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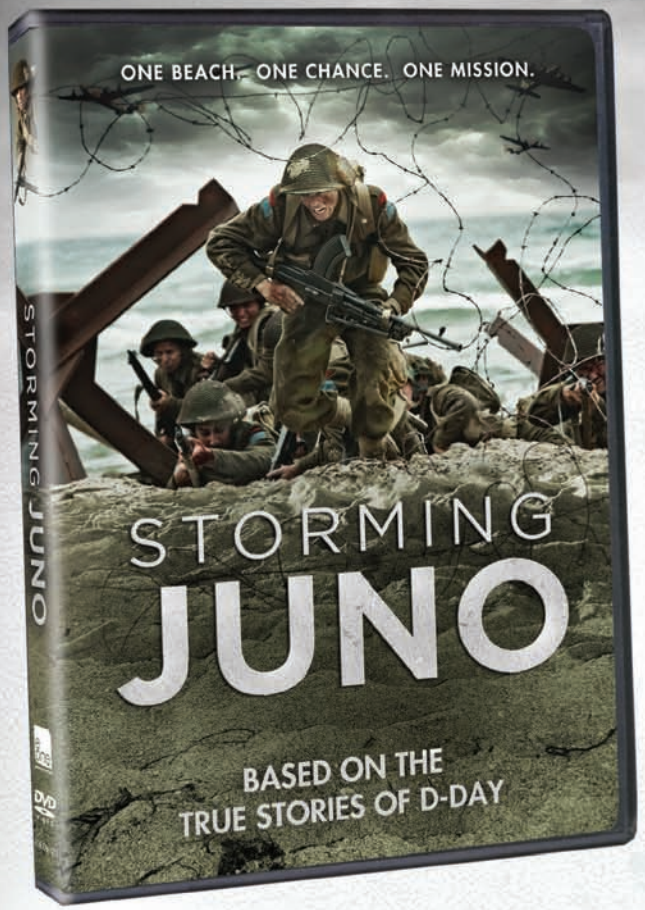

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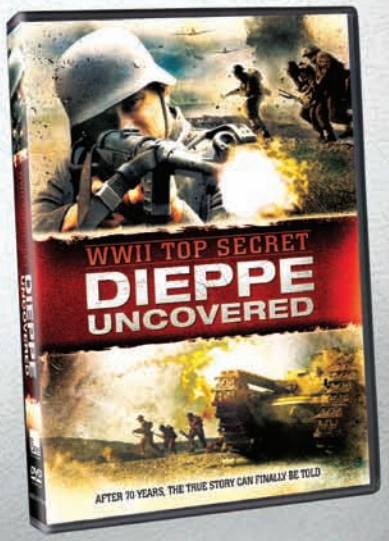

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COVER: Marines fire on a Japanese sniper in December 1944. See stories page 16 and page 88. Photo: National Archives

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The Search for the Missing DUKW of Lake Garda

IT WAS APRIL 29, 1945. World War II was nearly over. Former Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini was dead, killed by partisans at Lake Como on April 28, and his body mutilated and strung up in a Milan gas station. His Axis partner-in-crime Adolf Hitler would commit suicide in a Berlin bunker on the 30th. The Germans in Italy surrendered on May 2, 1945.

On April 29, 1945, the U.S. 10th Mountain Division was at the northern end of Lake Garda, Italy's largest lake, engaged in chasing the remaining Germans northward to the base of the Alps. To ensure their getaway, the retreating enemy blew up some highway tunnels along the lake's eastern shore, effectively preventing the Yanks from pursuing them.

But the mountain troops were nothing if not resourceful. They requested some DUKWs—amphibious trucks—that would enable some of them to cross the lake to the northwestern shore and continue their advance. Fifth Army provided the vehicles.

But something on that sunny Sunday went terribly wrong. For reasons still unknown, a DUKW carrying a 75mm pack howitzer and 24 soldiers from the 10th and a DUKW crewman, sank near the middle of the lake in cold water 900 feet deep. One man survived, but the vehicle and the other men were never seen again.

A tragedy, to be sure—one of countless tragedies of that war. But that is not the end of the story. While at Texas A&M University, Brett Phaneuf did preliminary search-and-mapping work at Lake Garda, trying to locate the wreck. Based on Phaneuf's data, an organization—Il Gruppo Volontari del Garda/Nucleo Sommozzatori (The Garda Volunteer Group and Divers Corps)—reported in January 2013 that, after a year of searching with sonar, they believe they have located the site of the sunken DUKW.

A wire-guided remotely operated underwater vehicle equipped with lights and two cameras confirmed that the object found is that of a DUKW, sitting upright on the lake bottom. The group's preliminary report says, "Visual inspection of the wreck indicated no human remains or military gear. However, the sonar scan found numerous small targets spread around."

Luca Turrini, spokesman for Il Gruppo Volontari del Garda, said, "Final objective of this project is to find the human remains related to the DUKW and items pertaining to the cargo. It might not be so simple since the mud at the bottom covers most of these items. In any event, our sonar has reported a great number of targets: this would encourage the success of this project. The complete recovery and bringing the DUKW to shore will be a much larger project. It will involve agencies, institutions, specialized companies, and external staff."

Mike Plummer, president of the National Association of the 10th Mountain Division, reported, "Italian divers discovered the underwater remains of a DUKW in Lake Garda. They have requested funds to check if it is the 10th Mountain Division's DUKW that went down on 29 April 1945…. The Association, in partnership with the 10th Mountain Division Foundation, the National Descendants Organization, Submergence, and a foundation known as ProMare, has voted to provide funds to help defray costs for Gruppo Volontari del Garda who will film and identify the DUKW and associated targets in its vicinity. The project is not intended to retrieve the DUKW or the remains of possible 10th Mountain Division soldiers, but to verify the identification of the DUKW and the potential remains that may be nearby."

Steve Coffey, president of the 10th Mountain Descendants group, said, "We received a request for some funds from the search group to help with expenses for a second search that will try to determine if this is the 10th Mountain DUKW or another; apparently there is more than one DUKW in the lake. If they were to find the pack howitzer nearby or human remains, for example, that would be enough. Jeff Patton, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel, is there observing and agreed to be our eyes and ears. Jeff was the air attaché at the embassy in Rome several years ago and has stayed very interested in the project. If remains are seen, Jeff is fully aware of the process and protocol for the next steps."

Thomas E. Hames, chairman of the board of directors, 10th Mountain Division Foundation, said that, if the wreck proves to be that of the missing DUKW, "it allows us to locate their remains and may afford the family and the U.S. Army an opportunity to recover the remains or leave them where they are. It also might present an opportunity to work with the Italians to locate a small monument to the 24 mountain troopers who perished. That monument could be located on the shores of Lake Garda."

I have a slightly tangential relationship to this project. The men who perished when the DUKW sank were members of Batteries B and C, 605th Field Artillery Battalion (Pack). My father was a member of Battery A, 605th Field Artillery (Pack). It is quite likely that he knew some of the young men who lost their lives at Lake Garda just a few days before the war ended.

I will report on any future developments.

Flint Whitlock, Editor

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Axis Sally, Tokyo Rose, and Lord Haw-Haw used propaganda to influence troop morale—to little effect.

MILDRED "MIDGE" GILLARS was born in Portland, Maine, took drama lessons in New York City, appeared in vaudeville, worked as an artist's model in Paris and a dressmaker's assistant in Algiers, and taught English at the Berlitz School in Berlin before—motivated by love and fear—she became the notorious "Axis Sally," one of the Nazis' leading radio propagandists.

The most prominent of the World War II broadcasters—and the most remembered today—were Gillars, William Joyce, who became known as "Lord Haw-Haw" and targeted the United Kingdom with Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda, and Iva Ikuko Toguri, a first-generation Japanese American who was nicknamed "Tokyo Rose" by U.S. servicemen in the Pacific.

Private Collection / © Look and Learn / Bridgeman Art Library

An illustration from a pulp magazine of the day shows a British soldier shooting and capturing U.S.-born William Joyce ("Lord Haw-Haw") at war's end. Joyce was later hanged.

These three took up the cause of enemy propaganda for very different reasons, but those reasons were typical of the forces that motivated all these "turncoat" broadcasters.

Gillars began her broadcasts after the war broke out and she was trapped in Nazi Germany. While teaching English at the Berlitz School in Berlin, she became engaged to a German citizen, Paul Karlson, who was later killed on the Eastern Front. She chose to stay in Germany even after the United States in 1941 urged all Americans to leave. On December 7, 1941, Gillars was working as a radio announcer when word of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor arrived. Gillars broke down and denounced the Japanese, a German ally.

"I told them what I thought about Japan," she later said," and that the Germans would soon find out about them. The shock was terrific. I lost all discretion."

Later realizing that her actions could land her in a Nazi concentration camp, she produced a written oath of allegiance to Germany and returned to her work at the radio station. In the beginning, she was a "disk jockey" and took part in chat shows, but eventually her duties expanded until she became the well-known voice of Joseph Goebbels's Nazi radio propaganda machine. She was christened Axis Sally—as well as Berlin Bitch, Berlin Babe, Olga, and Sally—by GIs who listened to her broadcasts for the music.

Her "Home Sweet Home Hour" radio show ran regularly from December 24, 1942, until 1945. She also was featured on shows called "Midge-at-the-Mike" in 1943 and "GI's Letter-box" and "Medical Reports" in 1944, shows that were aimed at the U.S. civilian population and attempted to sow fear and worry by using information on wounded and captured American servicemen.

Her most famous broadcast, however, was on May 11, 1944. In that day's radio play, "Vision of Invasion," she portrayed a Ohio woman who dreams that her son had died a horrific death during an attempted invasion of occupied Europe.

Gillars was arrested in March 1945 after she was traced through a furniture dealer to whom she had sold some of her furniture. She was held at Camp King,

National Archives

ABOVE: Military reporters interview Iva Toguri, an American citizen who made radio broadcasts for Japan, September 1945. BELOW: Fascist William Joyce, "Lord Haw Haw," in a German radio studio.

Library of Congress

Oberursel, with fellow collaborators John Burgman and Donald S. Day until she was conditionally released from custody on December 24, 1946.

She was formally rearrested on January 22, 1947, and was flown to the United States, where she went on trial in August 1948, charged with eight counts of treason. A year after the trial started, she was convicted on only one count, that of making the "Vision of Invasion" broadcast, and was sentenced to 10 to 30 years in prison and a $10,000 fine.

At her trial she said she had done it all "for love."

Gillars, who had converted to Roman Catholicism while imprisoned, took up residence at Our Lady of Bethlehem Convent

in Columbus, Ohio, where she taught German and French at St. Joseph Academy after she was paroled in June 1961. She died of colon cancer in Columbus in 1988.

While Gillars found herself trapped in Germany by the war, William Joyce's choice to ally himself with Fascist Germany was completely voluntary.

He had been born in 1906 in Brooklyn, New York, to a Protestant mother and an Irish Catholic father who had taken United States citizenship. A few years after his birth, the family returned to Ireland where, Joyce later said, he aided the Black and Tans during the Irish war for independence and became a target of the Irish Republican Army. Following what he claimed to be an assassination attempt against him in 1921 when he was 15, Joyce moved to England where he graduated with honors from London University.

In 1932, he joined the British Union of Fascists (BUF) and became a speaker for the group. A journalist who heard him speak described Joyce as "thin, pale, and intense" and said, "He had not been speaking many minutes before we were electrified by this man ... so terrifying in its dynamic force, so vituperative, so vitriolic."

Shortly after the 1937 elections, Joyce broke with the BUF and formed the more anti-Semitic National Socialist League. Getting a tip that authorities planned to arrest him, Joyce and his wife fled to Germany in August 1939, shortly before war was declared. There he was recruited to do radio broadcasts, which eventually had an estimated six million regular and 18 million occasional listeners in the United Kingdom.

Because of wartime censorship, it was possible for Joyce's German broadcasts to be more informative than those of the BBC, which accounts for many of his listeners.

Joyce became a naturalized German citizen in 1940. The name "Lord Haw-Haw" was coined by the *Daily Express* radio critic in 1939 and applied to German journalist Wolf Mittler, but when Joyce became a prominent propaganda broadcaster, the nickname shifted to him.

Trying to make his way to Denmark in the waning days of the war, he was wounded and captured by British troops and taken to England, where he was imprisoned in London's Old Bailey, charged with three counts of treason. Despite his American birth and his naturalized German citizenship, he was put on trial in England in September 1945 and found guilty on one of the three counts. He was sentenced to death.

Mildred Gillars, aka "Axis Sally," photographed in 1946 at U.S. Counter Intelligence Headquarters, Berlin.

National Archives

"As in life," he said at the end, "I defy the Jews who caused this last war, and I defy the power of darkness which they represent. I warn the British people against the crushing imperialism of the Soviet Union.... I am proud to die for my ideals, and I am sorry for the sons of Britain who have died without knowing why."

Joyce, 39 years old, was hanged on January 3, 1946, at Wandsworth Prison. He died unrepentant.

"Tokyo Rose" was a generic name given by Allied forces in the South Pacific to a number of English-speaking women broadcasting Japanese propaganda, the most famous of whom was Iva Ikuko Toguri D'Aquino, an American citizen who was born in Los Angeles, the daughter of Japanese immigrants. She attended school in Mexico and Los Angeles and earned a degree in zoology from UCLA.

Whereas Gillars was trapped into her role and Joyce embraced his, Toguri appears to have been innocent of willingly committing treasonable acts. In 1941, she sailed to Japan to visit an ailing relative and was unable to leave that county when war broke out in December. Like many other Japanese Americans stranded there, she was pressured to renounce her United States citizenship but refused to do so.

"A tiger does not change its stripes," she is reputed to have said.

She was subsequently declared an enemy alien by the United States. In late 1943, Japan began forcing Allied prisoners of war, many of whom had been tortured, into broadcasting radio propaganda. Toguri had previously risked her life smuggling food into a POW camp where several Americans who had made these broadcasts were being held. As a result, she was chosen by them to host portions of a one-hour radio show, "The Zero Hour."

She accepted the offer with the provision that she would not broadcast anti-American propaganda and was assured the show's scripts would not have her say anything against the United States.

Toguri hosted a total of 340 broadcasts of "The Zero Hour," calling herself "Ann" and later "Orphan Annie," a reference to the popular *Little Orphan Annie* comic strip and possibly a reference to "orphans"—the nickname given to Australian troops separated from their divi-

sions in battle. (The name "Tokyo Rose" was given to her by Allied servicemen who listened to her broadcasts.) She performed in comedy sketches using American slang and played American music but never participated in any actual newscasts.

She earned 150 yen or about $7.00 per month and is said to have used some of that money to buy food that she then smuggled to Allied POWs.

After Japan's surrender in August 1945, she was arrested but released after a year in jail when neither the FBI nor General Douglas MacArthur's staff found any evidence that she had aided Japanese forces. American and Australian prisoners of war who had written her scripts also publicly claimed she had committed no wrongdoing.

Now pregnant by Felipe D'Aquino, a Portuguese citizen of Japanese-Portuguese descent whom she had married on April 19, 1945, she announced her intent to return the United States to have her child born on American soil. The announcement ignited a firestorm of public protest—orchestrated to some extent by radio host Walter Winchell.

Her baby was born in Japan but died shortly after birth. U.S. military authorities then arrested her a second time and transported her to San Francisco on September 25, 1948, where she was tried for treason. She was fined $10,000 and given a 10-year prison sentence. Her attorney at the time, Wayne Mortimer Collins, a prominent Japanese American rights advocate, denounced the verdict as "guilty without evidence."

Toguri was sent to the Federal Reformatory for Women at Alderson, West Virginia, where Gillars was also being held. She was paroled in January 1956 after serving six years and two months. She died in Chicago in 2006 without ever seeing her husband again.

In 1976, an investigation by a *Chicago Tribune* reporter revealed that two witnesses who had given testimony against Toguri had been threatened by the FBI and U.S. occupation police and had lied under oath. The witnesses said they had been told what to say and what not to say just hours before the trial.

On January 19, 1977, President Gerald Ford granted Toguri a full pardon.

The *New York Times* noted in her obituary, "[Her] broadcasts did nothing to dim American morale. The servicemen enjoyed the recordings of American popular music, and the United States Navy bestowed a satirical citation on Tokyo Rose at war's end for her entertainment value."

Although probably the most famous of the World War II broadcasters who filled the airways with Axis propaganda and teased Allied troops with visions of unfaithful wives and girlfriends back home, Gillars, Joyce, and Toguri were not the only ones.

Paul Fredonnel, "the Stuttgart Traitor," worked on propaganda broadcasts in France promoting the Nazi regime and demoralizing French troops and civilians. Philippe Henriot broadcast propaganda for the Vichy French, while John Amery, a British Fascist, broadcast for the Nazis. Frederick Wilhelm Kaltenbach, a naturalized American of German origin, Herbert John Burgman, and Donald S. Day all broadcast from Germany. Robert Brest targeted the United States with anti-Semitic remarks and attacks on Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Ezra Pound, a well-known American poet, used a weekly Italian radio show to attack the United States and support the Fascists.

But the use of radio for propaganda broadcasts was not a solely Axis technique. Britain, for one, retaliated.

That nation's Political Warfare Executive operated a number of "black" radio stations, as propaganda sites were then labeled. Among their many broadcasts were regular appearances by Peter Seckelmann, who broadcast under the name "Der Chef," purported to be a Nazi extremist, and accused Adolf Hitler and his henchmen of going soft and focused on alleged corruption and sexual improprieties by Nazi Party members.

The propaganda messages from both sides were often mixed with popular music and other features to hold their audience, but their intent was always the same—to undermine enemy morale, both at home and among fighting men, and to create tensions that would ultimately disrupt the enemy war effort.

Their success has been debated. □

Percy Hobart went from forced retirement to being acclaimed as a hero.

AN ARMY THAT will be poised for victory requires élan, military intellect, a penchant for tactical and strategic innovation, and the zeal to use the most qualified individuals for training and leadership. This dictum was violated with the curious circumstances of the forced retirement of Maj. Gen. Percy Cleghorn Stanley Hobart shortly before hostilities were to commence in Western Europe and the North African littoral during the early months of World War II.

Hobart's forced retirement occurred despite his spectacular rise through the young Royal Tank Corps (RTC) for well over a decade. Fortunately, Prime Minister Winston Churchill retrieved him from the Home Guard and empowered him to develop and train first the 11th Armored Division and then the 79th Armored Division, which would gain historical acclaim by the assortment of specialized armored vehicles ("Hobart's Funnies") fielded by this unit.

Hobart was born in Taina Tal, India, in 1885; his father was a civil servant there. He graduated from Clifton College and began, as his biographer Kenneth Macksey states, "an initially orthodox military career" by attending the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich in 1902. After graduation, he was posted to the elite 1st Bengal Sappers and Miners in the Indian Army in 1906. However, unorthodoxy was soon exhibited by Hobart, coupled with a keen intellect and an often abrupt, argumentative manner.

During World War I, Hobart won the Military Cross in 1915. The following year he served on the staff of an Indian Army infantry brigade ordered to relieve a British garrison in Mesopotamia (today Iraq). In this Middle Eastern theatre, he won the DSO, was wounded, and briefly taken prisoner by the Turks. Subsequently promoted to brigade major, he was highly regarded for his excellent staff work in the advance to Baghdad in 1917 and, then, at Megiddo. However, his actions in this theatre were also characterized by disobedience and insubordination.

In 1919, he attended the Staff College at Camberley and was a fellow student with H. Maitland ("Jumbo") Wilson there. Their relationship 20 years later in Egypt would prove to be a bitter one.

In 1923, Hobart volunteered for the nascent Royal Tank Corps (RTC) and became an instructor at the Staff College in Quetta (then in India—today Pakistan), where he supervised the development of tank doctrine. At Quetta, he scandalized some members of the military fraternity in 1927 by appearing as a co-respondent in a divorce case in connection with one of his student-officers in the Royal Engineers whose wife, Dorothea Field, he would marry only months after her divorce. The effects of their action was not ignored and would impact the subsequent development of Hobart's acrimonious interactions with his superiors in Egypt.

