and soldiers like Larimore compiled an impressive combat record during World War II.

XO's face to turn pale. Phil's first look nearly caused him to faint as well. Just below the right knee, a gnarly wound the size of a golf ball was still leaking blood. The torturous pain was something he'd never experienced before—way beyond all his previous wounds, including the major injury he'd suffered in the same leg earlier in France.

Abe reached over to the radio on the back of the radioman and grabbed the handset to report that Larimore had been hit.

"How badly?" It was the gravelly voice of Colonel McGarr.

Abe smiled at Phil. "He's tough. He'll live, but he has a hole through his leg about the size of a silver dollar."

"Get him out. Now!" came the order from the colonel.

"Yes, sir. Out."

Turning to Phil, Abe said, "Phil, the men are safe. Let's get the hell out of here and regroup in the woods."

Phil, his face twisted in pain, looked at Fitterman. "Abe, you get my radioman outta here."

"After I help you, Phil."

"I think it missed the bone, Fitt." But Phil wasn't sure if that was true. What he saw was a much bigger wound than he expected. "I can walk—I'll use my Garand as a crutch. I'll be right behind you."

Fitterman looked at him, skepticism written on his face.

"Abe," Phil said sternly, nodded toward the wounded radioman, "get him out and call down a TOT (time-on-target artillery concentration) on this clearing and the woods behind. We've gotta stop this now. You hear me?"

"I don't like leaving you. You can't walk. You'll be a sitting duck."

"Go! The TOT will protect me."

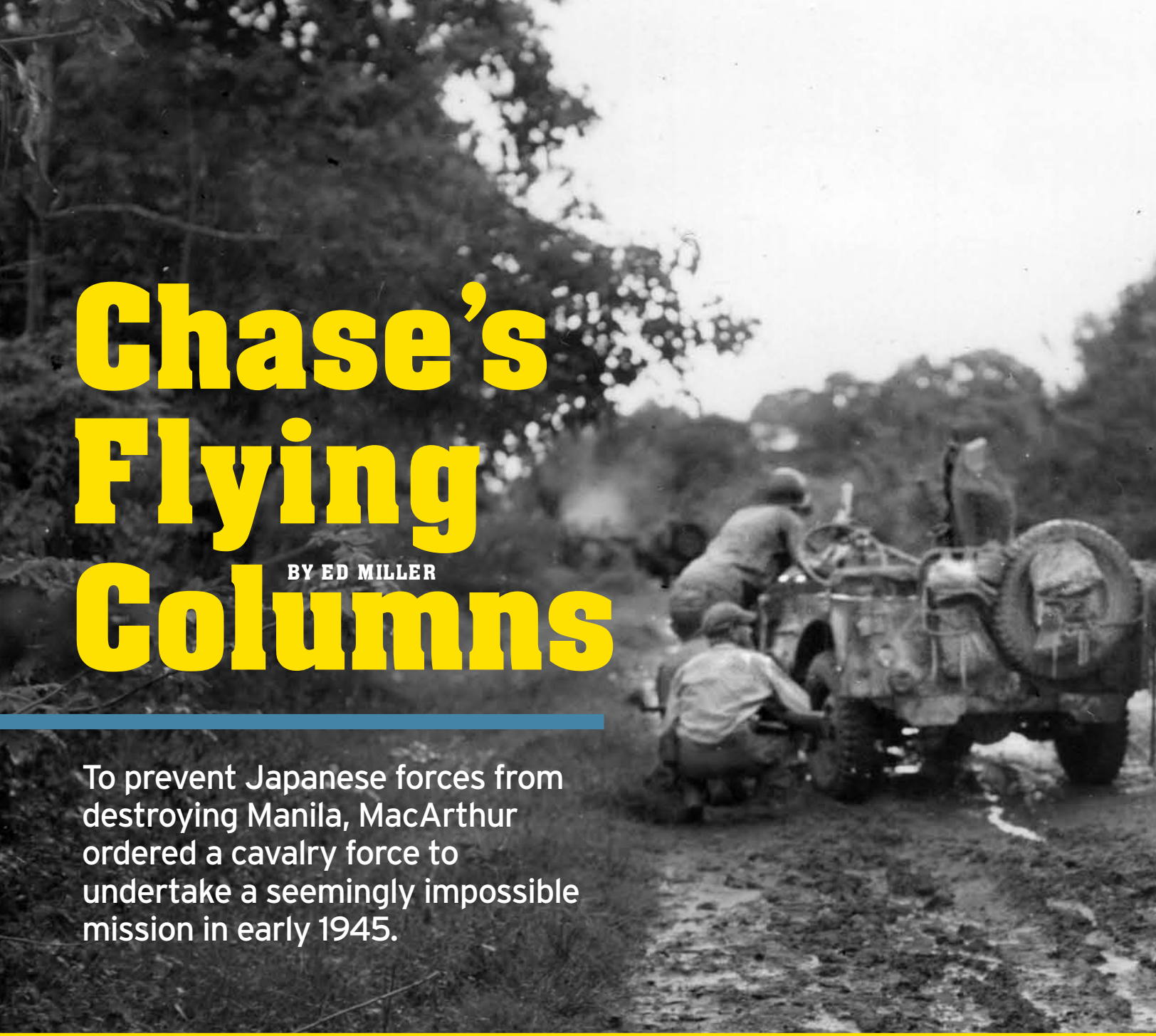
Abe grabbed the radioman, and they ran behind the retreating Sherman as enemy fire from the far edge of the forest intensified and poured in from three directions.

Suddenly, as mortar fire began to shred the clearing, scores of Germans poured out of the woods. Phil tried to stand, but an unimaginably excruciating pain shot up his leg. He collapsed as bullets kicked up the dirt around him. Seeking cover to save his life, he managed to quickly roll away from the tank treads and into a shallow ditch.

Although his artillery and armor fusillade had broken the attack momentarily, Phil could tell they had only temporarily slowed the enemy advance. He could only pray Fitterman would call in the more-concentrated TOT he had ordered to end this onslaught and end it now.

As the Germans inched closer and closer, an ear-deafening concussion was followed by dirt and mud raining across Phil's body. A mortar had landed only a few yards from him; thank goodness the shallow bank of

Continued on page 98



Chase's Flying Columns

BY ED MILLER

To prevent Japanese forces from destroying Manila, MacArthur ordered a cavalry force to undertake a seemingly impossible mission in early 1945.

Santo Tòmas University, Manila, Philippines, about 9:00 p.m., February 3, 1945: Louis G. Hubele, a 45-year-old civilian internee of the Japanese, heard more than the usual amount of vehicle traffic on España Street.

Unsure of the reason, he headed to the Education Building, intending to talk to other internees about this development. They were aware of the American activity well north of Manila, yet they had no details. Perhaps the GIs were bearing down on the city. On the other hand, had the Japanese stopped the Americans?

Outside, Hubele saw the enemy soldiers taking up positions at the entrances to the compound and on the lower floors of the Education Building. Though weakened by hunger and unable to reach his own room in the building, he summoned the will to reach the third floor, where he found an open room and some other internees. The sound of large engines grew by the second.

As they hunkered below the windowsills, they began to hear unfamiliar voices—in English! The clamor grew. Shouts. Orders. "Get out of the windows! We will shoot at movement inside the building!" Figures in green uniforms fanned out in the twilight. The U.S. cavalry came to the rescue as if a Western film played out in real life. Three years in Japanese captivity were over for Hubele and many others. Hubele remarked, "We didn't know any American troops were anywhere near Manila."

ABOVE: The occupying Japanese turned the campus of Santo Tomas University in Manila into a sprawling prison camp. TOP: U.S. troops of the 8th Cavalry Regiment warily enter Manila on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, February 5, 1945. In an effort to prevent the destruction of the city and unnecessary loss of life, General Douglas MacArthur ordered American forces to advance swiftly to liberate Manila from Japanese occupation.

Both: National Archives

The story of the liberation of about 4,000 Allied internees at Santo Tòmas University had nearly everything—"Flying Columns" of cavalry, desperate civilian internees, an enemy on the brink, a sense of desperate urgency, and even the press. How it took shape and succeeded in a matter of a few hours is worth study because today's readers often relegate American operations in the Philippines (and the Pacific in general) to second place when measured against the enormous scope of

operations in Europe. Yet GIs performed as admirably in the hot, muggy climate of the Philippines as they did in the bone-chilling cold of a European winter.

Planning for operations on Luzon, the political and economic heart of the Philippines, began in the summer of 1944. General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific Area, successfully argued to President Franklin D. Roosevelt his case for invading the archipelago by the end of the year.

By October, MacArthur's staff had completed an initial plan for taking Luzon and the capital of Manila, and he issued a preliminary operation order in mid-month. When the opportunity arose to make the initial landings on the island of Leyte that same month, he also advanced the target date for Luzon to December.

Several factors led to postponement of the operation. Bad weather caused significant logistical problems, planners did not identify early on the need for additional supporting air bases closer to Luzon than those on Leyte, and the Japanese proved to be an exceptionally a tenacious enemy. MacArthur delayed the invasion ("S-Day") until January 9, 1945.

General Yamashita Tomoyuki, the 58-year-old commander of Japanese ground forces in the Philippines, had about 260,000 troops on Luzon, though the force was weak in artillery, armor, and logistics units. Yamashita had no intention of strongly defending Manila, a city of over 800,000, and the central plain against overwhelming American mobility. He intended to force the Americans to fight for the rugged mountains surrounding the plain.

Yamashita rightly considered the city indefensible, despite the fact that many of the newer buildings in the downtown area were built from heavily reinforced concrete to withstand earthquakes (and, as it turned out, American tank and artillery fire).

Disagreements between his subordinate army and navy element commanders impeded operations. He placed the defense of Manila under Lt. Gen. Yokoyama Shiuzo and ordered the city's evacuation, except for a rear guard element. However, as army troops departed, several thousand sailors under Rear Adm. Iwabuchi Sanji moved into the city without orders from Yamashita and prepared to destroy it if necessary.

The Japanese built intricate defenses, screening Manila's outskirts with mobile troops and placing some strong fixed positions north of the Pasig River inside the city. They devoted most of their effort to preparing complex defenses south of the river, including roadblocks, mines, and over 350 gun positions.

An American report said that the enemy "fought tenaciously and skillfully to the bitter end, using all available weapons and barriers, natural and artificial." The 1st Cavalry Division's G-2 (Intelligence), Lt. Col. Robert F. Goheen, concluded the day before the liberation of the internees that "the evidence is unimpeachable that in the streets and buildings of Manila and its suburbs that there has been an incessant construction of defensive works and positions of astonishing variety. It is reported that bridges are mined and electrified, tank obstacles are imbedded in the pavement, barricades are raised, charges are laid under important buildings."

Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, commander of the Sixth U.S. Army, disagreed with MacArthur on the potential for an enemy counterattack from the high ground on Luzon's interior against American forces moving south on Manila.

MacArthur, no doubt determined to repay what he believed was a national debt to the Philippine people, told Krueger to disregard the threat and focus instead on driving fast south against Clark Field and Manila, which was about 120 miles from the Lingayen Gulf landing beaches.

In addition to its political and symbolic value, Manila's port facilities were critical to sustaining operations both in the islands and during an invasion of Japan itself.

Only the U.S. military could undertake operations of such scale. Sixth Army staged from Leyte, New Guinea, the Solomons, Western New Britain, and New Caledonia, assembling units of all types scattered over thousands of square miles of island-dotted

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ABOVE: A once beautiful courtyard on the grounds of Santo Tomas University has been turned into a dismal cluster of residential shacks by internees who suffered nearly three years of privations under Japanese rule. OPPOSITE: Following the fall of the Philippines in 1942, Americans and foreign nationals were rounded up by the victorious Japanese, and many were interned at Santo Tomas University. In this photo, a group of internees gathers at the command of the Japanese, bringing along what few belongings they could carry.

U.S. Navy

ocean. Two corps (I and XIV) would each put two infantry divisions and supporting units ashore in the Lingayen-Damortis-San Fernando area of Luzon, in the first wave.

As reinforcing units landed, the Americans would establish air, naval and ground bases, seize the central plain/Manila area, and establish control over the remainder of the 40,000-square-mile island.

Yamashita's decision to concentrate his defenses in Luzon's high ground meant that the American landings went generally according to plan and schedule, with little opposition. MacArthur in late January released the 1st Cavalry (Maj. Gen. Verne D. Mudge) and the 32nd Infantry Divisions (Maj. Gen. W.H. Gill) to Krueger, who in turn ordered the XIV Corps (Maj. Gen. Oscar W. Griswold), to seize crossings of the Pampanga River, Clark Airfield, and Manila.

Urging his generals to move fast, MacArthur on the afternoon of January 30 met with Krueger, Griswold, and Mudge, whose division had been ashore only three days. "Go to Manila, go around the Nips, bounce off the Nips, but go to Manila," he demanded. There, free the civilians interned at Santo Tòmas and capture the Malacañan Palace, the seat of government, before midnight on February 3—then hold until reinforced.

MacArthur was firm, though Krueger and Griswold remained concerned about the potential enemy threat from the high ground.

Soon after the meeting, Brig. Gen. William C. Chase, commander of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, received the mission of attacking 100 miles beyond the American lines, entering Manila, and liberating the internees. Mudge called a meeting of his senior commanders at 7:00 p.m. and announced that Chase would command two "Flying Columns" organized around Lt. Col. Haskett L. "Hack" Conner's 2nd Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment (2/8), and Lt. Col. William H. Lobit's column organized around the 2nd Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment (2/5).

Ashore only a few days, the cavalrymen had been able only to organize for combat, resupply, and refuel. A third element, a Provisional Reconnaissance Squadron (PRS), under Lt. Col. Tom Ross, controlled two tank companies and a reconnaissance troop.

Chase held a final commanders' meeting at 9:00 a.m. on New Year's Eve, January 31, 1945, and Mudge issued a final written field order later that night. The initial target was the Cabantuan–Santa Rosa area, where the Flying Columns would cross the Pampanga River early on February 1. Ross' PRS would secure crossings over the Angat River and maintain contact with the adjacent 37th Infantry Division.

The cavalrymen entered the battle after continuous action in incessant bad weather on Leyte and without rest or receipt of replacements before the Luzon battle. Mudge nevertheless wanted the cavalrymen to strike "with paralyzing speed and vigor to clear route of advance for foot troops" who would follow the columns "aggressively."

Each element carried six day's supply of rations, fuel for 400 miles, and all the ammunition they could haul. Each soldier would carry two canteens, and obtain extra water locally for purification by attached engineers. No one walked—all

Both: National Archives

troops rode in the vehicles or on the tanks.

Chase knew the terrain between the division's assembly area north of Cabantuan and Manila, having served in the Philippines in the 1930s. Route 5 was the axis of the Flying Column operation, though Chase instructed Lobit (2/5) to first move east toward the high ground bordering the Luzon Plain. If this drew the enemy out of his defenses, Lobit would buy time for Conner's 2/8 column to continue to Manila on its own.

Alternatively, should the enemy stop Conner, Lobit would assume the lead and Ross' PRS would be prepared to support either Column.

Chase's mobile command post, including a Marine Corps forward air controller with access to two air groups, began the attack following Lobit. He recalled that the columns were stripped down and traveled light, but "what we had a great deal of, however, was high spirit and morale and a grand desire to get into Manila first."

The 1st Cavalry Brigade Combat Team consisted of the 2nd Squadron, 5th Cavalry (Lobit); Battery A, 82d Field Artillery Battalion; Company A, 44th Tank Battalion; 3rd Platoon, Troop A, 8th Engineer Squadron; Company B, 85th Chemical Mortar Battalion; 1st Platoon, Troop A, 1st Medical Squadron; 19th Portable Surgical Hospital; a platoon from Troop A, 16th Quartermaster Squadron; and Maintenance Support Detachment, 27th Ordnance Company.

Lt. Col. Thomas H. Ross' Provisional Reconnaissance Squadron was comprised of the 44th Tank Battalion (minus Companies A and B) and the 302nd Recon Troop.

There was no artillery preparation before Chase gave the order to move at one minute after midnight on February 1, 1945. A brilliant moon helped combat engineers seize the northern approaches to the Pampanga River bridge near Cabanatuan.

At 6:30 a.m., as 1st Lt. William Leach and his men were approaching the south end of the span, they saw that the enemy had blown 20-foot gap in the floor, so the engineers spent an hour looking for a usable ford. Lobit's troops were across by early afternoon, held up for a few hours by about 250 of the enemy fighting from of "well-entrenched positions."

Most of Conner's column (2/8) was across the river by mid-morning. Troop G, which met no resistance in a diversionary attack, was unable to get all of its vehicles across a poor ford and the commander ordered the elements that were not across to rejoin the main body of the 2/8 column. The elements remaining across the river would move to a pre-designated site and await the rest.

A Filipino guerilla reported that when this group, including the troop commander, reached the link-up point and found no other Americans, the commander evidently decided he was late and that the squadron had moved on. His group continued moving south along Route 5 for nearly 40 miles before an artillery liaison plane found them engaged with a Japanese force near the town of Baliuag. The pilot relayed Conner's order to break contact and withdraw north until reinforced.

Lt. Col. Ross' PRC was meanwhile across the Pampanga River south of Cabanatuan. The light tank company (D/44th) pushed south to Gapan and the Peñaranda River, where it hit enemy infantry defending the town; Ross was one of the casualties. The Japanese searched his body before it was recovered by the Americans, and took some of his papers. Ironically, the stray element of Troop G had earlier passed through the town with such speed that the enemy was unable to react to it until seconds before its last vehicle cleared. They were apparently ready for the PRS.

At about 4:00 p.m. on February 1, the now-reassembled Troop G, 8th Cavalry, attacked Gapan and helped the tankers stabilize the situation; GIs found several enemy dead after the fighting. Colonel Conner ordered the remainder of his column to continue Gapan. Captain Thomas Barrow recalled, the "marching, countermarching amid some confusion [was], in view of the very light enemy resistance ... not so good. We of the Squadron were beginning to learn a little more about coordination of a fast-moving force, however."

Barrow said, "From here on to the final objective at Santo Thomas [sic] the column's movement resembled a Wild West movie. Off and on for the entire distance, some 12 to 15 miles, the Squadron received fire from the flanks of the road, which was vigorously returned from both tank guns and truck-mounted machine guns."

ABOVE: An American Sherman tank approaches the outskirts of Manila in February 1945. Overcoming Japanese resistance on the way, the American tanks and accompanying infantrymen coordinated their advance to fully utilize combined-arms fighting techniques. OPPOSITE: Twenty-five miles from Manila, American soldiers of the 1st Cavalry and Filipino civilians gather along the banks of the Angat River.

The next day Conner reinforced each of his cavalry troops with a platoon of Sherman tanks, and his squadron continued south toward Plaridel. Japanese infantry again delayed the column at a blown-out highway bridge across yet another river, the Angat.

Combat engineers told Conner that the bridge would take hours to repair. Troop G laid down fire to distract the enemy while Troop F located a ford passable for tracked vehicles. This still cost precious time because the tanks had to tow the wheeled vehicles across the Angat.

Since this column also came into contact with elements of the 37th Infantry Division, which was moving on Manila from the northwest, Chase permitted Conner to hold in place for refuel, maintenance and resupply amid a crowd of cheering Filipinos. The day's gain was only 14 miles.

A map reconnaissance indicated a promising route for February 3, until a Filipino guerilla officer who knew the area told Conner that it would expose his column to strong enemy forces then withdrawing into Manila from the northeast. Aerial reconnaissance late in the afternoon confirmed that bridges on the route were intact but presumably well defended. Believing there was little alternative, Conner gave the order to move out at 9:00 p.m. on February 2.

Guerillas reported to the Troop G commander that the enemy was passing through Santa Maria, a town about midway between Manila and Baliuag. At about 2:00 a.m. on February 3, elements of the troop hit enemy outposts, and called for mortar and heavy machine-gun support. Troops E and F at daylight forced back the enemy.

The Santa Maria River crossings were

by this time damaged, but a platoon leader reported a useable ford about 1,000 yards away. Yet, when the platoon crossed the river, it ran into an ambush and was pinned down. Troop F and its attached tank platoon went to assist and killed an estimated 30 defenders.

Moving next to the town of Muzon, 2/8 destroyed 15 trucks and killed two dozen enemy soldiers in a harsh firefight. Not long afterwards, the cavalrymen dismounted to clear more opposition and realized that the enemy was present in force. GIs dismounted, taking cover in drainage ditches along the road. Captain Barrow believed the enemy was about as surprised as the Americans. This firefight lasted about a half-hour.

Colonel Conner's leading elements finally reached Novaliches late on the afternoon of February 3. Just five miles from the outskirts of Manila, fire from three directions at the bridge over the Tuliahan River hit the column. One group of cavalrymen found a mine "with enough explosive to demolish two bridges." Lieutenant (j.g.) James P. Sutton, USNR, an explosive ordnance expert attached to the Sixth Army, disassembled the charge under fire. (He received the Army's Distinguished Service Cross and, in 1949, was elected to represent Tennessee's 6th Congressional District.)

Sutton was not the only person recognized for heroism at Novaliches. S/Sgt. John T. Lee and T/4 Samuel L. Hardin received Bronze Stars for disregarding their own safety to run inside a burning building to rescue injured Filipino civilians.

Barrow said, "From here on to the final objective at Santo Thomas [sic] the column's movement resembled a Wild West movie. Off and on for the entire distance, some 12 to 15 miles, the Squadron received fire from the flanks of the road, which was vigorously returned from both tank guns and truck-mounted machine guns."

Chase, initially moving behind Lobit's column, recalled that Filipino men, women, and children lined the roads when they were sure the enemy was gone, yelling "'Mabuhay!" and trying to give the Americans food. Chase was particularly fond of

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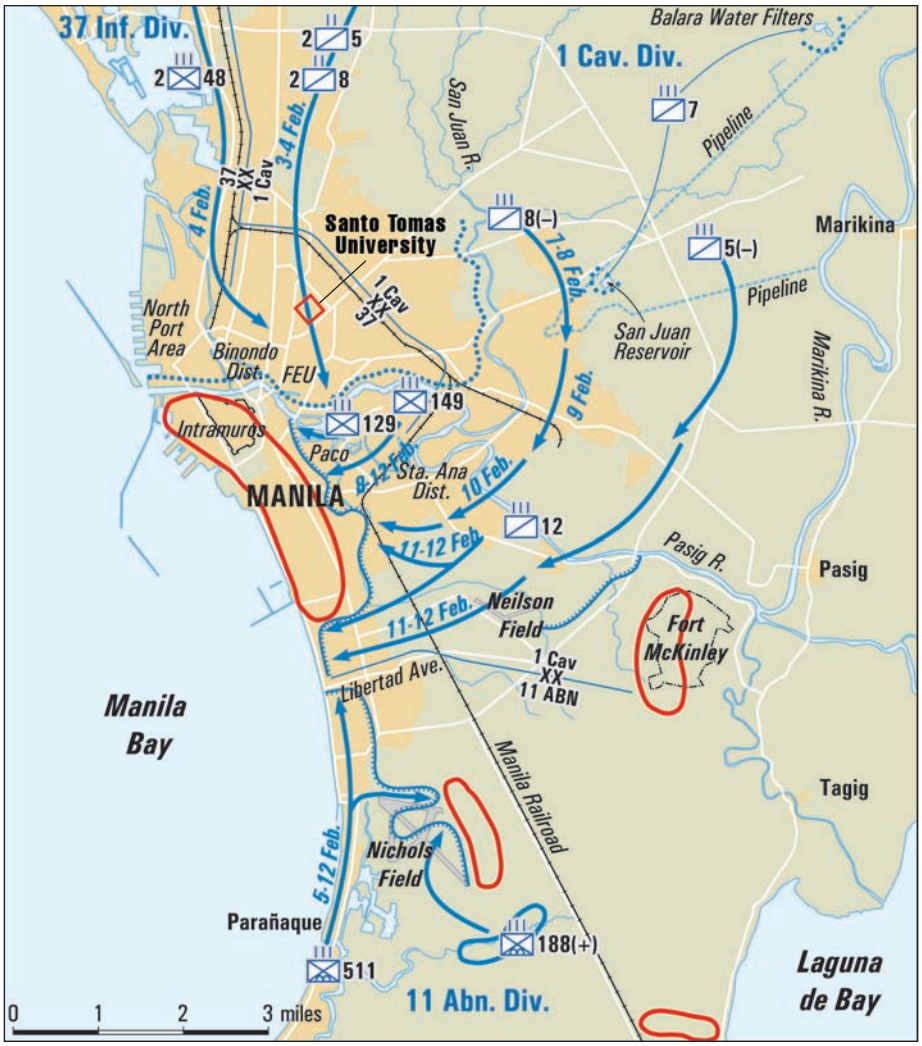

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ABOVE: American troops enter the grounds of Santo Tomas University to secure the area and liberate the internees. Some straggling Japanese soldiers were rounded up as the liberation concluded. OPPOSITE TOP: The American approach to Manila and its liberation were prosecuted rapidly on orders from General Douglas MacArthur. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: American soldiers of the 37th Infantry Division cross the Tuliahan River on February 4, 1945. Although the advance proceeded with all haste, pockets of Japanese resistance slowed the liberation of the city.

papaya and bananas. In fact, he thought Lobit's "entire column" was "eating its way toward Manila" under the cover of Marine aircraft. Chase spent the night of February 1-2 in a home recently used by Japanese General Yamashita, who was traveling in the opposite direction.

Lobit's column reached the Angat River at Sabang, near the 2/8 crossing site, at midday on February 2. He learned that, while the bridge he wanted was damaged, nearby fords were passable if the tanks pulled the trucks across the river bottom.

This process took about six hours and the column continued to move east in heavy rain toward the high ground to determine if the Japanese would in fact attack the cavalry division. They were on a narrow, one-lane road lined with houses and could make only 5-10 mph in the growing darkness. Five riflemen rode on each tank and all those in the trucks were ready to return enemy fire.

"The night [2-3 February] suddenly became alive with all kinds of sound," said Lobit. From a ridgeline paralleling the column, an unknown number of enemy opened fire. Lobit's artillery commander, Major J.P. Henry, ordered his 105mm howitzers into position. When Lobit radioed for a report, Henry replied, "The guns are in position and I have 900 rounds ready to fire." Adjusting by sound in the darkness, the forward observer needed only three rounds to put the howitzers on target.

Lobit knew at dawn on February 3 that guerillas were in control of the approaches to the route of march, and he ordered his column to move back to the southwest toward Santa Maria. Still hampered by the lack of bridges and useable fords, Lobit ordered the tanks to take yet another detour, while the wheeled vehicles moved at speeds of up to 25 mph on Route 64, then at speeds of up to 50 mph along the gravel surfaced Route 52, determined to catch up to the 2/8 column—and to General Chase, who was now moving with Hack Conner.

At a crossroad near Santa Maria, the absence of villagers told Chase that the enemy was close by. Halting temporarily to wait for some vehicles to pass, his brigade S-2, Major Lyman Bothwell, entered a store and returned with cigars and beer. Chase took a quick break.

Meanwhile, the commander of the 82nd Field Artillery Battalion, Lt. Col. Harry Lambert, was in a liaison plane overhead, and reported during the late morning of February 3, "Have seen all the way to Manila. Situation for us looks good." Marine pilots then reported that the Santo Tòmas University compound was intact but there were many fires breaking out across the city.

The ground was relatively flat and open near the hamlet of Talipapa, just four miles northeast of the Manila city limits. Four

National Archives

enemy trucks carrying troops and supplies almost literally ran into 2/5. GIs waved the enemy to stop, and they amazingly complied, probably momentarily thinking they were linking up with a column of their own forces. Unfortunately for the now-vulnerable Japanese, as each American vehicle passed, GIs "unloaded" their weapons and left all four trucks burning, killing at least 25 of the enemy.

Conner's 2/8 column entered metropolitan Manila about 6:30 p.m. on February 3, tanks and troops firing at any position they suspected an enemy soldier might occupy. The situation remained fluid and uncertain. Despite the news from the reconnaissance pilots, Chase could not afford complacency and told Conner to move rapidly. Would the enemy now try to destroy the internment camp and the civilians within it?

Troop F and attached tanks, accompanied by Lt. Col. Conner, disregarded security and sped deep into the city. Cavalrymen seized the Malacañan Palace on the north bank of the Pasig River and headed toward Santo Tòmas.

Two platoons of Troop G reconnoitered the river itself and ran into very heavy enemy automatic-weapons fire. Drivers frantically tried to turn around in what was a killing zone at the Far Eastern University campus.

After three officers were wounded, Sergeant John Gallagher organized a defense against repeated enemy attacks. An engineer lieutenant, George N. Renshaw, led his platoon out of an ambush. Two other engineers, S/Sgt. Adolph E. Bart, and T/5 Lloyd F. Madaus, manned a bazooka and destroyed two trucks carrying Japanese reinforcements. Guerillas helped them organize and bypass the ambush and they reached Santo Tòmas by midnight, where the remainder of Conner's unit was in the process of securing.

Chase reached the city limits before 8:00 p.m., followed by 2/5. He recalled, "Fires and explosions breaking out on all sides, much sniping and firing at every street corner, and even a Japanese counterattack on our column."

Three enemy trucks dashed out of an alley beside his command vehicle and he shot at them with his .45-caliber pistol. GI rifle and machine-gun fire caused the truck to burst into flames just yards away, the flames illuminating a landscape of noise and smoke as Chase and his command group moved on.

Nearby, on Quezon Boulevard, the headquarters staff helped to silence a roadblock. Chase was out of his vehicle when a bright flash went off near him. Before his aide and orderly could fire at the apparent source of the flash, an American voice yelled at them not to shoot—it was a cameraman's flash bulb. War correspondents had descended on Chase's force at the start of the operation and were still with the cavalry. Each of them wanted to be the first reporter into Manila. After clearing the Calle España for use as a landing strip, the Army established regular runs for exposed film and news copy.

It was a scene worthy of a movie when the tanks led the remaining platoon of Troop G, Troop H, and the remainder of the 2/8 column to Santo Tòmas University, where a Sherman tank named "Battlin' Basic" crashed through the gate to the cheers of the 3,600 internees. Conner, however, was wounded and his executive officer directed the clearing of the University grounds.

As the soldiers stabilized the situation and cleared the buildings of the enemy, Chase's

brigade S-4 (logistics officer) reported there was no food to give the internees for breakfast the next morning. The resourceful staff officer somehow located the nearby offices of the Catholic Bishop of Manila, who helped supply rice, fish, and vegetables. The S-4 also sent Chase a bottle of scotch, which he combined with a hard-boiled duck egg for breakfast the next morning. An "unusual, but an invigorating, way to start any day," reported Chase years later.

Major Bothwell, Chase's S-2, brought word about 10:00 p.m. that the enemy camp commander, Lt. Col. Toshio Hayashi, with about 275 of the civilian internees and about 70 of his own men, were barricaded in the Education Building. These were the same enemy that Louis Hubele had seen a few minutes before.

