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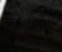
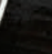

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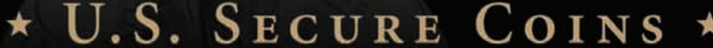

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COVER: A U.S. paratrooper prepares to exit his transport plane for a U.S. Army publicity photo. See story page 60. Photo: National Archives

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A Letter from a Bastogne Foxhole

WITH 2014 BEING the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, I wanted to share something from a close family friend our son's age. He gave me a copy of a letter written by his late grandfather, Sergeant David Warman, a member of Company E, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division.

In the Christmas Day 1944 letter to his mother and sister Rose, living in Washington D.C., Warman jotted down some of his thoughts during a lull in what has become known as the "Battle of the Bulge."

"This is Xmas morning," he wrote, "and I'm writing from a foxhole. The weather is very clear and sunny and there is slightly over 2 inches of snow which fell the other day. It is way below freezing and I'm wrapped in blankets as I write.

"As you know from the papers, the Germans have come out of their holes to put on a great drive to push us off their soil. They have mustered all their available power for this attempt for one of two reasons, I believe.

"First, rather than allow us to slowly but surely to advance to and over the Rhine, which would mean the total devastation of every town, village, and hamlet en route and the capture of such key industrial cities as Cologne, Coblentz, Duismund [sic], Essen, etc., they have decided to risk all on a big push of their own.

David Warman

"If successful, they'd have us off their soil and the danger of losing their vital production areas removed for at least several months. This would be a tremendous morale booster for both the [German] military forces and the home front.

"Secondly, they have decided, rather than allow us to devastate the whole country which will take years of rebuilding at the present rate of destruction, it might be wiser to risk everything on one big assault. If successful, Hitler and his military machine are still in business, if a failure. They might as well quit and yield to terms set by the Allies.

"I don't know how close I am to the truth in my analysis—I have very little information to go by (*Stars and Stripes,* the Army overseas daily). By the time you get this, the whole shindig here may well be over with....

"Germany's greatest handicap is her lack of petroleum, and as long as we can keep it from her, she is sunk.

"I hear there is talk in Washington that Stalin may soon send a column against Germany. If this be true, then they certainly will be thru very shortly. Let's hope the end is near and peace again comes to earth quickly and this time permanently.

"How are you both? I hope you have a happy holiday season and don't have too many gloomy thoughts about me. True, my life is very uncomfortable and I might say uncertain, but I'm still around and who knows—I may get out without a scratch, so don't worry about me.

"I don't mind the danger as much as I do the long, hard marches with all the equipment and heavy overshoes. Another thing, I never know when I can write. It is quite possible for 2 weeks and more to go by without getting a chance to write, so don't worry if there is little mail from me. But above all, keep writing me as often as you possibly can and keep me informed of things at home and what is going on in Washington and the nation.

"That's all for now, dear Mama and Rose. I send you my love and best wishes for a Happy and Healthful New Year."

Fortunately, Sergeant Warman did survive the war "without a scratch."

Flint Whitlock, Editor

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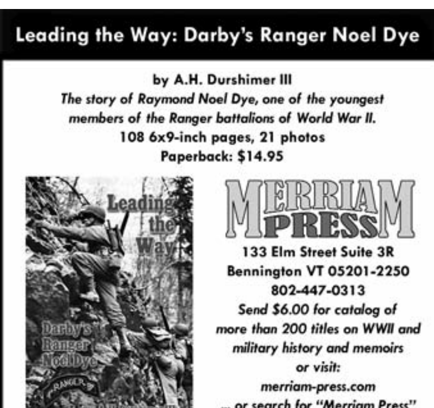

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Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin cast the only vote against declaring war on Japan the day after the Pearl Harbor attack.

An Associated Press report described “a chorus of hisses and boos” that echoed through the chamber when the Congresswoman from Montana cast her vote.

It was Monday, December 8, 1941, and the U.S. House of Representatives was assembled to ratify the declaration of war that President Roosevelt had asked for earlier in the day. Just 24 hours before, an aircraft carrier task force of the Japanese Imperial Navy carried out an air raid on American military installations across the island of Oahu in the Territory of Hawaii and left the U.S. Pacific Fleet in a shambles.

Although a troubling diplomatic confrontation had been unfolding for over a year between the two nations, Japan and the United States were at peace with one another at the time of the attack. With almost 200 U.S. aircraft destroyed, the Pacific Fleet smoldering or sunk at Pearl Harbor, and 2,400 Americans killed, a national consensus had been born overnight demanding war with the Japanese.

When the measure went to a vote in the Senate in the early afternoon, it passed unanimously, 82 to 0. But when it went before the House of Representatives shortly thereafter, not everyone answered “aye” when the Speaker asked for those in favor. The hisses and boos came only when 61-year-old Jeannette Pickering Rankin replied with a “nay”—the only opposing vote cast in Congress that day. But it was not the first time that Representative Rankin had opposed a declaration of war.

On April 5, 1917, the *Washington Times* reported that she appeared to be “a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown” as she stood to answer the roll call vote in the House of Representatives. No ordinary matter, this vote would decide the question of American intervention in World War I.

For 37-year-old Representative Jeannette Rankin, this important moment had come swiftly after her official swearing-in just three days earlier. The other members of the 65th Congress “cheered and rose” when her name had been called on that historic day because it marked the first time a woman entered the membership of the United States Congress.

In strong contrast, not a sound could be heard in the chamber on April 5 as Representative Rankin prepared to cast her vote relating to the declaration of war on Imperial Germany. With “every eye in the chamber fixed on her,” Rankin hurriedly gripped the back of the seat in front of her and spoke: “I want to stand by my country, but I cannot vote for war.”

In the final tally, the measure passed in the House 374 to 50 and the United States entered the “Great War.” Although Jeanette Rankin’s first vote in Congress did not avert America’s entry into the conflict, it did make her a household name and introduce her unique blend of pacifism and feminism to a nation still suspicious of both beliefs.

During the 25 years that followed her vote against the declaration of war in 1917, Jeannette Rankin left Congress but continued her crusade of radical antiwar and social reform activism. Her boundless, unwavering energy and epic stubbornness brought her into conflict with the leadership of every organization she served, making her a political outcast even among the suffragists of feminism’s first wave.

In 1940 she reentered Congress and eventually voted against America’s entry into World War II in a move that made her irretrievably unpopular. After choosing not to run for reelection in 1942, Rankin withdrew from public life, only to emerge again

A lifelong dedicated pacifist and the first woman elected to Congress, Montana Representative Jeanette Rankin cast one of 50 votes against the U.S. entering World War I—and the only vote against World War II.

Library of Congress

The American people were isolationist and firmly against involvement in foreign affairs—until the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

National Archives

during the 1960s to protest U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.

Her crusading, therefore, also reached into feminism's second wave at the end of over 50 years of political activity. During that half century, gender was both a blessing and a curse for Jeannette Rankin. It provided her the opportunity to serve in the House of Representatives at a time when women could not vote, but it also provided the limits that restricted her political career.

Jeannette Pickering Rankin's life began in June 1880 on a ranch just outside Missoula in the Montana Territory. Her father's business success in ranching and building charted the course of her future in so far as it provided her with not just a comfortable lifestyle, but also the financial support that would ultimately allow her to pursue her interest in social reform.

Whereas most young women in rural Montana at the turn of the 20th century married early and started families, the trajectory of Jeannette Rankin's life took her instead to college and to a brief career in teaching. Then, in 1908, she moved to New York City and entered a Master's degree program in social work at the New York School of Philanthropy.

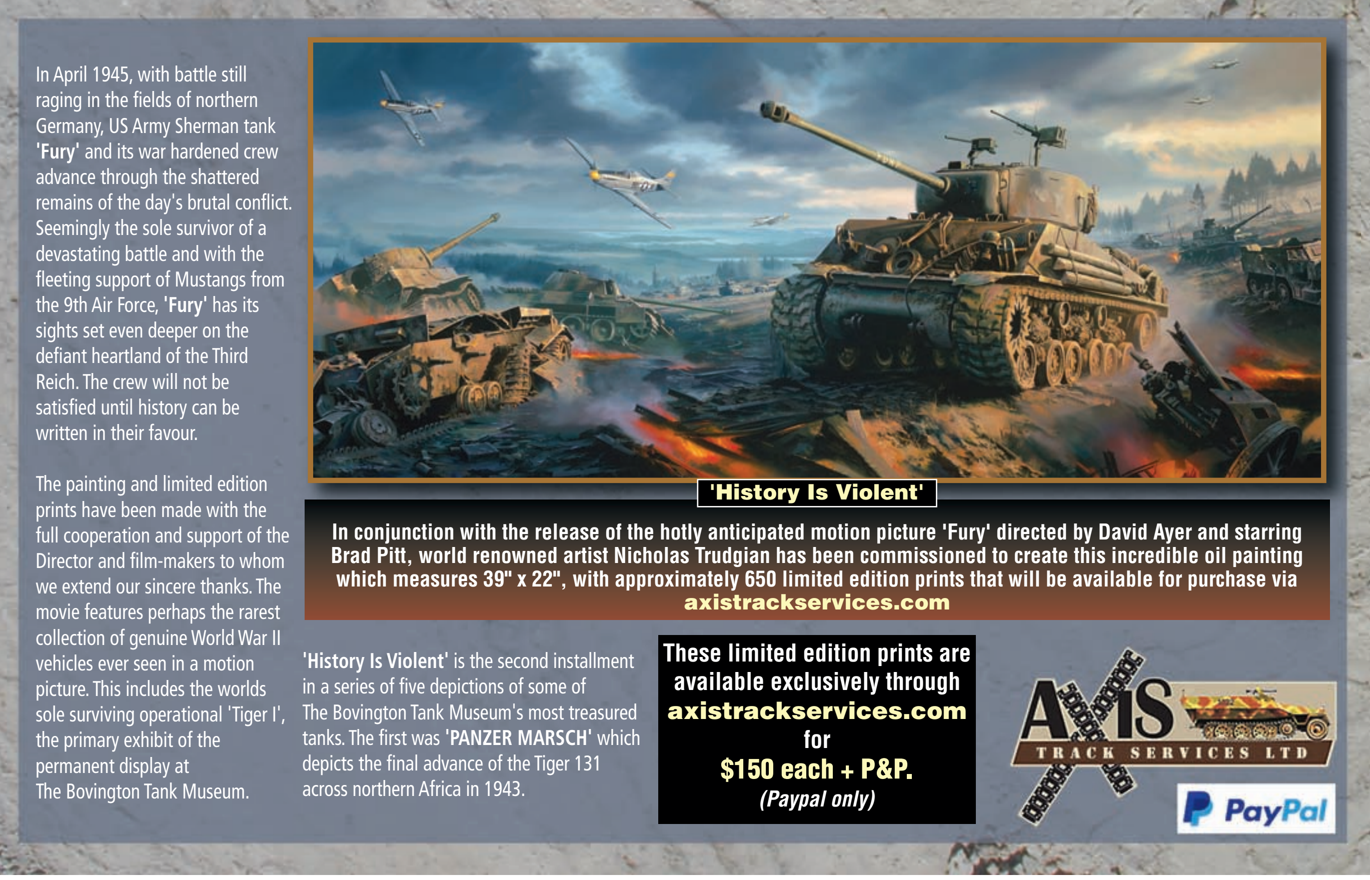
After experiencing the urban realities of child welfare in a major U.S. metropolis, Rankin's social progressivism began to explore new methods of childhood development and character building among orphans as well as cultivating higher standards of motherhood. When she returned to the Pacific Northwest the following year, Rankin continued her education by studying public speaking, sociology, and economics at the University of Washington.

During this same time her only brother, Wellington D. Rankin, received an education that placed him on an altogether different career path. He attended Harvard University School of Law, became a successful trial lawyer and ultimately U.S. District Attorney, Attorney General of the State of Montana, and Associate Justice of the Montana Supreme Court. In addition, Wellington Rankin also took over his father's business interests when he died in 1904, serving as the executor of his estate.

Despite the fact that she was the first born, it does not appear that Jeannette or anyone in the family expected her to take over the Rankin economic empire. Clearly, the male heir (Wellington) would be the one to develop the necessary skills to manage the family assets, and so off he went to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Brother and sister followed separate, gendered paths in education, with Wellington learning how to be a business leader and Jeannette learning to be a school teacher and exploring the social reform ideologies embraced by so many of the women active during the Progressive Era.

After spending a year as a social worker in Missoula, Spokane, and Seattle, Jeannette Rankin changed paths again and turned her attentions to the movement that was sweeping the nation: women's suffrage. Beginning in 1910, she began five years of campaigning and grass-roots organizing in the movement as a field secretary for the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

Although the campaign took her from



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ABOVE: Although the Nazis had not yet come to power in Germany, Rankin, shown here in 1932, was a lobbyist for the National Council for the Prevention of War. OPPOSITE: Fellow suffragettes gather around a car carrying Jeanette Rankin, who was already a controversial figure, during a 1917 rally.

coast to coast, she directed the effort in Montana and in 1914 succeeded in making it the 11th state to pass woman suffrage. Her distinctive speaking style and fervent eloquence helped the cause and made Jeannette Rankin a rising star in the movement.

At a Woman's Day speech in Missoula shortly after winning the Montana suffrage initiative, Rankin urged her audience with these compelling words: "All over the country women are asking for the vote.... We are a force in life, a factor which must be considered in all problems.... While we Montana women have broader opportunities than the women of any other part of the world, we want the ballot in order to give opportunity to less fortunate women."

Her passionate oratory and untiring efforts won many admirers across the country. One suffrage organizer in New York described how "her tact, her gentle feminine persuasion and her ever-ready logic made many converts to Woman Suffrage" there. During 20 weeks of "the most strenuous" fieldwork, Rankin demonstrated herself to be an "unselfish volunteer" and did it all for expenses only. But the accolade and admiration of suffragists throughout the United States would not last forever.

In 1916 she decided to run for one of

Montana's two at-large seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Her implacable stamina and compelling speaking ability served her well again on the campaign trail. Former Montana legislator Tom Haines later described it: "She was one of the ablest campaigners that I ever saw. If she heard of a vote a hundred miles up in the mountains [or] in some isolated canyon up there, she would go up and see them, drive up there and it didn't make any difference about the roads.... She would go anywhere. Anywhere—a house of prostitution, it didn't make any difference to her what it was—she would make herself at home.... She was a tough person; nothing phased [sic] her when she was after something."

Thanks to these tenacious campaigning skills, along with Wellington's political acumen and financial support, Jeannette Rankin won election to the U.S. House of Representatives on November 7, 1916. In the wake of the victory, she refused requests for interviews from reporters and did not answer telegrams offering congratulations, but issued a brief public statement saying, in part, "I am deeply conscious of the responsibility resting upon me."

Both: Library of Congress

A series of circumstances unique to Jeannette Rankin—and unique to Montana—made this victory possible. First, she possessed all of the qualities of an excellent candidate and she belonged to a wealthy and influential family that could provide the financial backing and the networking necessary to win a Congressional campaign.

She also ran in a state where she could actually win. In the less populated Western states, women in politics became a reality sooner than back East. This was certainly true in Montana where conservatives worried that the increasing influence of an

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expanding immigrant population would overshadow the interests of a white minority. Enfranchising the state's women served the pragmatic political purpose of doubling the size of the white electorate with the stroke of a pen.

When Jeannette Rankin ran for the House, she ran as a Republican candidate and, unsurprisingly, attracted the state's female voters. In a perfect example of principle meets pragmatism, she was the right person at the right place at the right time. Her gender had opened the door of opportunity and she had walked through that door into the House of Representatives on behalf of women everywhere.

Rankin believed that armed conflict was a "stupid and futile" means of settling international disputes, but she was nevertheless aware that a vote against the war in April 1917 would produce a strong backlash. Major newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* criticized her decision and the *Helena Independent* even went so far as to label her "a dupe of the Kaiser, a member of the Hun army in the United States, and a crying schoolgirl."

But for Rankin, the "hardest part of the vote" was the way it alienated her from the national suffrage movement. Concerned that a close association with Rankin's unpopular pacifism would damage their campaign, suffragists quickly backed away from the Montana Congresswoman. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, told the *Helena Independent* that "Miss Rankin was not voting for the suffragists of the nation—she represents Montana"—and "every time she answers the roll call she loses us a million votes."

The cold shoulder that turned toward Jeannette Rankin immediately after the April 1917 vote on the declaration of war against Germany only foreshadowed the more ominous opposition that she would confront the following year.

The suffragists who had supported her run for the House of Representatives in 1916 withdrew their support in 1918 when Rankin made her next political move. Earlier that year the State of Montana eliminated its at-large House seat and created in its place eastern and western congressional districts. Rather than competing against a colleague for the western district seat or carpetbagging in the eastern district, Rankin decided to make a run for the Senate.

Both: Library of Congress

ABOVE: An unidentified Congressional colleague tries to persuade Rankin to vote for a declaration of war on Japan, December 8, 1941. She refused. BELOW: President Franklin D. Roosevelt asks a joint session of Congress to declare war on Japan, December 8, 1941. The House of Representatives voted for war, 388 to 1; the Senate was unanimous.

In response to news of this decision, Carrie Catt told the *Helena Independent* that, "for her sake as well as ours it is most advisable that she should quit at this stage." To pour salt in the wound, Catt offered nothing but the kindest words for Rankin's opponent, Democratic incumbent Thomas Walsh. In the end, opposition to the declaration of war, as well the perception that she held sympathies for radical labor activists in Butte, turned the voters against Rankin and she lost her bid for a Senate seat.

Undaunted by her brief foray into politics, Jeannette Rankin continued to work in the interests of pacifism and social welfare after leaving the House of Representatives, and her words continued to echo with the radical timber for which she was famous. As a paid lobbyist, she became an advocate for child-labor reform, hunger relief, consumer protection, minimum wage/maximum hour legislation, and even a Constitutional amendment outlawing war.

She joined the Executive Board of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, but resigned in 1925 when she disagreed with its leadership over the organization's direction. To Rankin, the League had "no organization, no purpose, no definite thing."

In 1929 she went to work as a lobbyist for the National Council for the Prevention of War, but her strong-willed individualism generated friction there as well. By 1939, Rankin was done with national bureaucracies. She quit the Council for the Prevention of War and decided that the time was right to reenter the political arena. The ominous situations in Europe, North Africa, and Asia deeply concerned her because the gathering clouds of conflict suggested another world war in the making.

The next year, 60-year-old Jeannette Rankin ran for a second term in the House of Representatives. "No one will pay any attention to me this time," she predicted. "There is nothing unusual about a woman being elected."

When Election Day came, Rankin won her second term in the House of Representatives with 54 percent of the vote. Although almost a quarter century had passed since 1917, she took the oath of office in 1940 under remarkably similar circumstances. The United States was on the verge of being drawn into another world war and Jeannette Rankin could read the writing on the wall: "I knew it was coming.... Roosevelt was deliberately trying to get us in the war.... I didn't let anybody approach me. I got in my car and disappeared. Nobody could reach me.... I

Continued on page 98

Hail And Farewell

This summer, the military history community lost a true warrior who was making a solid impact in our field. **Richard George Higgins**, 64, passed into eternity July 29, 2014 after a lifetime of positive influence, leadership and dedicated friendship to countless individuals.

Rich was at once a close confidant, a sounding board, and quietly the smartest man in the room. He possessed a penchant not only for studying military history, but also for sharing it. He was instrumental in the establishment of an interpretive trail at the Glorieta Pass battlefield, podcasts, numerous articles, archaeological reports, military staff rides, and an operatic adaptation. He also made generous donations to carefully selected historical organizations whose efficient approach to preservation and exposure to the public continues to profoundly improve the field.

Rich grew up in New Jersey and graduated from University of Maine with two competing passions: engineering and military history. His passion for engineering drove him to a highly successful 26 year career at the Boeing Company, culminating in the position of Vice President of the Americas for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. As an engineer and then an executive, Rich travelled far and often, and when he did his love of history overtook him. He maximized his opportunities to visit foreign battlefields, leaving his hosts captivated at his knowledge of their heritage and culture.

While his two passions were engineering and military history, Rich was most proud when speaking of two other things: his family and his time with the U.S. Coast Guard. When he spoke of his family, his wife Jean of 44 years and his daughter Colleen, his otherwise modest tone was suspended. He could not say enough about their values, their closeness and their successes, and it was evident that they were the source of his pride and joy. He served six years in the Coast Guard with obvious pride in his branch and his country.

Additionally, Rich had other broad interests, including diving, fishing, kayaking, skiing, culinary arts, and notably, opera. In fact, he was serving as the historical consultant for an opera adaptation of the Civil War novel, "Cold Mountain," which has its World Premier at the Santa Fe Opera on August 1st, 2015.

Deeply driven to make as big a contribution to history as he did to engineering, Rich took the same "all-in" approach, completing Norwich University's rigorous Master's Program in Military History in 2009. He published numerous articles for World War II Quarterly (including…) and for other magazines, as well as several archaeological reports, and conducted frequent battle staff rides, and recently he was poised to make his mark as a historical novelist.

Drawing from his experience in Russia doing business for Boeing, he completed the first of an intended series of World War II Russian Red Army novels. Rich's brand new book **"Red Tears"** is available now from amazon.com and on Kindle.

World War II Quarterly articles enjoyed by readers:

- **"How Pearl Harbor Happened" (See this Article on the next page!)**
- **"America's Most-Honored Heroes" (Winter 2013-14 issue)**
- **"Behind Barbed Wire in America" (Fall 2013 issue)**
- **"New Mexico: Atomic Spy Capital" (Fall 2012 issue)**

While the military history community has lost a true rising leader and up and coming novelist, his investment and influence in everyone he met will ensure his legacy continues.

Rich, thank you for your service to the country, to military history, and to the world. ***Semper Paratus!***

—Friends of Rich Higgins

HOW PEARL HARBOR HAPPENED

Efforts to reach peace accords—and the expectation of one decisive battle—actually put Japan on a collision course to war with the United States.

BY RICHARD G. HIGGINS

Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, strike leader for Operation Hawaii and 20-year veteran of the Imperial Japanese Navy (Kaigun), strapped himself into the observer's seat as his Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" torpedo bomber, piloted by Lieutenant Mitsuo Matsuzaki, and lifted off from the carrier *Akagi* on the black morning of December 7, 1941.

The top secret mission, he had been told, was to strike a crippling blow at the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, with the aim of gaining concessions from the United States and ensuring that America would not go to war with Japan.

There was not even a ghost of a dawn at approximately 6 AM, but Fuchida and Matsuzaki gained altitude and circled in wait for the launching of the rest of the attack force of the 1st Combined Air Fleet (Kido Butai). Down below in the darkness, all six of Japan's fleet carriers—the *Akagi, Kaga, Soryu, Hiryu, Shokaku*, and *Zuikaku*—were grouped 200 miles north of Hawaii.

The attack force included Val dive bombers, Kate level bombers, and Kate torpedo aircraft—all escorted by feared Zero fighters. As Fuchida watched and waited for his strike force to assemble in the air, his thoughts no doubt centered on the details of the coming attack and its prospects for success, and probably did not extend back to the decades of misunderstandings and miscalculations that had led to this fateful moment. It is worthwhile, however, to consider them here.

The history was a long one, extending back to the Meiji Restoration of the emperor beginning in 1868; the victory over the Russians at Tsushima in 1905; and more recently the bitter struggle between his commander, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, and the Fleet Command Staff over the Pearl Harbor attack strategy.

National Archives

The USS *Maryland* (BB-46), left, was slightly damaged and was one of the first to be repaired and returned to the fleet. Hull of the capsized *Oklahoma* (BB-37) is visible at right. INSET: Reflecting the mood of the country after the attack, an angry Uncle Sam shakes his fist and vows vengeance against Japan in this American propaganda poster.

Library of Congress

Fuchida remembered the time he was present when the drunken Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi, a Princeton University graduate and commander of the 2nd Carrier Division, physically attacked Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, commander of the Kido Butai, for not including his division in the original plans for the attack force. Today would settle all arguments.

For more than 70 years, most people in the United States have regarded the December 7, 1941, attack on American military facilities at Pearl Harbor as a "sneak" attack, totally unprovoked and unwarranted—a completely incorrect view. A detailed analysis of the events that led up to the attack and America's subsequent entry into World War II is important—even absolutely necessary—for understanding why the Japanese did what they did.

It began in 1905 with the crushing Japanese naval victory over the Russians at Tsushima that paved the way for the development of a rigid naval doctrine that survived until World War II. Other critical elements were added, with the U.S. naval expert Alfred Thayer Mahan ironically becoming the center of Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) doctrine.

Mahan, a U.S. naval officer and Naval Academy professor, was arguably the most influential naval thinker prior to World War I. His approach to naval warfare, with its emphasis on decisive battle fueled a large portion of the naval arms race up to and after the Great War. He was accepted and followed in the U.S. and Europe, but nowhere was he so closely followed and respected as in Japan. Indeed, worshipped is not too far from the mark.

Mahan's doctrine was a mixture of naval dominance of the seas coupled with commercial expansion. His elements of sea power included geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, population, national character, and character of government. These generalized characteristics were supported by a view of naval combat as offensive, concentrated, navy-to-navy as opposed to commerce raiding, and supported by production and colonies.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

A Japanese print depicts naval gun crew in action during the 1905 victory over Russians at Battle of Tsushima Strait. The victory gave Japan a false sense of superiority.

The naval aspect of the Russo-Japanese War was critical to IJN doctrinal development for two primary reasons. First, the Japanese defeat of a Western power was important in the eyes of Japan and the world as a harbinger of a new age.

Second, the almost "miraculous" win at Tsushima not only fulfilled Japanese cultural expectations of divine help but supported the Mahanian concept of a single, decisive battle (Kantai Kessen). Additionally, the famous British naval theoretician Julian Corbett inadvertently added to this fixation when he declared, "Tsushima was the most decisive and complete naval victory in history." The Japanese cemented the battle and its "lessons" into a rigid doctrine, and Mahan and Corbett's analyses provided the very tenuous foundation upon which rested the balance of Japanese naval thought for the next 40 years.

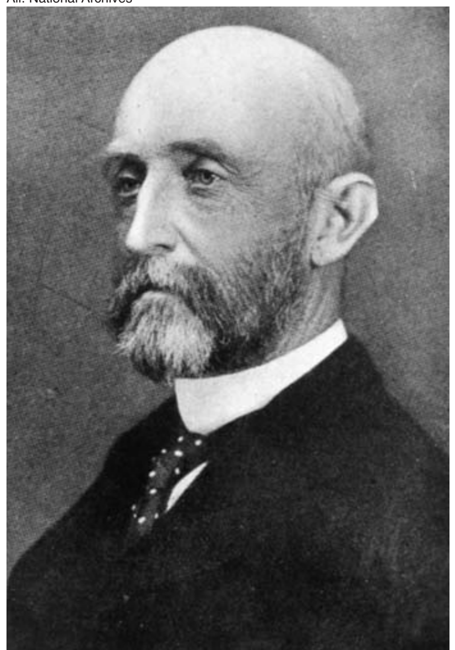
The doctrine was summarized by David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie in their insightful *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*: "The concept of the decisive fleet engagement determined by big guns; the validity of a strategy of attrition against a numerically superior enemy; the preference for quality over quantity in naval weaponry; and the importance of nighttime torpedo tactics."

The marriage of doctrine and experience was fully developed by the victory at Tsushima. The Japanese Navy did not widely explore other approaches to naval strategy after this but only continued the development of doctrine based on these principles. Little of material value was gained from their World War I experience, and generally elements that did not fit the preconceived doctrine were discarded, including commerce raiding and submarine warfare.

Only the 1916 Battle of Jutland was examined in great detail as the "decisive battle" of the naval war between Imperial Germany and the British Royal Navy. The lessons drawn were therefore aligned with their preconceptions.

A subtle but important distortion of strategy and tactics was also introduced at this point, which once again boded ill for future practice of the doctrine. Evans and Peattie described it as, "Faith in the decisive battle became dogma in the Japanese navy. In this way the confusion of tactical doctrine (for fighting battles) with strategic planning (for winning wars) began with Tsushima and fatally limited Japanese naval strategy."

All: National Archives



(Left to right): Alfred Thayer Mahan, the American naval theorist, shaped Japan's views of war at sea; Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, architect of Pearl Harbor attack; Mitsuo Fuchida, commander of aerial attack force.

In addition, Mahan posited complete control of the seas and the importance of the "decisive battle." The Japanese naval historian Sadao Asada in his *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor* summarized this view as "The aim of a naval engagement was the total annihilation of the enemy fleet in a decisive battle." In her new world position, this was a clear message that the Japanese Navy unhesitatingly accepted.

Mahan himself saw the connection between his thinking and the victory at Tsushima and expressed pleasure that his strategic doctrines were vindicated by the battle. The primary lesson to be learned from Tsushima, Mahan wrote in 1906, was never to divide the battle fleet. The Russian navy had made the fatal mistake of dispersing its battleship strength and suffered the consequences. This lesson, however, was largely ignored by the IJN, even though spoken by their doctrinal mentor.

After World War I, Mahan's theories were increasingly called into question, but both the U.S. and Japanese navies generally continued to follow his lead. In Britain, Corbett and his more balanced philosophy of sealane protection, critique of the decisive-battle theory, and his holding the strong position regarding naval support for the army, introduced a new conceptual model more inclusive of modern industrial capability.

Additionally, this period saw Mahan's plan for war against Japan rejected by the U.S. Navy. His textbook was discontinued at Annapolis. He continued to influence both navies, but criticism pointed to flaws in his doctrine. The effective use of submarine warfare in World War I influenced the United States but conversely did not raise concerns among the Japanese about their extended supply lines.

Airpower was well recognized by both navies but with different applications. Clearly the world in which Mahan had fashioned his theory was dramatically changing.

However, in Japan the emphasis on Kantai Kessen was retained without question. In the 1920s, the political world intruded on the naval with worldwide interest in disarmament. This reinforced rather than diminished the IJN's belief in "big guns and big ships."

The world reacted with horror to the carnage of World War I. This reaction embraced not only ground warfare, but also encompassed the naval arms race that had led up to the war. Public opinion and military concerns regarding future opponents and fleet sizes brought the U.S., Britain, and Japan, along with other naval powers, to a series of conferences (Washington 1922, Geneva 1927, and London 1930) in hopes of avoiding another arms race and another war.

Unfortunately, while intentions were generally good, the results infuriated and insulted the Japanese and confirmed that their future adversary would be the United States Navy.

The first and arguably only successful conference in terms of any sustained agreement was held in Washington during 1921-1922. The treaty that resulted established ratios for the relationship between the three major powers in battleships and other categories. The treaty also restricted the U.S. ability to fortify its island possessions in the western Pacific. The Japanese entered the negotiations with the intent of agreeing to a 70 percent ratio to the U.S. and Great Britain in capital ships; they eventually agreed to a 60 percent ratio with the addition of a non-fortification provision.

The intent of the Japanese Navy was to ensure that Japan would not meet a superior U.S. force in the envisioned decisive battle while at the same time assuring Japanese supremacy in East Asian waters. While the ratio itself did not guarantee this, the inclusion of the non-fortification article helped to provide a balance.

Both: National Archives

TOP: A detailed scale model of Pearl Harbor built after the attack by the Japanese as a motion-picture prop. ABOVE: Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighters prepare to launch from the aircraft carrier *Shokaku* at the start of second attack wave, December 7, 1941.

This sounds like it was a great victory for Japan, and objectively there was some truth to that. However, because of the focus on "big guns, big ships" and "decisive battle," it was viewed as anything but by a large contingent of Japanese naval officers—even though the navy minister, Kato Tomosaburo, was the chief delegate and supported the compromise. U.S. Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison noted, "If the naval limitation treaties of 1921 and 1930 were a crime against American defense, they were a tragic mistake in their effect on the internal struggle in Japan."

The usually taciturn Kanji Kato, future navy chief of staff and adviser to Minister Tomosaburo at the 1930 conference, was vociferous in his condemnation of the Treaty. The treaties that were negotiated in the 1920s, along with provocative U.S. anti-Japanese immigration legislation, cemented in Japanese military minds the position of America as the future enemy.

This was not improved by the failure to reach any agreements at the Geneva Conference of 1927, and any smoldering Japanese animosity was reignited at the London Conference of 1930. At the London meeting, the Japanese insisted on a 70 percent ratio in capital ships, with particular focus on heavy cruisers. The heavy cruiser ratio had been established as unlimited at the Washington Conference, and the Japanese had adopted tactics to improve this class's effectiveness in the battle line, so they were determined not to lose that advantage.

The Japanese felt that not only the respect they deserved but their complete doctrine depended on a 70 percent capital ship ratio. This was not agreed upon and the civilian government, and the Navy Ministry settled for 60 percent over the strident objections of Kanji Kato and Admiral Yamamoto, a member of the delegation.

Once again the U.S. felt that it had bent over backward to compromise, but this time there was no support at all in the Japanese Navy for this position. The treaty was set to expire in 1936, and even before that date the IJN was undermining its treaty obligations. The Japanese were incensed at what they saw as America's attempts to thwart Japan's interests in the Pacific.

The naval treaties, in the event, only strengthened the IJN's view of the U.S. as their future enemy and protagonist in the Kantai Kessen, with capital ships as the primary weapon of choice. As such, these efforts at peace were a critical step toward war. This was confirmed by the beginning of construction in 1936 of the mammoth battleships *Musashi* and *Yamato*—powerful on paper but impotent in battle.

Additionally, to account for the perceived U.S. superiority in the capital ship ratio, Japanese tactics focused more and more on reducing the American fleet's size before it arrived at the scene of the decisive battle by use of air and submarine forces, in a new plan known as Operation Attrition. Night tactics and torpedo attacks were greatly emphasized. Training became both more extensive and dangerous, seeking to produce the most highly qualified personnel possible to gain a qualitative advantage in the Kantai Kessen.

National Archives

A Nakajima B5N torpedo bomber from the carrier *Kaga* flies high above smoldering Pearl Harbor. Note the black puffs of antiaircraft bursts.

The IJN's obsession with Mahan's doctrine needed only several further elements to establish an almost perfect storm that led to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the unintended consequences of Japan's defeat in World War II.

The first of these elements was the diminution of the individual. Throughout Japanese society this had major impacts. At the naval command level it tended to reinforce the Japanese focus on consensus. This in turn led to a form of "groupthink," which prevented rational critique of plans and strategies.

Japanese Admiral Shigeru Fukodome described this process: "When we took our positions as individuals, we were all in favor of avoiding a Japanese-American war by all means, but each time we got together and conferred, things moved in the least desirable direction.... It was really very strange."

A more ominous and influential new mode of conduct in the military was the ability of lower level officers to override—or even assassinate—their superiors. This was "justified" because the intimidator was acting "in the interest of the Emperor."

Morison discussed the origin and import of the Way of the Emperor: "Essentially a lower middle class and junior officer movement, its basic motives were hatred of the rich who were getting richer, hatred of the white man and his industrial civilization, an ardent desire to restore military supremacy at home, and to make conquests abroad." This was the rationale for assassination, attempted coups, and intimidation all through the 1930s.

This was so prevalent in Japan that Yamamoto, instead of being named navy minister, which might have changed history dramatically, was given command of the Combined Fleet to remove him from the danger of assassination ashore. Japanese naval captain Tameichi Hara cited four of these assassination events, some of which involve multiple killings of government leaders as "fateful steps toward war." These actions certainly inhibited debate on strategic questions and, since the hardline radicals were of the right wing, pushed policy in that direction.

The emphasis in all of these philosophies was on military service and combat. These highest duties to the emperor dwarfed all other concerns. This had especially negative consequences when the emphasis on combat and toughness was combined with preparation for the single, decisive battle. Logistics—without which a successful campaign cannot be fought—was ignored or made the responsiblity of less capable officers while more aggressive staff or line officers, fixated on the dramatic strategies and tactics, focused almost singularly on the great encounter at sea.

Finally, the emphasis on extremely harsh discipline and the associated degradation of the quality of officer corps education stifled individuality and cost the IJN dearly. Historian Asada noted, "The unimaginative emphasis on cramming and rote memory ended any original thinking."

The recognition of U.S. industrial power should have been a red flag to Japanese war planners, but their fixation on the Kantai Kessen sent their strategic response in only one direction. A fast, short war was their only plan—and their only hope. Of course, all of this was exacerbated for the Japanese by their paltry oil supplies, which, in 1941, were adequate only for a two-year conflict.

This error was made greater by the Japanese flawed adoption of Mahan. The Japanese repeatedly ignored and violated his concepts of concentration and protection of lines of communication. Asada commented, "The Japanese navy's adoption of Mahan's ideas was highly selective and arbitrary. The Japanese navy was not only influenced by Mahan's strategic doctrine, but also used his sea-power theory as a rationale for fleet expansion."

The tactics became strategy, which was sold as budgetary necessity to the government which, in turn, led to a one-dimensional battleship response to what developed as a three-dimensional war—on the sea, in the air, and under the surface.

If one truly believes the logic of the ratios combined with gunnery doctrine, the U.S. was fated to win the "decisive battle." To overcome this possibility, the Japanese drove some key improvements through the fleet. Their development of night combat, torpedo tactics, severe training of the highest qualified personnel, longer range guns, and eventually superior airpower were all examples of the required elements to overcome the U.S. capital ship superiority in the Kantai Kessen.

However, this very focus and commitment to the fast win and the militant characteristics discussed here led to further significant errors. The manpower pool—and especially the training regimen—were never deep or complete enough. The logistical ineptitude of both the Army and Navy was staggering. There was no comprehensive plan for a war of attrition that would result if no decisive battle were to take place.

The fixation on decisive battle led, inevitably, to preparation for a short, one-battle war—hardly a war at all, but more akin to preparing for a single, decisive stroke. This, in turn, led to a tremendously inflexible strategy that did not accept variants based on the enemy's actions. It was a passive plan with only one possible result: inevitable defeat.

Astonishingly, these failures were compounded by Yamamoto forcing the navy staff to accept his plans that threw what existed as IJN strategy into disarray.

Yamamoto, who had studied at Harvard and served as a naval attaché in Washington, was faced with his own realistic view of U.S. industrial might and naval forces. He was also bounded in his thinking by belief in a Kantai Kessen that Japan could not win in light of the balance of forces. Thus Yamamoto fashioned a new tool and plan to even the odds in the decisive battle.