Back in England, in 1931, Hobart took command of the 2nd Battalion RTC. Two years later, he was promoted to Inspector General of the RTC with the rank of brigadier general and formed a strong friendship with the tank expert, Basil Liddell Hart. In his book, The Other Side of the Hill, Liddell Hart notes, "The command of this tank brigade—the Experimental Armoured Force of 1927/28—was given to an expert in handling tanks, Brigadier P.C.S. Hobart, who had both vision and a dynamic

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: The irascible Maj. Gen. Sir Percy Hobart did not suffer fools gladly, was demoted from brigadier to corporal to major general and was knighted. LEFT: As commander of the 1st Tank Brigade, Percy Hobart was photographed on the turret of a Medium Mk.III tank during exercises in the early 1930s.

sense of mobility. He did much to develop the tactical methods and wireless control required for fast moving operations. He also seized the opportunity to try out, in practice, the theory of deep strategic penetration by an armoured force operating independently."

In 1934, Hobart became the commander of the 1st Tank Brigade upon its establishment and had the opportunity of leading this unit in a large-scale exercise. When the exercise became a total failure, Hobart lost his temper because of the obstacles deliberately imposed upon the armor by the umpires, chief among them Major-General Archibald P. Wavell. The paths of Wavell and Hobart were to cross again with an even more disastrous outcome.

With the assumption of the War Ministry by Leslie Hore-Belisha in 1937, Hobart had found a supporter who wanted to reward him with command of Britain's first modern armored division. However, War Office conservatives became belligerent in their rejection of Hobart to command this division and proposed a cavalryman instead. A frustrated Hore-Belisha wrote, "In all my experience as a Minister of the Crown, I never encountered such obstructionism as attended my wish to give the new armored command to Hobart."

Fortunately, following the Munich crisis in September 1938, Hobart was sent to Egypt to raise and train Britain's second modern armored formation, the Mobile Division, destined to become the famed 7th Armored Division (the "Desert Rats"). London was now free of Hobart, but Germany was on a war footing, having already studied and implemented Hobart's lessons on tank warfare.

In Egypt, Hobart faced similar ostracism from the military command. The conversion from cavalry to armor was a bitter blow to the traditional and hidebound Hussar regiments and their Commander-in-Chief, Egypt, Lt. Gen. Sir Robert Gordon-Finlayson, who was also very unreceptive to any new ideas. Upon Hobart's arrival in Egypt, Gordon-Finlayson met him with the discouraging greeting, "I don't know what you've come here for, and I don't want you anyway." The tone was set for Hobart's relationship with Cairo Headquarters and was not to change.

Medium tanks of Hobart's 1st Tank Brigade during close-order military exercises on southern England's Salisbury Plain, circa 1934.

Imperial War Museum

Gordon-Finlayson was a socially-minded soldier who detested Hobart at the personal level for his scandalous marriage in 1928. At the time, divorce was a stigma and Hobart's involvement caused a considerable flap, provoking the War Office to issue a statement that if an officer were to disrupt the marriage of a brother officer in his own regiment he would be expected to resign his commission. Fortunately, Hobart was in the RTC while the divorced fellow officer was a Royal Engineer.

Nonetheless, through his own perseverance against a vocal, disapproving superior and an initially nonmotivated command, Hobart molded this North African tank division into the famous 7th Armored Division with the black jerboa (desert rat) as their emblem.

Gordon-Finlayson despised Hobart and had sworn professional retribution. When Gordon-Finlayson returned to the United Kingdom to become adjutant general, he wrote a condemning report of Hobart's fitness to command in order to "appease his pent-up frustration" with him. Some of the derogatory statements made in Hobart's fitness report included, "difficult to serve with or understand;" "impetuous in judgments which are not as consistent and confidence-bearing as a Commander's should be;" "not likely to qualify for the highest command and appointment;" "marked reluctance to listen to others' opinions and is too impatient with staff officers;" "gives impression [of] not placing much value on other arms;" "has caused misgivings and shaken his position as a Commander, result is he does not get the willing best from his subordinates and has not welded them into a happy and contented body;" "General Hobart's methods of managing officers and men do not give the best results. I cannot regard him a suitable commander in the field for a promotion."

It seems that before Wavell left England to assume command of the Middle East, he had talked with Gordon-Finlayson who had, most irregularly, shown him one of Hobart's confidential fitness reports. In any case, Wavell undoubtedly remembered the 1934 exercises in which Hobart's opinion of his own umpiring had been both unfavorable and vociferous. Parenthetically, Wavell's wife was among the ladies who thoroughly disapproved of the Hobart marriage in 1928.

In mid-1939, "Jumbo" Wilson arrived in Cairo to relieve Gordon-Finlayson. Wilson immediately found fault with Hobart after suggesting that an exercise with the Mobile Division be held. It was a complete disaster and led to an embarrassing confrontation between Hobart and Wilson, which was then followed up by a letter from Hobart to Wilson rebutting the latter's military criticisms. It was quite clear that despite the vast area of the Middle East Command, there was not room for both Wilson and Hobart.

On November 10, 1939, Wilson wrote a letter to Wavell recommending that Hobart be replaced on the grounds that there was "no confidence in his ability to command the Armored Division to their satisfaction." Wilson judged Hobart's over-centralization of command and the

heresy of his tactical ideas being based upon the invincibility of the tank to the exclusion of the employment of other arms in correct proportion as his principal flaws. Wilson's letter to Wavell ended, "I request therefore that a new Commander be appointed to the Armoured Division."

Hobart's biographer, Kenneth Macksey, notes, "Neither General Wavell nor General Wilson came out of this transaction with credit." However, Wavell did write, "I hope that it will be found possible to use General Hobart's great knowledge and experience in Armoured Fighting Vehicles in some capacity."

When Hobart departed Egypt, the troops of the Mobile Division lined the route to cheer their general on his way. It must be noted that upon assuming command of the Mobile Division, Hobart showed great ingenuity in improvising equipment, at a time when shortages in everything was rife. As more equipment, infantry, armor and artillery arrived, the troops began to learn more about their weapons and vehicles as well as working better with the other arms. Other important details, such as learning to live in the desert, how to deploy, how to recognize the enemy while concealed, all began to take hold in Hobart's maturing Mobile Division.

General Richard O'Connor, who commanded the 8th Infantry Division at Mersa Matruh, wrote of the Mobile Division, "It is the best trained division I have ever seen." Six months after Hobart's departure, the 7th Armored Division, using Hobart's methods, was an integral part of the Western Desert Force in its famous victory over the Italian Army at Beda Fomm.

On March 9, 1940, Hobart, now on retired pay, became a Lance Corporal in the Chipping Campden Home Guard. Neither an appeal to the King nor the War Office could help reinstate him to higher rank. Thus, during the height of the "Phoney War" or "Sitzkrieg" with Germany, as the Allies were readying themselves for an attack in the West by the Wehrmacht, the upper echelon of the British Army deemed it suitable to sack their major armor expert in uniform.

Hobart engendered considerable opposition amongst top military leaders, who

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ABOVE: In theory, Hobart's Duplex Drive Sherman tanks, fitted with an inflatable canvas skirt, were supposed to be able to swim short distances, but rough seas at Normandy caused many of them to sink, drowning their crews. OPPOSITE: An M4 Sherman "Flail" or "Crab" tank fitted with a rotating drum and chains that pounded the ground ahead of the vehicle to detonate land mines.

believed that his enthusiasm for the armored concept of warfare meant of necessity the denigration of all other arms including their own. They were mistaken, since Hobart was well aware of the need for integration of all arms, and far more aware than most of the need for cooperation between army and air forces. What more likely contributed to Hobart's "forced retirement" in 1940 was his irascible, abrasive personality.

Also, he did not suffer fools gladly. He treated those whose minds did not move as quickly as his own with scant regard, whatever their rank, and cared little for the politeness of life as in the officers' mess. "Military buffoonery" was a phrase Hobart often used to castigate many of the Army's cherished traditions. He said, "I dislike all this dressing up. This emotional intoxication produced by bagpipes and bearskins, and the hypnotism of rhythmical movement and mechanical drills. The glorification of the false side of war." Hobart's attitude was not one that would endear him to the military establishment.

On August 11, 1940, Liddell Hart, the military theorist and correspondent, wrote an article that appeared in the press entitled, "We Have Wasted Brains." It was Liddell Hart's intent to convey that Hobart's position, as well as that of other armored enthusiasts who had been diverted by entrenched conservatism in high places, be revealed to Churchill. Immediately, Churchill began the maneuvers necessary to bring Hobart back from the Home Guard to the Army.

Hobart and Churchill were not strangers to each other. In 1935, Hobart and Churchill met at an RTC dinner. The following year, when Churchill remained isolated in his "political wilderness," in part because of his frequent criticism of then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's meager attempts to rearm in the name of appeasement, Brigadier Hobart as the commander of England's only tank brigade arrived at Churchill's London apartment in mufti to advise the "backbencher" informally about the inadequate extent of Britain's mobile armor. This was not unusual for Churchill, who had a myriad of uniformed officers providing him with both German and British armament capabilities.

On October 13, 1940, Corporal Hobart met with Churchill and the former delineated his grandiose design for an "Armored Army" comprised of ten armored divisions and 10,000 tanks. Six days later, Churchill corresponded with the CIGS, General Sir John Dill, to have Hobart command an armored division. After some contentious negotiations with Dill and a subsequent meeting with Churchill in November 1940, Hobart was given command of the 11th Armored Division in 1941.

Prior to this appointment, Churchill

wrote Dill, "I was very pleased … when you told me you proposed to give an armored division to General Hobart. I think very highly of this officer, and I am not at all impressed by the prejudices against him in certain quarters. Such prejudices attach frequently to persons of strong personality and original view. In this case, General Hobart's views have been only too tragically borne out. The neglect by the General Staff even to devise proper patterns of tanks before the war has robbed us of all the fruits of this invention." Parenthetically, it should be noted that Churchill was instrumental in the ideas for tank development to break the stalemate of trench warfare on the Western Front in World War I.

Churchill further commended Hobart in his letter to Dill, "We should, therefore, remember that this was an officer who had the root of the matter in him, and also the vision. I have carefully read your note to me, and the summary of the case for and against General Hobart. We are now at war, fighting for our lives, and we cannot afford to confine Army appointments to officers who have excited no hostile comment in their career. The catalogue of General Hobart's qualities and defects might almost exactly have been attributed to most of the great commanders of British history…. Cromwell, Wolfe, Clive, Gordon, and in a different sphere Lawrence, all had very close resemblance to the characteristics set down as defects. They had other qualities as well, and so I am led to believe has General Hobart [then reduced to Corporal Hobart of the Home Guard]. This is the time to try men of force and vision, and not to be exclusively confined to those who are judged thoroughly safe by conventional standards."

As Churchill's plans to reinstate Hobart were in play, Britain's precarious position in the winter of 1940 must be emphasized. Although, the Western Desert Force under the command of Maj. Gen. Richard O'Connor was about to cripple the Italian Army during Operation Compass in North Africa from December 1940 through February 1941, both Western Europe and Scandinavia had been lost and the British Isles were still being pounded by the Luftwaffe during "the Blitz." Churchill clearly needed an armored enthusiast to devise, equip, train and lead armored divisions if he ever seriously considered ultimately fighting the German Army on the Continent.

Despite the prime minister's ringing endorsement of Hobart, continued efforts were made to oust the 11th Armored Division commander on medical and age criteria on the eve of his unit's deployment to Tunisia in 1942. Churchill, once again, defended Hobart with a memorandum to the Secretary of State for War on September 4, 1942: "I see nothing in these reports [of the Medical Board report on Hobart] which would justify removing this officer from command of his division on its proceeding on active service. General Hobart bears a very high reputation, not only in the service, but in wide circles outside. He is a man of quite exceptional mental attainments, with great strength of character, and although he does not work easily with others, it is a great pity we do not have more of his like in the service." It seems as if Churchill were describing a kindred spirit of himself.

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The prime minister's endorsement of Hobart went even further: "I have been shocked at the persecution to which he has been subjected. I am quite sure that if, when I had him transferred from a corporal in the Home Guard to the command of one of the new armored divisions, I had insisted instead of his controlling the whole of tank development, with a seat on the Army Council, many of the grievous errors from which we have suffered would not have been committed."

It must be emphasized that even though Rommel was stopped in his bid for the Nile Delta at the Battle of Alam Halfa at the time of Churchill's memorandum, the British Eighth Army under many different commanders had suffered the worse for almost two years in armored engagements in North Africa. In July 1942, the Eighth Army had been on the brink of disaster after the Gazala debacle. A wholesale purge of Eighth Army leadership was to occur in August 1942. Thus, one has to wonder what would have happened in North Africa if Hobart had remained in command of the 7th Armored Division.

Churchill's communiqué concluded, "The high commands of the Army are not a club. It is my duty ... to make sure that exceptionally able men, even though not popular with their military contemporaries, are not prevented from giving their services to the Crown." Ultimately, neither Hobart nor the 11th Armored Division went to North Africa. The 11th Armored Division was redeployed for Europe under General "Pip" Roberts. However, the 11th Armored Division, along with Hobart's previous command in Egypt, the 7th Armored, remained one of the best British tank units of the War.

Another pressing assignment had developed for Hobart. The new CIGS, General Sir Alan Brooke, offered Hobart command of the 79th (Experimental) Armored Division in March 1943 with the specific intent

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Terrible Toll at TARAWA

Troops of the U.S. 2nd Marine Division conquered the fortified Japanese islet of Betio and learned bitter lessons in island fighting.

Under a smoke-blackened sky, U.S. Marines, in their distinctive P42 camouflage uniforms, wade across the shallow lagoon toward the blazing Tarawa beachhead in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati), November 20, 1943. The draft of the Higgins boats proved too great for the shallow water that covered the barrier reef encircling the lagoon, forcing many Marines to struggle ashore through heavy enemy fire. Painting by artist and U.S.M.C. Sergeant Tom Lovell.

SEVENTEEN MONTHS AFTER the juggernaut of Japanese conquest in the Pacific had come to an abrupt end with the Battle of Midway, American strategists were ready to launch their long-awaited offensive in the Central Pacific.

The road to Tokyo lay across thousands of miles through a string of fortified islands—often one or two spits of land among numerous coral shelves that peaked just above the water surrounding an extinct volcano. Known as atolls, these clusters might consist of only a few small islands or several dozen.

When Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet, set Operation Galvanic in motion during the summer of 1943, its objective was the conquest of the Gilbert Islands, particularly two atolls, Tarawa and Makin, approximately halfway between Hawaii and Australia.

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

Control of the Gilberts was essential to the U.S. offensive in the Central Pacific, eliminating the threat of air attack or harassment from the rear as American forces reached farther across the ocean to attack the major Japanese base at Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands, 500 miles northwest of the Gilberts. Operation Galvanic would also provide the U.S. Marine Corps an opportunity to hone its skills in amphibious warfare, the essence of its being, rapid landing, and movement across a contested beach.

Operation Galvanic was set for November 20, 1943, and charged with its execution were the 2nd Marine Division and the 165th Regimental Combat Team of the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division. Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, the victor at Midway, commanded the Central Pacific Force, while three major generals named Smith assumed vital command roles for the coming fight: Marine Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith commanded the V Amphibious Corps, Julian C. Smith the 2nd Marine Division, and Ralph C. Smith the Army's 27th Infantry Division.

The combined strength of U.S. ground troops exceeded 35,000, and the force that set sail from several locations in early November included an array of transports protected by 17 aircraft carriers, 12 battleships, eight heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and 66 destroyers. Altogether more

Marine Corps Art Collection

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Evidence of the bitter battle for the small spit of land are apparent in this aerial view of Betio, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands, November 24, 1943, four days after the initial landings. The view is to the north toward "The Pocket"—the last place of Japanese resistance. Two 12.7cm antiaircraft guns are visible at lower left. LEFT: Shown in this photo taken at the Marine command post on Betio, Colonel David Shoup (with map case) confers with Major Thomas Culhane of the 2nd Marine Division, while Colonel Evans Carlson rests in the left foreground. Behind Carlson with hands on hips is Colonel Merritt A. Edson, 2nd Division Chief of Staff.

than 200 ships converged on a rendezvous point near the intersection of the International Date Line and the equator. From there, the armada split into three groups. The carrier group maintained vigil against Japanese air or naval attacks, particularly from the direction of Kwajalein, while the northern force headed for Makin and the southern steamed toward Tarawa, 100 miles distant.

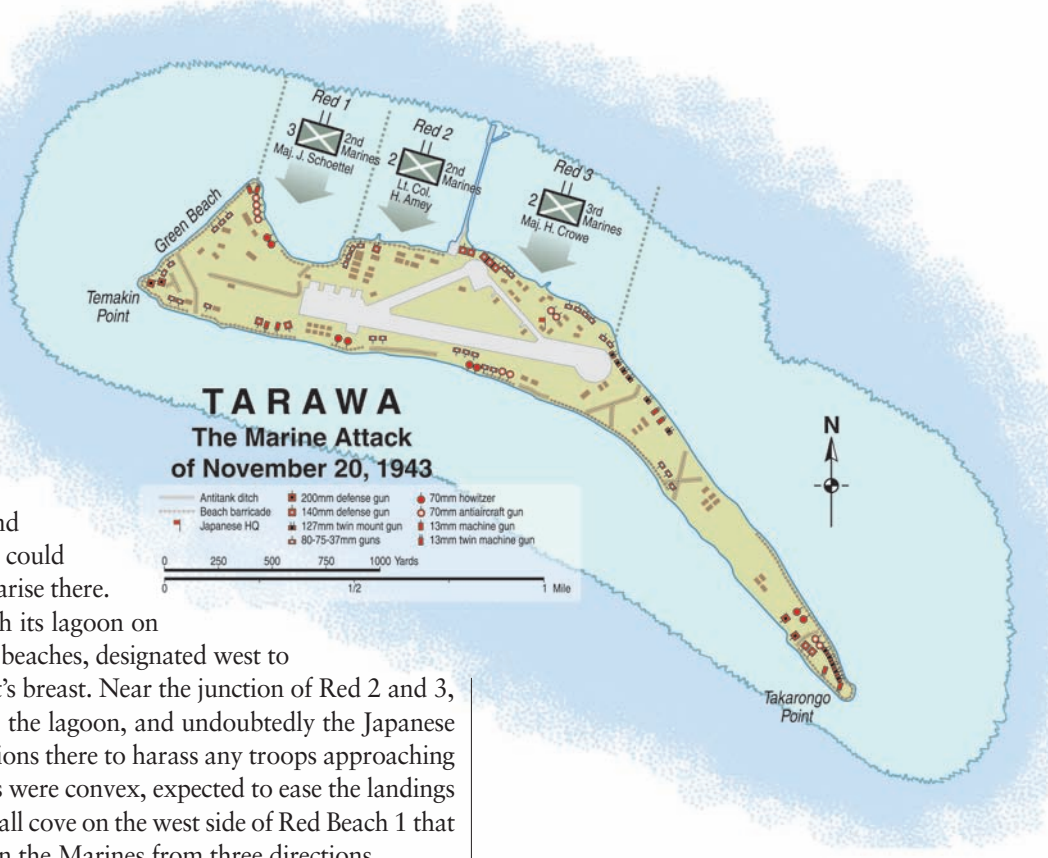
Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had seized Tarawa and Makin without opposition. For more than 18 months, they had worked to fortify the principal islets of the atolls, Betio and Butaritari. In August 1942, the Marines' 2nd Raider Battalion under Colonel Evans F. Carlson conducted a raid against the small garrison at Makin, awakening the Japanese to the vulnerability of island outposts along their defensive perimeter.

By the middle of 1943, the Japanese had established a "Zone of Absolute Defense" that encompassed territory from Burma in the west to the Dutch East Indies through New Guinea and the Marshalls and to the Kuriles in the northeast. Island groups outside this zone, such as the Gilberts, were to be defended to the last man, buying time to bolster inner defenses and to exact the heaviest possible toll on the Americans.

Under the command of Rear Admiral Tomanari Saichiro, 2,600 troops of the 6th Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force bolstered the garrison on Betio. Along with 1,200 Korean forced laborers and 1,000 Japanese construction workers, they built concrete blockhouses with walls several feet thick, reinforced with steel and coconut logs and covered with tons of sand. Machine-gun nests and pillboxes were sited with interlocking fields of fire, barbed-wire entanglements were strung, and obstacles that could tear into the thin skin of a landing craft were submerged around the islet and in the 17-mile-long, nine-mile wide lagoon that fronted the beaches chosen by American planners for the coming assault. Seven tanks were also buried in sand up to their turrets in positions covering the lagoon.