Hayashi wanted to take his men to Japanese lines south of the Pasig River. Little wonder, because guerillas had already reported that the area was heavily fortified and under the firm control of Japanese Navy forces.

Colonel Charles E. Brady, Chase's Chief of Staff, during daylight on February 4, tried without success to persuade Hayashi to surrender. He replied that his men would kill the civilians if the Americans did not permit his force to remain armed and to cross the Pasig.

With civilian lives at stake, Chase had no choice but to agree to the terms. Early on February 5, Troop G, 8th Cavalry escorted the enemy to the river. Despite some criticism, Chase maintained he did the right thing and noted that MacArthur approved the decision. GIs did not clear the last resistance in the university complex until about the time this group left for enemy lines.

Texas businessman Louis Hubele recalled that the Japanese provided only very basic rations during the war, and the internees who had outside contacts and the resources to obtain money, helped set up trade with local food vendors. Internees responsible for maintaining the camp, who worked or needed medical care, could go outside from time to time, but most were confined to the university complex.

As time went on and the war turned against them, the Japanese became more difficult. Cases of beriberi and starvation grew after they ended access to the outside vendors in early 1944. By the end of the year, Hubele was down to a can of Spam, and he and his wife shared their last corned beef for Christmas; there was not much left but rice. (Hubele and his wife returned to Texas in 1946.)

U.S. Navy

ABOVE: Jubilant American nurses, freed from Japanese captivity at Santo Tomas University, board vehicles to begin their journey home. Many of the Americans at Santo Tomas had endured nearly three years as prisoners of the ruthless Japanese. OPPOSITE: Fighting erupted in Manila itself as the Americans fought their way into the city. In this photo, an American tank destroyer engages Japanese forces near the Filipino legislature building.

Even as the GIs secured the university compound, some of the cavalrymen reconnoitered the Pasig River bridges and reinforced their small perimeter to enable other units to take charge of the internees. It did not take long for reports to reach Chase that "considerable parts of the city have been wrecked or burned."

The release of the civilians from years of Japanese captivity marked only the beginning of the battle of Manila, which would drag out for a month and result in the destruction of thousands of buildings and 100,000 Filipino lives.

This attack also marked the end of General Chase's command of the 1st Cavalry Brigade; the 49-year-old took command of the 38th Infantry Division, also in the Philippines, on February 7. His lightly armed "Flying Columns" had, in about 72 hours, stormed over 100 miles, killed about 1,200 Japanese (they took only two prisoners), and liberated about 3,600 Allied prisoners and internees held in Manila.

The geography of the Southwest Pacific Theater was clearly not well suited to comparatively large-scale mobile operations, and this was the only example in the Pacific Theater of such a drive deep behind enemy lines. American doctrine for mobile operations proved adaptable to the circumstances of the Pacific if the terrain permitted them.

Leaders, however, lacked the opportunity to practice the doctrine during the remainder of the division's operations during the war. Chase returned to the 38th Division as its commanding general at the end of the war and took it to Japan as part of the occupying force. It remained overseas for years, eventually deploying to Korea to fight a new enemy. But that is another story. ■

While the British capture of Pegasus Bridge went off perfectly, almost everything that could go wrong did go wrong at nearby Merville Battery.

BY FLINT WHITLOCK

The small French village of Merville (1940 population: 470), located just south of the coastal town of Franceville-Plage, had as its neighbor on its southern fringe an unwelcome German battery consisting of four concrete bunkers housing artillery pieces that pointed northwest toward Ouistreham and the mouth of the Orne River.

Since Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's visit to the battery site on March 6, 1944, Allied aerial photos revealed a frenzy of activity there, with it appearing obvious that the Germans' construction arm, Organization Todt, was in the midst of installing four reinforced-concrete, earth-covered casemates.

The first and largest was identified by the British as "Type H611," while the other three were smaller "Type 669" models. SHAEF intelligence officers knew that the Type H611 was almost always used to house 155mm field guns that had a range of 10 1/2 miles; Sword Beach, at Ouistreham, where the 3rd British Infantry Division was planning to come ashore on D-Day, was only slightly less than four miles from this battery.

It was therefore understandable that SHAEF believed that these powerful guns were, or soon would be, emplaced within the Merville casemates. No one at SHAEF was actually certain of the caliber of the guns because none of the aerial photographs showed them in any great detail.

But unless the guns, whatever their caliber, were knocked out, they would pose a grave danger to British troops landing at Sword—and possibly even farther west at Gold and Juno Beaches.

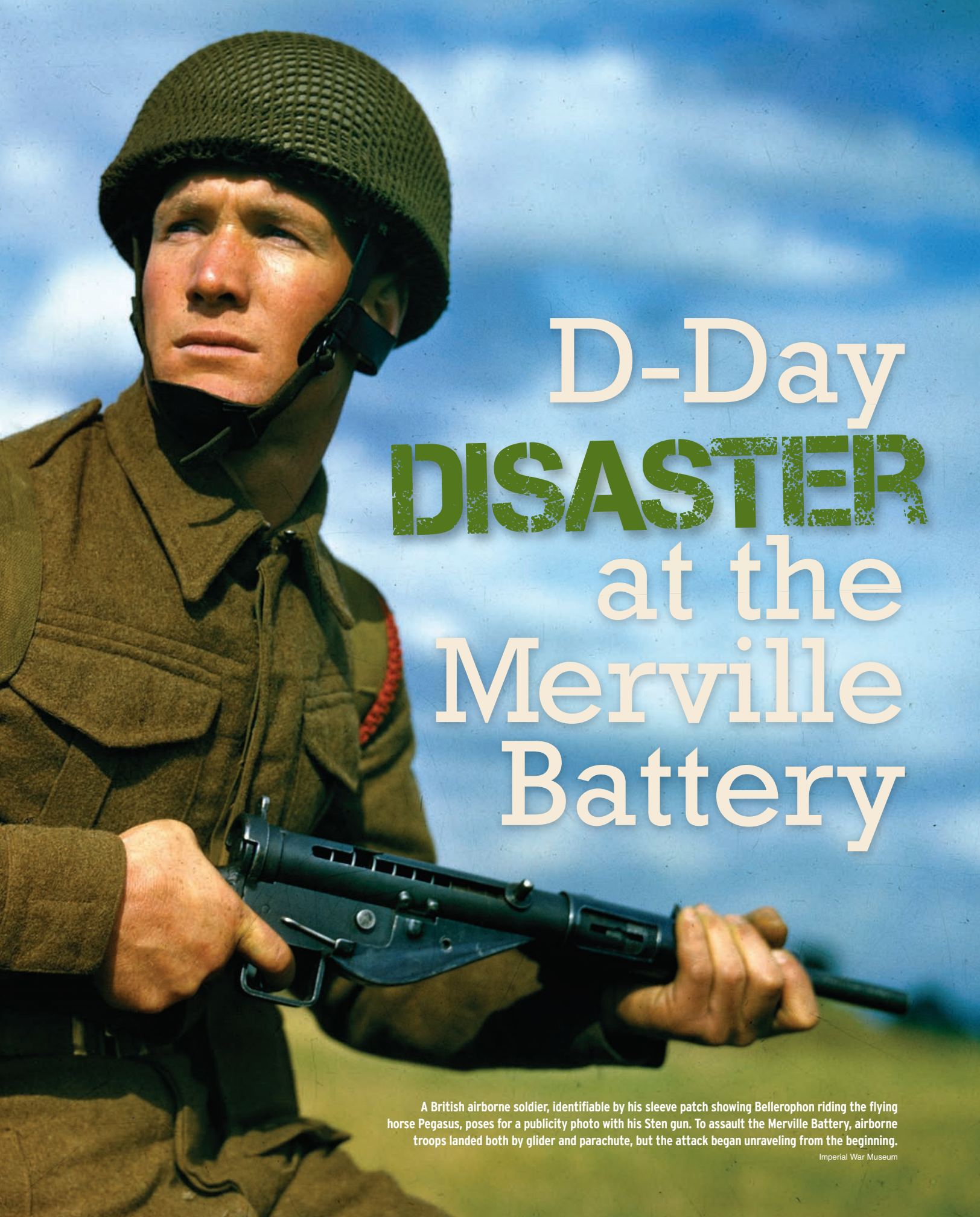
Aerial photos also revealed that encircling the battery were a 20mm anti-aircraft gun, bunkers, fighting trenches, and a partially completed anti-tank ditch. The position was also surrounded by a cattle fence enclosing a minefield of an approximate average depth of 100 yards, the inner border of which consisted of a concertina 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—such as Sainte-Mère-Église, Pointe-du-Hoc, the La Fière bridge, and the two bridges over the Orne—that needed to be taken as soon as possible on D-Day. Since it was believed that the casemates of the battery were immune to aerial assault, SHAEF realized that only through a ground assault by a large number of troops could it be neutralized.

The *coup-de-main* assault on the two Orne bridges were the responsibility of Major John Howard's D Company, 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (the "Ox and Bucks") Regiment, while the mission of taking out the Merville Battery was assigned to Lt. Col. Terence Otway and his 9th Parachute Battalion. While Howard's planned simultaneous seizure of the Orne bridges was daring in the extreme, it was not nearly as complex and fraught with danger as Otway's mission.

The Orne bridges and Merville Battery assaults were themselves portions of a larger plan called Operation Tonga that was designed to seal off the eastern end of the 50-mile-long invasion area. While these actions were taking place, Brigadier S. James Hill's 3rd Parachute Brigade—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—was 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.

In addition, the division's other brigade--the 5th, commanded by Brigadier Nigel Poett—had the daunting task of seizing and holding two bridges over the Orne River and Canal west of Ranville that were the only bridges in the area that the Germans could use to attack



D-Day DISASTER at the Merville Battery

A British airborne soldier, identifiable by his sleeve patch showing Bellerophon riding the flying horse Pegasus, poses for a publicity photo with his Sten gun. To assault the Merville Battery, airborne troops landed both by glider and parachute, but the attack began unraveling from the beginning.

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the amphibious invasion force.

Once their missions had been accomplished, the majority of the 5th Parachute Brigade would be withdrawn and held in reserve to respond to any emergencies that might arise.

Additionally, Lt. Col. Peter J. Luard's 13th Parachute Battalion would secure Ranville, while the 591st Parachute Squadron would clear two landing strips at LZ "N," between Ranville and Le Mesnil, for the first glider landing.

Although the objectives might seem to be more than one brigade could reasonably be expected to accomplish, Brigadier Hill said afterwards, "Looking back on my brigade's task for D-Day, I think I would have accepted it was well-nigh impossible when 2,00 young men with an average age of 22, who, with the exception of three officers, had never seen a shot fired in anger before, were asked at the dead of night, in a foreign field, to put out of action an enemy battery and destroy five bridges interspersed with deep irrigation ditches and German wire. These tasks covered a span of seven miles.

"Thereafter, as near first light as possible, the brigade was required to capture and hold the [Le Mesnil] ridge, which was the dominating feature overlooking the Orne Valley, where the main divisional objective was the capture intact of the bridges over the River Orne and canal so that a bridgehead for a future breakout for 21 Army Group could be established. When regarded in retrospect and the cold light of day, that was a formidable task in all circumstances.

"The extraordinary thing was that no one of us doubted our ability to carry it out. During our months of training, we had built up faith in each other and faith in ourselves."

Lt. Col. Pearson's 8th Para was to be dropped at Drop Zone "K," some three miles south of Ranville, from which the Royal Engineers of No. 2 Troop, 3rd Parachute Squadron, would proceed to demolish a road bridge and a railway bridge at Bures and another highway bridge at Troarn, thereby shutting off German access to the invasion area.

Otway's battalion, which obviously had the roughest assignment (he called it a "stinker"), spent many weeks training for their role. With the four, earth-covered, concrete bunkers of the Merville battery virtually bomb-proof, Otway's men had to figure out ways to breach the barbed wire, minefields, and machine-gun emplacements surrounding them, then get close enough to the bunkers to assault them through their firing ports, steel doors, or ventilation shafts—all within a very short period of time.

The timing for this mission was critical; the battery would have to be neutralized by 5:30 a.m. and a signal given, or else the Royal Navy would assume the raid had failed and would begin bombarding the site. At best the mission seemed suicidal, and, even though the 29-year-old battalion commander presented a bluff, hearty confidence to his men, Otway secretly doubted that any attacking force could accomplish such a mission.

Twenty-nine-year-old Lt. Col. Terence Brandram Hastings Otway (born in Cairo in 1914) did not look like the prototypical image of a leader of airborne troops. But appearances can be deceiving. As historian David Howarth observed, "At that age he commanded 750 of the toughest of British troops. He was slim and lightly built. His face was lean and gave an impression of keen intellect and an ascetic and sensitive character. One might almost have been forgiven for putting him down, at first sight, as an artist rather than a colonel of paratroops. But such appointments are more than a matter of chance."

By D-Day Otway was, in fact, a seasoned officer with over 10 years in the army. The son of a soldier who had died after being gassed during the First World War, Otway entered the Royal Military College (Sandhurst) at age 19 and, upon receiving his commission, was posted overseas to China where, in the mid-1930s, he and his unit became the target of Japanese attacks.

His unit moved from China to India, but he was not pleased with the assignment and planned to resign his commission. On his way back to England, he learned that he had been selected for promotion to captain in the 1st Battalion, Royal Ulster Rifles. In 1939, he became the battalion adjutant, and then the Second World War broke out.

Four months before Operation Overlord, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and made commander of the 9th Parachute Battalion.

Les Daniels, a sergeant in 9th Para, said of him, "Colonel Otway was a very hard man, very stand-offish, naturally as you'd expect your commanding officer to be. No tolerance for a fool whatsoever. You daren't make a mistake with the colonel."

Otway's own command philosophy was simple: "I wanted to be respected and I wanted to be considered to be a fair person, but I wouldn't go out of my way to get popularity. I wanted an efficient, well-run, happy battalion, and I reckon I had it."

Shortly after taking command of the battalion, Otway was informed of the invasion plan and the role that the 9th Para would play in it. "I was taken to a farm house near Amesbury, in Wiltshire, by the Brigade Major, and nothing was said. I was taken up to the first floor and there was a model, and he said, 'You see that, that's a battery.' I said, 'Yes, I can see that,' and he said, 'You have got to take it.' They [the guns] were sited to fire straight along the Normandy beaches over which the British troops were due to land in Operation Overlord."

Otway privately mulled over the awesome responsibility of leading the assault on the Merville Battery—an assignment he privately regarded as suicidal. But, ever the dutiful soldier, Otway knew he had to give it his best; the fate of the British and Canadian invasion beachheads depended on it.

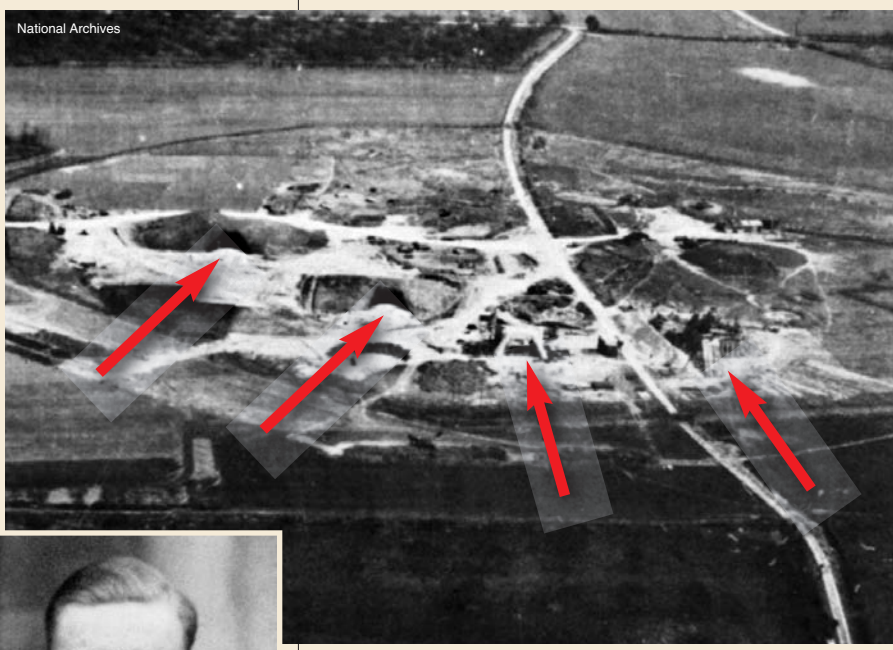
While Howard's planned seizure of the Orne bridges was daring in the extreme, it was not nearly as complex and fraught with danger as Otway's mission. He and his men would be delivered by both parachute and glider. Any miscalculation or mis-drop on the part of the Royal Air Force, or a determined stand by the Germans, could lead to a disastrous failure—and the possible slaughter of British and Canadian troops landing by sea at Sword, Juno, and Gold Beaches. The likelihood of things going wrong was immense.

But there was nothing but to do it. The British government bought a field near Newbury in Berkshire and constructed a full-scale replica of the Merville Battery, developed from aerial photos. "If we were going to go and do this job, which was obviously very difficult," said Otway, "we had to have a replica in this country and every man would have to know what to do. The battery was sited to fire along the length of Sword Beach, across which the British 3rd Infantry Division was going to land. Everybody emphasized to me personally what would happen if we failed—that is, the men killed on the beach."

Otway's 750 men spent weeks rehearsing and refining their timing and movements at the replica, often using live ammunition. Since the raid was scheduled to take place in the dark, Otway had his men constantly practicing the assault in the dead of night.

He soon realized that having his men land either by parachute or glider outside of the battery's defenses and then fight their way in would probably not work, so he devised a plan that would have 60 men in three Horsa gliders crash-land as close as possible to the concrete casemates; additional men would drop immediately by parachute inside the defenses on top of the battery.

Outlining his plan to A Company, Otway asked for volunteers; the entire company stepped forward. Moved by this show of courage and selflessness, Otway and Major Allen J. M. Parry, the company commander, had the solemn task of selecting 60 men, all of them single, for almost certain death.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ABOVE: British reconnaissance photo taken in March 1944 of the Merville Battery under construction near Sword Beach, Normandy. Two casemates on the left are completed, the two on right still being built. LEFT: Lt. Col. Terence Otway led the 9th Parachute Battalion in its attack on the Merville Battery. OPPOSITE: During training, British airborne troops rush from a Horsa glider. The Horsa, manufactured by Airspeed Ltd., could carry up to 30 troops.

Practicing for Pegasus

As Otway was running 9th Para through its paces, Major John Howard and his glidermen were rehearsing for their *coup de main* assault to simultaneously take both the Bénouville and Ranville bridges over the Orne. The bridge at Bénouville was codenamed "Pegasus" and the one at Ranville "Horsa."

For months Howard had put the men of D Company through a grilling as they constantly practiced perfecting the techniques of seizing a bridge. Understandably, the troops became bored with the repetition, especially since, with the exception of Howard, they had no idea what their role in the invasion would be.

To end boredom and add a new level of realism, Howard asked Brigadier Nigel Poett if he could find a place in England that replicated the target in France—a place where two bridges close together crossed both a river and a canal. Colonel George Chatterton, commanding the Glider Pilot Regiment, said that such a place was found "near Hinton, Buckland and Bampton Aston which almost completely corresponded" to the Orne bridges area: the troops were moved there in early May to continue their training.

Fortune was about to smile on the Allies. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, head of Army Group B and tasked with defending the northern coast of France, had gone off to Germany to try and convince Hitler that the panzer units in Normandy needed to have the flexibility of countering local threats by the Allies when and where they appeared. Rommel knew that by going over his boss's head—Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt—and meeting with Hitler he would incur the old man's wrath, but he had to risk it; there was simply too much at stake.

Rommel also knew that Hitler, as well as the High Command, were firmly convinced that the Allies' main thrust onto the continent would come at Calais, no matter how many thousands of landing craft and warships and paratroopers and gliders were hitting Normandy. Rommel's meeting with Hitler produced nothing of substance; discouraged, he headed back to his Normandy headquarters at La Roche Guyon.

The defense of the Normandy coastline was primarily the responsibility of Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Richter and his 716th Infantry Division, an understrength division that was thinly stretched from the Dives River in the east to the Vire River in the west—a distance of some 50 miles, nearly the entire length of the Allies' Normandy beachhead. The 716th was part of General of Artillery Erich Marcks' LXXXIV Corps, which, in turn, was part of the German Seventh Army, commanded by Col.-Gen. Friedrich Dollmann.

Compounding the 716th's problems was the fact that it had only two regiments (the 726th and 736th Grenadier), and both were of dubious fighting quality; many of its personnel were wounded veterans from the Eastern Front who had been transferred to Nor-

IN ALL THE NOISE AND CONFUSION, OTWAY GAVE THE ORDER FOR THE BREACHING TEAMS TO BLOW THE WIRE. THE BANGALORES RIPPED A 20-FOOT GAP AND, BEFORE THE DUST FROM THE EXPLOSION HAD SETTLED, OTWAY SHOUTED, "GET IN! GET IN! GET IN!"

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mandy to rest and recuperate.

In fact, so dire were the Germans' manpower problems that one battalion of the 736th, whose headquarters were at Amfréville, even consisted of Russian soldiers who had been taken prisoner and given the option of either fighting for Germany or being interned in a prisoner-of-war camp; the loyalty and combat capability of this unit, known as Ost-Batallion 642, was doubtful at best.

The 736th Grenadier Regiment also had an artillery regiment, the 1716th, Battalion I of which was the one at Merville. The Merville garrison consisted of 80 artillerymen and 50 combat engineers. A forward-observation bunker with an excellent view of the coastline was located on the beach at Franceville-Plage.

The Merville battery was under the command of an inexperienced 24-year-old Austrian lieutenant named Raimund Steiner. The previous battery commander, Captain Karl-Heinrich Wolter, had been killed during an RAF bombing raid on May 19, 1944, while he was spending the evening with his French mistress. When he took command, Steiner had no idea that, in less than a month, his battery would be the scene of immense violence and bloodshed.

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ABOVE: Major Hans von Luck (center) commanded Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 125. He tried to alert higher headquarters to the invasion's start. BELOW: Although dozens of Allied bombs fell on the Merville Battery in May, they failed to knock out the complex, which meant the Brit paras had to finish the job. OPPOSITE: Field Marshal Erwin Rommel (right) inspects members of the 21st Panzer Division three weeks before the Normandy invasion. He was absent from the region when the attack was launched.

D-Day arrives

All the preparation and training was about to be put to the test. On the night of June 5, 1944, with warships and troop transports ploughing the stormy English Channel on their way to their assigned beachheads, the American, British, and Canadian parachute and glider forces were winging their way southward from their air bases in southern England.

Although dwarfed by the number of aircraft the Americans would be using 50 miles to the west, the 6th British Airborne Division lift was still considerable: a total of 266 aircraft, mostly Albemarles and Dakota C-47s, were detailed to carry 4,512 paratroops. The troop carriers were followed by 98 tugs pulling gliders. (Seventy-four gliders were successfully released, of which 57 landed on or near their designated Landing Zones. Altogether 611 troops were carried by gliders, and 493 of them successfully went into action.)

Once the skyborne soldiers were dropped, Allied battleships, cruisers, and destroyers would begin plastering the coastline with a fearsome barrage that would shake the entire coast of Lower Normandy, softening up the German defenses in preparation for the amphibious landing of over 100,000 soldiers.

According to the Overlord plan, Otway and his troops would depart from RAF Harwell (recce and rendezvous parties under Major Allen Parry) and Brize Norton (main assault group) shortly before midnight on June 5 in C-47s, Albemarles, and Stirlings—followed immediately by the rest of the battalion being towed in eight gliders.

In the early hours of June 6, dozens of frantic calls began lighting up the switchboard in the headquarters of Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 125 at Bellengreville, east of Caen. Roused out of bed, 32-year-old Major Hans von Luck, regimental

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commander, recalled, "I looked out the window and was wide awake; flares were hanging in the sky. At the same moment my adjutant was on the telephone: 'Major, paratroops are dropping! Gliders are landing in our section!'"

Luck dashed to his command post, where he was inundated with calls from shouting captains and lieutenants telling him that countless airplanes were overflying their positions; they could see gliders and paratroopers. Everyone was convinced that this was the prelude to the long-awaited Allied invasion.

Luck relayed this information to his higher headquarters—Maj. Gen. Edgar Feuchtinger's 21st Panzer Division—but was told the general and his staff were on the road, heading back from Paris. Luck gave the junior officer who answered the phone "a brief situation report and asked him to obtain clearance for us for a concentrated night attack the moment the divisional commander returned."

By the time Feuchtinger got the message, however, it was too late. Besides, the German high command was still clinging to the belief that any thrust at Normandy would undoubtedly be only a diversionary action to cover the real invasion that would take place at the Pas de Calais.

Soon, some of the 6th British Airborne Division paratroopers captured at Troarn were taken to Luck's HQ and interrogated; intelligence was gathered that these troops were part of an effort to secure the bridges at Ranville and Bénouville in advance of a seaborne landing. Luck passed on the information to higher headquarters, which did nothing about it.

Lt. Col. Terence Otway and his 9th Parachute Battalion were on the way to their objective. One historian would call Otway's assault on the battery "the most singularly outstanding example of personal leadership and raw courage displayed in Normandy during the pre-dawn darkness of D-Day," and he would not exaggerate. Nowhere else during the entire invasion would so many things go wrong for the attackers, and nowhere else would so much chaos and adversity be overcome by so few.

Like their American counterparts, the British paratroops were weighted down with every conceivable item they might need for several days in combat. But whereas the American paratroopers used toy crickets to identify each other in the dark, the men of 9th Para carried bird whistles, and the officers had bakelite devices that made a quacking sound when squeezed.

As he crossed the Channel, Otway continued to run over the details of his mission; he and his parachutists, along with the supporting company of Canadians, would drop at DZ "V," march a mile and a half to the northwest, and take cover as a hundred Lancaster bombers plastered the battery.

With the battery's garrison dazed and deafened by the bombardment, or so Otway hoped, the rest of his force would arrive atop the battery in gliders, then blow their way through whatever mines and barbed wire remained with Bangalore torpedoes and assault the German survivors. The battalion would need to neutralize the battery no later than

5:30 a.m. Otway would then fire a yellow flare signifying success, or else the Royal Navy would begin shelling it.

Assaulting Merville

Trailing the paratroopers were the eight Horsa gliders. Piloting the first of them, Chalk Number 67, was Sergeant Billy Marfleet, a former dentist's apprentice with a knack for flying. Number 67 was being towed by an Albemarle piloted by Flying Officer Christopher Lawson. Before they had taken off, Marfleet, along with the seven other glider pilots, had downed a huge meal of bacon and eggs.

The special treatment continued; the pilots were then trucked to their gliders at the airfield (they had always walked before). Shortly before 11:30 p.m. on June 5, the squadron received the signal to take off and so, with Lawson and Marfleet in the lead, the Albemarles and their attached Horsas began rolling down the runway until they became airborne. The unit assembled over Worthing near the south coast of England and then set course for France.

The flight over was as uneventful as a flight into history could be. The paras were so tightly wedged into the gliders that they could scarcely breathe, let alone move. But the bobbing and weaving motion of the gliders, being tossed about in the slipstream of the planes towing them, led inevitably to motion sickness, and soon the floors of the eight Horsas were awash in vomit.

Shortly after take-off, another glider, this one carrying men of Lieutenant Hugh Smythe's No. 3 Platoon, A Company, had problems. The tow rope parted company with the tug, but the glider pilot was able to make a safe return to England; they would not arrive at the Le Mesnil crossroads until the evening of June 6, however.

The flight over the Channel was not without tragic mishap. Halfway across, the planes ran into a cloudbank as thick as steel wool. As the tugs and gliders approached the Normandy coast, deteriorating weather engulfed the formation. At some point while flying blindly through the dark, nighttime clouds, the tow rope connecting Number #67 with Albemarle V-1746 broke.

Billy Marfleet and his co-pilot Vic Haines dropped lower in hopes that they would see land beneath them. No such luck; all they saw was the blackness of the Channel below, rushing up at them.

Without an engine, and without the ability to climb, Number #67 plunged into the water, killing everyone on board. It was the first bad omen that signaled Otway's aerial assault was headed for trouble. But, without radio contact between the gliders and the bombers carrying the paratroops, Otway was unaware of the tragedy that had just taken the lives of a glider full of his men and removed a key element from his assault force. He and the rest of the flight continued toward Normandy.

As his plane droned on, Otway, still trying to convince himself that the plan was workable, pulled out a bottle of whiskey that he had tucked into his jump smock and passed it around to the 20 men in his stick; it came back to him half-empty.

A few minutes after midnight the flight reached the sleeping coast, which suddenly began winking with flashes of light, and the anti-aircraft shells stabbed upward in angry red rivers to explode in and around the flock of planes. The pilot of the lead plane began to toss it about violently, throwing the paratroopers, who had just stood up in preparation for the jump, around like marbles in a tin can. Otway struggled forward to the cockpit. "Hold your course, you bloody fool!" he angrily shouted at the pilot.

"We've been hit in the tail," the pilot shouted back.

"You can still fly straight, can't you?" Otway barked. Then he saw the green light go on and the men starting to bail out through the hole in the fuselage. He thrust the half-empty whiskey bottle at one of the RAF crewmembers. "Here—you're going to need this." With that, he jumped to join his men.

As he drifted down toward a farmhouse that he recognized from the briefings to be a German battalion headquarters, Otway could see that the wind was carrying him away from the hump of the Merville Battery's four casemates. With no time to steer his chute, he slammed against the wall of the house and dropped several feet into a garden where two of his men already lay.

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ABOVE: Airborne soldiers emerge from a Hotspur glider. Because it could only carry eight soldiers, the Hotspur was only used for training and not employed in combat. OPPOSITE: Training for D-Day was intense and continual. Here, heavily laden British paratroopers are packed into an aircraft, ready to make another practice jump. The British used both Albemarles and C-47 Dakotas in training and in combat.

A German, having heard the thud, opened an upstairs window and looked out. Seeing movement, he fired at the Brits; one of the Brits responded by tossing a rock through the window.

Otway and the two men then high-tailed it out of the garden and took cover nearby while the Germans inside the house rushed out to look for whomever was disturbing their peace.

Meanwhile, the plane from which Otway had jumped was circling the area, for only seven men of his stick had managed to jump on the first pass; the pilot made two additional passes over the area.

Suddenly, on the ground, there was a loud crash of breaking glass. Otway's batman, Corporal Joe Wilson, had just come down on top of the glass greenhouse attached to the headquarters farmhouse. Luckily, he managed to avoid being killed or captured by the Germans and took off for the battalion's rendezvous point (RV) in the woods more than a mile from the battery.

Also moving to the RV, Otway managed to pick up a few 9th Para stragglers along the way, but, when he counted noses, he found that he had only a handful of troops. Waiting in the woods, Major Alan J.M. Parry, his second-in-command and the commander of A Company, whispered, "Thank God you've come, sir."