That tool was the establishment of the First Air Fleet or Kido Butai, comprising all of Japan's major carriers. While revolutionary in concept, the air fleet was but an arm of the main battle fleet that would engage the U.S. fleet. With Japan's two most advanced airmen, Captains Mitsuo Fuchida and Minoru Genda, leading the strike on Pearl Harbor (and other units attacking the Philippines and other Pacific bases), the unit was planned as a seagoing air force to destroy American power in the Pacific in what was expected to be the decisive battle. After such a humiliating defeat, the Japanese assumed the United States would have no other option than to sue for peace, leaving control of the entire Pacific and East Asia to Japan.

Both: National Archives

Japanese aircraft over Pearl Harbor. Instead of causing the United States to retreat further into its isolationist shell, Japan's "unprovoked and dastardly attack" propelled America into two-front war.

Yet, the more Yamamoto contemplated the outcome of the Kantai Kessen and Japan's prospects the less willing he was to wait for the U.S. fleet to steam over the horizon; he would go to them. But he was of two minds. In October 1941, he mentioned in a letter to a friend, "My present situation is very strange. Because I have been assigned the mission, entirely against my private opinion, I am also expected to do my best. Alas, maybe this is my fate."

Pearl Harbor was planned as a means of balancing the perceived American superiority in the coming battle and to provide time for Japan to consolidate its conquests in Southeast Asia. With this in mind, the Japanese strike force was sent to Hawaii "to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet 'wherever it might be found.'" Despite his misgivings, Yamamoto also saw this as the best opportunity to destroy both U.S. military and civilian morale.

Yamamoto and the naval general staff, however, clashed violently over the plan and the number of carriers involved. To resolve the dispute, Yamamoto engaged in his own intimidation and threatened to resign. The plan was accepted but with a non-aviator and non-aggressive senior battleship admiral, Chuichi Nagumo, in command.

Fuchida's air crews had rehearsed the attack in Japanese waters since April 1941, and new weapons, such as shallow-riding aerial torpedoes, had been specially devised to carry it out. While he felt confident about the ability of the torpedo planes, dive bombers, and fighters to accomplish their missions, he was less certain about the horizontal bombers. Each one carried a single 1,763-pound bomb specially designed to penetrate the decks of the capital ships, but which meant the chance of hitting anything from altitude was very slim. He had told the pilots and bombardiers that they might have to make several runs over their targets before getting the best possible sightings.

In the preraid briefings, Fuchida had also told his men to do everything possible to sink ships in or near the channel—Pearl's only point of ingress and egress. If they could close this choke point, no ships could escape. They would be pounded unmercifully by the second and third waves.

The main targets, in Yamamoto's words, were "four battleships"—enough, he believed, to even the odds in the decisive battle or cause the U.S. to avoid the battle with a negotiated settlement.

Of course, Yamamoto also hoped to catch the American aircraft carriers at anchor, but, unknown to him, the three carriers normally berthed there were all absent. Rear Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey Jr.'s USS *Enterprise* was on its way back to Pearl Harbor from Wake Island where it had delivered fighter planes to the Marine Corps. At the

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A fireboat (right) attacks the flames and black smoke shrouding the battleship *Maryland*. In the distance another damaged battleship (probably *West Virginia*) and the capsized *Oklahoma* are visible.

same time, Rear Admiral John H. Newton's USS *Lexington* was delivering 25 scout bombers to Midway atoll, while the USS *Saratoga* was in California for maintenance.

And so, the fateful day had come. As dawn gradually lightened the eastern horizon, Fuchida was able to look behind him and see the powerful strike force streamed out until the farthest planes were nothing more than tiny black spots.

Fuchida had his pilot home in on the radio beam being broadcast from radio station KGMB in Honolulu; it would make navigation easier. All was going smoothly, perhaps too smoothly. Fuchida knew that to expect a surprise attack to come off without a hitch was expecting the impossible, although everything that needed to proceed like clockwork had been worked out in meticulous detail for months.

The 37-year-old Minoru Genda, as one of the main planners of the attack, had done a masterful job in organizing the strike force into a series of waves designed to do the most damage to the U.S. Fleet. In this aerial armada Fuchida knew that he had over 420 aircraft of varying types. The first wave of 180 planes consisted of torpedo planes, high-level bombers, dive bombers, and fighters. The second wave with slightly fewer planes, just now taking off, was composed mostly of dive bombers. A third wave, which would take off after the attack on the fleet was finished, would destroy Pearl Harbor's fuel storage, submarine base, and dry dock and maintenance facilities.

Additionally, Fuchida knew that five midget submarines had been launched and were scheduled to make their way into the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor during the aerial assault and cause further death and destruction.

What Fuchida did not know was that before dawn U.S. Navy vessels on patrol had spotted an unidentified submarine periscope near the entrance to Pearl Harbor. One of the midget subs was attacked and sunk by the destroyer USS *Ward* (DD-139). The report of the submarine sinking was handled routinely and, somehow, did not raise suspicions that a major attack was imminent.

More fortuitously for the Japanese, however, at 7 AM an alert operator at the Opana U.S. Army Mobile Radar Station at Kauhuku Point on the northern shore of Oahu spotted the approaching first wave of the attack force, but the officer to whom the report was relayed dismissed it, believing that the planes were an approaching flight of American B-17 bombers scheduled to arrive that morning. Thus, not a single American aircraft was scrambled to intercept the incoming flight.

Closing in on the American anchorage at Pearl Harbor, Fuchida pushed back the canopy of his Kate bomber and calmly stood. The whipping airstream pulled at his hachimaki, watered his eyes, and made it difficult to count the small black specks trailing behind his aircraft. With the turquoise blue of the Pacific far below bordered by the shimmering beaches and green foliage of Oahu, Fuchida got his first glimpse of Pearl Harbor through the broken clouds, wondering—had they attained surprise? In Fuchida's mind, the future of Japan depended on the answer, as would his next command as strike leader.

He had just enough visibility to ascertain that there was no apparent enemy reaction. He grasped his flare pistol and fired a single flare indicating to his force that surprise had been achieved. The horizontal bombers were supposed to continue on at an altitude of 3,000 meters, the

dive bombers would ascend to 4,000 meters before pouncing, and the torpedo bombers would descend as low as possible.

However, Lieutenant Masaharu Suganami's fighters did not respond to his first flare, so Fuchida mistakenly fired a second—which was supposed to indicate that surprise was lost. Some of his units saw one flare while others saw both. Confusion reigned. Instead of the attack formation for surprise with the torpedo planes in the lead, both dive bombers and torpedo planes leaped into action. With strict radio silence imposed, Fuchida was unable to correct the error. But, as events turned out, it did not matter.

Fuchida looked down and started counting. All concern about the confused attack formation was submerged in his joy as he counted eight big, gray battleships at anchor. Surely they could bag four! He still saw no sign that the enemy had detected him and his force.

At 7:49 AM, he directed the message "To-To-To" be sent to the attack squadron: "Charge!" Following this transmission, Fuchida had the message "Tora, Tora, Tora!" (Tiger, tiger, tiger!)—sent to *Akagi* for relay to naval and government offices in Japan and the Pacific, a signal that indicated that surprise had been achieved.

From his perch high above the harbor, Fuchida observed the attack unfolding below. Takahashi's dive bombers went swooping down, plastering American planes on the ground at Ford Island and Hickam Field. Lieutenant Shigeharu Murata's 40 torpedo planes, converging on the harbor from several directions at once, were skimming the placid waters, sliding their long, slim missiles into the hulls of the helpless, stationary ships. A smaller group—16 torpedo planes under Lieutenant Tsuyoshi Nagai—was striking other vessels moored around Ford Island. The Zero fighters were strafing the buildings at Schofield Barracks, home of the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions. Black, fiery explosions could be seen boiling up from hits on the ships and the shore installations. Also coming up were the first bright streaks of antiaircraft fire; American gunners were now fully alert and were fighting back.

Bombs, bullets, and torpedoes were falling onto and in between the tightly packed American warships. Violent explosions were tearing steel vessels apart like they were made of cardboard, throwing men overboard or vaporizing them were they stood. The once blue waters of Pearl Harbor were now black with spreading oil, orange with fire, or red with blood, and the clear skies were now smudged with plumes of ugly black smoke.

The battleship *Oklahoma,* moored outboard of *Maryland* at Berth F-5, was pierced by torpedoes and she began listing—a list that would not stop until she had totally capsized. At about the same moment, another torpedo struck *West Virginia* and turned her into a flaming wreck. Moments later, an aerial torpedo flashed beneath the repair ship *Vestal,* moored outboard of *Arizona,* and blew a huge hole in the battleship's hull. Not long thereafter, an aerial bomb hit the *Arizona* and touched off a massive explosion in her forward magazine that killed more than 1,100 of her sailors.

The battleships *California, Tennessee,* and *Pennsylvania,* the latter in dry dock, were also taking their share of punishment. The *Nevada* was able to get up steam and began moving toward the channel—the only escape route out of the harbor. Like hawks spotting a running rabbit, the Japanese planes seemed to halt what they were doing and concentrate all their firepower on her, hoping to sink her and put a large steel cork in the neck of the channel. At the last minute, though, *Nevada*'s skipper, Captain F.W. Scanland, beached her, half sunk, just short of the channel.

Still hovering above the writhing, flaming cauldron that was once America's mighty anchorage, Fuchida felt his plane suddenly shudder. "Is everything all right?" he asked his pilot.

"Just a few holes in the fuselage," Matsuzaki replied calmly.

Satisfied with the answer and with the visible results of the first wave, Fuchida issued orders to bring on the second wave attack by another 167 aircraft, commanded by Lt. Cmdr. Shigekazu Shimazaki. There were 54 horizontal bombers divided into two groups flying at 11,500 feet. Shimazaki's Fifth Group from *Zuikaku* had the mission of putting Hickam Field out of commission, while Lieutenant Tatsuo Ichihara's Seventh Group from *Shokaku* would bomb Kaneohe Naval Air Station and Ford Island.

Accompanying them were Lt. Cmdr. Takashigi Egusa's 78 dive bombers divided

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into four groups; their job was to finish off any warships that appeared to be unscathed or only slightly damaged. The final component of the second wave was Lieutenant Saburo Shindo's 35 Zero fighters, whose role was to battle any American planes that tried to attack the formations and to strafe installations on the ground at Kaneohe and Wheeler Field.

By this time—approximately 9 AM—antiaircraft gunners still at their posts on the burning, listing ships were demonstrating improved marksmanship and a number of Japanese planes—six fighters and 14 dive bombers—were being shot out of the sky. A handful of American aircraft managed to get airborne and tangle with the enemy planes, but they, too, were in danger of being downed by the antiaircraft gunners.

By about 9:30 AM, the second wave had done its work and was heading back to its carriers. Fuchida, whose plane resembled Swiss cheese by now, was low and fuel and turned to rendezvous with *Akagi*, expecting to see the third wave on its way to Pearl Harbor. The fact that he did not see it puzzled him.

But in his wake was left awful devastation: eight battleships, three light cruisers, three destroyers, and four auxiliary craft damaged or destroyed. U.S. naval aviation also lost 13 fighters, 21 scout bombers, 46 patrol bombers, and seven other warplanes—not counting several American planes shot down by American gunners. It was the U.S. Navy's worst lost ever.

The Army's air component also lost 77 planes, with another 128 damaged. Even more tragic, 2,403 American service personnel had been killed, and 1,178 wounded. Sixty-eight civilian were dead, many in nearby Honolulu, killed by falling munitions.

Returning to the *Akagi* about noon, Fuchida reported at least four battleships sunk. Mission accomplished—at a cost of only 29 planes.

A grateful Admiral Nagumo told him, "Well done, Commander." But Fuchida, and Genda, too, were incredulous that their chief had not ordered the third wave to take off. When pressed, Nagumo said that it was best to leave well enough alone, that the American fleet had been crippled and, because the whereabouts of the American carriers could not be determined, the fleet would have to turn back immediately for Japan lest it be discovered and destroyed.

ABOVE: Fireboats pour water on the *West Virginia* (BB-48) while motor launches rescue sailors in the water. OPPOSITE: One of five Japanese Type A midget submarines that were attacked by U.S. forces lies beached at Oahu.

Nagumo, an overly prudent worry wart also feared that his task force was within range of Hawaii-based bombers and, even though he did not know how many, if any, American planes had survived with which a counterstrike could be carried out, he could not take the chance. He could not afford to push his luck; he had to get back to Japan as soon as possible.

Once he received reports of the attack, Admiral Yamamoto initially supported Nagumo's prudent decision to withdraw after the second strike but then later realized that it had been a grave error to not knock out the fuel depots, dockyards, and maintenance facilities.

Nine days after Pearl Harbor, Admiral Matome Ugaki, who would become Yamamoto's chief of staff during World War II, confided in his personal war diary: "By the help of Providence, we have at last obtained such brilliant results! Nothing can be more praiseworthy. With the entry of the huge [battleship] *Yamato*, the ratio of 5-5-3 (set at the Washington Naval Conference

of 1921-22) turned out to be reversed. Instead of by treaty, we retaliated against the enemy with real power. This ought to teach them a lesson. Our 20 years of hard pains have now borne fruit. Here I express my hearty thanks to our great seniors who strove so hard." Ugaki was a bit premature in patting the IJN on the back.

The U.S. carrier fleet, which was at sea, escaped destruction and became the center of future IJN attention. It is notable that all but three of the battleships (*Arizona, Oklahoma,* and obsolete *Utah*) were repaired

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Navy salvage personnel equipped with face masks, air supply, and battery-powered miner's lights come off their shift aboard *Oklahoma*, December 1942. While initial plans were made to salvage the ship, the *Oklahoma* was decommissioned in 1944.

and returned to duty during the war. The Japanese had not considered that the shallow harbor also allowed for salvage.

There were a number of consequences of Japan's "success" of Operation Hawaii. First was victory disease. The Japanese military and civilians were consumed by their spectacular victory—at least for a while—and a sense that they were invincible. Combined with Japanese belief in divine support this became a major impediment to rational war planning.

Indeed, in their minds all of their pre-war doctrine was vindicated. This led Yamamoto to another attempt at a decisive battle to rid the seas of the U.S. carriers. The resulting Battle of Midway—an American victory—effectively ended any chance of Japanese success in the Pacific naval war.

Second was the rapid modernization of the U.S. Fleet. Once war was declared, there were virtually no limits on the funds spent by the United States to rebuild a more modern fleet from scratch and from the remnants of the Pacific Fleet. This fleet building effort dwarfed Japan's efforts during the war by a factor of eight in carriers (including escorts), battleships, and cruisers. Also, by sinking and damaging the battlewagons in a shallow harbor rather than at sea in the Kantai Kessen, America was handed an ideal repair and refloat scenario.

The third consequence was a shift in the U.S. Navy's reliance on airpower and submarine warfare. The Navy was almost instantaneously transformed into a modern air and underwater sea force. There was no debate, only the reality of the situation.

Finally, Pearl Harbor rudely awoke the sleeping giant, in Yamamoto's words, from his isolationist slumber, converted him into an awakened avenger burning with a righteous anger, and propelled him into a position of world leadership. A massive visceral reaction by the U.S. citizenry and military to the Pearl Harbor attack fueled war plans, military preparation, mobilization, and industry forward faster than any other measure could have achieved. Although morale was initially dealt a serious blow, it was only temporary and ensured that revenge was at the top of the list for the American war effort.

Ironically, the level of rage also prevented any attempt at a peace settlement at this time, which might have favored Japan. It became a fight to the death with no possibility of U.S. negotiation with the Empire. It was unconditional surrender or nothing. Yamamoto's lack of foresight regarding this result may have been his greatest strategic failure.

Of course, the Japanese were more or less allowed the freedom of the Pacific for the next six months—until the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. This, also, fed a number of the incorrect conclusions derived from Pearl Harbor.

However, Yamamoto was ultimately disappointed with Nagumo and the attack. He recognized the significance of the missing carriers. He saw the additional mistakes in the failure to attack the fuel tanks and infrastructure. He compounded this error with his next plan to eradicate the American carriers and perhaps a return strike on Hawaii. Ominously for the IJN at Midway, they did not question why the U.S. was even present at the Coral Sea or consider that their secret diplomatic and naval codes had been compromised.

Seventy-plus years after the events of December 7, 1941, it is easy to be harsh in a judgment of Yamamoto. Before concluding, we must comment on his central role in the late acts of the Kaigun drama. He was one of the strongest advocates of avoiding war with the United Stares. Once he lost that battle, he desperately searched for a solution to the problem as he saw it. The problem was defined in terms of the Kantai Kessen, as were

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Winches from Ford Island attached to *Oklahoma* are used to right the ship, a process that took three months. The Japanese did not believe that the sunken ships could be salvaged to fight another day.

his solutions. However, the problem definition was flawed, and the results of his plan were disastrous for both the navy and his country.

In the end, all of this extended from the mistaken belief in an outmoded and incorrect view of naval strategy and modern total warfare. The Japanese sought to fight a limited war that would be settled at the negotiating table. The United States was aroused to a passion for vengeance that exceeded all Japanese expectations.

Japan was industrially and economically ill prepared for a war of attrition lasting a number of years. The United States, on the other hand, used the time bought by the victory at Midway and the protracted fight for the Solomon Islands to harness an industrial base capable of fighting two wars at once—also serving as a major supply source for Britain and the Soviet Union. No single naval battle could diminish that capability.

In fact, the U.S. Navy of 1945 had grown 8.5 times larger than that of December 1941. The building of the world's largest fleet was accomplished while at the same time building the world's largest supply of military aircraft. How many decisive battles would have been required to win such a war?

In addition to the blind devotion to Mahan, when, after the British attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto and the attack on Pearl Harbor the power of aviation was fully evident, the Japanese ignored two of his most important other tenets. Not only at Midway but also in the Solomons, the Marianas, and even at the Philippine Sea they refused to concentrate their forces, holding them back while waiting for the "real" Kantai Kessen—or sending units piecemeal to achieve poor tactical objectives.

Japan's well-developed night-fighting and torpedo tactics won a number of engagements but never a substantial victory that challenged eventual U.S. supremacy. Also, their refusal to convoy until later in the war or recognize the significance of their extended lines of communication permitted the U.S. submarine force to wreak havoc on their needed oil, war materiel, and vital other resources secured from their newly conquered territories.

The concept of Kantai Kessen had an almost mystical appeal for the Japanese naval leaders that lasted until 1944. It conjured up images of heroic warriors, of the Emperor's blessing, the "all together" feeling embodied in national unity. It connected to risking everything on one roll of the dice where their superior quality vanquished Western quantity, recalling the glorious victory at Tsushima.

While the theory was developed by a Western strategist, it could almost have been lifted from Japanese history and philosophy. This strategy was responsible for the virtual mothballing of their super battleships built at great sacrifice to the fleet, and indeed the Japanese economy, to save them for the elusive Kantai Kessen. When that battle never happened, they were sent to wasted deaths in battles determined primarily by airpower.

This mistaken support for what was by then a failed doctrine, especially in light of Pearl Harbor, was the naval leadership's greatest failure. Its inability to cut its ties with the past and to openly and cooperatively arrive at the best strategy, as the Americans did, ultimately resulted in the almost total annihilation of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

We will give the final word regarding Pearl Harbor to the noted naval historian Admiral Samuel Morison: "And from a strategic point of view, the thing was idiotic." □

FIERY FIGHT *for a Frozen Hell*

Often overlooked, the portion of the Battle of the Bulge that took place in Luxembourg was as savage as the better known battles in Belgium. BY JAMES G. BILDER

Described in one U.S. Army report as "the quiet paradise for weary troops," the tiny nation of Luxembourg was viewed by American commanders in late 1944 much like Belgium—liberated, safe, and an ideal location for combat-worn troops to rest and for untested replacements to get exposed to outdoor living and military routine before being exposed to combat.

The largest portion of the Battle of the Bulge story has, of course, usually been devoted to how the main German thrust of Hitler's last and most desperate gamble was halted by the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagles" Division at the Belgian crossroads city of Bastogne. Even after 70 years it still remains a fundamental study for amateur and professional historians alike.

Lesser known is that the German offensive in the Ardennes was not limited to Belgium and the northern drives toward the port of Antwerp and the capital city of Brussels, but actually had a sizable southern flank in Luxembourg, where the crossroads were of no less value and the fighting was every bit as ferocious.

While SS General Sepp Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army was racing toward Antwerp and General Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army was driving toward Brussels (with General Gustav-Adolf von Zangen's Fifteenth Army in reserve far to the north), it was General Erich Brandenberger's Seventh Panzer Army that cut into the northern half of Luxembourg. Brandenberger was responsible for the southern flank of the Bulge and protecting the underbelly of Manteuffel's force.

Brandenberger's force consisted primarily of infantry, with limited armored support, and Third U.S. Army commander Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., would respond in kind when assembling the necessary units to counter his enemy's moves. The battle in Luxembourg would be primarily an infantryman's war with the footsloggers on both sides going toe-to-toe in some of the most brutal fighting, under some of the most horrific conditions, in all of northwestern Europe.

The commanders squaring off against one another were both highly accomplished and capable but could not have been more dissimilar in style, method, and appearance. At 52, Brandenberger was short, pudgy, bald, and normally wore spectacles (occasionally, pince-nez). Patton, seven years his senior, had a commanding presence (despite a high, squeaky voice) with a solid frame and enough white hair to make for a distinguished portrait.

Both men had served in combat during World War I. Patton, trained as a cavalryman and always a believer in mobility, led his FT-17 Renault tanks on foot at St. Mihiel and the Argonne. He was wounded in the leg at Cheppy during the Argonne battle, and his leadership and courage were recognized when he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and a Purple Heart Medal that came 14 years later in 1932.

Brandenberger had been an artillery officer in the Great War and was awarded the Iron Cross, both First and Second Class, for his combat actions. The static battle lines of World War I and limited mobility of artillery pieces in that conflict made him accustomed to slower paced movements. He was, however, given command of the 8th Panzer Division in 1941 and awarded the Knight's Cross, the Third Reich's highest military decoration, for his actions on the Russian Front.

These circumstances could not change the fact that Brandenberger was primarily a staff officer, both by nature and experience, and remained a conservative and methodical commander. This was in stark contrast to Patton, who was not only bold but also daring—sometimes to the point of recklessness.

Brandenberger was given command of the Seventh Panzer Army in early September

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Portrait of misery: A 90th Infantry Division soldier with a Browning Automatic Rifle waits in the snow and sub-freezing temperatures near Doncols, Luxembourg, for a possible enemy attack, January 1944.

1944. He was not highly regarded by his new commander, Field Marshal Walther Model. Model had been in the German Army since 1910. He fought in the First World War and earned the Iron Cross, First Class, at Arras, and served on both the Eastern and Western Fronts during World War II. He had been an Army commander since January 1942 and had turned so many potential catastrophes into German victories, or at least German survivals, that he was referred to as "Hitler's Fireman."

In the autumn of 1944, Model was in charge of Germany's Army Group B (after Erwin Rommel's successor, Günther von Kluge, committed suicide on August 17) and would be responsible for directing Hitler's Ardennes counteroffensive codenamed Wacht am Rhein (Watch on the Rhine). Model seldom consulted Brandenberger during the planning phase of the offensive, but the two men were in agreement about the mission's overall objective—an offensive that was doomed to failure.

When the battle loomed on December 15, 1944, Brandenberger's Seventh Panzer Army was "panzer" in name only, as it consisted of the 212th, 276th, and the 352nd Volksgrenadier Divisions (the latter made up mostly of replacements from the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine without real combat experience), and was supplemented with the 5th Fallschirmjäger (Parachute) Division. These were all infantry divisions.

Even with some 60,000 men, these forces were understrength, undertrained, underequipped, and a number were limited in combat experience. The Seventh was clearly the stepchild of the German armies in the Ardennes, and Brandenberger was fortunate in that the American units serving in Luxembourg at the opening of the battle were greatly limited in number.

Since the dense Ardennes Forest was considered by the Allies virtually impenetrable despite the fact that the Germans had launched their May 1940 assault on the West through these same woods, it was regarded as the perfect safe haven for American units to recuperate and resupply. All other circumstances indicated continued quiet as the winter was starting out unusually cold and snowy, and the Germans had not mounted a major winter offensive in almost 190 years.

The only immediate obstacles in Brandenberger's path were a regiment from the 4th Infantry "Ivy" Division in the south, a regiment from the 28th Infantry "Keystone" Division in the north, and a largely combat naive infantry battalion from the 9th Armored "Phantom" Division in the center.

The 4th Division was Regular Army and had landed at Utah Beach on D-Day. It had been engaged in heavy fighting ever since and had just come from the killing grounds in the Hürtgen Forest, where the division had suffered a casualty rate in excess of 40 percent.

The 28th, on the other hand, was a federalized National Guard Division from Pennsylvania. The division had arrived in Normandy in late July and fought in the hedgerows as well as the campaign in northern France. The 28th, too, had been badly mauled during the slugfest in the Hürtgen Forest, with roughly a third of the division becoming casualties. In fact, Maj. Gen. Norman "Dutch" Cota's 28th Division had been so badly torn up by the enemy that the Germans gave them their own nickname in reference to the unit's red keystone insignia: the "Bloody Bucket" Division.

Major General John W. Leonard's 9th U.S. Armored Division had come to France in late September and did not arrive on the front lines until late October. Its actions thus far had been primarily confined to patrolling the quiet sector of the front along the border between Luxembourg and Germany.

Both Belgium and Luxembourg in this area are composed of hills and significant elevations that are covered with thick concentrations of trees and, in the winter, blanketed by heavy snowfalls. This made control of the roads essential, as it was impossible to traverse the off-road areas with vehicles or any meaningful numbers of troops. The important crossroad towns within the 109th Regiment's area of responsibility—Diekirch, Ettelbruck, Grosbous, Heinerscheid, and Mertzig—were the most valuable real estate imaginable and prime objectives for the coming German counteroffensive.

The 109th Regiment of the 28th was in the northern end of Brandenberger's path.

Three American soldiers, using white sheets for camouflage, on patrol near Lellig, Luxembourg, December 30, 1944, two weeks after the Germans launched their Ardennes Offensive.

National Archives

Both: National Archives

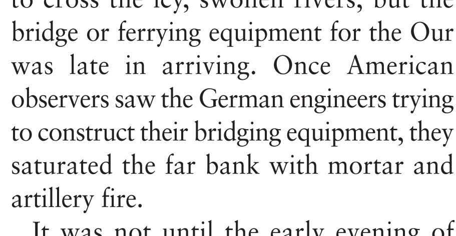
ABOVE: A 4th Infantry Division soldier loads a 3.5-inch rocket launcher (aka "bazooka") inside a ruined house during the German offensive, early December 1944. RIGHT: Major General Norman "Dutch" Cota, commander of of 28th Infantry Division, accepts Christmas cookies from one of his men.

When the battle started, the 109th was headquartered in Ettelbruck, southwest of Diekirch, under the command of Lt. Col. James Rudder, who had commanded the U.S. Rangers during the assault on Normandy's Pointe-du-Hoc, and he was determined to do everything possible to hold his ground.

The timetable called for Brandenberger's forces to jump off from the German side of the Our and Sauer Rivers at 6 AM on December 16; they were to be 10 miles west of the river near Wiltz by day's end, but there was one major problem: getting across the rivers. The 5th Parachute Engineer Battalion was tasked to erect a bridge across the Our, and ferrying equipment was to be put into place to get attacking units across, but such activities would take time.

The 14th Parachute Regiment had orders to cross the Our in the north near Stolzembourg, drive past Putscheid and Weiler, and seize a crossing point on the Wiltz River west of Hoscheid. Simultaneously, the 15th Parachute Regiment was to cross the Our at Roth and Vianden a few miles south of Stolzembourg, then establish a bridgehead over the Alzette River at Bourscheid. The 13th Parachute Regiment was to wipe out any American units in the area that might resist.

The preparatory artillery barrage began 30 minutes before the German troops started



to cross the icy, swollen rivers, but the bridge or ferrying equipment for the Our was late in arriving. Once American observers saw the German engineers trying to construct their bridging equipment, they saturated the far bank with mortar and artillery fire.

It was not until the early evening of December 17 that the German assault gun brigade, antitank battalion, and vehicles of the 15th Parachute Regiment started across. The delay gave the Americans an opportunity to harass and impede the oncoming Germans at almost every area they attempted to cross.

After the Germans struggled across the Our, American units holding the high ground east of Ettelbruck stopped the left flank of the advancing 352nd Volksgrenadier Division as well as the neighboring 276th Volksgrenadier Division's right flank.

Near Ettelbruck, Rudder's regiment was grossly outgunned and still in a weakened state (not to mention 20 percent understrength), but its reputation as hell fighters was well earned. In fact, some of the members of the regiment's 3rd Battalion were scheduled to be formally decorated that day for valor as a result of their recent actions in the Hürtgen.

When the attack began, Rudder was advised by the nearby 9th Armored to fall back, but he disregarded the recommendation and decided to secure whatever strongpoints he could to form anything resembling an effective defensive line.

Rudder had been keenly aware of the strategic importance of the Ettelbruck-Diekirch line and, because of his limited resources, had skillfully booby trapped a number of its approaches. Rudder's task was daunting and pragmatically hopeless, but he was fortunate to have the regiment's 3rd Battalion in Diekirch. He ordered the 3rd's commander, Major James McCoy, to immediately cannibalize all his units to convert every soldier into an infantryman. McCoy was then to deploy his meager forces in the most effective way possible, which he did by forming a defensive line ahead of Diekirch.

McCoy had heavy weapons in the form of .30- and .50-caliber machine guns along with a couple of 81mm mortars and support from a nearby antitank unit equipped with 57mm (M1) antitank guns.

For two days the Americans succeeded in fending off the Germans with a roadblock at Bastendorf, a mile north of Diekirch, before the enemy renewed its attack with armor. On the afternoon of the 18th, German infantry and two panzers approached the 109th's positions. In the ensuing fight, all six of the antitank company's 57mm guns were knocked out and a supporting Sherman tank was destroyed. The Germans broke through the American lines with a Tiger and two Jagdpanzers along with a significant number of supporting infantry.

Rudder's position was untenable and, as much as it pained him, he requested and was given permission to fall back toward Diekirch. The GIs—infantry, armor, artillery, and a field hospital—withdrew under cover of smoke while blowing bridges over the Sauer River. The 109th was reduced to a shadow of its former self; some 500 officers and men had been killed, wounded, or were missing. But their stiff resistance delayed the German advance in that sector.

The situation worsened for the 109th Regiment the following day when Diekirch had to be evacuated. Most of the civilians evacuated as well. The 109th had fought tenaciously and would later be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its actions during the opening days of the battle. Its exceptional courage typified the determination of American units throughout the Ardennes.

Despite the casualties inflicted by the 109th, the German 5th Fallschirmjäger Division under Colonel Ludwig Heilmann had traversed the Our River to the north of Diekirch with 15,000 men in a classic pincer movement. The southern portion of the pincer had gotten past Vianden and as far as Walsdorf on the first day. Just south of Heilmann was the 352nd Volksgrenadier Division under Colonel Erich Schmidt. Schmidt, too, moved in a pincer

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-2013-0226-501; Photo: Hanns Gross

ABOVE: German paratroopers prepare to construct a temporary bunker during the final days of the Ardennes Offensive, January 1945. BELOW: A German soldier with an STG-44 and his comrades move through snowy woods toward American lines in Luxembourg, shortly after the start of the offensive, December 1944.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-1985-0104-501; Photo: Lange

as he took on McCoy's 3rd Battalion. The southern portion of the German assault had moved on the important crossroads of Diekirch while the northern portion had continued west before turning southward on Ettelbruck.

Beneath all this, the 276th Volksgrenadier Division, in the center of the German advance, crossed the Our/Sauer River junction near Wallendorf and moved ahead under the cover of fog but soon ran into the 60th Armored Infantry Battalion (AIB) from the U.S. 9th Armored Division. The battalion was under the command of Lt. Col. Kenneth Collins.

Collins, like his unit, was well trained but untested in battle. The 60th AIB had less than

a thousand men, but it did have armored half-tracks with .30- and .50-caliber machine guns mounted on them. The men instinctively took high points and were fortunate enough to have artillery support from their 3rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

The Germans responded with rocket fire from their nebelwerfers (multibarreled rocket launchers) and proceeded to surround the isolated infantry companies. Collins managed to scrape together some medium and light tanks (Shermans, Stuarts, and Chaffees) with combat engineers acting as supporting infantry, and a counterattack was planned for December 18 to rescue the pockets of surrounded GIs. Collins's actions kept the Germans off balance and derailed their plans for rapid advance in that sector.

The major problem for the German 276th, and good fortune for the Americans, was that it had the largest number of inexperienced and poorly conditioned enlisted personnel in Brandenberger's Seventh Army. Even worse, many of their NCOs were "gun shy," as they had just been returned to the ranks after recovering from previous battle wounds.

The 276th's commander, Lt. Gen. Kurt Moehring, was competent, respected, and well liked by his troops. But just two days into the offensive Moehring made a fatal error in judgment when he decided to use a captured American jeep for transport to his command post. He was shot and killed, almost certainly by friendly fire, on the main road between Grundhoff and Beaufort. Maj. Gen. Hugo Dempwolff succeeded Moehring.

Brandenberger felt his ace in the hole was the 212th Volksgrenadier Division, under the command of Lt. Gen. Franz Sensfuss. The men of the 212th were the mirror opposite of those in the 276th. They had fought in the siege of Leningrad and had extensive experience fighting in harsh winter conditions.

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An American soldier with a Thompson submachine gun cautiously inspects a frozen German corpse for possible booby traps near Wiltz, Luxembourg.

The official U.S. Army history noted, "After three years of campaigning on the Eastern Front the [212th Volksgrenadier] division had been so badly shattered during withdrawals in the Lithuanian sector that it was taken from the line and sent to Poland, in September 1944, for overhauling. The replacements received, mostly from upper Bavaria, were judged better than the average although there were many 17-year-olds."

In Sensfuss, the men of the 212th had a leader worthy of command. A career officer, Sensfuss had been highly decorated in both world wars and was a very cunning commander. He thrived on information and calculated his risks on reliable intelligence.

Sensfuss knew from German spies in Luxembourg City that the town of Echternach, on the bank of the Sauer, was being held by elements of the 12th Regiment (Colonel Robert Chance commanding) of the 4th U.S. Infantry Division. The 4th had been under the commanded of Maj. Gen. Raymond O. "Tubby" Barton since the summer of 1942.

Barton, a West Point graduate and combat veteran of World War I, was a scrapper and a very capable commander. Before the counteroffensive began, Barton was wary of the seemingly peaceful atmosphere and had Colonel Chance deploy their meager resources carefully with lightly manned outposts near the Sauer River and rifle companies in the nearby cities and towns.

As recently as December 7, the 12th Regiment had been described in an official army report as "a badly decimated and weary unit." The division in total had lost over 5,000 men in combat and another 2,500 non-battle casualties to trench foot and exposure. The men of the 4th Division were seasoned veterans and, while they had been bloodied from their recent campaign in the Hürtgen Forest, they were far from beaten or demoralized.

The Germans, much to their chagrin, soon discovered this as they attempted to cross the Sauer in rubber boats. Like the GIs in the 28th Division to the north, Barton's men saw to it that the enemy's cost in getting across the river was a heavy one. After taking heavy casualties, the Germans were forced to cross farther south at Edingen.

But once across the Sauer, the Germans quickly moved north and advanced on Echternach to surround it. Securing Echternach would keep a supply line open and allow for an expansion of the German bridgehead. In what would be comparable to a Luxembourg version of the fight at Bastogne, the Americans of the 12th Regiment were determined to hold onto Echternach or die in the effort.

Sensfuss's men may have swept aside the American outposts and captured their mortars, machine guns, and antitank weapons, but they had not yet taken the town itself.

The Germans charged into Echternach only to encounter the men of Easy Company, who fought them tooth and nail in the streets. The sheer weight of German numbers, however, steadily drove the GIs back, and Easy Company's survivors, under the command of Captain Paul DuPuis, secured a fallback position inside a hat factory and a few surrounding buildings in which they barricaded themselves.

A little north and farther west, Sensfuss was forced to bypass the town of Berdorf as 1st Lt. John L. Leake from Fox Company had some five squads (roughly 60

men), along with a .50-caliber machine gun and a Browning Automatic Rifle to support their efforts. They turned the three-story Parc Hotel and several stone buildings into a virtual "Alamo" and held out for four days despite accurate German shelling.

Brandenberger had no armor; only his 5th Parachute Division had assault guns that his other units were counting on and awaiting their promised arrival. Brandenberger knew that the inevitable American counterattack would come from Patton and that would mean tanks.

Without assault guns or secured strongpoints to place them in, Brandenberger knew Patton's armor would surely push the Germans across the Our and Sauer Rivers and back onto their home turf. Time was not on Brandenberger's side, so his infantry would have to claw its way ahead and seize its objectives quickly.

The companies of Chance's 12th Regiment were scattered in various nearby locations but holding firm. Able and George Companies were holding the roads to Lauterborn and Echternach open, while Fox Company continued to hold Berdorf and Item Company occupied Dickweiler. The GIs were barely maintaining their grip as Barton issued orders forbidding "any retrograde movement."