More than 40 artillery emplacements studded Betio, and the islet fairly bristled with the muzzles of 13mm heavy machine guns to 120mm field pieces. Also present were four heavy 8-inch guns of British manufacture that had been purchased by the Japanese at the height of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Contrary to popular belief, they were not captured at Singapore and transported the great distance to the Gilberts.

Approximately two miles from end to end and 800 yards across at its widest point, the islet of Betio consists of only 291 acres, about half the size of New York City's Central



The islet of Betio, about half the size of New York City's Central Park, is the largest of the landmasses comprising Tarawa Atoll.

Park. Yard for yard, Betio may well have been the most fortified territory on Earth. In August, Rear Admiral Keiji Shibasaki replaced Saichiro. So impressed was the new commander with the defenses at Betio that he boasted, "A million men cannot take Tarawa in a hundred years!"

General Holland Smith and Admiral Turner chose to accompany Task Force 52, the Makin force, aboard the battleship *Pennsylvania,* while command of Task Force 53, headed to Tarawa, was given to Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill aboard the battleship *Maryland*. It had been agreed that the Makin operation should end swiftly and that Holland Smith and Turner could reach Tarawa quickly should any problems arise there.

Shaped like a parrot, Betio is situated with its lagoon on the north side and the primary U.S. landing beaches, designated west to east as Red 1, 2, 3, running along the parrot's breast. Near the junction of Red 2 and 3, a long pier jutted more than 500 yards into the lagoon, and undoubtedly the Japanese would set up machine guns and sniper positions there to harass any troops approaching land. For the most part, the primary beaches were convex, expected to ease the landings to a degree. One notable exception was a small cove on the west side of Red Beach 1 that would allow the Japanese to converge fire on the Marines from three directions.

Farther west, at a right angle to Red Beach 1, Green Beach ran the length of the parrot's head from beak to crest. Intelligence reports suggested that the defenses along the Red beaches were not yet completed, and the waters of the lagoon would not be as rough as the open sea approaches to the ocean side of Betio.

Still, of greatest concern to the planners of the Tarawa assault was the existence of a barrier reef that ringed the islet. The most common landing craft in use with American forces at the time was the LCVP (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel), or Higgins Boat, and these flat-bottomed transports were capable of hauling a 36-man platoon, a jeep and a squad of infantry, or the equivalent of 8,000 pounds of supplies.

Although they were shallow draft, about three feet aft fully laden, the depth of the water along the reef during tidal cycles might well be insufficient for the craft to enter the lagoon. If the LCVPs became hung up on the reef, infantrymen might be disgorged hundreds of yards from shore and required to wade some distance under enemy fire.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Shoup, Operations Officer of the 2nd Marine Division, led the planning effort for the Tarawa assault. Choosing the primary landing beaches was simple enough, but Shoup recognized the peril the barrier reef posed to the LCVPs. He did, however, believe that a possible solution was at hand. Among the landing craft available to the Marines were a limited number of tracked amphibious vehicles originally developed for use in the swampy Everglades of Florida.

These vehicles, designated LVTs and commonly referred to as "amtracs" (and sometimes "amphtracs") or "alligators," were capable of powering through the water and then engaging tracks to climb across low barriers and land troops directly on the beaches.

Only 75 LVTs had been allotted to the Tarawa invasion, and Shoup requested the release of an additional 100 that were in storage on the U.S. West Coast. Holland Smith took up the cause and went toe to toe with Turner, who argued forcefully against the inclusion of more LVTs.

Turner reasoned that time was of the essence. Transporting the craft to a combat zone would require additional seaborne escort and possibly compromise the secrecy of Operation Galvanic. Smith persisted, and eventually the 100 LVTs were assigned to the deployed force. Half of these, however, would go to the Army's landing operation at Makin. A total of 125 LVTs would be available at Tarawa. The rest of the combat transport burden would rest with the LCVPs.

During a senior-level conference at Pearl Harbor, Shoup's original invasion plan was evaluated, and the architect was startled at the restrictions handed down by the highest echelon of Pacific command: A diversionary landing on an islet near Betio was cancelled. Although heavy bombers from the Ellice Islands had hit Tarawa repeatedly for days, the duration of pre-invasion naval and air bombardment on November 20 was restricted to preserve the element of surprise as long as possible. But perhaps the cruelest blow to Shoup was the pronouncement that the 6th Marine Regiment

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U.S. Coast Guardsmen ferry supplies to Betio past an LCM-3 that has taken a direct hit and sunk stern first—mute testimony to the ferocity of Japanese resistance at the water's edge.

was to be held as V Corps reserve, lowering the Marine numerical superiority to only about two to one.

Thus, Shoup's revised plan called for the 2nd Marine Regiment and a landing team of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines to hit the beaches, while the remainder of the 8th Marines served as 2nd Division reserve. On the eastern edge of the assault beaches at Red 3, the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines (Landing Team 2/8), under Major Henry P. Crowe, would land simultaneously with the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines (Landing Team 2/2) under Lt. Col. Herbert R. Amey, Jr., on Red 2, and the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines (Landing Team 3/2), under Major John F. Schoettel on Red 1. The 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, under Major Wood B. Kyle, constituted the regimental reserve.

The first Marines to touch Tarawa would be the 34-man Scout Sniper Platoon, 2nd Marines, led by 1st Lt. William D. Hawkins, charged with seizing the long lagoon pier.

Shoup felt the considerable weight of the responsibility for planning the Tarawa landings; however, within days of the operation his burden became much heavier. Colonel William Marshall, commander of the 2nd Marines, suffered a serious heart attack just days before the assault. Shoup then became the logical choice to take field command and execute his own plan. Julian Smith promoted him to colonel and made it official.

Still agonizing over the challenge presented by the barrier reef, the new commander of the 2nd Marines told *Time-Life* Correspondent Robert Sherrod that the earliest of his assault troops would reach the beaches in amtracs but follow-up waves might run into trouble. "We'll either have to wade in with machine guns maybe shooting at us, or the amtracs will have to run a shuttle service between the beach and the end of the shelf."

In the predawn hours of November 20, steak, eggs, fried potatoes, and coffee were served up in the galleys of the transports carrying the Marines who would make the first major contested beach assault against entrenched Japanese defenders during the Pacific War. From the galleys, the Marines proceeded topside, then down cargo nets and into landing craft that bobbed below.

From the beginning, what had been conceived as a well-choreographed series of shelling, bombing, and strafing prior to the landings began to go awry. Admiral Hill became aware that some of the transport ships were actually in the wrong place and obscured the view of the gunners aboard the battleships and cruisers of the support force. He ordered them to relocate to the proper position while some Marines were still scrambling down the nets, and confusion ensued as transports and landing craft were separated.

A red star shell arced above Betio at 4:41 AM, and at 5:07 the heavy Japanese shore batteries fired the first shots of the day. Minutes later, the big guns of the battleships *Maryland, Colorado,* and *Tennessee* opened fire. Some of the transports found themselves in range of the Japanese batteries and scurried to safer locations.

With H-hour set for 8:30 AM, pre-invasion fire support was to begin with air strikes by planes from the carriers *Bunker Hill, Essex,* and I*ndependence*. Naval gunfire was to follow for just over two hours, and then a second wave of aircraft would strafe and bomb to keep Japanese heads low right up to five minutes before the first Marines landed. Actually, when Admiral Hill ordered his ships to cease firing at 5:42, he anticipated the appearance of aircraft. None came. For some unexplained reason, the strike was delayed half an hour.

After the Japanese received a reprieve of more than 20 minutes, Hill ordered his bombardment force to commence firing again. Five minutes later, at 6:10 AM, the planes appeared overhead. The warships also took up their task once more and seemed to give credence to the boast of Rear Admiral Howard F. Kingman, who said, "Gentlemen, we will not neutralize Betio. We will not destroy it. We will obliterate it!"

The Marines in the landing craft were awed by the spectacular bombardment. A volcano of flame erupted on Betio when a shell from *Maryland* detonated the ammunition bunker of one of the heavy Japanese guns.

It looked as if no living creature could survive such a sustained rain of large-caliber shells. Looks, however, were to prove quite deceiving. Many of the naval rounds failed to penetrate the thick, reinforced walls of the Japanese bunkers, and these would have to be destroyed by Marines on the ground.

Due to strong currents in the lagoon and the general confusion, H-hour was postponed to 8:45 and then again to 9 AM. Hill ordered his ships to continue their bombardment

beyond the scheduled time, while aircraft were to maintain their support, striking targets inland from the beaches. However, the concussion of the first salvo from *Maryland*'s 16-inch guns caused a disruption in communications, and Hill's order was in vain. Air support and naval fire were reported to have ceased 18 minutes before the Marines landed. Some accounts offer that Hill ordered a cease-fire at 8:54, fearing possible incidents of friendly fire. Aircraft remained in the vicinity and resumed their strafing attacks moments later.

The first amtracs began crossing the line of departure, 6,000 yards from the beaches, at 8:24 AM, and one certainty during the tangle of confusion that preceded the assault was the gallant performance of the destroyers *Ringgold* and *Dashiell,* gliding into the lagoon as close as they dared without running aground and firing ahead of the Marines as long as they could without endangering their own men.

Three waves of amtracs churned toward the barrier reef followed by two waves of LCVPs. Japanese defenders on the ocean side began rushing toward the lagoon positions as reinforcements and, when the amtracs were within 3,000 yards, the defenders' guns began to bark and chatter.

Lieutenant Hawkins and the intrepid Scout Sniper Platoon were five minutes ahead of the first line of amtracs. Unflinching in the face of heavy fire, Hawkins led the assault on the pier. His Marines followed, routing the Japanese with rifle, bayonet, grenade, and flamethrower. With his primary task completed, Hawkins was seen standing in an amtrac as it crushed barbed wire and beach obstacles and climbed the five-foot seawall near the water's edge. From there he began to engage Japanese strongpoints.

As the first-wave amtracs reached the reef and ponderously climbed across, they were met by a torrent of deadly accurate Japanese fire. Private Newman M. Baird, a machine gunner aboard one of the craft and a Native American of the Oneida tribe, remembered the harrowing ordeal.

"We were 100 yards in now, and the enemy fire was awful damn intense and getting worse. They were knocking boats out right and left," Baird recalled. "A tractor'd get hit, stop, and burst into flames, with men jumping out like torches.... Bullets ricocheted off the coral and up under the tractor. It must've been one of those

Photo by Frederic Lewis/Hulton Archive/Getty

Looking like actors in a Hollywood war film, U.S. Marines climb a log seawall along one of the three Red Beaches at Betio; amphibious tractors (amtracs) are visible behind them. The fight for Tarawa Atoll, November 20–23, 1943, cost the Marines dearly; however, valuable lessons were learned for future U.S. amphibious operations.

bullets that got the driver. The lieutenant jumped in and pulled the driver out and drove himself 'til he got hit. Our boat was stopped, and they were laying lead to us from a pillbox like holy hell…. I grabbed my carbine and an ammunition box and stepped over a couple of fellas laying there and put my hand on the side so's to roll over into the water. I didn't want to put my head up. The bullets were pouring at us like a sheet of rain. Only about a dozen of the 25 went over the side with me."

Major Henry Drewes, commander of the 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, climbed up to an LVT machine-gun position when the crewman manning it was killed. Within seconds, Drewes was dead from a bullet to the head. A sergeant stood up in an LVT on Red Beach 1, and his men watched as machine-gun bullets appeared to "rip his head off."

The men of Major John F. Schoettel's 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines were being chewed up on Red Beach 1; several of their landing craft were hung up on the reef, forcing them to wade ashore in the face of intense Japanese fire. Schoettel believed his battalion had been decimated and was unable himself to get ashore for several hours.

Although his own Company L had taken 35 percent casualties while slogging toward Red 1 from the reef, Major Michael Ryan adapted to the situation and began to gather survivors of his command along with others he could assemble in a relatively quiet area that was actually on Green Beach.

At Red Beach 2, Corporal John Joseph Spillane was the crew chief of an LVT named *The Old Lady,* which reached the seawall and came under heavy fire. The Japanese tossed grenades at the amtrac, and Spillane, a baseball prospect that had brought scouts from the St. Louis Cardinals and the New York Yankees to his home, reacted instinctively. Accounts vary as to how many hand grenades he "fielded," spearing, trapping, and throwing them back like a shortstop. There were at least three and as many as six that hissed his way.

"I didn't have time to think. I just kept throwing them back," Spillane remembered sometime later. "Finally, one came over with a lot of blue smoke coming out of it. I picked it up anyway, and just as I pushed back my hand to throw it went off. I was stunned for a minute. There wasn't much left of my hand, but I felt no pain."

Spillane's baseball career was over. He held his bloody stump and yelled, "Let's get out of here!" After recovering from his grievous wound, Spillane received the Navy Cross and Purple Heart and returned home to Waterbury, Connecticut. He worked for the Mattatuck Manufacturing Company and died at the age of 77 in 1996.

On the west side of the pier at Red Beach 2, Lt. Col. Herbert R. Amey, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines, attempted to rally his beleaguered men, raising his pistol and shouting, "Come on! These bastards can't stop us!" In seconds, he was riddled with machine-gun bullets and killed. Lt. Col. Walter Jordan, an officer of the 4th Marine Division who had come along as an observer, took command of Amey's battalion and quickly learned that one company was pinned down while another had lost five of six officers.

The only battalion to land relatively intact on the bloody morning of November 20 was

Crouching behind the low seawall on Red Beach 3, east of the long pier at Betio, Marines take cover among their dead and the debris of battle. For hours, the situation on Betio was in doubt; however, intrepid Marines made progress and captured the 291-acre islet in 76 hours.

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ABOVE: The fighting on Betio was ferocious, and Marines often measured their gains in yards. Small teams of Marines methodically assaulted Japanese strongpoints on the islet and opened the way for offensive operations Here, a group of Marines braves intense fire to attack a Japanese bunker (background). BELOW: Three of the four Medals of Honor awarded for bravery at Tarawa were presented posthumously. They were earned by (left to right) Staff Sgt. William Bordelon, 1st Lt. William Deane Hawkins, and 1st Lt. Alexander Bonnyman, Jr. The fourth Medal of Honor was presented to Colonel David Shoup, who commanded the landing operation.

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U.S. Navy

U.S. Navy

Major Crowe's 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines at Red Beach 3, east of the pier where *Ringgold* and *Dashiell* had covered their approach. Although much of Crowe's complement was held up by a group of pillboxes and bunkers that included Shibasaki's command post, two amtracs began pushing through to the edge of the 4,000-foot airstrip that crisscrossed the islet.

Meanwhile, Colonel Shoup was frustrated in his attempts to get ashore. Finally, sometime around 10:30 he transferred from an LCVP to an LVT and headed for Red Beach 2 near the pier. On its third attempt to land, the LVT was shot up and Shoup sustained a leg wound from a shell fragment. He limped shoreward, stood in water up to his waist, and began to piece the situation together. Communications were difficult at best as most radios were lost or waterlogged. Around noon, Shoup set up a command post about 50 yards inland from the pier and only three feet from a log bunker still occupied by Japanese troops. Neither could fire on the other.

Shoup received desperate reports on the situation from just about everywhere. "Have landed. Unusually heavy opposition. Casualties 70 percent. Can't hold," said one. He committed the regimental reserve, Major Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, to land on Red Beach 2 and fight westward to Red 1.

General Julian Smith had already released Major Robert H. Ruud's 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines from the division reserve after reporting to Holland Smith, "Successful landings on Beaches Red 2 and 3. Toehold on Red 1. Am committing one LT (Ruud) from Division Reserve. Still encountering strong resistance throughout."

Kyle's assault lost cohesion rapidly as LVTs were hit with accurate Japanese fire, several bursting into flames and sinking. Two companies were aboard these LVTs, but the weapons company was required to wade in. Five boats were pushed away from Red 2 by a hail of shells and wound up landing their troops at Ryan's position on Green Beach. Kyle reached the pier and caught a lift from an LVT for the run-in. A relative few of his men succeeded in extending the tenuous American penetration a few yards inland.

Ruud's command was cut to pieces when no LVTs were available to shuttle the Marines from the reef to the beach. The 3rd Battalion suffered 70 percent casualties wading through water that was chest deep. Two Higgins boats were obliterated on the reef by direct hits, and the coxswain of another was so terrified by the sight that he lowered his ramp shouting, "This is as far as I go!" Marines jumping off with full combat gear sank like stones and drowned.

The last of the division reserve, the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, under Major Hays, was committed by Julian Smith sometime around midday after Holland Smith confirmed that the 6th Marines had been released from Makin and were heading toward Tarawa. A colossal communications failure resulted in Hays's command remaining aboard landing craft all night long rather than coming ashore near Red 3 and working to the west as Julian Smith intended.

As casualties mounted and Japanese fire slackened only slightly, it became clear to the Marines pinned down at the seawall, in the shadow of the pier, or dug in along a narrow strip of sand that Japanese strongpoints would have to be cleared the toughest way possible—with demolition

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The bodies of Japanese troops of the 6th Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force, killed as they exited their shelter, lie sprawled before the wreckage of their bunker. Many were burned or blasted inside their strongpoints by flamethrowers or satchel charges, while others were buried alive when bulldozers piled sand over exits and firing slits. RIGHT: The Japanese defenders of Betio had presighted their weapons, subjecting the Marines to interlocking fields of fire that took a heavy toll. A Sherman tank lies disabled in the shallow water; few of the American tanks committed to the landing actually made it ashore, but those that did helped tip the balance in the Marines' favor. The American public, shocked by images such as these, demanded censure of the American commanders who had ordered the assault.

charges, grenades, and flamethrowers. Their dead comrades bobbed in the lagoon, burned out LVTs littered the shoreline, and the wounded lay about by the score. Those junior and noncommissioned officers that were left had to act.

Among the first of these to rise to the occasion was Staff Sergeant William Bordelon of San Antonio, Texas. A combat engineer coming ashore with Lt. Col. Amey's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines, Bordelon reached Red Beach 2 after his LVT was hit, killing all but four of the men aboard. Bordelon prepared demolition charges and destroyed two Japanese pillboxes. As he took on a third position, he was wounded by machine-gun fire but emptied a rifle in support of Marines crossing the sea wall.

Bordelon then rescued two wounded men from the water. As he charged a fourth machine-gun position, he was cut down and died instantly. Bordelon received a posthumous Medal of Honor, the first of four Marines so recognized for valor during the fight for Betio.

The bodies of dead Marines floated in the lagoon and along the shoreline, while corpsmen and heroic Navy and Marine personnel risked their own lives to treat and evacuate the wounded. Among these was a Naval Reserve lieutenant from Minneapolis, Minnesota, named Edward Albert Heimberger, who pulled 47 severely wounded Marines from the water and helped 30 more get back to the ships for treatment. He received the Bronze Star with Combat "V" for heroism. Later, Heimberger went on to a notable acting career under the stage name Eddie Albert.

Although their combat training with armor had been virtually nil, the Marines knew that tanks could be valuable assets in reducing Japanese strongpoints on Betio. A company of 14 medium M4 Sherman tanks and a few light M2s of the 2nd Tank Battalion had been attached to the 2nd Marine Division for Operation Galvanic. The tanks headed for the invasion beaches at Betio aboard LCMs (Landing Craft, Mechanized) and ran into trouble just as the infantry units had.

Several LCMs were hit and destroyed by Japanese guns, taking their tanks to the bottom of the lagoon; none of the light tanks reached the shore. Shermans, too, fell into deep holes off the beaches and were lost, while several were thrown into the fight piecemeal with orders to simply engage any enemy position encountered. At least two were mistakenly put out of action by American dive bombers.

As the day wore on, only two Shermans remained in action. On Red Beach 3, a tank christened *Colorado,* under the command of Lieutenant Louis Largey, supported Major Crowe's thrust toward the airstrip, taking punishment from Japanese antitank guns and

FRUSTRATION AT MAKIN

Although fewer than 400 Japanese troops garrisoned the islet of Butaritari, the principal American objective of the assault on Makin atoll, its capture took an agonizingly slow four days. As the Marines hit the beaches on Betio on November 20, 1943, elements of the U.S. Army's 6,500-man-strong 165th Regimental Combat, 27th Infantry Division, streamed ashore at Butaritari.