"Why?" asked Otway, fearing the worst.

"The drop's bloody chaos, sir. There's hardly anyone here."

It was true. 9th Para was scattered over more than 50 square miles; the bulk of the unit was missing, dropped into trees, marshes, flooded areas, and villages—everywhere except Dropping Zone "V."

Otway waited, but at 2:35 a.m., nearly an hour and a half after the drop, only 110 of the battalion's 750 men had been assembled.

Forty more stragglers came in during the next 15 minutes, but there were no jeeps, guns, trailers, anti-tank weapons, or, except for 20 lengths of Bangalore torpedoes and a few pounds of plastic explosive, no demolition equipment. The sappers, mortars, radios, signal equipment, mine detectors, and naval-bombardment party were all

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: British airborne troops apply lampblack to their faces before boarding their gliders and transports on the evening of June 5. OPPOSITE: Next stop: Normandy. Members of the British 6th Parachute Division unit load into the belly of an Albemarle troop transport that will drop them into France.

missing. And most of the Canadians of A Company, who were supposed to provide flank security, were nowhere to be found.

The Canadians had been badly mis-dropped. According to the Canadian Parachute Battalion war diary, Major Wilkins' A Company, 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, was dropped at approximately 1 a.m. but far off target. Upon tramping through the fields and reaching the company rendezvous point, Lieutenant John A. Clancy found only two or three men of the company present. After waiting unsuccessfully for more members of the company to appear, Clancy decided to reconnoiter the nearby village of Gonneville-sur-Merville. Taking two men, he entered the village but found no sign of the enemy. The Canadians would play no part in the coming battle for the battery.

Otway glanced at his watch again: nearly 3 a.m. The battery had to be taken by 5:30 or else the light cruiser HMS *Arethusa* would begin shelling it. The battalion had one Vickers machine gun, one Bren gun, and a Very flare pistol that, ironically, was only supposed to be used to signal the Navy once the mission had been accomplished.

Otway lay in hiding for a half hour observing the German sentries "wandering around inside [the wire], smoking, and they hadn't got a clue." But he was in a terrible quandary.

Should he wait awhile longer in hopes that the men and equipment he needed would show up or should he launch the attack with what he had at his disposal? Given the circumstances, no one would have blamed him if he decided to abort the assault and move on to his secondary objectives (of which there were many).

After more hopeful, fruitless waiting, Otway realized that he could not delay the assault any longer. He called for a meeting of his available officers and non-coms and told them that, despite their diminished numbers, the attack would proceed; all of his subordinates supported that idea, even though they knew many of them would likely die in the effort.

The force crept out of the woods and started moving silently toward the objective, bypassing an anti-aircraft battery firing on the two remaining gliders that were coming in to support Otway's assault. At this moment, the two gliders swooped in low over the battery looking for a star-shell mortar signal that Otway could not give because his signaling equipment was missing.

The first glider, with Captain Robert Gordon-Brown and his platoon from A Company, 9th Para, aboard, took hits from the Germans as it raced overhead but landed safely, albeit

four miles away.

The second Horsa, carrying Lieutenant Hugh Pond and his platoon, also from A Company, looked as though it would land atop the battery but then was ripped by 20mm antiaircraft fire. It came in hard and fast in an orchard some 200 yards away, where trees tore off the wings and shredded the plywood fuselage. Dazed, the survivors stumbled from the wreckage only to come under fire from a German patrol.

After reaching the outer wire of the battery, Otway ran into Major George Smith, commander of Headquarters Company, who had parachuted in with the advance party. Smith reported that he was late because the pathfinders had marked the wrong DZ but that he and his recce party had already snipped the outer ring of barbed wire, dug up some of the mines, marked a path through the minefield by scratching grooves in the dirt with the heels of their boots, and were ready to cut the inner wire upon Otway's order.

Smith also said that he had seen the hundred Lancasters flying overhead, but their bombs had completely missed the battery (they had dropped their bomb load on DZ "V" instead), and some of his men drifting to earth in their parachutes had the falling bombs miss them by feet.

As the awful reality that his mission was on the verge of unraveling sank in, Otway counted his force. Major Parry's A Company and Major Ian Dyer's C Company (Dyer himself was missing) could muster only 48 men total. Major Harold Bestly's B Company was down to 30 men. With only about a third of his expected force available, Otway had no choice but to reduce the scope of his assault.

Dividing his reduced resources into four assault teams of 12 men each, Otway assigned each team to attack one of the enemy casemates. Only two gaps through the wire and minefield would be used instead of three, with two assault groups attacking through each. B Company was organized into two breaching teams of 15 men each, with 10 Bangalore torpedoes. A diversion party made up of seven men and the Bren gun would cause a commotion at the main gate to distract the German garrison.

Suddenly, before Otway could give the signal to attack, the Germans became aware of the Brits' presence and began spewing out automatic-weapons fire. Otway yelled, "Get those bloody machine

PRIVATE SID CAPON JUMPED INTO A TRENCH WHERE HE WAS CONFRONTED BY TWO MEN IN GERMAN UNIFORMS. SUDDENLY THEY THREW DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND RAISED THEIR ARMS, SHOUTING "RUSSKI! RUSSKI!" INDICATING THAT THEY WERE RUSSIAN "VOLUNTEERS" THE GERMANS HAD PRESSED INTO SERVICE.

Imperial War Museum

guns!" The Vickers opened up in reply and silenced the German positions.

In all the noise and confusion, Otway gave the order for the breaching teams to blow the wire. The Bangalores ripped a 20-foot gap and, before the dust from the explosion had settled, Otway shouted, "Get in! Get in! Get in!"

Major Parry blew his whistle and charged through the minefield with the assault party following on the double; he was among the first to be hit. "I was conscious of something striking my left thigh," he said. "My leg collapsed under me, and I fell into a huge bomb crater. I saw my batman [Private George Adsett] who was just alongside me, looking at me as if to say, 'Bad luck, mate,' and off he went." Adsett was killed moments later.

The four assault parties from A and C Companies rushed through the gaps, firing their Sten guns from the hip as they ran. Men threw themselves onto barbed wire so their mates could use them as human bridges, then jumped into the trenches to battle the Germans hand to hand.

The pre-dawn darkness was raked by a thousand bullets, and grenades and mines and shells were exploding everywhere, catapulting attackers into the air. Private Alan Mower saw a bleeding paratrooper sitting in the middle of a minefield, waving his comrades away and yelling, "Don't come near me!"

Otway, observing all this from a bomb crater that he had made his command post, decided that his place was in the center of the action even if it would cost him his life, so he leaped up and shouted, "Come on!" to his batman Corporal Joe Wilson and made for the gap in the wire.

Otway's officer corps was particularly hard hit in the first few minutes, although he himself was miraculously unhurt. His adjutant, Captain Havelock "Hal" Hudson, was hit in the buttocks and stomach; B Company commander Major Harold Bestly had a mangled leg; and Lieutenant Alan "Twinkletoes" Jefferson, so nicknamed because he had previously trained with the famed Sadler Wells ballet company, was wounded by a mine.

Major Parry, too, was down and lying wounded in a bomb crater. "My left leg was numb, and my trouser leg was soaked in blood," he said. "Having a miniscule knowledge of first aid I removed my whistle lanyard and tied it to my leg as a tourniquet. My knowledge was evidently too limited, as I applied it to the wrong place. Realizing, after a brief interval, my error, I removed it, thus restoring some form of life to my leg; sufficient at any rate, to enable me to clamber out of my hole and continue with my appointed mission."

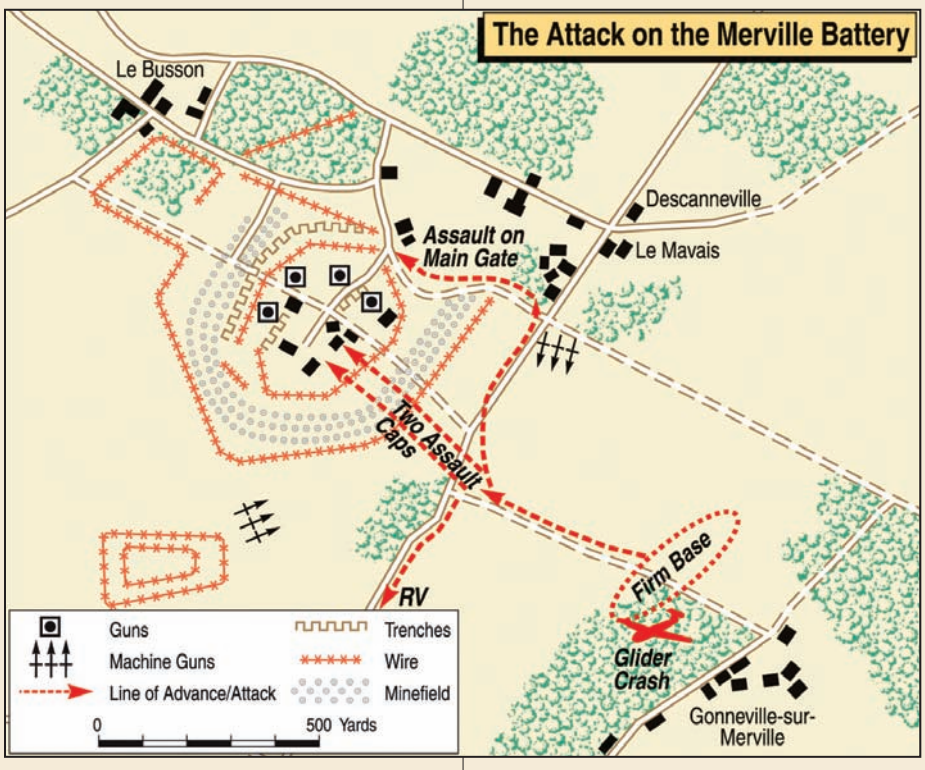
Private Sid Capon jumped into a trench where he was confronted by two men in German uniforms. Suddenly they threw down their weapons and raised their arms, shouting "*Russki! Russki!*"—indicating that they were Russian "volunteers" the Germans had pressed into service. Other Germans who noticed the paratrooper insignia on the Denison smocks, shouted "*Fallschirmjager*!" and either dashed into the night or surrendered.

The battle was reaching its climax. Lieutenant Mike Dowling of B Company led 40 men to the gun ports of one of the casemates, furiously firing their Stens and throwing grenades into the embrasures. Dowling said, "We started to charge and then I felt something whipping me on my left leg. I went down and I couldn't get up. My left arm and left leg were both hit. I watched my soldiers going in … and they were doing what they should do. I was immensely proud of them."

Other paras broke through the steel doors of one of the earth-covered gun casemates only to be cut down by German grenades. While some paras were finishing off stubborn pockets of resistance, others were rounding up prisoners.

Otway overheard one of the soldiers say, "'Poor Mr. Dowling,' so my ears pricked up and I said, 'Mr. Dowling—what?' 'Oh, he's dead, sir,' he said. 'So is his batman. I saw both their bodies.' I said, 'No! Are you sure?' And he said, 'Yes sir, quite sure.' That was an awful shock." But Dowling wasn't dead, just badly wounded.

A couple of miles to the north in the coastal resort city of Franceville-Plage, as the attack on the battery began, the battery commander, Lieutenant Steiner, was sound asleep



Protected by rings of barbed wire, land mines and machine-gun nests, the Merville Battery proved to be a "stinker" to attack.

Merville today: A rear view of two of the casemates. The site has been turned into an open-air museum that attracts thousands of visitors each year.

in his quarters at the beachside observation and command post. He was awakened by a frantic call from a sergeant at the battery telling him that gliders had landed at the guns and that a fierce battle was underway, with grenades and phosphorus bombs being thrown down the casemates' ventilation shafts.

"Over the telephone," Steiner said, "I heard my men panting as if in the last hour of their lives. Some prayed, others cursed and fought against suffocation."

Steiner quickly called his boss, Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Richter, to inform him of what was taking place. Richter was not impressed. "Typical Austrian," Richter grunted before he hung up, noting that, to the Germans, the Austrian soldiers were "wimps" and easily panicked into thinking that a single downed glider meant that the invasion had begun.

"I did not know what to do," Lieutenant Steiner admitted. "I was still a very young lad and was all alone. It was hopeless."

He then rang up the commander of the 711th Division, who said that he could provide artillery support but that Steiner had to get to his battery immediately so he could adjust the fire. The lieutenant recalled, "The radio operator and I crawled a mile on the belly. In the meantime, it was a pitch-black night. Chaos. Franceville, the classy seaside resort between the [Command] Center and the battery, was burning already. We crawled through the middle of the inferno."

As he neared the battery, Steiner saw dead and wounded soldiers from both sides scattered across the landscape and German artillery shells raining down on it (someone else in one of the casemates must have been calling down fire on the site), trying to blow away the enemy. He realized he had no chance to do anything and so retreated back to the coast.

"The bombers came and went, gliders behind them," he said. "It was hell. Everywhere were paratroopers—whether English, whether American, I do not know to this day. We were shelled all the time and had to defend ourselves. Constant artillery strikes and shots came from all sides. It was heartbreaking." Later he tried again to reach the battery, but it was no use, and once more he went back to the command center on the coast, feeling that he had failed in this, his first battle.

At the battery, Major Parry, his leg bleeding profusely, hobbled over to No. 1 casemate and noticed some captured German prisoners sitting huddled together. "Most of them were wearing greatcoats and soft hats and didn't appear to be expecting us," he said. "As I entered the enormous casemate it was possible to discern only two or three of my party.

"To my intense dismay, I saw not a 150mm gun, as was expected, but a tiny, old-fashioned piece mounted on a carriage with wooden wheels. I estimated it to be a 75mm and it was clearly a temporary expedient pending the arrival of the permanent armament. This was an awful anti-climax and made me wonder if our journey had really been necessary."

Pondering the situation and weak from loss of blood, Parry was resting on the sill at the bottom of the firing aperture resting when, moments later, there was an explosion outside, and he felt something slam into his wrist. At first thinking that he had lost his hand, Parry was relieved to find that it was only a small cut from a shell splinter. He bandaged it and proceeded to deal with the captured gun.

"We all carried sticks of plastic explosive, detonators, and fuse wire, and I instructed a sergeant to make up a suitable charge which was placed in the breech of the gun."

The fuse was lit, and everyone abandoned the casemate until a tremendous bang was heard. "We re-entered the casemate, now full of acrid smoke, and upon inspecting the gun I was reasonably satisfied that sufficient damage had been inflicted upon it to prevent it playing a part in the seaborne assault."

The rest of the guns were disabled, but Otway's men were not yet home free. Artillery rounds from a nearby battery began saturating the area.

It was almost 5 a.m., and the eastern sky was growing light. In a half hour the cruiser *Arethusa* would add its bombardment to that of the Germans. Lieutenant Jimmy Loring, Otway's signal officer, fired a yellow flare from the Very pistol and lit yellow smoke candles in hopes that an RAF spotting plane would see the success signal and radio the cruiser lying offshore. It did.

Loring also produced a ruffled carrier pigeon from a case inside his smock, attached a success message to its leg, and sent it on its way. After first heading toward Berlin, the bird corrected its direction of flight and made for London, carrying the news that the battery had been neutralized.

In less than an hour, the battle for the Merville Battery was over, but victory came with a heavy price. Otway, his ears still ringing from all the noise, and his fury at the pilots for the mis-drop undiminished, paused to count his losses. Of the original 150 attackers, only 75 were still on their feet; the other 75 lay dead or wounded around the battery.

The Germans had it worse. Out of the original 200, only 22 survived. Corporal Doug Tottle, one of only six out of 30 medical orderlies who made it to the battery, thought he could stand the sight of anything, but the carnage—men disemboweled, some missing eyes, jaws, arms, and legs, others decapitated—sickened him. "I then helped and did what I could with the aid of the other medics," he said.

Because he had a large number of wounded men to be cared for—both British and German—and no ambulances, jeeps, or necessary medical equipment, Otway asked the battalion's medical officer, Captain Harold Watts, and two medical orderlies if they would set up an aid station in a half-destroyed barn at a farm near the battery, known as Haras de Retz, realizing full well that they might themselves be captured; the men agreed.

More German shells from a battery to the west began falling around the position, so Otway issued orders for the battalion to quickly head to the appointed assembly point—a large wooden crucifix about 500 yards away. He knew that his depleted force was in no shape to take on its secondary objective—a small radar station at Sallenelles—but perhaps they could make it to Le Plein, a mile to the south.

The wounded Parry was trundled off the battlefield in a small cart towed with toggle ropes. Major Smith noted that Parry "took a brandy flask from his pocket, gulped a mouthful and beamed, 'A jolly good battle, what?' The grim faces of the men burst into smiles, and the sullen group of prisoners looked on in bewildered amazement. Parry insisted on being allowed to stay with the Battalion, but Otway ordered him to go to the Regimental Aid Post, and he did so reluctantly."

Private Ken Walker soberly reflected on the battle and its aftermath: "Here for the first time I realized some of the horrors of war, never having been in battle before. I was absolutely exhausted and feeling depressed, as if suffering from the after-effects of an attack of influenza. Most of the soldiers appeared to be in the same state, which could also be described as total bewilderment."

Their work at Merville done, Otway and his gallant band, their mud-covered, blood-stained uniforms shredded by bullets and shrapnel and barbed wire, began heading toward Le Plein.

While on the march, Otway met up with Lieutenant Pond's glider-borne platoon, which had engaged a German patrol after its crash. A German doctor and two orderlies were Pond's prisoners, and they were marched back to the barn to assist Captain Watts. (When the medical teams ran out of supplies, the German doctor said there were more in a bunker and went to retrieve them; the doctor was killed by a German shell.)

Aftermath

Lieutenant John A. Clancy of A Company, 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, whose unit was dropped far from the battery, finally arrived at the RV at approximately 6 a.m. and found one other officer and 20 other ranks of the battalion and several men from other brigade units there. By that time, of course, the fight for the battery was over.

Major Hans von Luck, commander of Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 125, was angry and frustrated. "If Rommel had been with us instead of in Germany," he later said, "he would have disregarded all orders and taken action—of that we were convinced. We felt completely fit physically and able to cope with the situation …

"There was no longer much chance of throwing the Allies back into the sea … Even the bravest and most experienced troops could no longer win this war. A successful invasion, I thought, was the beginning of the end."

When Otway and his battered-and-bloody 75-man battalion reached Le Plein, they were at the end of their rope. He recalled that, while on their way there, they were accidentally bombed by a squadron of British bombers; luckily, there were no casualties, but his already considerable rage against the RAF hit a new high. What was left of his unit would remain in Normandy until September, when it was brought back to England.

Each attacking unit of the Allied invasion force played a role, whether large or small, in the ultimate Allied victory. And none fought with more courage and gallantry than Terence Otway's 9th Parachute Battalion.

This article is adapted from the author's book, If Chaos Reigns: The Near-Disaster and Ultimate Triumph of Allied Airborne Forces on D-Day, 6 June 1944.

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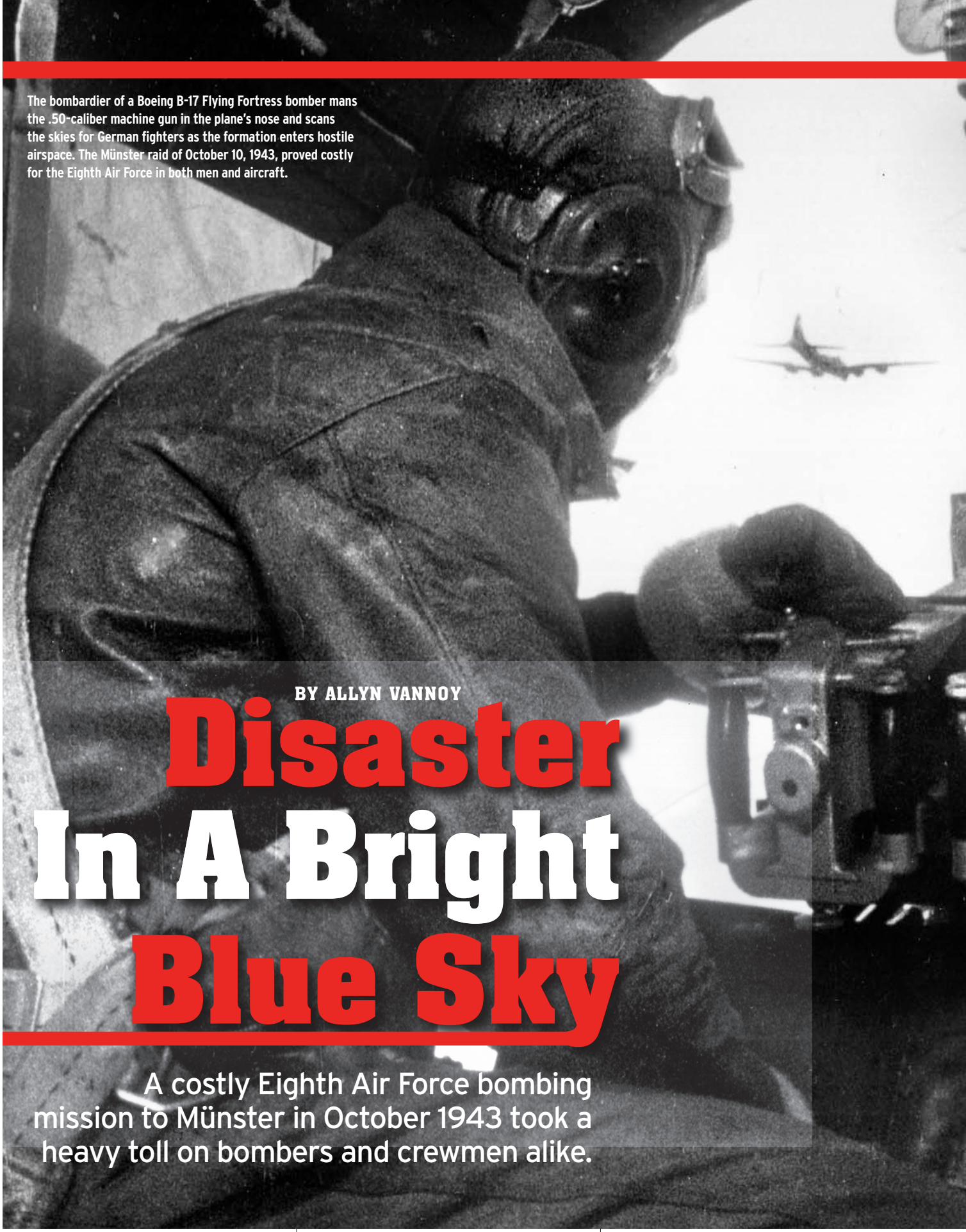
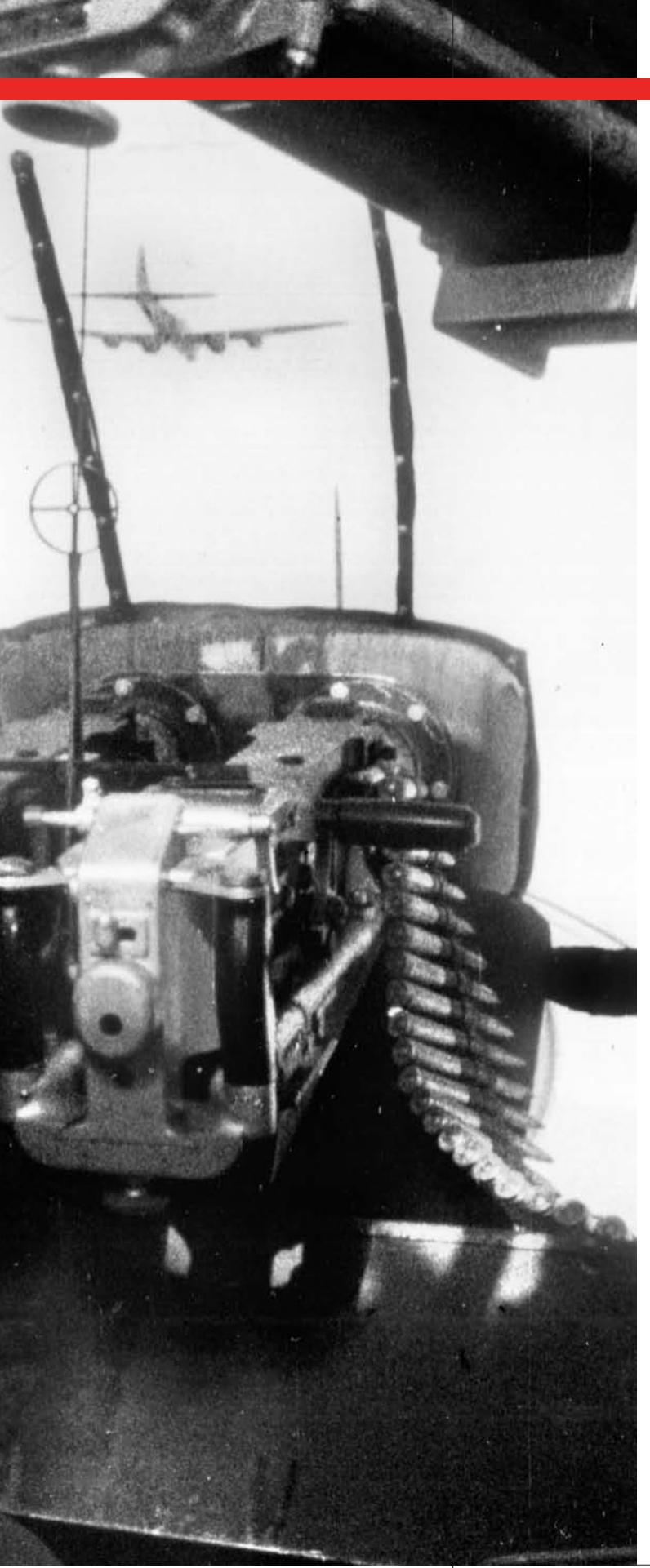


The bombardier of a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber mans the .50-caliber machine gun in the plane's nose and scans the skies for German fighters as the formation enters hostile airspace. The Münster raid of October 10, 1943, proved costly for the Eighth Air Force in both men and aircraft.

BY ALLYN VANNOY

Disaster In A Bright Blue Sky

A costly Eighth Air Force bombing mission to Münster in October 1943 took a heavy toll on bombers and crewmen alike.



National Archives

Lieutenant Robert Sabel struggled to get his Fortress, the *Rusty Lode*, home. Eight B-17s of his bomb group, the 390th, had already been shot from the sky. Sabel's ship was riddled with flak and shell holes, two engines were out, and his fuel gauges indicated just two minutes of fuel remaining in his tanks. Three of his crewmen had bailed out over Germany; four others lay dead in the bomber's radio compartment. The odds of even making it back to England were highly unlikely. Then he saw it—his field's runway—just ahead.

As September 1943 drew to an end without a resumption of deep penetration raids by American heavy bombers, General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, commander of the U.S. Army Air Forces, became increasingly aggravated by the lack of initiative on the part of General Ira Eaker, Eighth Air Force commander. Based on the number of replacement bombers arriving in England, Arnold could not understand why Eaker wasn't attacking Germany with at least 500 bombers on every mission.

Eaker had been feeding the new planes and green crews into the groups that had been badly depleted during the Stuttgart raid on September 6, when 388 B-17s had been sent to destroy the city's industrial sector. A fifth of the force aborted due to weather or mechanical problems. Of the 262 B-17s that made it to Stuttgart, 45 were lost. After the raid, Eaker limited most of his targets to those in France, within range of his escort fighters.

On September 28, Arnold directed his staff to send a message designed "to build a fire under General Eaker." Although Eaker focused on making good the loses sustained on September 6, in the face of Arnold's pressure, he reluctantly prepared to resume the air offensive into Germany.

In early October, Eaker's meteorologists forecast a week of good weather, and so Eaker directed the offensive be resumed in earnest.

On October 8, the Eighth Air Force dispatched the largest American raid to date, sending 399 bombers to strike the Bremen shipyards and industrial area and the U-boat construction yards at Vegesack, Germany, near the North Sea coast; 314 Fortresses reached their targets. German air defenses shot down 27 aircraft and damaged 217; 325 causalities were suffered. Two bombardment groups, the 100th and the 381st, each recorded the loss of seven aircraft.

The next day, Saturday, October 9, 378 American bombers were sent on the deepest penetration raid yet flown, hitting targets in both Germany and Poland. The raid was the first time airborne transmitters were used to jam German radar. Targets included the Danzig U-boat yards and the port area at Gdynia, on the Baltic Sea. The force included a mix of B-24 and B-17 groups from all three bomber divisions.

Bombers of the 1st Bombardment Division—115 B-17s of six bomb groups—were also sent to hit the industrial area at Anklam in northern Germany. The 1st Division groups suffered heavy losses, with 18 B-17s shot down, 52 damaged, and 210 crew casualties. The 3rd Bombardment Division's target was Marien-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers of the 350th Bomb Group are shown in flight during an August 1943 mission to bomb German airdromes near Paris. The B-17s were escorted in this mission by Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters that tried to keep the Luftwaffe at bay. OPPOSITE: In this photo take on August 31, 1943, B-17s of the 91st Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force, approach their target—the Dornier aircraft assembly plant at Meulan, France. After experiencing heavy losses in raids on targets inside Germany earlier in the year, General Ira Eaker ordered later attacks to be made in France, within the limited range of escorting fighters.

burg, Germany, about 20 miles southeast of Hannover. The losses were light—just two bombers out of 100 assigned to the mission.

Eighth Air Force planners were determined to keep the pressure on the Reich on October 10. Weather forecasters predicted a large, high-pressure area that would bring clear skies to Germany. The plan involved all 16 B-17 heavy bomber groups—a total of 237 B-17s—plus 217 P-47 Thunderbolts in support, striking Münster, Germany, as well as targets of opportunity at Coesfeld, Germany, and the Enschede Airfield in the Netherlands.

A shallow and direct penetration raid to Münster would allow for escort fighters to stay with the bombers all the way to the target. The two B-17 bomber divisions would attack the center of the city in a single stream, while a fewer number of B-24s would fly a diversion over the North Sea in an effort to draw German fighters from northern Germany.

On the night of October 9, the "Alert" message came down from "Pinetree"—code name for the Eighth Air Force Headquarters at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire—detailing the mission to Münster, just 35 miles from the Dutch border, a historic city with a population of 155,000.

The aiming point for the strike was to be Münster's 1,000-year-old cathedral. Within the city was a sprawling railway marshaling yard. American planners calculated that the entire German rail system operating in this heavily trafficked area would be seriously disrupted as rolling stock and a key operations center were destroyed along with train crews and maintenance-and-repair personnel.

The bomber crews were told that their target was strategic; that they would be attacking the workers of one of the largest railroad switching yards serving the industrial Ruhr. This was the first time the Eighth Air Force had specifically targeted civilians.