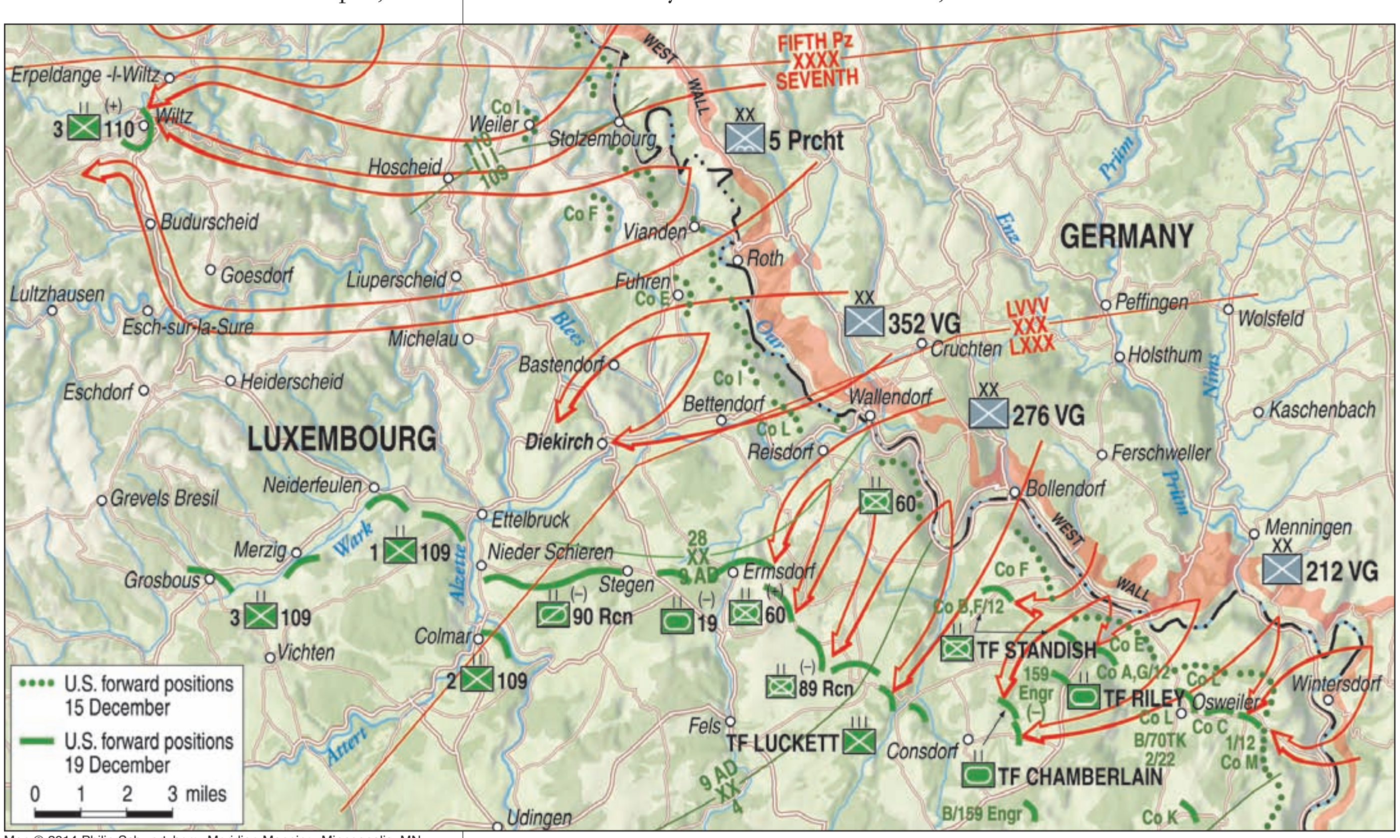
There was some glimmer of hope on December 17 as the 42nd Field Artillery and the 12th Regiment's own Cannon Company (105mm howitzers) provided much needed fire support to keep the Germans at bay. Also, the American 10th Armored "Tiger" Division was in Thionville, France, and was immediately ordered north to Luxembourg.

Separate from the 10th Armored, there were some additional 10 Stuart and eight Sherman tanks that were hastily pulled together and sent to assist the 12th Regiment. Finally, three hodgepodge armored/infantry task forces (Standish, Riley, and Luckett), along with some combat engineers, were Jerry-rigged to reenforce the desperate American defenders.

The task force under Lt. Col. J.R. Riley actually rolled into Echternach on December 18 and offered to take the men of Easy Company out of the stronghold they had established in the hat factory. Captain DuPuis declined, citing General Barton's "no retrograde" order of two days prior. DuPuis pointed out that his men had sufficient ammunition—and a more than ample supply of wine.

While Brandenberger was dealing with the inefficiencies of his Seventh Panzer Army, Patton's Third Army could not have been more prepared for battle. After a bloody three-month siege, Patton had successfully captured the fortress city of Metz in Lorraine, France. Patton was especially puffed up by this victory—not only because he had snatched it from the jaws of defeat, but also because he was the first commander since Attila the Hun in AD 451 to conquer Metz. His Third Army was now resupplied, highly experienced, and highly motivated.

Patton set up his headquarters in Luxembourg City alongside 12th Army Group and the Ninth Air Force, which were already established in Luxembourg's capital. Patton's decision effectively drew a line in the snow, and he was not about to let the Germans



Map © 2014 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: A 9th Armored Division M4 Sherman tank moves up in attempt to stem the German breakthrough, December 27, 1944. OPPOSITE: The southern shoulder at the beginning of the Ardennes Offensive saw German forces catching the Americans in Luxembourg by surprise, thrusting westward all the way to Wiltz. Hitler's goal of reaching Antwerp, however, was never realized.

National Archives

cross it. Patton had suspected for some time that the Germans were ready and willing to execute a winter offensive and had anticipated approximately where they might strike. This allowed him to plan for a counterstrike.

One of the units that had been with Patton since the formation of Third Army was the 5th Infantry "Red Diamond" Division under the command of Maj. Gen. Leroy "Red" Irwin. The 5th was a part of XX Corps, which was often referred to by the Germans as Patton's "Ghost Corps" because of its ability to suddenly appear out of nowhere and inflict great pain.

The 5th was often at the tip of Patton's spear as he plowed through France. The men of the 5th had moved farther east than any American division in World War I and had been dubbed the "Red Devils" by the Germans in 1918. It would maintain that fearsome reputation in World War II.

When the Battle of the Bulge erupted on December 16th, the 5th was far to the southeast, engaged in intense street fighting in Saarlautern and struggling to gain control of the bridgehead over the Saar River that would take it right into Germany proper.

On December 21, the 5th was detached from Maj. Gen. Walton "Bulldog" Walker's XX Corps and assigned to Maj. Gen. Manton Eddy's XII Corps. It was to be sent northwest toward Diekirch to engage the Germans there and liberate the town.

The men of the 5th were loaded onto trucks, tanks, jeeps, or simply walked as they moved into Luxembourg without sleep or hot chow. Meanwhile, Patton would use his beloved 4th Armored Division, with the 26th and 80th Infantry Divisions in support, to swing wide to the left and make an end run to Bastogne to break through to the 101st Airborne.

By December 21, the American situation in northern Luxembourg was becoming desperate. The Germans had overwhelmed the defenders in the Echternach hat factory the day before (the GIs there had been given permission to withdraw, but only two escaped while the rest were either killed or captured), thus securing Echternach and a lifeline across the Sauer for their comrades. Easy Company had gone down hard, but not without costing the Germans heavily in irreplaceable time and men. The 12th Regiment would later be awarded Luxembourg's Croix de Guerre for its gallantry in the fighting.

The Americans had new worries as Brandenberger's requested support started to appear. Northwest of Diekirch, near Goesdorf, the newly arrived Führer Grenadier Brigade was consolidating its position with infantry and some 90 armored vehicles. If all this wasn't bad enough, the 79th Volksgrenadier Division showed up outside Diekirch to reinforce and invigorate the Führer Brigade in its operations. Both organizations had been battle hardened on the Eastern Front and were well accustomed to winter warfare.

Back toward the Sauer River and Echternach, the men of Sensfuss's 212th Division were filled with blood lust and still on the march. They advanced south like an angry mob screaming, "Kill the sons-of-bitches!" in broken English. On the American side, the remainder of Chance's 12th Regiment dug in while Task Force Luckett raced forward to plug the gap in front of the Germans' 276th Division, where the Americans were hanging on by a thread.

Still, hopes among the GIs were high as XII Corps commander Manton Eddy set up his headquarters in Luxembourg City while Maj. Gen. William Morris was bringing up elements of his 10th Armored Division to assist; the 5th Infantry Division raced northward to join the battle. No one realized it yet, but the Germans had reached their high point in Luxembourg and the tide of battle, while slow and bloody, was soon to turn.

On December 22, Patton had the piece-

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TOP: Members of 19th Field Artillery Battalion, 5th Infantry Division, man their gun under a snow-covered cammo net near Haller, Luxembourg. ABOVE: A white-clad soldier from the 8th Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, with young German prisoners captured during fighting in the Sauer River sector.

meal makings of a counterattack in the offing. The 10th Armored made up the left flank of a relief force pushing north toward Echternach, while the 10th Regiment from General Irwin's battle-hardened 5th Infantry Division was moving on the right. Barton's 4th, which had been engaged in a skillful defensive action that halted the German advance south of Echternach, was in the center.

The Germans could no longer advance southward but made good use of their artillery and nebelwerfers to push the Americans back every time they gained ground. The battle south of Echternach turned into a stalemate.

The following day the 2nd Regiment, also from Irwin's 5th Division, relieved more of the beleaguered men of the 4th Division when it linked up with them in an open area outside Berdorf.

There was nothing to celebrate on Christmas Eve for the men of the 2nd Regiment as two of its three battalions were sent against the Germans just a few hundred yards north of Breitweiler and Consdorf. After eight hours of bitter fighting, the veteran Red Devils had advanced a mere 200 yards. They had entered a German kill zone and were bogged down by enfilading fire.

On Christmas Day, the fog lifted and American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers sped to assist. One shot up a convoy of vehicles, including ambulances, along the roadway. The problem was that these vehicles were part of the 2nd Regiment.

The Germans hoped to exploit the situation by hitting the 2nd Regiment with a nebelwerfer rocket attack on Christmas night. The next day events shifted dramatically as the Americans, eager for payback, jumped off at 5 AM and took the southern end of Berdorf, bagging over 100 prisoners before the enemy knew what hit them. The Germans in the north end of town made a ferocious counterattack with every form of heavy weapons—from mortars to rockets to artillery.

The Germans were also using the tactic of putting their own men in American uniforms. During a lull in the fighting, three men in American uniforms and coats were moving almost leisurely down a street in Berdorf when Sergeant Henry Lipski opened the door of a house occupied by GIs and yelled out, "Get off the street, you stupid bastards!"

The men soon revealed their true loyalties as they whipped out MP-40s from beneath their coats and fired in unison on Sergeant Lipski; he was dead before he hit the ground. The three Germans then made their escape around the corner of a house before the unbelieving Americans could even process what they had just seen.

The 2nd Regiment finally drove the Germans out of Berdorf on December 27, summarily executing three Germans captured in American uniforms. Irwin's men were slowly pushing the enemy back. They would be sent farther west toward Ettelbrück with the objective of driving the Germans north and into Diekirch.

That portion of the battle became one of attrition as the infantry on both sides fought for control of the area between Ettelbrück and Diekirch. The Germans often held the high areas along steep embankments, and the Americans paid dearly whenever they tried to advance or move up along the slopes to clear the enemy.

The third and final regiment in Irwin's division was the 11th, and it held the area on the left flank of the 2nd Regiment along the Schwartz Erntz River. Under the command of Colonel Paul Black, the men of the 11th Regiment made a two-mile advance and succeeded in dislodging German infantry from the high ground near Haller.

With the support of tanks from the 10th Armored Division, the 11th Regiment then severed the line between General Dempwolff's 276th and Sensfuss's 212th Volksgrenadier Divisions. It was a breach the Americans would exploit to the fullest in the commencement of a drive to push the enemy out of Luxembourg and back into Germany.

The 11th Regiment went on to surround Waldbillig and take Haller, where enemy POWs revealed orders for a German withdrawal. On the extreme right flank, the 10th Regiment from the 5th Division and the 8th Regiment from the 4th Division were clawing at the Germans on the outskirts of Echternach.

The Americans captured the high ground overlooking the Sauer River and used artillery to cut the German lifeline into Luxembourg and rain death down on Sensfuss' prized 212th Volksgrenadiers. A false rumor spread among American ranks that 120 men from the 12th Regiment were still in Echternach, but when patrols found nothing in the village the men were officially listed as missing in action.

Caught in the middle of all this carnage were the civilians of Luxembourg. Unable to

extricate themselves in time, they had to remain holed up in cellars or attempting to dodge crossfire in the streets. Napalm dropped from P-47s along with white phosphorous in 81mm mortar rounds often burned their homes to the ground. There was minimal access to food or medicine, and many civilians simply died from exposure, hunger, stress, and want of care. To add to the overall misery and mortality of soldier and civilian alike, the winter of 1944-1945 was the coldest in Europe in a century.

With Echternach and Berdorf back in American hands and Ettelbrück secure, the lines stabilized. Heavy snows and bitter cold forced an unofficial truce as men on both sides huddled around open fires, more worried about the elements than the enemy. Frostbite and trench foot took additional heavy tolls on both sides.

There was still excitement and danger. Pfc. Michael Bilder of the 2nd Regiment was sent into Echternach on a supply (booze) run. At a tavern in the town, Bilder was conversing with the bartender as three GIs casually strolled in, hung their helmets on a hook, and sat down at a table. The bartender excused himself, and a few moments later American MPs simultaneously burst through both the front and rear doors, taking the three soldiers at the table into custody.

A stunned Bilder asked the bartender what had just happened. "Those men were Germans," the bartender explained. "I knew it almost immediately after they entered," he added. "American soldiers always slide their helmets under their chairs after they sit down, but Germans always hang them on hooks before they seat themselves." The three Germans in American uniforms were summarily shot.

The unofficial truce for Bilder and the others in the 2nd Regiment ended in mid-January when enough time had passed for the Americans to be resupplied and reinforced. The time had come to cross the Sauer River below Diekirch and retake the town.

The plan called for a stealthy crossing in the dead of night, but events would soon reveal that the plan would be anything but stealthy. At 3 AM on January 18, 1945, the temperature was well below zero as riflemen from the 2nd Regiment waited for engineers to throw a footbridge across the relatively narrow river. German snipers picked off the continuing supply of engineers with ease until the American command had had enough. The word was given for the GIs to cross the river in M-2 assault boats. The rifle squads of the 2nd Battalion dutifully picked up their 400-pound wooden assault boats and ran through mind-numbing cold in knee-deep snow toward the Sauer.

The Germans illuminated the darkness with flares that cut through the fog as they fired their heavy machine guns at the GIs starting across. The 914th Regiment of the

4th Infantry Division troops dash across a Bailey bridge while under enemy fire near Moesdorf, Luxemborg, January 21, 1945.

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352nd Volksgrenadier Division was on the high ground (Goldknapp Hill) trying to prevent the American crossing.

Smoke was released to mask the GIs' advance, and the 3rd Battalion opened up to provide covering fire. The men in the 2nd Battalion, with enemy fire to their front, American fire to their rear, and almost no visibility at all, had to show extreme discipline and nerves of steel as they remained in their designated area for the crossing.

Once arriving on the opposite bank, the Americans snagged wires that set off trip flares to further alert the Germans to their presence as a withering fire reigned down from above.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion jumped into boats and followed across. American artillery then opened up to break enemy strongpoints on Goldknapp Hill, and the GIs were mobile once again.

The 2nd Battalion advanced up Goldknapp Hill to rout the Germans as the 3rd swung right to take Ingledorf and advance on the outskirts of Diekirch. Crossing the Sauer near Diekirch had been costly. The Americans had 17 dead, 81 wounded, and 30 missing (probably killed). The casualties equaled almost a company.

The Germans were not yet through impersonating Americans. On January 19, American troops coming back from patrol outside Diekirch were huddled around a fire burning inside a steel drum when three men in American uniforms approached in the darkness. They quickly drew MP 40s from behind their backs and began to spray lead.

Sergeant Hymen Stein was wounded, but the other Americans quickly composed themselves and returned fire. Sergeant Stein made a fatal error in judgment when he decided to try and crawl to an area of greater cover. The Germans finished him off and then quickly withdrew.

Brutality sometimes extended to both sides. After another massacre of Americans, Michael Bilder recalled, "Word filtered into us from the 10th Regiment after they took Bastendorf on January 19 that the Germans in that town had executed American POWs from the 28th Infantry Division who'd been captured in the early days of the Bulge. Typified by the massacre at Malmedy [Belgium], this kind of news caused a great deal of hard feelings among American units, but it seemed to affect some of our men in the 5th Division particularly strongly.

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ABOVE: With the German offensive broken, members of the 10th Regiment, 5th Infantry Division pursue the enemy, January 24, 1945. OPPOSITE: GIs of the 26th Infantry Division move through Clervaux, scene of much hard fighting in northern Luxembourg, after the town's liberation, January 25, 1945.

"After word got out that American POWs had been killed, a number of our guys became a lot less likely to offer quarter to any surrendering Germans, and the enemy quickly picked up on our change of attitude."

Bilder noted that later during the Bulge, "Killing prisoners was never officially permitted, but sometimes a blind eye and deaf ear were turned towards it. If we had to move up quickly and had taken prisoners before we reached our final objective, those prisoners were in trouble if we couldn't spare anyone to stay behind and guard them. Someone was expected to lag behind for a moment or two to do the dirty work. It was never an order, or even mentioned. It was simply understood.

"This was not a matter I ever had to struggle over. Someone who had just lost a close buddy or simply enjoyed killing always stepped forward to do the job. In retrospect, somebody, including me, should have objected, but in battle all the rules of heaven and earth become casualties of war."

A seesaw battle for Diekirch took place in which the center of town changed hands four times before shells from American 155mm guns drove the Germans out. The Americans had taken 45 prisoners from the 208th Volksgrenadier Regiment. They were lucky to be spared, for in the center of Diekirch were the bodies of six American POWs who had been shot execution style in the back of the head. There were also more than a dozen civilians who had been shot and their bodies piled in the town square because they had openly welcomed their American liberators.

There was some payback as the civilian populace identified the collaborators in their midst. The women immediately had their heads shaved while the males were taken by the Luxembourg resistance into a wooded area outside town to have their service to the Germans repaid in kind.

Farther to the west, on the 5th Division's left, the 80th "Blue Ridge" Infantry Division was advancing across rough terrain against a German army already in retreat. The major concern for Model and Brandenberger now became saving the German Seventh Army from being trapped and subsequently destroyed.

Things were suddenly looking very bad for the Germans. Along the far western boundary of Luxembourg, the American 26th "Yankee" and 90th "Tough Hombres" Infantry Divisions had moved on Wiltz and were driving back the German 5th Parachute Division, which had overextended its supply lines and had been without relief.

A lesson not to be forgotten, in Luxembourg as well as in all of Europe, was that the Germans most often inflicted their greatest casualties against their enemies while in retreat; the advancing Americans would have to keep their guard up.

Model directed the Panzer Lehr and 2nd Panzer Divisions from Belgium to cover the Seventh Army's retreat. Raging snowstorms slowed the advance of the GIs of the 4th and 5th Infantry Divisions, but it was only a band-aid for Brandenberger's hemorrhaging of men and ground. By January 20, the American forces in Luxembourg were linked, rearmed, resupplied, in command of the heights, and ready to continue their attack.

The weather cleared on the 22nd, and American P-47s once again pounded the enemy, shooting up the German columns along the roads to Vianden. Brandenberger's Seventh Army may have escaped encirclement, but it certainly did not escape destruction. By January 28, the American III and XII Corps had linked up, reconnecting the link between Belgium and Luxembourg, and in a little over a week the Germans were pushed out of Luxembourg altogether.

This article represents but a small fragment of the overall desperate fighting that took place in Luxembourg; scores of cities, towns, villages, hamlets, clusters of farm buildings, roads, bridges, and open fields became battlefields where dramatic life-and-death scenarios were played out with extreme violence; it is impossible within the scope of this short article to fully explore, or even mention, all of the many other actions that raged there from mid-December 1944 through January 1945.

For the Germans, Hitler's colossal gamble in the West had failed, and following that failure would come the apocalyptic defeat of Nazi Germany. There would be little respite for the Germans after the battle, as Patton would send the 5th Division across the Sauer and into Germany on February 7.

Still, the exceptional courage of a weary but determined group of defenders and a relief effort that refused to be slowed by the elements or the enemy played no small role in ensuring that the Battle of the Bulge would be forever remembered as an American victory that hastened the defeat of Nazi Germany. □

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On a Wing... and Several Prayers

BY GLENN BARNETT

ON August 25, 1944, Larry Stevens and the rest of his Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber crew completed their 35th mission over Nazi-occupied Europe. Since April 25, 1944, they had bombed targets in France, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania.

As part of the Eighth Air Force, they had flown from bases in England, Russia, and Italy. They bombed submarine pens, airfields, V-1 and V-2 rocket factories, dropped supplies to French Resistance fighters, and flew over Normandy on D-Day. Stevens was just 20 years old when his war ended.

Like most Americans, Larry Stevens's war started on December 7, 1941. He was then a sophomore at Alhambra High School in southern California. He did his bit as an air-raid warden—admonishing his neighbors to turn their lights out in case of air raids. On the night of February 23, 1942, a Japanese submarine shelled an oil terminal on the coast near Santa Barbara. In Los Angeles, air raid sirens and searchlights pierced the night sky and Stevens ran from door to door to ensure that the lights were off.

In April 1943, Stevens, now a high school senior, joined two friends in enlisting in the U.S. Army. They were given a month to put their affairs in order and used the time to arrange with their teachers to let them graduate early.

Larry Stevens, a teenaged gunner on a venerable B-17G named *Full House,* survived 35 missions to make it back home.

In this painting by Robert Taylor, B-17s return from the August 17, 1943, Schweinfurt raid with German Me-109s in hot pursuit. The raid cost the U.S. Eighth Air Force 60 B-17s and 600 men. Luckily for him, Larry Stevens was still in training at the time of the raid.

On May 10, Stevens boarded a bus for a staging area near San Bernardino, where the recruits were given uniforms, inoculations, and an IQ test. Then they were asked what branch of the Army they were most interested in. Stevens had taken photography classes in school, so he elected the air force; perhaps he could become an aerial reconnaissance photographer.

He soon found himself on a train to Atlantic City, New Jersey, home of the Army Air Forces Training Command (AAFTC), where new personnel received basic training and were introduced to such subjects as indoctrination into the air force, pilot and aircrew training, and technical training.

The AAFTC lacked enough barracks for the thousands of new recruits, so many were housed in the Claridge and other hotels on the famous boardwalk. But it was no vacation. Stevens remembers that his NCO was from the South and a man of few words, about 20 of them, "all curse words that he used to put a sentence together."

Six days a week the new men hiked some 13 miles through the streets of the city, singing Air Corps songs. Their destination was a city dump where they practiced close-order drill and marksmanship.

When Stevens was asked if he wanted to be an airplane gunner, he jumped at the

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chance, but that evening, August 18, 1943, he saw the headlines in the paper: "Sixty B-17's lost over Schweinfurt and Regensburg." Then he wasn't so sure, but it was too late to change his mind.

He was soon on a train again, this time heading west for armament school at Lowry Army Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. There he learned, among other things, aerial gunnery and how to field strip and reassemble a .50-caliber machine gun while blindfolded and wearing gloves. He also practiced aircraft recognition.

From Lowry the new gunners were sent to gunnery school in Fort Meyers, Florida. In addition to more training, the troops shot skeet twice a day. It was pleasant duty but was punctuated by sadness when Stevens received a letter from his mother informing him that his older brother Ernie had been killed in action at Messina, Sicily.

In December 1943, Stevens joined his 10-man B-17 bomber crew. He was assigned to be the tail gunner and he took to it right away. Everyone else was close enough to other crewmen for conversation—at least over the interphone; the noise from the engines blotted out normal conversation. The tail gunner was all alone.

He would rest on his knees and sit on a bicycle seat that could take part of his weight. He had a good view of the sky behind the plane, but there were a few blind spots. At altitude he would breathe from an oxygen mask and wear a fleece-lined full body suit that was heated with wires connected to the plane's electrical system. His parachute was always close at hand.

The crew practiced flying in a B-17, cross training in each other's jobs (Stevens also learned to operate the radio), and the important work of getting to know each other. On March 31, 1944, the crew boarded the liner *Queen Elizabeth* in her wartime gray livery and sailed for England along a zigzag course to elude U-boats. Among the other military passengers on board was world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Lewis. Although technically in the Army, Lewis was in the Special Services division and put on boxing exhibitions to entertain the troops and raise money for charities.

After docking in Scotland, the flyboys took a train to their airfield near the tiny (population 50) rural village of Horham, England, about 80 miles northeast of London, to become a part of the Eighth Air Force. RAF Horham was the home of the 13th Combat Bombardment Wing, 95th Bombardment Group, 3rd Bomb Division. RAF Horham's U.S. Air Force designation was Station 119; about 3,000 Americans were based there.

Upon entering their headquarters quonset hut for the first time, Larry and the other men noticed 40 wallets on the counter of the orderly room. When they inquired about the wallets, they were told, "You're their replacements. We lost four crews yesterday. Welcome to the real world."

After this sober greeting, the men settled in. The hut was Spartan. It had room for two enlisted crews of six men each; the officers bunked elsewhere. There was a pot-bellied iron stove in the center of the room for heat and for boiling water to make tea. Each bunk was topped by a straw mattress covered with canvas. There were no sheets or pillowcases, just scratchy Army-issued wool blankets.

BELOW: Larry Stevens poses at his tail-gunner's position next to *Full House*. BOTTOM: Close-up of the deadly twin .50-caliber machine guns mounted in the tail of a B-17.

Courtesy of Larry Stevens

National Archives

Larry and the other new men soon learned that the Eighth Air Force was spread across 45 different bomber airfields in Britain and divided into three bomb divisions. The 1st and 3rd Bomb Divisions flew B-17s, while the 2nd Division flew the Consolidated B-24 Liberator. Each division contained 15 groups, and each group had four squadrons of seven to 12 planes each. Five or six of these were available for flying at any one time. Three squadrons could put 20 planes in the air at a time. Sixty planes became a "wing." The fourth squadron stood down for maintenance.

After a few days at RAF Horham, the new crews were scheduled to take a familiarization flight around the country. They were to use an old B-17F called *Patches* because it had been patched up so often following previous missions. As the new men assembled by the runway, they heard a loud explosion in the thick clouds above. As they watched, the broken sections of two B-17s, having collided in the thick clouds above, crashed in front of them; 15 men were lost. The familiarization flight was cancelled.

On April 25, 1944, Stevens flew his first combat mission—over Dijon, France. The crew was awakened at 1:45 AM, went to the latrine, had breakfast, and assembled in the smoke-filled briefing room where a blanket covered a large map of Europe.

Courtesy of Larry Stevens

National Archives

TOP: The crew of *Full House*, photographed in front of the plane. Stevens is in the front row, third from the left. ABOVE: A photo taken during Stevens's first combat mission, the April 25, 1944, raid on Dijon, France.

The blanket was removed, and the men were shown their primary target along with secondary targets and the routes they would take. The revelation of the day's target was always met with groans and gripes. After the briefing, the gunners collected their .50-caliber machine guns from armament, where they had been cleaned and oiled. They were then driven to their planes, and the guns were mounted before takeoff. This was the routine for every mission.

Because there were so many airfields in Great Britain at the time and because the skies were almost always cloudy, each plane flew in a tight spiral over its own airfield to gain altitude and reach clear skies above. Then they would seek out the other planes in their group (each group had unique tail marking for identification) and join the wing in formation while heading for the target.

Stevens's plane flew tail's ass Charlie—the last plane in the "wing." There was light flak, but no enemy fighters appeared. The first mission to Dijon was a success; that mission logged eight hours and 45 minutes in the air. On landing, the men were given a shot of scotch and went through a thorough debriefing—what kind of flak and enemy fighters were encountered, what were the weather conditions like, any mechanical problems to the target and back, etc. Stevens told his interviewer that he had seen a lone, unmarked B-17 in the distance at their same course and speed. He then learned that the Germans often flew captured B-17s to radio to the ground the altitude and speed of the bombing formations to alert their gunners below and fighters above.

On April 26, their second mission, they bombed Brunswick, Germany. This time, Stevens and his grew were mated with a B-17G with the serial number on the tail of 297797. The last five numbers gave the plane its name: *Full House.* The nose art featured a hand of cards with three sevens and two nines. Larry and his crew would fly 29 of their 35 missions in this plane.

Larry's crew flew its third mission on April 27 against Cherbourg, France, in *Full House,* below and behind the rest of the wing. As they neared their target, Stevens, from his vantage point in the tail, saw four flak bursts behind them. Each burst was at their altitude, and each burst came closer to the plane. This was followed by a second burst of four shells, each successively closer yet.

As calmly as he could, Stevens notified his co-pilot, "Do something or they're going to get us." It got worse. George Dancisin, the pilot, increased speed to avoid the flak but that put them directly below the rest of the group which had by now opened their bomb bay doors and would soon release their bombs right on top of *Full House.*

To avoid being blown out of the sky by friendly bombs, Dancisin suddenly cut power and swerved sharply out of the bomb run. As he did so, flak exploded where they would have been, riddling the bottom of their plane with steel splinters. *Full House* made for home, dumping her bombs in the English Channel.

When *Full House* arrived back at Hor-

sham, the crew was informed that they would fly their fourth mission the same day. The plane was rearmed and refueled to bomb Le Culot, France. The crew logged 11 hours and 45 minutes in the air that day. Everyone was exhausted.

On the 11th mission, they joined 1,000 other bombers and as many fighters to bomb synthetic oil plants; *Full House* was assigned to hit a plant in Brux, Czechoslovakia. Stevens, from his tail position, saw yellow, black, and white parachutes that "completely filled the sky behind me." The Germans put up a stiff resistance, and the parachutes were both German and American.

Stevens recalled that he fired at a variety of fighters—yellow-nosed Messerschmitt Me-109s of the elite Hermann Göring squadron and Focke-Wulf FW-190s—while *Full House* took flak that knocked out its communications wiring. Fortunately, the flak shells were set to explode at a higher altitude and passed right through the plane.

The next day *Stars and Stripes* reported that 40 American bombers and 10 fighters were lost on the mission and many more were damaged. Assuming no one survived, that would make for 410 men killed on one mission.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the crew of *Full House* flew its 16th mission—against targets inland behind the invasion beaches to support the troops on the ground. There was not much to see of the invasion because of the thick cloud cover, but occasionally Stevens spotted a few ships below through a break in the clouds. As it was, its target was socked in, and the crew aborted its mission. There were absolutely no enemy fighters in the air. "The sky belonged to us," Stevens remembered.

The next day *Full House* returned to bomb a bridge at Nantes, in western France, to prevent German reinforcements from reaching the Normandy invasion beaches. The weather was better over Normandy on June 7, and the crew could see the vast armada of ships and the landing beaches, but at 20,000 feet the men were too high to make out any details.

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A B-17 releases its bombs over Brunswick, Germany, on April 26, 1944. It was Stevens's second mission.

On June 19, while *Full House* was undergoing maintenance, Stevens and his crew took advantage of a day pass to London. While they were in the city, German V-1 buzz bombs, each armed with nearly a ton of Amatol-39, began to fall. Along with the rest of the population, the American fliers ducked in and out of air raid shelters frequently. "We knew what it was like to be on the receiving end" of a bombing, Stevens related.

Stevens celebrated his 20th birthday on July 10 with a bottle of scotch that his crewmates pooled their money to buy him. Of course he passed it around, so they all shared in the celebration.

The next day the crew of *Full House* flew its 24th mission against V-1 factories in faraway Munich, Germany. Flak was heavy. Stevens watched as a neighboring B-17 took a direct flak hit that knocked out an engine. The waist gunner of that plane, a friend of Stevens, was hit in the shoulder by a fragment that penetrated his flak vest. He was seriously wounded and sent home.

Even with their busy flight schedule, there was still time for mischief. One day while *Full House* was grounded for maintenance work, Stevens and a friend went for a long hike in the English countryside. They came across a farmer's hen house and helped themselves to four eggs. The fresh eggs were a welcome contrast to the powdered eggs they had been eating since arriving in Britain.

As the war progressed, new technology was brought into use to increase accuracy and bomb damage. The 25th mission of the *Full House* crew, on July 12, was against a Focke-Wulf assembly plant at Munich. On the way home, the co-pilot, Albert Keeler, affectionately nicknamed "Ruby" after the actress, tuned the ship's radio to a station that broadcast German propaganda in English and played it over the interphone. The announcer made a big deal about how the Americans were dropping "dud" bombs on Munich. What the cocky announcer didn't know was that the crew of *Full House* dropped bombs with delayed-action fuses that would explode later.

Another technology that came online was pathfinder radar-guided bombing; the target no longer needed to be visible to the eye. The lead aircraft was fitted with electronics that could "see" through the clouds to drop its bombs on target. Each following plane

released bombs around the leader's drop.

For its 29th mission, the *Full House* crew had something to do besides drop bombs. *Full House* joined 191 other B-17s assigned to drop supplies to the French Resistance, the Maquis. The drop zones lay west of Geneva, Switzerland, in Savoie in the Alps. In all, 2,281 containers were dropped.

Flying at 500 feet, Stevens recalled, "We flew in formation with our landing gear and flaps down to lower our air speed." As the parachutes exited the plane, Stevens could see figures on the ground rushing to receive them. There were no enemy fighters or flak. Time in the air was nine hours and 20 minutes. There was disconcerting news when they landed, however. The mandatory number of missions was raised from 30 to 35.

It should also be noted that, as the war progressed, the number of missions required for a U.S. Eighth Air Force air crewman to complete before becoming eligible for rotation off combat flying duty changed several times. In August 1942, the number was 30 sorties and 200 hours—and was once briefly raised to 50 missions—but in December 1942 it was dropped to 25 sorties and 150 hours "if circumstances warranted."

The criteria continued to change periodically until the fall of 1944, when the Mighty Eighth deleted all references to number of sorties or flying hours in relation to rotation; personnel were rotated when they were "fatigued to a degree that affected the efficiency of their unit." The increase in the required number of missions or hours always led to a decrease in morale. The Eighth soon established a policy of 35 missions.

On August 6, *Full House* began another unusual mission. The crew would be a part of Operation Frantic that ran from June to September 1944. This was a plan to allow long-range American bombers to bomb targets in the far eastern part of German-held territory and land in the Soviet Union. From there they would refuel, rearm, and hit targets on a return "shuttle" flight to Italy.

Frantic was plagued with problems from the beginning. Uncooperative Soviet allies made it a logistical nightmare. Supplies from bombs to bullets had to be shipped in through the Baltic and sent by train to airfields in what is now Ukraine. Soviet airfields were often little more than rutted dirt or mud, and PSP (pierced steel planking) had to be imported and laid on top of the runways to support heavy bombers.

After a few bombing runs in June 1944, the Germans caught on. On the night of June 21, a flight of 75 Luftwaffe bombers found 73 undefended B-17s and their North American P-51 Mustang fighter escorts on the ground at Poltava, Ukraine. For two hours the Luftwaffe leisurely bombed the airfield at Poltava, destroying 47 B-17s while damaging most of the others. In addition, 14 P-51s were damaged and much of the fuel and bomb stores on the ground went up in flames.

The Soviets would not allow the Americans to defend themselves. Officially no explanation was ever given, but the flyers suspected that the Soviets feared they would look bad in American propaganda if they could not defend their guests. This only added to the mistrust between allies.

Full House would take part in the fifth of these shuttle missions to Poltava. They were part of a wing of 75 B-17s escorted by 154 P-51s. Outbound from England, the wing bombed a German airfield at

National Archives

A field of destroyed American B-17 bombers caught on the ground by the Luftwaffe at the Russian airfield in Poltava, Ukraine, on June 21, 1944.

Gdynia—a part of the "Polish Corridor." Focke-Wulf 190s made a diving pass at *Full House,* but the P-51s chased them away.

As *Full House* circled the airfield at Poltava, her crew could see the dozens of wrecked B-17s strewn all over the airfield. It was a sobering sight as no one aboard knew of the June 21 tragedy, which was still classified. "It scared the be-jesus out of me," remembered Stevens.

The Americans were not allowed to leave the base, but that did not stop their hosts from making them very welcome. They were served a hearty meal by friendly farm girls and treated to an after-dinner concert of Russian folk music and dancing. But sleep was problematic. There were still patches of snow all around, and the clear Ukrainian night was freezing cold; each man had only one inadequate blanket on his cot. Even after an exhausting 10-hour flight, it was difficult to sleep because of the bitter cold.

The next day, at Soviet request, *Full House* joined 54 other B-17s and 29 P-51s for an attack on an oil refinery at Trzebinia, Poland. After their bomb run, Stevens could see black smoke rising to 23,000 feet—a sure sign that they had done their job.

The crew had a real scare on the way back from Trzebinia. Flying at 10,000 feet, Stevens took off his oxygen mask and began to relax when suddenly he heard the pilot yell to the co-pilot, "Grab it, Ruby, grab it!" At the same moment *Full House* veered out of formation and started to dive. From his position in the rear of the plane, Stevens saw two parachutes float past. He turned and looked forward through the fuselage to see smoke filling the plane. Somewhere there was a fire. Grabbing his parachute, he crawled forward to find one of the waist gunners frantically trying to wave the smoke out of one of the side gun ports.

Meanwhile, the other waist gunner, Gordon Langford, grabbed a fire extinguisher and ran forward through the bomb bay without his parachute to put out the fire. The plane was righted and continued back to Poltava.

It was there that the crew discovered the cause of the mysterious fire. A design flaw in the B-17 caused the oxygen hoses to run at the base of the top turret. Constant rubbing against these hoses by the swiveling turret eventually cut through the hoses and caused an oxygen fire, which shot forward between the pilot and co-pilot and into the nose of the plane, which housed the navigator and bombardier. They instinctively bailed out, and it was their parachutes that Stevens had seen floating past him.

Fortunately, the two men who bailed out landed in Soviet-occupied territory. They would be returned to England two weeks later, where they reunited with the rest of the crew and had an amazing story to tell.

Frank Morrison, the navigator, related how trucks full of Russian soldiers drove out to meet him. He threw up his hands and said, "Amerikanski, Amerikanski."

The first Russian on the scene laughed and said in perfect English, "I know that you are American. I graduated from Michigan and was conscripted into the Soviet Army when I returned to Russia."

That night the Russians held a banquet and, after several friendly toasts of vodka, Morrison could no longer recall the details except that everyone had a good time.

The city of Munich takes a pasting during an American air raid.

National Archives

Meanwhile, the rest of the crew scavenged the extensive boneyard of wrecked B-17s at Poltava for spare parts, but the oxygen system could not be fixed until they returned to England. *Full House* left Poltava on August 8, 1944, for the crew's 33rd mission—a bombing run against Buzan, Romania, a part of the Ploesti oil refinery works. Without a navigator or bombardier, the ball-turret gunner, Leo Makelky, was assigned to do both tasks while Stevens took over the ball turret.

It was relatively easy work for Makelky. He would simply follow the other B-17s, and when the lead bomber dropped his bombs. Leo would drop his. As the ground was socked in with clouds, accuracy was entirely dependent on the lead bomber and his pathfinder radar.