As at Tarawa, communications were poor. Radios were inundated with seawater and refused to work. The Makin assault was the initial combat experience for most of the soldiers, and their regimental commander, Colonel Gardiner Conroy, was killed by a Japanese sniper on the afternoon of the first day.

Almost immediately, Marine Maj. Gen. Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith, commander of V Amphibious Corps, was dissatisfied with the performance of the Army troops and their commander, Maj. Gen. Ralph C. Smith. Marine doctrine favored rapid advance and acceptance of higher casualties, particularly to protect a vulnerable invasion fleet from attack at its offshore station. Army tactics favored more measured progress to keep casualties low.

When the fighting on Butaritari had ended, the Japanese garrison was virtually annihilated. However, nearly 800 Americans were dead, 644 of them killed when the escort carrier USS *Liscome Bay* was torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese submarine I-175 on November 23. □

even detonating a mine. Still, *Colorado* came on, blasting bunkers and pillboxes with its 75mm gun until its crew was at the point of exhaustion.

With Major Ryan at the extended position on Green Beach, a Sherman dubbed *China Gal,* commanded by Lieutenant Ed Bale, destroyed a Japanese tank after a hit from the enemy vehicle had turned the inside of *China Gal*'s turret lemon yellow but failed to penetrate the armor.

Japanese light tanks were no match for the American Shermans, but a pair of them rumbled toward Crowe's embattled Marines. Two 37mm antitank guns had been wrestled to shore by their crews when the landing craft carrying them were sunk; the seawall blocked any further movement forward. Word was passed, and the shout, "Lift 'em over!" was heard. In seconds, the 900-pound guns were manhandled into position and fired. One of the Japanese tanks lurched sideways and belched smoke and flame—a direct hit. The other turned and fled.

Ryan realized that he was out of position, but as the number of men in his composite command grew, he sensed an opportunity. The Japanese defenses on Green Beach were sited to fire out to sea and vulnerable to flank attack. Marines moved from blockhouse to pillbox, from machine-gun nest to trench, and cleared a portion of Green Beach that might have been used to land reinforcements. However, there were no communications with Shoup to exploit the gains.

Ryan had little in the way of substantial weapons, no flamethrowers, and many of his demolition charges were expended in the fighting. Only the 75mm gun aboard the blackened hulk of *China Gal* provided anything heavier than standard infantry weapons. In danger of being cut off, he pulled back to a perimeter 200 yards deep and about 100 yards wide, an area he felt his makeshift command could hold against counterattack. His position was separated from Shoup's command post by a 600-yard stretch of sand literally crawling with Japanese. Runners attempted to reach Shoup but failed.

To the east, the deepest penetration from Red Beaches 2 and 3 was 250 yards, about halfway across the airstrip. Elements of four Marine battalions stretched from left to right: Major Crowe's 2nd Battalion, 8th Regiment; Major Ruud's 3rd Battalion, 8th Regiment; Major Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2nd Regiment; and the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment under Lt. Col. Jordan after the death of Lt. Col. Amey.

As the end of that first bloody day approached, about 5,000 Marines had come ashore on Betio, and 30 percent of these were dead or wounded. The front line was not continuous. Pockets of Marines held positions that were often a significant distance away from the nearest supporting troops. They were well aware of the Japanese penchant for nighttime suicide charges, and the Marines knew they were vulnerable to such attacks. Sporadic gunfire pierced the darkness, but no attack came. Shibasaki's communications had been severed, and he had lost contact with his subordinate commanders. Attempts to organize an attack that might drive the Americans into the sea proved hopeless.

During the night the Marines braced for the banzai charge that did not materialize. Some Japanese soldiers managed to reach the lagoon and swim to disabled LVTs and the hulk of a half-sunken freighter, *Saida Maru,* hit by American dive bombers earlier and capsized in the shallow water. From these positions, they waited to rake

ABOVE: 1st Lt. Alexander Bonnyman, Jr., identified by a faint arrow drawn on this image by combat photographer Obie Newcomb, leads a contingent of Marines in an attack on the two-story blockhouse believed to be the headquarters of the Japanese commander at Tarawa, Rear Admiral Keiji Shibasaki. The assault succeeded, but Bonnyman was killed in the action and received a posthumous Medal of Honor. OPPOSITE: Two Marines man a .30-caliber Browning machine gun, while a third, with fear etched on his face, crawls up to assist. Marines with machine guns and flamethrowers were prime targets for Japanese snipers.

any reinforcements that ventured toward the Red beaches as dawn streaked the sky.

Aboard *Maryland,* Julian Smith was worried. "This was the crisis of the battle," he remembered later. "Three-fourths of the island was in the enemy's hands, and even allowing for his losses he should have had as many troops left as we had ashore." Smith advised his superiors, Spruance and Nimitz at Pearl Harbor, in succinct, unvarnished fashion: "Issue in doubt."

Hays and the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines were still aboard their landing craft almost a full day after initially boarding. Waiting at the line of departure, Hays had never received orders to land, and Julian Smith was shocked to learn later that the battalion had not come ashore. Through his assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Leo Hermle, who had spent much of the day at the embattled pier, Smith learned that Shoup wanted Hays to land at Red Beach 2. Initial orders to go in on Red 3 were altered, and at 6:15 AM, Hays's men began the agonizing slog of 500 yards or more from the reef to Red 2.

The early hours of the second day were as costly as the first. The 800 men under Hays lost 350 of their number to murderous fire that poured from Japanese emplacements ashore and from the hulk of *Saida Maru,* even through repeated dive bombing and strafing by American planes. Shoup, weak from blood loss and exhausted from 30 hours without sleep, realized that Hays needed help and ordered a general attack along the intermittent Marine line. Two 75mm pack howitzers of Lt. Col. Presley Rixey's 1st Battalion, 10th Artillery Regiment had been brought ashore during the night and assembled on the beaches behind a sand berm constructed by a Seabee bulldozer. They barked in support, suppressing some of the Japanese fire.

At Red Beach 3, Crowe and Ruud began to move despite the interlocking fields of fire from three Japanese bunkers on their left. *Ringgold* and *Dashiell* went to work once again, a direct hit from a five-inch gun blowing a bunker sky high. On Red 2, Jordan and Kyle directed their Marines in a push that reached the south shore of Betio, tenuously cutting the islet in two.

Though wounded on the first day, Lieutenant Hawkins, the quintessential Scout Sniper, was still full of fight. He had once pronounced that his platoon could whip any company-sized 200-man force in the field, and on the morning of November 21, few would have doubted it. Hawkins was ordered to silence a series of Japanese machine-gun nests and pillboxes that ringed a Japanese pillbox pouring deadly fire into Hays's men near the small cove close to the junction of Red 1 and Red 2.

As his men lay down covering fire, Hawkins crawled toward a pillbox, fired through a gun slit, and tossed grenades inside. Screams were heard, and the Japanese weapons were silent—but not before Hawkins had been shot in the chest. He still refused to evacuate declaring, "I came here to kill Japs, not to be evacuated!"

Three more times, Hawkins led his men in successful attacks on Japanese positions. Then, he was caught in the explosion of an enemy mortar shell. Within minutes, he was dead. Some time later, Shoup remarked, "It is not often that you can credit a first lieutenant with winning a battle, but Hawkins came as near to it as any man could."

The dashing Lieutenant William Deane Hawkins received a posthumous Medal of Honor for his bravery and remarkable leadership at Tarawa. He was 29 years old. Although his heroism had cost him his life, Hawkins had opened the way for Hays's 1st Battalion, 8th Marines to seize the initiative on the right (west) flank of Red Beach 2.

Major Michael Ryan and company had been busy on Green Beach during the night gathering weapons, ammunition, and first aid kits from the dead and wounded. A second Sherman tank, *Cecilia,* had been repaired to join *China Gal* on the second day. There had been no appreciable Japanese resistance, allowing for some intermittent rest for the men who had braved the harrowing fight of November 20. Good fortune smiled on Ryan in the person of Navy Lieutenant Thomas Greene, a gunfire spotter whose radio actually worked.

At 11:20 AM, Ryan moved across Green Beach with an organized and coordinated attack on the Japanese pillboxes and machine-gun nests there. Greene radioed coordinates to destroyers in the lagoon, and the 5-inch shells smashed into their targets with great accuracy. Within an hour, Green Beach was clear as Ryan's patchwork command retraced its steps from the previous day. "Task Force Ryan" then turned toward the southwest corner of Betio to eliminate Japanese resistance there, moving into position to attack farther eastward toward the airfield.

Although communications had been sporadic, Ryan got word to Julian Smith aboard *Maryland* that Green Beach was open. The 6th Marines were arriving from Makin, and Smith ordered the regimental commander, Colonel Maurice Holmes, to prepare for landings. Holmes sent Major Willie K. Jones and the 1st Battalion to Green Beach and Lt. Col. Raymond L. Murray's 2nd Battalion to the neighboring islet of Bairiki, where some Japanese had apparently fled. When Jones's battalion reached Green Beach, it was virtually unscathed, with all its weapons and equipment intact.

Both: National Archives

By mid-afternoon, the situation had continued to improve. The Marines were gaining ground yard by yard, pillbox by pillbox. Reports began filtering into Shoup's command post that some Japanese troops were turning their weapons on themselves. Shibasaki was desperate but resolute as the American artillery and naval gunfire crept closer. He exerted little control over his troops, and no reinforcements or relief could be expected.

About 4 PM, Shoup had gained enough confidence to send a situation report to Julian Smith. Its conclusion has become legendary: "Casualties: many. Percentage dead: unknown. Combat efficiency: we are winning."

After dark, Colonel Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson, already famous for his defense of Bloody Ridge at Guadalcanal, came ashore to relieve Shoup, whose stellar performance would earn him the Medal of Honor. Exhausted and in need of medical attention, Shoup, who went on to attain the rank of four-star general and serve as commandant of the Marine Corps, said to Robert Sherrod, "Well, I think we're winning, but the bastards have got a lot of bullets left. I think we'll clean up tomorrow."

Edson set to work with efficiency. Orders for the third day were straightforward. The gains on Green Beach were to be exploited with renewed attacks to the east spearheaded by the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, which was to link up with the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 2nd Marines that had fought their way southward the previous day. Hays's 1st Battalion, 8th Marines was to thrust westward and eliminate the Japanese salient between Red Beaches 1 and 2.

Crowe and Ruud, commanding the other two battalions of the 8th Marines, were to attack eastward.

With *Cecilia* and *China Gal* up front and supported by infantry, Major Jones and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines made good progress, killing 250 Japanese troops and linking up with the 2nd Battalion Marines in about three hours. At Red Beach 2, Hays brought in half-tracks mounting 75mm guns when the light M2 tanks proved insufficient for the job of reducing some Japanese strongpoints. The 75s blasted away, and painfully slow progress against enemy positions around the cove required combat engineers with satchel charges and grenades to silence some of the persistent guns.

Both: National Archives

Crowe's Marines faced the triple threat of a coconut-log bunker with multiple machine guns, a steel-reinforced pillbox, and a large blockhouse that was reported to have been Shibasaki's headquarters. Their interlocking fields of fire had held the Marines at bay for two days. Finally, at 9:30 AM, a mortar round scored a direct hit on the ammunition storage compartment for the coconut-log bunker, destroying the strongpoint. The Sherman *Colorado,* still in action, belched a 75mm round that cracked open the pillbox. The Japanese grip was loosened, but the blockhouse still spewed machine-gun and rifle fire.

Early on the morning of the third day, Shibasaki had sent a stout-hearted message to Tokyo. "Our weapons have been destroyed. From now on everyone is attempting a final charge. May Japan exist for 10,000 years." His information was sketchy, and Shibasaki had no way of reorganizing a cohesive defense; however, the message was in keeping with the spirit of Bushido, the Japanese code of honor, and with his previous bravado. Now, if he was indeed inside the blockhouse, the Japanese commander did not have long to live.

The two-story structure was the highest point on Betio, and it had to be taken by storm. First Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman of Knoxville, Tennessee, led five engineers forward under covering fire. Bonnyman traversed the sandy slope and reached the roof of the blockhouse only to be met by dozens of Japanese troops who had emerged to fight. Bonnyman made several of them human torches with his flamethrower and emptied his carbine into them. The Japanese pulled back in disorder, but the gallant engineer was killed.

As Bonnyman's body tumbled down the slope, the remaining engineers planted demolition charges while Japanese troops swarmed out of the blockhouse. These hapless men were gunned down in minutes, and *Colorado* took out 20 of them with a single canister round. A Marine bulldozer shoved mounds of sand against stubborn firing slits. Gasoline was poured through ventilation shafts, followed by grenades. Explosives were detonated.

At last, the Marines on Red Beach 3 had silenced their greatest tormenter. More than 200 blackened Japanese corpses were later found inside the blockhouse. However,

BELOW: Many of the wounded Marines had to be ferried out to the edge of the coral reef aboard rubber boats like this one for evacuation to larger vessels that would take them to hospital ships offshore. LEFT: A Marine discharges a flamethrower to clear away thick brush that obscures a path across the islet of Betio. The flamethrowers were essential in the reduction of numerous Japanese strongpoints, burning defenders out of their virtually impenetrable bunkers of steel-reinforced concrete, coconut logs, and sand.

Both: National Archives

LEFT: Marine reinforcements, aware of the heavy toll in lives lost during the fighting, wade ashore past a pier jutting into the lagoon at Betio. Tarawa provided valuable lessons that actually saved countless Marines during subsequent Pacific amphibious operations. BELOW: With surrender considered dishonorable, only 17 of Tarawa's Japanese defenders were captured alive during the 76 hours of the battle.

Shibasaki's body was never positively identified. The 33-year-old Bonnyman received a posthumous Medal of Honor for his act of bravery.

Julian Smith came ashore on Green Beach about noon and quickly decided to move to the lagoon side of Betio near the pier where heavy fighting was still going on between Hays's men and the Japanese along the edge of the small cove. Smith's landing craft was shot up and its coxswain killed. An LVT was located for the general, and it was raked by machine-gun fire. Two hours later, Smith found Edson and Shoup. Attacks continued throughout the afternoon. Smith took formal command on the islet at 7:30 PM.

During the night at least four uncoordinated suicide charges rattled some of Major Jones's positions, but the Marines held on in hand-to-hand combat, killing hundreds of Japanese troops. One Marine killed three Japanese soldiers with his bayonet and was stabbed with a Samurai sword by a Japanese officer whose skull was then fractured by a Marine rifle butt. The howitzers of the 1st Battalion, 10th Artillery fired more than 1,200 rounds, and gunfire from the destroyers *Sigsbee* and *Schroeder* broke the back of the Japanese, but Jones and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines lost 40 dead and 100 wounded.

By the morning of November 23, the fresh 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines under Lt. Col. Kenneth McLeod was rolling eastward along Green Beach against diminishing resistance. Japanese combat proficiency had blown itself out with the previous night's series of charges. At 1 PM, McLeod halted at the eastern end of Betio with nearly 500 dead or wounded Japanese in his battalion's wake.

The Japanese strongpoints near the cove and the junction of Red Beaches 1 and 2 were still tough nuts to crack; they had played havoc with the Marines trying to come ashore on the first day. Majors Hays and Schoettel directed their 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, and 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, respectively, in attacks from three directions, while half-tracks provided suppressing fire from the reef, effectively encircling the troublesome pillboxes and machine-gun nests. Marine grit and Japanese suicides brought the situation under control.

Around 1 PM, a Navy Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter plane landed at the airfield on Tarawa that would bear the name of the deceased Lieutenant Hawkins. About the same time, resistance at the edge of the cove ended. Tarawa was declared secure after 76 hours of fighting the likes of which few men had ever experienced.

The veteran Lt. Col. Carlson admitted, "It was the damndest fight I've seen in 30 years of this business."

Only 17 Japanese troops and 129 Korean laborers surrendered alive. A total of 1,027 Marines and 29 U.S. Navy personnel, most of them corpsmen attached to Marine units, died in the fighting on Betio, and 2,292 Americans were wounded.

The lessons learned at Tarawa were bitter, but they actually saved lives during future amphibious operations across the Pacific. Among these were the clear implications that overwhelming numerical superiority against the defenders was a must, while the coordination of pre-invasion naval and air bombardment had to be improved. The big naval guns would only be effective against reinforced strongpoints with armor-piercing shells and plunging fire.

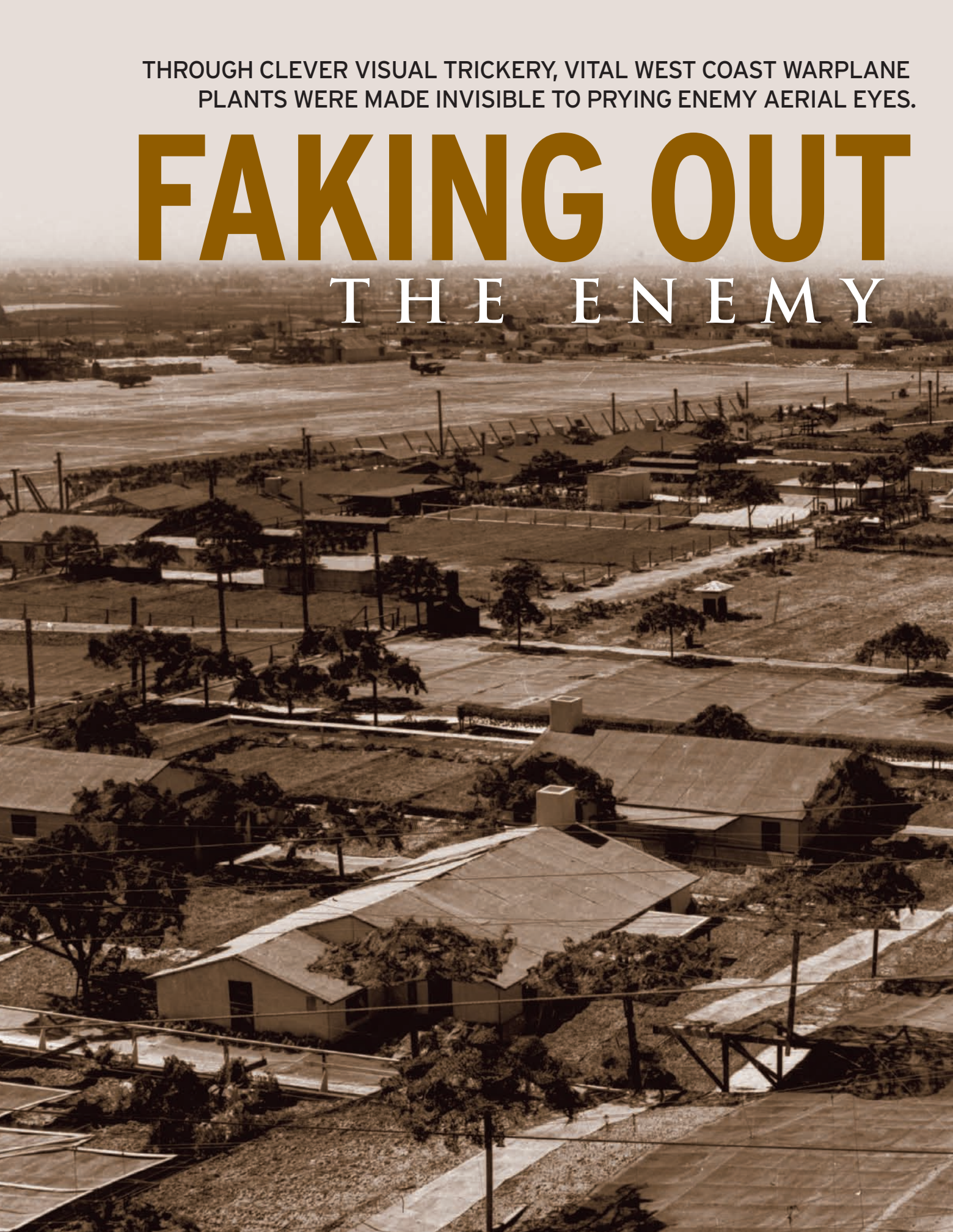
Solid information on the tides and depth of surrounding waters was needed for future operations. Amtracs would have to be available in quantity. Communications had to be improved, and the actual chain of command had to be clearly defined. On the ground, the Marines needed more automatic weapons and flamethrowers.