For their part, the Luftwaffe assumed that the Eighth Air Force would return to Germany on the 10th, and so they shifted additional fighter units forward to Dutch bases on the 9th. On the morning of the 10th, the increased volume of radio traffic from the American bomber bases signaled a massive raid.

When the bombers did not take off during the early morning hours, as they normally would for a deep penetration raid, the commander of Luftwaffe fighters at Deelen, the Netherlands, concluded that the bombers were headed to northwestern Germany and began to deploy his forces accordingly. The largest group was placed within 25 miles of Münster at Loddenheide and Münster-Handorf. Heavy anti-aircraft guns defended both airfields, the city itself, and numerous military installations around Münster.

German radar stations detected the American bombers as they began stacking up over East Anglia.

Major John Egan, 418th Squadron, 100th Bomb Group, was to lead his squadron on the Münster mission. Egan said, "The mission had not been set up for one to kill the hated Hun, but as a last resort to stop rail transportation in the Ruhr Valley. Practically all of the rail workers in the valley were being billeted in Münster…. A good, big, bomber raid could really mess up the very efficient German rail system by messing up its personnel."

At the group's mission briefing, its intelligence officer, Major Miner Shaw, informed the crews that the mission would take them across the Netherlands to the railroad yard at Münster, just over the Dutch border. As a short raid, P-47 fighters would escort the bombers to the limit of their range. Six Thunderbolt groups were to provide escort for the bombers—three groups to rendezvous on the way to Münster and three for the return leg.

Many bomber crews that had seen friends lost in the previous days cheered the opportunity to kill Germans. Other aircrews were surprised to learn that they were to bomb

civilians as their primary target. As a result, some were not inclined to fly that day.

Colonel John Gerhart, commander of the 95th Bomb Group, addressed a reluctant officer: "We're in an all-out fight; the Germans have been killing innocent people all other Europe for years. We're here to beat the hell out of them … and we're going to do it." Gerhart would be the task-force commander, occupying the co-pilot's seat of the B-17 *The Zootsuiters*.

Bombardier Lieutenant Jack Nosser of *Cash and Carrie*, 390th Bomb Group, responded to the briefing: "Even saying we would bomb only military targets, there were factories and plants situated in cities and towns anyway, and with a whole Air Division of perhaps nine or 10 Bombardment Groups all attempting to hit a specific point accurately from an altitude of five miles, and with cross winds gusting up to more than 100 miles an hour, errors were bound to occur."

Opinions of the bomber crews varied. Sergeant John Leahy, a radio operator with the 385th Bomb Group: "I was exhausted and completely drained emotionally. I assumed that we were continuing our strategic bombing of military targets. By then, of course, we were living on borrowed time—our crew was on its nineteenth mission…. I didn't expect to complete my tour."

For many of the crews it was the third mission in as many days, and so most were too tired to care one way or the other.

Lieutenant Howard Hamilton, bombardier of the 100th Bomb Group's *M'lle Zig Zag*: "The basic problem in trying to bomb a railway system is that, if sufficient labor is available, railroad tracks can be repaired in short order. We were told that the idea of bombing these railroad workers' homes was to deprive the Germans of the people to do the repair work."

Among those with the 385th Bomb Group at Great Ashfield, Lieutenant William Whitlow, who had piloted the long, tiring mission to Marienburg, thought: "Give me a short, hot mission to the long, dreary one any time."

Captain Frank Murphy, navigator of the 100th Bomb Group's *Aw-R-Go*, recalled: "Compared to over 11-hour deep penetration into German airspace to distant Marienburg the previous day, which I flew in the 100th's lead B-17 with our commanding officer, Colonel "Chick" Harding, Münster, which is just beyond the Dutch/German border, didn't appear to be a particularly alarming or hazardous mission at that time."

Lieutenant Keith E. Harris of the 570th Squadron, 390th Bomb Group, had flown missions to Bremen and Marienburg. On the morning of the 10th, Harris learned that his crew was assigned a new B-17G, *Stork Club*, but that they were also posted to the 100th Bomb Group. The 100th had already gained a bad reputation that had begun with the raid on the aircraft factory at Regensburg on August 17, when it lost nine B-17s.

Lieutenant Harris appealed to his commanding officer, Colonel Edgar Wittan, informing him that he didn't want to fly with the 100th. Wittan told him that everyone was going on the mission and that the 100th was short of planes, that they needed enough to complete their group.

At 11:11 a.m., the lead B-17 of the 100th, *M'lle Zig Zag*, lifted off the runway at Thorpe Abbotts, 106 miles northeast of London. The 100th Bomb Group was only

able to put 12 planes in the air instead of the required 18 to 21, having lost seven aircraft two days before on the mission to Bremen. Six to nine aircraft were to be supplied by other bomb groups, but the full number failed to appear.

Lieutenant Harris and one other aircraft of the 390th took off and flew to the 100th assembly area. But the other Fortress of the 390th had problems, either real or imagined, and returned to base.

A worrisome sign appeared early as Lieutenant Paul Vance, 390th, spotted a lone German Me 110 at high altitude observing the groups as they formed up.

The 53 bombers of the 13th Combat Wing (95th, 100th, 390th Bomb Groups) assembled over Great Tarmouth, then headed southwest to join the other combat wings of the 3rd Bomb Division, the 4th Wing (94th and 385th Bomb Groups) and the 45th Wing (96th and 388th Bomb Groups), both of which trailed the 13th as it turned east. A total of 247 B-17s and 216 P-47s were dispatched.

The 3rd Bomb Division began crossing the English coast at Felixstowe on schedule at 1:48 p.m. It was followed 15 minutes later by the 1st Bomb Division, which was assigned most of the P-47 escorts with the expectation that the 3rd Division would achieve surprise; the two divisions formed a bomber stream 75 miles long. Over the North Sea, four bombers of the 100th turned back, claiming mechanical difficulties.

Two of the Luftwaffe's five divisional headquarters lay in the area of the strike—at Deelen in Holland and at Stade on the lower Elbe in northwestern Germany. The centers plotted reports from radar stations, then flashed messages to the airfields. The Luftwaffe began massing its fighter defenses.

At 1:23 p.m., a half hour before the American bombers had crossed the English coast, Luftwaffe controllers at Stade alerted their fighter units. Orders were sent to the twin-engine fighters based in the Low Countries and western Germany at 1:54 to ready themselves. An estimated 350 fighters would ultimately engage the Americans—Messerschmitt Bf 109s, Focke-Wulf 190s, twin-engine rocket-firing Me 110s, Me 410s, and Junkers 88s. There was even the appearance of rocket-firing Dornier 217 medium bombers.

At 2:05 p.m., two groups of Fw 190s took off from Deelen; a few minutes later two more departed the airfield at Rheine, north of Münster. At 2:08, three squadrons of the Bf 109s were on their way to the Dutch coast. The Me 110 squadrons at Stade were airborne at 2:15. Ten minutes later, another three Me 110 squadrons departed the field at Leeuwarden in northern Holland.

The German pilots were prepared. Fighter pilot Feldwebel Gerd Wiegand recalled, "Each B-17 had 12 heavy guns which could fire accurately and score hits at a range of 600 meters. When we attacked the formation of from three to six Flying Fortresses, it meant that we had to fly through the fire from anywhere between 36 and 72 guns to make an effective attack, often closing to within 200 meters or less, in order to get enough strikes sufficient to shoot down a B-17."

As they started to cross the North Sea, a bomber of the 100th turned for home, and

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: During tense moments in the skies over occupied Europe in 1943, waist gunners aboard a B-17 of the 91st Bomb Group man their .50-caliber machine guns in anticipation of attacks from marauding Luftwaffe fighters. OPPOSITE: Vapor trails thatch the skies as Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers of the 390th Bomb Group and their escorting fighters maneuver during a raid on the city of Emden, Germany, on September 27, 1943. Just days later, the the 390th Bomb Group participated in the costly raid on Münster.

Lieutenant Harris pulled up into the lead of the high squadron.

As the bombers passed high over Schouwen Island, flak rounds began to burst ahead of them. Shortly after crossing the Dutch coast, three squadrons of P-47s of the 352nd Fighter Group rendezvoused with the 3rd Bomb Division. One squadron flew top cover, the other two took up position on either flank of the bombers as they cruised at 155 mph.

In the 2nd Bomb Division, when the lead B-24 had equipment problems and turned back, the rest of the division followed. The diversion of the division's 39 B-24s had failed, freeing up more German fighters.

The German pilots began to concentrate along the track of the bombers. As the bombers crossed the Dutch border, passing over Westphalia, they ran into intense flak.

Captain William Lindley, a member of the 95th's *The Zootsuiters*, noted, "Well before we got to Münster, the flak guns began putting up heavy barrages of antiaircraft fire over every city and town along our flight path…. The radar-tracking guns were by far the most accurate. We could, however, still give the flak gunners fits of apoplexy.

"By looking over the side of the cockpit at the gun emplacements, we could see every time the battery fired in unison [a battery salvo]. A slight turn in either direction [by the formation] of a few degrees and the 88 mm shell bursts would appear off to the side of our formation. The next time they fired a salvo we would begin a slight turn in the opposite direction. Radar tracking, with manual feed to the guns, made this maneuver possible. [But] you didn't use the maneuver during the bomb run from the initial point to the primary target."

The first enemy fighters to approach were easily driven off by the P-47s of the 352nd; however, the Thunderbolts reached the limit of their fuel at 2:48 p.m. over Dorsten, Germany, and had to turn back. The escort relief, the 355th Fighter Group, was fogbound at their airfields in England. Even after the aborting of 14 B-17s of the 13th Wing and 13 bombers from the other four groups of the 3rd Air Division, the division's remaining 120 bombers continued on without fighter escort.

Luftwaffe pilots saw their opportunity. The bomber crewmen of the 13th Bomb Wing could only watch as some 200 German fighters prepared to make their attack.

The Luftwaffe employed new tactics and weapons, concentrating their attacks on only a few bomber groups in order to maximize the number of kills using swarms of single-engine fighters and rocket-firing twin-engine aircraft that flew out of range of the B-17's guns.

Captain Rodney Snow, 95th Bomb Group pilot, recalled the fighter attacks: "They elected first to take on the 100th Group, which was flying low group in the wing. On the first pass, I remember there were eight to ten Me 109s, 410s, and Fw 190s coming in waves directly through our formation in a frontal attack from 12 o'clock level. Following their first pass, which took out three airplanes from the 100th's lead squadrons, I thought that the enemy had successfully shot down all of our 100th Group—certainly most of them were smoking or had exploded in midair due to direct hits."

Captain Murphy, the navigator on *Aw-R-Go*, said, "The German aircraft came after the 100th in seemingly endless waves. As one element of fighters broke away, another was turning for a head-on attack far ahead of us, and still others were forming up. Fighter after fighter flew directly into our formation, passing by so close that we could distinctly see the German pilots in their cockpits…. The fighters came on, at tremendous closing speed, with complete disregard for the curtain of defensive fire from our guns…. Exploding cannon shells 'walked' through our formation."

The Luftwaffe had never before repulsed an Eighth Air Force strike. Robert "Rosie"

ABOVE: A formation of B-17 Flying Fortress bombers is shown in flight during the difficult raid against German targets in the city of Münster. OPPOSITE: A pall of smoke and debris rises skyward while American bombs fall on a rail yard in Münster, Germany, on October 10, 1943. Civilians in Münster had been assured by German Home Air Defense that American bombers would not attack on a clear, cloudless day.

Rosenthal, 100th Bomb Group, said, "I think this attack was aimed at turning us back for the first time."

The 100th was starting to come apart. *Shackrat*, piloted by Lieutenant Maurice Beatty, leading the second element of three aircraft in the low squadron, suddenly exploded over Xanten, west of Haltern. Only two parachutes were seen.

Lieutenant Nosser of the 390th recalled: "Before we reached the initial point, I had seen Paul Vance's *Miss Carry* take a direct flak hit just after the heavy fighter attacks had begun. It appeared to me that part of the left side of the cockpit had been blown completely away, and I vividly remember seeing Lieutenant Vance lying slumped across the lap of his copilot. It was all over in an instant of time, but his ship continued holding formation

We ended up at the rear of the formation, where we received the brunt of the fighter attacks. We were now in a hell of a lot of trouble."

Nosser described the sounds of the attacks: "The screaming supercharger, the 20mm fire from the fighters sounding like gravel thrown on a tin roof coming in waves along the fuselage, the deafening din of all our own point-five's firing, and the constant roar of our two good engines running at advanced power settings. At times, the vision from the nose was obscured by exploding shells. Why *Cash and Carrie* wasn't blown into a thousand pieces, I shall never know."

As the 13th Wing passed above Haltern-am-See, southwest of Münster, and reached the initial point (IP), nine minutes from Münster, a swarm of Fw 190s began level attacks on the 100th Bomb Group from dead ahead. The Focke-Wulfs came on firing cannon and machine guns, closing to 50-75 yards before flipping onto their backs and diving away.

Waist gunner of the *El Paapanen*, Sergeant Raymond Manley, 100th Bomb Group: "I was shooting at a 190 at nine o'clock and pieces started to come off him when a small glare to the right suddenly caught my eye. A rocket had apparently struck our left wing, igniting the main gas tank, and our number one port outer engine was also on fire. I called the pilot on the intercom to tell him, and he immediately banked the airplane steeply to the right out of the formation and dived. He side-slipped in an effort to extinguish the flames, but the fire grew in intensity." Some of the crewmen were able to bail out.

At the IP, the task force commander's Fortress, *The Zootsuiters*, made a gradual turn onto a course of 57 degrees, leading the badly mauled 13th Combat Wing toward Münster, 30 miles to the northeast.

Captain Lindley: "Flak increased as we made our turn over the initial point, and two more B-17s went down. It was about then that our number-four engine took a light hit and began to vibrate. Colonel Gerhart reached over to push the 'feathering' button to number four, but before he could press it, I knocked his arm away. A feathered engine at that critical time would have played all hell with the formation and the bomb run."

1st Lt. John K. "Jack" Justice, piloting *Pasadena Nena*, 100th Bomb Group, had completed 17 missions prior to Münster. Justice recalled, "We were over Germany and had been under attack for some time when the group leader was hit and caught fire. The pilot performed the prescribed procedure of putting his nose down and getting away from the formation. His wing man, according to procedure, should have taken over the lead formation. Instead, all five ships in his squadron followed him down, leaving our squadron with three aircraft and the high squadron with three aircraft. The Germans immediately came in at all of us and split the remaining formation all over the sky."

As they turned at the IP, Lieutenant Harris spotted two fighters approaching from about six o'clock; they shot up the lead plane of the group. It began to slow down, and as it did, it caused a disruption of the other planes. One of the most difficult parts of formation flying was the slowing down—if the lead slowed, it took a little while for the other planes in the formation to keep from overrunning it.

As the damaged B-17 started losing altitude, Harris attempted to hold his position in the formation and stay with him. While this was happening, German fighter attacks grew even more fierce, coming in from all sides. After Harris's formation lost 2,000 to 3,000 feet, the 390th Group passed by above them.

About that time, the 100th's lead plane was smoking badly, as the other planes tried

to maintain formation, though scattered a bit by enemy fighters and the slowing down of the lead plane.

Harris: "Things then got very confusing in a hurry. The ships that were left milled around trying to form up on a new leader while under extremely heavy fighter attacks." Harris realized he had to take action, and so gave power to the throttles and moved to catch the 390th. The B-17 on his right wing, piloted by Lieutenant Rosenthal, stayed close. During the effort to gain altitude, the two planes successfully fought off several fighter attacks; however, most of the German attacked seemed bent on finishing off the 100th.

By the time they reached the 390th, that group had already turned right, then made a slight turn to the left as it approached the bombing run. During the turns Harris and Rosenthal were able to catch them. Harris dropped into the number five spot in the low squadron.

Captain Charles Cruikshank, pilot of *Aw-R-Go*, recalled, "I was leading the second element of three airplanes behind the group leader's element when he was hit and left the formation. I immediately took over the lead and continued the route as briefed. Apparently we were the only three ships left. Fighter opposition was extremely heavy at this point, and it continued all through our bomb run to the target."

Within minutes any organization of the 100th Bomb Group had disappeared. Six B-17s were shot down and six others turned back with smoking engines. Only one of the 13 B-17s dispatched by the group was able to continue.

The only escort unit present, the 4th Fighter Group, was with the trailing 1st Division, in which just one bomber was lost. The main air battle was far ahead of them.

In Münster, the city's inhabitants were enjoying a sunny Sunday afternoon. Assurances had been given by Home Air Defense that the Americans wouldn't attack on a clear, cloudless day.

Carl-Friedrich Bell, a 17-year-old student, recalled, "During the air raids we all had to help in the defense of Münster. Our battery consisted of six 8.8cm anti-aircraft guns emplaced in a large, reinforced concrete structure with sloping earthen banks situated on the northern outskirts of the city. Our battery was crewed by 40 regular soldiers, 60 air-defense helpers—16- and 17-year-old boys mostly—and 20 Russian Powys…. We students were given such tasks as fuse setters, gun layers, and range-finding."

Otto Schute, a 15-year-old apprentice at a Münster publishing firm, said, "Many times previously the sirens had sounded. When the 'all clear' had followed a little later on, we had neither seen nor heard any unfriendly planes. We concluded that nothing at all would happen and that the alarm had sounded because a few enemy aircraft were perhaps on their way into Germany, maybe well to the south or north of us. Nobody was worried about an attack on Münster…. We could not remember any large-scale air raid which had taken place anywhere on a Sunday afternoon in northwestern Germany."

As they started their bombing run, one B-17 pilot described the sky over Münster as "A fantastic panorama of black flak bursts, burning and exploding B-17s, spinning and tumbling crazily."

Sergeant Henry Glenden, top turret gunner of *Miss Carry*, observed that it was like flying through an aerial junkyard. The air

Both: National Archives

was full of parachutes and falling men. The ship's tail gunner, Sergeant William "Ike" Adamson, watched the enemy fighters approach: "The German twin-engines would fire rockets into our formation, and we would fan out to let the rockets pass. We could see them coming from way back, and I'd instantly relay their trajectory to our pilots up front and they would take evasive action."

At 3:03 p.m., just three minutes behind schedule, the bombardier of *The Zoot-suiters* released his lethal load of 500-pounders, and the other 18 B-17s of the 95th following suit. Forty seconds after release, the first bombs struck the heart of Münster. Moments later, the 16 Fortresses of the 390th Group unloaded their bombs.

Lieutenant Charles Walts, piloting *Invading Maiden*, 100th Bomb Group: "We had dropped our bombs and made the turn back towards England when we were hit again by both flak and fighters … Lieutenant Cooper Wilson, our bombardier in the nose compartment, was killed by a 20mm shell, and I was wounded by flak. The control column suddenly became unresponsive. I subsequently lost control, and the aircraft immediately went into a spin.

"With absolutely no response from the controls, I gave the order to bail out. Apparently, a following B-17 in what was left of our formation, under intense attack, had temporarily lost control, and one of its propellers had sheared off our tail section."

On the ground, Otto Schute remembered: "As the bombs dropped closer and closer, and as the attack grew in intensity, we suddenly realized that our lives were at stake. We all started to scatter and race for cover as the bomb explosions and anti-aircraft fire reached a crescendo. I simply sprawled face down on the ground. Looking upwards I saw, to my horror, bombs and phosphorus canisters coming down—and it looked like they were all coming directly towards me. But they exploded 30 to 50 yards away."

Fourteen-year-old Hildegard Kosers recalled, "The mournful wailing of the air-raid sirens mingled with the deadly whistling of the descending bombs. They exploded massively all around us: the earth shook, vibrated, shuddered, and heaved from the impact of the concussions. The solid concrete bunker trembled and shook to its very foundations."

Gerhard Ringneck, a soldier on his way to the Russian front, was at the Münster railway station. He said, "Apparently a daylight raid on Münster had never happened before, and the local people were not taking the wailing sirens seriously as they nonchalantly strolled in the warm afternoon sun. Very soon I saw the first units of the bomber formation in the distance coming straight towards Münster.

"They were being attacked by many of our fighters, and, as they got closer, I could see bursts of anti-aircraft fire from our flak guns south of the city engaging the bombers. Then I saw two or three burning planes diving down out of control. It quickly became apparent, however, that the enemy bombers were not being stopped or diverted by our air defenses. Being such a clear day, I could see many more bomber units appearing in the distance, all heading directly towards Münster."

Attacks on the 3rd Division alternated between head-on passes by Fw 190s and Bf 109s and rocket barrages from the rear by Me 410s and Me 110s. The German fighters broke off their attacks as the bombers approached Münster's flak defenses, then resumed them as the 3rd Division left the target area. Four more B-17s were lost by the 95th Group. As the leading wing appeared to be on the verge of annihilation, the P-47s of the 5th Fighter Group arrived to deal with the German fighters.

Captain Rodney Snow, 95th Bomb Group: "Our bomb run was nearly six minutes—two minutes longer than we liked to fly straight and level as enemy anti-aircraft fire was quite heavy, as were the fighter attacks…. After they had practically destroyed the 100th Bomb Group in the low position of our wing, the fighters next concentrated effort was on the 390th Bomb Group, who were flying at about a 1,000 feet above and behind us. Here again, they took their toll with straight, head-on attacks against the three squadrons of the 390th."

One of the few remaining 100th Bomb Group Fortresses, *Forever Yours*, piloted by Lieutenant Edward Stork, was seen to slowly keel over on fire and plunge earthwards. Barely 48 hours earlier, Stork had brought his B-17 home from Bremen on just one engine. Eight parachutes were seen.

Waist gunner Sergeant Stanley Smith of the 390th's *Stork Club* recalled, "There were bandit targets all around the clock at this stage as we stood back-to-back, our feet slipping on the rolling clutter of spent cartridge cases while we tracked our separate targets, or relayed them to each other as they darted over and under our ship."

As the Fortresses flew west from Münster, the German fighters continued to attack ferociously. The guns of Keith Harris's B-17 seemed to be firing continuously. At one point a fighter came head on at 12 o'clock level. Harris noted that the fighter wasn't firing. Just before colliding, the fighter dropped down slightly and Harris pulled back on his controls and raised his aircraft a bit, avoiding collision.

While this joust was in progress, the 390th lost two more planes to flak or fighters.

Harris responded by moving to the number four spot in the low squadron. Twenty minutes later over the Netherlands, as American P-47s appeared, the German fighters turned away, but not before another 390th bomber in the low squadron went down. Harris then moved up to the number-three position in the squadron.

Lieutenant William Oversteers, co-pilot of *Situation Normal*, 95th Bomb Group, said, "Münster was our crew's 13th mission and it was, by far, the roughest. The Germans hit us with everything they had. The whole sky was a fantastic panorama of black flak bursts, burning and exploding B-17s, spinning and tumbling crazily … German fighters blowing up and going down streaming flames and long plumes of grey and black smoke."

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Gun camera footage from an American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter escorting bomber formations captures the last moments of a Luftwaffe Focke Wulf Fw-190 fighter. German fighters broke off their attack as the American bombers entered the area of German antiairaft fire over Münster. BELOW: This horrific image depicts the death throes of a B-17 bomber shot down over Germany. The aircraft took a direct hit from enemy fire, blowing the nose off the plane with the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, and bombardier trapped inside.

Departing the target area, Lieutenant Robert Schneider, a pilot with the 100th, witnessed a terrible event: "What little was left of the 100th Bomb Group's formation was flying low and to our left. Shortly after bombing the primary target, two of their ships collided with an Me 109." One of the Forts involved in the collision was *Sexy Suzy—Mother of Ten* and the other was *Sweater Girl*, piloted Lieutenant Richard Atchison. Six crewmen managed to parachute safely from *Sweater Girl*.

There were now only four 100th Bomb Group B-17s left, apart from Harris's reassigned air-craft: Captain Cruikshank's *Aw-R-Go*, Lieutenant Rosenthal's *Royal Flush*, Lieutenant Justice's *Pasadena Nena*, and Lieutenant John Stephans' *Stymie*. Moments later, Captain Cruikshank's B-17 crashed near Linden, 15 miles from Münster. Then *Aw-R-Go* followed.

As Luftwaffe pilot Feldwebel Wiegand climbed to altitude, he noted, "What an awe-inspiring sight … their whole armada was laid out in front of me. About 20 olive-green camouflaged Fortresses flying in precise formation with their big white stars and glittering machine guns as they fired long streams of violet-colored tracer bullets at us from long range."

Selecting a B-17 at the rear and on the left of a box, Wiegand continued, "I had him in my gunfight and I aimed at his left wing. I wanted to hit his engines. My guns thundered and immediately big chunks of metal came away from his left outboard engine. I then had to throttle back sharply to stay behind the B-17.

"Suddenly, from somewhere near the tail of the Fortress, a brown object came hurtling at me, barely missing my whirling propeller and passing within inches of my cockpit. A human body…. My B-17 [target] was now hanging on its two propellers in a 45-degree climb—the other two engines were gone. Suddenly it stalled and plunged towards the ground."

The top gunner/flight engineer of *Royal Flush*, Sergeant Clarence Hall, recalled: "We were hit by fighters, mostly 109s, coming out of the sun in flights of five or six at a time from topsides. They cut right through our formations, seemingly taking out a B-17 on every pass…. At one stage, the fighters seemed to be going down like flies all around us. We claimed 15. It was more a nightmare than reality."

Lieutenant Paul Perleful, a pilot with the 95th: "I vividly recall seeing a B-17 which had been simply cut in two halves by the concentrated cannon fire from a German fighter … [it] appeared to me to happen in slow motion. The Fortress was struck and slowly came apart at the radio room. The front half of the fuselage, wings, still-functioning engines, and the cockpit seemed to slowly rise upwards, completely separate from the rear fuselage and tail unit. Then both halves twisted and tumbled down and away."

The 13th Combat Bomb Wing had penetrated the target area with 49 or 50 B-17s.

Only 24 remained, some having sustained severe battle damage, as they withdrew towards the Dutch coast.

Rocket-equipped Me 110s were directed to intercept the 13th Combat Wing as it withdrew. Thirty-five Me 110s approached from aft of the bombers, and from 800 yards they loosed a salvo of 21cm rockets into the formation. The rockets, each weighing 240 pounds, contained an 80-pound warhead with a time fuse set to four seconds. The 110s were equipped with a graduated sight that indicated the span of the B-17 at different ranges.

The B-17 *Tech Supply*, 390th, piloted by Lieutenant John Winna, Jr., took a direct hit and exploded. *Miss Fortune*, in the 390th's high squadron, piloted by Lieutenant Wade Sneed, received a rocket hit and broke in half. The front half nosed up and collided with a B-17, *Miss Behaving*, flown by Lieutenant George Starnes. Only one crewman survived from *Miss Behaving*. The other B-17s in the high squadron maneuvered frantically as they tried to avoid the exploding Forts, wreckage, and bodies hurled in every direction.

Heinz Hassling, a teenaged Luftwaffe helper with a flak battery protecting the Dortmund-Em Canal bridges north of Münster, recalled, "As they flew over, about three kilometers to the west of our position, a Fortress suddenly exploded … I could clearly see the wings, engines, and fuselage slowly disintegrating in mid-air. Seconds later, another Fortress, in the immediate vicinity of the first B-17, also exploded and seemed to fly apart." These were likely *Miss Fortune* and *Miss Behaving* of the 390th Bomb Group.

Another 390th Fortress, *Eightfold*, flown by Lieutenant William Cabral, had its right wing almost torn off by a rocket during a frontal attack by an Me 110.

Lieutenant James Goff, navigator aboard the 95th's *Rhapsody in Flak*, remembered the scene: "It all seemed like a blurred nightmare … wave after wave of enemy fighters … pieces of aircraft littering the clear blue sky … ugly black smoke of flak bursts, men in drifting parachutes … burning bombers and fighters all around us … 25 minutes that lasted an eternity."

The 56th Fighter Group took off in poor weather at 2 p.m. to rendezvous with the bombers; however, it couldn't prevent the loss of four additional 13th Wing Fortresses. The crew of *Bad Penny*, flown by Lieutenant Edward Weldon, 390th, was on its 18th mission when it went down near Divestiture, north of Münster. *Patsy Ann IIWI*, of the 95th, piloted by Lieutenant William Buckley, made a slow curve away from the formation with both wing fuel tanks ablaze and fire in the radio room. Over Holland, the ship of Lieutenant Frank Ward, *Pinky*, had to be abandoned—the eighth 390th Bomb Group Fortress to go down.

The trailing 1st Air Division had also had several aircraft abort, primarily because of excessive drag from externally mounted 1,000-pound bombs, one under each wing, which caused over-heated engines in several B-17s. A number of planes had to jettison these bombs over the North Sea.

Leading the 1st Division was Captain Sterling Baseler, 92nd Bomb Group. Six miles short of Haltern, a flak burst struck Baseler B-17, forcing him to veer his aircraft to the left while his navigator desperately tried to locate Haltern, the mission's IP.

The maneuver caused the 14 Forts of the 92nd and the two following groups of the 40th Combat Wing to follow Basler's turn. The wing was now on a course to Coesfeld, 20 miles west of Münster.

The 92nd and 306th Bomb Groups of the 40th Combat Bomb Wing, leading the 1st Air Division, bombed Coesfeld at 3:11 p.m. The third Group in the Wing, the 305th, realized the error during the bomb run, bypassed Coesfeld, and made a gradual right-hand turn to attack the primary target, Münster.

The next wing, with the 91st, 351st, and 381st Bomb Groups of the 1st Air Division, had formed a composite group of three squadrons en route, totaling only 16 aircraft due to several aborting B-17s—the wing having departed England with 27 Fortresses. As the

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The crew of the 100th Bomb Group B-17 *Rosie's Riveters* poses for a photographer with pilot Robert Rosenthal kneeling second from left. Of the 13 B-17s from the 100th Bomb Group that participated in the Münster raid, only *Rosie's Riveters* returned. Most of the bomb groups suffered heavy casualities during the raid. OPPOSITE: The rail hub of Münster was a frequent target for Allied bombers during World War II, as this April 1945 photo shows. The last air raid against Münster occurred on March 25, 1945.

1st Combat Wing approached Münster from the IP, it found itself on a collision course with the 305th approaching from the northwest. A disaster was averted as the 13 B-17s of the 305th veered away at the last moment.

At 3:17, the 1st Combat Bomb Wing released its load of high-explosive and incendiary bombs. Feldwebel Alois Slaby, radio operator-gunner of an Me 410, recalled, "We then sighted a formation of B-17s while we were southeast of the burning city. Leutnant Stehle [the aircraft's pilot] then maneuvered into position behind the bombers and opened fire. Dense smoke immediately poured from the B-17 and, as we emerged from the clouds of smoke, there were bombs over, under, and in front of us. Suddenly it was raining bombs all around us and the air was full of metal."

About the same time that the 1st Wing was bombing Münster, two of the three groups of the 41st Wing (384th and 303rd), bringing up the rear of the 1st Air Division, released their bombs on a now-blazing Coesfeld.