That night *Full House* landed at Foggia, Italy, on the Adriatic Sea near the heel of the Italian boot. Stevens was shocked at the total devastation around them; every building he could see had been reduced to rubble.

Stevens arrived late at his assigned bunk only to find it occupied by someone else. He decided to sleep in the plane but, as he walked in

National Archives

An unidentified target in Poland is obscured by a thick pall of smoke and dust. Eighty thousand Allied airmen lost their lives during the war while an estimated 400,000 German civilians perished in bombing raids.

the dark, he was nearly shot by a nervous guard who had orders to shoot first and ask questions later. Fortunately, the guard disobeyed orders by challenging the "dumb" flyboy who had just arrived and didn't know the rules. He escorted Stevens safely to his plane by shouting to the other guards and waving his flashlight so they would not be shot.

The crew's 34th mission was to bomb the airfield at Toulouse, France, and land back in England. Someone decided that, since liquor was hard to find in Britain, he would store some in the radio operator's compartment. As the plane reached altitude, however, the tops popped off the bottles. The radio operator calmly called to his friend Leo Makelky to join him in the radio room as he had a "problem." By the time *Full House* reached England, the two of them "were pretty well snockered."

In England the crew was given some R&R while awaiting the return of its navigator and bombardier from Russia. While the men rested, a brand new crew, just arrived in England, took *Full House* out on its first mission, which was over Zeitz, Germany. German flak was heavy and accurate, and *Full House* and her new crew were shot down.

Despite the loss of the plane that had carried them safely through 29 missions, Stevens and his crew would fly their 35th and final mission on August 25, 1944, in a brand new B-17G model, which their crew chief had already named *Big Chief Illiniwek,* after the mascot of the University of Illinois.

Taking off with the usual load of a dozen 500-pound bombs and 2,875 gallons of fuel, they spiraled up through the clouds until they reached clear skies at 15,000 feet. From there they and the rest of the formation headed toward the day's target: Politz, Austria.

As the formation flew over Germany, it gained altitude to above 20,000 feet. At that altitude, the number-three engine of the new ship would not hold manifold pressure, and the plane could not keep up with the formation. They turned back toward Horham without dropping their bombs. The built-up pressure of 35 missions vented itself as Stevens spotted "enemy seagulls" and the gunners happily did a lot of shooting.

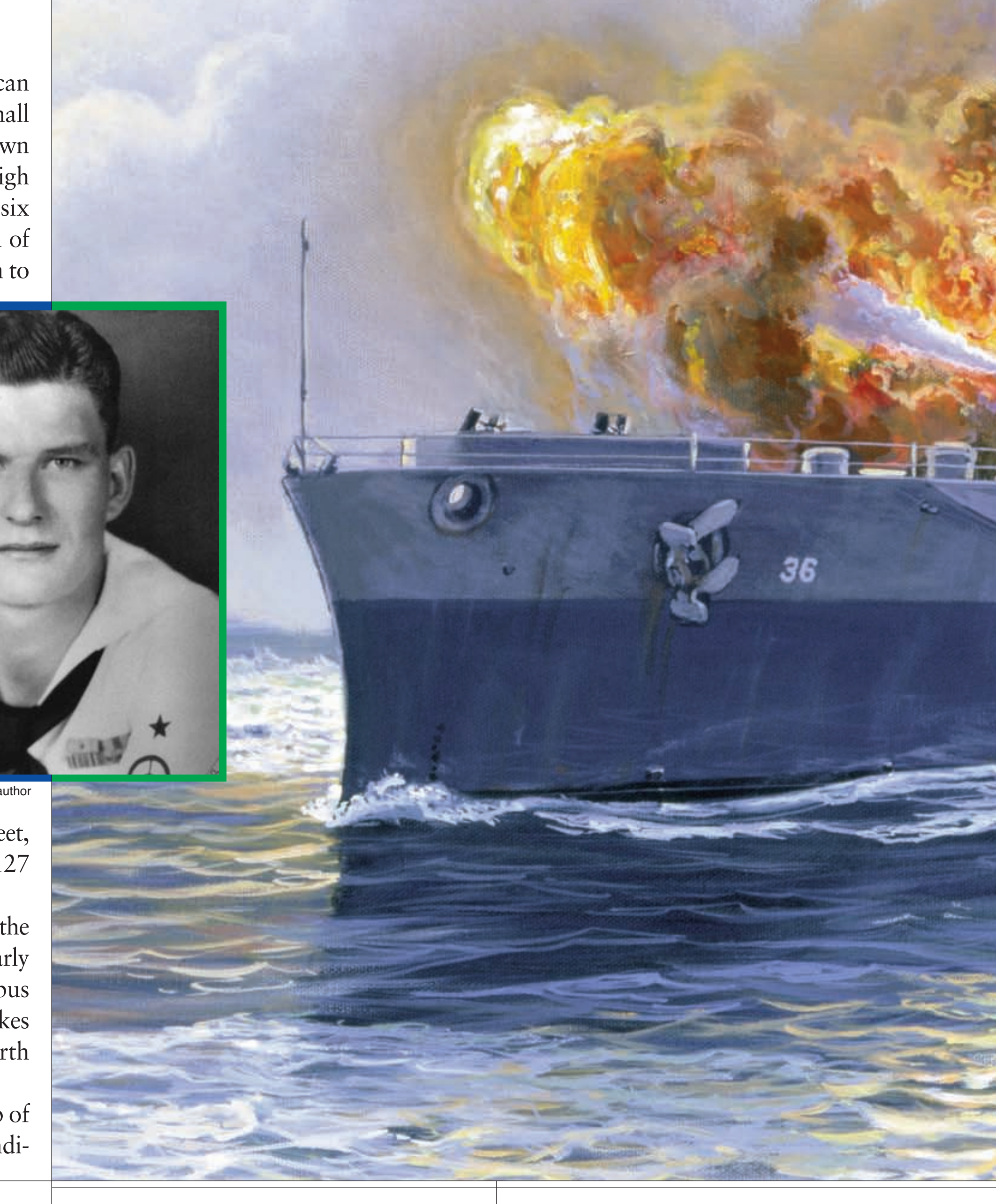
Because they had flown over enemy territory, the crew was given credit for its last mission. The men later learned that two of the bombers on the run were lost to flak. After somehow surviving 35 missions, it was time to go home.

Stevens flew home in a C-54 transport plane. When he arrived in New York, there was a cursory inspection of his luggage, and the inspector told Larry to "go home and enjoy himself." The inspector knew from the combat ribbons on the gunner's uniform that Stevens had flown in combat and survived. He was a war hero and deserving of a warm welcome home.

Larry Stevens was still in the Air Force, however, and he volunteered to be a tail gunner on a North American B-25 Mitchell bomber for duty in the Pacific and the invasion of Japan; the war ended while he was still training. Stevens returned home and served in the fire department of his hometown—Alhambra, California—for 31 years. He has written a book about his wartime experiences that was self-published under the title *It Only Takes One*. He is still in touch with Leo Makelky, the only other member of his crew still living. □

The Nevada and I Survived the War

BY CHARLES T. SEHE



I AM OF POLISH, Irish, and American Indian descent and grew up in the small (population 3,800) northern Illinois town of Geneva. After graduating from high school at age 17 (the only one of six siblings in my family to do so), several of us 17- and 18-year-old kids went down to the recruiting substation in Aurora, Illinois, and enlisted in the U.S. Navy. It was Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1940—almost a full year before Pearl Harbor.

Photo courtesy of the author

Applicants had to have been United States citizens between the ages of 17 and 31 and needed to meet the Navy's physical standards. Since some of us were not 18 years old, parents had to sign for us with their approval. This Depression-era kid stood at five feet, six inches tall and weighed a skinny 127 pounds.

We were allowed to return home for the Thanksgiving dinner weekend. Then, early Monday morning, December 2, a bus drove us from Aurora to the Great Lakes U.S. Naval Training Center near North Chicago, a distance of 60-plus miles.

Once there, we joined another group of recruits to form a company of 110 indi-

© Mark Churms

In *Unsinkable* by Mark Churms, the battleship USS *Nevada* blasts Japanese positions during the American assault on Okinawa, April 1945. Although badly damaged at Pearl Harbor, the ship was refloated, repaired, and saw plenty of action for the rest of the war.
INSET: The author, Charles T. Sehe, photographed in August 1944.

A former sailor recalls his ship's participation in some of the most momentous events of World War II, from Pearl Harbor to Normandy to Iwo Jima

viduals—Company 122—to be billeted in large wooden barracks where a chief petty officer and two lower ranked petty officers processed us, read us some of the Navy regulations, and assigned us to lockers and bunks. Written and manual exams and physical fitness were also scheduled to determine our qualifications to enter advanced trade schools.

Then we were sent through a processing line where we were issued a complete set of naval clothing: underwear, dungarees, shoes, white jumpers and pants, white caps, etc. Another set of Navy dress blues, caps, and peacoats was issued for winter wear.

Barracks inspection was held every Saturday morning, and each recruit was to have his locker contents neatly displayed on the floor with all clothing tightly rolled and fastened with "stop lines" and small brass ferrules. Some days were devoted to Army-style drills with rifles. We marched around the camp wearing khaki canvas leggings called "boots." I suppose this is why the Great Lakes Naval Training Center was called "boot camp."

Reveille was at 5:30 AM. We dressed and marched in formation to every meal—breakfast, lunch, and supper. On Sunday, each recruit attended his own faith and worship service. "Rope Yarn Sunday" was free time for all to catch up on seamanship skills, washing clothes, writing letters, or just getting acquainted with the other recruits of our company.

On the rifle range I did not hit anything but got a sore jaw from the weapon's recoil. I never learned to swim, but I did pass the swimming test by dog paddling my way across the long pool's required distance.

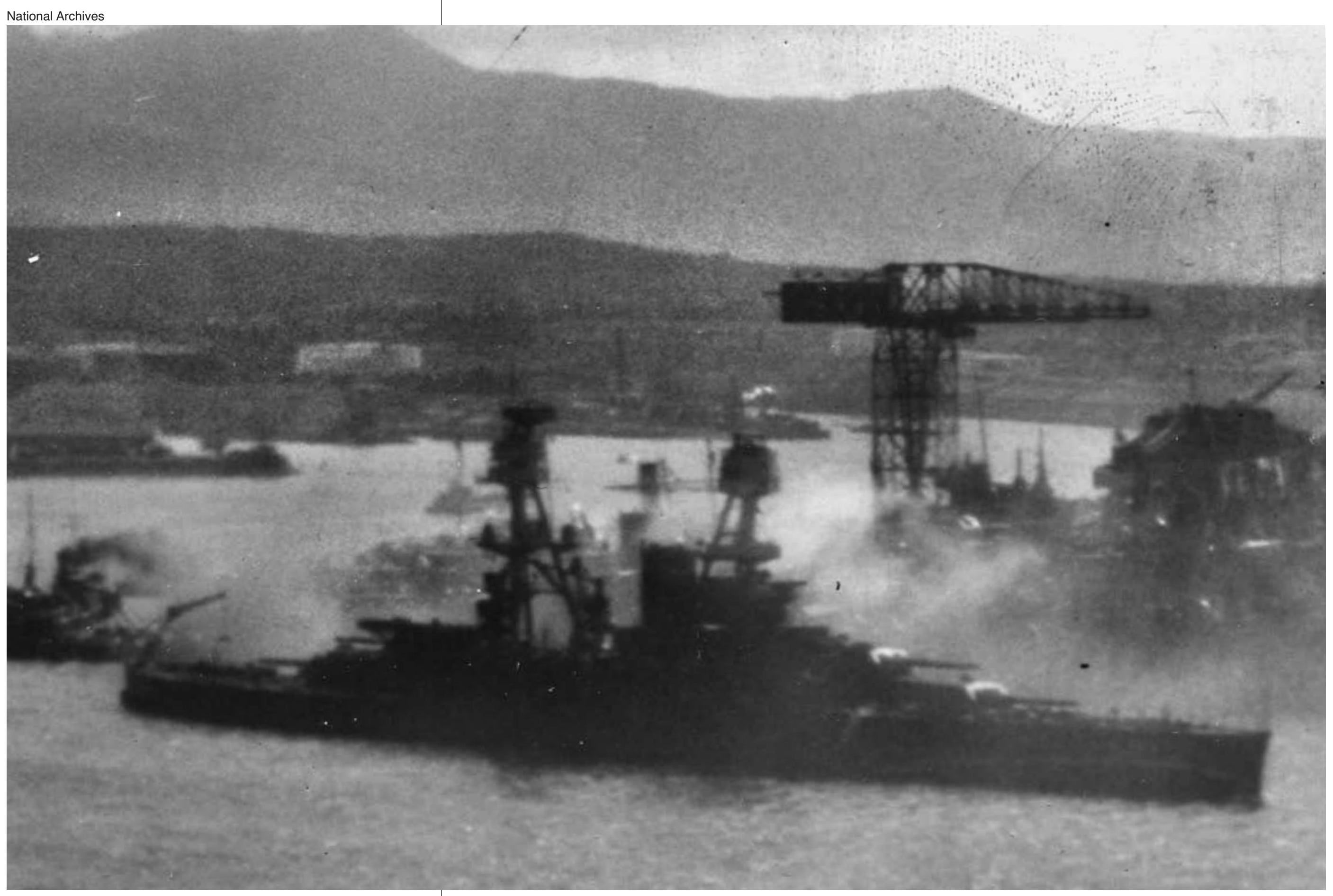
Final inspection and graduation for Company 122 was January 4, 1941. I had previously developed a sore throat with runny nose—catarrh fever—and was admitted to sick bay. Two weeks later, I was assigned to Company 130, with which I graduated on January 18, 1941.

In a large hall our new assignments were given to us by a petty officer stenciling on each recruit's clear mattress cover the name of the ship or station to which we were assigned. The printed words on my mattress cover read, "USS *Nevada* (BB36), Bremerton Naval Yard, Washington." A series of unanticipated historical events soon erupted that would profoundly affect my personal life.

After completing my recruiting duties at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, I went by train to the Puget Sound Naval Yard in Bremerton, Washington, where I reported aboard the *Nevada,* a battleship with a crew of 1,500 men. From Puget Sound we would sail to the tropical paradise of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

With smoke streaming from internal fires, *Nevada* tries to escape the Pearl Harbor killing zone and head out to sea. Moments after this photo was taken, the ship was hit by two Japanese bombs.

National Archives



Nevada **lies beached and burning at 9:25 AM after being hit forward by Japanese bombs and torpedoes. A harbor tugboat is alongside** ***Nevada*****'s port bow, helping to fight fires on the battleship's forecastle.**

PEARL HARBOR

In early December 1941, the *Nevada* was moored to Quay Fox 8, just astern of the battleship USS *Arizona.* On the Friday afternoon before that fateful Sunday, I went aboard the A*rizona* to visit a hometown friend. He invited me to come over on Saturday night after liberty, but I had duty watch on Sunday so I declined his offer. He would be among the 1,177 who perished aboard the *Arizona* the next day.

At 7:55 AM on December 7, a bright, sunny Hawaiian morning, most of the *Nevada* crew had finished eating breakfast, and the band members and the Marine color guard were assembling on the main deck aft in preparation for the daily posting of the American flag. I left the dining area to use the enlisted men's "head" and, moments later, the concussions of the first bombs that hit the *Nevada* literally blew me from my seat.

As general quarters sounded, I ran to my battle station, which was Number 4 After Searchlight, located high up on the mainmast. Already, incoming Japanese planes were strafing the exposed deck areas with machine-gun bullets, and the color guard and band members were scattering for safety. Since the searchlights were obviously not used during daylight hours, all I could do was watch this terrible, alarming, unbelievable nightmare unfold before my eyes.

An aerial torpedo launched from one of the Japanese planes soon struck the *Nevada* on the port side near frame 40, causing the ship to lurch violently upward and shudder. I could also see numerous torpedo wakes streaking toward the moored battleships *West Virginia* and *Oklahoma.*

The *Nevada,* with some of its boilers already lit on standby, got up enough steam pressure to get underway. As my ship slowly eased its way into the channel and past the *Arizona,* a tremendous, fiery explosion ripped the *Arizona* apart, showering the open-deck crews of the *Nevada* with hot, searing debris, burning many of them to death.

I watched a second wave of high-level and dive bombers now concentrating their efforts on the *Nevada* as we, the only ship moving, slowly proceeded up the channel, trying to reach open water. Eight bombs hit their mark and severely damaged our forecastle, bridge, and the boat-deck area. The *Nevada,* I learned later, was given orders to beach herself to avoid blocking the channel and preventing other ships from entering or leaving. An urgent call piped for firefighters—"men free!"

The *Nevada* now lay bow low aground. I came down from my perch on the mainmast to help with rescue and firefighting efforts and discovered all her decks below the second level, except for the watertight compartments, were filled with floating debris in foul-smelling water mixed with heavy sludge fuel oil.

After most of the fires were put out, we turned our attention to removing the wounded and dead, who were then transferred to motor launches that came alongside. Motor-launch crews were moving between the ships, pulling severely wounded and burned sailors, covered with fuel oil, from the burning waters.

After the attack ended, we were given galvanized buckets to pick up the numerous isolated body parts strewn around the 5-inch gun casemates within my division area. I can never forget finding mangled arms, legs, heads, and knee joints, as well as shoulder fragments and torn, burned body torsos—all unidentifiable because of their blackened, burned condition. The tremendous force of the numerous explosions seemed to have literally strained some of the bodies through the chain-link fencing making up some of the bulkheads in the vicinity of the huge casing for the smokestack.

Seven sunken U.S. battleships now lay helpless along Battleship Row in the harbor. After the fires had been put out and the wounded and dead were removed from these ships, harbor tugs towing empty barges came alongside these stricken vessels to begin salvage operations. *Nevada*'s losses were three officers and 47 men killed, 102 wounded, and 17 missing.

The *Nevada* still lay bow down, mired in the mud at Waipio Point. We began throwing all loose debris and metal fragments into the barges while repair crews from the navy yard climbed aboard carrying acetylene torch tanks and began cutting through the fire-blackened, torn, and twisted structures still posing a hazard to the crew.

RAISING NEVADA

I still recall the day, February 12, 1942, when the bow was slowly raised by a huge barge crane, causing a loud sucking noise as our ship was freed from its muddy prison and floated. Towed and maneuvered by tugs, *Nevada* reached one of Pearl's drydocks, where repairs immediately became top priority to make the ship as seaworthy as possible to reach the mainland for more extensive repairs.

The wide, gaping hole on *Nevada*'s port side, left there by a single torpedo launched by one of the Japanese aircraft, was soon closed tightly by the welding together of numerous steel plates. Those steel plates later became affectionately known as the "million-dollar patch."

Being a seaman second class, I was among the 300 skeleton cleaning crewmen that remained assigned to the *Nevada,* whereas the more experienced and high-rated crew members were transferred to other ships for immediate sea duty.

From December through February, we worked during daylight hours removing all debris and, by using gasoline-powered pumps, soon drained the acrid, foul-smelling water and oil from the lower compartments—after which it was determined that it was safe to enter these areas; some had been filled with poisonous fumes.

Every day at dusk, we left the ship by launch for the base facilities where we took hot, soapy showers to remove the grimy dirt and oil from our bodies and have a hot meal. We then were billeted in the Bloch Arena for a good night's rest.

The *Nevada* left Pearl Harbor under its own power with me aboard and slowly proceeded across the Pacific to the Puget Sound Navy Yard in Bremerton, arriving on May 1, 1942. The crew was granted a 10-day leave, so I left by train to go home to visit my parents, who were very happy, though shocked, to see me alive and well.

Upon my return to Bremerton, a profound change was occurring in the silhouette of the *Nevada*'s superstructure, foremast, and smokestack. The 10 casemated guns had been removed, and eight dual-purpose twin 5-inch gun mounts were being installed. These guns were more suitable for defense against incoming enemy planes and could still be used against surface craft using modern electronic fire-control systems and computerized range-finding equipment to provide rapid firing and movement.

National Archives

ABOVE: Navy seamen take part in radar training at the Fleet Training Center, Oahu, Hawaii. OPPOSITE: With binoculars in hand, crews are on the alert for the enemy. *Nevada* participated in Operation Landcrab—the retaking of Attu Island in the Aleutian chain, April 1943.

I can't recall the specific day in May 1942, but I was privileged—among hundreds of servicemen and naval yard workmen—to see President Roosevelt's motorcade course through the navy yard. He had requested to see some of the damage caused by the Japanese naval assault at Pearl Harbor.

From May through June 1942, as the *Nevada* was being reconditioned, periodic bulletins gave the first indications how grave the situation had become for the Allied forces in the Pacific Theater. Week after week following the initial attack at Pearl Harbor, Japanese successes seemed to continue—Wake and Guam Islands, Singapore, Malaya, and the Philippines were conquered.

The loss of numerous U.S. warships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines just added more despair to the humiliation suffered at Pearl Harbor. These new, tragic events gave this 19-year-old crewman the horrible realization that we were engaged in a deadly game of war, and this thought sickened me emotionally.

During the second week of June 1942, a communiqué from CINCPAC (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific) gave us most welcome news that spread quickly throughout the U.S. fleet. Navy fliers had sunk four Japanese aircraft carriers in the Battle of Midway. What a morale booster!

Division officers aboard our ship gave encouraging impromptu talks about their respective views on the future. In summary, they emphasized that our naval forces would now have the opportunity to avenge the Pearl Harbor disaster by striking back at the Japanese with more sophisticated weapons of war, modern warships, and tons of military equipment, as the industrial might of America swung quickly to full-time war production.

Upon the completion of the *Nevada*'s modernization, involving almost eight months of overhaul, our crew of 450 including several Pearl Harbor survivors left Bremerton

and set course toward Port Angeles located in the upper straits of Juan de Fuca between Washington State and Vancouver Island. Here gun crews and radar operators began testing their new, computerized equipment. I was instructed in the use of the FD radar unit, assigned to gun director Sky No. 1. Four gun-director mounts controlled the rapid movements and firing of the newly installed twin 5-inch antiaircraft gun mounts, all electronically operated.

In practice runs, a small surface craft would tow a target sled some distance behind it, and these objects would appear as two small, elevated blips on the green radar screen. Repeated practice runs enabled the radar operators to readily distinguish with accuracy between the towing vessel and the target. I also gained experienced as a 20mm gun operator when gunnery practice for all antiaircraft batteries—5-inch, 40mm, and 20mm—became the order of the day.

OPERATION LANDCRAB

Cruising southward along the western coast of the United States, the *Nevada* reached San Diego, then began gunnery exercises again, this time near San Clemente Island, a restricted U.S. Navy reservation some 25 miles offshore from San Diego.

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In the first week of April 1943, the *Nevada* received its orders to accompany two other battleships—*Pennsylvania* (another resurrected Pearl Harbor casualty) and *Idaho*—along with several cruisers and destroyers to a chain of islands extending southwest from Alaska, the Aleutians.

As we approached the island chain, the weather began to change drastically from what we had experienced in Bremerton, San Diego, and Hawaii. Dense foggy areas, blustery winds, and snow flurries greeted us as the mountainous islands came into view. A solid overcast prevented any sunshine from breaking through. Winter must come here early, we thought, but in April?

"Air defense" and general quarters alarms often sounded as "bogies" (unidentified aircraft) appeared on the air-surface radar screens. Rough seas, persistent dense fog, driving rain, and sometimes blinding snowstorms postponed the landing at Attu—an island 60 miles long and 20 miles wide—several times and had made those landings difficult for the ground troops once the order was given.

Bombardment by the *Nevada*'s main (14-inch) and secondary (5-inch) batteries at Massacre Bay eliminated the threat of enemy concentrations massing for counterattacks. American bombers operating from a base at Adak Island were having frequent and dangerous skidding mishaps during takeoffs and landings across water-covered runways. Dense fog, wind-driven rain or sleet, and the constant backlash of propeller-driven fountains of water from the runways often impaired pilot vision. Temperatures often fell below zero degrees Fahrenheit.

The *Nevada* arrived at Adak on Saturday, April 17, 1943, and dropped anchor in its harbor. We refueled from a tanker before leaving on patrol with two prewar cruisers, the *Detroit* and the *Richmond*, and several destroyers. Our position was only a few hundred miles from a Japanese naval base in the Kuriles, so this group of ships was ordered to patrol with a distance of 35 miles

National Archives

Nevada fires at targets at Utah Beach during Operation Overlord—the Allied invasion of Normandy, June 6, 1944.

between them. Enemy subs were a problem, but several were reported sunk.

My newly learned skill as a radar operator was soon to be tested many times. Bogies often appeared on the green screen. Our AA gun batteries were ready to commence firing if the bogies did not give the correct recognition signal. Our radar was constantly scanning the skies for enemy aircraft during preparation for the bombardment of Attu. The *Nevada* and the two cruisers opened fire on April 26 and raked the shore and interior highlands with intense fire.

Our fuel and vital stores were soon running low, and the captain set course for Cold Bay, where the auxiliary vessels lay anchored. Arriving there on Friday, April 30, all deck crews began handling the stores as the fueling continued in rough seas, though we were in a harbor. I believe it was here, handling stores on an open deck in sub-zero weather, that my fingers became frostbitten.

Two incidents remain vividly in my mind. First, a call came from Army command that the Japanese had set up a murderous crossfire in the mountain interior: "Can you help?" The *Nevada* responded with over 50 thunderous salvos that rocked our ship back and forth. This bombardment eliminated the Japanese crossfire and allowed our infantry to advance.

Second, tragically, a desperate, last-minute Banzai charge by a thousand Japanese soldiers on May 29 broke through the U.S. lines in a predawn attack, overran the medical station, and killed all personnel around it—doctors, nurses, patients, everyone. An American counterattack swiftly retook the area and captured some 25-30 prisoners.

Our 27-year-old lady had apparently developed engine trouble during the operation, for she started to groan and shudder; the captain announced that the *Nevada* had permission to go to Mare Island, near San Francisco, for repairs. We departed Attu on June 7, 1943.

After the repairs were completed, we received orders to steam south, pass through the Panama Canal, and proceed to Norfolk, Virginia, to prepare for Atlantic convoy duty escorting cargo ships, fuel tankers, and other auxiliary vessels to Belfast, Northern Ireland.

All of our numerous Atlantic crossings were successfully completed without a major mishap, but those frequent ocean storms, heavy seas, and the constant threat of German submarines kept all of us on full-time alert status. We soon learned that all of these crossings were bringing vital equipment and supplies for the upcoming invasion of Europe—Operation Overlord.

OPERATION NEPTUNE

During Operation Neptune—the assault portion of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944—the USS *Nevada* was part of the huge naval armada that stood off the beaches and hammered German defensive positions.

Under the protective umbrella of the *Nevada*'s gunfire support, Neptune's Naval Beach Battalion sailors coordinated ship-to-shore communications for the unloading of cargo vessels, the flow of men and supplies at the "Uncle" and "Victor" landing sectors of Utah Beach, controlling the beaching of LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) and smaller craft, and the

dangerous removal of the Germans' remaining lethal obstacles.

Nevada's guns were prevented from always firing in a favorable support position, as the seas became congested with incoming cargo vessels and landing craft. Undetected enemy artillery and mortar fire continued until French partisans were able to provide their precise camouflaged locations to U.S. Army personnel, who then forwarded the information to the warships.

Frequent attacks by British warships against German E-boats, patrol craft, and minelayers operating from Cherbourg and Le Havre also soon eliminated much of the German Navy surface threat.

After silencing the guns in the massive concrete casemates near La Madeleine and Les Dunes d'Varreville, Captain Powell Rhea, the *Nevada*'s skipper, gave the order for the *Nevada* to close in another 1,100 yards toward the landing beaches. Now the 5-inch twin gun mounts and the quadruple 40mm guns began to eliminate the harassing German fire coming from those mortar and machine-gun pillboxes along the coast.

The *Nevada* served as the flagship for Rear Admiral Bertram J. Rodgers during the battle for Iwo Jima.

Our gunnery crews remained at general quarters for over 80 hours, and this prolonged, intensive firing on enemy-held positions weakened the volume of German return fire, enabling U.S. infantry troops, mechanized vehicles, and additional replacements to advance farther in the Utah sector and to thrust southward into France's hedgerow country.

After 12 days off the coast of Normandy, the *Nevada* returned to Weymouth, England. We replenished our ammunition, fuel, and critical supplies before setting course for Cherbourg, a heavily fortified harbor bristling with huge 15-inch guns, some mounted on railroad track beds. Although outranged by 10,000 yards, we silenced all.

German shellfire from Cherbourg's coastal guns straddled our ship 27 times without even one hit. I could actually see and hear those large, whirling shells coming to the end of their trajectory. Several passed over the ship between the masts before they splashed into the waters just yards from us, sending up huge geysers that sprayed our main deck.

Operation Neptune also survived the onslaught of a fierce Atlantic storm, June 18-22, despite the loss of many sections of the artificial Mulberry harbors at Omaha Beach that were urgently needed to expedite the movement of supplies onto the beaches.

Neptune came to a close. It accomplished its objectives with the successful landing of Allied troops in Normandy and the liberation of France's coastal harbors.

The war was not over. *Nevada*'s next assignment: southern France.

OPERATION DRAGOON

German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was right: "We must contain them on the beaches if we are to win this war!" He had realized that the Allies would have complete air supremacy over Normandy.

We had air supremacy for the invasion of southern France in August 1944, during Operation Dragoon. We also had command of the Mediterranean Sea and the landings of Allied troops on the shores of the Riviera went much more smoothly than the landings in Normandy.

The *Nevada* dueled with German 13.4-inch gun batteries defending the port of Toulon. These guns had been removed from French ships scuttled earlier in the war and emplaced in reinforced concrete bunkers. The efforts of the *Nevada*—which fired over 5,000 shells—and other ships made it possible for the troops of the French II Corps to seize Toulon.

RETURN TO THE STATES

From the Mediterranean, the *Nevada* was ordered to return to the United States for an overhaul, refitting, and further assignment. We learned that the navy yards along the Pacific coast would not be fully capable of solving *Nevada*'s serious gunnery problems—her fractured and protruding 14-inch barrel rifflings and a damaged turret mount, resulting from *Nevada*'s firing of the 14-inch guns during the Normandy and southern France operations.

Consequently, Captain Rhea received orders to leave the area with his escort vessels by the same route that we had come, proceeding to the Norfolk Navy Yard in Virginia.

After a short stay in New York harbor to avoid a hurricane threat, the *Nevada* entered a drydock at Norfolk on September 18, 1944. The crew was given a 21-day leave while an interesting and unusual event took place. Our 14-inch guns were relined, and the guns in Turret 1 were replaced with tubes salvaged from—of all ships—the *Arizona* and *Oklahoma,* both stricken at Pearl Harbor.

The *Nevada* left Norfolk on November 21, 1944, and sailed south, proceeding through the Panama Canal. After a brief stop at Long Beach, California, we sailed on to Pearl Harbor, where we tied up to Quay Fox 8—the same site where the *Nevada* had been moored on December 7, 1941.

OFF TO ULITHI

After two days of loading ammunition of all calibers, the *Nevada* set course for the Ulithi Atoll, a major naval staging area in the Caroline Islands. We passed

One of *Nevada*'s 40mm quad "pom-pom" gun mounts opens up on Japanese positions at Iwo Jima, February 17, 1945.

National Archives

through the Mugal Channel and dropped anchor off an island with an unusual name: Mog Mog.

Mog Mog gave us weary sailors a reprieve from the cruise. We enjoyed unrestricted liberty, drank beer, played acey-ducey, drank beer, played poker, drank beer, and had a scuttlebutt session with a final toast of the stateside suds.

Several task forces were formed at Ulithi. We were part of Task Force 54, the gunfire and covering force, which consisted of six battleships (*Arkansas, New York, Texas, Idaho, Tennessee,* and *Nevada*), five cruisers (*Pensacola, Salt Lake City, Chester, Tuscaloosa,* and *Vicksburg*), and dozens of destroyers and other support ships.

Those of us on topside watched for almost two hours as ships cleared the Ulithi harbor to begin their rampant raids on enemy shipping lanes and the Japanese home islands. This event left an almost empty area in the harbor for our own Fifth Fleet and auxiliary vessels. In contrast to other streamlined battleships, the *Nevada,* with her grimy, time-flaked gray paint mottled over her hull, had the appearance of an old, tired scrubwoman at the end of her working day.

Officers of the *Nevada* met for a briefing session on our next assignment: Operation Detachment—the invasion of Iwo Jima. Our ship refueled at Kerama Retto, and we took on 14-inch and 5-inch shells and powder and thousands of 40mm and 20mm rounds.

On February 10, 1945, the task force set sail to a small island none of us had ever heard of—Iwo Jima.

IWO JIMA

Although Iwo Jima was a tiny, obscure island in the Pacific, the United States needed its airfields to be available for crippled B-29s returning from their bombing missions over Japan. The *Nevada* and other major warships had the responsibility of giving gunfire support to the landing troops who would secure the airfields.

Rear Admiral Bertram J. Rodgers, commander of Task Force 54, made the *Nevada* his flagship. Rear Admiral William Blandy, aboard the USS *Estes,* an amphibious force command ship, supervised Task Force 52, which comprised the amphibian support and cover force for the Marines (the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions) that would be going ashore.

The combined task forces arrived off Iwo Jima at 6 AM, February 16. My shipmate, Bill Brinkley, was one of the bridge communication talkers who would be monitoring and relaying all confidential messages between the two admirals.

Each battleship had been assigned its time of fire, number of shells, and target areas.

Nevada and *New York* were assigned blockhouses, pillboxes, and any suspicious-looking, sand-covered mounds seen along the beaches. Other warships would fire upon any visible gun battery in the high cliff areas around Mount Suribachi. Priorities were artillery emplacements, blockhouses, pillboxes, and ammunition and fuel dumps.

The preinvasion bombardment was scheduled to last three days (although the Marines had requested more—much more). Personnel aboard Blandy's ship would record all hits of known targets that the *Nevada* and other warships counted as having been demolished.

At 9 AM, Friday morning, February 16, 1945, we, along with the battleships *Idaho* and *Tennessee,* came within a mile and a half of the island and opened fire on the Mount Suribachi cliffs. The *Nevada*'s role in the invasion was to furnish the main gunfire support for the 5th Marine Division along the "Purple" and "Brown" sectors on the western side of the island near the base of Mount Suribachi.

My general quarters battle station was as gun captain at a 20mm antiaircraft gun mount. On Condition II, I served as an alternate range finder operator during the day and as a radar operator at night.

We pounded the little sulfurous island, five miles long and less than two miles wide but heavily fortified. We destroyed everything on Iwo's surface but, hell, all of the Japanese were protected by underground, linking tunnels—safe from naval shelling and bombing.

Final reports from the first two days of shelling indicated that the bombardment had scarcely damaged or even reduced the Japanese firepower from the Suribachi batteries. A firm belief by many Navy and Marine personnel at that time was that if Admiral Chester Nimitz had been allowed the original 10 days of prelanding bombardment by the original number of battleships, cruisers, and planes from 12 carriers (taken away from us by General Douglas MacArthur for his sacred Philippines campaign), there would have been considerable reduction in the enemy's island defenses and, more importantly, a marked reduction in the loss of American lives.

Hours before the initial assault on the beaches began on February 19, a group of LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry) gunboats containing UDTs (Underwater Demolition Teams) came under vicious enemy gunfire. The badly damaged LCI 441 came alongside the port side of the *Nevada* requesting emergency medical assistance for its personnel. I climbed aboard the 441 with several other sailors and immediately began to transfer the wounded to the *Nevada* and then returned to remove the dead from its slippery, bloodied decks. It was a horrible sight.

From my position, as the *Nevada* lay just 2,200 yards offshore, I witnessed the initial landings of the first wave of 5th Division Marines after their LVTs (Landing Vehicle, Tracked) made impressive circles before heading toward the beach. Then the second wave of LVTs made its appearance.

We were told that the defensive organization of Iwo was the most complete and formidable yet encountered. After the initial U.S. naval bombardment ceased in order to allow the Marines to hit the beaches, I felt numb, sick, and, of course, helpless as I watched the extremely accurate Japanese heavy mortars, rockets, and artillery shells from hidden positions rain down a vicious barrage of violent death along the upper beach areas and cut down our troops—a horrifying, nauseating experience watching these men die!

The *Nevada* was quickly instructed to lay down a rapid rolling barrage of 5-inch high-explosive shells in front of our troops. I could see explosive clouds of dust creeping toward the high terrain just off the beaches that the Marines were trying to reach.

One naval historian wrote, "Battleship *Nevada* became the sweetheart of the Marine Corps. Her skipper, Captain H.L. ('Pop') Grosskopf, an old gunnery officer and a ruthless driver, had set out to make his battleship the best fire support ship in the Fleet, and did. *Nevada,* when firing her assigned rolling barrage at 0925, found that her secondary battery could not penetrate a concrete blockhouse and turned over the job to her main battery. This damaged a hitherto undisclosed blockhouse behind Beach Red 1, blasting away its sand cover and leaving it naked and exposed.

"At 1100 this blockhouse again became troublesome; the battleship then used armor-piercing shells, which took the position completely apart. At 1512 *Nevada*

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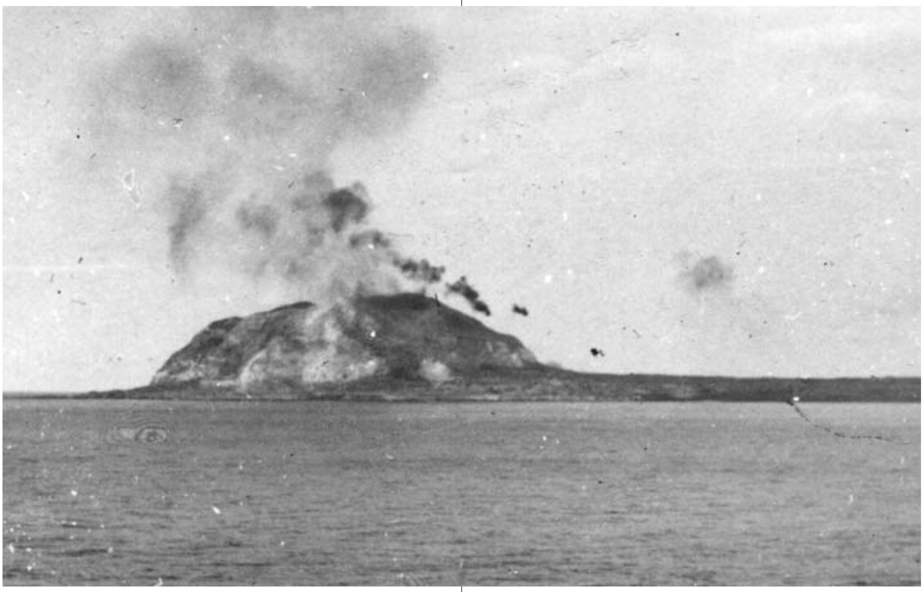

Mount Suribachi is blasted by shellfire from *Nevada*'s 14-inch guns, February 1945.

observed a gun firing from a cave in the high broken ground east of the beaches. Using direct fire, she shot two rounds of 14-inch, scoring a direct hit in the mouth of the cave, blowing out the side of the cliff and completely destroying the gun. One could see it drooping over the cliff edge 'like a half-extracted tooth hanging on a man's jaw.'"