A public outcry followed Operation Galvanic. Newspaper headlines screamed of the high death toll, the cost of wresting a tiny mound of coral from its fanatical defenders. Admiral Nimitz and others were roundly criticized, but the Marines had been equal to the bloody task.

The military men had already known something the civilians had not previously reckoned. War is horrific business. They also knew that Tarawa was only the beginning. □

THROUGH CLEVER VISUAL TRICKERY, VITAL WEST COAST WARPLANE PLANTS WERE MADE INVISIBLE TO PRYING ENEMY AERIAL EYES.

FAKING OUT THE ENEMY



All images: Author's Collection, except as noted

This excellent overview of the camouflaged Douglas factory in Santa Monica shows how detailed and realistic the false rooftop neighborhoods were. In addition to tree-lined streets and buildings of varying shapes and sizes, there were sidewalks, detached garages, and empty lots. Note the sizable, but unplanned, "potholes"—actually rips in the cammo netting, in the center. By the time this picture was taken in 1945, such potholes were no longer being repaired. The Clover Field flightline is visible in the upper left. INSET: A bombardier's-eye view. At first glance, it is hard to spot which areas of this aerial photograph of the Lockheed camouflage project in Burbank are real and which are fake. The area on the right is the main factory building (with ant-like humans seen as shadows) where thousands of aircraft were built below the faux village. Lockheed built 9,423 P-38 Lightnings in Burbank.

BY BILL YENNE

When I was a young boy in Seattle, my father told me about a fake town that had been built on top of Boeing's Plant 2 during the war. This naturally fired my imagination. What an ingenious way, I thought, to fool the enemy bombers that might being coming over the Emerald City to wreak havoc.

He told me about it with exaggerated caution to underscore the fact that it had been top secret during the war. Nobody was supposed to talk about it, although everyone in town knew about this faux neighborhood that employees called "Wonderland." By the time people "in the know" were allowed to talk about Wonderland, Boeing was tearing it down.

Wonderland was kept out of the newspapers until the war was almost over, but it was an open secret. Just as "Loose Lips Sank Ships," loose lips could also bring Mitsubishi G4Ms swarming over that little neighborhood on East Marginal Way South.

Boeing workers Suzette Lamaroux and Vern Manion inspect one of the rooftop bungalows above Plant 2 ("Wonderland") in Seattle, July 1945. Such elaborate deception may seem today like an unnecessary waste of time and resources, but it calmed the fears of those who worked there.

Indeed, the entire monumental effort made to camouflage West Coast aircraft factories was an open secret. Tens of thousands of men and women went to work beneath bogus villages every day, quietly assuming that it was a vital necessity that was serving to protect their lives. At the same time, they knew that they dare not mention it.

In retrospect, we know that during World War II, enemy bombers never clouded the skies over any American city—except Honolulu, of course. In retrospect, too, we know a lot about what might have happened, but did not, during the war. At that time, though, it was not so obvious that Japanese bombers would never appear.

People living on the West Coast were not convinced that this could not, and would not, happen. Pearl Harbor is nearly 4,000 miles from Japan. If the enemy could launch a large-scale air raid in two waves on Honolulu and environs, what was stopping them from doing the same, also without warning, against any city from San Diego to Seattle?

Within a month of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had captured Manila and Hong Kong. Singapore fell about a month after that. The West Coast was jittery and very afraid. In 1942, nobody went anywhere near a beach without looking long and hard toward the horizon, half expecting to see a Japanese invasion fleet.

Few persons in authority were more shaken by the dread of a Japanese invasion than General John Lesesne DeWitt, the commander of the Fourth U.S. Army and the Western Defense Command, who imagined spies and saboteurs under every bush and used his overactive imagination to justify his draconian enforcement of Executive Order 9066, which led to the internment of all Japanese American civilians—including those born in the United States—who lived in the West Coast states.

The nervous DeWitt even ordered that the 1942 Rose Bowl Game be relocated away from Pasadena for fear that the Japanese would bomb the venue. His biggest fear, though, was what a Japanese invasion might do to his career. He knew the troops under his command were entirely inadequate to meet a force such as the enemy had just used to invade and conquer the Philippines.

He was not alone in his concern. On February 23, the Japanese submarine *I-17* shelled oil storage facilities about 10 miles up the coast from Santa Barbara, California. The following night, nervous gunners thought they saw an armada of Japanese bombers over Los Angeles, and the sky was illuminated with searchlights and exploding antiaircraft shells. [See *WWII Quarterly,* Spring 2012]

The people in the City of Angels had seen the newsreels of the London Blitz, and they knew that the Luftwaffe had leveled cities from Rotterdam to Coventry. Of course, they were well aware of what had happened in Hawaii in December. There was little reason not to believe that California's Southland was getting its turn.

The government, specifically Navy Secretary Frank Knox, announced that the "Battle of Los Angeles" was a "false alarm," and there is no evidence that it was not. However, even at the time, many people assumed that sinister government obfuscation was in motion. Today, the Battle of Los Angeles "cover-up" still rates its own small cadre of true believers whenever conspiracy theorists congregate.

Even if Los Angeles was a false alarm, Santa Barbara really happened. Then, just as those who had held their breath got up the nerve to exhale, the Japanese submarine *I-25* attacked Fort Stevens in Washington state on two consecutive nights in June. Also in June, Japanese forces invaded and occupied the Aleutian islands of Kisksa and Attu, establishing a Japanese base on Alaska's doorstep.

Meanwhile, a number of American merchant ships were being sunk off the West Coast of the United States. Attacks also came from the air. In September, Nobuo Fujita flew two bombing missions over southwestern Oregon in a submarine-launched Yokosuka E14Y floatplane.

These are the events that actually did happen. For each of these, there were a hundred widely believed rumors that are not chronicled in the history books, but which governed the perceptions of those who lived with them in the midst of mankind's biggest war. It was a frightening moment in U.S. history.

These events, real and imagined, defined the apprehensive mood of the home front in 1942. The Axis armies seemed invulnerable abroad, and the West Coast felt too dreadfully exposed, especially to air attack.

Another view of Boeing's Plant 2, looking toward the southeast, clearly shows Wonderland's "street grid." The presence of B-29 Superfortresses on the ramp and runway indicate that this photo was taken late in the war.

Everyone—from the military planners at the War Department to the civilians on the street gazing nervously at the sky—knew that World War II was an air war. It was the first war in which air power played an essential role, and air power was proving itself to be a prominent and devastating weapon.

Just as the enemy, especially the Luftwaffe, was wielding air power so effectively, military and industrial planners in the United States understood that America's own aircraft production must be the highest of priorities.

In the spring of 1940, more than a year before Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt had famously proclaimed that America should have 50,000 combat aircraft. Between them, the Navy and the Army Air Corps had less than a fifth that number, and most of these were trainers. To assure that the services had enough airplanes, production had to be ramped up. Aircraft factories suddenly became the most vital element in American defense procurement and in Roosevelt's emergency mobilization of essential industries.

In May 1940, the administration created the National Defense Advisory Commission to oversee this industrial expansion, and Congress authorized funds for both the expansion of existing factories and construction of new facilities that would be government-owned and managed by a new bureaucracy known as the Defense Plant Corporation but operated by existing manufacturers.

To head this commission and to serve as commissioner of production, Roosevelt tapped William Signius "Big Bill" Knudsen. An expert on mass production and auto industry executive, Knudsen had been president of General Motors since 1937.

In 1940, nearly 90 percent of airframe manufacturing capacity measured in square feet of floor space was located in five states, with 65 percent along or near one of the coasts; California alone had 44 percent.

Of America's five largest aircraft manufacturers by total aircraft weight, four—Douglas, Consolidated Vultee (with plants in San Diego and Downey), North American, and Lockheed—were located in Southern California, with their factories within five minutes flying time of the Pacific Ocean. The fifth, Boeing, was only about 100 miles inland from the Pacific in Seattle. On the East Coast, meanwhile, Grumman, Martin, and Republic were all closer to the Atlantic than Boeing was to the Pacific. Of the major American aircraft manufacturers, only Curtiss and Bell, in upstate New York, had their flagship factories more than an hour from the coast.

In the wake of Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt and Knudsen realized that they had been right. America's plane-making infrastructure was dangerously vulnerable. If the same carrier battle group that had zeroed in upon Pearl Harbor had been sitting 200 miles off the Malibu coast, Douglas, Consolidated Vultee, North American, and Lockheed would be out of business for months—or longer. They also realized that Japanese planners knew this as well.

The new Defense Plant Corporation factories were being built well inland, in states such as Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, and Texas, but in the dark days of early 1942, most of the industry was still exposed to the potential of enemy attack. Because everyone now had a graphic illustration of what could and did happen, protecting this vital manufacturing infrastructure was an even bigger priority than it had been on December 6.

Enter Major John Francis Ohmer, Jr., a man with a plan at a time when a plan was needed.

Born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1891, he was the son of John Francis Ohmer, Sr., an inventor, manufacturer and founder of the Ohmer Fare Register Company. Young John earned his masters degree in engineering from Cornell University in 1913, and served with the U.S. Army's 404th Engineer Battalion in World War I. He later returned to the family business but retained captain's rank in the Engineer Officers Reserve Corps.

Ohmer, an amateur magician and a photography hobbyist, also began to develop an interest in both the art and the science of camouflage. In 1938, he formed the 604th Engineer Battalion as a camouflage unit within the California-based Fourth Army.

Studying the success of the Royal Air Force in camouflaging their fighter fields from the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain in 1940, Ohmer proposed the same to the U.S. Army Air Corps (renamed U.S. Army Air Forces after June 1941).

He even carried out some demonstrations of suggested camouflage techniques at places such as Fort Eustis, Virginia, and such air bases as Langley Field, Virginia, and Maxwell Field, Alabama. However, prewar budgets were tight, and there was no money for operational camouflage.

In March 1941, Ohmer was ordered back to active duty as a major under the command of the office of the Chief of Engineers, Operations and Training Section, in Washington, D.C. That fall he was sent to Hawaii to study defenses. He recommended an extensive camouflage plan for Wheeler Field on Oahu, about 12 miles north of Pearl Harbor. The cost of the project, around $50,000, was too much for the USAAF, and it declined. A few weeks later, on December 7, the USAAF lost most of its Wheeler-based aircraft to the same raiders that decimated Pearl Harbor.

By this time, Major Ohmer was based at the USAAF's March Field in California's Riverside County, east of Los Angeles. Against a backdrop of fear and revamped priorities, General DeWitt ordered Ohmer to develop a camouflage plan for the West Coast. Ohmer, who had done a lot of thinking about a project such as this, found himself with a dream assignment.

In areas at Douglas in Santa Monica where the camouflage netting ended with buildings, the edges were "softened" through the addition of artificial trees mounted on brackets.

With money no longer an object, the amateur magician implemented his well-considered plan to make California's aircraft industry vanish. He began with March Field itself, using it as a demonstration project, an operational training exercise to work out specific techniques and technical details.

Ohmer's proximity to Hollywood gave him access to an incredible pool of talent in the form of the best movie set designers and large-scale scenic painters in the world. Meanwhile, all the major studios were more than willing to provide their services for the war effort. Ohmer had his pick of the best talent at Columbia, Disney, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, Universal Studios, and others.

"In the early weeks of 1942, March Field came alive with creative talent," writes Dr. Dennis Casey of the Air Intelligence Agency (now Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency). "Indeed, some Army observers remarked that it looked like a Hollywood studio back lot.

"Depending on where you might walk, you could run into a small farm being created complete with animals, a barn, a silo and other buildings. Pastoral settings were under construction using frames of lumber and large spreads of canvas. When a pastoral setting was used to conceal an ammunition storage area, the whole thing achieved near reality when a neighboring farmer grazed his cows near the phony buildings."

According to Casey, Ohmer and his team disguised 34 military air bases in Washington, Oregon, and California, as well as Mills Field, the future San Francisco International Airport.

Their most dramatic attention, however, was reserved for the Southern California aircraft manufacturers, including Lockheed in Burbank, North American Aviation in Inglewood, Northrop in Hawthorne, and Consolidated Vultee in Downey.

The idea was to make the aircraft factories "disappear" by cloaking them to appear as innocuous suburban neighborhoods to an observer flying at an altitude of 5,000 feet. Operational bombing altitudes were generally higher, although the attacks on Pearl Harbor had come in much lower.

The disguises consisted of painting what appeared to be streets and greenery on real runways, and erecting entire faux subdivisions on factory rooftops. Standard-issue camouflage netting, stretched on massive wooden scaffolding served as the basic canvas on

which the Hollywood artists painted contrasting color detailing to suggest streets and other features. The netting was foliage green to begin with, but areas were sprayed in subtly different shades to give the scene a more realistic look. Some "lawns" in the subdivisions were painted brown to suggest that they had not been watered.

Dozens of fake houses, as well as schools and public buildings, were made of canvas. Hundreds of artificial shrubs and other ground details were created, using burlap over chicken wire matrices.

The movie industry illusionists developed a method of crafting trees using tar and feathers. Chicken wire was lightly coated with tar, and then dipped in chicken feathers. The finished product, which had a soft, leafy appearance, could be formed into a rigid structure of any shape and sprayed multiple shades of green.

Chimneys and vents in the roofs of the factory buildings were allowed to poke through the netting, and were painted to simulate fireplugs.

In Burbank, full-size inflated rubber "automobiles" were parked on the "streets" above Lockheed's plant (where the Bob Hope Airport is located today), and workers went up periodically to move them around from place to place to suggest that they were being driven and reparked. In some cases, clothing was even taken on and off real clotheslines that were installed behind the houses. In the event Japanese reconnaissance aircraft were secretly overflying Southern California, Ohmer's team wanted to give their fantasy world a lived-in look.

Ohmer's villages were as accurate as possible in two dimensions, although not in height. The houses and trees were not very tall; indeed, most of the buildings were no taller than six feet. The reason was that the camouflage was designed to be seen from high above, not from ground level, and to be studied in minute detail only in the form of two-dimensional aerial photographs. In practice, a bombardier would have no more than two minutes, if that, to view the target, and he would be looking straight down.

THE SANTA MONICA CAMOUFLAGE WAS SO EFFECTIVE THAT AMERICAN PILOTS WHO WERE SUPPOSED TO LAND AT CLOVER FIELD OCCASIONALLY GOT LOST AND HAD TO DIVERT TO ALTERNATE AIRPORTS.

"Ohmer's camouflage works by deceptively combining a technological feature of photography with one of its contingent social meanings," writes Austin Nelson in a March 2012 blog post on the Camera Club of New York website. "On the one hand, Ohmer's work took advantage of a fundamental technological truth about the camera, namely that it's mono-focal.

"Photographed objects are rendered in perspective but by a single lens and onto a flat 2D surface. The effect is that the space around and between things looks squashed, especially in cases like aerial shots where the depth of field is very shallow. At the same time for Ohmer's paintings to work as camouflage when photographed, he had to assume that despite the apparent unreal flatness of any aerial photograph with a shallow depth of field, the enemy still believed in the literal truth of such photographs....

"If Ohmer could count on the Japanese's [sic] belief in the literal truth of photography (and the very existence of their aerial reconnaissance program would have given him reason to do so), he could reliably use the flattening effect of photography to his advantage. That is, as long as the Japanese expected aerial photographs of on-the-ground reality to look flat no matter what, that 'reality' could be simulated with an equally flat painted canvas. Ohmer added some three-dimensional props to his tarps, like shrubs and rubber cars, but these were accents to a painted picture that had to be convincing in its own right."

Nevertheless, the overall terrain of the "landscape" was not flat. In order to compensate for the irregular height of various factory buildings, the subdivisions appeared at ground level to have been built on gently rolling hills.

In a lecture that he delivered to military personnel on September 15, 1943, Ohmer, now a colonel, described his technique as "visual misinformation."

Meanwhile, when it came to visual misinformation, John Ohmer's was not the

The camouflage netting at Douglas in Santa Monica stretched seamlessly from building to open areas, obscuring the edges of the buildings. Note the "woody" ambulance in the background.

only game in town. Donald Douglas, whose Douglas Aircraft Company operated plants at Santa Monica, El Segundo, and Long Beach, had decided not to wait for the Army Engineers. In 1941, Douglas had asked engineer Frank Collbaum to find him someone who could design a plan to camouflage the Douglas Aircraft flagship plant at Clover Field in Santa Monica. Collbaum, whose history at Douglas included his having been the flight engineer on the debut flight of the immortal DC-3, suggested the noted architect, H. Roy Kelley.

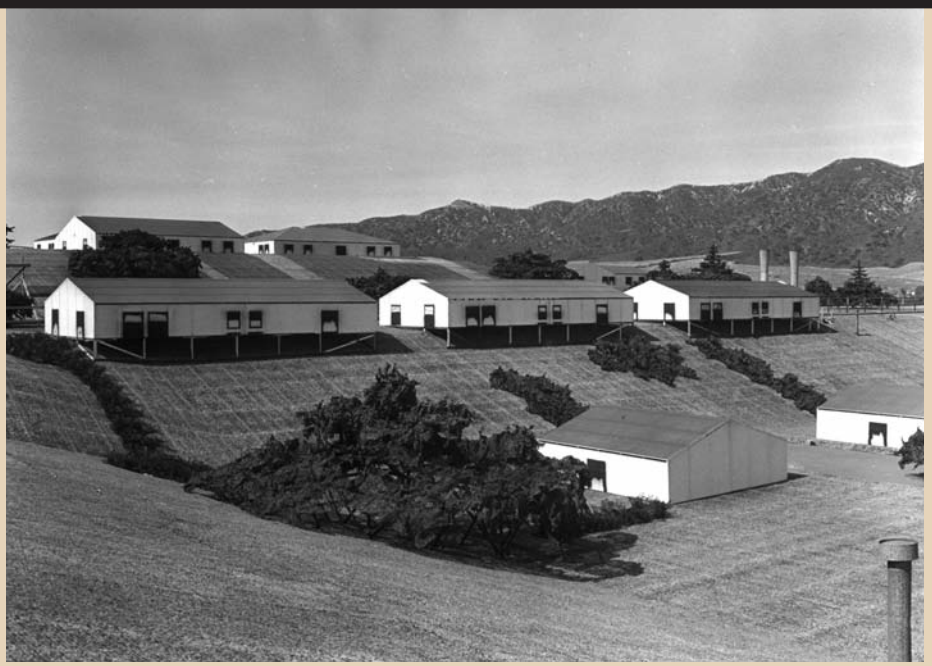
Among his many other accomplishments, Kelley is credited with having been an originator of mid-century California "ranch-style" homes, some of which were represented in faux form in the enormous rooftop

National Archives

Major John S. Detlie, far right, poses with Colonel Richard Park, Seattle District Engineer, and two civilians who received checks as part of an "Ideas for Victory" promotional campaign. Detlie, an art director and set designer for MGM Studios, was in charge of camouflaging Boeing's Seattle aircraft plant.

commission that he undertook for Douglas in 1942. On this project, Kelley teamed up with an equally popular and well-known California landscape architect, Edward Huntsman-Trout, whose credits included the campus of Scripps College in Claremont.

Like Ohmer, Kelley and Huntsman-Trout utilized Hollywood set designers, specifically from Warner Brothers, in their project. According to Cecilia Rasmussen of the *Los Angeles Times,* their creation was made of "burlap supported by a tension compression structure of more than five million square feet of chicken wire and 400 poles." It covered the terminal and hangars, as well as the parking lot.



The rolling burlap hills of the subdivision top the rounded Lockheed factory roof in Burbank, with the San Gabriel Mountains in the distance.

As Ohmer's own Hollywood experts had done, they filled their "village" with houses, fences, and clotheslines. In turn, they designed their "street grid" so that it blended into the adjacent Sunset Park neighborhood. They even matched the scale of their "ranch" homes to match those in Sunset Park. Warner Brothers executives later insisted that their own lot receive the "Kelley Treatment." They decided that their sound stages looked too much like aircraft hangers from the air, and feared that Japanese bombardiers, fooled by the Clover Field camouflage—or by Lockheed's, only three miles to the north—would bomb their studio instead!