There were only two bomb groups that had not yet found a "target of opportunity"—the 305th and the 379th. The lead navigator of the 379th, Captain Joseph Wall, thought that he had identified the town of Rheine, in northwest Germany. Post-strike photos revealed that the Dutch town of Enschede had been bombed instead, killing 151 civilians.

Lieutenant Justice, piloting *Pasadena Nena*, noted, "We found ourselves completely alone. I observed a group to our left returning from the target area. They were some five or six miles away and lower, so we dove to meet them and joined their formation taking a position between all three squadrons. It was a presumably safe place and we headed homeward. Shortly, a Jerry attacked this group and was aiming, I am sure, at the lead aircraft. Instead, he hit our No. 4 engine with a 20mm shell, which completely knocked it out and sent us in a fast spin.

"From approximately 20,000 feet, John, the co-pilot, and I tried to pull the aircraft out of the spin. At about 5,000 feet we succeeded, but the aircraft was still in a dive. John and I continued to try to right the aircraft and leveled off below 1,000 feet, at which time it was apparent that the rest of the crew members had parachuted out. We counted seven chutes, and John tried to stop the engineer from going out the bomb bay, but he could not hear him and abandoned the aircraft.

"John and I decided to head for home, crew-less and crippled. The No. 4 engine was still on the aircraft, but there was no cowling all the way back into the wing. We were able to control the aircraft and John decided to take up a position in the upper turret, to protect us from any further attack. We had no communication, so it is my supposition that John, upon entering the turret, saw a German following us down and turned the turret to take aim. The German seeing the turret move, realized that there was still life aboard and sprayed us from one wing tip to the other with 20mm shells. Both wings were completely on fire and the whole side of the cockpit, my side, was blown away.

"John, realizing our situation, came forward from the upper turret. There was blood across his forehead. He reached under my seat, handed me my chute, then put his on and went out through the bombardiers' hatch. I put on my chute and went out the bomb bay…. To the south of me, approximately one mile, the aircraft crashed."

Of the 13 planes of the 100th Group that took off for Münster, only one, *Rosie's Riveters*, returned. Those on the ground who waited for the group were shocked to see a lone battered Fortress return. One-quarter of the 100th Group, 120 crewmen, were lost. Rumors circulated that the Luftwaffe was out to get the 100th. The Group had arrived in England four months before the Münster raid with 140 flying officers; after Münster, only three of them remained on flying status.

In the 45 minutes that the Eighth Air Force pounded the city, the 13th Combat Wing lost 25 planes. A total of 30 B-17s

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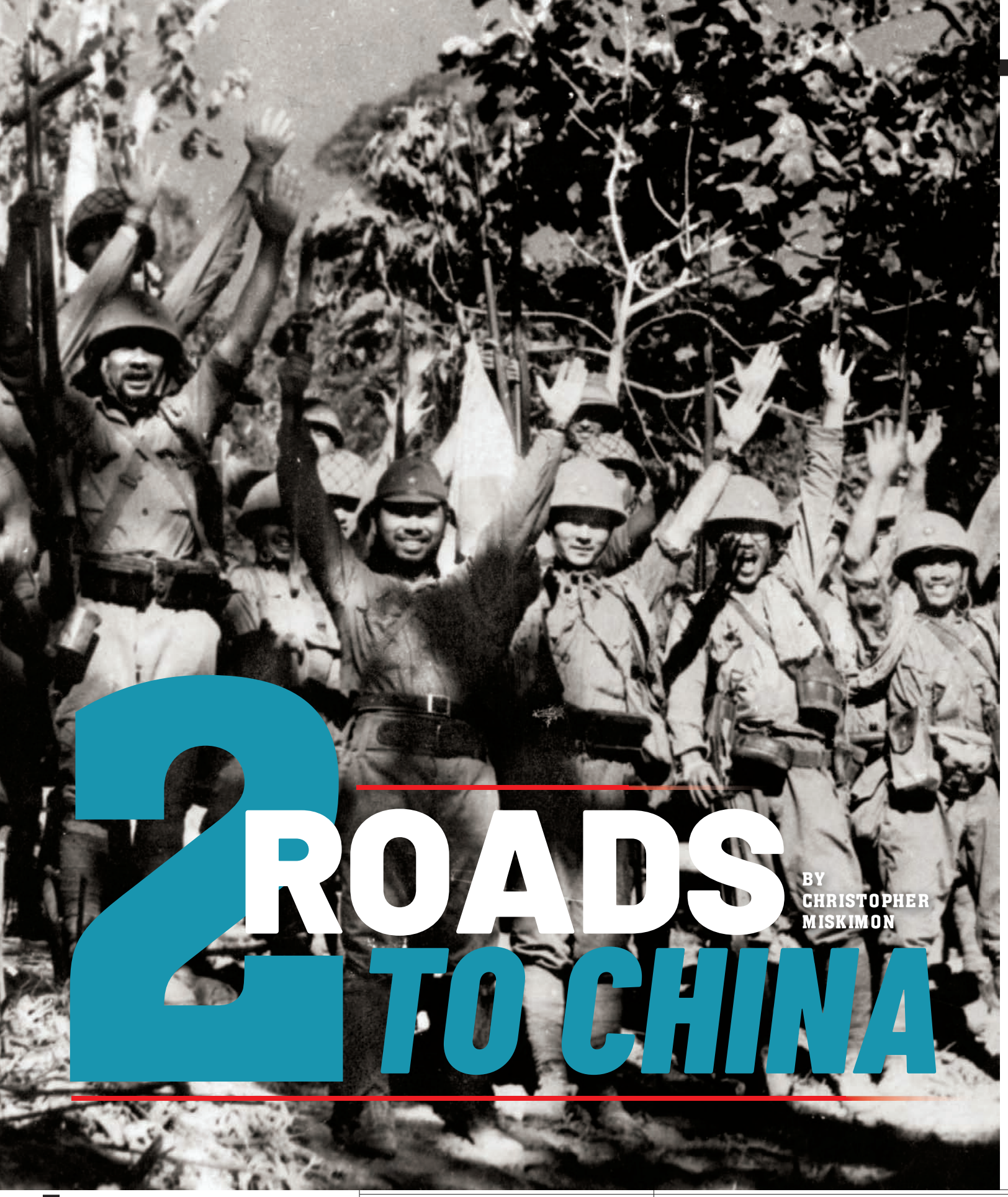


2 ROADS TO CHINA

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

Colonel Nick Galbraith's wartime journey took him from the Philippine jungles to a POW camp in Manchuria, where he and General Jonathan Wainwright were rescued by a team of OSS operatives.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Nick Galbraith photographed at the Bataan peninsula, January 1942. Although he was the logistics officer for the U.S. Forces in the Philippines, he was detailed by Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright to try and convince 90,000 American-Philippines coalition troops scattered throughout the Philippines to surrender. OPPOSITE: Japanese soldiers on the main island of Luzon celebrate their victory over the Americans and Filipinos, April 1942.

MAY 1942 was a dark time for Colonel Nicoll F. "Nick" Galbraith and his fellow American soldiers in the Philippine Islands. The war was six months old, and so far it seemed things were going the way of the Japanese. Much of the U.S. fleet was sunk or out of commission following the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941; what was left was busily fighting defensive actions, unable to achieve a relief of the American-Filipino force struggling to hold off the invading Japanese. The troops in the Philippines were left almost entirely on their own.

Despite the odds against them, a severe lack of supplies, and near-total isolation from the United States, those troops had managed to put up a bitter, five-month-long battle that began with Japanese air attacks following close on the heels of the Pearl Harbor raid. The defenders had been compelled to fall back on the Bataan Peninsula, fighting their way gradually southward until all that was left was the bastion island of Corregidor and a few scattered units sheltering in the jungles.

Nick Galbraith was one of the men caught in this maelstrom. Born in 1896, he was the grandson of a Civil War Union cavalry officer. Feeling the calling of that military tradition, Galbraith joined the Army the day the United States entered World War I.

Trained as an artillery officer, in 1940 he was sent to the Philippines, where he commanded a battalion of Philippine Scouts; he was there when the war began. He also served on the staff of General Jonathan M. Wainwright, commander of the U.S. Forces in the Philippines (USFIP) after the withdrawal of General Douglas MacArthur in early March 1942. His role was G-4, military parlance for the logistics officer on the general staff. During the fighting, he was promoted to colonel.

When the end came at Corregidor in May 1942, Japanese flamethrowers were pointed at the entrance to the Malinta tunnel, where thousands of American servicemen sheltered. Wainwright decided there was no further use in fighting and began to discuss surrender with the staff of the Japanese commander, General Masaharu Homma.

These talks stalled when Homma refused to accept the surrender of the troops on the island

Left: Alamy; Right: National Archives.

unless it was accompanied by the capitulation of all the units in the Philippines, including those still resisting elsewhere. The problem was one of communications and even authority.

At this point, the forces on Corregidor were unable to communicate with these other units, and there were questions as to whether Wainwright, who was now at least presumptively a prisoner, had command authority over them. There was no guarantee they would obey a surrender order even if they could be reached.

It was clear that the Americans would have to try, however. General Homma announced he would destroy the remaining garrison on Corregidor, 14,000 men, unless all Allied forces in the Philippines surrendered together; the garrison was to be considered hostage.

Wainwright decided to send representatives to find these units in northern Luzon and Mindinao and convince them to give up. The Japanese thought there was an entire regiment hiding in the mountains of Luzon.

The journey was fraught with peril. Many of the Filipinos still resisting the Japanese were hiding in the same region, regardless of whether they were under American leadership. They often considered any non-American white man to be a German spy, and Galbraith worried he would be a target, particularly since he would be traveling with a Japanese detachment. Anyone with a weapon might attack him, not knowing of his mission or orders.

Galbraith quickly learned of the situation facing him. The American commander of the Luzon forces, Col. John Paul Horan IV, was willing to surrender, but since the forces under his command were scattered and unreachable, there was no way to simply call them in for an orderly surrender. It would be necessary to travel around the mountains make them the soldiers aware of the surrender order.

It was a daunting task, requiring Galbraith to cross battle lines numerous times in search of men who did not want to be found. He would remain at risk from both sides. It was also a physically arduous challenge; months of campaigning on limited rations had left him in relatively poor physical condition; he was malnourished, increasing the risk of disease or injury.

He went into the jungle and began his search, accompanied by his Japanese captors. After six weeks of effort, few Filipino or American troops were located; there was no regiment hiding in the mountains. But the effort was noticed by the Japanese, who actually commended Galbraith before sending him back to General Wainwright, by now being held at a former air training base called Tarlac.

After a few weeks at the Tarlac camp, Galbraith and his fellow officers boarded a ship. They were being sent to Formosa, modern-day Taiwan.

Soon the ship got underway, and the American prisoners were sailing to Formosa, where they would spend the next year and a half. There they would be joined by a number of British and Commonwealth prisoners, including General Arthur Percival, who had recently been forced to surrender Singapore in the largest capitulation in the history of the British military.

While Nick Galbraith was struggling in the Philippines through battle and surrender, a young, newly inducted American soldier named Hal Leith was assigned to give language exams to even newer inductees. Through intensive study he had become fluent in Russian, French, and German. Soon he was assigned to Camp Santa Anita, California, where the Army told him to study Chinese.

One day a man from Washington, D.C., appeared and addressed all the Chinese language students. He told them he was from the Office of Strategic Services, or OSS. The organization was looking for volunteers to work in China. The man cautioned them that if they volunteered they would be expected to become paratroopers, learn armed and unarmed combat, and be willing to operate behind enemy lines. Hal and six others saw it as a challenge and stepped forward.

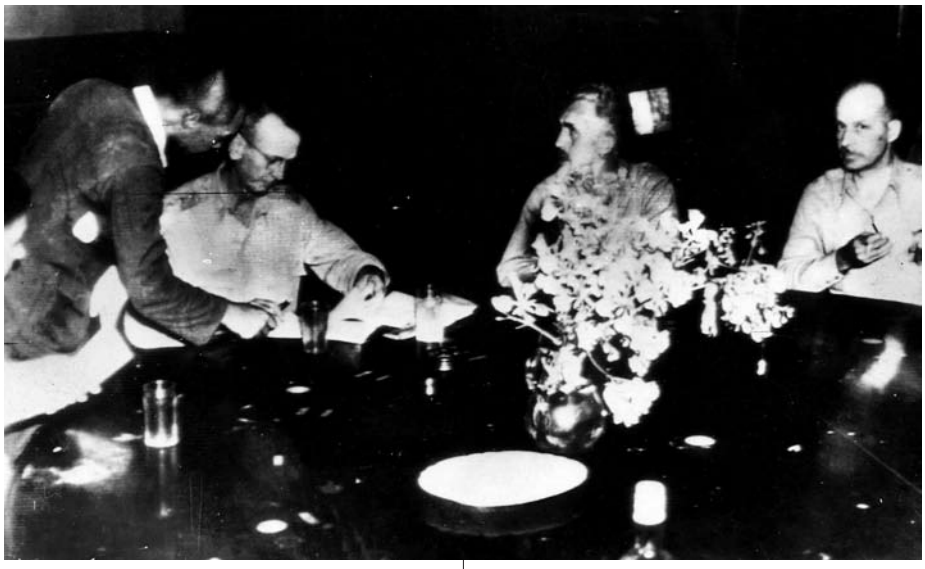
Alamy

The young corporal soon found himself at a farmhouse in the Virginia countryside outside Washington, D.C. There he met the famous British Colonel William Fairbairn, who spent many years in Asia and elsewhere as a soldier and policeman, learning all he could about armed and unarmed combat. He taught hand-to-hand combat in the backyard. The students, about 10 of them, had intelligence classes in the living room.

Next they were then sent to Santa Catalina Island off the southern California coast for more intensive training. Most of it involved sending and receiving coded messages, lock picking, and improving memorization.

Hal and his comrades then were sent overseas, eventually arriving ino Kunming, China. In Kunming he finally got his parachute training in June. As a bonus, his contact with the local Chinese reassured him his language studies had paid off; he could communicate with them easily.

While Hal Leith was preparing for the adventure of a lifetime, the years 1942 to 1945 were hard ones for Nick Galbraith and his fellow prisoners of war. Life in the camps was harsh, tedious, and dull, and he was constantly trying to come up with something to pass the time. Jokes and puzzles circulated the camp, and Galbraith often recorded them in journals he kept to help pass the time. Over the course of his imprisonment he would fill in many notebooks, which he collected from whatever source he could.



Abandoned by the U.S., American officers are led by their Japanese captors to sign surrender terms on the Bataan Peninsula. BELOW: To complete the humiliation, Wainwright (left) and Galbraith (center) are forced to make a radio broadcast from Manila declaring the American surrender, May 8, 1942. OPPOSITE: Dressed in U.S. Army uniforms, a unit of Filipino Scouts appears to be confident in its ability to halt the Japanese incursion.

Both: National Archives

He also tried to keep track of the progress of the war, listening to Japanese announcements of victory after victory.

Each Saturday there was a mandatory cleanup of the camp followed by an inspection. The eighth day of each month was nicknamed "Rescript Day." The prisoners would be formed into ranks to await the camp commandant, who would read the latest Imperial Rescript. The rest of their time was an exercise in deprivation. Soap had to be conserved; they didn't receive another issue until December 1942, and even that was a single bar. Tobacco was issued only infrequently; it was hard to do without it, and morale improved markedly whenever it was issued. Shaving became a major decision due to the need to conserve razor blades. Replacement clothing was often made from rice sacks and soon became worn, patched, and repatched.

All these problems paled next to the constant shortage of food, however. Rice was the staple of their diet, but there was never enough of it, even when they were eating it three times a day, which they most often did. There were occasional issues of fruits and vegetables such as bananas, grapefruit, and sweet potatoes—the last often reserved for soldiers performing labor. Garden snails became a delicacy. Eventually, the prisoners were allowed to raise goats, chickens, and pigs, though there was seldom enough to keep them well fed.

Nick's diaries revealed the daily tedium of camp life. The Japanese would often reduce rations if they perceived the prisoners were not working hard enough or were being insolent. There were frequent inspections by the guards. If they did not come to attention quickly enough or did not bow or hold their salute long enough, they were beaten, which Nick called being "bopped."

National Archives

American soldiers, their hands tied behind their backs, briefly rest during the 66-mile Bataan Death March from Saysain Point, Bagac, Bataan and Mariveles to Camp O'Donnell, Capas, Tarlac, Philippines. Of the 76,000 men who began the march, some 3,000 perished along the way.

Sometimes, a man would be bopped for no discernable reason; General Wainwright was beaten for using the wrong door.

Those who dared to wear shoes in the barracks had their feet beaten with rifle butts. A wounded American named Ives was beaten one day with his own cane. Nick recorded all these events in a simple code he devised so it would be difficult for an English-reading Japanese to understand what he meant. This way he might avoid a bopping of his own.

On June 1, 1943, an event at the camp drew Nick's particular interest. A Japanese soldier spent two days interviewing various American prisoners, asking them what they thought about the war and how America might treat Japan afterward. In particular, there were questions about whether Japan would be allowed to retain control of Formosa and Korea. The prisoners were also asked what they thought of President Franklin Roosevelt and whether he could stop the war quickly. This led several to wonder if the tide of war was changing.

Through it all, Nick Galbraith kept recording the conditions in his journal, keeping his mind active and creating an in-depth look at the lives of the prisoners of the Japanese Empire.

Finally, on October 10, 1944, new orders arrived to the camp's senior officers. The prisoners were awakened at 3 a.m. and taken to a port, where they were loaded aboard the *Oryoko Maru*, a transport ship used alternately throughout the war to move both Japanese troops and prisoners of war. (This ship would be sunk just two months later in Subic Bay, Philippines, while transporting a different group of POWs.) Now, Nick and his comrades were placed into the hold; the heat was terrible and they were without water for a day.

They did not get underway until the night of Monday, October 23, spending most of the time locked below deck. One night there was an air raid, with the prisoners locked in the hold and tracers filling the sky above the harbor. Once at sea, they tried to estimate the ship's course and speed, but it proved impossible.

Finally, on October 28, they disembarked near Beppu, on the Japanese home island of Kyushu. They still weren't sure where they were going, but the rumor mill pointed toward Mukden, in the Laioning Province of northern China.

On November 11, they sailed aboard another ship and reached China late that afternoon. Soon afterward, they were in Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet state in Manchuria. It was very cold; Nick recalled giving a British overcoat he had acquired to General Wainwright, who had none.

Occasionally, news of the war trickled in. They heard of a large naval battle at Leyte Gulf, the Russians advancing near Budapest, and of an air battle fought near Taiwan, their former location. Nick noted in his diary a rumor that General MacArthur's headquarters was back in the Philippines.

A month later, a Japanese colonel arrived to inspect the camp. He met with the camp's senior officers, stating he had orders from the emperor to care for the prisoners in "body and mind."

When the colonel left on the 19th, he rode aboard a local taxi made from an old Model T Ford. Its tires had been replaced by wagon wheels; a brown pony and white mule were hitched to the taxi, the driver sitting where the hood used to be. It was an almost comic sight as the driver pulled the single rein and cracked his buggy whip, the horses carrying the colonel away in the decrepit vehicle. Still, it was a sign of the depri-

vation the Japanese were experiencing this late in the war. Ominously, within a month the first rumors began to spread about the Japanese not allowing any prisoners to remain alive if Japan lost the war.

A final move came on May 20, 1945. Shortly after noon, the POWs were marched to a waiting train, spending three days on it on their way to the Wari Hoten camp. They were combined with another group of POWs who had suffered greatly—out of 1,634 men, only 385 were left. They also heard rumors of 18,000 British prisoners dying while building a railroad in Burma and Thailand.

The last summer of the war brought further deprivation as the Japanese supply system was strained even to meet the needs of its own troops. Cigarette rations, one of the most important things to many POWs, were cut down to a pack a week, if they could be gotten at all.

While they suffered and struggled to survive the harsh conditions, the POWs had no idea that across the Sea of Japan the war was entering its final days as two atomic bombs had laid waste to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, convincing the Japanese leadership to finally end the conflict.

As the war progressed to its end, Allied planners worried over the fate of the prisoners in Manchuria and Korea. Japanese forces on mainland Asia were still intact and in command of the region. It was feared

Those who dared to wear shoes in the barracks had their feet beaten with rifle butts. A wounded American named Ives was beaten one day with his own cane. Nick recorded all these events in a simple code he devised so it would be difficult for an English-reading Japanese to understand what he meant.

ABOVE: Bundled-up prisoners at roll call on the parade ground at Camp Hoten. BELOW: Galbraith, Wainwright, and hundreds of other American POWs were transferred to Camp Hoten at Mukden, in the Laioning Province of Manchuria, where winter temperatures dropped to 30 or 40 below zero.

Both: National Archives

these prisoners might be massacred outright, held hostage, or simply abandoned.

It was known that they were in bad condition after years of captivity. It would take at least a month for Allied teams to make their way inland and find the various camps, so it was decided to parachute teams of men into the camps and take control from the surrendering Japanese.

Author

ABOVE: On his escorted trek into the jungle, Galbraith carried with him two small flags, one American and one Japanese, so he could signal to whichever side he came across and prevent himself from being shot. RIGHT: Galbraith kept journals written in code while a POW, describing the brutal treatment by his captors.

It was a risky venture; the teams could easily meet the same fates feared for the POWs. The Soviets were expected to invade Manchuria as well, and it was uncertain what they might do now that the war in Europe was over and they did not need the alliance with the West as badly.

On August 12, 1945, the head of the OSS in China, Colonel Richard Heppner, received a warning order. He was to insert six-man teams of OSS personnel near known POW camps north of the Yellow River. They were considered the only personnel with the varied skills needed to handle the delicate and dangerous situation. Corporal Hal Leith was one of those men.

On August 15, his team was flown to Xian in northwest China. The next day, they boarded the B-24 bomber *Flight Pay*, piloted by Lieutenant Paul Hallberg, and took off for the Mukden area and Camp Hoten.

With Staff Sergeant Leith were two officers. The team leader was Major James T. Hennessy, a 27-year-old West Point graduate. Major Robert F. Lamar, a 31-year-old doctor, was the other. The other Americans were radioman Sergeant Edward A. Starz and Sergeant Fumio Kido, a Hawaii-born "Nisei," or second-generation American born to Japanese immigrants. The sixth member of the team was a Nationalist Chinese officer, Cheng Shih-Wu.

At 10:45, Lieutenant Hallberg told them to get their parachutes on but warned there were 20-mile winds at the landing site. They decided to go ahead. They had to jump through a hatch in the bottom of the plane.

As he drifted down under his canopy, Hal saw a group of Chinese farmers running toward their landing field. They seemed excited by the sight of the parachutists. Within moments Hal hit the ground, collapsed his parachute, and dumped it. As the team gathered, the B-24 circled back and began dropping supply canisters with their food, radios, and medical supplies.

On the ground, the Chinese farmers helped the team gather their gear. One of the Chinese offered to lead them to the Hoten camp just a few miles to the north. Leaving Starz and Cheng to guard the supplies, the rest started up the road. They barely went half a mile before running into a Japanese patrol that quickly surrounded them, working the bolts on their rifles.

It was a tense moment; Hal managed to speak to one of the Japanese who spoke Chinese, telling him the war was over. The man told Hal they knew nothing about the war being over. Sergeant Fumio Kido spoke to the Japanese sergeant leading the patrol, but it made no difference. Major Lamar was sent back to the landing site with an escort to retrieve the rest of the team and the supplies.

Hal, Major Hennessy, and Sergeant Kido were taken to a nearby building and questioned by a mean looking Japanese officer. A guard with a bayonet admonished them, "No talk!" Eventually, they were blindfolded and placed in a vehicle, which took them through a rainstorm to Mukden, where they were reunited with the rest of the team. All six were taken to the local headquarters of the Kempetai, the dreaded Japanese military police, who wielded almost unchallenged power. They had no idea if they were about to be tortured, interrogated, or simply executed.

Inside, they were taken before a colonel who gave them sake and whiskey. He then told them through Sergeant Kido that they were his guests, not prisoners. He had just heard on the radio the war was over. It was 2 p.m. The colonel told them he had no orders from Japan but would request them.

The Cardinal Team asked to be taken to the camp. The colonel told them they could go to the camp; but the commandant, a Colonel Matsuda, had no orders either, so he probably would not let them meet with the prisoners.

They soon arrived at the camp, but Matsuda refused to let them talk to the POWs. Still, Hal saw some of them watching the meeting, flashed them the OK sign, and waved to them.

The next morning the Kempetai colonel reappeared. He bowed deeply to the Americans and told them he was formally surrendering to them.

They asked the colonel to remain with them and keep order among the Japanese troops in the area. He assigned an escort to take them back to the camp and ordered his soldiers to protect them. The soldier who had told them "No talk!" the day before came up and said, "Hey! I have a brother in L.A.! I wonder if you know him?"

Hal's team was son back at the Hoten camp. They were taken to Matsuda's office and given seats. Matsuda was obviously uncomfortable and kept flinching. Finally, they asked to speak with the senior POW; the commandant sent for Maj. Gen. George Parker, the highest ranking man in the camp.

When Parker entered, he immediately bowed to Colonel Matsuda, but then saw the Americans. They told him "no more bowing, the war is over." They explained about the Japanese surrender and their mission to get the POWs out. Parker was thin, emaciated, but at the happy news he became obviously elated.

Afterward, Hal went out into the courtyard where many prisoners were gathered. Within seconds, he was mobbed by the jubilant crowd, who asked him endless questions. Hal answered as best he could and then walked around the camp. Hal noticed it was crowded, with straw mattresses on boards and fleas and lice everywhere. An American POW in the camp hospital died that day. Behind the camp, 300 more Americans lay buried.

The American POWs now walked as free men, in sharp contrast to the Japanese guards, who were shocked. In the course of a day they were no longer the undisputed masters of not only the camp but of the Chinese in the region.

The Cardinal Team went back to speak with Colonel Matsuda to find the leadership in the camp, in particular General Wainwright. They were surprised to learn that Wainwright and the rest of the high-ranking officers were recently moved to another camp in Hsian, roughly 150 miles northeast of Mukden. It was decided that Hal and Major Lamar would go there in the morning to ensure their freedom.

The next day, some of the Cardinal Team returned to the camp and met with the camp leadership. They distributed K-rations, radios, medical supplies, cigarettes, and rifles. Thousands of pieces of mail had been withheld from the POWs, and now they were passed out. The former guards otherwise stayed out of the camp.

Now Nick could write openly, without fear of a bopping: "I can now write as I choose without that eternal fear of some goddamn savage ramming a bayonet through my guts for some insignificant reason—I need no longer—pick and choose my words, or write in riddles or reverse expressions, but am in a position to speak

Interior of a barracks at the Mukten POW camp, where Americans like Galbraith and Wainwright were held.

National Archives

my mind and thoughts fully and in truth and honesty.

"The only thing they understand, the only power they recognize, the only influence on them is force—might. And it finally gained the position of superiority that forced them to squeal and cry for quarter. How vast a change from the dominating, egotistical attitude while they had the upper hand."

Over three years of pent-up rage and frustration came out in a single paragraph.

Early on August 18, Hal and Major Lamar boarded a train to Hsian to retrieve General Wainwright.

Arriving at 3 a.m., they met the camp commandant, Lieutenant Marui, a graduate of the University of Oregon.

The next morning they met General Wainwright. Hal was shocked at the man's appearance, thinking he looked like a scarecrow. He weighed less than 100 pounds and was losing his hearing. Wainwright had endured extensive abuse over the past three years. Often, Japanese privates would beat him just because they could, an easy way to strike out at a superior enemy officer.

With Wainwright were General Percival and American Generals Edward P. King and George F. Moore, both Philippine veterans. They had learned the war was over the day before, but it all seemed incredible after what they had endured for the past three years.

National Archives

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The warehouse holding the Red Cross packages was opened, and the food and supplies distributed. A church service, previously banned, was also held.

The next morning, Major Lamar went back to Mukden to coordinate getting the men in Hsian reunited with their comrades. Hal stayed behind to make sure the prisoners were treated properly.

While they waited, Hal spent much time talking to Wainwright, King, and Moore. Wainwright in particular was worried that the American people hated him for surrendering, but Hal told him they actually considered him a hero, something he found hard to believe. General King asked that he not be returned home without his men; he didn't want to go ahead of them.

Now that Red Cross supplies were available, some of the cooks began making cakes and doughnuts, something the prisoners hadn't seen in years. At the same time, tension arose when the Soviet Red Army appeared. Hal went with Lieutenant Marui to meet with them.

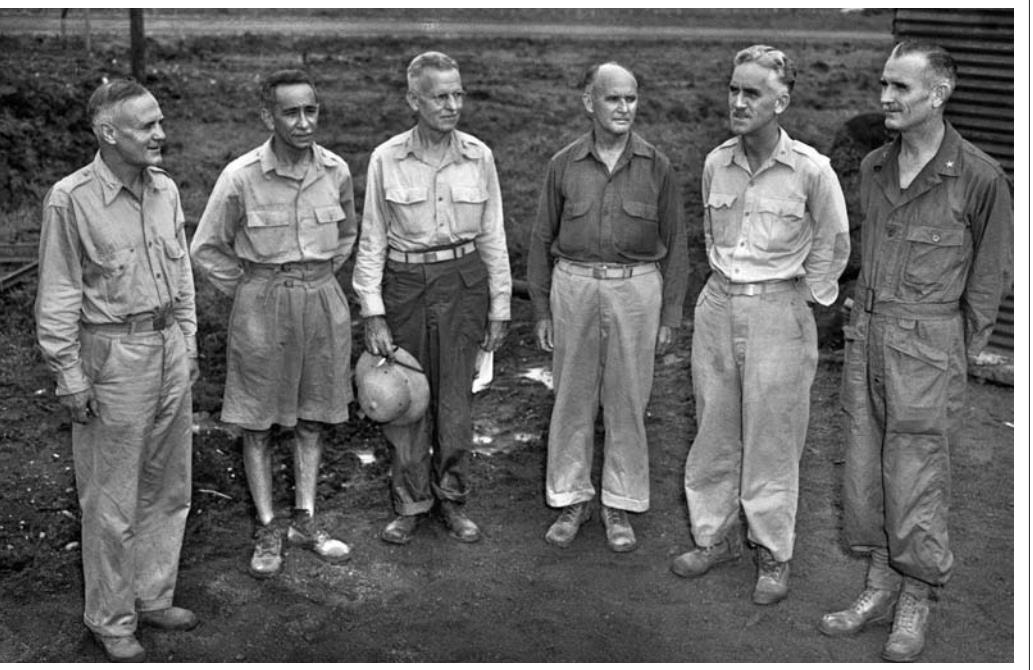
The general commanding the Soviet forces was unhappy to learn the OSS men had arrived in the area before them and refused permission for them to go to Mukden via train. Instead, they would have to go by trucks and buses with Russian guards. In the late afternoon of August 24, a Soviet lieutenant general appeared with some infantrymen, and they all boarded some requisitioned vehicles and left for Mukden.