On February 23, I was on the rangefinder watch and witnessed an event that had an intense emotional effect on all Navy personnel on the ships surrounding Suribachi. With binoculars I watched as a small group of U.S. Marines, who had survived vicious counterattacks, raised a small American flag on a long pipe atop the summit of Mount Suribachi. I did not see the second flag raising, made famous by Joe Rosenthal's widely published photo, as I was then off watch.

Spontaneously throughout the anchorage area, a tumultuous eruption of whistles, sirens, and klaxons sounded in the air. The "whoop, whoop, whoop" of nearby destroyers' whistles dominated the celebration as the crew members of the *Nevada* yelled their lungs out.

I also recall *Nevada*'s periodic star shell barrages, aided by other warships, that illuminated many of the "black night" counterattacks by fanatical Japanese infiltrators. These bursting pyrotechnics sent brilliant, dazzling daylight effects over the darkened island, astonishing this Depression-era kid who had never seen a fireworks display before.

Early on Thursday, March 1, while the *Nevada* was assisting the destroyer *Terry* that had been damaged by a Japanese coastal battery, Admiral Rodgers received news that the main U.S. Marine ammunition dump had come under shell fire, causing considerable damage to communication matériel; no loss of life was reported, but several Marines were burned while attempting to retrieve some of the ammunition.

The largest force of Marines ever committed to action in a single battle captured the island after 36 days of unrelenting, bitter fighting. Losses were heavy; the Marines and Navy personnel suffered almost 7,000 killed and over 19,000 wounded, and the 19,000-man Japanese garrison was all but annihilated.

Although the support forces of all services contributed honorably to the final victory, it was the Marine combat teams aided by the Naval Construction Battalions (Sea Bees) and their resources that had to close with the enemy and destroy him.

At approximately 7:30 PM on March 11, back at Ulithi Atoll, I was on black night radar watch on a 5-inch gun director when I heard a swishing noise overhead. I looked out of the open porthole and was astonished to see a twin-engine Yokosuka P1Y "Frances" bomber just passing silently directly over my position. Moments later, all of the *Nevada* crew topside heard an explosion in close proximity. Reports filtered in later indicating that the newly arrived aircraft carrier, *Randolph,* had suffered serious damage and 27 dead when that plane slammed into her. It could have been us.

OKINAWA

Okinawa was the last epic struggle of World War II in the Pacific. L-Day (Landing Day) was scheduled for Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945. The USS *Nevada,* anchored in Nakagusuka Bay along Okinawa's southeast coast, was already being threatened with fiery death and destruction by the daily appearance of Japanese kamikaze planes.

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The *Nevada* and other gunfire support ships moved into their assigned grid units off the beaches of Okinawa, 10 to 12 miles out. The air defense gun crews were alerted immediately to enemy planes approaching. Suicide planes began to infiltrate the antiaircraft barrages and seek out those ships most vulnerable—the carriers.

Think of it! A Japanese pilot crashes his plane onto the deck of a large ship. He sacrifices one life, but he could take out hundreds of U.S. sailors and possibly sink the vessel or severely damage it and put it out of action in one daring moment.

On March 27, at 6:20 AM, while at Kerama Retto, a small group of islands southwest of Naha, Okinawa, a Japanese plane (first reported to be a Nakajima B5N1 Kate torpedo bomber but later changed to an Aichi D3A Val dive bomber) crashed into our main deck on the starboard side. The terrific explosion at impact violently strewed twisted 40mm and

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ABOVE: ***Nevada*** **crewmen clean up damage after Japanese shore batteries on Okinawa zeroed in on her, April 1945. OPPOSITE: A solemn burial at sea aboard** ***Nevada*** **for casualties from LCI 441 who were killed during the Iwo Jima operation.**

20mm guns about and left 60 brave sailors dead, wounded, or missing. The force of one of the explosions threw me against my gun shield but, although momentarily stunned, I was not seriously injured.

At 6:30 on a Tuesday morning, while off the coast of Okinawa, a twin-engine suicide Betty bomber narrowly missed our gun position over *Nevada*'s stern as it crashed into the sea. Two Japanese crewmen were rescued and brought aboard our ship. Now I saw the faces and stature of my enemy. Both were of small height, bronzed from the sun, and they were approximately my age—both 18 or 19 years of age.

For the next eight or so days our main and secondary batteries pounded the beaches and several inland targets. There was always the opportunity to destroy gun positions that became visible to the shore fire-control parties when given the correct coordinates.

On April 5, during a lull in the daily kamikaze attacks, the *Nevada* lay 6,000-8,000 yards (three to four miles) off the southwestern coast of Okinawa, alone and not at anchor. Foolishly we remained stationary in position too long, for a Japanese shore battery got our range and sent some 20 salvos toward us. Unexpectedly, water splashes caused by projectiles from that shore battery straddled our ship.

Moments later, five explosions were heard across *Nevada*'s open deck and structures, which caused moderate damage to the main deck and sleeping areas, two deaths, and several wounded men.

In retaliation, N*evada*'s 14-inch batteries unleashed a murderous barrage of shells at the enemy installations, smothering them with fiery debris and rendering them totally silent.

Afterward, several of us walked about and viewed the damage to our ship caused by the Japanese shelling. I picked up a shell fragment while it was still warm. On the base of the five-inch shell fragment was stamped "Made in Maryland." Obviously, it was part of a U.S. ammunition cache captured elsewhere by the Japanese in earlier times.

Emergency repairs from the shelling were made at Kerama Retto. There we received word that our commander-in-chief, President Roosevelt, had died on April 12, 1945.

By the following day, the *Nevada*'s gunfire support assignments off the shores of Okinawa totaled 22 days. I believe that we had been at general quarters or air defense some 50-60 times during those 22 days, but it was the brave little destroyers of the early warning picket line that suffered greatly throughout this campaign. It was a bloodbath. On land, sea, and in the air, over 12,000 Americans were killed, 38,000 were wounded, 900 aircraft were lost, 28 ships were sunk, and 368 vessels were damaged.

We were also part of the force that patrolled the East China Sea lanes surrounding Okinawa and Formosa with minesweepers to clear the area for incoming U.S. naval traffic. The *Nevada* aided a landing force on the tiny island of Ie Shima off the northwest coast of Okinawa that required a six-day battle to subdue. Here on April 18 the United States lost one of its best known GI journalists—Ernie Pyle,

killed by enemy gunfire.

While we were patrolling in those waters, our communication center picked up a message from Tokyo Rose: “Hello, *Nevada*! We know that you are here!”

One day some crew member reported a grinding and scraping noise along the starboard bow and hull—a scraping noise that slowly moved along the ship’s side. Suddenly, someone called out, “Mine chain!” I don’t remember how it was removed, but those few anxious moments certainly prompted me to look toward the heavens and pray.

While patrolling the East China Sea, we had to ride out a slashing storm front at the outer edge of a violent typhoon brewing miles away. Our navigator’s report informed us that the inclinometer read a “roll” of 21 degrees. The *Nevada* was a 30,000-ton vessel. Imagine what smaller ships like destroyers must have put up with in heavy storms and high winds!

Our ship and several other damaged ships were ordered to report to Pearl Harbor for permanent repairs, overhaul, and updated fire-control systems. Rounding the southern tip of Okinawa, the *Nevada* joined up with the battleship *Maryland,* the cruiser *Pensacola,* and several destroyers and transport ships. We all shared a common tragedy—extensive damage. This small, sad-looking group stopped at Guam in the Marianas for refueling, emergency repairs, and provisions before setting course for Hawaii.

On Friday, April 20, 1945, the *Nevada* was moored in Pearl Harbor at Fox 3—the berthing site of the battleship USS *California* at the time of the December 7 attack. We were originally supposed to be repaired stateside, but a shipyard strike was affecting the entire West Coast region.

For two months the days and nights were filled with the blue flames of cutting torches going over the *Nevada* from stem to stern, and there was the rapid clatter of air hammers and the smell of freshly sprayed paint. Qualified personnel were given liberty and an opportunity for schooling.

Accompanied by two destroyers, the *Murray* and the *Taylor,* the *Nevada* and her refreshed crew finally left Pearl Harbor and arrived early in the morning of June 18, 1945, at the small coral island of Emidj, part of Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Our assignment was to harass and silence Emidj, where there was a Japanese garrison, an airfield, and radio tower. The Jaluit garrison was previously bypassed and kept isolated after its neighboring islands, Kwajalein and Eniwetok, were assaulted and taken by U.S. Marines.

The *Nevada* and her two destroyer escorts divided their gunfire assignments, and both primary and secondary targets on Emidj were quickly ranged and destroyed. The *Nevada* then withdrew, turned northwest, and stopped at the U.S. base at Saipan in the Marianas. We refueled, took on ammo and provisions, and received orders to return to Okinawa.

Before we got there, however, we were relieved to receive word that the battle for Okinawa was over. On June 30, we joined forces with two other Pearl Harbor survivors, the *California* and *West Virginia,* to form a task force with accompanying destroyers and auxiliary vessels to patrol the East China Sea. We went to air defense several times in the Korea Strait.

GOING HOME

After Okinawa, the U.S. military was apparently reducing the size of the force in the Pacific and discharging some of the prewar enlisted men. I soon learned that I was among the *Nevada* sailorswho were eligible for transfer back to the States and discharge from the Navy.

On July 31, 1945, I was detached from the *Nevada* and sent to the receiving station at Kuba, Okinawa, along with a group of other crewmen. On August 5, we boarded the transport USS *Kittson* (APA 123) and sailed for Guam.

On August 6, while en route to Guam, we received a report that a massive bomb had been dropped over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. A few days later, a second bomb exploded over the city of Nagasaki. The Atomic Age had arrived.

We reached Guam on August 11,

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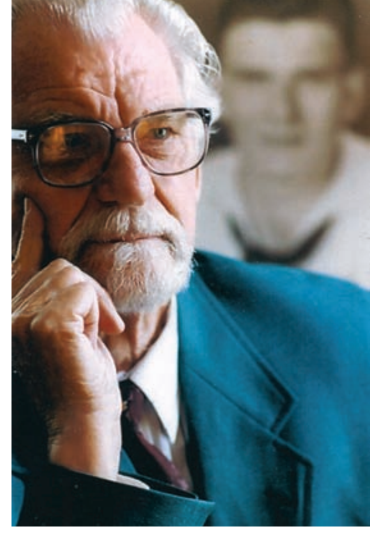
Smoke and flames belch from *Nevada*’s 14-inch guns as her antiaircraft guns fight off kamikaze attacks at Okinawa, April 1945.

National Archives

ABOVE: Although charred and radioactive from being subjected to an atomic test blast at Bikini Atoll in 1946, the *Nevada* remains proudly defiant. She was later sunk by torpedoes in 1948. RIGHT: The author in a recent photograph.



where, four days later, we received the most welcomed news: a cease-fire order was in effect throughout the Pacific. All enemy action had ceased by a firm directive of Emperor Hirohito. PEACE! An unbelievable moment for all of us who had survived the war.

The initial end of the fighting in the Pacific had a greater emotional impact on us than the impressive formal Japanese surrender ceremony aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945.

After a short period at Fire Control School in San Diego, I was sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center to be discharged on February 26, 1946—my 23rd birthday. I had spent six years in uniform, with three years, eight months, and nine days in combat zones.

I had seen it all—from being at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked to being in the Aleutians and off the shores of Normandy during the D-Day operation, then again for the invasion of southern France to the fierce battles for Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and elsewhere.

After my discharge, I chose to take advantage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the G.I. Bill of Rights) and enrolled in a nearby Illinois liberal arts college. That decision changed the entire spiritual and economic outlook of this Depression-era boy.

Seventy years later, I can't help reflecting on the fact that young people from various nations entered into this horrific war with different obligations, goals, principles, and ideas. Many never saw their homes again, while others assumed a different life after returning to civilian status. Still others left this war with shattered minds. To many World War II veterans, those terrible moments seven decades ago have become a haunt-

ing specter, the anchor of their turbulent thoughts.

Foremost among the many tragedies of war is that it is always the innocent youth to be called to fight, to bear the deepest wounds and scars, and even to die. When will mankind ever learn?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The U.S. Navy deemed the *Nevada* too old, damaged, and obsolete to be worth overhauling, and so she was designated a target ship for the atomic bomb tests that took place at Bikini Atoll on July 1, 1946. The old girl proved she could still take it. She survived this blast as well as another underwater atomic test three weeks later. Still, she refused to sink, although she was heavily damaged and highly radioactive.

After being towed back to Pearl Harbor and used for experiments in radioactive decontamination, it was decided to use her for gunnery practice. She was towed to a location some 65 miles southwest of Pearl Harbor, where the battleship *Iowa* and the cruisers *Pasadena* and *Astoria* blasted her for over an hour. Although badly battered, she remained afloat. A single aerial torpedo capsized her shortly after 2 PM on July 31, 1948. Her exact resting place in 2,600 fathoms of water remains unknown. □

DROPPING *into* NORMANDY

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Although almost everything went wrong during the American D-Day airborne jump, the paratroopers managed to pull victory from the jaws of defeat. These are their personal stories.

What was it like to parachute into Normandy in the opening minutes of June 6, 1944—D-Day? Almost 1,000 C-47 transport planes delivered more than 13,000 paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions from the skies above northern France. Each plane carried up to 16 paratroopers, each weighed down with 125 to 150 pounds of gear.

When a plane neared its drop zone the pilot turned on a red light near the open back door. At the order "stand up, hook up, equipment check," the paratroopers stood up, hooked their static lines to the anchor cable running down the length of the cabin, and checked the gear of the man in front of them. They then waited for the red light to turn green.

The following is a compilation of the experiences of more than 80 paratroopers who survived parachuting into Normandy, from the jump to the drop to the landing.

THE JUMP

When the light flashed green the jumpmaster shouted "Go!" and the men pushed out the open door. Most men made it out without incident.

David Kenyon Webster, 101st Airborne Division: "I shuffled up, glancing down and stopped, dumbfounded. All I could see was water, miles and miles of water. But this was D-Day and nobody went back to England, and a lot of infantry riding in open barges seasick to the low-tide beaches were depending on us to draw the Germans off the causeways and gun batteries, and so ... I grabbed both sides of the door and threw myself out."

Elmo Bell, 82nd Airborne Division: "I turned to Zeitner to tell him that we were gaining altitude, and when I called his name, he went out the door. Well, realizing that my calling his name had triggered his jump, I jumped, too—and, of course, the rest of the stick followed me out."

Burt Collier, 101st: "When the light came on I already had my head and part of me out of the plane, and then I was knocked out the door and gone."

Others experienced a quick change from the noisy plane to the relatively quiet night.

Robert Webb, 101st: "When I cleared the door, the plane was bucking like a crazy horse, and the tracers were so thick it looked like a wall of flame."

William Walton, *TIME* war correspondent: "I plunged out of the plane door happy to be leaving a ship that was heading toward flak and more Germans."

Kenneth Moore, 101st: "The plane started bucking and jumping, and as [a fellow paratrooper] fell down the green light came on. They were all jumping, and he was scrambling trying to get out the door, so I grabbed him and pitched him out the door."

Ken Russell, 82nd: "As we left the plane we had flak, machine-gun fire and everything else all the way down, because we were sitting targets."

Tom Pocella, 82nd: "With the roar of the engines in my ears, I was out the door and into the silence of the night. I realized I had made the jump into darkness."

Turk Seelye, 82nd: "After I left the door, the plane nosed downward, and I watched the tail pass a few feet over my head."

Donald Burgett, 101st: "Doubled up and grasping my reserve chute, I could feel the rush of air, hear the crackling of the canopy as it unfurled, followed by the sizzling suspension lines, then the connector links whistling past the back of my helmet."

Other paratroopers had trouble getting out the door. Some had to deal with other paratroopers' illnesses.

All images: National Archives

An American paratrooper floats to earth during a practice jump in 1942. Before dawn on June 6, 1944, paratroopers would be much more heavily equipped.

Leslie Kick, 82nd: "Then we're going out, slipping on puke but keeping our balance by holding tight to the static line snap."

Ed Boccafogli, 82nd: "I fell out. I slipped on vomit. Some guys were throwing up from nerves, and as we pivoted out my feet went out from under me, and I went upside down."

German fire made it difficult for some men to get out of their planes.

Virgil Danforth, 101st: "As we stood in the door, ready to jump, our plane took a close one, which threw men down in the door in such a way that my head was outside and my shoulder was inside and I was wedged in this position so I couldn't get up. With the help of the man behind me, I finally managed to dive head first out of the door."

Harry Mole, 101st: "I stepped into the door and was about to go out when the plane lurched and threw me past the opening, back toward the tail. I got to my feet quickly and grabbed the door's edge with all my might."

Dan Furlong, 82nd: "There were static lines and parachutes all over the place. I thought the plane was going to crash, and I was screaming for the guys to get out, and they finally got the message and went. I was the last out. I fell in [a] hole in the floor with one leg before I got to the door, then I just dove out head first."

Ray Grossman, 82nd: "The green light went on and we threw out the first door load. The pilot tipped the plane to the right and put me and the first man in the stick on the floor. When we got straightened out and jumped, the first door load couldn't be found until noon the next day."

Clarence McKelvey, 82nd: "The pilot jerked the plane again. Corporal Bates flew out the door—I flew out the door—head first, ass over teacups."

Jack Schlegel, 82nd: "I recall that I was the ... last to leave the plane ... the plane was going down. I moved as fast as I could to get out and, after bailing out, saw the plane go up in a ball of flame."

Others tried to survive when their plane tilted 180 degrees onto its side.

ABOVE: Men of the 82nd adjust gear before boarding their transports on June 5, 1944. OPPOSITE: With faces blackened and their divisional insignia obscured by a censor's brush, these smiling, heavily laden paratroopers prepare to board their transport plane, June 5, 1944.

Louis E. Traux, 101st: "My left shoulder crashed into a window.... I was surprised the window didn't break." Once the plane was righted, "I was appalled at the view which greeted me—I was the only one standing. Four men lay in a tangled heap on the floor. One man dived out the door first. I stepped over the top of two men. The closest man to the door crawled out head first. I grabbed the ammo belt of the man I thought was next and gave him a heave out nose first. The next man made it crawling on his own power."

Richard Gleason, 101st: "As I stood near the door, a shell exploded under the left wing, and the old '47 did a handstand on the right wing tip, and I was thrown back across the cabin. There was a mad scramble to get out the door, but I was able to get there first, so I didn't get tangled in any static lines."

Harold Canyon, 82nd: "Just as I approached the door, the top of the airplane opened up. It had been hit by some type of explosive shell. As I turned into the doorway, the plane started a right wing dip going into its death spiral. It took everything I had to get over the threshold. It seemed to me the threshold was just a little more than chest high as I rolled over and got out. I was the last man out of the plane."

One man, Thomas Rogers of the 82nd, made it out of his plane but did not fall far. His reserve pack flew open inside the plane. According to a witness, "He scooped it up and held it bundled against his waist. Over the drop zone, six men piled out but, as Rogers shuffled down the aisle, the bundled chute trickled free and caught on a piece of the seat. He jumped anyway, but the 450-pound tensile strength suspension lines refused to give an inch and he found himself suspended 600 feet over hostile territory." Six following paratroopers dove on top of him, trying to break him loose. "Rogers seemed resigned to exist as a pendulum." A final paratrooper landed on him and broke him loose as "Rogers' static line snapped taut and ripped off his pack cover. His main chute line blossomed and, shortly after, a bruised and battered paratrooper was on the prowl for the Wehrmacht."

THE DROP

Having cleared the plane, the paratroopers' parachutes popped opened while the enemy took aim. Some men's chutes opened so low to the ground that they did not even notice the drop.

Clarence McKelvey: "We didn't know how high we were, but I felt three things in succession—my helmet popped off my head, I felt my chute open, and I looked down and there was ground."

David Rogers, 101st: "When my parachute opened, I was directly above the steeple of the church in Saint Marie du Mont. The moon was full, and there were scattered clouds which made everything on the ground easy to see. When I looked down, I saw Saint Marie du Mont. It looked just like the picture I had studied so intensely at Uppottery."

Ralph Robins, 101st: "I passed through a cloud, which I thought was ground fog, expecting to land at any moment. However, after passing through the cloud, I could see the moonlight reflecting on a large body of water. There was land nearby but no wind."

John Taylor, 101st: "I got out good, my chute opened, and I checked it.… I looked down and saw a haze. I assumed this haze was on the ground and braced myself to land. When I passed through the haze, to my surprise I was still a good 600 feet up. At that point I could see what looked like spots on the ground and a mirror—a large area of water."

Brigadier General James Gavin, 82nd: "After about a three-second delay, we went out, small-arms fire was coming up from the ground when the chute opened—just general shooting all over the area. Off to the right of the line of flight there was considerable apparent gunfire and flak. I figured that it probably was in the vicinity of Etienville, where there was supposed to be located the only known heavy AA installations in the area."

Some of the men's planes were flying too fast for a safe jump. The result was a harrowing opening shock when their parachutes deployed.

Ed Tipper, 101st: "The opening shock was so great, it ripped my musette bag off."

Dick Winters, 101st: "Tore my leg bag off, along with virtually every bit of equipment I was carrying."

Tom Pocella: "As the chute popped open, my head snapped forward and my feet came up. My helmet was pushed over my face."

Marion Grodowski, 101st: "I had a violent opening shock. A .45 pistol that I had holstered on my hip, as well as my canteen, tore away. I looked up and saw a blown panel in my parachute."

Elmer Brandenberger, 101st: "The opening shock tore the rifle from my grasp. I can still remember the thought flashing through my mind that it would hit some damned Kraut and bash in his head."

Ray Aebischer, 101st: "The jolt from the opening shock was more intense than usual. At the same second the chute opened, my leg pack broke loose from the straps around my leg. All of my equipment, except one trench knife and a canteen of water attached to my cartridge belt, went plummeting to the ground, never to be seen again."

Benjamin Vandervoort, 82nd: "It tore off my musette bag and snapped blinding flashes in front of my eyes. We were too high and drifted away from our drop zone."

Donald Burgett: "Instinctively the mus-

Their faces displaying a variety of emotions, these paratroopers from the 101st Airborne prepare to take off in a C-47 "Skytrain" on D-Day.

cles of my body tensed for the opening shock, which nearly unjointed me when the canopy blasted opened. From the time I left the door till the chute opened, less than three seconds had elapsed."

Turk Seelye, 82nd: "As the prop blast forced air into my chute, I got the strongest opening shock ever. The chute opened with such a violent jolt that a Beretta pistol I took from an Italian naval officer in Sicily was torn loose, along with my new safety razor."

David Kenyon Webster: "Suddenly a giant snapped a whip with me on the end, my chute popped open, and I found myself swinging wildly in the wind. Twisted in the fall, my risers were unwinding and spinning me around. They pinned my head down with my chin on the top of my rifle case and prevented me from looking up and checking my canopy. I figured that everything was all right because at least I was floating free in the great silence that always followed the opening shock. For several seconds, I seemed to be suspended in the sky, with no downward motion, and then all at once the whole body of water whirled and rushed up at me."

Guerdon Walthall, 101st: "When my chute popped open, I thought it was torn in half. I felt a wrench at my leg. When I looked down, my leg pack was gone.... All I could see were tracers racing from every corner of every hedgerow and the boom of mortars and 88s on the field below."

Leslie P. Cruise, 82nd: "The chute tightened in my crotch as the planes droned overhead, and I knew my chute had opened though I could hardly look up to see it. I had suddenly slowed as the chute fully opened and I floated in space.… The staccato sound of machine-gun fire broke my trance. It was to the left. No, it was to my right as I kept turning in my chute. I couldn't tell where it was coming from."

Some men narrowly missed being hit by their own planes and comrades.

Roy King, 82nd: "I was fascinated by the sight of the tracers flying around everywhere when I saw a huge explosion blossom directly below me.… A plane between me and the ground. No, it was not in trouble, I was! I was above the stream of airplanes that had just dropped their troopers and equipment. My immediate concern was that I could be chopped to pieces by the propellers of the oncoming planes. I was trying furiously to turn and face the oncoming planes in order to be able to see how to safely maneuver through them. I dropped safely through them in spite of my near-hysterical struggles."

William Dunfee, 82nd: "Looking around, I spotted Jim Beavers next to me and our equipment bundle off to one side. Then, looking down, I saw C-47s flying below us. That scared the hell out of me, and I started cussing them. I didn't want to be turned into hamburger by our own air force.… While descending, I regained my composure, since it appeared we were going to make it down in one piece."

Charles Miller, 82nd: "It looked like a great big Fourth of July celebration. The whole sky was lit up like a big show."

Roy Zerbe, 101st: "The sky was filled with fire, and it looked like the Fourth of July.

I would guess we were low, at about 500 feet. I could see fires off in the distance."

Guy Remington, 101st: "The black Normandy pastures tilted and turned far beneath me. The first German flare came arching up, and instantly machine guns and forty-millimeter guns began firing from the corners of the fields, stripping the night with yellow, green, blue, and red tracers. I pitched down through a wild Fourth of July. Fire licked through the sky and blazed around the transports heaving high overhead. I saw some of them go plunging down in flames. One of them came down with a trooper, whose parachute had become caught in the tailpiece, streaming out behind. I heard a loud gush of air: a man went hurtling past, only a few yards away, his parachute collapsed and burning. Other parachutes, with men whose legs had been shot off slumped in the harness, floated gently toward the earth."

Edward C. Krause, 82nd: "While descending, four ships passed under me and I really sweated that out."

Others remembered the intense German fire rising up to greet them.

Clancy Lyall, 101st: "The Germans opened up on us with artillery and small-arms fire while we were still in the sky. The flak was so thick you could walk down on it."

Jim "Pee-Wee" Martin, 101st: "I stepped out to meet a ladder of flak and tracers. Thank God, I missed all the rungs on the way down."

All that remained of a C-47 that crashed and burned in Normandy. A number of paratroopers recalled barely escaping their transports when they were hit by enemy flak or seeing other transports going down with all aboard.

Heavily armed paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division await the signal to stand up and hook up. Their faces are blacked to camouflage them during the night assault.

Frank Brumbaugh, 82nd: "I couldn't see much of the ground—it was more or less of a blur—but I watched all these tracers and shell bursts and everything in the air around me. A stream of tracers, obviously from a machine gun, looked like it was coming directly at me. Intellectually, I knew I could not be seen from the ground under my camouflage chute, but the stream of tracers still came directly at me. It was obviously a futile, but normal, gesture, I guess. I spread my legs widely and grabbed with both hands at my groin as if to protect myself. Those machine gun bullets traced up the inside of my leg, missed my groin but split my pants, dropping both my cartons of Pall Mall cigarettes onto the soil of France."

Earl McClung, 101st: "It was horrific. It looked like everything was coming right between your eyes. There were Germans all around. Machine-gun rounds, small arms, tracers."

John Walsh, 82nd: "I thought the Jerry gunner was going to shoot my feet off—tracers just missing. I slipped away, but he kept right at it."

Thomas Rhodes, 101st: "I was hit as I went out the door over Sainte-Mère-Église but was able to count seven chutes following me before I hit the ground."

Robert Flory, 101st: "I remember the sky was criss-crossed with tracer bullets and flak. The noise was terrible. I looked down and immediately went into a state of shock. I was over water. My first thought was that the SOB pilot had dropped us over the English Channel. I looked to my right and saw a herd of dairy cows grazing."

Edward Isbell, 82nd: "The bullets were cracking all around me. I could see the flash of their rifles as we were coming down and knew that I was going to land in their laps. I went limp, dropping my arms as if I had been hit."

Vince Occhipinti, 101st: "I could tell there were a lot of things going on below me. There was a tremendous noise, and I could see tracer bullets coming up after me. In fact, I knew that all German soldiers on the ground had seen me jump and had targeted all their guns in my direction. On every fifth to seventh machine-gun bullet, anyone can see the tracer, meaning you can see where it is going and improve your aim. I couldn't see the other bullets in between. Here came another tracer and

another and another. I could see them coming at me from all directions. What was the most horrifying was that in between each of those tracers was five or six other bullets."

Some of the men worried that their parachutes would not survive the onslaught.

Zane Schlemmer, 82nd: "The sky was "alive with pink, orange, and red tracer bullets, which would arc up gracefully, then snap by with little tugs as they went through the parachute canopy."

Harold Canyon: "When I felt the opening shock of the chute, more by habit than anything else, I looked up to check the chute and I remember seeing clusters of tracers going through it."

George Koskimaki, 101st: "I became aware of the colorful tracers reaching towards me like desperate fingers clawing upward. I heard men yelling to each other in foreign languages—and it didn't sound like French. Small-arms fire was snapping about me and the canopy. I looked up, noting that the chute was still filled with air though there were more openings than had been placed there by the manufacturer."

Curtis Johnson, 82nd: "During the jump, I saw tracers flying everywhere, and some of them started swinging his [a fellow paratrooper's] way. There was nothing I could do, and my chute was full of holes and five or six lines were cut before I hit the ground."

James Eads, 82nd: "A tracer had gone through my chute canopy like a cigarette hole in a silk handkerchief, smoldering and fiery red. The hole was getting bigger by the instant. I grabbed my front risers and brought them to my waist. I was in a hell of a hurry to get down before the chute became a torch. The bullets, in which tracers intermingled, were still snapping all around me. It seemed as if they would curve to one side just as they were going to hit me. I became so fascinated by this that I forgot to release my risers, and I was plummeting to earth extremely fast."

Eddie Livingston, 82nd: "I could hear slugs popping into the tight canopy. And they were crackling by my ears viciously. I could see them tugging at my jump suit, two loose-fitting garments, pants and jacket, with oversized pockets. All the way down, I watched the tracers coming up, pinpointing their location for future usefulness."

Some men witnessed the deaths of their fellow paratroopers.

Guerdon Walthall: "I saw a tracer go through the fellow below me, and I really started sweating out getting hit before I reached the ground."

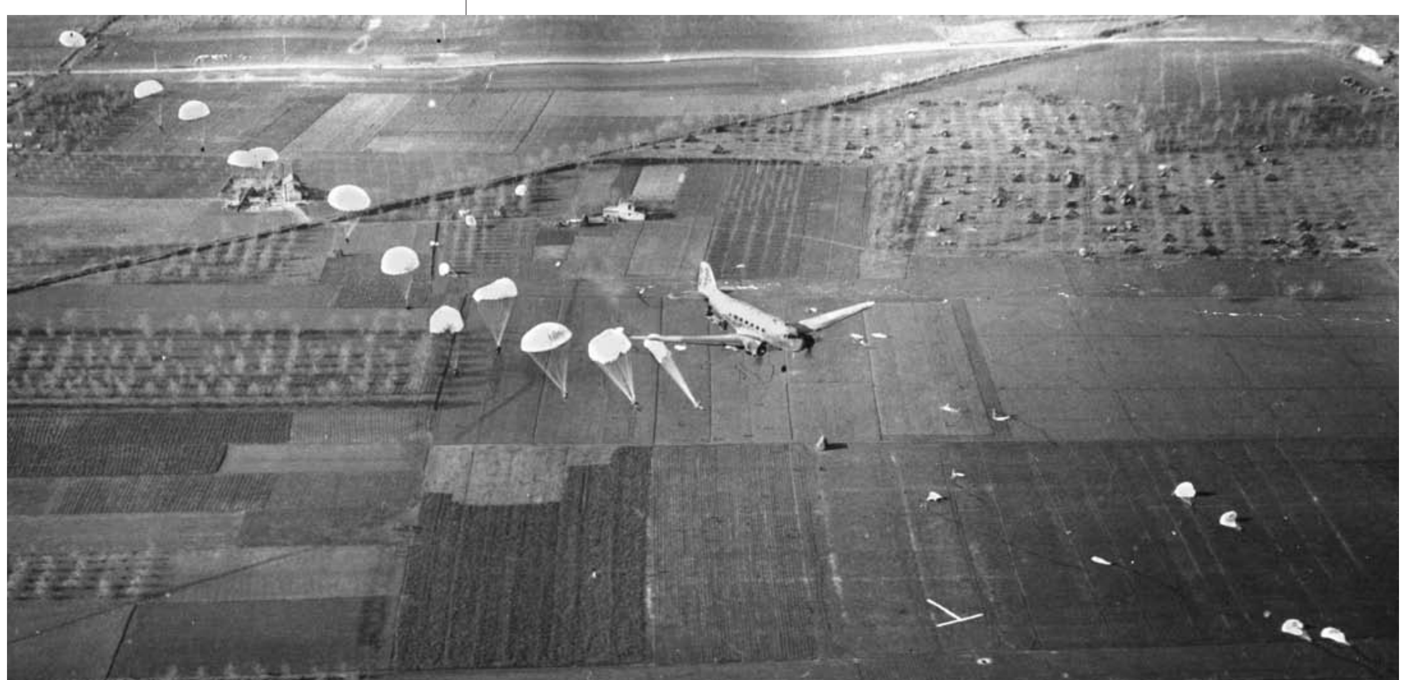
Ed Mauser, 101st (watching another plane): "I thought the plane was going to make a landing; it hit the hedgerow and exploded."

Tom Alley, 101st: "I saw the fire near the square at Sainte-Mère-Église. I don't know if it was a house or a barn. I slipped my chute to the right, as hard as I could do so safely to avoid landing in the fire. The machine-gun tracers were so thick it was like you could walk down them to the ground."

Ken Russell: "I saw something I never want to see in my life. I looked to my right, I saw a guy, and instantaneously, there was just an empty parachute coming down. A shell of some kind must have hit one of his Gammon grenades. He was blown away.… I was trying to hide behind my reserve chute because you could hear the shells hitting. We were all sitting ducks coming down. One guy landed in the fire [at Sainte-Mère-Église]. I heard him scream one time before he hit the fire. I saw him land in the fire. It was the heat from the fire that was drawing all these parachutes towards the fire."

One man almost strangled himself on the way down.

Burt Collier, 101st: "I was trying to hang onto my musette bag because I found a bro-



ABOVE: A paratrooper climbs a tree to help cut a lucky buddy out of his parachute. Other paratroopers were not so lucky and were killed or captured by the enemy while hanging helpless. OPPOSITE: A stick of paratroopers hit the silk over Europe. During the Normandy jump, many sticks became separated and men had trouble finding their units in the dark.

ken strap on it on the flight over and had been wondering the whole time whether I could reach under my pack with one hand and hang onto it.… I accidentally pulled one of the cords for that side of my Mae West [an inflatable flotation device that went around the neck and chest], which was under my harness. When it inflated, I couldn't breathe until I hit the ground and found my switchblade and stabbed it."

LANDING

Those who survived the drop landed in Normandy. They landed in fields, hedgerows, trees, and on structures. Some were unlucky enough to land in water. Beside the rivers and streams throughout Normandy, the Germans had flooded areas where they suspected the Allies might deploy airborne troops.

Lou Merlano, 101st: "I must have jumped at about 300 feet because after 1½ oscillations I hit the ground with a thud. I was in Normandy in a field marked 'Minen.' At the time I did not know it was a dummy minefield and moved through it very cautiously."

Tom Alley: "I landed in a pasture or an orchard—an open field, really. It was illuminated by the burning building just a few hundred yards to my north. I stayed low, pulled out my trench knife and the bag holding my rifle. I put the rifle together as it was in three pieces for the jump. As I did so, I watched the occasional plane pass over with men jumping out."

John Taylor: "I just slipped the chute as much as I could away from the big body of water. I thought my time had come. I landed on a narrow piece of land barely 25 feet from it. I hit the ground hard. The box of machine-gun ammo I had swung under down my right leg smacked me on the leg when I landed."

Donald Burgett: "I pulled the risers apart to check the canopy and saw tracer bullets passing through it; at the same moment I hit the ground and came in backward so hard that I was momentarily stunned."

Zane Schlemmer: "I hit a hedgerow, coming up with very sore bruised ribs from the impact of all my equipment that I had strapped to my body."

Robert James, 101st: "I reached up and grabbed my back risers and slipped my chute as hard as possible to get down quick. I don't think I ever let up on slipping my chute, because I hit the ground like a sack of cement and saw plenty of stars. It did not even hurt me; I was too damned scared."

Ed Pepping: "When I landed, I had nothing except a knife. As a medic, I never carried a rifle anyway, but the speed of the jump and the opening shock had ripped off my medical equipment, but the frustrating part was that I had nothing to work with. You can imagine, a lot of the wounds seen were catastrophic."

Richard Gleason: "The ground was coming up fast, and as usual I somehow turned around and was coming in backward. It kind of scattered my equipment in the direction I was going, but landing backward kept me from getting hurt. I unbuckled my harness, picked up my gear, hooked everything in place, and headed for a hedgerow about 30 yards away."

Clayton Storeby, 101st: "I landed in a bomb crater about 10 feet deep, with only my trench knife attached to my leg and some explosive caps taped to my armpit."

Elmer Brandenberger: "I landed in the middle of an open field and, as I lay on my back looking up to ascertain the direction of flight, I could see chutes blossoming out overhead and machine-gun tracers dancing among them like fireflies."

Chris Kanaras, 82nd: "I hit the ground so hard I was numb for a couple of seconds. I rolled over on my stomach and could see a big fire and explosion on the field. It must have been our bundles."

Clarence McKelvey: "I hit the ground.… I was lying on my back, trying to get all these straps unhooked. Finally, it dawned on me—I've got a trench knife on my right leg. So I got that and I was sawing on the

straps to get out, and I heard this voice saying, 'Who are you?'"