The Santa Monica camouflage was so effective that American pilots who were supposed to land at Clover Field occasionally got lost and had to divert to alternate airports. For a time, Douglas adopted a policy of placing men waving red flags at the ends of the runways to greet incoming planes.

In Seattle, Boeing's president Philip Johnson followed suit with Don Douglas, moving quickly to protect his principal asset—Plant 2. On December 11, four days after Pearl Harbor, the company issued a press release tersely reporting that Plant 2 had been "entirely transformed from a daylight plant to a blackout plant, enabling all night operations during blackouts. This plant is believed to be one of the first, if not the first, major defense plant in the country to complete this transformation."

On April 1, 1942, the Boeing News Bureau reported with a bit more colorful detail that "the suddenness of the Pearl Harbor attack and the urgency it created prevented wasting of any time in laying groundwork for the work of blacking out. Painters, janitors, maintenance men—all available nonproduction workmen who had painting experience—were quickly rounded up and added to a crew furnished by Austin Construction Company. Brushes, spray guns, all necessary equipment was rounded up, too. All equipment, including pressure tanks and hoses, was hauled to the roof by hand.... Wartime censorship rules do not permit revealing of the plant's size or the number of windows painted in those two days and nights, but the number of windows was tremendous, and approximately four miles of air hose were used for operating spray guns."

It was actually harder than it sounds. The crews had to experiment with five different paints before they found a mixture that would stick to the windows. When done, the black windows created a reflection problem and had to be painted over with gray to match the

rest of the building. Finally, Austin Construction installed three layers of plywood inside the windows to protect workers from shards of glass that might be shattered by bomb blasts. It would have been easier just to replace the glass with plywood.

In May 1942, the Corps of Engineers undertook to camouflage the blacked-out factory. To design the job, Ohmer sent John Stewart Detlie, a talented art director whom he had recruited off the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lot. Having earned his degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1933, Detlie went to Hollywood to start a career in set design. In 1940, he was nominated for an Academy Award for his work on MGM's *Bitter Sweet,* with Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy.

In 1940, the 32-year-old Detlie married an 18-year-old starlet named Constance Ockelman. Within a year, Constance had become one of the hottest talents in Hollywood, and had changed her name to Veronica Lake. Detlie was living the Hollywood dream—until Ohmer came calling.

As Veronica Lake became one of the favorite GI pinup girls of World War II, her husband reported for duty in Seattle. Detlie found an environment where the Japanese occupation of islands near Alaska was of particular concern. Seattle was 900 air miles from Juneau, the capital of the future 49th state. People in the Pacific Northwest readily imagined that when the other shoe dropped, they would be next.

My father, who was working at the Todd Pacific shipyard on Seattle's Harbor Island—about three miles north of Boeing Field—recalls being called to work in the middle of the night on June 3, 1942. AJapanese radio transmission had been intercepted. Enemy bombers were on their way to Harbor Island!

The Todd Pacific workers battened down the hatches and waited for the air raid. Finally the "all-clear" sounded. The Japanese had bombed Dutch Harbor, Alaska, instead of Harbor Island, Washington. The radio intercept was misinterpreted. Still, Alaska was too close for comfort.

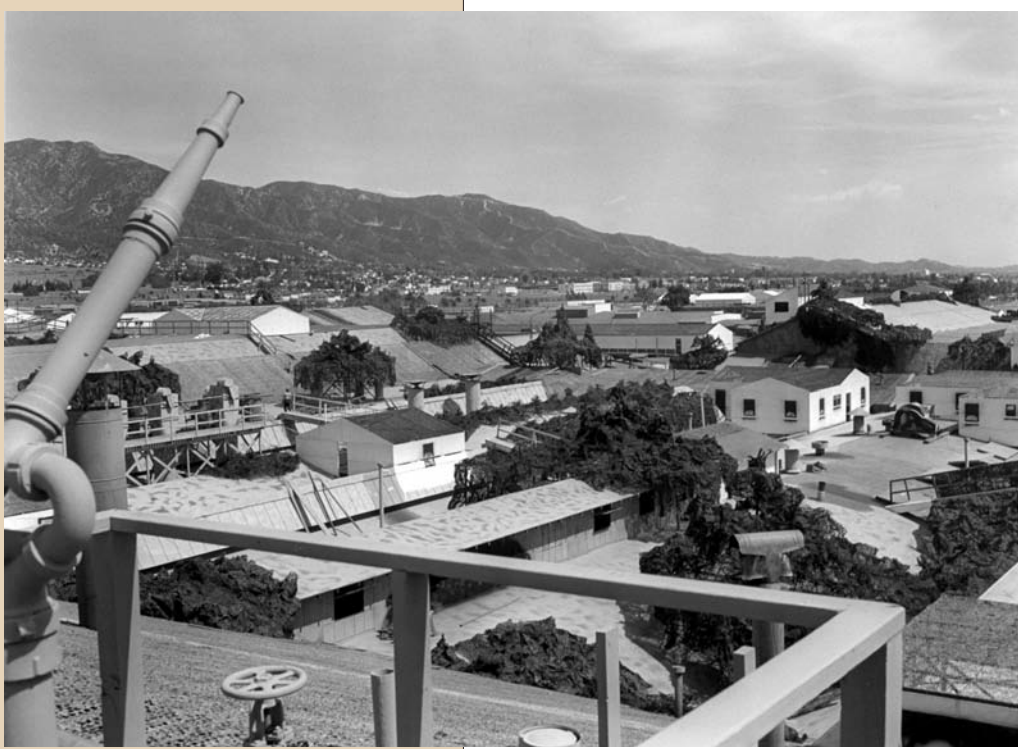
While my father was welding superstructures for Fletcher-class destroyers, John Detlie was a few miles away, working with Washington State Camouflage Director William James Bain and the Seattle architectural firm of Young and Richardson to hide Boeing from Japanese aircraft. They designed an elaborate camouflage plan that included a rooftop covering for Plant 2, as well as fake streets and foliage detail that would be painted across Boeing Field.

The "streets" that began on the roof of Plant 2 continued across the runway and climbed the slopes of Beacon Hill, on the opposite side of the field where Interstate 5 is now located. The latter was accomplished by cutting the paths through the brush on the hillsides that looked like streets.

The focal point of Detlie's effort, his large-scale masterpiece, was the 26 acres atop Plant 2. Here, the crews supervised by the Seattle District of the Army Corps of Engineers, were presented the challenge of a "sawtooth," rather than flat, roof. This uneven surface, stepping up and down with a variation of as much as 35 feet, necessitated scaffolding, platforms, and framing that consumed an estimated million board feet of Pacific Northwest lumber, as well as an elaborate sprinkler system to protect it from fire, accidental or caused by the enemy. In addition, the structure consumed 555 tons of steel structures and half a million feet of support wires.

Because of the variation in the height of structures below, there were several fairly steep "hills" in Detlie's "Wonderland." This imaginary town had at least three major streets, as well as alleys and driveways. The streets even had names. Though there was no way that a bomber pilot could read street signs from 10,000 feet, the people who built Wonderland had senses of humor and couldn't resist; Synthetic Street intersected Burlap Boulevard.

Using the "tar and feathers" method also seen in Southern California, the engineers created some 300 artificial trees, some of them as tall as 12 feet. There were a total of 53 homes, two dozen garages, three greenhouses, a small store, and even a gas station. All of them were built of wood and canvas like those which John Ohmer had designed in California.



In this view of the Lockheed factory camouflage at Burbank, looking southeasterly toward Glendale, one gets an idea how complex much of the structure really was. On the left in the foreground is a hose nozzle for fire-fighting. Being made of wood, burlap, and tar, the whole affair was a potential fire hazard.

Boeing employees Joyce Howe and Susan Heidrich ascend a "hill" on a wooden walkway for a better view of Wonderland. Note the "cars" on the street. Their angular shape makes them look more like AMC Gremlins from the 1970s than the smoothly rounded Fords and Chevies of the 1940s.

Many were only about four feet high at the eaves, although some were taller, and there were even a few which represented two-story houses. Inside, they were furnished only with fire-protection sprinklers. Mile-long catwalks served as "sidewalks" and provided access to all the areas of Wonderland.

At least two of these homes were built to be occupied by nonimaginary people. During 1942 and early 1943, the U.S. Army personnel who manned antiaircraft guns in Wonderland were housed on the Plant 2 rooftop.

Whereas the imaginary populations of the imaginary rooftop towns in Southern California "drove" rubber cars, the automobiles parked on Wonderland's streets were made of wood and were just a couple of feet high. The angular design of these wood frame vehicles made them look more like AMC Gremlins from the 1970s than the smoothly rounded Fords and Chevies of the 1940s.

An often-repeated urban legend was that a cow was even let loose to roam Wonderland. However, this charming but improbable story has just as often been debunked by those in the know.

AN OFTEN-REPEATED URBAN LEGEND WAS THAT A COW WAS EVEN LET LOOSE TO ROAM WONDERLAND. THIS CHARMING BUT IMPROBABLE STORY HAS OFTEN BEEN DEBUNKED.

Also involved in building and maintaining the elaborate camouflage project at Plant 2, Boeing Field, and Beacon Hill, were the personnel of the Passive Defense Division of the Corps of Engineers. Indeed, the Seattle office of the division was quite active during the war. LeRoy Robert Hansen, chief of the division's Agronomy Section, who was probably involved in the Boeing project, published his 1943 monograph, *The Use of Grasses and Legumes for Camouflage and Dust Control on Airfields* with a Seattle dateline.

Different techniques were used for the sections of the phony village that were laid out across Boeing Field. As described by the Seattle District Engineers, the "problem was to obtain a texture to which camouflage paint would adhere and yet which would offer no interference to air traffic. After much experimenting, a crushed rock surface from one-eighth to three-eighths of an inch was rolled with an adhesive material for paved areas. For nontraffic areas, wood chips or hogged [sic] fuel with cement was used."

In the areas between and beyond the runways, the "houses" were merely concrete slabs six inches thick, because anything higher was deemed to constitute too much clutter for ramp and runway operations. However, in these areas, "lawns" and vacant lots could be comprised of real grass and real weeds, carefully designed and tended by LeRoy Hansen's agronomists.

While Detlie and the engineers managed the passive defense for Boeing, active defense, such as the planning and execution of fire and air raid drills and air raid shelters, was handled by company personnel, such as Glenn V. Dierst, the company's plant protection manager, and his team of white-helmeted wardens. A 1943 Boeing News Bureau release states that all the plant personnel could reach the shelters in less than 12 minutes.

Seattle presented a unique problem for the passive defense planners. As anyone who has gazed at the ground from an airplane has noted, it is much easier to identify a familiar location through the contrasting color and contours of land and water. New York and San Francisco, for example, are easier to recognize than Des Moines or Topeka because their shapes are strictly defined by rivers and bays. Because Seattle is sandwiched between the distinctively shaped Puget Sound and Lake Washington, spotting landmarks is easier than it is at Burbank.

For this reason, Detlie planned additional phases for the Boeing project. His master plan involved overhead camouflaging of the large Boeing employee parking lots, as had been done at the Lockheed and Douglas employee lots in California, as well as continuing the camouflage cover across sections of East Marginal Way.

Because the Boeing campus is defined geographically by the Duwamish River that flowed behind Plant 2, Detlie conceived of covering it as well and painting a faux river

that had a different course in the vicinity of the Boeing facility. A further phase that was also seriously considered by the Corps of Engineers involved the construction of an entire dummy aircraft factory at a different location, complete with fake airplanes.

While the Japanese never came, there are many tales of American pilots who had used the pre-war Boeing Field who were now confused by the camouflage and the absence of familiar landmarks. Indeed, with the field covered by scattered clouds, it was quite hard to make it out from the air.

Unless a pilot had gained actual experience with the camouflaged field, it was hard to know what to expect because no aerial photographs were published until the second half of 1945.

For a 1987 article in Seattle's *The Weekly,* journalist Tom Watson spoke with Vern Manion, who worked as a photographer for the in-house paper, *Boeing News*. In 1943, he had been asked to take aerial photographs of Plant 2 so that the camouflage could be evaluated by the brass in Washington, D.C. He shot a couple of rolls from an open-cockpit Stearman and landed back at Boeing Field only to discover that one of his rolls was missing!

The aircraft was searched, then disassembled and searched. The roll had apparently fallen out somewhere over the field. An extensive search for the small object came up empty handed.

"The FBI questioned me for weeks," Manion told Watson. "They were real worried."

Finally cleared of suspicion of espionage, Manion went on to complete four decades of service to the company. The film never turned up. By early 1945, ground level photographs of Plant 2 had been published, but the public had yet to see any aerial photographs.

Meanwhile, the personal life of John Stewart Detlie was unraveling. His marriage to superstar Veronica Lake ended three months after her pregnancy was tragically terminated when she tripped and fell on the set of a movie she was making.

Detlie never went back to the film industry and did not return to California for two decades. After the war, he married Virginia Crowell and became a prominent Seattle architect, designing several landmark buildings at the University of Washington, as well as the Children's Orthopedic Hospital. When Detlie lost a second young child—three-year-old Christopher Detlie died in 1960—the architect and his wife left Seattle permanently. After time spent in Hawaii and Baltimore, they settled in Southern California.

A group of Boeing employees gathers on a "lawn" in Wonderland. This was probably the only time these women were ever allowed to visit; a few months earlier it would have been a federal crime to be here, and a few months later the whole village was gone. In contrast to many other "homes" in the "subdivision," the one shown here was close to accurate height.

Detlie's plan for "rerouting" the Duwamish River was never implemented, nor indeed were any further camouflage projects after 1943. By that time, the Japanese were on the defensive and had been routed from the Aleutian Islands. The likelihood of an attack had greatly diminished. The fear and apprehension of 1942 gradually faded to nervousness, and the nervousness faded to complacency.

Nevertheless, the open secret of the existence of all those rooftop villages in Seattle and Southern California remained unheralded. Indeed, it was not until the summer of 1945 that the admittedly transparent cloak of secrecy was officially taken down. A release by the Boeing News Bureau dated June 19, 1945, stated, "Today's word and picture description of the elaborate Boeing camouflage job, made with the approval of the Western Defense Command, was the first public pronouncement on the subject."

On July 17, nearly a month before the Japanese government announced that it was ready to surrender unconditionally to the Allies, the Army Corps of Engineers announced that it had already issued contracts to civilian firms to dismantle the hoax hamlets. Among others, the L.B. Colton Company of Los Angeles had been awarded $248,861 to dismantle Detlie's Seattle Wonderland within 150 days. The Corps of Engineers press release put the cost of installing the Boeing camouflage project at $2 million, although a June 27, 1945, article in Boeing News estimated $2 million for Boeing Field and another million for Plant 2.

Both Boeing and Douglas made a photo op of the official revelations, sending groups of women employees to their

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FIGHTING IRISH

BY TIM NEWARK

It was a letter in the *London Times* that caught the attention of British wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill. "It appears that very large numbers of Irishmen have joined H[is] M[ajesty's] Forces since the outbreak of war," wrote retired General Sir Hubert Gough in September 1941.

"This is their own spontaneous and unsolicited act, since owing to Ireland's neutrality there have been no agencies where they could enlist at home and no recruiting campaign. It is a pity that the fact—well known as it appears to be in Ireland—is not more widely realized here, as it is valuable evidence that Irish neutrality is not a mask for a hostile spirit towards Britain and the Commonwealth at war."

Gough went on to suggest that the fighting spirit of the Irish was particularly strong when they served in units grouped together under an Irish banner. Just as American neutrality was not compromised by Americans volunteering to serve in the Eagle Squadron of the RAF, he recommended that Irish and Anglo-Irish serve together in an Irish brigade.

Churchill loved the idea, and in an unguarded personal minute to the Secretary of State for War he wrote: "I shall be glad to have an expression of opinion from the War Office on this suggestion. We have Free French and Vichy French, so why not Loyal Irish and Dublin Irish?" Churchill's enthusiasm for an Irish Brigade was strengthened when he saw extracts from letters secretly intercepted in Northern Ireland for a Postal Censorship Report.

"Patrick is 19 years old," wrote one correspondent from Waterford to a friend in Hampshire. "He joined up entirely on his own bat and I must say that all his boy friends over here from three counties have done likewise, so Ireland shouldn't be damned so freely."

Churchill underlined several similar passages in red and repeated his request for the War Office to look at this suggestion: "I think now the time is ripe to form an Irish Brigade also an Irish Wing or Squadron of the RAF.' The Prime Minister recommended that the Dublin-born Battle of Britain RAF Spitfire ace Paddy Finucane would make an excellent figurehead for such a force. "Pray let me have proposal," insisted Churchill. Then, with an eye to postwar developments, he added: 'The movement might have

CHURCHILL'S IRISH BRIGADE FOUGHT IN NORTH AFRICA, SICILY, AND ITALY TO PROVE THEIR LOYALTY TO KING AND COUNTRY.

Sergeant John Patrick Kenneally, shown here in a portrait by Henry Carr, earned the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military award, for his actions in Tunisia, April 28, 1943, while serving with the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards. Kenneally, however, was half English and half Jewish; his real name was Leslie Jackson (aka Robinson). OPPOSITE: Men of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, part of the British Expeditionary Force sent to France after war was declared, march down a wet road at Gavrelle, near Arras, October 17, 1939. The two men in the foreground are carrying a 14.3mm Boys antitank rifle.

All images: Imperial War Museum

important political reactions later on."

It was the political ramifications of an Irish Brigade that concerned David Margesson, Secretary of State for War, and Viscount Cranborne, Secretary of State for the Dominions, in their joint reply. They liked the idea of an official show of appreciation to all the volunteers coming from Eire, but they also did not wish to disrupt this flow.

"Up to now, men have gone from Ireland unobtrusively, and nothing has been said to underline their presence in our armed forces. It has therefore been possible for the Southern Irish Government to wink at it. But were we to blazon abroad

ABOVE: Major The Viscount Stopford, an officer in the London Irish Rifles (Royal Ulster Rifles), wears the distinctive bonnet known as a caubeen (portrait by Henry Carr, 1944). OPPOSITE: A column of Sherman tanks of 2nd Irish Guards, Guards Armoured Division, advances cross-country south of Caumont, Normandy, France, July 31, 1944.

the part which the citizens of neutral Eire are taking in the war, contrary to the policy of their own Government, the Irish Government might well feel bound to take action to prevent the departure of any further volunteers from their shores to join our forces. Were they to do so, we should have lost far more than we gained."

It would be estimated by the Dominions Office that some 43,000 Eire-born Irish men and women had joined the British services by the end of the war.

In their letter to Churchill, Margesson and Cranborne made the case that southern Irish volunteers might not like it to be known that they had fought for the British as this might penalize them at home: "Further, there is the possibility that completely Irish units, so far from being the symbol of the close connection between Britain and Ireland, might become a fertile breeding ground for subversive agitation by the IRA and other disloyal elements, who would join them for this very purpose."

Consideration was given to establishing a Shamrock Squadron, formed from "men of Irish blood from all parts of the world," but the view of the Air Ministry was that there was no demand for this within the service and that Irishmen would object to being removed from their current units. The only positive suggestion was to brigade together existing British Army Irish battalions—such as those from the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Fusiliers, and London Irish Rifles.

Somewhat deflated by the arguments coming from the War Office, Churchill scribbled his own reply on this joint memorandum: "As proposed. It is a halfway house." But, as if this wasn't disappointing enough, word of the suggested Irish Brigade got to John Andrews, then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

In a forceful letter to Churchill, in which he apologized for burdening him with extra trouble, he appealed to the war leader's acute sense of military history. "The name would inevitably be associated with the Irish who fought against England in the days of Marlborough, the Irish Brigade which fought against Britain in the Boer War ... and finally with a body of 'Blue Shirts' organized in Eire a few years ago to fight in the Spanish Civil War."

With Churchill abroad in the United States talking to U.S. President Roosevelt, Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee stepped into the growing controversy, saying that Andrews had got the wrong end of the stick. There was no intention to raise an Irish Brigade as originally suggested by General Gough, just to brigade together several Ulster regiments within the British Army. He reassured the Northern Irish prime minister that no particular publicity would be given to the proposed brigade "until occasion arises to do so when it has distinguished itself in action."