While Hal Leith was helping recover General Wainwright, Nick Galbraith helped oversee the liberated POWs in Mukden.

The men were glad to learn they were not considered failures for surrendering,

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Their ordeal at last over, freed prisoners prepare to fly out of Mukden. British General Arthur Percival sits rear left, Wainright, rear right. BELOW: Some of the freed officers photographed in Manila in 1945. Galbraith is second from right. He retired from the Army in 1950 and passed away in 1986. OPPOSITE: Members of the "Cardinal Team"—a group charged with rescuing POWs held in China—pose with a Japanese flag. Sergeant Hal Leith is second from right.



although Nick recorded some bitter feelings about the issue: "They do not seem to realize a large portion of this Bataan 'hero' stuff is emotional cover-up for the chagrin and disappointment of defeat—rather than acknowledge the latter, the 'hero' tack forces itself forward.

"Of course, there is the other side of the picture as well. The P.I. [Philippine Island] force was well out on a limb—not adequately supplied or prepared by its Govt., which was caught 'short'—then the delaying action in P.I. forcing Nips to return troops from south for the final assault must have had a great delay on Nips effort at Australia."

General Wainwright was flown out of China with a few of his staff in time to join the surrender ceremony aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* on September 2, 1945. MacArthur expressed joy at seeing him again.

Afterward, Wainwright went to the Philippines and accepted the surrender of the local Japanese commander, General Yamashita. He would eventually return to the United States, where he assumed command of the Fourth Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Jonathan Wainwright retired from the Army in August 1947 and passed away in 1953.

Back in Mukden, Nick and his fellow officers spent their time organizing the POWs' care and then movement to the coast, where they boarded the cruiser USS *Louisville* and several destroyers on September 13. On the 15th, they arrived at Okinawa, where Buckner Bay was crowded with hundreds of American ships greeting them.

Finally, another ship took the group east to San Francisco, where Nick was met by his wife, Leila, and they made the train ride home to Colorado Springs and their three children.

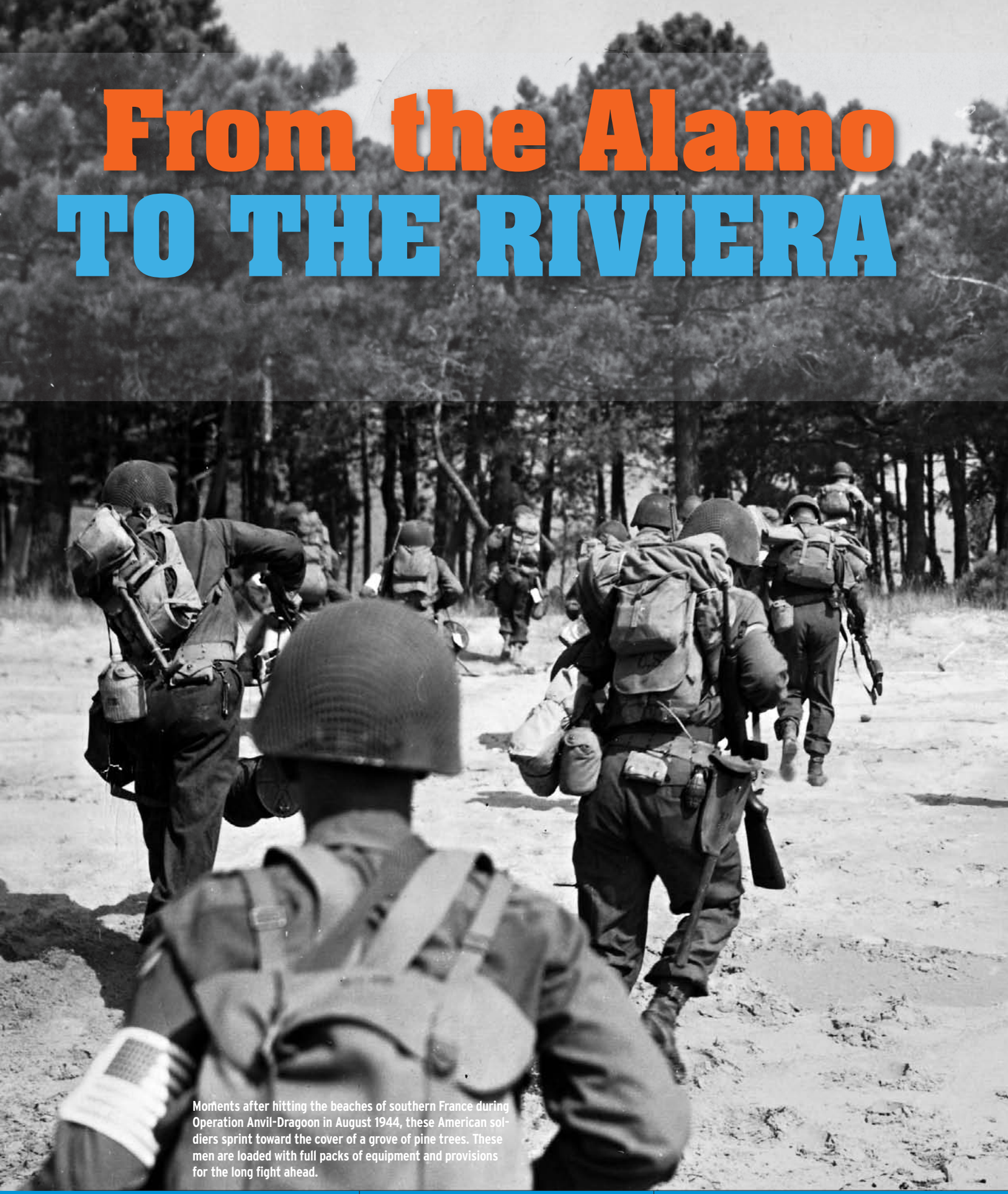
In 1946 Colonel Galbraith rejoined Wainwright at Fort Sam Houston. While there, he was awarded a Silver Star for his actions in the Philippines; General Wainwright pinned the award on his chest personally. Galbraith retired from the Army in 1950 and passed away in 1986.

Hal Leith stayed in China for several more months, dealing with the aftermath of the war. He encountered more Russian troops, most of whom proved bestial in their behavior, looting and shooting their way through China.

In March 1946, he was discharged and immediately recruited into the OSS as a civilian. He transferred into the CIA upon its creation in 1947 and spent his career there, retiring in 1974. He passed away in December 2013.

These two men's lives were connected by General Wainwright; one ably served on his staff and endured war and captivity alongside him, while the other began a lifetime of service to his country in his mission to find Wainwright and rescue him. In their writings, neither specifically mentioned meeting the other, but nevertheless their paths came together on the windswept plains of Manchuria. ■

From the Alamo TO THE RIVIERA



Moments after hitting the beaches of southern France during Operation Anvil-Dragoon in August 1944, these American soldiers sprint toward the cover of a grove of pine trees. These men are loaded with full packs of equipment and provisions for the long fight ahead.

National Archives

A Texas outfit, the 36th Infantry Division landed in southern France and fought a confused battle with the Germans around Montelimar.

BY BRUCE L. BRAGER

Operation Anvil, the invasion of southern France, was originally planned for June 1944, the same time as the Normandy invasion. Anvil was designed to tie up German troops, which might otherwise be sent to Normandy. Eventually, Allied commanders realized that landing craft shortages made simultaneous invasions impossible.

American political and military leaders still supported a second invasion, seeing it as a way to protect the right flank of the advance from Normandy from possible attack by German forces in Italy. The two Allied spearheads would eventually link up to form an unbroken Allied front across France. The southern invasion would capture major French ports, particularly Marseilles, to help land supplies. From an important political perspective, the southern invasion would allow Charles DeGaulle's Free French troops to play a greater role in liberating their homeland.

The British, however, particularly Prime Minister Winston Churchill, opposed Anvil—whose code name had been formally changed to Operation Dragoon. Churchill favored an attack through the Balkans or expanded support for the war in Italy, and he was politically motivated. The Italian campaign had an overall British commander and any attack into the Balkans would have a British commander. An American general would command in southern France until the force linked up with the main force from Normandy under General Dwight D. Eisenhower, also an American.

Few British soldiers would participate in the Anvil/Dragoon landings. American units would provide the main invasion force, with French units brought in as soon as possible. The American Seventh Army, under the command of Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, would conduct the landings with the three divisions of Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.'s, VI Corps hitting the beaches. Maj. Gen. John E. O'Daniel commanded the Regular Army 3rd Division; Maj. Gen. William W. Eagles commanded the 45th Division, with origins in the Oklahoma National Guard; and Maj. Gen. John E. Dahlquist had been brought in from the 70th Division to replace Fred Walker as commander of the 36th Division.

The VI Corps did not control the other units in the invasion. Airborne assault troops, including a British parachute brigade and light artillery battalion, would be commanded by Maj. Gen. Robert T. Frederick, whose old 1st Special Service Force, a combined Canadian-American unit, was now under the command of Colonel Edwin A. Walker. Two French commando units would also take part in the landing. Additional assistance would come from the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), better known as the Maquis. The Maquis had 75,000 men and women in the field, but only about one-third were armed.

The main body of French troops was to come in after the first wave. General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny would temporarily serve as commander of the first French corps brought into southern France. Operations would be upgraded to Army level under General Patch. De Lattre was waiving rank so French units could get into the action. When the second French corps arrived, De Lattre would command the First French Army. It would remain under Patch until Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers took command of the 6th Army Group.

German Army Group G, under General Johannes Blaskowitz, occupied defensive positions in the south of France under the overall direction of OB West, the high command for operations in France. The German First Army in southwest France had withdrawn most of its men to the Seine River in early August, and the LXIV Corps was the only remaining element. The 19th Army had seven divisions in the area, but only one reserve division near the invasion beaches. In the days before the invasion, the 11th Panzer Division was spotted on its way to southern France. The Germans had about 30,000 men in the assault area, 200,000 within a few days

march, and perhaps another 50,000 also available. The Germans expected an Allied landing roughly when and where it came.

According to the official U.S. Army history, "The choice of assault sites along the Mediterranean coast of France was in large measure dictated by the ANVIL operational concept—to land in southern France, seize and develop a major port, and exploit northward up the Rhone valley." Three major mountain masses, with natural corridors to the north, rise close to the coast. A direct assault against the cities of Marseilles and Toulon would require the invasion force to traverse poor-quality, heavily defended beaches. The beaches west of Marseille were first rate, but the landing forces were likely to encounter areas the Germans could easily flood.

The best area for an amphibious assault was the coastline between Toulon and Cannes. Toulon was the first major Allied target, but several smaller ports, including the famous St. Tropez, made this area even more attractive. The invasion area was eventually narrowed to the 50 miles between Cape Negre on the west and Theoule-sur-Mer to the east. The three U.S. infantry divisions would assault the inner 30 or so miles of this area, with commandos on both flanks.

The 1st Special Service Force would begin the attack about midnight on August 15, landing on two islands on the left flank of the beach. These islands were expected to hold extensive German artillery positions. Soon after, French commando units would attack both beach flanks. About the same time, the paratroopers were scheduled to drop in the Le Muy area, about 10 miles inland, clear it for glider landings, and block German counterattacks.

The main landings were to begin at the relatively late hour of 8 AM in the Cape Cavalaire-Antheor Cove beaches. Daylight was required for accurate bombardment, which the landing forces needed to get sufficient troops and supplies ashore and capture nearby hills.

Two regiments of the 3rd Division would land on the left, capture St. Tropez, and head toward Toulon. Two assault regiments of the 45th would land in the center of the Allied front, take the nearby hills, and capture Ste. Maxime.

The 36th would play a basically defensive role on the right. The division was to advance to the nearby hills, make contact with the paratroopers, and seize the small port of St. Raphael. Only one regiment was scheduled land at H-hour about four miles east of St. Raphael. One battalion would land at Antheor Cove, three miles away. The second regiment would land at the same beach, with the third landing at 2 p.m. between the mouth of the Argens River and St. Raphael. The invasion planners expected that the third regiment would be supported by elements of the 45th Division. If necessary, however, the third regiment could land at the main landing beaches to the east.

The invasion convoys left as scheduled, and things seemed likely to go well. The poetically written "Operations in France for the Month of August 1944," for the 142nd Infantry Regiment, describes the landing: "A hundred small craft bobbed up and down in the blue Mediterranean within a thousand yards offshore, waiting. Hundreds of other vessels, large and small, were in the vicinity, each with an assigned job to perform…. Looking toward shore from the sea…. spectacular white streamers of smoke fanned out in clusters as phosphorous smoke shells burst in the air. Billows of smoke poured from floating pots laid to form a protective screen…. The three thousand men in the hundred small craft watched all this with anxious interest…. Southern FRANCE was being invaded."

Every previous landing on the Continent had been met by heavy German resistance. In Normandy, the defenders contested the landings on the beaches, and at Salerno on the Italian mainland they had launched savage counterattacks. There was every reason to expect heavy resistance at the Riviera.

The French Resistance, the FFI, actually struck the first blow of Anvil/Dragoon. After August 1, incidents of sabotage in southern France made it difficult for Army Group G to maintain communications. The Germans were forced to use combat troops to keep

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Major General Johannes Blaskowitz (center) inspects coastal defenses in southern France in June 1944, two months before the Allied landings in the area.

Naval History and Heritage Command

supply routes open to the Riviera since rail and phone lines were regularly cut. Army Group G had a great deal of trouble communicating with OB West near Paris and with its units on the Atlantic coast. The mountains made it difficult to communicate by radio. The FFI had become so aggressive that the Germans could only move large, well-protected convoys along the highways and railroads in southern France. By August, General Blaskowitz considered the FFI as being an effective army in his rear.

The commander of Task Force Butler, an ad hoc pursuit force General Truscott had created, wrote, "The German dread of the Maquis came to the surface continuously during our race into the interior. Really, some of our adventurous young officers became quite persuasive salesmen. Many and many a garrison was taken after a few shots—an American advanced under a white flag and a parley. If the German commander could be convinced that he and his force would become American prisoners, and not be turned over to the French, surrender usually was accomplished forthwith."

By the time of the invasion in southern France, the Germans only had effective control over the Rhone Valley, the Carcassone Gap, and strips along the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Extensive strategic Allied bombing contributed to the German confusion by destroying most bridges over the major rivers. Tactical bombing and shelling, however, did not heavily damage German defenses in the landing area.

Airborne landings in the early morning hours began the actual invasion, as had been done in Normandy. Aided by cooperating French resistance forces and commandos landed by sea, the paratroopers succeeded in cutting off most of the invasion beaches from reinforcements.

Task Force Butler's commander later wrote, "The airborne operation was highly effective and so disrupted communications in paralyzing the [German] 62nd Corps headquarters (the enemy was forced to destroy his radio the first day) that [the German] Corps lost track of what was happening on the beaches." Indications are, however, that German commanders were not fooled by deception measures, including dummy "paratroopers" similar to those used in Normandy. The attack on the beaches themselves opened with a naval artillery barrage. Two of the three assault divisions, the 3rd and 45th, experienced little significant resistance to their landings. By the time August 15, 1944, was over, the 3rd Division had entered St. Tropez, but found it already had been liberated by the FFI and paratroopers dropped in the area by mistake. By the end of the day, elements of the 3rd had linked with elements of the 45th Division which did not get as far inland. However, it did not require the services of its third regiment, the 179th Infantry, being kept in reserve. A platoon of the 45th Reconnaissance Troop met up with air-

Both: National Archives

ABOVE LEFT: Major General Wend von Wietersheim (left) commanded the 11th Panzer Division, moved to the south of France in anticipation of an Allied landing there. ABOVE RIGHT: Major General John Dahlquist, commander of the American 36th Infantry Division. TOP: The 36th Division was tasked with capturing the beaches at St. Raphael, France, during the opening hours of Operation Anvil-Dragoon and took on determined enemy defenders as it moved inland. This photo was taken several days later as equipment was unloaded on the secured beaches.

borne units south of Le Muy.

The 36th Division did not have as easy a time. Four initial color-coded beaches had been selected near the French city of St. Raphael—from east to west, Red, Green, Yellow, and Blue. Yellow Beach would have been an excellent landing site but the troops would have had to go into an estuary and contend with heavy German fire from behind as well as in front. Regimental records for the 141st Infantry report, "The area around the bay was so heavily fortified and its waters so extensively mined that no attempt was to be made to assault the beach." This beach would be flanked and attacked from the rear. When it was taken, engineers would prepare the beach for landing supplies.

There was little resistance on most beaches that day. Still, an amphibious landing was an unforgettable experience. A history of the 141st Infantry Regiment describes their landing: "Now we were 2000 yards offshore and the great rocket ships began to send their screeching cargo into the air. The sea was rolling lightly and the increased speed threw a fine salt spray into our faces. At 1000 yards the din of thousands of rockets and the shells crashing into the beach ahead become a steady roar in which the concussion caused by no single shell or group of shells could be heard. Now the water became rough and the boat lurched violently from side to side."

The 1st Battalion of the 141st Regiment was the only one to use Blue Beach, the farthest to the east. "The regimental combat team had been split up to assault two separate beaches," reports the 141st's history. "The 2d and 3d Battalions assaulted GREEN beach while the 1st Battalion assaulted BLUE beach. Neither GREEN nor BLUE beaches could be called beaches in the technical sense of the word. An extremely narrow strip of rocky shale separated the water from steep embankments directly to the rear of both beaches. Beyond the coastal highway and railroad which paralleled the shoreline along the bluff above the beaches, the terrain ascended in heighth [sic] to high hills, which in turn arose into a mountainous

During their successful effort to prevent German reinforcements from reaching the invasion beaches on the southern coast of France, American paratroopers of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion rush down Route D7 near the French town of Le Muy.

sector to the north. The entire shore area was dotted with villas, hotels and resorts of the famed Riviera "Côte d'Azur."

The area was also dotted with German defenses, including, according to the regimental history, "pillboxes … in advantageous defensive positions flanked by trenches. Other than the narrow beach, all portions of the land bounding the narrow inlet comprised rocky cliffs."

The 1st Battalion of the 141st met some resistance but managed to quickly seize high ground overlooking the beach and capture 1,200 German prisoners. The battalion won a Presidential Unit Citation for these actions. The other two battalions in the 141st landed on Green Beach just after 8 AM, against light resistance. "The beach line was a sight to behold. The Navy had done a superb job. The only remaining signs of the barb [sic] wire entanglements was a picket here and there," reported the 2nd Battalion of the 141st. These battalions quickly took the high ground near this beach.

The post-war regimental history continues, "For most of us the memory of D Day in southern France is not too unpleasant. It had been a spectacular show. We had suffered few casualties and our regiment had taken the beach, over which [almost] the entire division had landed, before midnight on D Day. Almost to a man we liked the first impression of France. D Day was warm and sunny and the reddish firm soil was a welcome contrast to the powdered ankle-deep dust of Italy."

The 143rd Regiment started to land on Green Beach at 9:45, followed soon after by division commander Dahlquist and his staff. They planned to watch the 142nd landing on Red Beach several miles to the west and assist if needed. The 2nd Battalion headed directly toward St. Raphael, but encountered stubborn resistance from several German strongpoints. By 2 PM, its lead elements still had not reached St. Raphael.

The Red Beach landing was to take place several hours after that on Green Beach to give the 143rd time to head west and take the heights dominating Red Beach. The division was eventually supposed to occupy a line on the right flank of the Corps, with a 12 to 15 mile depth inland. Red Beach, however, was the most heavily fortified of the assault beaches. It was later discovered that most of the defenses of Green Beach had been removed to strengthen those of neighboring Red Beach. Heavy bombardment and the use of drone boats filled with explosives failed to sufficiently clear obstacles from the beach. At one point, one of the radio-controlled drone boats, loaded with explosives,

reversed course and headed straight at the invasion assembly—to the distress of everyone watching. Fortunately, it turned again and ran aground on an inlet near Red Beach without exploding.

The 142nd's records report, "RED BEACH was the obvious place to land in this coastal sector and its defenses had been stoutly organized by the enemy. A broad sandy beach was near the small port of ST. RAPHAEL and the town of PREJUS. Access to it was essential for the quick follow-up of supplies and equipment which must accompany any invasion force, and in this particular facilitate the intended drive of the Army Northwest in the ARGENS river valley to cut off the ports of TOULON and MARSEILLES…. The alternate plan anticipated the possibility of the 142nd Infantry landing behind the 141st and 143rd on GREEN BEACH. An apparent disadvantage lay in the fact that it hardly seemed feasible to land a whole Division with the necessary armor and vehicles over the one rock-enclosed beach."

The 142nd was finally scheduled to land on Red Beach at 2 PM Colonel George E. Lynch, the regimental commander, radioed his leading battalion to ask about the delay and learned of the poor performance of the drone boats.

At 3:15, the commander of the naval assault on Red Beach, Rear Adm. Spencer Lewis, ordered the landing craft to head to Green Beach. General Dahlquist ordered the 142nd to land on Green Beach. St. Raphael and Red Beach were captured from the rear within two days.

Lieutenant General Truscott was watching the planned Red Beach landing. He thought the bombardment was going well and was shocked to see the landing flotilla first stop and then head back out to sea. His boss, Seventh Army commander Patch, and overall Navy commander Vice Adm. H.K. Hewitt, shared Truscott's feelings. Truscott later wrote, "Then, while we watched, helplessly, to our profound astonishment the whole flotilla turned about and headed out to sea again. Hewitt, Patch and I were furious." Truscott, in fact, threatened to relieve Dahlquist or court- martial Colonel George Lynch, the commander of the 142nd Infantry, if either of them had ordered the diversion. In his 1954 memoirs, Truscott wrote that the diversion and the apparent delay in capturing Red Beach and St. Raphael set back the schedule for the whole operation.

A crowd of civilians in the town of St. Maxime, France, welcomes a French tank-destroyer unit on August 16, 1944. They are wearing American uniforms and equipped with American arms, including this halftrack mounting a .30-caliber machine gun.

"It was in fact almost the only flaw in an otherwise perfect landing," wrote Truscott. "Failure to carry out this delayed landing as arranged was to hold up the clearing of Beach 264A by more than a day…. It was in my opinion a grave error which merited reprimand at least, and most certainly no congratulations. Except for the otherwise astounding success of the assault, it might have had even greater consequences."

Others disagreed. A recent history of the invasion concluded that Truscott's criticism could have been unjustified. Lt. Col. Fred W. Sladen of the 36th Division wrote in his dairy: "August 17, 1944: Red Beach is finally opened this evening. Good thing we didn't land there, mines by the thousands and casements and underwater mines and obstacles. We would have taken heavy casualties."

A member of the division, who later wrote a history of the 36th Division in the last year of the war, also quoted General Tassigny as supporting the decision to switch beaches. The same division veteran offered his own opinion: "The diversion was correct, the decision to do so was correct, and the results were more than satisfactory."

Lieutenant Colonel Lynch later said he felt his regiment would have been so damaged by a Red Beach landing, that it would have been unable to meet most of its later objectives. The diversion did not hurt Lynch's career, as he eventually retired from the Army as a major general. The

diversion came as a surprise to the Germans. The 142nd's Record of Operations reports, "A [German] CORPS staff officer admitted that they had never imagined that we could or would attempt to land a whole division on GREEN BEACH."

By the end of the second day, as the poetic clerk of the 142nd phrased it, "The beachhead was now secure and our forces were rapidly fanning out beyond. The invasion success was won with lightning suddenness and meager casualties." The controversial diversion had worked and left all regiments of the 36th Division in excellent shape for the work that followed. With the amphibious aspect of the operation completed, the 36th Division was positioned for more conventional land operations. The "blue line" of the initial bridgehead was reached, and Truscott issued new attack orders before dark on August 16.

The two primary French Riviera ports, Marseilles (the largest in France) and Toulon, were taken by French divisions serving with the Seventh Army on August 28, far sooner than expected. The port facilities were repaired and put into service as major supply avenues for the entire Allied effort. On August 17, Army Group G was ordered to pull back to the tough Vosges Mountains. The Allies knew about these orders almost immediately.

The rest of August and a good portion of September consisted of a giant race, sometimes hindered by the need to overcome supply problems. "Our vehicles are too few in number for what we have to haul," one American company reported. The desperate race was an attempt to stop the withdrawing German forces from reaching stronger positions in the mountains along the German and Swiss borders.

The German coastal defenses of southern France were undermanned, as many troops had been withdrawn to fight the Allied effort in Normandy when the Germans finally realized it was the main invasion. Hilly terrain focused this withdrawal to the roads running up the Rhone River Valley. "With the disorganization of the Germans and their attempt to withdraw up the RHONE valley the campaign developed into a fight for the valley and control of road nets," wrote a company historian in the 142nd Regiment. "With great mobility, units were maneuvered on the flanks of the enemy, destroying their convoys and large quantities of materiel and personnel."

Apparently the shortage of vehicles among American formations was overcome before August 22, when Task Force Butler and elements of the 141st Infantry arrived at Montelimar.

The Germans were withdrawing their troops in southern France back to the Vosges Mountains. Intelligence reports indicated that they were not going to move troops from Italy to southern France but would continue to mount a strong defense north of Rome. Lt. Gen. Patch, commander of the 7th Army, planned accordingly. With no concern about his flanks, Patch could use virtually all of his forces in as rapid an advance as possible up the Rhone River Valley. Patch wanted to get ahead of the Germans, block their path, and force them to attack at places the Americans chose. One such place was just north of the city of Montelimar, 120 miles from the invasion beaches, 80 miles inland from the coast.

The Rhone River Valley and its two major highways run virtually north to south. It was the quickest, most logical route for a retreating German force, especially one protected by the powerful 11th Panzer Division, which was heading to the area. The val-

ABOVE: Task Force Butler was ordered to advance rapidly in the hope of cutting off the German avenue of retreat from the coast of southern France, while the 36th Infantry Division was expected to move inland quickly and link up with Task Force Butler as soon as possible. OPPOSITE: During the rapid Allied advance toward the interior of southern France, American M10 tank destroyers give infantrymen a lift during the rapid advance from the beaches.

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ley has one particularly significant characteristic. It varies in width. Usually a broad plain, with space for maneuver along its two main highways, the terrain frequently narrows. These bottlenecks are obvious points for defending the valley or stopping a retreating army. Montelimar itself originated as such a defensive position, a Roman fortress at a particularly narrow spot with rugged hills and cliffs near both banks of the river. The area came to be called the Montelimar Gate.

Task Force Butler had been created as a rapid-movement force to try to block the German retreat. In order to leave him with an exploitation force if French armor was taken from his command, about a week before the Anvil/Dragoon invasion VI Corps commander Truscott had planned to put together a provisional Armored Group from elements of the corps. Placed under the command of Brig. Gen. Frederick B. Butler, the deputy commander of VI Corps, the force consisted of a motorized infantry battalion, 30 medium tanks, 12 tank destroyers, 12 self-propelled artillery pieces, and a light cavalry squadron with armored cars, light tanks, and trucks. While Task Force Butler has been described as balanced and mobile, it was not particularly strong, with a complement equal to somewhere between one and two regiments.

By August 19, Butler's force (to which had been added a battalion of the 143rd infantry) was already speeding northwest, preparing to swing around in front of the Germans. The force reached Sisteron, about halfway to Montelimar, by noon. About this time, Patch told Truscott to have a division ready to advance northward, in the general direction of Grenoble. Truscott ordered Dahlquist to have the 36th Division ready to move early the next day. Truscott expected that at least one regiment of the 36th would reach Sisteron by the end of that day. Butler was told to await Dahlquist, but also to continue patrols westward to seize the high ground north of Montelimar.

Butler never got this message. The mountains, which had interfered with Army Group G and 19th Army radio transmissions, affected American communications as well. The only instructions Butler received on the night of the 19th stated that the mission of the task force was unchanged—reconnaissance northward. Shortly before midnight, Butler reported that he intended to continue in the morning. He also reported a shortage of fuel and asked for further instructions, particularly whether he should head north to Grenoble or west to Montelimar. Butler was uneasy remaining stationary at Sisteron, within enemy territory. The FFI had reported a strong German force at Grenoble, and one within 30 miles of Task Force Butler. Butler was oriented toward a northward advance, but sent his operations officer by liaison plane to corps headquarters for more specific orders.

On the evening of the 20th, Brig. Gen. Robert I. Stack, assistant division commander of the 36th, arrived with part of the division headquarters and the remaining two battalions of the 143rd Infantry. The operations officer had returned with the news that further orders would be coming that night. Stack reported that the 36th Division was headed north, with the 142nd now 35 miles away. The 141st would follow the next morning. Stack warned Butler, however, that the division

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ABOVE: American soldiers greet members of the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), or Maquis, after moving inland from the beaches of southern France during Operation Anvil-Dragoon. OPPOSITE: As the 36th Infantry Division is committed to the battle for the French town of Montelimar, German armored vehicles erupt in smoke and flame. The enemy forces in Montelimar had been caught in the open during an American fighter-bomber sweep as they attempted to retreat from the embattled town.

was still being hindered by shortages of fuel and trucks, and he did not know when it would arrive. The 143rd was to head for Grenoble the next morning. Stack thought this was the most logical move for Butler.

Radioing Dahlquist that evening, Stack relayed instructions for Butler to stay in the area of Sisternon until most of the 36th had arrived. Several hours later, after speaking with Truscott, Dahlquist told Butler to stay in the area and cancelled the move to Grenoble. Finally, at about 8 PM on August 20, Truscott ordered Butler to move as rapidly as possible to Montelimar at dawn the next morning, seize the town, and block the German route of withdrawal. The 36th Division would follow as quickly as possible.

A slight change in the written orders, received by Butler early the next morning, told him to seize the high ground north of Montelimar but not the city before dark the next day. Two battalions of corps artillery were being sent, but only one infantry regiment with supporting artillery and other units, the 141st, was specifically ordered to immediately join Butler. The rest of the division would not be ordered to the Montelimar area until 24 hours later. Dahlquist would take command as soon as he arrived on the scene.

Butler's force, which had been spread out and oriented north to Grenoble, was regrouped on the morning of the 21st. Some of his force had to be left to secure his rear until the 36th Division elements could arrive. By the end of the day, however, the bulk of Butler's force was within 13 miles of the Rhone River at the town of Crest.

Crest was the northeast corner of what came to be known as the Montelimar Battle Square. Boundaries for this area were the Drome River on the north, the Rhone River on the west, the Roubien River on the south, and the implied line north South from Crest to the Roubien on the east. The area alternates from flat farmland to rugged, hilly country. Route N-7 runs through Montelimar, two miles from the Rhone, and then continues up the valley. A secondary road, D-6, passes through Montelimar, then cuts into mountainous country before rejoining N-7 about 15 miles north of the city. Railroad tracks run on both sides of the Rhone, with another road paralleling N-7 to the west of the Rhone.