Jim "Pee-Wee" Martin: "The loneliest feeling in the world was when I hit the ground with no other soul near me. I lay on my back, painfully unbuckling my harness."

William E. Ekman, 82nd: "I do not remember the landing because I was pretty dazed. I was in the midst of cattle when I landed."

Vince Occhipinti: "Suddenly the ground was there, and—bam—I hit.… I lay there on the ground and started to work on the fasteners that connected the harness at my groin.… I found, however, that I could not get the harness loose because I couldn't reach under the chute to get it disentangled. I struggled with both for quite some time. I reached to get my dagger underneath my equipment but could not reach it.… I heard a noise not too far from my left. Suddenly, a large shape loomed nearby. It said, 'Moo.' A cow just stood there, looking at me."

Harold Young, 101st: "It was obvious that I was going to land in a field about 100 by 250 yards in length, and my eyes almost popped out as I saw 40 to 50 shapes which I immediately assumed were men and therefore German soldiers. The shapes turned out to be about 20 cows which were completely oblivious of the plane, the parachutes, the ack-ack, and machine guns—and entirely indifferent to me as I landed. They continued to chew their cuds."

Major General Maxwell Taylor, Commander, 101st Airborne: "I floated down in my parachute toward the top of a tall tree. Not eager to become hung up in it and an easy target for a German rifleman, I made every effort to avoid the branches and succeeded landing inside a small field enclosed by an impenetrable hedgerow."

Edward Jeziorski, 82nd: "I slammed into the ground and was immediately pinned down by machine-gun fire. There was no way to raise up. Every time I tried to turn, the machine gun would open up."

Charles Sammon, 82nd: "I landed flat on my back in a small orchard, completely exhausted and so bound up in equipment I could hardly move."

The Germans flooded miles of Normandy countryside, drowning many paratroopers, like this soldier from the 82nd Airborne Division.

Leslie Cruise, 82nd: "Rushing past a 20-foot-high hedgerow, I landed with a thud as I tumbled backwards, hitting the ground and striking my head on the Normandy turf. I had jammed my helmet over my eyes, which blinded me momentarily."

Dick Winters: "I hit the ground with a thump. This was the only jump I ever made that I ended up with black-and-blue bruises on my shoulders and legs for a week afterward. As I lay in a field on the edge of Sainte-Mère-Église, I could hear the church bell tolling in the night, summoning local citizens to fight a fire that had broken out on the edge of town.… Armed with only the knife I had stuck in my boot, I struck out in the general direction where I thought my leg bag had landed."

Marion Grodowski: "I could see the reflection of water below me and began to slip my chute hard to avoid it. With the blown panel and violent movement of my parachute, I had a very hard landing. The impact on dry land was so hard that I thought I had broken a leg."

James Elmo Jones, 82nd: "Landing was very hard. But I had learned many jumps before to try not to tumble with so much equipment because it was an impossibility and, almost without exception, a leg or arm would be broken. So, I simply pulled up my feet, tried to land as much as I could on the equipment, and my parachute settled over my head. And the first thing I thought, without even trying to get out of my parachute was, 'Damn, I just cracked the Atlantic Wall.'"

Gus Liapes, 101st: "I came down in a heap in a field; enemy soldiers came charging across the field with fixed bayonets. I cut and hacked at my harness in a frantic effort to get out of the way. They were almost on top of me when I got my Tommy gun and fired into them."

James Montgomery, 101st: "I could see the tracers, which seemed to come directly at me and then curve away. I reached for my front risers and slipped like I never slipped before. Fortunately, I had enough sense to stop my slip before I hit, but about 20 feet from the ground I realized that I was so tense my legs were absolutely rigid. I relaxed,

but even so, I hit the ground quite hard. After getting free of the harness, I crawled off the field to the shadows of the hedgerow."

Guy Remington: "I was caught in a machine-gun crossfire as I approached the ground. It seemed impossible that they would miss me. One of the guns, hidden in a building, was firing at my parachute, which was already badly torn; the other aimed at my body. I reached up, caught the left risers of my parachute, and pulled on them. I went into a fast slip, but the tracers followed me down. I held the slip until I was about 25 feet from the ground and then let go of the risers. I landed up against a hedge in a little garden at the rear of a German barracks. There were four tracer holes through one of my pants legs, two through the other, and another bullet had ripped off both my breast pockets, but I hadn't a scratch."

Ralph Robbins: "I was literally jerked towards the land by a surface wind so strong it must have taken me at a 45-degree angle from vertical. If it had not been for that wind, I don't think [Ralph] Provenzano would have landed in shallow water, and I was the first to fall on dry land."

Henry Beck: "I landed in a field alongside a roadway. Five other members of my plane landed in the field as well. I remember with the moonlight I could see a road sign mounted nearby, listing the distance to Sainte-Mère-Église."

Harry Walsh, 101st: "I came down over a burning plane that had crashed previously. The heat made my chute go up and away from the flames and tangled in the hedgerow. I fell alongside the hedgerow."

Trees were both a blessing and a curse. They cushioned some men's falls, but also left them exposed to the enemy.

Ed Tipper: "I went down almost immediately. I went right through a tree and landed unhurt. I had my rifle in three pieces in my pack and was holding my bazooka—I don't know how I was able to hold onto it, but I did. I had my weapons but very little ammo."

James Eads: "Just as I checked the burning hole in my chute and saw it was now about 18 inches in diameter, I hit the ground, plowing through the limbs of a tree. I bashed into the ground. I took most of the shock with my hind end. My chute then draped lazily over the tree. As I started to sit up to get out of my chute, I promptly slid flat again. After two or three more attempts and a sniff of the air, I finally discovered that I was lying in cow manure."

Dead American paratroopers are gathered in a field by a Graves Registration unit prior to burial.

Nick Cortese, 101st: "I landed in the biggest tree in Normandy. What a tangled mess! My leg pack containing an SCR-300 radio was in one part of the tree while I was further down in the branches. About 50 yards away a haystack burned fiercely, and some distance from that was an enemy machine-gun nest. The gunner was firing away from me at other planes and paratroopers and apparently didn't see me. After what seemed like hours, I cut myself loose from my harness and climbed down my jump rope."

Roy Zerbe: "I managed to land in an apple tree and was suspended only a few inches off the ground. As I tried to free myself, I heard what sounded like an army approaching from behind me in the orchard. My carbine was in a hip pouch, and I struggled to get to it. I looked back towards [the] noise and much to my relief saw it was a group of cows, curiously approaching."

Dewitt Lowery, 101st: "I didn't hit the ground. I hit a tree and hung there. It was a big old tree ... and I could see two machine guns in each corner of a field shooting at me. Those bullets just whizzed past me through those leaves and branches. It sounded like they were firing at a barn.... My buddies took care of the machine guns. I must have been near a farmhouse or something because after that a big old Rottweiler came up and had me bayed up in that tree. Some lady came out in her nightgown and took the dog away. I cut my ammo off my leg and let it drop, let my machine gun drop, then got myself out of the harness, and that's the way I came down."

Bud Edwards, 101st: "I was a short distance off the ground but in a tangled mess of straps and suspension lines. I struggled for about 30 minutes and could not get out of my harness or the tree. Three troopers from the 82nd arrived and asked if I needed some help. I told them I did, and they cut me out of my harness and helped me down."

Four members of the 82nd enter the French village of Sainte-Mère-Église after their harrowing drop.

William Walton: "I landed in a pear tree, a rather good shock absorber. But the real trouble was .. my chute harness slipped up around my neck in a strangle hold, covering the knife in my breast pocket. I was helpless, a perfect target for snipers, and I could hear some of them not far away. In a hoarse, frightened voice, I kept whispering the password, hoping someone would hear and help. From nearby I heard voices. I hung still a moment, breathless. Friends. Then I heard them more clearly. Never has a Middle West accent sounded better. I called louder. Quietly, Sergeant Auge, a fellow I knew, crept out of the hedge, tugged at the branches and, with his pigsticker, cut my suspension cords. I dropped like an overripe pear."

Some landed on man-made structures.

Dan Furlong: "When my chute popped open, my feet hit the trees…. A big branch broke off as I went through the tree and I landed flat on my back in a cement cow trough. It was full of water."

Ray Aebischer: "Landed with a thud on some concrete in a church yard. I remember removing my parachute, grabbing my trench knife, and slowly moving toward the church door."

Earl McClung: "I landed on the roof of a little shed behind the church…. As I came down, there were two Germans running down a walkway toward me, shooting at my parachute. It was no contest. I always jumped with my rifle in my hands, ready to go."

Thomas Rhodes: "I did land in the town square (Sainte-Mère-Église). I had been hit in the mouth and was bleeding rather profusely. A few minutes after landing, two French civilians helped me to my feet and prevented a German soldier from shooting me on the spot."

Ken Russell: "When I hit the roof [of the Sainte-Mère-Église church] a couple of my suspension lines, or maybe more, went around the church steeple, and I slid off the roof. I was hanging on the edge of the roof on the right side of the church.… I cut my risers, threw the knife away, and fell to the ground."

John Steele, 82nd: "I was trying to dodge the burning building and didn't see the steeple. I actually hit the roof of the church and then my chute caught on the steeple. There was fighting going on all around the church."

Mickey Sheridan, 101st: "I had a good landing—right on the roof of a farmhouse. I slid quickly over the side and dropped to the ground without injury."

Bill Kopp, 82nd: "I passed through telephone wires along a roadway, and my canopy hung up in the wires; I ended up in a half-standing, half-sitting position. I remember the panic when I heard hobnailed boots running down the road toward me. I couldn't get loose from the harness until, sobbing with fear and frustration, I cut the risers with my trench knife and crawled into the ditch beside the road."

Some men were not lucky enough to touch down on land.

Roy Lindquist, 82nd: "It was a good opening and a soft landing in about two-and-a-half feet of water."

Stefan Kramer, 82nd: "I counted 'one thousand, two thousand,' and had not more than said two thousand, and I was in water so deep it was over my head! With all of my gear there was no way I could keep my head above water. As soon as I got back to the surface of the water, I pulled the release cord on my Mae West. It instantly filled up."

Pat Lindsay, 101st: "I tried to aim for a small finger of land on which stood a large silo. I tried to manipulate my chute toward the projection of land, but the wind was not cooperating. I hit the water—went completely under into the soft gummy bottom, fought

my way to the top, and flapped my arms to stay afloat with all my equipment trying to pull me under. The billowing chute, acting as a sail, carried me toward land. I had hit the water approximately 150 yards from shore, and the 'sail-chute' carried me within 75 feet of the shoreline."

Leslie Kirk, 82nd: "In the moonlight it looked like a nice smooth meadow to land in, but instead it was a splash. I couldn't get my leg straps unbuckled, so I cut them with my trench knife. The wind was blowing my chute and I took a lot of water before I got myself cut loose."

Robert Flory: "I landed in water up to my chest. I was in a salt marsh. It seemed like an eternity before I could get out of my harness and wade to dry land."

Paul Vacho, 101st Airborne: "I took one or two swings and landed in the water.… The water was chest deep where I landed. Had to cut the webbing of my harness because it was too tight. This I did with my face in the water because the Germans were firing just over the water at a height of about two feet."

Harold Shoutis, 82nd: "I tried to slip my chute, but the wind was too strong and I landed in the center of the river. The wind caught my chute, which probably saved me from drowning, and I went across the river like a motorboat. I was dragged about 30 feet on the shore before I could collapse my chute."

Tom Porcella: "I hit the water in a standing position, and when my feet touched the bottom I was leaning forward. I managed to straighten myself up and realized that the water was over my head and I had to jump up for air."

Louis Cione, 101st: "Above the water I grabbed for my knife and the chute caught the wind at about the same time. After gliding through the water, I finally cut the chute loose."

David Kenyon Webster: "I saw the water 20 feet below. I've had it, I thought. Goddamn Air Corps. I reached up, grabbed all four risers, and yanked down hard to fill the canopy with air and slow my descent. Just before I hit, I closed my eyes and took a deep breath of air. My feet splashed in the water. I held my breath, expecting to sink over my head and wondering how I was going to escape from my harness underwater—and hit bottom three feet down. My chute billowed away from me in the light wind and collapsed on the surface. I went to work to free myself from my gear. Immensely relieved at the safe landing, I undid the reserve and discarded it, yanked loose the bellyband, unsnapped the leg straps and chest buckle, detached my rifle case, and let the harness sink into the swamp. I was on my own at last."

Others suffered injuries from their hard landings.

Ed Pepping: "I came down backwards and landed in the middle of a field. I didn't have enough time to pull up on my risers and alleviate the shock of landing. The back of my helmet hit the back of my head. I didn't know it at the time, but I had cracked three vertebrae and received a concussion."

Mark Alexander, 82nd: "I landed on a stump in a clearing near a farmhouse. The stock of my carbine hit the stump first, slammed up into my chin, and cut a half-inch gash in my jaw."

C.B. McCoid, 82nd: "Stunned initially, I soon was able to check my injuries. I found I had a crushed right kneecap where a wound already existed from the antiaircraft round that hit our plane."

Joseph O'Jibway, 82nd: "We hit so hard, the landing was sideways—I was almost knocked out, and my left leg was badly injured."

Donald Ellis, 82nd: "I slipped trying to miss this cow, and I slid off her back, and fractured one leg."

Benjamin Vandervoort: "As I came down, I selected a small field with a clump of brush in the center and slipped my chute toward the shadows of the brush to be able to conceal myself while getting out of my harness. I landed about a 45-degree slope—hit hard and felt my ankle snap and knew at once it was broken."

George Jacobus, 82nd: "As the ground began to come into focus, so did a German machine-gun nest on my right. There appeared to be a small building to my left. With all my strength, I pulled on the risers to go left away from the machine-gun nest. I did, and slammed into the building like a ton of bricks, on the ground, on my back. Something had hit my left eye. I knew in an instant I had broken my left leg. It was eerie, as I lay amidst the tangled shroud lines and wriggled out of my chute."

Lou Sacchetti, 101st: "I was hit over the right eye while in the air. Blood was pouring down my face, and it was difficult to see and unhook my chute."

Zane Schlemmer: "I hit a hedgerow, coming up with very sore bruised ribs from the impact of all my equipment that I had strapped to my body."

WITNESSING TRAGEDY

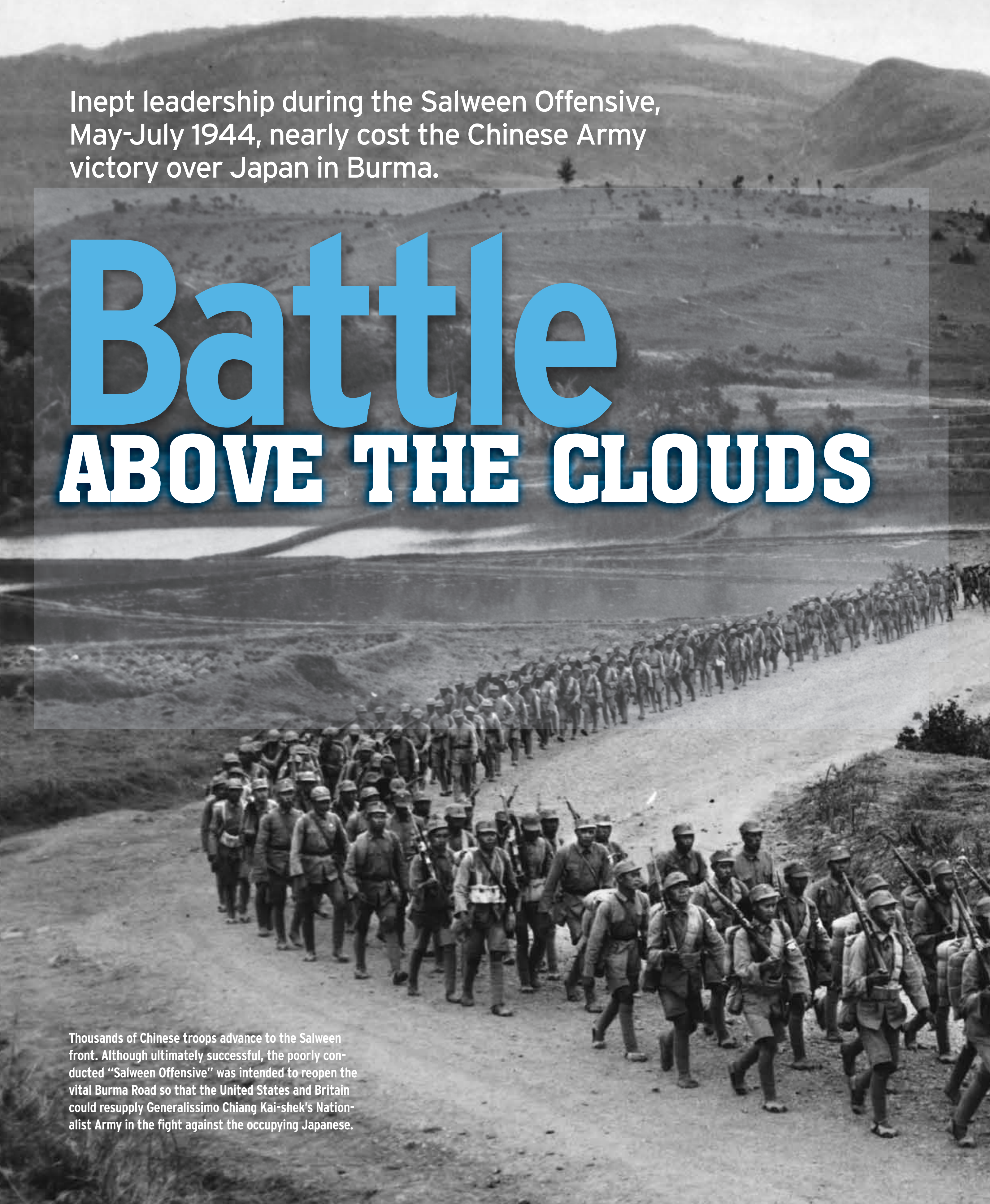
Once on the ground, some of the men watched the death of their comrades.

Robert Flory: "I saw one plane take a direct hit and explode in mid-air."

Leslie Cruise: "Occasionally one large flash appeared and I saw a plane silhouetting earthward. 'Oh, my God,' I thought. 'There goes a whole planeload of guys.'"

Donald Burgett: "Another plane came in low and diagonally over the field. The big ship was silhouetted against the lighter sky with long tongues of exhaust flame flashing along either side of the body. Streams of tracers from several machine guns flashed upward to converge on it. Then I saw vague, shadowy figures of troops plunging downward. Their chutes were pulling out the pack trays and just starting to unfurl when they hit the ground. Seventeen men hit before their chutes had time to open. They made a sound like large ripe pumpkins being thrown down to burst against the ground."

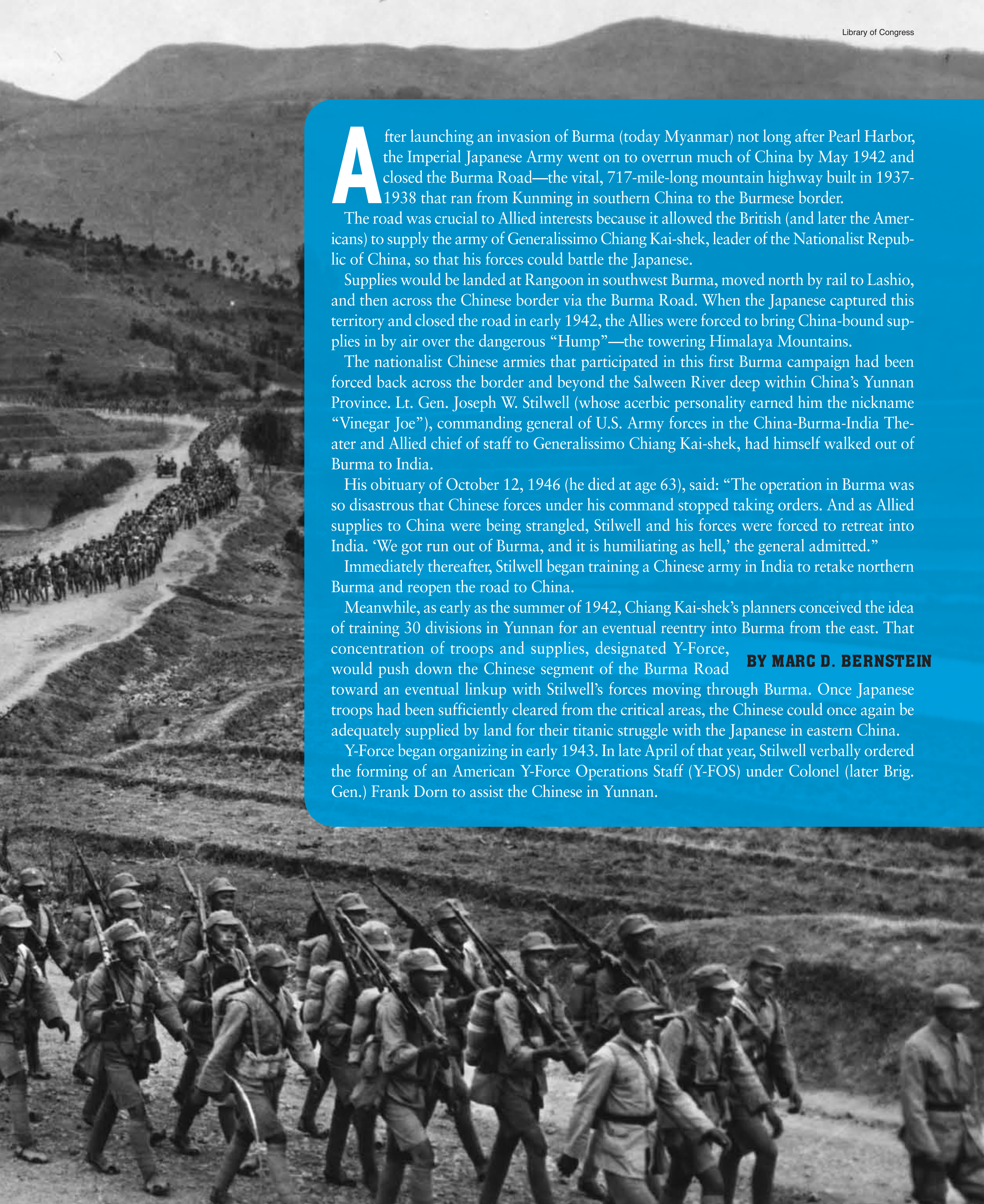
The paratroopers who survived their harrowing experiences now gathered themselves and set off to find and engage the enemy. The amphibious forces would be arriving in less than six hours. □



Inept leadership during the Salween Offensive, May-July 1944, nearly cost the Chinese Army victory over Japan in Burma.

Battle ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Thousands of Chinese troops advance to the Salween front. Although ultimately successful, the poorly conducted "Salween Offensive" was intended to reopen the vital Burma Road so that the United States and Britain could resupply Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army in the fight against the occupying Japanese.



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After launching an invasion of Burma (today Myanmar) not long after Pearl Harbor, the Imperial Japanese Army went on to overrun much of China by May 1942 and closed the Burma Road—the vital, 717-mile-long mountain highway built in 1937-1938 that ran from Kunming in southern China to the Burmese border.

The road was crucial to Allied interests because it allowed the British (and later the Americans) to supply the army of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Nationalist Republic of China, so that his forces could battle the Japanese.

Supplies would be landed at Rangoon in southwest Burma, moved north by rail to Lashio, and then across the Chinese border via the Burma Road. When the Japanese captured this territory and closed the road in early 1942, the Allies were forced to bring China-bound supplies in by air over the dangerous "Hump"—the towering Himalaya Mountains.

The nationalist Chinese armies that participated in this first Burma campaign had been forced back across the border and beyond the Salween River deep within China's Yunnan Province. Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell (whose acerbic personality earned him the nickname "Vinegar Joe"), commanding general of U.S. Army forces in the China-Burma-India Theater and Allied chief of staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, had himself walked out of Burma to India.

His obituary of October 12, 1946 (he died at age 63), said: "The operation in Burma was so disastrous that Chinese forces under his command stopped taking orders. And as Allied supplies to China were being strangled, Stilwell and his forces were forced to retreat into India. 'We got run out of Burma, and it is humiliating as hell,' the general admitted."

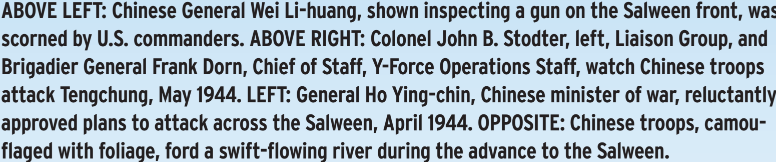
Immediately thereafter, Stilwell began training a Chinese army in India to retake northern Burma and reopen the road to China.

Meanwhile, as early as the summer of 1942, Chiang Kai-shek's planners conceived the idea of training 30 divisions in Yunnan for an eventual reentry into Burma from the east. That concentration of troops and supplies, designated Y-Force, would push down the Chinese segment of the Burma Road toward an eventual linkup with Stilwell's forces moving through Burma. Once Japanese troops had been sufficiently cleared from the critical areas, the Chinese could once again be adequately supplied by land for their titanic struggle with the Japanese in eastern China.

BY MARC D. BERNSTEIN

Y-Force began organizing in early 1943. In late April of that year, Stilwell verbally ordered the forming of an American Y-Force Operations Staff (Y-FOS) under Colonel (later Brig. Gen.) Frank Dorn to assist the Chinese in Yunnan.

All: National Archives



ABOVE LEFT: Chinese General Wei Li-huang, shown inspecting a gun on the Salween front, was scorned by U.S. commanders. ABOVE RIGHT: Colonel John B. Stodter, left, Liaison Group, and Brigadier General Frank Dorn, Chief of Staff, Y-Force Operations Staff, watch Chinese troops attack Tengchung, May 1944. LEFT: General Ho Ying-chin, Chinese minister of war, reluctantly approved plans to attack across the Salween, April 1944. OPPOSITE: Chinese troops, camouflaged with foliage, ford a swift-flowing river during the advance to the Salween.

Dorn was a highly competent West Pointer who had served as Stilwell's aide and in several other key staff positions in the CBI since early 1942 and had walked out of Burma with Stilwell.

On June 18, 1943, formal written orders confirmed the establishment of Dorn's Y-FOS. Y-Force itself would be entirely under Chinese command, but Dorn's Americans would have several important functions. They would assist in training and supplying the Chinese, exchange intelligence, provide air-ground liaison, and report on the needs of the frontline troops in the coming offensive.

Initially, Dorn had only a handful of officers to accomplish these duties, but by January 1944, Y-FOS had grown to a staff of 654 officers and 1,629 enlisted men. Importantly, American portable and field hospitals joined Y-FOS to provide a level of care hitherto unknown to Chinese troops. American advisers were attached to units as large as Chinese armies and as small as regiments.

It had originally been hoped that the Chinese would be ready to move in Yunnan by October 1943. All supplies for Y-Force needed to be transported by air over the Hump of the Himalayas from bases in India, but this had been accomplished with sufficient speed.

Still, the Chinese dallied. Finally, in mid-April 1944, after being threatened with a cutoff of Lend-Lease supplies to Y-Force, Chinese Minister of War and Army Chief of Staff General Ho Ying-chin gave formal approval to an attack across the Salween by 12 divisions (known as the Chinese Expeditionary Force) under General Wei Li-huang.

General Ho asked Dorn for his personal assurance that the Americans would ferry 50,000 Chinese troops across the Salween and that air support and artillery coordination would be forthcoming. Moreover, Ho wanted the Americans to share General Wei's command responsibility regarding the supply of food and ammunition to the advancing troops. Dorn readily agreed to all of these requirements.

General Wei Li-huang, nicknamed "One Hundred Victory Wei," had spent six years fighting in another part of China, but Dorn considered him inexperienced for the kind of fighting that would be required west of the Salween. His initial 12 divisions were split between the XX Group Army, which would be responsible for the northern half of the area of operations, and the XI Group Army, which would be responsible for the southern half.

Wei's forces were significantly understrength, with his divisions averaging only about 6,000 men apiece. Thus, he would begin the offensive with approximately 72,000 effectives. To this total would eventually be added three more divisions of the Eighth Army, assigned to the CEF during May 1944.

Wei's opposition west of the Salween consisted only of the 11,000 troops of the Japanese 56th Division, which held a front stretching over 100 miles from north to south. Though far short of his authorized strength, Wei would have a numerical advantage over his enemy of better than six to one to start the campaign.

But the CEF faced more than just a tough Japanese division that had had two years to perfect defensive positions in this sector of the front. The Salween battleground was arguably the roughest in the world. The river itself, although generally not more than 150 yards wide, is cold and fast flowing. To the Chinese it is known as the "Angry River."

The Salween lies in a gorge 3,000 feet above sea level but just west of it the Kaoli-kung Mountains, a spur of the Himalayas, rise as high as 12,000 feet. The Burma Road, running in a northeasterly direction, bisected the area of operations. North of the road, there were four high mountain passes through the Kaoli-kung. The two most important for the Salween campaign were the Mamien Pass and, to the south, the Tatangtzu Pass, both at about 10,000 feet.

At that altitude, the Chinese would have to weather snow, ice, sleet, and fog in pushing through the passes during the monsoon season, which begins in May. Over a distance of 170 miles from Hpimaw in Burma's north to Kunlong in the south there were 17 ferries or river crossing points that were usable in 1944. The three bridges across the Salween were destroyed by the Chinese during their retreat in 1942.

North of the Burma Road there were five main trails leading across the Kaoli-kung Mountains from the Salween to the Shweli River, 15 miles west of the Salween. South of the Burma Road there were four main trails leading from the Salween to the road itself, plus several secondary paths. A motor road ran from Kunlong on the Salween to Hsenwi on the Burma Road, 45 miles to the west.

The walled city of Tengchung, north of the road, was a critical road and trail junction, and one of the trails from it led west all the way to Myitkyina in Burma, a distance of 124 miles. A road also led 40 miles south from Tengchung to Lungling on the Burma Road.

A 1944 report on the Salween operations added: "The ruggedness of the country makes it sparsely populated. There are only two towns of any size, Tengchung and Lungling. A number of villages and tiny settlements lie on the rivers and their tributaries and along the trails…. In the Salween Campaign terrain, the distances between villages and points of resistance are small. Hence, distances of a few miles are highly significant. In the mountainous terrain, large bodies of troops cannot be maneuvered, and the operations must be carried on with relatively small numbers. Battalions in these mountains are equivalent to divisions in open country."

General Wei Li-huang's operational plan was relatively simple. With the Japanese 56th Division firmly established on the Burma Road and in a position to easily move reinforcements forward along the road, the Chinese decided to attack the Japanese flanks first. After ferrying across the Salween, Wei's troops would press inland in a double envelopment of the enemy center of resistance from the north and south. When the Japanese were enveloped, Chinese forces would then push directly down the Burma Road.

National Archives

With the capture of the key objectives of Tengchung and Lungling, it was expected that the Japanese would fall back to Burma. American engineers could get to work constructing a connecting route between the recently built Ledo Road across north Burma and the Burma Road. Once that was accomplished, the land route would be open all the way to Kunming.

Wei assigned the XX Group Army to the sector north of the Burma Road. Initially, it would send three reinforced regimental combat teams across the Salween at three different points. They would each be rapidly reinforced, and these forces would advance through the mountain passes to converge on Tengchung. The XI Group Army was assigned the Burma Road and the Japanese positions to the south of it.

Elements of the 71st and 2nd Armies were to cross the Salween at two points near Pingka and converge on that town. Other elements would bypass Pingka and head northwestward toward Lungling and Mangshih on the Burma Road. The capture of locations along the Burma Road would seriously threaten the defensive positions of the Japanese 56th Division, cutting off units to the east.

With Lungling and Mangshih under attack, the remainder of the XI Group Army would ferry across the Salween. If these early operations proved successful, General Wei would commit his reserve to an attack directly down the Burma Road.

The U.S. Army official historians commented, "The plan was good, but the hour was late and this would be a great handicap." Indeed, the monsoon rains arrived about a week after the first crossings of the Salween on the evening of May 10-11.

On April 27, Chiang Kai-shek telephoned General Wei at his Paoshan headquarters to order some late adjustments and set the date for launching the offensive. Chiang instructed his commanders to "succeed—or else!" Dorn later notified Stilwell that his hopes were high for reaching Myitkyina before Stilwell's five Chinese Army in India divisions did.

"So fanatic was the Jap resistance that even after the Chinese troops surrounded and entered a pillbox, the Japs still charged with bayonets and had to be exterminated one by one inside the positions."

The Chinese commanders were concerned about the vulnerability of their troops during the Salween crossing operations, but the Japanese elected to put up virtually no resistance at the crossing sites, preferring to establish their main defensive positions along the Kaoli-kung ridgeline 10 miles west of the river in the XX Group Army sector.

Units of the Chinese 39th Division were ferried across the river a few miles north of the wrecked Hweijen Bridge without incident on the night of May 10-11 and began

moving south parallel to the river toward the bridge site and a trail leading from there westward to Tengchung.

North of the 39th Division's crossing, units from the 36th and 116th Divisions crossed at Mengka Ferry on May 11-12, heading toward Tatangtzu Pass. Farther north, elements of the 198th Division (54th Army) crossed the Salween near Haipo on the night of May 11 on rubber boats and bamboo and oil drum rafts, with the intention of advancing on Mamien Pass. The current was so strong that it took four engineers to paddle just four infantrymen and their equipment across the river at a time.

In the south near Pingka, the 228th Infantry Regiment from the 76th Division crossed 11 miles below the town, while elements of the 88th Division were ferried to a point seven miles northeast of the town. Serious fighting did not begin in any of these sectors until the Chinese were well established beyond the river. The only casualty was one man who drowned.

The 198th Division pressed westward toward Mamien Pass, making contact with the first outpost of the Japanese 2nd Battalion, 148th Regiment there on the afternoon of May 12.

The main body of the division was in position for an attack on the pass by May 15, while other elements bypassed Mamien Pass entirely and moved over trails toward the Shweli River.

On May 17, Chinese guerrillas occupied Hpimaw Pass, far to the north of Mamien Pass, and units of the 198th Division were diverted north to reinforce the guerrillas.

By that same date, the elements that bypassed Mamien Pass had reached the Shweli River and made contact with the Japanese in a surprise attack at Chiatou, where heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. Pushing farther south along the Shweli, the Chinese occupied Kiatou on May 24.

Alarmed, the Japanese counterattacked the Chinese in the Shweli River Valley and both Chiatou and Kiatou were retaken by the enemy before the end of May. Fighting raged there until mid-June, with Chiatou changing hands three times and Kiatou twice before the Japanese were finally driven west of the Shweli River and south of Kiatou.

In Mamien Pass, the Chinese were stalled by stubborn enemy resistance, with the Japanese 2/148 falling back to the fortified village of Chaikungtang, where it joined two battalions of the Japanese 113th Regiment that had been rushed north to reinforce after the 56th Division determined that the major Chinese threat was in the northern sector of its front. The Japanese held out at Chaikungtang, blocking movement through the pass, until June 13.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Chinese troops carrying weapons and supplies cross the Salween over the temporary Huitong Bridge, July 1944. While Allied forces advanced on Myitkyina, Chinese troops crossed the Salween from the east. The two forces met at Tengchung in September 1944, establishing the first thin hold in northern Burma. BELOW: Troops of the 2nd Chinese Army (Y-Force) cross the Nujiang River from the east bank in rubber boats, May 11, 1944. Some 40,000 crossed on the first day, with 60,000 more to follow.

An American report noted that "so fanatic was the Jap resistance that even after the Chinese troops surrounded and entered a pillbox, the Japs charged with bayonets and had to be exterminated one by one inside the positions."

In addition, evidence of Japanese cannibalism was discovered. First Lieutenant Richard D. Shoemaker, part of the Y-FOS liaison team with the 54th Army, wrote: "[W]e saw the body of a dead Jap. The head, hands and feet still had flesh on them showing no sign of decay…. The rest of the body was bare and no flesh whatsoever on the bones. The skin had the appearance of having the flesh cut off—here were no jagged or uneven edges." Some of the bodies Shoemaker found were located adjacent to a Japanese kitchen.

At Tatangtzu Pass, south of Mamien, the Chinese 36th Division (54th Army) also encountered serious difficulties. By the evening of May 12, it had surrounded the Japanese at the eastern end of the pass. But the enemy launched a devastating attack that night and drove the Chinese back to the Salween. The 36th Division's morale was smashed, and it would be out of action for several weeks.

The 53rd Army continued the attack against the pass with the 116th Division moving from the north and the 130th Division from the south. An American observer noted, "Several days were wasted and heavy losses incurred ... in suicidal charges by a succession of squads against enemy pillboxes. Teamwork in use of weapons and supporting fires and the use of cover were conspicuously lacking ... most casualties resulted from attempts to walk or rather climb up through inter-locking bands of machine-gun fire. As a demonstration of sheer bravery the attacks were magnificent but sickeningly wasteful."

The fighting for Tatangtzu Pass continued with great ferocity until May 24. On May 18 alone, Tatangtzu village changed hands three times. The Chinese fed additional troops into the battle, and the Japanese, concerned about pressure to the north, eventually decided to thin out the troops blocking the pass. A number of Japanese were successful at breaking through the Chinese lines and escaping to the west.