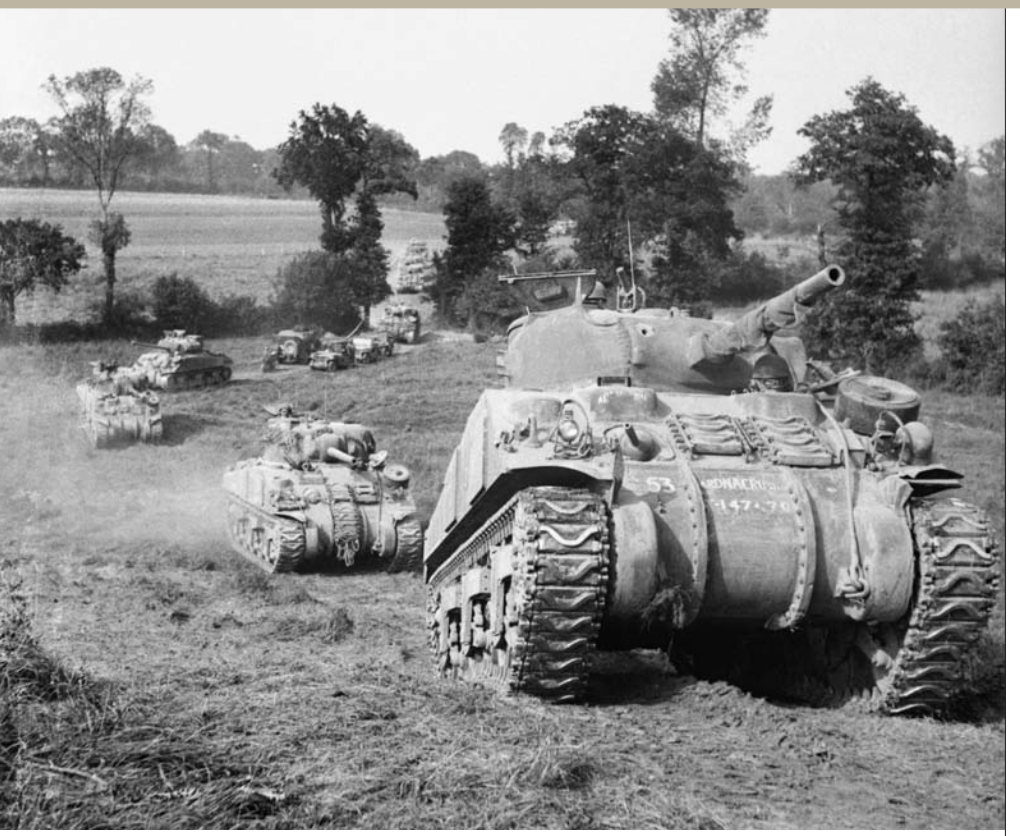
Andrews was unimpressed: "While, of course, I appreciate the desire of the British Government to give recognition in due course to those Eire citizens who are loyally supporting the Allied cause, we feel that the use of Ulster regiments for that purpose would arouse resentment here. In my view, any policy calculated to obliterate or blur the distinction between the belligerency of Northern Ireland and the neutrality of Eire would confuse and mislead public opinion and be detrimental to the highest interest of the Empire as a whole."

In the end, it was the will of Winston Churchill that prevailed, although in the moderated form suggested by the War Office. In January 1942, the 38th (Irish) Brigade came into being, consisting of the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, the 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and the 2nd London Irish Rifles. The London Irish were a Territorial unit associated with the Royal Ulster Rifles.

The Irish identity of the brigade was strongly established from the outset with a saffron-kilted pipe band for each battalion, a songbook full of Irish songs, and soldiers wearing the caubeen—a traditional Irish beret or tam o'shanter-style headdress worn with a feather hackle favored by Irish warriors since at least the 17th century. Its first commander was Brigadier Morgan O'Donovan, who adopted the traditional clan title of "The O'Donovan." He was soon succeeded by Brigadier Nelson Russell.

The Irish 38th first went into action in November 1942 as part of the Anglo-American landings in French North Africa at Algiers in Operation Torch. It was the dramatic beginning to a very long and bloody series of campaigns for Churchill's cherished Irish Brigade.

Edmund "Ted" O'Sullivan was a typical London Irishman. Born in Peckham in 1919, his father's side of the family had come from Limerick in the 19th century, and his mother's side from Kerry. Raised a Catholic and winning a scholarship to the Bromp-



ton Oratory, he had just got his first job as a clerk at the uniform makers Hawkes of Saville Row, when the war came.

Called up in September 1939 into the 2nd Battalion of the London Irish Rifles, he spent the first three years of the war in training, including shooting practice on center court at Wimbledon. Promoted to Color Sergeant, O'Sullivan was one of the Irish Brigade that landed in North Africa in 1942.

"We climbed out of Algiers in thick service dress," he recalled, "carrying everything in the hot midday sun. The pipers carried only their pipes. The first mile out of Algiers was a steady climb up a road that wound in a semi-circle. Gradually men collapsed from heat and exhaustion. At first, stretcher-bearers went to attend to them. Eventually, we left them where they fell."

Their first night in North Africa, sunlight ended abruptly at 6:00 PM, and the soldiers of the Irish Brigade had to huddle together under greatcoats and antigas capes against the intense cold of the night. The next morning, they had breakfast of biscuits spread with margarine and jam or potted meat, washed down with tea.

Part of the 6th Armored Division, the London Irish and the rest of the 38th Brigade were transported by lorries to the battlefront in Tunisia along roads in the Atlas Mountains. The Italian-German forces were dug in along a north-south line 30 miles west of the capital of Tunis. The main Allied offensive came in January 1943. The weather was poor and heavy winter rain turned the ground to mud.

The London Irish were tasked with taking Point 286 on January 20, a hilltop held by the Germans in the northern Bou Arada sector. They took it just after dawn, but were swept off it in a counterattack supported by tanks and armored cars. As the London Irish went back to wrestle them off the hill, the Germans called in Stuka dive-bombers.

"It was practically impossible to dig in on the hard rocky slopes," reported Brigadier Nelson Russell, "and all through the day they were subjected to heavy artillery and extremely accurate mortar fire. This fine battalion refused to be shelled off the position. What they had, they held. But at heavy cost."

As Russell later noted: "The Irish Brigade learnt at a hard school. From the very start we were opposed by the Koch Brigade of the Hermann Göring Division. They were paratroops—all unmarried volunteers and the average age was 22-23."

Throughout the fighting, Color Sergeant Ted O'Sullivan was back at the supply base getting hot food for his men. When he arrived at the captured position, he was shocked to see that several key officers had been killed or wounded.

"It was a shambles," recalled O'Sullivan. "There seemed to be no order or discipline." Some of the NCOs had dropped their weapons and fled. A total of six officers and 20 other ranks were killed, eight officers and 78 other ranks wounded, and at least 136 other soldiers recorded as missing but later confirmed as either wounded or made prisoner.

Brigadier Russell considered it a tough but critical clash, whereas O'Sullivan believed it was poorly executed with men exhausted by previous night patrols. Along with the other color sergeants, O'Sullivan was rebuked for not promoting NCOs from the survivors. "The whole exercise was nonsense and the three color sergeants had been used as scapegoats," he commented bitterly.

In February, the Germans, led by General Erwin Rommel, assaulted the British and American lines. On the 26th, they came back to the Bou Arada position, west of Tunis, held by the London Irish.

O'Sullivan was delivering rations to his men in the morning when his truck came under fire—tracer flashing past him. Armed with a couple of grenades and rifles, he and the driver jumped out of the vehicle: "We did not a have a clear field of fire and could see little more than the bushes about 50 yards to our front. I was going to move forward when the undergrowth in front of us started to shake violently. I shouted a warning to Percy and we were preparing to open fire when a goat's head followed by about 20 others broke through the shrubs followed by a young lad."

Once the Germans reached the rest of

the Irish Brigade, they found the Brigade clinging on to their positions and, after 24 hours of hard fighting, the Germans had had enough and withdrew. A hill near Hadj was retaken with an artillery barrage.

"For many weeks after the battle," remembered O'Sullivan, "you could smell Hadj from almost a mile away. The stench of death was all pervading. Using an old towel, I cleaned the pieces of flesh which clung to the branches of trees. We buried our dead with honour but not the enemy, who were interred without ceremony."

The German breakthrough failed, and the Allies pushed on toward Tunis. After a period of rest, the Irish Brigade, including the London Irish, were transferred to the 78th Infantry Division. On April 22, 1943, a massive Allied barrage crashed down on the Germans, and the Irish Brigade played their part in the assault on the German lines that eventually cracked.

As they closed in on the capital, Brigadier Russell drove past a mile-long column trudging along the dusty roadside. "About 3,000 prisoners," he noted. "Bosch and Italian, soldiers, sailors, and airmen—a mixed bag. It was a pleasant—though smelly—sight."

The Irish Brigade was given the honour of first entering Tunis, but they were not too sure what sort of reception they would get. Just in case, recorded Russell, "The troops were all loaded up with bombs, PIATs (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank), mortars and petards—all set for a bellyful of street fighting—and the last lap." They needn't have worried.

"I remained in my three-tonner," said O'Sullivan, "which soon became bedecked with flowers. The men were garlanded, kissed, and cheered by the French colon[ial]s, who were relieved the war was over for them with little damage to their home." Brigadier Russell was kissed twice by the delighted citizens. At a victory parade on May 20, the Irish Brigade marched in their caubeens with saffron-kilted pipers before Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harold Alexander, and Bernard L. Montgomery.

"I always felt I was very lucky to command the Irish Brigade," wrote Brigadier Russell at the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign. "It's the command an Irishman would court—and there are a good many Irishmen in the Army. I wouldn't change my command for all the tea in China, or perhaps better, all the stout in Guinesses!"

It was in Tunisia in 1943 that Irish Guardsman John Kenneally won a Victoria Cross by charging German panzergrenadiers while firing a Bren gun from his hip. "This outstanding act of gallantry," said his citation, "and the dash with which it was executed completely unbalanced the enemy company, which broke up in disorder."

Kenneally then repeated this exploit two days later, inflicting so many casualties on the Germans that they cancelled their planned assault on the Allied lines. Although wounded in this attack, he refused to give up his Bren gun and carried on fighting throughout the day.

It was an extraordinary achievement, but Kenneally wasn't all that he seemed. In fact, he wasn't Irish at all, but half-Jewish—from Birmingham, England. He was born Leslie Jackson, but his mother changed it to Robinson. When war broke out, he joined the Royal Artillery in an antiaircraft battery, but found this boring, and so he deserted. In Glasgow, he fell in with a gang of Irish laborers who gave him a fake identity as John Patrick Kenneally and a fake past that included a childhood in Tipperary, Ireland. Under this name he joined the Irish Guards.

Two years later, Churchill was delighted to hear of the VC, contrasting this "Irish" hero with the Irish premier "frolicking" with the Germans. Such publicity was the last thing Kenneally needed. "It was the worst thing that could have happened to me"' he said. "I thought, 'Now I'm bound to be rumbled,' but I never was."

In July 1943, the Irish Brigade took part in the Allied invasion of Sicily. It was the stepping stone toward attacking Mussolini's Italy, considered the "soft underbelly" of the Axis forces. The Americans had a relatively smooth advance across the island, but the British and Canadians took the brunt of German resistance as they tried to cover their retreat to the Italian mainland.

The Irish Brigade was tasked with taking the hilltop town of Centuripe. It was a hard but effective assault in which all three Irish battalions played a part. Brigadier Russell concluded, "The capture of Centuripe had repercussions on both flanks—as it forced the Bosch to readjust the whole line." Many good men were lost in the fighting, including Peter Fitzgerald of the London Irish. "A great character and a fearless leader," noted Russell. "He was, by trade, a West of Ireland barrister—about 36 years old—and thus a volunteer in the very highest sense."

For Colour Sergeant Ted O'Sullivan it wasn't just the Germans that posed the greatest threat. Worn-out 25-pounders delivered their shells short of the enemy, endangering their own side, while malaria and dysentery invalided many men, including O'Sullivan. Even a period of rest had its dangers, as the colour sergeant nearly drowned in strong currents off the island as he tried to swim to a nearby beach; two other adventurous soldiers were not so lucky and perished at sea.

On September 24, 1943, the Irish Brigade landed at Taranto on the heel of the Italian mainland. Now part of the British Eighth Army, their mission was to advance along the Adriatic coast, breaking through two German defensive lines from Termoli to Ortona. It was merciless work.

At one point, the London Irish discovered 20 Germans in a deep dugout. When they refused to surrender, the London Irish dynamited the entrances and brought up a bulldozer to bury the Germans under tons of earth. Because of their relentless fighting spirit, the Germans had a new respect for the Irish Brigade and dubbed them "Die Irische SS."

Following this, the Irish Brigade was shifted west to a posting in the Apennine Mountains. Fresh British soldiers joined them, many not from an Irish background but willing to adapt to their new military culture.

Among the new influx of officers was Lieutenant Nicholas Mosley, the son of the imprisoned British Fascist leader, Sir Oswald Mosley. He later wrote up his own account of fighting with the Irish Brigade, preferring it to the "stuffiness" of the Rifle Brigade, saying, "I had come to appreciate the anarchic style of the London Irish."

For Christmas, they were billeted at Campobasso in a large Franciscan monastery. "During Christmas Eve," recalled O'Sullivan, "the monks carried around a harmonium and sang carols at each cell. The Catholics attended midnight Mass, formed a choir and sang the Credo. Our Christmas fare included pork chops."

Brigadier Nelson Russell added his own observation of the feast: "Each man was getting busy on a plate which held about three lbs. of turkey, pork and ham; happy in the thoughts that he would shortly follow it up with two lbs. of plum pudding—the whole thing diluted by a couple of pints of beer—steadied and solidified by great cans of steaming liquid—which smelt like an unauthorized rum issue (but who cares for local by-laws? Certainly not the Irish Brigade on Christmas Day)."

Men of the 2nd Battalion, London Irish Rifles, part of the 38th Irish Infantry Brigade, ride into battle in Italy in a "Kangaroo"—essentially a tank that British and Commonwealth units converted from a gun platform to an armored personnel carrier.

In January 1944, elite German mountain troops swooped on a patrol of the London Irish near Campobasso. Properly equipped with white smocks and skis, the Germans briefly captured the frozen-footed Irish until a counterattack released them. In March, a new brigadier, Pat Scott of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, took over from the ill Nelson Russell.

One of the departing brigadier's last acts was to turn over the body of a dead Irishman on a rocky crag in Tangoucha. "He was facing the right way," wrote Russell, "the last round of a clip in the breech and three dead Germans in front of him. His name was Duffy. After all is over—and the remainder of the Empire is quite understandably irritated with Ireland—I hope these countless Duffys, from both the North and South, and in all three Services, will be remembered. We also supply quite a few Generals."

In the same month, the Irish Brigade was moved westward again, to a position behind the Monte Cassino front line, where the Germans had fortified a hilltop monastery and were defying all efforts to take it. From the nearby 2,300-foot peak of Monte Castellone, Brigadier Pat Scott witnessed a massive aerial bombardment of the German-held monastery. "It seems questionable," he wondered, "if one wishes to attack a town or village, whether the right thing to do is to smash it all up first or not. If streets are an unrecognizable wreck of rubble, two bad things happen: you cannot drive down the streets with tanks and it is quite impossible to tell which piece of rubble holds the enemy."

Overlooking the battered monastery, the London Irish had to monitor the ongoing battle. Supplies could only reach them by mule up a dangerous mountain track exposed to enemy shelling.

"We had to take particular care as the nervous muleteers were attempting to ditch their loads," remembered Colour Sergeant O'Sullivan, "I finally arrived at the top with about half a dozen mules. Loads were spread along the track behind us."

Brigadier Scott was impressed by the effort involved. "The Battalion's administrative teams really came into their own during this period," he noted—and that praise included O'Sullivan. "The Irish Rifles bakery never failed to produce appetizing cakes for the warriors on the mountaintop," he said.

The London Irish needed something to keep their spirits up as they were unable to dig slit trenches in the hard rock and had to clear up the rubbish and excrement left by the French troops before them.

For the month of April, they carried out their sentry duty, sitting motionless during the day to avoid attracting the heavy mortar fire that pounded all the positions around Monte Cassino. At one point, Brigadier Scott was given a chilling task when General Harold Alexander asked him to work out a plan for capturing the monastery. Replied Scott, "I said I thought the best plan was for someone else to capture it."

Fortunately, Alexander agreed. "We were very glad when some Poles started coming over to have a look around," recalled Scott.

"They were being given the unenviable task of capturing the Monastery and breaking through the mountains behind it when the big battle came off."

As the Poles finally took the summit of Monte Cassino in mid-May, the Irish Brigade was shifted to Monte Trocchio, east of the River Rapido, ready to advance along the Liri Valley to link up with the Poles beyond Cassino. On May 15, Colonel Ion Goff, London Irish commander, rode off in a jeep to carry out some reconnaissance when his vehicle was hit by German shell-

fire. O'Sullivan was in the camp when a Bren carrier came in acting as an ambulance:

"I went over and found the battalion's commander, Colonel Goff, seriously wounded and in agony. I helped unload him. With him was what looked like a midget who was obviously dead. It took me some time to recognise the body as Goff's driver who was more than six feet tall. He had lost both legs."

Goff died shortly afterward. "His loss was a very sad one," wrote Brigadier Scott, "and it reflects the greatest credit on the London Irish that in spite of losing this trusted leader on the eve of one of the biggest battles they had ever fought, it in no way detracted from the magnificent performance they were to put in the next day."

On the 16th, the battle began at 9:00 AM with a tremendous artillery barrage by several hundred big guns. The London Irish surged along the road to Sinogogga—a fortified village that was part of the Gustav Line. A few were held up by Germans firing from the cellars of houses, but other riflemen poured into the enemy dugouts using bayonets to finish off the Germans before the barrage had barely passed over them.

When the London Irish were halted, supporting tanks from the 16/5 Lancers blasted the enemy positions with high-explosive shells from their 75mm guns. Many of the Germans were caught away from their antitank guns by the artillery barrage and those that managed to get to their guns were shot down by infantry fire. "The show never really looked like stopping," noted the battalion report.

The London Irish were most vulnerable on their open left flank across the Piopetto River when Germans fired heavy machine guns and mortars at them. The Lancers helped by scoring several direct hits on German armored vehicles and blowing up two ammunition dumps. H Company of the London Irish eventually broke into the village of Sinogogga where they had to engage in fierce hand-to-hand fighting for over an hour as the Germans tenaciously defended the shattered buildings with grenades, MG 34 machine guns, and "Schmeisser" MP 40 submachine guns.

A self-propelled 75mm gun proved the most deadly of the German weapons, and Corporal Jimmy Barnes from County Monaghan went forward by himself, covered only by a Bren gunner, to deal with the vehicle. He killed one of the German crew with a grenade before being killed himself. Shortly after this, the Germans in the village surrendered. Barnes was unsuccessfully recommended for the Victoria Cross.

It took another hour of hard fighting for the rest of the London Irish to take their objectives. In total, their casualties numbered five officers and 60 other ranks. The Germans lost 100 killed and 120 captured, including Hermann Göring paratroopers—their old rivals from Tunisia. Two more days of hard fighting followed until the Germans realized their position was lost and they withdrew—the monastery at Monte Cassino falling on the 18th.

Another casualty of the fighting on the Gustav Line was Lt. Col. Humphrey "Bala" Bredin, battalion leader of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Shot through both legs, he remained in command throughout the battle, propped up in the front of a jeep.

Commissioned into the Royal Ulster Rifles in 1936, Bredin had been placed second in command of the Royal Irish Fusiliers during the earlier fighting at Cassino. He was then transferred to command the Inniskillings. Following his recovery from his wound, he took over command of the London Irish Rifles. Thus, he held senior command of all three battalions in the Irish Brigade.

Already the recipient of the Military Cross in Palestine before the war, Bredin won a Distinguished Service Order for his leadership in Italy. "Throughout this operation he commanded his battalion with the utmost skill and inspired his men by his examples of

ABOVE: After a special audience with Pope Pius XII, attended by both Catholic and Protestant soldiers, the Irish Brigade band parades smartly in front of St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, June 12, 1944. OPPOSITE: Taking cover behind a stack of ammunition boxes, an infantryman of H Company, 2nd London Irish Rifles hurls a grenade at a German strongpoint on the southern bank of the River Senio, northeast of Bologna, Italy, March 22, 1945.

personal gallantry under fire," ran the citation. Famously, he never wore a steel helmet, preferring to wear the Irish caubeen and carry a cane into battle.