Butler's men reached Marsanne, in the center of the "square" and blocking D-6, late on the 21st. The advance party, under Lt. Col. Joseph G. Felber, recognized that Hill 300, next to N-7, with a clear view of the other Rhone arteries, was the key terrain feature. Unable to occupy the whole ridge, Felber set up outposts, roadblocks, and other positions. Germans were already passing through on the road. A light armor and infantry roadblock was chased back into the hills by a German attack at dusk. The Americans also destroyed the N-7 bridge over the Drome in the northwest section of the disputed area with no resistance from the Germans.

On the north bank of the Drome, light armor sent west from Crest spotted a German truck column fording a stream. Fifty of these trucks were destroyed before the troop was ordered back to Crest to protect the roads to Puy St. Martin in the middle of the "square."

Just before midnight on August 21, Butler radioed Truscott to report the task force's arrival at the objective area. Butler said that his forces were thinly spread out but, with more artillery and a regiment from the 36th Division, Butler thought he not only could hold out but could successfully attack Montelimar the next afternoon. By the next morning, Butler's force had received neither reinforcements nor supplies.

The Germans struck first the next day. Units attacked north from Montelimar, taking Sauzet and forcing an American outpost back into the hills. This was just a feint, however. Larger German forces attacked from south of the Roubion River, advancing on Puy St. Martin and Marsanne behind Butler's defenses. Puy was occupied that afternoon, cutting Butler's supply line back to Crest and Sisteron. Fortunately, Butler's unit left to guard his rear at the town of Gap had been relieved by the 36th and arrived in time to successfully counterattack into Puy.

Butler thought the German attacks were still only probes to determine his strength. He expected a far larger attack the next morning, August 23. No part of the 36th arrived during most of the 22nd, just Butler's own men from Gap and the Croix de Haute Pass and the two battalions of corps artillery. The task force was also beginning to run out of tank and artillery ammunition. About 10 PM on the evening of the 22nd, the 2nd Bat-

talion of the 141st Regiment arrived. The regimental operations report later stated, "The many miles covered by the regiment in the previous two days had placed a severe strain on the Service Company. The drivers received very little rest and the supplying of gasoline, rations and water for all units of the combat team proved to be a most difficult and arduous task."

Generals Truscott and Butler would be critical of the 36th Division and its delayed arrival at Montelimar. Butler later wrote that at Montelimar, "even had the 36th Division swung in behind me rather than continue north to Grenoble the effectiveness of my position would have been enhanced," and referred to the "slowness of the relief at Gap" by the 36th. An aide to General Truscott even wrote in his journal for August 21, 1944, "36th fouled up."

The U.S. Army in World War II, also known as the Green Book series, relates, "The lack of reinforcements reflected American indecision. Throughout the day and evening of 21 August neither Patch nor Truscott had been willing to make Montelimar the major effort. They were still unable to predict when Toulon and Marseille would fall, or confirm the beginning of a complete German withdrawal up the Rhone valley."

Truscott finally ordered Dahlquist to start moving toward Montelimar at 11 PM on August 21. That evening at 9 PM, the 141st was in Digne, 80 direct miles southwest (more by road) from Montelimar. Most of the division was still swinging north toward Grenoble in accordance with its latest orders. Division orders instructed the 141st to move toward Aspres-sur-Beach, on the route to both Grenoble and Montelimar, and still less than halfway toward Montelimar. The 141st itself had just completed, not long before midnight on August 19th, a sharp action in capturing the town of Callian, only 16 miles from the beach.

The next morning, Truscott flew to the area around Montelimar to find out what was causing the delay in movement. He remembered flying to the 36th command post just before noon on August 22. A staff officer of the 141st, present when General Truscott arrived, later recalled that the VI Corps commander's plane landed on the highway between Aspres and Sisternon, where the 141st was moving, mostly by foot, toward the division Headquarters at Aspres.

"General Truscott got out of the plane and introduced himself. I was traveling in a jeep with [141st Regiment commander] Colonel Harmony. We told General Truscott we were on route to the Division CP to get instructions on our next employment. He got into the jeep with us and we hastened to the Division CP in Aspres. We were met by Colonel Stewart T. Vincent, the chief of staff, who said that General Dahlquist was 'up front somewhere.' He had no means of communicating with him. Truscott asked Vincent if he had received the message which he, Truscott, had sent the night before, telling Dahlquist to get the division to Montelimar as quickly as possible, with the mission of blocking the highway. He said that was the key to stopping the German Nineteenth Army. Vincent had no knowledge of the message, but Truscott demanded that the Message Center chief check. The sergeant found that the message

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had been delivered late the night before to Lieutenant Colonel Fred W. Sladen, the Division G-3 (operations officer)."

Apparently Sladen had not thought to awaken Dahlquist. When Sladen got up the next morning, Dahlquist was gone. Sladen then went to Gap and Grenoble with Stack, the assistant division commander. He appears not to have mentioned the orders to Stack. There is no mention that Truscott had asked to have his orders confirmed by Dahlquist.

"Truscott was bitterly disappointed," remembered the staff officer of the 141st, "and he turned to Harmony and told him to get his regiment to the west, in the vicinity of Crest, as soon as possible. He then turned to Vincent and told him to get in touch with General Dahlquist by whatever means possible and inform him to get his forces to Montelimar as soon as possible."

Truscott returned to his command post and sent Dahlquist written orders. He expressed disappointment with the 36th Division's deployments. According to Truscott's memoirs, he emphasized that the "primary mission of the 36th is to block the Rhone Valley in the gap immediately north of Montelimar. For this purpose you must be prepared to employ the bulk of your Division. If this operation develops as seems probable, all of your Division will be none too much in the Rhone valley area."

The 19th Regiment was to replace the 143rd at Grenoble, with the 45th Division eventually assuming responsibility for that area. Truscott also sent a convoy of fuel trucks to the 36th, enabling the rest of the 141st to join Butler. Telephone conversations with Dahlquist—on a line finally opened—stressed the basic orders, though making a few changes in details. The confusion with the 36th finally seems to have been straightened out on August 23, when the division began to shift westward to block the Rhone Valley.

The bulk of the 11th Panzer Division had actually gotten south of Montelimar. The division's reconnaissance battalion had fought with Butler on the 22nd, while most of its elements were blocking roads leading to the Rhone from the east and the

ABOVE: German tanks roll down a street in the city of Toulouse in southern France. The 11th Panzer Division was ordered south to stem the Allied tide prior to the landings of Operation Anvil-Dragoon, but it was ultimately battered and forced to retire. OPPOSITE: An American M8 gun carriage—an M5 Stuart light tank modified to carry a 75mm howitzer—rolls past the charred wreckage of a bus caught in the fighting along a road near Montelimar.

landing beaches. The division was then ordered to move northward, take the high ground around Montelimar, and secure Highway N-7 running northward. The 198th Infantry Division was also ordered to the area. Fortunately for Butler, Dahlquist, and Truscott, the Germans had the same supply problems as the Allies. The first elements did not reach the Montelimar area until August 23, with the rest not expected until the next day, but the Germans still intended to seize the initiative.

The difficult terrain provided one final obstacle to the immediate execution of Truscott's order and the records of the 141st Infantry describe it: "The country through which the regiment travelled was mountainous, comprising portions of the French Alps. A good highway was available most of the way but the Germans had made enough demolitions to cause numerous detours. The enemy had evidently left the sector very hurriedly as there were many places where effective demolitions could have appreciably held up the motor columns. This mountainous region was a stronghold of the FFI (French Forces of the Interior) and the information and assistance furnished by this force was invaluable. It was extremely improbable that the Allied thrust so far north in a few days could have been accomplished without their aid."

Fighting started again with the arrival of the lead elements of the 141st. "For us," as a regimental history of the 141st put it, "Montelimar and the week from August 24th to the 30th was one of the fullest 168 hour weeks of the war." Colonel Harmony was with the 2nd Battalion and received his regimental assignments from General Butler. The 2nd Battalion was assigned to attack Montelimar itself, with a jump-off point about 5 miles from the city.

Three German probes were fought off during the day. Fortunately for Task Force Butler (formally abolished on August 23, but still together) and the 36th, the Germans also did not have full strength in the Montelimar area. Company A of the 1st Battalion was able to seize the north slope of Hill 300, about five miles north of Montelimar, without opposition.

The main American attack of that day came down highway D-6, through Sauzet, aimed at Montelimar. Troop B of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron moved

out with Company F, the leading element of the 2nd Battalion. Tanks and tank destroyers had not arrived in time for the attack. As the battalion commander later remembered, "We reached a point a little more than a kilometer from Montelimar when we got into a heavy fire fight with the Germans…. Our attack was actually brought to a halt by a combination of an intense grass and brush fire and by the Germans."

Butler had yet not blocked highway N-7, though on the afternoon of the 23rd Truscott ordered all Rhone Valley roads blocked. Both battalions were counterattacked that evening and night, but held their positions. However, the Germans began to infiltrate around the units on the maze of area roads. The 2nd Battalion mission changed from an attack on the town to withdrawing to presumably better defensive positions north of the road east from Montelimar. Both units were alerted to expect a German attack the next morning. The rest of the 36th Division was on its way, but still not quickly. Increasingly strong German counterattacks started the next morning. One was against 2nd Battalion.

The battalion's commander, Lt. Col. James H. Critchfield, later recalled, "At dawn the next morning, we again attacked, with Company F in the lead. We were quite successful and they actually reached and cut Highway 7 just north of Montelimar…. After a while they launched an attack out of the village; the situation stabilized, and turned into a fight that raged throughout the day. I can only describe it as intense…. During the day, we had a series of attacks against us of varying intensity…. Gradually we were forced back into a perimeter defense. Our connections to the rear were very tenuous—we really didn't have a rear area except for those up near Marsanne. There were no stable lines at this time."

American units were holding on in the general area, aided by artillery and other supporting elements. However, they were pushed back from blocking N-7, their primary goal in the area. Dahlquist seemed more concerned with holding his position than with any active offense against the German escape route. The 142nd and 143rd, still not in the area, received confusing orders from division headquarters. Truscott spoke with Dahlquist, again reminding the division commander to block N-7. One can only imagine what Truscott would have said if he had learned that a copy of Dahlquist's operational instructions for the next day, had fallen into German hands. A liaison officer had left them in a jeep, fleeing a German roadblock. Fortunately, all of the 36th Division arrived in the battle square that night.

The complex German battle plan for August 25 called for attacks from six different directions. If all went well, they would be able to surround and virtually destroy the 36th Division and Task Force Butler. Coordination proved impossible, and the attacks had different degrees of success. One battle group from 11th Panzer, formed around a panzergrenadier battalion, attacked eastward along the Drome River from N-7, in the north of the combat area. The attack began just before noon, reaching Grane before 2 PM, about halfway to Crest at the northeast corner of the "battle square." Other German units seized the town of Allex, north of the Drome, about the same time.

Dahlquist sent what remained of Task Force Butler, a weak battalion with supporting elements, north from Puy halfway to Crest to cover his supply route. Butler sent a tank platoon toward Grane. It was not able to retake the town, but set up a

Both: National Archives

blocking position just outside it. No further German attacks in this area followed. The Germans in Grane seemed content to defend their gains, while their attacks in the southern part of the box had accomplished little.

The main American offensive of that day was an attack directly at Highway N-7. The Hill 300-La Coucourde area, about five miles north of Montelimar, was left unprotected by the Germans for most of the day. However, defending a six-mile front made it impossible for Colonel Harmony to put together a 141st Regimental attacking force until late in the day. About 4 PM, units of the 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, secured the northern portion of Hill 300. The 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, moved directly at the highway. Elements of the German battle group supposed to be in the area arrived, but were fought off. By 7 PM, an American rifle company (later reinforced by a second company), four tanks, and seven tank destroyers had set up a roadblock. German traffic was again piling up south of Montelimar.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: German snipers, disarmed and taken alive, are marched down a street in Montelimar while a crowd of townspeople looks on. OPPOSITE: The wreckage of a German convoy, decimated by Allied air power north of Montelimar during Operation Anvil-Dragoon, litters both sides of the road as an American tank lumbers past. German forces in southern France continued their retreat after mounting a spirited defense in some areas.

American artillery kept the Germans from assembling for a counterattack until nightfall, but Colonel Harmony was concerned about whether the road could be held. German pressure against the rest of his regiment was making it impossible to reinforce the blocking force. He was having trouble keeping it supplied. The Colonel suggested the force retire into the nearby pass at Hill 300 for the night, blowing up several bridges before leaving. They could return in the morning. Dahlquist vetoed this idea in compliance with Truscott's orders.

By this time, Maj. Gen. Wend von Wietersheim, commander of the 11th Panzer Division and acting commander of a temporary corps combining the 11th and the 198th Infantry Division, had become annoyed with the failure of his plans and of his men to keep the road open. He organized an attacking force from what he could scrape together near Montelimar and personally led a midnight attack on the roadblock. By 1 AM, three of his tanks and six tank destroyers had been knocked out, with the rest of the force dispersed. Wietersheim sent some of his forces to seize the high ground over the highway to prevent an easy American attack in the morning.

When the fighting on the 25th and early on the 26th ended, neither side had done particularly well. Dahlquist had still used little of his strength, with most of the 142nd and 143rd having seen virtually no action. The Germans had opened the road, but that was all they had accomplished. Their forces were spread out, vulnerable to attack at weak points.

On August 26, Truscott ordered the 45th Division to send the 157th Regimental Combat Team and the 191st Tank Battalion north to the Montelimar "battle square" area. Part of the force arrived on the 25th, to be used as the 36th Division reserve. The rest, arriving the next day, stayed at Crest as corps reserve. The 3rd Division was also on its way to the area. No major German units arrived, though part of the LXXXV Corps was still heading toward Montelimar from the south. However, Von Wietersheim asked to be relieved of responsibility for the acting corps command so he could just handle 11th Panzer. Lt. Gen. Baptist Kneiss, commander of the LXXXV Corps, was given control of the Germans troops in the Montelimar area.

The only offensive action Dahlquist planned for the 26th was an attack by Butler through the Condilac Pass to restore the roadblock. The major portion of this attack started in the early afternoon. Butler sent two rifle companies of the 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, over the northern slope of Hill 300. As they neared the highway, they were reinforced by a platoon of medium tanks and some tank destroyers moving on the road directly out of the pass. The attacking Americans ran into Germans both moving up from the south and attacking down from the north, and the best they could do was hang on to Hill 300 after again being pushed off the road. The tanks and tank destroyers with-

drew. Efforts by the 143rd in the next few days were also unsuccessful.

The commander of the 3rd Battalion later remembered the battle: "We didn't have much trouble taking the high ground, but we had trouble keeping it.... Fortunately, we had good artillery communications, and they were blasting the valley. As the Germans attacked over our positions, we called the artillery down on our own location. There was nothing else we could do."

The Presidential Unit Citation the 3rd Battalion won described the rest of their battle. "The following day, when attacked by an enemy force of battalion strength, units of the battalion fought valiantly to repel the attackers and inflict upon them an estimated 30 percent dead, while other units of the battalion courageously beat off successive enemy tank and infantry attacks from the north.

"The members of the battalion directed thousands of rounds of mortar fire into the enemy, blocking the highway with the debris of destroyed vehicles and trucks.

"On 29 August 1944, the enemy in overwhelming numbers desperately attacked the battalion and succeeded in infiltrating through and dividing it into small units. Although completely isolated from other units and faced with possible annihilation, the members of the 3rd Battalion fought furiously to hold their positions and by mid-morning had completely beaten the hostile forces, who suffered tremendous losses in personnel and equipment.

"During this action, the 3rd Battalion captured more than 600 prisoners, including the Commanding General of the German 198th Infantry Division."

Blocking of the main Germans escape routes through the Rhone was intermittent and mainly accomplished by artillery. Although effective, the U.S. artillery was short of ammunition, and unable to do as much damage as possible on the steady stream of German targets. The 3rd Division was hampered by supply and transportation shortages in getting to the combat area. Units of the 36th Division could not move as fast as hoped in the "battle square" itself.

Truscott, however, was able to travel. He arrived at Dahlquist's headquarters on the morning of August 26, intending to remove Dahlquist. Truscott complained that Dahlquist had failed to carry out instructions to block the highway and was sending in faulty situation reports. Truscott wrote that he told Dahlquist, "John, I have come here with the full intention of relieving you from your command. You have reported to me that you held the high ground north of Montelimar and that you had blocked Highway 7. You have not done so. You have failed to carry out my orders. You have just five minutes in which to convince me that you are not at fault."

Dahlquist blamed much of this on the confusion of battle, including one case in which the wrong hill was taken. German attacks in the northeast corner of the square, at Crest and Puy, made the defense of these towns necessary. Supply and transportation shortages made it impossible to concentrate sufficient combat power on Hill 300 or to establish a permanent physical block across Highway N-7. Truscott saw the terrain difficulties but ordered further attacks the next day. Though Truscott remained unhappy, Dahlquist kept his job.

Continued on page 98

German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring is accompanied by staff officers during an inspection of defensive positions in Italy in 1944. Kesselring was a Luftwaffe officer who proved particularly good at managing a defensive ground war in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

Poland National Archives

ALBERT KESSELRING: Hitler's Go-To Guy

BY R. JEFF CHRISMAN

A smiling persona masked a hard-nosed commander who participated in everything from the invasion of Poland to the fighting withdrawal in Italy to the defense of the western front in 1945.

He was seemingly everywhere—Poland, France, Holland, Italy, and the western front during the last days of the Third Reich. Yet his name is less well known than that of other German military figures such as Rommel, Rundstedt, Manstein, Guderian, Jodl, and Dönitz.

Albert Konrad Kesselring began his military career as a staff officer in the Bavarian Army during the Great War. He was an architect of the new German armed forces between the wars, and then a field marshal in the Luftwaffe and a ground-forces commander with unique command authority in World War II.

But it was his service in Italy during the last half of World War II that made Kesselring famous, and infamous, to the rest of the world. His command of the months-long German withdrawal up the Italian boot made him a defensive specialist of wide renown. Unfortunately, atrocities committed by subordinates in Italy were, rightly or wrongly, blamed on him and brought post-war charges of war crimes and murder.

Albert Kesselring was born at Marktsteft, near Würzburg in Bavaria on November 30, 1885. His father was a schoolteacher, but Albert knew from a young age that he wanted to be a soldier. Kesselring volunteered for the Royal Bavarian Army in July 1904 as a *Fahnenjunker* (cadet) and was commissioned a *Leutnant* (lieutenant) on March 8, 1906, serving in pre-war engineering and artillery units. His first taste of air service was in 1912, when he trained as a balloon observer with the Bavarian Airship and Motor Transport Battalion, where he soon learned from personal experience that balloon service required a strong stomach.

During World War I, Kesselring served as an adjutant and staff officer in several Bavarian Army artillery units and was decorated with both classes of the 1914 Iron Cross. It was during this time that young Albert gained and honed his understanding and appreciation of tactics and leadership, as well as the notice of his superiors for the first (but not the last) time.

Instead of being mustered out, Kesselring was selected for the post-war German Reichswehr and, in October 1922, was assigned to the Reich Defense Ministry. The officer corps of the Reichswehr was deliberately insulated from politics; for them, there was to be only one guiding principle—the military oath.

In January 1924 Kesselring was assigned to the *Truppenampt* (Troop Office) under the head of Army Director General Hans von Seeckt, where he became deeply involved in secretly building the foundation and framework of the new German armed forces, the Wehrmacht.

Seeckt was convinced that military aviation would be required to secure Germany's future, and he secreted a small group of officers—Kesselring, Hugo Sperrle, and Walther Wever, among others—to see to its development. Between the wars Germany and Russia had a secret agreement whereby Russia would clandestinely provide training facilities for German pilots. Kesselring was involved in the planning and development of the secret training and made several trips to Russia in the 1920s.

On October 1, 1933, he was discharged from the army and assigned to the newly created Air Ministry, where he was made chief of the Administration Office with the rank of Commodore.

In the 100,000-man Reichswehr, rank advancement was exceedingly slow. But in the brand-new air force, promotion came quickly—Kesselring was promoted to *Generalmajor* (brigadier general) on April 1, 1934, and then to *Generalleutnant* (major general) on April 1, 1936. Although he was one of the architects of the Luftwaffe, which became known as a National Socialist institution, Kesselring was never a member of the Nazi party.

Kesselring worked tirelessly toward his goal of building up the fledgling Luftwaffe into a force equivalent to the army or the navy. At the time, there was debate raging

about the fundamental nature of the Luftwaffe: should it be a tactical force or a strategic force? Kesselring believed the optimum use of the Luftwaffe and its limited funds would be as a tactical force, directly supporting ground operations. With Kesselring now chief, his view prevailed.

Kesselring's tenure as chief of staff lasted less than a year. Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring transferred him to Dresden, promoting him to *General der Flieger* (Lt. Gen. of Aviation), and making him commander of *Luftkreis III* (Air District III) on June 1, 1937. Kesselring was elated—he would now have a chance to put the theoretical knowledge he had amassed into practical use.

In early 1938 Kesselring was transferred to Berlin to take command of *Gruppenkommando 1* (Air Command 1). A year later, when Poland was invaded on September 1, 1939, Gruppenkommando 1 was upgraded to *Luftflotte 1* (Air Fleet 1), putting Kesselring in charge of the full range of air units—from reconnaissance and transport wings to fighters, bombers, and dive bombers.

Luftflotte 1 was attached to Army Group North for the Polish campaign and performed well, working closely with the ground troops as they struck targets in Poland. Kesselring's Stuka dive bombers were particularly effective in support of General Guderian's XIX Corps as its panzers surged across the breadth of Poland in barely two and a half weeks. At the end of the campaign, several high-ranking officers, including Kesselring, received the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross directly from Hitler on September 30, 1939.

In January 1940 the commander of *Luftflotte 2*, General Hellmuth Felmy, was relieved of command and replaced by Kesselring. Luftflotte 2 was scheduled to play a large part in the upcoming invasion of France and the Low Countries, where it would be attached to Army Group B. Kesselring was specifically responsible for the airborne operations against the Netherlands and for protecting the forces attacking across Belgium to the Channel coast.

Once again, the German forces surged through the enemy with the help of Kesselring's ground-attack air units. The combination airborne/glider operation in Holland was only partially successful, but the glider-borne assault on the fortress of Eben-Emael was a complete success, with Kesselring's troops holding both the fortress and the nearby bridges over the Albert Canal by the end of the first day.

On May 14, just four days after the attack had commenced, Holland surrendered, persuaded in part by Luftflotte 2's heavy bombing of Rotterdam; by May 20, panzer units were closing in on the channel coast.

The ensuing Allied evacuation from Dunkirk brought German air forces into contact with units of the RAF for the first time. The evacuation from Dunkirk also produced the first major conflict over objectives between Hitler and his military leaders, principally Reichsmarschall Herman Göring, which in turn produced the first strategic turning point in the war.

Göring persuaded Hitler to hold back the ground troops that had surrounded Allied forces at Dunkirk and instead allow Luftflotte 2 to destroy the enemy as he tried to escape from the beach.

Kesselring was aghast. He told Göring that it couldn't be done by fresh pilots, let alone by pilots that had been through three weeks of hard fighting. In the event, thanks in large part to the interdiction by RAF fighters, Luftflotte 2 failed to destroy the enemy troops on the beach or in the water—just as Kesselring had predicted. This allowed the British Expeditionary Force and over 100,000 French troops to escape and fight another day.

In a lavish ceremony at the Berlin Opera House on July 19, 1940, Hitler bestowed the field marshal's baton on 12 generals, including Kesselring, in celebration of their swift victory in the west. Kesselring, a General der Flieger, jumped over the rank of *Generaloberst* directly to *Generalfeldmarschall*.

While German ground units continued the attack through southern France, Luftflotte 2 remained on the channel coast preparing to launch an air attack on Britain preliminary

ABOVE: Albert Kesselring visits with Luftwaffe pilots at their airfield in France in 1940. Kesselring was wary of Hitler's decision to halt ground forces before the British lines at Dunkirk, expecting the Luftwaffe to deal the final blow to the British Expeditionary Force. OPPOSITE: During the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland, Luftwaffe Stuka dive bombers unleash their deadly cargoes on Polish positions. Kesselring believed the highest and best use of the Luftwaffe was in tactical support of German ground troops rather than attempting to mount a strategic bombing campaign.

Both: Poland National Archives

to a full-blown invasion from the sea.

The first phase of the air assault began on July 10 with Kesselring's flyers attacking coastal shipping convoys and harbors. On August 8, the attacks turned to airfields, radar installations, and other military targets in Southern England. On August 24 the attacks were expanded to include the London area.

Another turning point was reached on September 7, when Hitler switched Luftflotte 2 to terror attacks on civilian targets in London exclusively. This switch in targets allowed the RAF, which had been severely attritted by attacks on its airfields, to regain its footing and in fact, to survive.

The survival of the RAF, in turn, meant that the Luftwaffe could not gain air superiority over England or the Channel, and therefore the planned German invasion of England could not go forward. Luftflotte 2 remained in France and continued bombing England night after night until May 1941, when Kesselring and Luftflotte 2 were transferred back to Germany to prepare for Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union.

Luftflotte 2 flew in support of Army Group Center—in the capable and familiar hands of the now-Generalfeldmarschall Fedor von Bock—in Barbarossa beginning June 22, 1941. Once again, German troops surged deep into enemy territory with Kesselring's ground-attack air units leading the way.

Blitzkrieg was at its zenith. By November 30 Kesselring's flyers had destroyed 6,670 Russian aircraft, 1,900 tanks, 26,000 motor vehicles, and 2,800 trains.

In late November 1941, just as the German attack on Moscow was reaching its climax, Kesselring and Luftflotte 2 were transferred to Italy to help the flagging Axis effort in the Mediterranean. Kesselring, in addition to his Luftwaffe duties, was also made *Oberbefehlshaber Süd* (Commander-in-Chief South).

For the next 20 months, Kesselring was right in the middle of what was surely one of the most byzantine and convoluted command arrangements ever known. He reported to Hitler on strategic matters, to Göring for Luftwaffe matters, and to Mussolini for operational matters. On the one hand, he had to gently prod the Italians into action without stepping on their very sensitive feelings; at the same time, he had to encourage the German commanders' cooperation with the Italians and mitigate any frustration that flared due to Italian reluctance. All the while, both Germans and Italians were protective of their own national interests—Machiavellian in the land of Machiavelli, as one observer put it.

The Mediterranean-North African theater had been a quagmire for the Germans long before Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring arrived. The Italian armed forces were poorly led and were constantly having to be bailed out of one predicament or another.

It was to prop up the Italians that Hitler had sent a few divisions and a corps headquarters to Libya in February 1941. Commanded by Generalleutnant (Major General) Erwin Rommel, the Afrika Korps was to push the British out and secure the Mediterranean coastal area of North Africa. Unfortunately, the British, with bases on Malta, were very well placed to disrupt the German supply route to North Africa.

Kesselring's mission was to establish air superiority over the Mediterranean, closing it to British shipping and eliminating Malta as a threat. Kesselring believed that to neutralize Malta, it would have to be occupied, but Hitler and Göring scoffed at

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ABOVE: A German Junkers Ju-88 aircraft flies over the Grand Harbor at Valetta on the Mediterranean island of Malta. Kesselring was placed in charge of the anticipated German invasion of Malta, but the effort was soon abandoned as many German aircraft were redeployed from the Mediterranean to the Eastern Front. LEFT: Albert Kesselring (center) and Erwin Rommel (left), both senior German field commanders, confer during a meeting at El Alamein in North Africa in August 1942.

the idea, expecting that aerial bombing would suffice.

Kesselring initiated bombing raids on Malta immediately and found quick success, causing a slackening of pressure on German shipping. German shipping losses, formerly in the 70-80 percent range, quickly fell to 20-30 percent. In fact, by February 1942, British bombing units were forced to relocate from Malta to Egypt. For these early successes Kesselring received the Oak Leaves to the Knights Cross on February 25, 1942.

Kesselring was then charged with creating a plan for the invasion of Malta and produced the first draft—code-named Operation Herkules—in mid-May. Unfortunately, during the first week of May, German bomber strength in the region had been reduced by 50 percent and fighter strength by 35 percent when part of Luftflotte 2 was rushed back to the Eastern Front.

The loss of air superiority over the entire Mediterranean was now only a matter of time. With Malta's defenses growing stronger and German ground forces in the theater being consumed by Rommel in the desert, Operation Herkules was cancelled by Hitler shortly thereafter.

Rommel's pursuit of the British into Egypt had stalled at El Alamein in early September, and he was finally defeated there by Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army at the end of October. Panzer Army Afrika began to withdraw from Egypt on November 4, 1942, marking the end of large-scale German offensive operations in North Africa.

Four days later, the Allies landed in French North Africa in Operation Torch, creating a totally different strategic situation with Allied ground forces now both east and west of Panzer Army Afrika.

Kesselring, always the master of every contingency, reacted quickly and ordered the establishment of two bridgeheads in Tunisia—one at Tunis and another at Bizerte, the only deepwater ports in the country—to protect it from Allied incursion from the west. Kesselring immediately started to round up troops wherever he could find them and sent them to Tunisia. On the 12th they seized Tunis and its airfield.

At first there were mainly Luftwaffe air and ground units and some paratroops in Tunisia, but by the 25th there were nearly 25,000 German and Italian troops with 64 tanks holding the two bridgeheads. By the middle of December, the Allied advance had been temporarily repulsed west of Tunis, and the two bridgeheads had been joined into one 50-mile-wide bridgehead covering both Bizerte and Tunis.

Rommel's withdrawal reached the Tripoli position in mid-January 1943. Tripoli, as the heart of Italian North Africa, was full of service troops and civilians who now saw their futures in jeopardy. Less than a week, later Rommel resumed his withdrawal and Tripoli was evacuated. By the end of the month Panzer Army Afrika had taken up positions along the "Mareth Line" in southeastern Tunisia, forming the southern boundary of the enlarged German bridgehead.

The loss of the Italian colony in North Africa was a severe shock to the Italian command and particularly to the Italian people, and it served to bring into sharp focus the threat to their homeland. This in turn made all the leadership suspicious of each other. The Italians became suspicious that the Germans would try to disarm them and take over their country, while the Germans were suspicious that the Italians would go over to the Allies behind their backs. No one trusted anyone.

But it was clearly Kesselring who made the strategic decisions in Tunisia, and they were mostly correct. Rommel had wanted to pull out of the Mareth Line and withdraw all the way to Gabes at the first sign of enemy attack preparations, fearing an enemy outflank-

ing maneuver. But Kesselring insisted on a staged withdrawal, and events proved him right, producing an orderly retreat into the mountainous stronghold of northern Tunisia without excessive losses.

Rommel had completely lost faith in the Mediterranean campaign and the Italians. He thought that abandoning most of Italy up to the far north was the right course of action and filled Hitler's ears with his reasons.

Kesselring argued that Italy was infinitely defensible; a long, narrow strip of land, much of it mountainous, that, if defended in-depth, could take months for an enemy to fight its way through.