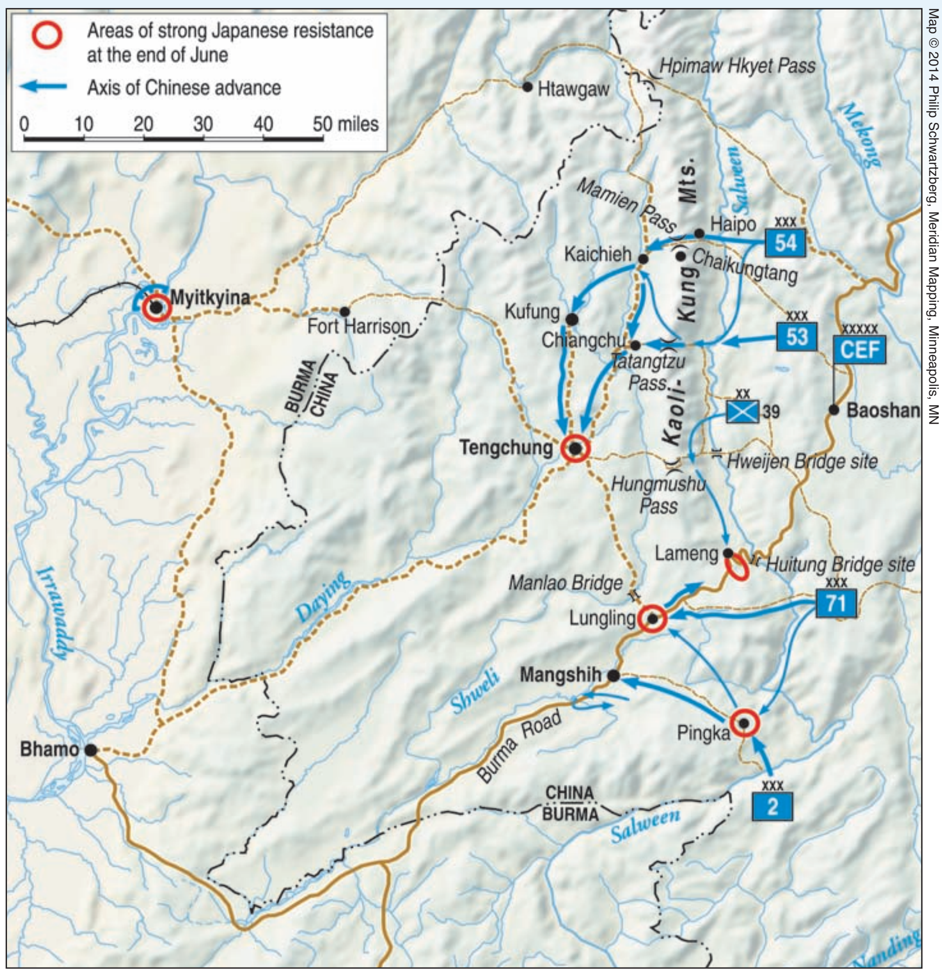
The Chinese pursued toward Chiangtso, on the trail from Tatangtzu to the Shweli River, and also moved on Watien, on the Shweli River to the northwest. Thus, by early June the Chinese were heavily engaged just west of Tatangtzu and along the Shweli River itself. Watien held out until June 20, and shortly thereafter the Japanese fell back toward Tengchung, 25 miles to the south.

In the Hweijen Bridge area, south of Tatangtzu Pass, the Chinese 39th Division at first made good progress, driving the Japanese 1st Battalion, 113th Regiment from the vicinity of the west end of the destroyed bridge and moving into the village of Hungmushu by May 17.

At Hungmushu there was yet another pass leading through the mountains toward Tengchung, just 20 air miles away. But the Japanese counterattacked successfully and pushed the 39th Division out of Hungmushu and back against the Salween.

By late May, the Chinese were in defensive positions seven miles north of Hungmushu and continued to engage the Japanese there for two weeks. The Japanese decided to withdraw the 1/113 and send it north, thereby allowing the 39th Division to occupy the Hungmushu Pass by mid-June. But the 39th Division was then diverted along a trail paralleling the Salween, under orders to assist the 28th Division of the 71st Army in its attack on the Japanese stronghold of Sungshan on the Burma Road considerably to the south.

On the southern half of the front, the XI Group Army initially had little trouble advancing on Pingka. The Japanese 1st Battalion, 146th Regiment was forced back



Battling westward against Japanese forces over a mile high on the China-Burma border, the Chinese Expeditionary Force (CEF) faced unbelievably rugged terrain, including mountains, raging rivers, dense forests, and deep gorges.

by elements of the Chinese 76th Division (2nd Army) to the heights overlooking the town. The 88th Division (71st Army), moving from the north, fought through a series of fortified villages in its advance. On May 14, the Japanese struck rear elements of the 88th Division, causing it to stand and fight east of Pingka.

Meanwhile, units of the 76th Division temporarily occupied the town on May 15, but a seesaw struggle ensued with the enemy able to reestablish itself in Pingka and remain there until late September.

The 88th Division joined two other divisions of the 71st Army in a drive on Lungling, and the bulk of the 76th Division was ordered to bypass Pingka, leaving only the 226th Regiment to besiege the Japanese there. That regiment faced the enemy along a semicircular front that extended 24 miles.

The rest of the 76th Division plus the 9th Division headed west toward Mangshih on the Burma Road below Lungling. On June 9, elements of the 9th Division cut the Burma Road four miles south of Mangshih. But one source reported, "The 2nd Army suspended its operations and complained bitterly that it was being discriminated against in supply. Investigating the charge, Y-FOS found that there was an old feud between Headquarters, XI Group Army, and Headquarters, 2nd Army." The Americans were unsuccessful at resolving the issue, and the Chinese pulled back from the Burma Road.

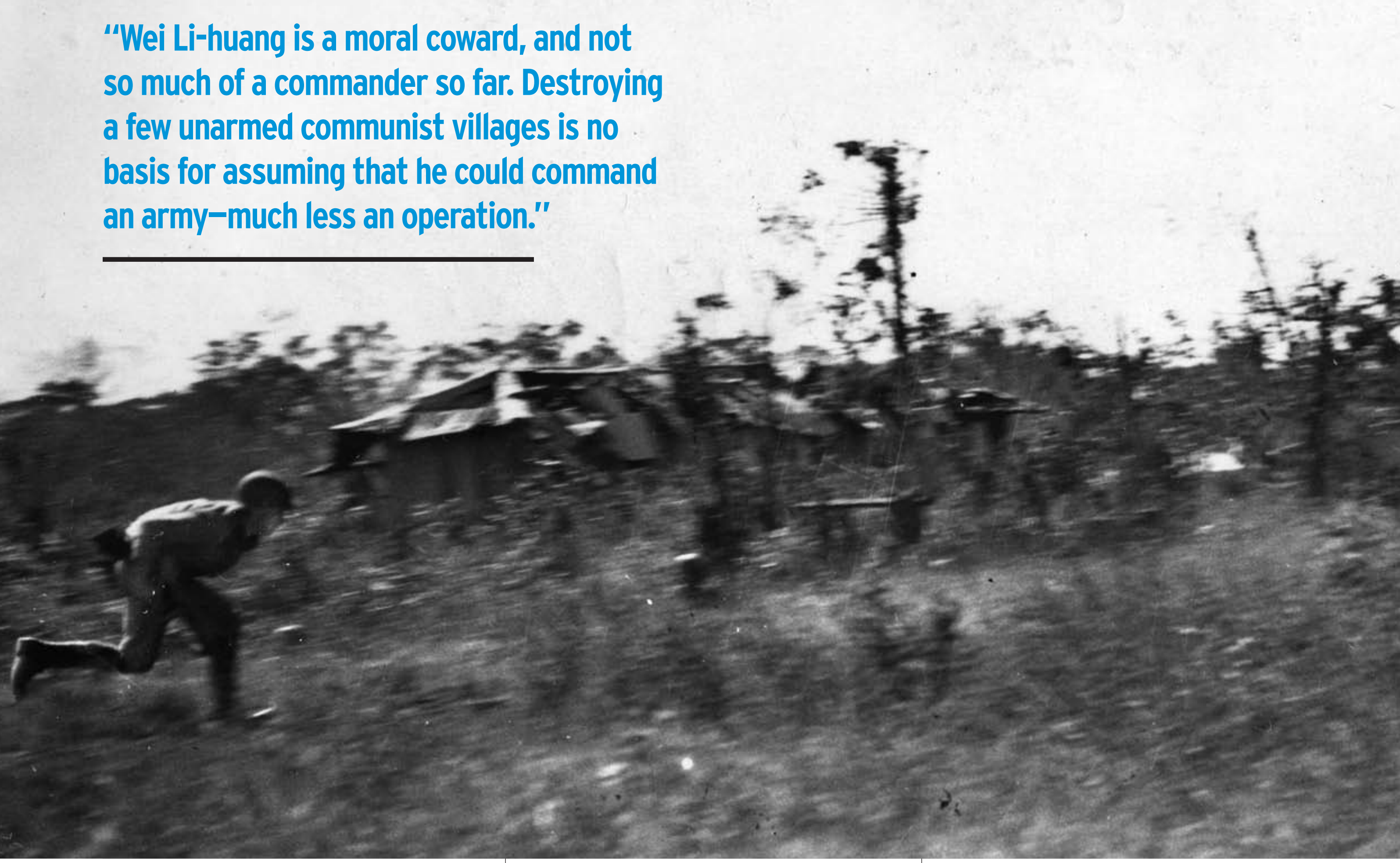
In late May, CEF Commanding General Wei Li-huang decided to commit most of the 71st Army in a move on Lungling, except the 28th Division, which was charged with reducing the strong enemy position at Sungshan on the Burma Road, a few miles west of the Salween.

Wei was seeking to exploit the difficulties faced by the Japanese 56th Division, which was in the process of conducting a mobile defense of the entire front, shifting units north and south to meet threats in vital sectors. Both Stilwell and Dorn welcomed Wei's decision to commit fully all four of his original armies to the offensive while the Chinese Eighth Army was being moved from the Indochina border to augment the CEF.

The Japanese had launched a major offensive in east China that seriously threatened the airfields of the U.S. Fourteenth Air Force, and according to an observer, "Stilwell was most anxious to join his forces with Wei's for he wished then to move the Chinese Army in India and Wei's forces to east China to meet the Japanese threat."

By June 5, the 71st Army had moved 20,000 additional troops across the Salween. In the Sungshan sector, the 28th Division took the village of Lameng, pushing the Japanese back to Sungshan itself, which constituted a mountain fortress. The Japan-

"Wei Li-huang is a moral coward, and not so much of a commander so far. Destroying a few unarmed communist villages is no basis for assuming that he could command an army—much less an operation."



National Archives

National Archives

A Chinese soldier wounded by mortar fragments awaits medical attention. The courage of the Chinese soldier was seldom called into question, but many of those in command left a great deal to be desired. OPPOSITE: Massed Chinese troops charge Japanese positions under heavy fire. Americans were critical of Chinese tactics, which were often wasteful of human life.

ese, with fewer than a thousand troops at Sungshan, managed to hold out there until early September.

Meanwhile, the 87th and 88th Divisions pushed toward Lungling, reaching the gates of the city by June 7-8. Lungling was crucial to the Japanese effort to hold the line against the Chinese on the Salween front. Its fall would make the Japanese position at Tengchung, 40 miles to the north, untenable and could cause the entire front to crumble. On June 10, the Chinese moved into Lungling, taking three-quarters of the city. But the Japanese quickly regrouped, and by June 16 the 87th Division had been pushed well outside of Lungling.

Major General Sung Hsi-lien, commanding XI Group Army, ordered the 88th Division to fall back alongside the 87th to a line four to five miles northeast, east, and southeast of the city.

The U.S. Army official history observed, "So passed a brilliant opportunity; General Wei's attempt to exploit his initial successes by committing his reserves had been shattered by [Sung's] withdrawal before the counterattack of 1,500 Japanese…. Y-FOS personnel considered the Chinese decision to withdraw from Lungling inexcusable because XI Group Army had sent forward no reinforcements to meet the initial Japanese counterattacks. Of 21 battalions that XI Group Army had in the vicinity of Lungling on 14 June, only nine took part in the fighting."

The Japanese would hold Lungling until early November. In an operation supplemental to the main effort across the Salween, a Chinese force at the far southern end of the front attacked Japanese troops east of Kunlong on May 17 and by late May had effectively neutralized the enemy threat in that area.

General Dorn, as chief of staff of the American Y-FOS, was in a unique position to assess the quality of the Chinese effort during the Salween offensive. His commentary on what he witnessed was both trenchant and telling. From the beginning, he was highly critical of the Chinese commanders, including Wei himself.

On May 16, Dorn had radioed Stilwell: "Says, 33rd Div [commander] ... This is not his war, but he is saving his division for second war to come…. Wei Li huang will not issue positive orders to bypass resistance as urged by [CEF chief of staff] Hsaio and me because army and division commanders 'object' to having enemy in their rear…. This same old story of lack of discipline, incompetent commanders and weakling on top. We now have total of about 41,000 west of Salween."

Dorn compiled a summary of his notes and personal comments, which he organized by time period. For May 10-15, he recorded that "justifiable reliefs from command at this time" included CEF commander Wei Li-huang "for weakness in issuance of orders," Maj. Gen. Huo Kwei-chang of XX Group Army "for failure and refusal to act with decision," the commanding general of the 33rd Division "for failure and refusal to accept any orders and for stating his refusal to act," and the commanding general of the 36th Division "for complete incompetence and stupidity."

During the period of May 15-20, Dorn noted that "younger officers and enlisted men with all Chinese units are universally praised for their attitude and courage." But he went on to scathingly state, "The 36th Div was the first to make the crossing in its area. On the night of the crossing many fires were lit in the valley of the Salween in total disregard of security or safety. Had the enemy been prepared to defend the crossing, even with light forces, this unit would have suffered extremely heavy casualties….

"The first battery of the 53rd Army artillery battalion to cross the river went into position and immediately fired 242 rounds of ammo without observation of any kind. If any enemy installations were hit, it was by pure accident.

"American liaison officers with the unit attempted to induce the battery commander to stop firing until he had established an observation post, but he refused. This waste of ammunition weighed over 6,000 pounds, the load for 100 porters….

"[E]nemy counter attacks have been successful each night. There is no security and no follow-up of advantages gained. Troops suffer heavy casualties in order to take a position. Their efforts are wasted, and lives lost for nothing, because commanders have

AP Photo

Chinese troops hold a ridge high above the Salween Gorge, July 1944.

no idea that they should guard their gains. There is no continuous effort against the enemy, and no continuous pressure….

"General Hung, Comdr of the 39th Div, informed the American liaison officer with him that when he [the commander] crossed the river, he would wear civilian clothes in order to be safe, and that the American officer could not accompany him as his uniform would attract Jap attention."

For May 20-25, Dorn wrote, "Plans for the enlarged offensive lumber on. The high command refuses to issue positive orders for the 71st Army to push directly to the Lungling area. Their plan is a series of short jabs at each Jap fortified position along the way—when swift flank moves could avoid all serious fighting until Lungling itself is reached. The result will be about five times the number of necessary casualties; but this plan is 'safe' and will be played close to the belt, so it is considered good…."

Dorn reserved his harshest criticism for the CEF commander personally: "Wei Lihuang is a moral coward, and not much of a commander so far. Destroying a few unarmed communist villages is no basis for assuming that he could command an army—much less an operation.

"Recently Wei proposed that we use B-24s as dive bombers at Tatangtzu, because they could dive and drop 1,000-pound bombs. The impossibility of such an idea is obvious to anyone—but Wei…. Weak command all the way through. One American division could have been in Tengchung eight days ago….

"Out of six division commanders, two army commanders, and one group army commander involved up to date, only one division commander has done satisfactorily so far, one division commander is fair, and one army commander is fair. All others have done a poor job."

In June, Dorn repeatedly expressed frustration with the Chinese effort in the Lungling sector. He observed, "The Chinese should have taken Lungling before this time [June 9]. It is defended by a small Jap garrison. The 71st Army arrived in the area on June 5th; and then spent two days 'getting into position to attack'—the usual Chinese minuet on the chess board of war—instead of plunging right in.

"In the meantime the Japs were thus given two full days to prepare for the attack which started on June 7th. This is standard procedure with the Chinese—and every time it results in many times the necessary casualties. Chinese commanders play chess—they do not fight…. [CEF chief of staff] Hsiao I-hsu told me—'It is not the enemy who is holding us up; but our own people who are unable to overcome their fears.'

"When I remonstrated that the troops themselves had demonstrated on a number of occasions their ability to fight, he replied—'I mean our leaders and commanders.'

"…[XI Group Army CG] Sung insisted [June 20] that he could not hold Lungling, because he had neither artillery ammunition nor air support; though he had an effective combat strength of four to five times the total Jap strength—accepting his reports of Jap troops…. Sung left his headquarters immediately after he had submitted his plan of withdrawal, and remained out of communication for over 24 hours—leaving his chief of staff [without authority to act] at the communication point….

“Sung had had supply difficulties, but nothing to compare to those of the XX [Group Army] in the north, where it was impossible to move animals over the trails, men had to move on all fours over some of the trails, over 150 transport coolies fell off cliffs, over 50 animals were lost in the same way, and where continuous rain, sleet and ice caused the death by exposure of over 300 troops.

“There can be absolutely no excuse for Sung’s conduct—particularly as a supply train of 1500 animals delivered to him about 100 tons on the afternoon of June 16.... Wei ordered Sung to counterattack at once, and to restore his Lungling position. This was on June 17th. He ignored the order and placed his troops in positions of passive defense....

“Hsiao told me that one of Sung’s motives is to preserve the 71st Army intact with a minimum of casualties, and that he was deliberately holding back. No report that Sung makes can be accepted, as he has lied too many times. Hsiao told me plainly to accept nothing that either Sung or [71st Army CG] Chung Pin said.

“Hsiao also states that the CEF has no idea as to what Sung may or may not do, because of his constant refusal to accept or to obey orders. Their great fear is that he may pull out altogether, and without warning. His flagrant refusals amount either to treason or to cowardice; and will delay the completion of the campaign for at least one month—even if he eventually goes into action.”

At Sungshan the Chinese were also stalled, and in early July Dorn railed against the deficiencies of the 71st Army commander. “General Chung Pin, who was placed in command of operations at Sungshan, has continued piecemeal frontal attacks on Jap pill boxes and strongly fortified positions, suffering heavy losses and accomplishing nothing. Chung Pin sent word to the CEF that after numerous attacks on Sungshan, he was out of all ideas as to how its capture could be accomplished; but that he must have more troops....

“Chung sent word that he intended to attack again, using troops of the [Honorable] 1st Div which had been sent to reinforce him. Chief of Staff of CEF told him not to attack until he had received the new plan, and could use newly trained troops. Chung replied that he would attack as a matter of ‘face,’ even though he did not expect much result. After four orders, including a personal order from General Wei, Chung finally agreed to delay the attack (which was to ‘save his face,’ and certainly would fail again).

“The following day Chung sent in one battalion of the Hon 1st Div to attack one of the lesser strongpoints, which was captured with a loss of 60 killed to the Chinese. However, since this area was overlooked by a higher strongpoint, Chung ordered his troops to withdraw after they had taken the place. This is typical of all of Chung’s actions—attack the weak strongpoints, take them with a heavy loss of life, and then because the Japs hold a stronger position, order the withdrawal of the troops....

“After talking with Chung, both [Colonel] Sells and I agreed that Chung was completely whipped. He had no ideas as to how to solve his problem, and would accept none. He insisted that Sungshan must be taken, but could see nothing but a repetition of the wasteful methods he had previously used. He asked me to tell General Wei not to expect much on his front; and to ask General Wei what plan of withdrawal had been ordered in case he (Chung) was unable to take Sungshan.”

On a positive note, as the campaign progressed the Chinese became more receptive to American advice and recommendations, but they refused to accept Dorn’s proposals regarding the relief of key officers. Dorn’s continued exasperation with his allies saw direct expression in a letter he wrote to Chinese Army Chief of Staff General Ho Ying-chin on July 5, 1944.

In it, he castigated both Generals Sung and Chung, stating that “since the middle of June, it has only been with the greatest difficulty that General Sung Hsi-lien has been prevented from withdrawing. He has made greatly exaggerated reports of enemy strength in the Lungling-Mangshih sector, which have been proven wrong for the past three weeks by the fact that the Japanese have never made more than half-hearted local counterattacks in that area....

“He has never committed a force which had sufficient strength to accomplish the assigned mission, but has wasted troops by piecemeal commitments and assignment of limited objectives. The same is true of General Chung Pin.... I know that it is ordinarily not part of my duty to make a report of this kind to you, but I feel that in this case I would be neglecting the trust which both you and General Stilwell have placed in me in the past if I failed to do so.

“I realize the many difficulties involved in removing high commanders, but submit to you that I am convinced without any question of doubt, that as long General Sung Hsi-lien remains in command of the XI Group

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Supplies to support Y-Force frequently had to be carried by pack animals and porters across virtually impassable terrain.

Army, and General Chung Pin remains in command of the 71st Army, the campaign to open the land route between India and China is in grave danger of failure."

Despite this extremely negative evaluation, both Sung and Chung remained in command. In a memorandum Dorn wrote for Stilwell in September, however, he revised his initial estimate of the XX Group Army commander, Maj. Gen. Hou Kwei-chang, noting that he "improves with knowledge. Slow but steady and knows how to accept and carry out orders. Nothing brilliant, but will listen to suggestions. He is big surprise of the campaign, as we thought he was no good. He is dependable in a slow though uninspiring way." By that time, XX Group Army had taken Tengchung after a bitter siege lasting almost two months.

Dorn's general dissatisfaction with the Chinese commanders was matched at times by a critical view of the American air effort backing the CEF. Early in the campaign he wrote, "Air support has been good in the sense that many missions have been flown—more than normally should be necessary under the tactical conditions. But Colonel Kennedy, C.O. 69th [Composite] Wing, is a theorist who has neither any understanding of local conditions and needs, nor apparently is interested in learning anything about them."

After the monsoon set in, the problem worsened considerably. In early June, Dorn commented that the "situation with regard to air dropping of supplies is growing tense. The Chinese report either good weather or broken clouds during most of each day; 69th Wing reports that weather is closed in, and that either combat missions cannot fly at all or have been forced to turn back; while air dropping missions are unable to get through…. We have repeatedly urged Colonel Kennedy to get supplies to these troops—who if they fail in this mission to take Lungling will wreck the whole campaign.

"The Chinese can see only the weather overhead, and will believe nothing else. Most Americans with Chinese troops are of the opinion that supplies could be dropped; and that if they are not, the entire American effort here will be jeopardized. Personally I believe that full advantage is not taken of temporary breaks in the weather. Kennedy is a theorist, and cannot or will not consider anything which varies in the slightest from his own ideas—which have not been gained in combat experience of which he knows very little.

"His own people are free and outspoken in this idea, and claim that anything which was not done in the Louisiana maneuvers, according to Kennedy, cannot be done at all. The general attitude of the Chinese during the past few days has soured considerably because of our inability to help them."

Other U.S. air units participating in the campaign included the 51st Fighter Group, 27th Troop Carrier Squadron, and 19th Liaison Squadron, all based in Yunnan. The Tenth Air Force, based in India, also assisted in the effort.

Regarding the use of weapons during actual combat, the Chinese too often chose to dis-

A Chinese Y-Force soldier uses an American flamethrower to silence a Japanese pillbox during the fight for Tengchung. The flamethrower ignited the Japanese soldiers' grenades and other munitions, killing all inside.

National Archives

miss what they had been taught by the Americans. The U.S. official history noted: "Y-FOS observers [with XX Group Army] wrote that Chinese regimental commanders could not ask directly for support from their attached artillery, but had to route their requests through division headquarters.

"When artillery support was granted, it was almost worthless. Targets were not bracketed, and delay between rounds was often as long as five minutes. Artillery observers were sometimes two miles behind the front. The Chinese gunners disdained cover and concealment, drawing on themselves accurate Japanese counterbattery. Chinese pack artillery did not march in orderly fashion but straggled into position. Battery positions were occupied in daylight with individual pack sections arriving at half-hour intervals. The Chinese neglected to maintain their pieces, which quickly grew rusty during the rains.

AP Photo

May 1944: Chinese troops advance through the streets of the ancient city of Tengchung, held by the Japanese for two years. The Japanese garrison at Tengchung was wiped out.

"To the Americans, the Chinese seemed equally indifferent toward proper care and use of infantry supporting weapons. Chinese mortar crews dismissed their American-taught techniques.... The Chinese infantryman raised the hair on the Americans' heads by casually using the ring of the hand grenade to hang the weapon from his belt.... At night, an entire Chinese regiment would open up on a Japanese patrol. Ammunition was wasted endlessly, and weapons soon grew unserviceable from constant use and lack of maintenance."

By early July, after two months of campaigning, the Chinese offensive was bogged down around the Japanese strongholds of Tengchung, Lungling, Sungshan, and Pingka. The Japanese 56th Division, while receiving limited reinforcements, was successfully fighting a brilliant delaying action in the face of vast Chinese numerical superiority.

Japanese air support was virtually nil, but their use of concrete and log bunkers and pillboxes was extraordinary. At Tengchung, for example, in addition to the 35-foot-high wall surrounding the city, the Japanese had constructed literally hundreds of defensive strongpoints. Chinese tactics were often wasteful, unimaginative, and unsuccessful. Compounding their difficulties, on June 24 a Chinese transport plane carrying codes, ciphers, and order of battle information en route from Chungking to Paoshan had mistakenly landed at Tengchung and was captured by the Japanese.

Later in July, the Chinese did launch a well-coordinated attack on Laifengshan, a heavily fortified hill just south of Tengchung. In taking this position, the Chinese followed a plan drawn up by the Americans. After thorough reconnaissance, they attacked en masse instead of in the usual piecemeal fashion.

As an American report also noted, "Having captured the point, the troops continued the advance instead of the usual pause for consolidation and looting." Flamethrowers were used here for the first time in the Salween campaign. The Japanese suffered an estimated 600 casualties in the attack, and the Chinese by then had moved within a half-mile of Tengchung's walls. But the fall of the city did not occur swiftly.

As the campaign dragged on, the weight of Chinese numbers, plus the continuous application of American airpower, slowly ground down the Japanese. Sungshan finally fell on September 7, after engineers detonated 6,000 pounds of dynamite in tunnels dug under the mountaintop.

Tengchung was taken on September 14 and Pingka on September 23. Lungling held out longer but was finally occupied by the Chinese on November 3. With the capture of Lungling, the Chinese were able to advance down the Burma Road toward Wanting on the China-Burma border, taking that city on January 20, 1945, and ending the Salween campaign. The connection between the Ledo and Burma Roads was completed, and the first truck convoy in almost three years arrived in Kunming on February 4, 1945.

In more than eight months of heavy fighting, the Chinese absorbed over 40,000 casualties. American medical personnel were instrumental in saving the lives of many Chinese wounded, and many were returned to action. Japanese deaths totaled about 15,000.

To call the Salween campaign a triumph for the Chinese would be stretching the point. What might have been accomplished in two months—if Chinese generals had demonstrated boldness and initiative—took more than eight.

Stilwell's hopes that the Chinese troops fighting in Yunnan and northern Burma could be moved to eastern China with a rapid victory on the Salween front were thoroughly dashed. Needless casualties were caused by poor tactical handling of troops. Many Chinese commanders were thorough incompetents, more concerned about their business interests than with fighting the Japanese.

Despite the eventual reopening of the road to China, the Salween offensive should stand as a testament to the gross inefficiency of war. □

THE UNITED STATES 3RD, 4TH, AND 5TH MARINE DIVISIONS FACED THEIR STERNEST TRIALS BY FIRE IN THE MONTH-LONG BATTLE TO TAKE THE ISLAND OF IWO JIMA.

Marines from the 4th Division storm the beach at Iwo Jima, February 19, 1945. The 36-day-long battle would wound 18,000 Marines and claim the lives of nearly 7,000 more. LEFT: Like a giant, all-seeing monster, Mount Suribachi looms 556 feet above the invasion beaches.

"YOU KNOW," said Marine Maj. Gen. Clifton B. Cates to a war correspondent on the eve of Operation Detachment, the invasion of Iwo Jima, "if I knew the name of the man on the extreme right of the right-hand squad of the right-hand company of the right-hand battalion, I'd recommend him for a medal before we go in."

And for good reason. General Cates's 4th Marine Division was tasked with conducting its fourth opposed amphibious landing on a heavily defended island. The 4th was the right flank division of General Harry Schmidt's V Amphibious Corps and, together with Maj. Gen. Keller E. Rockey's 5th Marine Division on the left, was about to begin one of the bloodiest battles in American history. Also taking part would be Maj. Gen. Graves B. Erskine's 3rd Marine Division.

General Cates understood what his men were about to face. Born August 31, 1893, in Tiptonville, Tennessee, he was commissioned into the United States Marine Corps after receiving his law degree from the University of Tennessee. He fought in the Great War with the Marine Brigade of the U.S. Army's 2nd Division at Verdun, Belleau Wood, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne.

After inter-war duty in China and several military schools, Cates commanded the 1st Marine Regiment on Guadalcanal. Then, after commanding the Marine Corps Schools, he was sent back to the Pacific to command the 4th Marine Division, which had just completed the seizure of Saipan in July 1944. His many well-deserved decorations included the Navy Cross, two Distinguished Service Crosses, two Distinguished Service Medals, two Silver Stars, a Legion of Merit, and two Purple Hearts.

Whoever the unknown Marine on the far right flank was, he was a member of the 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division. Most of the men in the division had already made three or more opposed landings in the Marshall Islands, at Saipan, and most recently at Tinian, both in the Mariana Islands. Like General Cates, who had taken command of the division from General Schmidt after Saipan, they knew all too well what they were about to encounter.

They had learned fast. For a unit that had not existed when General Cates and the 1st Marine Division landed on Guadalcanal in 1942, the 4th Marine Division had been organized, trained, and took part in four amphibious assault landings in less than 13 months. And Iwo Jima, scheduled to be attacked on February 19, 1945, would be the worst.

Iwo Jima was also important. Lying midway along the direct path from Saipan to Tokyo, Iwo Jima had two airfields with a third under construction. From here

UNCOMMON VALOR

BY NATHAN N. PREFER

U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marine Corps

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ABOVE: LCVPs approach Iwo Jima. Mount Suribachi is visible at the left of the horizon line. RIGHT: Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi (center), commander of the Iwo Jima garrison, looks over a plan of the island's underground defenses. He did not survive the battle.

Japanese fighters were able to attack B-29 Superfortresses on bombing raids to Tokyo or returning home to Saipan, picking off bombers that had been damaged by antiaircraft fire. As a result, the B-29s had to fly higher, along circuitous routes, with a reduced payload. At the same time, enemy bombers based on Iwo often raided B-29 bases in the Marianas. Iwo's radar station also gave the Japanese defense authorities two hours advance notice of coming B-29 strikes.

Because of the distance between mainland Japan and American bases in the Mariana Islands, Iwo Jima, if captured, would provide an emergency airfield for damaged B-29s returning from bombing runs. The seizure of Iwo would also allow for sea and air blockades, plus strengthen America's ability to conduct intensive air bombardment and degrade Japan's air and naval capabilities.

Iwo was, and is, an isolated, sulfurous, seven-square-mile island that is part of the Bonin Group located 750 miles south of Tokyo. The Japanese, who considered the island part of the Tokyo Prefecture, had occupied it for decades and had spent all of 1944 creating a spider web of stinking, stifling hot underground tunnels, warehouses, command posts, fortifications, and fighting positions. Two airfields were spread across the island's surface, and 14,000 soldiers and 7,000 Japanese marines manned the defenses. The island garrison's commander, Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi, was confident that his position was as impregnable as anyone could make it.

The 4th Marine Division consisted of the standard three Marine infantry regiments (the 23rd, 24th and 25th) and one artillery regiment (the 14th). It included tank, engineer, and medical battalions as well as other supporting units. The 4th's assignment at Iwo was to secure a beachhead, seize the first enemy airfield, and then pivot to the north and east, clearing out enemy opposition as it went. Critical to success was the reduction of the enemy's ability to deliver flanking fire on the landing beaches from an area known as "the Quarry," which overlooked them from the north.

The various Marine divisions and regiments had specific sectors of the two-mile-long beach assigned to them. In the first wave, Colonel John R. Lanigan's Regimental Combat Team 25 would come ashore on Blue Beach on the right flank, Colonel Walter W. Wensinger's RCT 23 was assigned the Yellow landing beaches (to the left of the 25th) and to assault the first enemy airfield. The 27th Marines would land on Red Beach to the left of center, while the 28th would hit Green Beach on the far left, closest to Mount Suribachi. The 24th was in reserve and would come ashore at about 5 PM on L-Day (landing day).

Softening up enemy defenses was deemed critical. After sustaining a terrific naval and aerial bombardment that lasted for days (but not as long as American commanders wanted), the Japanese, although a bit shaken and deafened, looked through their telescopes and field glasses to see the 450-ship American armada parked off the island's southern coast.

At 6:45 AM on February 19, 1945, Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner signaled, "Land the landing force!" It took hours to obey that order, but shortly after 9 AM Marines of the 4th and 5th Divisions began hitting Green, Red, Yellow, and Blue Beaches abreast, initially finding little enemy resistance. Kuribayashi had ordered his men to hold their fire until the beaches were crowded with invaders; most would obey. There would be no suicidal banzai charges, either.

After wading ashore, the 4th Marine Division's 25th RCT's mission was to push forward to take the Quarry, a Japanese strongpoint, while the 5th Marine Division's 28th Marines had the task of attacking Mount Suribachi, which loomed 556 feet above the invasion beaches. The 3rd Marine Division would be kept in reserve and land on L+5 to capture Airfield Number 2. More than 80,000 Marines would eventually take part in Operation Detachment.

The Japanese watched and waited as the Marines in their camouflage-speckled uniforms came ashore, followed by their great, lumbering Sherman tanks. Supplies began to pile onto the black sand. The Marines were obviously relieved that, thus far, everything was proceeding without a hitch. Few shots had been fired at them. Maybe the preliminary barrages had wiped out all of the enemy.

ABOVE: H-hour at Iwo Jima: White wakes show landing craft bringing the first wave of Marine invaders. LEFT: Three Marine divisions landed on the island's southeast beaches and slowly pushed the defenders to the north.

Map © 2014 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

And then, at about 10 AM, the calm morning was shattered as General Kuribayashi gave the signal and hundreds of guns, firing from hidden emplacements, opened up on the Marines.

Colonel Wensinger's RCT 23 discovered that trying to run across the soft, yielding volcanic sand was like running through molasses. Struggling inland under increasingly severe enemy fire, they pushed forward until they reached the edge of Motoyama Airfield Number 1 in early afternoon. But enemy opposition had depleted the ranks of the leading battalion, and despite support from Lt. Col. Richard K. Schmidt's 4th Tank Battalion, the attack stalled at the edge of the airfield. Even the tanks had difficulty reaching the airfield, several being lost to enemy mines buried in the soft sand and others temporarily stranded on the beach in that same black volcanic sand.

Wensinger's 23rd Marines ran into a series of blockhouses and pillboxes manned by the 10th Independent Anti-Tank Battalion and the 309th Infantry Battalion. It was here that Sergeant Darren S. Cole, USMCR, a 24-year-old from Flat River, Missouri, serving with Company B, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marines, became the first Marine on Iwo Jima to earn the Medal of Honor. When his squad was halted by devastating small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire, Sergeant Cole led them up the slope to Airfield Number 1 and alone destroyed two enemy positions with grenades. He then identified three enemy pillboxes threatening his men.

Putting his machine gun into action, he managed to silence the closest pillbox. Suddenly, his weapon jammed and the enemy opened up a renewed fusillade, including knee mortars. Sergeant Cole, armed only with a pistol and one hand grenade, charged alone at the enemy, tossed his grenade, and then returned for more. He repeated this action twice more, each time knocking out an enemy position. As he destroyed the final enemy post, he returned to his squad only to be killed by an enemy hand grenade. His self-sacrifice had enabled Company B to continue its advance against Airfield Number 1.

Colonel Wensinger ordered his reserve battalion, Major James S. Scales's 3rd, into the fight. As Major Scales's men came forward, the tanks were forced to withdraw under an intense Japanese antitank barrage. Nearby, Major Robert H. Davidson's 2nd Battalion couldn't even get tank support, so intense was the enemy fire. Nevertheless, by mid-afternoon the Marines of the 23rd Regiment, through sheer guts, had reached and secured the edges of the airfield.

Colonel Lanigan's RCT 25 was on the extreme right of V Amphibious Corps. Their assignment was twofold. After landing over the Blue Beaches, they were to attack in two directions; Lt. Col. Hollis Mustain's 1st Battalion was to strike directly inland, protecting the right flank of the 23rd Marines attacking Airfield

Number 1, while Lt. Col. Justice M. Chambers's 3rd Battalion was assigned to take the Quarry. Because of concerns that fire from the Quarry and East Boat Basin would be severe against the landing beaches, Blue Beach 2 was not used, and Chambers's battalion landed behind Mustain's battalion over Blue Beach 1.

Because the two battalions followed each other across Blue Beach 1 under heavy enemy fire, some confusion and mixing of units resulted. The 3rd Battalion in particular was hard hit, with Company K losing eight officers by mid-afternoon; Company I lost six others and Company L another five. The supporting tanks of Company A, 4th Tank Battalion only drew more enemy fire. A bulldozer cutting a road off Blue Beach 1 was destroyed when it hit a large enemy mine hidden in the sand, and the tanks of Company A were halted barely 100 yards off the beach by a large enemy minefield.

Using their main 75mm guns, Company A's tankers provided what support they could to the Marines attacking the enemy positions in the cliffs and pillboxes to the north. Engineers from the 4th Engineer Battalion worked under enemy fire to clear the blocking minefield.

Landing 15 minutes after H-hour, Lt. Col. Chambers's 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, took the heaviest beating of the day on the extreme right while trying to scale the cliffs leading to the Quarry. "Crossing that second terrace," Chambers recalled, "the fire from automatic weapons was coming from all over. You could've held up a cigarette and lit it on the stuff going by. I knew immediately we were in for one hell of a time."

The enemy bombardment was unlike anything the Marines had ever experienced. There was hardly any cover. Japanese artillery and mortar rounds blanketed every corner of the 3,000-yard-wide beach. Large-caliber coast defense guns and dual-purpose antiaircraft guns firing horizontally caught the Marines in a deadly crossfire from both flanks.

Marines searched for cover in vain as the Japanese artillery and machine-gun fire cut them to shreds. One Marine combat veteran observing this expressed a grudging respect for the Japanese gunners. "It was one of the worst blood-lettings of the war," said Major Frederick Karch of the 14th Marine Artillery Regiment. "They rolled those artillery barrages up and down the beach—I just didn't see how anybody could live through such heavy fire barrages."

U.S. Marine Corps

"THERE WAS NO COVER FROM ENEMY FIRE. JAPS DEEP IN REINFORCED PILLBOXES LAID DOWN INTERLOCKING BANDS OF FIRE THAT CUT WHOLE COMPANIES TO RIBBONS. CAMOUFLAGE HID ALL THE ENEMY INSTALLATIONS."