He recognized that its long coastlines made an amphibious landing behind the front a possibility, but Kesselring would keep reserves near each coast to contain any such assault and knew he could react quickly enough to deal with this eventuality.

By April 1943 it was clear to most everyone involved that the Tunisian bridgehead did not have long to live, and with it the entire Axis presence in North Africa. It was being inexorably squeezed from the east and the west, and supplies and reinforcements had been reduced to a trickle.

Kesselring tried to evacuate key men and specialists but mostly in vain. *Generaloberst* (General) Hans von Arnim. Kesselring, who had replaced Rommel in command of Army Group Afrika, was forced to surrender on May 12, 1943. Immense sadness overtook Kesselring; he wished he'd done more but knew that he couldn't have.

Hermann Göring pounced immediately on Kesselring for the loss of Tunisia. Formerly referring to Kesselring as a model of the "modern thinking General," Göring now ranted that he was "State enemy Number One!" Fortunately for Kesselring, Göring's prestige and influence over Hitler was in a state of rapid decline, so his denigrations carried little weight.

Kesselring's delicate balancing act between German needs and Italian capabilities became all-consuming, and on June 12, 1943, Generalfeldmarschall Wolfram von Richthofen took over command of Luftflotte 2, allowing Kesselring to concentrate on the big picture—and the big picture was not pretty. With Tunisia gone, it was only a matter of time before the Allies invaded Italy or the Italians surrendered and invited them in, and everyone knew it.

National Archives

German bombs explode during an air raid on the island of Malta. British aircraft and submarines operating from the island played havoc with supply convoys to Axis forces in North Africa, but the Germans and Italians were ultimately unable to remove the threat to their lifeline in the desert.

The change in command made Kesselring responsible for all Axis ground, air, and naval units in the Mediterranean and North Africa. He thereby became the first and only German theater commander to command all three branches simultaneously.

Kesselring assumed that the Allies' next target would be within range of land-based aircraft in Tunisia; this ruled out France, northern Italy, and the Balkans, and made southern Italy the most likely target—specifically, the Italian off-shore islands: Corsica, Sardinia, or Sicily first, then the mainland.

The Italian plans for the islands' defenses were excellent, but the preparations and fortifications had not been started. Kesselring set out immediately to get defenses built, gently hounding the Italian commanders and cajoling the German high command to quickly send materials and equipment.

Kesselring's tactical sense told him that the Allies' first target would most likely be Sicily, so he focused his attention there. By the end of June Kesselring had managed to augment the defenses on Sicily—not to the point that they could throw back an Allied invasion, but they could at least delay an attacking force until reinforcements arrived.

The field marshal then tried to recede into the background to give the Italians an opportunity to demonstrate their steadfastness in defending their homeland.

The Allied invasion started in the early hours of July 10, and almost immediately the Italians showed their true colors. The Italian coastal divisions were a complete failure; the few counterattacks that were executed were weak, late, and easily pushed aside. Several units, including the entire "Napoli" Division, simply melted away. The fortress of Augusta, on the southeast coast, surrendered without even being attacked. The question at this point was whether these actions were due to incompetence or treachery.

Poland National Archives

A staff officer points to a location among the German defenses in Italy in October 1944 as Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of German forces in Italy, looks on during an inspection tour. Kesselring skillfully managed a fighting defense, delaying the fall of Rome for months.

Kesselring flew to Sicily to take direct command on the 12th and found mostly chaos. The Italian units were on the verge of collapse, and the two German divisions were the only troops fighting. Kesselring immediately ordered the abandonment of western Sicily and called in the1st Parachute Division from France; they began landing that evening at Catania.

His intent was to first block the Allies' push north along the east coast, as this was the fastest route to Messina and a short crossing to the mainland, then build a blocking force across the northeastern tip of the island, forming a bridgehead around Messina.

On July 25, the political situation was thrust back into the foreground when Mussolini was deposed. This was a precondition by the Allies for the Italian surrender, and the pace of that process now quickened. King Victor Emmanuel III assured Kesselring that there would be no change to Italy's prosecution of the war, and that he had been forced to dismiss Mussolini because he had lost the goodwill of the public.

Kesselring took Victor Emmanuel at his word, but Hitler was incensed; his first reaction was a scheme to kidnap the royal family as insurance against treachery. Hitler also saw Kesselring as an Italophile who was under the spell of the Italians. "That fellow Kesselring is too honest for those born traitors down there." he mused.

Hitler wanted to make a show of force—flying in troops to Rome to take over the government and moving in forces to secure the border area of the Brenner Pass in the Alps. Kesselring counseled caution: The Fascists had been deposed because the people were thoroughly tired of war and its strain, but the people weren't necessarily Germany's enemies. Bold military intervention in Rome, he argued, would immediately produce a violent confrontation, which the Germans did not need. Kesselring advised a calm approach; there was nothing to lose by staying in touch with the Italians, he said.

Kesselring held several meetings with the new chief of Commando Supremo and slowly maneuvered him into agreeing that they should work together, and eventually—"by seduction not rape," as the official U.S. history of the war puts it—the Brenner Pass was turned over to German control.

In the midst of the political fireworks and intrigue came the first display of Kesselring's real talent: the masterful withdrawal from Sicily that he orchestrated in the middle of August. Dropping back in stages during the hours of darkness, German and Italian troops withdrew to Messina and then safely across the straits to the mainland in barely a week's time. Over 114,000 German and Italian troops, 14,332 vehicles, 135 guns, 47 tanks, and almost 22,000 tons of ammunition, stores, and equipment were successfully withdrawn.

Fortunately for the Axis, the Allies did not immediately jump across the Strait of Messina to the mainland. Kesselring found this quite surprising, but he took advantage of the Allies' pause to distribute his forces and build up defenses.

Reports from Sicily and North Africa convinced Kesselring that the Allies' next target would be the mainland rather than one of the other offshore islands. It was also clear

that the Allied forces on Sicily would, sooner or later, attack across the Messina Strait into Calabria.

Kesselring left only Italian units to defend against such an attack and withdrew most German troops from the tip of Calabria. He concentrated on defending farther north and in the Naples-Salerno area, which he considered the most likely target of the main Allied invasion.

On September 3, Montgomery's Eighth Army crossed the Strait of Messina in Operation Baytown and landed at Reggio de Calabria virtually unopposed. Italian troops laid down their arms, and German rearguard units began withdrawing, blowing bridges and raising obstacles as they went—the first of what would be hundreds of obstacles built and bridges destroyed by German engineers in Italy over the next several months.

Early on September 8, with reports of over 100 vessels escorted by battleships and aircraft carriers heading north, it became clear that the Allied invasion was imminent. Just after noon, 131 B-17 Flying Fortresses of the U.S. Army Air Force struck Frascati, the Roman suburb where Kesselring's was located. The headquarters was destroyed, communications completely cut, and hundreds killed.

The Germans subsequently found a map in the wreckage of a downed bomber that had Kesselring's headquarters clearly marked. Kesselring thought this a clear indication that not all Italians could be trusted. In truth, coded "enigma" signals intercepted by the British were more likely the source of the information.

Four hours after the bombing at Frascati, Kesselring got word over the public telephone line from General Jodl at German high command that the Allied Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, had announced the Italian surrender on the radio. Jodl also issued the order for Operation Achse, the disarming of the Italians.

Hitler wanted all Italian soldiers disarmed, arrested, and sent to POW camps in Germany. In the north, Rommel did just that—arresting all he could get hands on and sending to Germany those who would not cooperate with his troops. Kesselring, on the other hand, opened negotiations with the Romans and came to an agreement: Rome would be declared an "open city" and be secured by military police only, and the Italian soldiers would turn in their arms and be allowed to go home.

Therefore, in central and southern Italy the disarming and demobilization of the Italians went very smoothly; some were still friendly to the Germans, and many just wanted to return home.

The German high command criticized Kesselring for not having arrested the Italians, and Rommel berated him for it. Later, however, as local militias engaged in guerilla warfare against the Germans, it was much more vigorously pursued in the north; Rommel's heavy-handedness was more antagonizing than Kesselring's diplomacy.

The morning after the Italian surrender, September 9, 1943, the Allied invasion began. As Kesselring had expected, the main landing took place at Salerno, with a small subsidiary landing at Taranto. XIV Panzer Corps units in the vicinity moved in to block off the U.S. Fifth Army's landing beaches. The LXXVI Panzer Corps hurried north from Calabria.

It appeared Hitler had written off Kesselring's 70,000 German soldiers in central and southern Italy after he refused Kesselring's request that Army Group B (in northern Italy) send him two divisions to shore up his defense against any landings. Hitler wouldn't even allow Rommel to send units south to make contact with Kesselring's troops in the vicinity of Rome. Presumably, Hitler had accepted Rommel's suggestion to abandon all but the northern reaches of Italy.

The units at hand near Salerno managed initially to hold the attackers to the immediate vicinity. German counterattacks over the next several days caused the Allies to consider a withdrawal, but in the end their heavy naval gunfire suppressed the defenders and allowed the Allies to consolidate.

National Archives

American soldiers secure a machine gun to a mule prior to undertaking a steep climb toward strong enemy positions. Kesselring utilized the rugged terrain of Italy to full advantage during his defense of the country against Allied forces.

On the 17th, Kesselring ordered his troops to begin forming defensive lines across Italy from just north of Naples, along the Volturno River, then across the country to Cerignola on the Adriatic. The Volturno Line, running from the Tyrrhenian and Ligurian Seas on the west to the Adriatic on the east, was to be the first of these lines.

Kesselring's troops held the Volturno Line until October 16 and then began an orderly withdrawal to the Bernhardt Line,

Both: National Archives

some 20 miles to the north. As they withdrew, they sowed mines and built traps and obstacles that delayed their pursuers at every turn.

By early November Kesselring's troops had taken up positions in the Bernhardt Line and awaited the Allies' first assault. That was all Hitler needed; on November 4, 1943, he told Kesselring that he should continue his line-by-line defense as long as possible.

On the 16th, Kesselring's command designation was changed to *Oberbefehlshaber Südwest* (Commander in Chief Southwest) and Commander, Army Group C, giving him complete command of all forces in Italy; on the 21st, Rommel's Army Group B relocated to Fontainebleau near Paris.

The primary defensive line south of Rome was known as the Gustav Line, and positions there had been under construction for several months. It bristled with concrete bunkers and gun pits, turreted machine-gun emplacements, barbed wire, and thousands of mines. By early January 1944, the Gustav Line was fully manned by Kesselring's troops after an orderly withdrawal from the Bernhardt Line.

By mid-January both the British Eighth Army and Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark's American Fifth Army had engaged the German troops holding the Gustav Line, but neither made much progress.

On January 22, to the complete surprise of the German troops at hand, the Allies made an amphibious landing at Anzio, about 56 miles up the west coast from the Gustav Line and only some 40 miles south of Rome. Kesselring immediately began rounding up units wherever he could find them and rushing them to Anzio, but once again something surprising happened.

The Allies, although they were virtually unopposed, did not seek to move inland immediately but seemed content to consolidate their beachhead and land supplies. This was all the head start Kesselring needed, for by the evening of the next day he had sufficient troops on hand to contest any breakout the Allies might attempt. By the end of the month, he had most of seven divisions, 95,000 men, deployed around Anzio.

ABOVE: German Fallschirmjägers and paratroopers from an independent Italian parachute battalion attacked Allied troops near the Anzio beachhead. These Italian airborne troops continued to fight with the Germans after most of Italian forces surrendered. OPPOSITE: By early June 1944, American troops were fighting on the outskirts of the Eternal City. In this photo American soldiers rush past the smoking hulk of a knocked-out German tank sitting on a street in the Italian capital. By then Kesserling had moved his forces north again.

The terrain at Anzio completely favored the German defenders: the beach gave way to reclaimed marshland and then a range of mountains that encircled the entire area. The Germans held the mountains and could rain artillery fire down onto anything that moved. This control of the commanding heights meant that the Allies could not directly threaten the rear of the units holding the Gustav Line, making it unnecessary for the Germans to pull back from it.

For the next four-and-a-half months, the combatants at both Anzio and along the Gustav Line pounded each other with artillery, and attack followed counterattack—neither side making any appreciable gains.

However, all that changed during the third week of May. On the 20th, Clark's Fifth Army broke through the Gustav Line southwest of Cassino, near the coast. This drew the attention of the Germans ringing the Anzio bridgehead just enough that, three days later, the U.S. V Corps was able to break out of the bridgehead.

Making the situation even more dangerous for the Germans, the two Allied forces linked up three days later, putting two U.S. corps essentially behind German lines. But then, rather than turning east and surging behind the German units holding the Gustav Line, the Allies turned northwest toward Rome.

Once again, Kesselring didn't need an engraved invitation; he ordered a withdrawal to the "C Line" north of Rome. On June 4, the Allies entered Rome nearly unopposed, almost exactly nine months after they had landed at Salerno—nine months that Kesselring had kept them from reaching Rome. In July Kesselring received the Diamonds to the Knights Cross for this achievement.

One must consider the duration and distance of some other campaigns during the war to appreciate the magnitude of Kesselring's achievement. For instance, Rommel in the campaign in the West in 1940 surged through Luxembourg, Belgium, and France with his 7th Panzer Division, covering 185 miles in 21 days, or 8.8 miles per day. George Patton's Third Army during the invasion in 1944 covered 385 miles in 21 weeks, or 2.6 miles per day. Georgi Zhukov's counterattack at Moscow in 1941/1942 pushed 262 miles

through Army Group Center in 135 days for an average of just 1.6 miles per day.

Now consider Kesselring's delaying actions throughout the length of Italy: By the end of 1944, the Allies had covered 320 miles from Salerno to just south of Bologna, but it had taken them 479 days. That's only two-thirds of a mile per day.

But Kesselring wasn't in Italy at the end of the year; he was in the hospital with a fractured skull. In late October, the field marshal's car was careening through the mountains after dark with no lights when a truck pushed a large artillery piece out from a side road in front of his car. Kesselring's driver was killed.

After only 12 weeks in the hospital, Kesselring returned to Italy and resumed command in January 1945. The front had not changed much, thanks mostly to the foul winter weather and the Allies' distractions on other fronts. In fact, the front still hadn't changed when he left again on March 9 to succeed General Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt as High Commander in the West (*OB West*).

With German-controlled territory rapidly shrinking, OB West was renamed *OB Süd* on April 22, commanding southern Germany, Italy, and the Balkans. One week later, General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, who had succeeded Kesselring in command of Army Group C, signed the documents to surrender Italy; Kesselring promptly fired him, and tried to have him arrested. Of course, the war was all but over, and six days later General Field Marshal Albert Kesselring surrendered, as well.

After the war, many German Generals were charged with war crimes, and Albert Kesselring was no exception. He was, however, considered only a minor war criminal. Many aspects of the prosecution remain controversial to this day, but the details, while fascinating, are beyond the scope of this article.

The charges against Kesselring boiled down to his taking reprisal against Italian civilians after partisans ambushed a German patrol in Rome. On May 6, 1947, the court found him guilty as charged and sentenced him to death by firing squad.

Many British officers who had fought against Kesselring came to his defense, and former Prime Minister Winston Churchill immediately branded the sentence too harsh. Well-known American military historian S.L.A. Marshall was quoted in a newspaper article in May 1947: "The verdict would appear to be that Kesselring, in taking reprisal, overstepped the bounds. But what are the bounds? ... I believe that Kesselring was the victim of unavoidable circumstance and that any competent commander put in the same position would have found it impossible to come through with clean hands."

On July 4, 1947, Kesselring's death sentence was commuted to life in prison, and in October 1952 he was released from prison on the grounds of ill health.

After his release, Kesselring became active in several veterans' organizations and wrote his memoirs. Albert Kesselring—regarded by many as one of Nazi Germany's few "honorable" soldiers—suffered a heart attack and died in Bad Nauheim, West Germany, on July 16, 1960. He is buried at the Bergfriedhof in Bad Wiessee, Bavaria. ■

Personality

Continued from page 12

ated due to disabilities that eliminated them from all active combat/military duty. Reba missed that visit but her name must have been mentioned. Four weeks later, another delegation visited specifically looking to meet her.

By mid-November a tri-party negotiation was in process between German and American diplomats, with the Swiss Red Cross as mediators, to come to terms in exchanging Reba for approved German POWs. The last entry Reba made in her journal came on November 23, 1944.

Reba's diary concludes at that point possibly because she learned that the International Committee of the Red Cross was working on ways to repatriate her back to the U.S.

Delays in repatriation were common, so it was not until January 1945 that she was told that she was being exchanged for German POWs. She left Stalag Luft IX on January 25, accompanied by members of the German Red Cross, and was placed in a railroad boxcar with other prisoners, some of whom seemed to be psychotic.

After arriving in Bern, Switzerland, she was housed by a Swiss couple; there she had her first hot bath in months. The following day she was repatriated with 109 other American POWs and on February 2, 1945, flew from Marseilles to the U.S.

She arrived via a military C-57 Lodestar transport plane and was admitted into Walter Reed Hospital on February 5. She was immediately transferred to Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, as that was her home state.

After a brief reunion with her fiancé, Lt. Col. Stanley Tobiason of the U.S. Army Air Force, she received a "welcome home" telegram from President Franklin D. Roosevelt and a security debriefing. She also received a Purple Heart and the Air Medal. On March 2, 1945, she was promoted to first lieutenant after spending four years, two months, and 13 days time in grade as a second lieutenant.

By May 11, 1945, she was classified as fit only for light duty due to dizzy spells and anxiety flare-ups.

Reba also spent several months in and out of Army hospitals to treat medical conditions brought on by the plane crash and her incarceration as a POW. Because of severe headaches, she was disqualified from flying.

In August 1945, she married Lt. Col. Tobiason. (At one point after the crash, he received permission to make a voluntary search-and-rescue mission for her but failed in his attempt.)

She was honorably discharged from active duty on January 13, 1946. Immediately thereafter, she applied to the Veteran Administration for war-related combat-injury disability compensation for a variety of physical and psychological ailments, including PTSD, that were brought on by the crash and her time spent as a prisoner of war.

Her biggest battle came against the U.S. Army. In 1950 she initiated a ten-year, back-and-forth claim for service-related medical-retirement benefits. The Army repeatedly denied appeal after appeal. Hospital stays in both civilian and military facilities would not sway the Army's opinion that her injuries not incurred under battle conditions, despite the fact that she was shot down while on active duty over enemy territory.

Through a series of three settlements, Reba received a total payment of $13,760.66, but nothing toward a monthly income disability benefits. By 1960 she gave up that battle.

On January 26, 1981, Reba Zitella Tobiason, neé Whittle, died due to brain cancer. The organic nature of this cancer may, or, may not, had been linked to her massive brain concussion of September 27, 1944.

Nearly 94,000 American men were taken prisoner during the war in Europe, but 2nd Lt. Reba Zitella Whittle was World War II's only American female military person to be held as a prisoner of war in all of the European Theater. ■

The majority of Reba's history and diary comes from Lt. Col. Mary E. V. Frank's The Forgotten POW: Second Lieutenant Reba Z. Whittle, A.N., *February 1990, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA.*

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were lost from the raiders, 102 were damaged, three damaged beyond repair; casualties were two killed, 18 wounded and 306 missing—crews of aircraft lost over enemy territory.

The unusually high number of B-17s that had aborted was likely due to the attempt to conduct three missions in as many days, leaving insufficient time for adequate maintenance. The First Air Task Force had 27 Forts abort, reducing defensive firepower by more than 300 heavy machine guns.

Besides the losses of the 100th, the other two bomb groups of the 13th Combat Wing had suffered heavily as well. The 95th had launched 23 B-17s; three had aborted, five were listed as "missing in action" after the mission—four had fallen from the six of the group's lower squadron. The 390th had set out with 22 aircraft; five aborted and eight were lost, the high squadron suffering five Forts lost out of eight.

Eighth Air Force gunners claimed 183 enemy fighters destroyed, and the 13th Combat Wing alone was credited with 105, but German records indicated only 26 fighters lost, most having been brought down by American fighters. The loses included seven Bf 109s, 10 Fw 190s, and nine twin-engine *Zerstörer* (destroyers)—five Me 110s and four Me 410s. As well as the German defenders performed, however, they failed to stop the bombers from attacking their targets.

The post-strike assessment indicated that Münster's railway station received five direct hits from 500-pound bombs. The marshaling yards and a supply depot also sustained damage. The Germans' own official police report stated that 60 soldiers and 301 civilians were killed, but other sources placed the number killed at 765. More than 25,000 were made homeless.

Bad weather grounded the Eighth Air Force for the next three days.

Four days after the Münster raid, the most ambitious raid during the week of 8-14 October was sent to destroy ball-bearing plants at Schweinfurt, deep in the Reich. Of some 291 B-17s launched on the mission, 60 were lost and another 145 were damaged.

After Schweinfurt, the next strike by the Eighth Air Force wouldn't be conducted until October 20, when 170 B-17s were sent to Duren, Germany, about 35 west of Cologne—a considerably less-aggressive strike.

The Münster and Schweinfurt raids demonstrated the ability of the Luftwaffe to break through the tightly knit bomber boxes and inflict severe punishment, though it was a hazardous task for the German pilots.

The Luftwaffe had also demonstrated a capacity for mass concentration on one bomber formation at a time, launching rockets into the formations and repeatedly pressing home fighter attacks. Without long-range escort fighters to provide added protection, bomber loses were likely to remain high during deep-penetration missions.

From October 8 to 14, 1943, the Eighth Air Force hit industrial and military installations at Marienburg, Bremen, Münster, and Schweinfurt at the cost of 143 B-17s and 1,590 casualties, the six days referred to as "Black Week."

The Münster raid was an ill-fated mission that helped to create the reputation of the 100th Bomb Group—the "Bloody Hundredth."

Captain Ellis Scripture, lead navigator of the 95th Bomb Group, said of his fellow airmen: "One memory that stands out … was the calm way young men reacted to extreme danger, and especially during the vicious air battles with German fighters. This stands out as a lasting tribute to the men of the Eighth Air Force."

The German 15-year-old, Otto Schuett, would later think of that day: "The events of 10 October 1943 often pass through my mind and, with those thoughts, pictures appear of the friends and neighbors who died on that day. A great sadness comes over me, and I also often wonder what kind of men the crews of those B-17s were that never returned home." ■

36th Infantry Division

Continued from page 85

The author of the 141st's regimental history later wrote, "In the fighting around Montelimar, operations were often in a confused state. Near Crest a fleeing Jerry motorcyclist approached a crossroads near the Division Command Post. Standing there was one of the faithful Division MP's attempting to keep straight the mobile affairs of the 36th. Seeing the Jerry speeding toward him in frantic flight, the MP, following the dictates of his habits, helpfully waived him on."

Tactical operations remained basically stalemated through the next few days. Neither side did as well as it might have done. Both failed to capitalize on opportunities. Supply problems made it impossible for the Americans to close the road and trap the Germans troops. Most made it out, but they took heavy materiel damage and high casualties. Germans units passed into the Vosges far weaker than they might have done otherwise.

The 36th Division was primarily responsible for this damage, though Dahlquist probably was not as aggressive as he could have been. In a letter written mid-battle, Dahlquist blamed himself for letting the Germans escape. Truscott would agree. However, Dahlquist was new to command of a combat division and had never before worked with Truscott. He probably could have used closer guidance in his first major engagement. He definitely could have used more supplies, transportation, gasoline, and ammunition. The rapid advance inland of the VI Corps, and the fact the Marseille and Toulon were not captured until the end of the battle and made usable as ports until sometime later made this unlikely.

There was room for improvement, but objectively the 36th Division passed its first real test in France. "Our operations in Southern France were completed," a division historian summed up. "Ahead of us, behind misty grey curtains of rain and fog, rose the formidable Vosges Mountains, which no army had ever before managed to penetrate in force." ■

Lt. Larimore

Continued from page 25

the ditch provided some protection.

As the TOT intensified, he began to quietly pray—that he'd survive the wound, that he'd see his parents again. In the craziness and danger of the moment, a tune flashed through his mind:

I'll be home for Christmas. You can count on me.

The melody was shattered by the growing fusillade from his guys, mixed with the fanatical shrieking of onrushing Germans and their hail of small arms fire, causing him to rub the dirt from his eyes. Tracers and bullets screamed past, inches above his head. Despite the unbearable agony, Phil slowly rolled over and peeked out of the ditch.

He felt the color drain from his face as he saw crazed Germans running toward him, screaming wildly like banshees, firing as fast as they could, less than 20 to 30 yards from him, closing fast.

Phil pressed his head into the ground, suppressing the urge to vomit. As waves of pain, nausea, and mind-numbing fear shot through him, he turned limp and played dead. The ruse worked; within seconds, the enemy soldiers leaped over the ditch and kept running.

Not daring to move, Phil thought, "*They didn't see me moving. Maybe I'll make it.*"

Then, the same melody played in his mind:

Please have snow and mistletoe and presents on the tree.

A wave of friendly artillery exploded around him. The earth shook mercilessly from blast after blast.

Thank God for the 155s. They'll save my men. Maybe me, too.

Phil felt clumps of moist loam shower down on him. He knew the earthen covering would not save him from a direct hit, but maybe it would hide him from the enemy surrounding him.

The violent blasts of the raging battle around him strangely began to wane. Phil's eyes clouded, and his peripheral vision dimmed. The overwhelming pain began to melt away.

He understood what was happening: he was bleeding out. The belt around his leg had loosened, and he no longer had the strength to reach down and pull it tighter. Soon the world around him was silent, and his body completely numb.

So, this is what it feels like to die. Not as bad as I imagined.

Tired beyond measure, he closed his eyes. He felt strangely at peace. His breathing slowed. He began to recite the Lord's Prayer.

Although he would miss his mother and father terribly, he looked forward to meeting his Father in heaven. On the eighth day of April 1945, he knew that maybe, just maybe, his long, grueling war was over.

I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.

Epilogue

1st Lt. Phil Larimore was rushed to a military hospital where doctors saved his life, but they had to amputate his right leg above the knee. After rehabilitating for a year at Lawson General Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, he fought to stay in the Army as an amputee but lost his hearing in 1947. He returned to college and eventually married and raised a family of four boys in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he made cartography—mapmaking—the focus of his teaching, research, and publishing career as a college professor at Louisiana State University. He passed away peacefully in 2003 at age 78. ■

Adapted, with permission, from At First Light, *released in April 2022 by Knox Publishing and distributed by Simon & Schuster. All of the facts, quotes, data, and statistics conveyed in this article are sourced and cited in the book, about which General David H. Petraeus writes, "This story is extraordinary: an almost forgotten hero, tough combat, tragic sacrifice, gripping aftermath, a marvelous horse, and an astonishing ending. Don't miss reading this remarkable book." For more information about the author, please visit www.DrWalt.com.*

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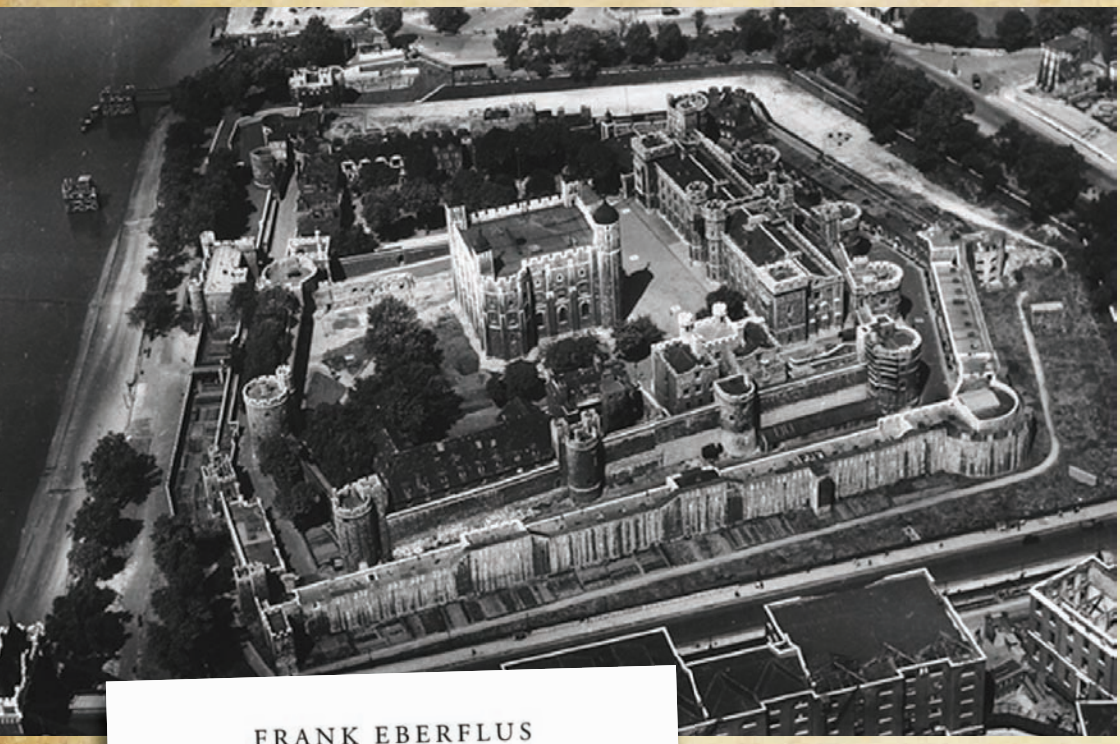

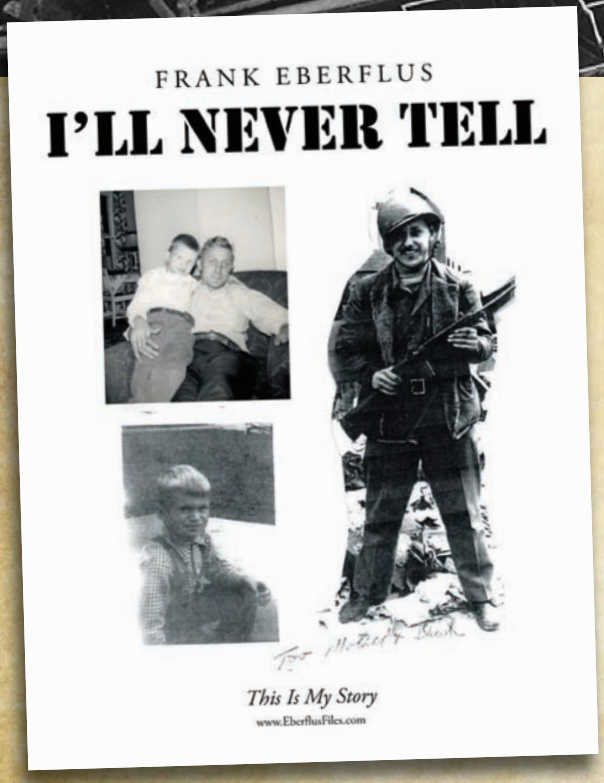

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