At sea, Lt. Col. Donald M. Weller, the naval gunfire officer with Task Force 51, tried desperately to hit the Japanese gun positions that were blasting 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, from the Quarry. It would take longer to coordinate this fire: the first Japanese barrages had wiped out the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines' entire shore fire control party.

As the two battalions of the 25th Marines attacked in different directions against strong enemy resistance, they soon lost contact with each other. This had been foreseen, and Colonel Lanigan called forward Lt. Col. Lewis C. Hudson's 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, from Blue Beach 1 to fill the gap.

With all his battalions now on line, Colonel Lanigan ordered a coordinated attack to clear the beaches and move on the airfield and the Quarry. This attack began well, but soon both the 1st and 2nd Battalions were forced to ground by enemy fire. The 3rd Battalion managed to clear about 200 yards before halting.

The 3rd Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Justice M. Chambers, USMCR, of Huntington, West Virginia, was already a legend in the Marine Corps before he ever set foot on Iwo Jima. Having served as a Marine Raider in the Solomon Islands campaign before joining the 4th Marine Division, he had earned a reputation as a daring leader in addition to several medals for bravery.

He was also a caring leader and trained his battalion hard. Chambers preached "mental conditioning" to his men and kept them for weeks on the rifle range to ensure accurate marksmanship. Not much for close-order drill, he kept his men out in the field, training at every opportunity. Some men groused and even considered revolt but gradually came to respect their battalion commander when they began to realize they were among the best trained battalions in the division. Now, after three campaigns, they would follow Chambers's lead anywhere.

On L-Day at Iwo Jima, he led them against the Quarry. It was a bitter, brutal fight and cost the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines dearly.

By late afternoon, Chambers reported to Colonel Lanigan that of the 900 Marines he had landed with that morning only 150 were still on their feet as the first day ended. Lanigan immediately rushed up elements of the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, to the Quarry battle.

As night fell, Chambers's battalion, or what was left of it, was relieved by Major Paul S. Treitel's 1st Battalion, 24th Marines. For his personally courageous leadership of 3rd Assault Battalion Landing Team, 25th Marines, from February 19 to February 22, when he was seriously wounded, Lt. Col. Chambers was awarded a Medal of Honor.

Not far behind the thin line of Marine infantrymen, Colonel Louis G. DeHaven's 14th Marine Artillery Regiment landed over the now secured beaches. Because of the heavy and accurate Japanese fire, only the 1st and 2nd Battalions came ashore on L-Day, the 3rd and 4th Battalions landing the following day.

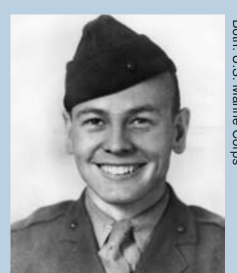
The artillerymen had problems of their own. The beachhead was too small and did not include areas that had been preselected for the artillery to emplace their guns. There were no roads inland, and the soft sand hindered movement of heavy equipment. Casualties, including a battalion commander, further hindered the artillery. Even Lt. Col. Carl A. Youngdale's 4th Battalion, which had spent the day aboard ships awaiting orders to land, suffered six casualties from enemy shells falling among the transports.

Japanese tactics so far in the Pacific War had been to launch a major counterattack on the first night of any invasion of their islands. This "defense at the water's edge" doctrine had broken the back of Japanese resistance in many island battles. But not at Iwo Jima. Although enemy artillery and mortars pounded the Marines all night long, no serious ground attack was launched against the V Amphibious Corps' beachhead. Iwo Jima was already showing signs of being a different type of battle than those the Marines had fought earlier in the Pacific.

The constant Japanese barrage took a toll, however. Both Lt. Col. Ralph Haas, the commander of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marines, and his operations officer were killed during the night, and the supply dump of the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, on Blue Beach was destroyed by enemy rockets. Preliminary casualty counts showed that about eight percent of the 30,000 men who landed on L-Day had become casualties. Of these 2,420 casualties, about 20 percent, or 548 men, had been killed.

February 20 dawned clear and with good visibility. The 4th Marine Division attacked toward Airfield Number 1 with the 23rd and 25th Marines abreast; battalions of the 24th Marines reinforced both regiments. With the support of Company C, 4th Tank Battalion, the 23rd Marines secured the airfield, breaching an important section of the Japanese defensive line. Minefields, rough terrain, and fierce enemy opposition slowed the advance. Heavy rocket, artillery, and mortar barrages constantly struck the advancing Marines.

Late in the afternoon, the 23rd Marines made contact with the 27th Marines of the 5th Marine Division, forming a connected line of advance across the middle of the island. The 25th Marines advanced with two battalions, while the attached 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, held in place at the Quarry until the rest of the corps came alongside.



Both: U.S. Marine Corps

ABOVE: Major General Clifton B. Cates, commander of the 4th Marine Division; Sergeant Darren S. Cole, the first of 27 Americans to earn the Medal of Honor during the battle. BELOW: In this painting by an unknown Japanese artist, Japanese soldiers, taking cover behind a wrecked U.S. plane, fire on Marines approaching from the beachhead. OPPOSITE: In the face of withering enemy fire, 5th Division Marines struggle to climb the volcanic sand slope from Red Beach 1 toward Mount Suribachi, hidden in the left background by the smoke of the battle.

Again, the cost of the advance was high. A mortar shell knocked out the command staff of the 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, and killed the commander of Company B, 4th Tank Battalion. Lt. Col. James Taul, the executive officer of the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, then in reserve, took command of the 2nd Battalion.

Meanwhile, the fight raged on. Lieutenant Arthur W. Zimmerman, seeing that tank support was desperately needed, constantly exposed himself to direct tank fire against a blockhouse that had his platoon pinned down. A tank commander, Sergeant James R. Haddix, volunteered to remain in an exposed position protecting several Marines who were pinned down in a shell hole, eliminating every enemy threat that came against them.

One of the participants, who wrote a brief history of the battle, stated, "There was no cover from enemy fire. Japs deep in reinforced concrete pillboxes laid down interlocking bands of fire that cut whole companies to ribbons. Camouflage hid all the enemy installations. The high ground on every side was honeycombed with layer after layer of Jap emplacements, blockhouses, dugouts, and observation posts. Their observation was perfect; whenever the Marines made a move, the Japs watched every step, and when the moment came, their mortars, rockets, machine guns, and artillery—long ago zeroed-in—would smother the area in a murderous blanket of fire.

"The counterbattery fire and preparatory barrages of Marine artillery and naval gunfire were often ineffective, for the Japs would merely retire to a lower level or inner cave and wait until the storm had passed. Then they would emerge and blast the advancing Marines."

Fighting remained personal on Iwo Jima. A 24-year-old from Marvel Valley, Alabama, Sergeant Ross Franklin Gray, USMCR, was a platoon sergeant with Company A, 25th Marines, when his unit was held up by a grenade barrage near Airfield Number 1 on February 21. He pulled his platoon out of grenade range and then went forward alone to reconnoiter the enemy defenses. He discovered a large minefield and a strong network of emplacements and covered trenches.

Although under heavy enemy fire, Sergeant Gray cleared a path through the minefield and then returned to his platoon. He volunteered to lead an attack under the covering fire of three fellow Marines. Unarmed except for a huge demolition charge, he crawled to the first enemy position and blew it closed with the explosives.

Immediately taken under fire by another of the enemy positions, Gray crawled back to get another demolition charge. He then returned and destroyed the second enemy post. He did this again and again, destroying a total of six enemy pillboxes and killing 25 enemy soldiers. Not finished, he returned to the minefield and disarmed the remaining mines. He survived to wear his Medal of Honor.

As the battle slowly moved north, the 24th Marines came up against six pillboxes that were stalling the leading company. Two tanks came forward and tried to knock them out, but both tanks were themselves disabled by mines. The battalion commander asked a Marine "regular," 43-year-old Marine Ira "Gunner" Davidson, from Chavies, Kentucky, if he could knock out the pillboxes. Davidson rounded up a gun crew of six Marines and a 37mm gun. While running across 200 yards of open ground under enemy fire, one was killed, two were wounded, and one knocked senseless before they could get the gun into position.

Davidson then set his sights on each bunker in turn, aiming for the firing slits in each pillbox and blasting away. Now protected by some riflemen, the Marines moved up to find that in each pillbox were from two to four dead Japanese. Davidson's exacting aim had knocked out all six pillboxes by exploding his rounds inside each without destroying the emplacement itself. Davidson repeated this exploit a few days later and was awarded a Silver Star for his skills and courage.

The time had come to take Airfield Number 2 in the island's center. During the advance of the 24th Marines on February 21, a company commander in the 2nd Battalion, Captain Joseph Jeremiah McCarthy, USMCR, a 34-year-old Chicagoan, refused to admit his men were stymied by the Japanese defenses around the airfield.

Despite heavy enemy machine-gun, rifle, and 47mm fire directed at his company, he organized a demolition and flamethrower team, covered by a rifle squad, and led them across 75 yards of fire-swept ground into a heavily fortified zone of enemy defenses. He

Japanese defenders lie dead as two Marines warily make their way up a hill toward their next objective.

National Archives

personally threw hand grenades into the successive pillboxes as his team came up to destroy each in turn.

Seeing enemy troops attempting to escape from a destroyed position, McCarthy stood erect in the face of enemy fire and destroyed the fleeing enemy. Entering the ruins of one pillbox, he killed an enemy soldier who was aiming at one of his Marines, then went back to his company and led them in an attack that neutralized all enemy resistance within his area. Throughout this battle, he had consistently exposed himself to personally lead and encourage his Marines. He received the Medal of Honor.

The situation was no less dangerous at the supply and aid stations in the rear along the waterline. Enemy gunners seemed to target supply dumps and aid stations, and many Marines suffered second and third wounds while lying helplessly in an aid station. Vehicles bringing supplies to the forward areas were also targeted.

National Archives

U.S. Marine Corps

ABOVE: Dead Japanese in a shell hole near the landing beaches. A portion of the 450-ship U.S. armada is visible in the distance. LEFT: The first flag raising, with the smaller flag carried ashore by Company E, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines, February 23, 1945.

On the beaches, a sudden storm made unloading difficult and delayed removal of the wounded to hospital ships offshore. During the landing of the 4th Battalion, 14th Marine Artillery Regiment, on February 20, over half the battalion's 105mm howitzers were lost to the sea and two more were lost on the beach due to high surf conditions. The surviving guns were set up on Yellow Beach and provided support for the infantry.

Advancing painfully, the 4th Marine Division had lost too many men to cover the assigned front. To assist with this, General Schmidt gave General Cates the 21st Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, then offshore in reserve. Although he originally intended for the new arrivals to relieve the battered 25th Marines, General Cates was advised by his assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Franklin A. Hart, that beach conditions and inland routes favored replacing the 23rd Marines instead, and it was so ordered.

Iwo Jima became a bloody battle between Marines above ground and Japanese deep underground, well camouflaged, and well supported by artillery, rockets, and mortars. Nights were full of enemy infiltration attempts and the occasional small counterattack. Single-plane enemy air raids dropped bombs at random, rarely hitting anything of importance, although one attack did hit the rear areas of the 25th Marines on Blue Beach on L+3. A cold, drizzling rain did little to cheer the exhausted Marines.

On February 23, L+4, a platoon of Marines reached the summit of the island's most imposing feature: Mount Suribachi. Five men from the 28th Marines raised a small flag atop the volcanic mountain. Navy Corpsman John Bradley said, "It was so small that it couldn't be seen from down below, so our battalion commander, Lt. Col. Chandler W. Johnson, sent a four-man patrol up with this larger flag…." Another group of men from the 28th Marines, including Bradley, raised the second, larger, flag—an event that was captured by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal and reproduced thousands of times. Although it was a photo that symbolized victory, final victory on Iwo Jima was still a long way off.

"It takes courage to stay at the front on Iwo Jima," wrote Lieutenant Jim G. Lucas, a Marine Corps combat correspondent. "It takes something which we can't tag or classify to push out ahead of those lines, against an unseen enemy who has survived two months of shell and shock, who lives beneath the rocks of the island, an enemy capable of suddenly appearing on your flanks or even at your rear, and of disappearing back into his hole. It takes courage for officers to send their men ahead, when many they've known since the [4th Marine] Division came into existence have already gone. It takes courage to crawl ahead, 100 yards a day, and get up the next morning, count losses, and do it again. But that's the only way it can be done."

Having secured the Quarry and the high ground above the East Boat Basin, the 4th Marine Division was now faced with a

major enemy defensive enclave. This was a mutually supporting group of defensive positions known as the "Amphitheater." The main defenses of this area in the central and northern sections of the island—Hill 382, Turkey Knob, Charlie-Dog Ridge, and Minami Village—would soon be collectively known as the "Meat Grinder."

The enemy had done everything possible to build these defenses. Hill 382, also known as "Radar Hill," had the remains of a radar station atop it, but the hill itself had been hollowed out by Japanese engineers and filled with antitank guns and artillery pieces. Each resided safely in a concrete emplacement. The hill gave the enemy excellent observation over all approaches.

U.S. Marine Corps

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ABOVE: Marine rocketeers launch 4.5-inch projectiles toward Japanese emplacements on Iwo. The rocket units, being mobile, resorted to hit-and-run tactics to escape enemy counterfire. LEFT: Marines fire their water-cooled, .30-caliber machine gun at the enemy at the foot of Mount Suribachi on L + 3. OPPOSITE: Artillerymen of the 4th Marine Division use a 105mm howitzer to blast Japanese positions.

The remainder of Hill 382 was a honeycomb of caves, ridges, and crevices containing light and medium tanks, 57mm and 47mm guns, and infantry armed with rifles, mortars, and machine guns. Turkey Knob, some 600 yards south, was a major communications center for the Japanese and housed reinforced concrete emplacements.

In the Amphitheater, a southeastern extension of Hill 382, the Japanese had taken the bowl-shaped terrain and filled it with three tiers of heavy concrete emplacements. Here, too, were extensive communications facilities along with electric lighting for the vast underground defenses. Antitank guns and machine guns covered all approaches to Turkey Knob.

Between each of these was a jumble of rocky ground, caves, crevices, and open ground offering little, if any, protection for attacking forces. Torn trees blocked approaches, as did blasted rocks, depressions, and a host of irregular ground obstacles. This was the eastern bulge of Iwo Jima—the core of the Japanese defense in the northeastern half of the island—and the 4th Marine Division's objective.

On February 24, the 24th Marines began to move across those approaches.

After several hundred yards the Marines were stopped cold. From Charlie-Dog Ridge came heavy machine-gun, rifle, antitank, and mortar fire at point-blank range. From behind came antiaircraft fire using airbursts, antitank fire, and artillery. The Marines called for supporting fire of their own, but because they were so close to the enemy this was refused.

Only the 14th Marine Artillery's 105mm guns were accurate enough, along with the infantry's own 60mm and 81mm mortars; Marines of the Weapons Company dragged a 37mm gun forward and helped. Four machine guns were also pushed forward to help in suppressing enemy fire.

Then it began again. Advancing by rushes, individual squads of Marines attacked each enemy position in turn, working from one position to the next. Shooting, burning, and blasting, they fought their way to the top. By late afternoon, Companies G and I had made it and were mopping up the last of the defenders.

The 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines, was not so fortunate. They hit the Amphitheater itself, suffered heavy casualties, and had to use white phosphorous smoke shells to screen the evacuation of their wounded. Among these was the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Alexander A. Vandegrift, Jr., son of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, who was seriously wounded.

By this time, L+6, two-thirds of the 3rd Marine Division was ashore on Iwo Jima and had taken over the center of V Amphibious Corps' front line. The 4th Marine Division continued on the right flank, facing the Amphitheater; one-third of the island lay in their sector. It was the most rugged terrain on the island and defended by determined enemy soldiers and sailors.

The 23rd and 24th Marines, the latter reinforced with the 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, and Company A, 2nd Armored Amphibian Battalion, opened the attack with a fierce barrage from supporting weapons. Because enemy defenses blocked the use of tanks on the division's front, permission had been given to move the 4th Tank Battalion's tanks through

the adjoining 3rd Marine Division's sector. These were particularly helpful to the 23rd Marines' advance, knocking out enemy pillboxes, machine guns, and antitank guns.

The 24th Marines and their reinforcements took on the Amphitheater and Minami Village. From offshore, the amphibian tractors tried to support the attack, but rough seas reduced their effectiveness and they were recalled.

Incredibly heavy resistance greeted the 24th Marines. Even the arrival of five tanks did little to aid the attack due to the rough ground and fierce enemy resistance. Once again, key leaders were among the first to fall to enemy fire. After gaining a few hundred yards, the attack halted for the night. General Cates alerted the 25th Marines to replace the 24th Marines in the morning. All three of its battalions, including the 2nd, which was already at the front, would resume the attack.

Using a rolling barrage, with the 14th Marine Artillery Regiment providing an artillery bombardment that advanced toward the enemy 100 yards at a time every five minutes, for 20 minutes, the 25th Marines advanced for the first 100 yards successfully. They then ran into a wall of enemy fire from the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob.

Tanks from Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, came up to assist, but they soon became targets of the enemy artillery. Attempts at counterbattery fire were frustrated by poor observation, even though two observation planes flew over the area attempting to locate the enemy guns. To the left, the 23rd Marines had doggedly moved on Hill 382 using flamethrowers, rockets, and demolitions to gain about 200 yards.

For the next two days the battle continued without pause. Time after time the Marines would gain the top of Hill 382 only to be forced back to cover by enemy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire. Fighting became hand-to-hand around the ruins of the Japanese radar station.

As one Marine later remarked, "The easiest way to describe the battle ... is to say that we took the hill [Hill 382] almost every time we attacked—and that the Japs took it back."

Marine engineers and bulldozers finally cleared a path for tanks to move to the front, and Company B, 4th Tank Battalion, came up to support the 23rd Marines. But once again, the Marines were forced to withdraw for the night. That night Japanese planes were observed parachuting supplies to their troops; Marine artillery took the drop zone under fire.

No description of Marines in combat is complete without an acknowledgement of the brave Navy corpsman assigned to them. One such was Pharmacist's Mate 2/c Cecil A. Bryan. During one battle on Iwo Jima, he saw First Sergeant Fred W. Lunch of the 24th Marines fall seriously wounded.

Despite heavy enemy fire, Bryan raced to the sergeant's side and saw that his windpipe had been severed by a shell fragment. Unless something was done immediately, he would be dead within moments. Bryan knew he had to give Sergeant Lunch an alternate windpipe—but how? Thinking quickly, he reached into his medical bag and grabbed a piece of rubber tubing normally used for plasma transfusions. He cut off six inches and thrust it into Lunch's throat. Then he carried his patient, barely alive and bleeding profusely, to an evacuation station. Lunch survived the war with no ill effects.

At the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob, the 25th Marines, with the 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines attached, continued their frontal attacks. There was no way to surround either terrain feature since they were mutually supporting. On February 27, the 1st Battalion attempted to flank the Amphitheater by moving through the zone of the 23rd Marines, but the latter had not advanced far enough.

Finally, late in the day an opening was cleared, and Company A, supported by tanks, moved forward. The advance soon turned into a disaster. Three tanks were quickly knocked out by enemy antitank fire, and enemy small arms, mortars, rockets, and artillery saturated Company A. Fire from Turkey Knob also ravaged the advancing Marines, and a withdrawal was soon ordered. The only significant success was the securing of the East Boat Basin by the 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines.

The constant attacks day after day not only wore down the Americans, but the Japanese as well. By March 1, Hill 382 was

U.S. Marine Corps

surrounded, many of the heavier enemy guns silenced, and many of the Japanese defenders dead.

For several more days the battle continued. Company E of the 24th Marines repeatedly attacked, and it seemed as if every attack cost the company a commander killed or wounded. Second Lieutenant Richard Reich, who had been with the company since L-Day, remarked, "They [the new commanding officers] came so fast," he said, "I didn't even get their names."

With such fierce fighting it was little wonder that the division's combat effectiveness was down to 50 percent. Casualties as of March 3 were preliminarily reported as 6,591 Marines killed, wounded, or missing. While this number was about 37 percent of the total division strength, it represented 62 percent of its authorized infantry strength and, as usual, the infantry carried the burden of the battle.

In other words, two of every three infantrymen who came ashore on L-Day were casualties by March 3, 1945, or L+13, after two weeks on Iwo Jima. As just one example, Captain William T. Ketcham's Company I, 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines, landed with 133 Marines in the three rifle platoons. Only nine of these men remained when the battle ended.

Although some replacements had arrived and joined the depleted regiments, they were not nearly enough to bring them up to authorized strength.

Although fighting still raged across, below, and above Iwo Jima, a signal moment came on March 4 when the first emergency landing was made by a B-29 bomber on one of the captured airfields. The aircraft was repaired, refueled, and took off to complete its mission. By war's end, 2,400 B-29 bombers would make unscheduled landings on the island.

FOR THE NEXT FOUR DAYS THE BATTLE RAGED, TOO CLOSE FOR AIR SUPPORT OR ARTILLERY. IT BECAME A BATTLE OF SMALL ARMS, MORTARS, AND FLAMETHROWERS AGAINST JAPANESE HIDDEN DEEP IN CAVES AND CREVICES.

U.S. Marine Corps

Meanwhile, the strong enemy defenses caused the Marine commanders to try new techniques. When two tanks fired directly into an enemy communications blockhouse atop Turkey Knob without result, the 14th Marine Artillery was asked to send up a 75mm pack howitzer. A gun was duly brought forward with its crew and fired 40 rounds directly at the blockhouse and, while it did not destroy it, the fire neutralized the garrison sufficiently for Company F to move forward some 75 yards to a position from which it destroyed the emplacement the next day. A demolitions crew and a flamethrowing tank completed the job.

By March 9, the Marines had outflanked Hill 382 and Turkey Knob, as well as the Amphitheater; the way to Iwo's east coast lay ahead. Division intelligence reported that the main enemy core of resistance in the 4th Marine Division's zone had been broken.

Signs that the Japanese were suffering were becoming clear. The one and only major counterattack against the 4th Marine Division came on the morning of March 9, when enemy troops were discovered infiltrating the lines of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines and 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines.

This infiltration quickly turned into a major counterattack but was by no means a wild banzai charge for which the Japanese were known. The enemy troops worked their way as close as possible to the American lines before revealing themselves. Several managed to advance to the battalion command post of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, before being killed. Others carried stretchers and shouted, "Corpsman!" in English to disguise themselves while penetrating the Marine lines. Most of the fighting fell to Company E, 23rd Marines, and Company L, 24th Marines.

Daylight found some 850 enemy dead in and around the friendly lines; many more were thought to have been carried back to Japanese lines.

General Erskine's 3rd Marine Division also encountered extremely stubborn defenses during its frontal assault to take Airfield Number 2, but take it they did. By nightfall on March 9, the 3rd had reached Iwo's northeastern beach, cutting the enemy defenses in two.

Hard fighting was by no means over, however. When the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, moved into rough terrain north of Turkey Knob, the unit went quietly, with no pre-assault bombardment. For a few minutes all seemed well, but then a barrage of rocket and mortar fire hit the battalion; close fire from enemy machine guns soon joined in the battle.

Friendly tanks and artillery answered. A thousand gallons of flamethrower fuel (jellied gasoline) and thousands of rounds of 75mm fire were hurled against the concrete communications blockhouse, which was again active. The battalion was nevertheless forced to withdraw; it spent the night absorbing replacements for the many casualties it had suffered.

Indeed, so short of men was the division that a "4th Provisional Battalion" was organized from supporting troops and placed under the command of Lt. Col. Melvin L. Krulewitch, who had been the 4th Division support group commander.

It had become common practice for companies to be shifted from one battalion to another simply to bring the assault battalion for that day up to near normal strength. The 24th Marines were forced to disband one rifle company in both the 1st and 2nd Battalions, using those men to strengthen the remaining companies.

U.S. Marine Corps

National Archives

ABOVE: Since very few Japanese willingly surrendered, the Marines had to resort to flamethrowing tanks and backpack flamethrowers to end enemy resistance. LEFT: Dazed and shell-shocked, the first of 21 Japanese to emerge from a cave surrender in March 1945. Out of a garrison of 21,000, only about 200 Japanese were taken prisoner. OPPOSITE: Marines silence an enemy-held cave with grenades and BARs.

The 4th Marine Division continued to clear its zone on Iwo Jima. Patrols sent out by the 23rd Marines on March 10 reported that they had reached the coast. The 25th Marines continued to advance on the right against strong but not determined resistance; the 3rd and 5th Marine Divisions would join them there. Clearly Japanese resistance had been broken.

A two-regiment attack on March 11 pushed forward against moderate resistance. Combat engineers followed and destroyed any enemy positions found. The 23rd Marines settled down for the night about 400 yards from the coast, the best position from which to cover their front.

The 25th Marines, facing more opposition, including rocket, mortar, and small-arms fire, continued forward. A prisoner captured during the day reported that about 300 enemy troops remained hidden in caves and tunnels in the small area left under Japanese control. He also reported that a Japanese major general commanded the group.

The remaining Japanese had good terrain from which to continue their resistance. Once again crevices, caves, and ridges covered the area. To avoid more casualties, a surrender appeal was broadcast to these defenders and the enemy general, thought to be Maj. Gen. Sadasue Senda, commanding the 2nd Mixed Brigade.

When the appeal failed, the attack began. Three battalions—2nd and 3rd, 25th Marines, and 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines—launched the 4th Marine Division's last major attack on Iwo Jima. For the next four days the battle raged, too close for air support or artillery. It became a battle of small arms, mortars, and flamethrowers against Japanese hidden deep in caves and crevices. Tanks could only operate with caution, so close were the fighters.

Finally, Marines with flamethrowers, bazookas, rifles, grenades, and satchel charges decided the issue. Despite numerous attempts to convince the Japanese to surrender, they fought to the end. Some 1,500 Japanese dead were later counted in this area. Maj. Gen. Senda's body was never identified, nor was Lt. Gen. Kuribayashi's body ever found.

On March 14, 1945, the 4th Marine Division, or what was left of it, began departing Iwo Jima for Maui, Territory of Hawaii, and some well-deserved R&R. Fighting still raged on the island, but the division had accomplished its mission.

Continued on page 98

The museum at La Gleize, Belgium is considered among the best museums dedicated to the Battle of the Bulge.

There is no shortage of museums in the Belgian Ardennes to record the region's dark winter of World War II. The museum at La Gleize has long been considered one of the best, focusing on the battle waged by troops of the U.S. 82nd Airborne, 30th Infantry, and 3rd Armored Divisions to eliminate Kampfgruppe Peiper and his spearhead of SS troops.

That battle reached its climax at Stoumont-La Gleize. In an old, reconstructed presbytery, historic for being the aid station of SS-Obersturmbannführer Joachim Peiper's troops of the 1st SS Panzer Division, are multiple displays and dioramas stocked with a fascinating variety of artifacts.

Newly renovated and enlarged in June 2014, the 1,000 square-meter building offers a chronological and themed journey into World War II history and the failure of the German offensive in December 1944 for the reconquest of Belgium (Battle of the Bulge) that had been liberated only a few months earlier by the Allies.

The tour begins outside with an impressive encounter with 69 tons of armor in the form of a battle-scarred German King Tiger tank from the 1st SS Panzer Division. It continues on the first floor where visitors are immersed in the German counteroffensive led by the tanks of SS Kampfgruppe Peiper. There, an item of great historical value can be seen: the map board carried by Peiper himself during the battle.

Most of the displayed items have a story to tell—a 120mm Russian mortar abandoned by the SS; the helmet of General Matthew B. Ridgway, commander of American forces in the sector; a shell fragment that injured one of the eyes of Lt. Col. Ben Vandervoort during a violent clash with SS forces under Peiper; fully equipped mannequins representing soldiers from both sides; a variety of military equipment and memorabilia (such as an ammunition box splashed with blood and a letter written by a parachutist before he was killed in combat); photographs and maps; a half-hour film on the bitter fighting in and around La Gleize during which time the village was entirely destroyed; and stunningly realistic dioramas displaying the rich collections held at the museum.

This museum is considered by many visitors the best Battle of the Bulge museum—not only in Belgium but anywhere.

ABOVE: A mannequin representing a medic in the 3rd U.S. Armored Division. BELOW: One of the realistic dioramas depicts three SS soldiers on the alert in a Belgium home.

Photos courtesy of the author

December 44 Museum
Rue de l'église 7B
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Admission fee charged
Website: www.december44.com

A view of one of the redesigned display galleries at the museum.

A display honoring General Ridgway.

A rare German Royal Tiger tank, a shot-and-shell-scarred 69-ton behemoth armed with a high-velocity 88mm cannon, makes for an imposing guard outside the museum. Few American weapons could dent a Royal Tiger, let alone knock one out.

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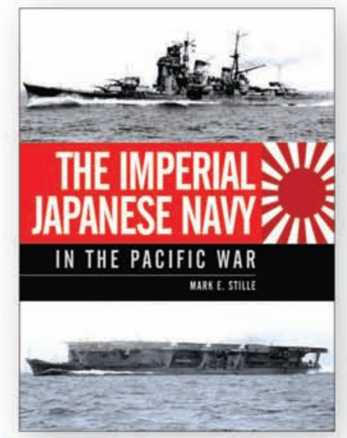

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Iwo Jima

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Plans for the invasion of the Japanese home islands were already in progress, and the 4th Marine Division was included. Behind them, 9,098 of the 4th's members were killed or wounded.

Indeed, for the 4th Marine Division the war was over. The division had spent a total of 63 days in combat during four major amphibious operations. The 4th's casualties totaled 16,323, or 260 casualties per combat day. Only the 1st Marine Division suffered more casualties during the war, but it spent far more time in combat. Only the 1st and 4th Marine Divisions made four opposed amphibious landings during the war. The 4th Marine Division also suffered more combat fatalities than any other Marine division except the 1st.

It had been a short but a very difficult war for the 4th Division, a unit that did not even exist until after Guadalcanal. But they had performed magnificently.

Total casualties for all three Marine divisions and the Navy offshore during the 36-day battle were over 26,000 with 6,821 killed; the Japanese lost 20,000 men killed. Twenty-seven Medals of Honor were awarded to Marines and sailors, many posthumously, the most ever awarded for a single operation during the war, and one third of the 80 Medals of Honor awarded to Marines during World War II.

After the battle, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, wrote, "The battle of Iwo Island has been won. The United States Marines by their individual and collective courage have conquered a base which is as necessary to us in our continuing forward movement toward final victory as it was vital to the enemy in staving off ultimate defeat.

"By their victory, the 3rd, 4th and 5th Marine Divisions and other units of the Fifth Amphibious Corps have made an accounting to their country which only history will be able to value fully. Among the Americans who served on Iwo Island, uncommon valor was a common virtue." □

Congresswoman

Continued from page 12

just drove around Washington and got madder and madder because there were soldiers everywhere I went.... I don't remember whether I thumbed my nose at them or not, but I resented them."

From Washington, D.C., Rankin did what she could to forestall America's gradual but steady march toward war. When President Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Act into law in March 1941, she spoke out against it, saying, "If Britain needs our material today, will she later need our men?"

Two months later she introduced a resolution condemning any effort "to send the armed forces of the United States to fight in any place outside the Western Hemisphere or insular possessions of the United States." The resolution died in the House. Then, on December 7, 1941, forces of the Japanese Imperial Navy conducted a devastating aircraft carrier raid against U.S. bases on Oahu in the Territory of Hawaii.

In a joint session of Congress the next day, Jeannette Rankin voted against a declaration of war for the second time. Although many other members of Congress had joined her in 1917, she was alone on December 8, 1941. Rankin justified her opposition to the measure by stating, "As a woman, I can't go to war, and I refuse to send anyone else," and, "I voted my convictions and redeemed my campaign pledges."

After the vote, Rankin very quickly faced enormous amounts of passionate and vicious criticism. Back in Missoula, Wellington wired her with a sobering update: "Montana is 100 percent against you." Angry letters and telegrams arrived at Rankin's office in Washington by the thousands. One letter from a Mary B. Gilson stridently placed gender at the center of criticism: "You have turned the clock back for women!... Thank God our country does not have to depend on such unrealistic persons as you! You doubtless flatter yourself on standing by your 'principles,' but inflexible principles like yours would put us under the Nazi heel. You will not hold an enviable position in the history of our times."

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, Jeannette Rankin made a stand on pacifist principles at a time when the rest of the country rejected them—especially when being articulated by a woman. Although almost 25 years had passed since her vote opposing American entry into World War I, Rankin was still being accused of damaging the cause of feminism during World War II.

Despite the fact that much had changed since 1917, and that women had been fully enfranchised for two decades by that time, one woman's refusal to conform provoked intense emotions that hastened her exit from Congress. Rankin chose not to run for reelection in 1942 and quickly faded from the political scene. She reappeared during the 1960s in the middle of feminism's second wave, but even that was an awkward, uncomfortable fit.

Despite the fact that the National Organization for Women named her "the world's outstanding living feminist" in 1972, she criticized modern feminism: "I tell these young women that they must get to the people who don't come to the meetings. It never did any good for all the suffragettes to come together and talk to each other. There will be no revolution unless we go out into the precincts. You have to be stubborn. Stubborn and ornery."

Jeannette Pickering Rankin died on May 18, 1973, in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, leaving behind a unique political legacy. She was the only member of the U.S. Congress to vote against both world wars, and she cast the solitary vote against war the day after Pearl Harbor. At 4:10 PM on December 8, 1941, President Roosevelt signed the declaration of war that Rankin stood alone to oppose.

As the United States became a combatant power in the struggle against Imperial Japan, the pacifist views that Rankin had so passionately espoused for nearly a quarter of a century fell by the wayside as an outraged nation sought to avenge an "unprovoked and dastardly attack." □

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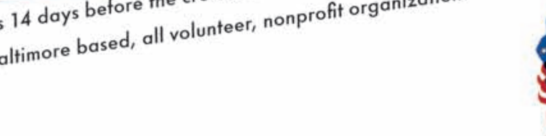

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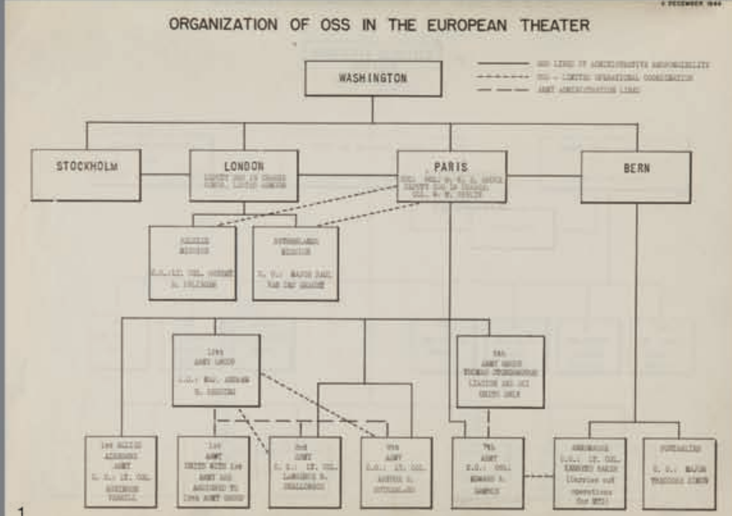

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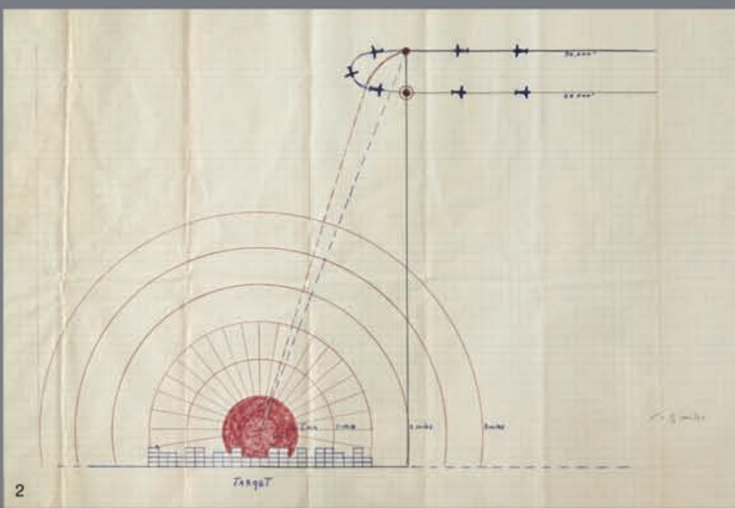

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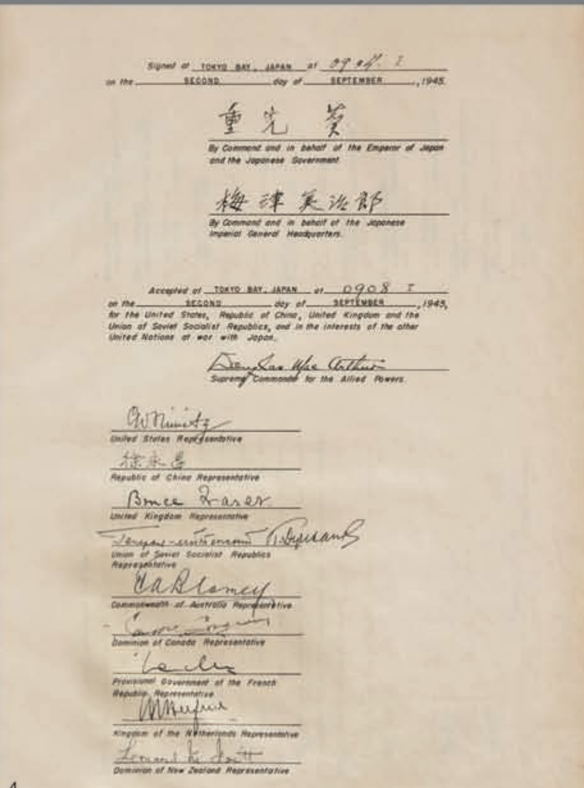
Signed at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0904 I
on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945.

重光葵

By Command and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan and the Japanese Government.

梅津美治郎

By Command and in behalf of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters.

Accepted at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0908 I
on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945, for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the interests of the other United Nations at war with Japan.

Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

United States Representative

Republic of China Representative

United Kingdom Representative

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Representative

Commonwealth of Australia Representative

Dominion of Canada Representative

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4

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