Seven days after the fighting at Sinogogga, the Hitler Line was broken and the Allies could march on to Rome. At one point, a soldier in the Royal Irish Fusiliers remembered approaching a junction commanded by an officer of the Irish Regiment of Canada. "Canadian Irish, this way," he barked, enjoying the global span of Irish soldiers before him. "English Irish, that way."

The Americans got to Rome first, but on June 12 the Irish Brigade accepted a special invitation to visit Pope Pius XII. Brigadier Pat Scott was an Irish Protestant but he most certainly was not going to miss such an honor for the brigade; he faced competition for the limited number of places for the papal audience.

"Many influential members of Orange Lodges were trying to get a seat in the party by virtue of their high rank or long service," observed Scott. He intended that Catholic soldiers of long service should get first choice, and those born in Ireland, but there were not enough to fill the quota of officers from each battalion so Protestants took the spare places.

"The 'heretic' element was almost entirely made up of out-and-out Orangemen [i.e., Irish Protestants]. I would like to mention a few names, both of these officers and of some men of the other ranks who afterward visited His Holiness, but it might be unkind to put their names in print and have them read out in their local Orange Hall at home."

The Irish Brigade party arrived at the Vatican at 8:45 AM and was escorted by the elaborately clad Papal Guards to the audience. Pope Pius XII gave a short speech praising the Irish for spreading the faith around the world to America, Australia, South Africa, and other nations. Scott then asked the Pope if he would to like hear his pipers play.

Brigadier O'Sullivan was at the audience and noted the irony of what followed next: "The massed brigade band in their saffron kilts and caubeens with the various colored hackles and regimental badges played 'Killaloe,' followed by 'The Sash My Father Wore.' This was probably the first and last time one of the signature tunes of the Orange Order was heard in the Vatican. His Holiness tapped his foot to the beat of the martial music and obviously enjoyed the alien sound.

The Pope then blessed the rosaries brought by the Catholic soldiers and they knelt to kiss his ring. The Orangemen remained in their seats.

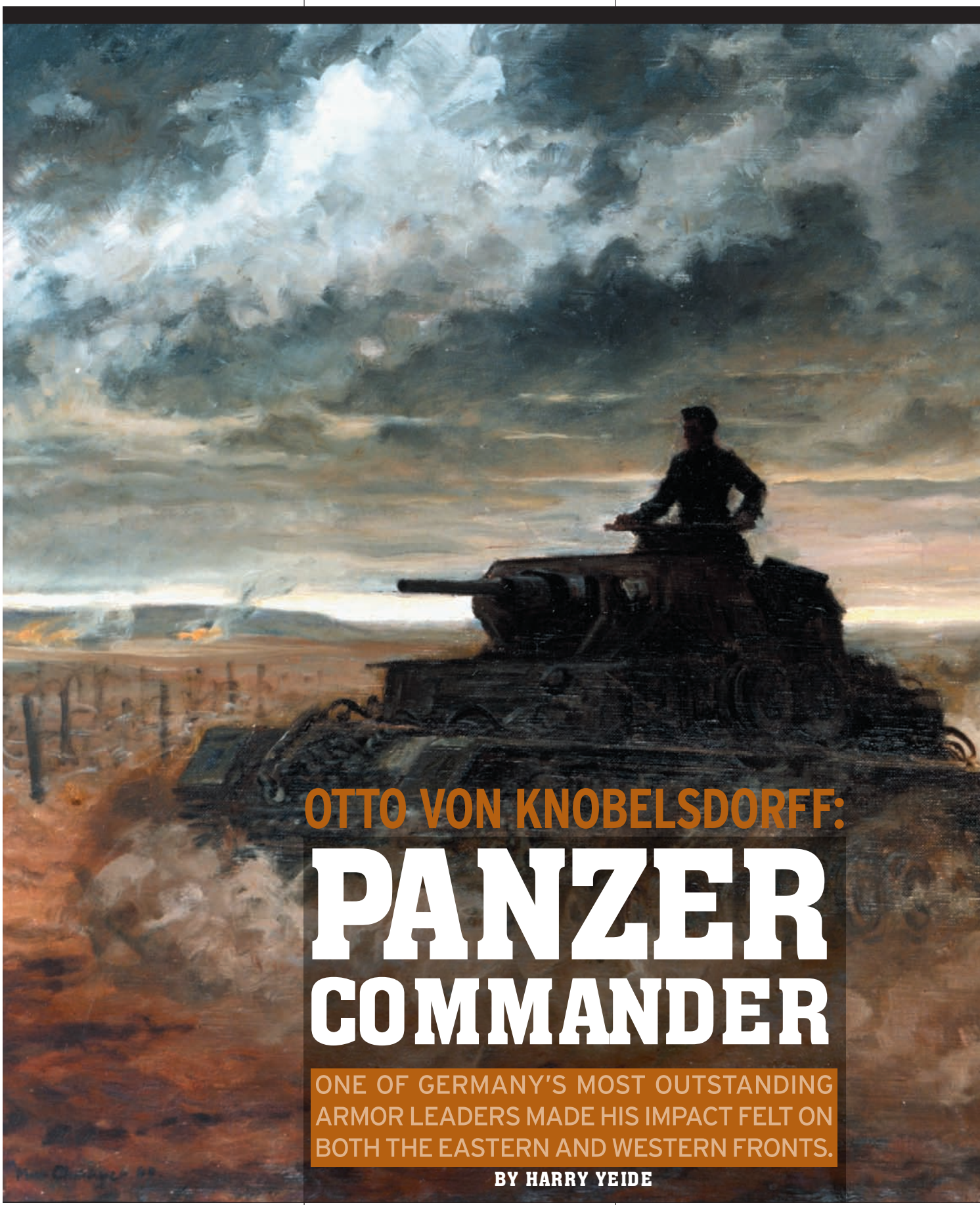
Hard fighting for the Irish Brigade continued into late 1944 and 1945 as they advanced through Italy against stubborn German resistance. In a battle three miles south of Lake Trasimeno, the London Irish lost more than 70 men killed, wounded, and missing. For the final phase of the war, the London Irish were issued with armored carriers called "Kangaroos" and they were dubbed the "Kangaroo Army."

Color Sergeant Ted O'Sullivan survived the bitter last stages of the war. In Austria in May 1945, he was given 28 days leave in England. As he trekked back across Europe, he witnessed German cities in ruins and thousands of refugees wandering along roads back to their devastated homes. After 3½ years away from London, he arrived back in Brixton. "My family did not know of my leave," he said, "and my mother was overcome when she opened the door to me."

O'Sullivan suffered a recurring bout of malaria he had picked up in Italy, and his leave was extended. It was during this rest period that he met an ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) officer who later became his wife. His soldiering finally ended in August 1946.

"By that time," he recalled, "I would have spent six years and 10 months in the Army instead of the six months which I was originally called up to serve in October 1939." After the war, Ted settled in Farnham Common, England, with his wife to run a newsagent and tobacconist store.

The Irish Brigade ended the war in Austria, having fought their last major combat south of Italy's Po River. From its initial fighting in Tunisia, all the way through Italy, the Irish Brigade lost more than 900 men killed of all ranks. □



OTTO VON KNOBELSDORFF:

PANZER COMMANDER

ONE OF GERMANY'S MOST OUTSTANDING ARMOR LEADERS MADE HIS IMPACT FELT ON BOTH THE EASTERN AND WESTERN FRONTS.

BY HARRY YEIDE

U.S. Army Art Collection

Author's Collection

A German combat artist captured the smoke- and dust-shrouded battlefield as German tanks drive deeply into the Soviet Union in the summer 1941. Otto von Knobelsdorff demonstrated outstanding leadership abilities during the fighting in Russia. ABOVE: General Otto von Knobelsdorff

While many in the English-speaking world have heard of Erwin Rommel and Heinz Guderian, few today know the name of Otto von Knobelsdorff, a German panzer general who commanded troops in battles every bit as pivotal as his contemporaries did, in quantity and quality, and who also fought against General George S. Patton, Jr.

Knobelsdorff was one of Hitler's outstanding panzer commanders alongside Hasso von Manteuffel, Hermann Balck, Hermann Priess, and Max Simon. He held Patton at bay in Lorraine in the fall and winter of 1944. In the attack, the aggressive Knobelsdorff resembled Patton in many ways, but he had rich experience in waging defensive battles and retreats, a test of command that the great strategist Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke judged the most difficult of military operations and a test in which Patton never had to prove himself. There are several excellent accounts of the battle for Lorraine, where Knobelsdorff commanded First Army; this article will focus on his military career up to that point.

Otto Heinrich Ernst von Knobelsdorff was born in Berlin on March 31, 1886, the progeny of an old Prussian military family. His father had been a major in the 12th Infantry Regiment, and his mother was born a von Manteuffel. After years being educated as a cadet at Bensberg and Gross-Lichtenfelde, Knobelsdorff in 1905 joined the Imperial Army's Infantry Regiment Grossherzog von Sachsen (5th Thüringisches) Nr. 94 as an officer candidate. The young cadet was nearly a head shorter than most of the others around him, but he made up for it with drive. He was endowed with boundless energy, clear judgment, and a good sense of humor. He was also brave, friendly, and open.

Knobelsdorff was promoted to Leutnant (second lieutenant) in 1908 and to Oberleutnant (first lieutenant in August 1914, having become the regimental adjutant in January. That year, he married Alasandria

Freiin von Korff-Schmising, who bore him two sons and one daughter.

Knobelsdorff's regiment, part of the 83rd Infantry Brigade, 38th Infantry Division, went to war on the Western Front in August 1914, pushed through the Ardennes with XI Corps, and reached Namur, Belgium. The corps then entrained for the east after the Russian invasion of East Prussia that same month and participated in the Ninth Army's counterattack. There on the Eastern Front, Knobelsdorff fought at the Masurian Lakes, Goldap, Opatów, and Ivangorod, and he experienced the retreat of his own army. In October, the corps joined the Austrian First Army to stiffen its fighting ability. Knobelsdorff remained on the Eastern Front until September 1915 and got to enjoy a stunning return to success for German arms.

The 38th Division entrained for France on September 25, where it absorbed new manpower and took up a quiet sector of the front at Tracy le Val until May 1916. On March 22, Knobelsdorff received a promotion to hauptmann (captain) for his bravery. Between November 1915 and April 1916, Knobelsdorff commanded a rifle company and, temporarily, first one then another battalion. In May the division moved to the Verdun sector, where it fought for five months. After a brief rest recruiting for the division, Knobelsdorff took command of a separate infantry battalion that worked with the 94th and 95th Infantry Regiments from the summer of 1917 until October. The 94th Regiment waged the epic struggle for Hill 304 and "Dead Man's Hill" and held them until August 24—the last remaining German strongpoints at Verdun to fall into French hands.

The 38th Division suffered heavy casualties, including 52 percent of the infantry. In October, the division moved to the Somme, where again it lost many of its men, but Knobelsdorff was moved up to brigade adjutant and was no longer on the front line.

In November 1917, Knobelsdorff set off to fill a string of staff jobs at Army Group B, VII Corps, the 200th Infantry and 1st Guards Infantry Divisions, the Bug Army, and the 242d Infantry Division. It was in this last assignment, while working as chief of supply, that Knobelsdorff was seriously wounded on October 28, 1918, less than two weeks before the end of the war.

Otto von Knobelsdorff followed a diverse and educational path after the Armistice. He returned to the 94th Regiment and served as a company commander in several other regiments, held staff jobs in two artillery groups, and took charge of a squadron of the 9th Mounted Regiment for a year in 1928. He then took command of the 102nd Infantry Regiment in 1935. A newly minted generalmajor (brigadier general), he commanded the fortifications around Oppeln, east of Dresden near the Polish border, just before war broke out in September 1939.

The German offensive in Poland on September 1, 1939, was a showpiece for Blitzkrieg (lightning war) and destroyed the Polish Army in about two weeks. Fourteen mechanized or partially mechanized divisions supported by an overwhelming Luftwaffe air arm were decisive in the stunning success, though some 40 regular infantry divisions also took part.

Knobelsdorff commanded the 102nd Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division in the campaign. The division's records were destroyed in a fire, so nothing is known about his performance in Poland except that it was good enough to earn him a divisional command in France.

Knobelsdorff took over the 19th Infantry Division on February 4, 1940. The division, part of XI Corps, was still in training on May 9 when the code word "Hindenburg 10 05 35" arrived. Generalleutnant (Maj. Gen.) Joachim von Kortzfleisch, commanding the corps, briefly addressed his subordinate officers: "Germany will be victorious, because it must be victorious!" Knobelsdorff and the others responded with a hearty "Sieg Heil!" to the Führer and the Fatherland. The fact that Knobelsdorff for a while sported a Hitler-type moustache suggests that he was a Nazi believer, and one personnel evaluation noted that he was a firm National Socialist.

In less than four hours, Knobelsdorff had his men on the march to their assembly area, straight from maneuvers. Knobelsdorff was well pleased with the excellent organization and high morale that he saw among his troops. By 2 AM, Knobelsdorff's combat elements had closed to the Dutch border. X-hour was 5:35 AM, XI Corps informed him. The invasion began on the dot.

The Dutch offered no resistance until the Germans reached Maasniel, where a Dutch motorcycle unit claimed the first casualties. The 2nd Battalion, 59th Infantry Regiment, supported by the 5th Panzer Platoon, reached the railroad bridge over the Maas River only to find it destroyed. As the panzers sat, Dutch gunners in bunkers on the far bank scored several direct hits and caused heavy casualties. By 6:45, the rest of the division closed to the Maas, but by then every single span had been blown. Heavy fire stopped every attempt to cross.

Knobelsdorff was to show daring and aggressive instincts from the first hours of battle. The general drove to the front line at the bridge at Roermond about 7 AM and surveyed the scene. The Dutch were brilliantly camouflaged, and they had made excellent use of invisible bunkers set well back to place raking fire on his flanks. Knobelsdorff ordered reconnaissance to identify the Dutch positions so they could be shelled, and he personally oversaw the deployment of heavy antitank guns, pointing out to the commanding officer of the division's artillery regiment which targets he wanted blasted. He also instructed his chief of engineers to hustle forward river crossing gear to replace what had been destroyed.

Briefly returning to his headquarters to report the situation to XI Corps, Knobelsdorff made his way back to Roermond by 9 AM to find that, under the cover of the heavy weapons, some of his reconnaissance troops were across the Maas. About 10:00, an antitank gun knocked out the Dutch bunker at the west end of the damaged Roermond bridge, and infantry immediately clambered across the girders. Elsewhere, the division's

crossings succeeded under the cover of artillery fire. With Roermond secured and nearly 600 prisoners in hand, Knobelsdorff ordered two battalions to continue to the Belgian border and prepare to assault the bunkers there.

Knobelsdorff led from the front again the next day, directing his battalions toward objectives on the Albert Canal. Only individual Belgian soldiers were encountered, and they inevitably surrendered. The Belgians, however, were well entrenched on the far side of the canal. Late on May 11, Knobelsdorff issued a special order of the day praising his men, who had created a breakthrough and advanced 45 miles in only two days.

Kept on a leash by XI Corps while the divisions to the left and right crossed the Albert Canal, the 19th Division finally got its attack orders on the 13th and pushed across. Knobelsdorff reached the far bank on the heels of the assault troops and immediately took control.

BELOW: Motorized German troops and vehicles pour into Belgium May 11, 1940. Striking fast and hard was a Knobelsdorff trademark. BOTTOM: Thanks to Knobelsdorff's aggressiveness, German troops of his 19th Infantry Division capture a bunker built into the end of a bridge that spanned the Albert Canal, May 1940.

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1990-100-32A; Photo: o.Ang

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1974-061-17; Photo: o.Ang

By the 17th, the division was on the northern outskirts of Brussels, having fought the British for the preceding two days; the 14th Division, to Knobelsdorff's left, occupied the Belgian capital on May 18. Brigadier A.J. Clifton's 2nd Armored Reconnaissance Brigade, covering the withdrawal of II British Corps southwest of Brussels, encountered Knobelsdorff's reconnaissance elements near Assche at about 11 AM.

The British were trying to link up with Belgian troops when they unexpectedly ran into the German forces. The British contingent, consisting of the 5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, 15th/19th The Kings Royal Hussars, 4th Gordon Highlanders (a machine-gun battalion), 32nd Army Field Regiment, and the 14th Antitank Regiment discovered the "enemy were round and between" them and their supporting artillery and machine guns.

Fighting raged throughout the morning. Antitank guns from the 19th Panzerjäger Abteilung (Antitank Battalion) had been positioned with fields of fire overlooking the routes utilized by the British, and Knobelsdorff rushed to the scene with a company of heavy antitank guns. A battalion each of infantry and artillery arrived, and in a wild melée Knobelsdorff and his men engaged the British with cannons, pistols, hand grenades, antitank rifles, and antitank guns. The British reconnaissance vehicles became stuck in soft ground, and the Germans gunned down the fleeing crews; several sections of the 15th/19th Hussars were completely wiped out during the fighting.

British orders to withdraw were issued at noon, but they failed to reach some units for several hours. By then, the Germans had surrounded them. When the shooting stopped at about 4 PM, 48 British reconnaissance tanks had been knocked out, plus 22 Bren carriers. On the field of battle, Knobelsdorff issued Iron Crosses to those he had seen perform with outstanding courage.

Knobelsdorff obviously had a hand in the drafting of his division's *Kriegstagebuch* (war diary; he signed the document) because his personal actions are well covered, and a

bit of his personal viewpoint appears to creep in. An entry on May 19 refers to "the hated English before us," which suggests that he fought the war with passion rather than professional detachment.

Knobelsdorff had already proved himself an aggressive commander in the attack, even though he commanded an infantry division. At times, he rode with his leading reconnaissance troops so that he could survey the terrain. One British prisoner told his captors, "You are motorized troops with parachutists, otherwise you could not possibly be here already!"

The race ended along the Scheldt River, where from May 20-22, XI Corps launched fruitless and costly frontal attacks against a determined British enemy well backed by artillery; reconnaissance on the 23rd revealed that the enemy had slipped away. Five days later, word reached Knobelsdorff's headquarters that a ceasefire with the Belgians had been declared. The British continued to fight, however, and the 19th Division did not cease combat operations until the 30th. The division's fighting days were over in the West.

But Knobelsdorff's glory days were not. On June 15 came the surprising news that Paris had surrendered, and the 19th Division received orders to enter the city and secure it. Knobelsdorff thereby became the conqueror of Paris. His columns marched through the city on the 16th, and he held regimental formations on the Place de la République and the Place des Nations. The 30th Infantry Division simultaneously entered from the west and remained as the occupation force.

Knobelsdorff's performance review in late 1940 described him as an extremely energetic and forceful personality with tremendous influence on his troops. He had proved himself in the French campaign in a superior manner.

Knobelsdorff was promoted to generalleutnant (major general) on December 1, 1940, shortly after his 19th Infantry Division had been converted into the 19th Panzer Division and received Czech 38(t) tanks. The able general picked up the craft of armored warfare with remarkable

Bundesarchiv Bild 116-483-014; Photo: Bernhard Borghorst

ABOVE: Three German soldiers view a curiosity: a dead Dutch defender, May 11, 1940. In five years, scenes of death and destruction would be commonplace. OPPOSITE: Although small of stature, Knobelsdorff, left, made up for it with bold, decisive moves. Here he briefs Major Walter Mecke, commander of 1st Battalion, Panzer Regiment 27, in Russia, summer 1941.

speed. The division's *Kriegstagebuch* for the period from the invasion of the Soviet Union through September 1942 was destroyed by enemy action. Fortunately, however, Knobelsdorff wrote a history of the division's operations.

Knobelsdorff's tanks formed part of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group and attacked into the Soviet zone in Poland on June 22, 1941. After following the 12th Panzer Division for several days, which meant fighting all the bypassed Soviet troops, the 19th Panzer Division was ordered by LVII Corps to advance to Minsk post haste. Superior Soviet forces, however, were attempting to break out northward across Knobelsdorff's line of march, and most of his column became engulfed in a furious defensive battle lasting from June 25-29, when an infantry division finally arrived to relieve the panzers. The corps headquarters offered no complaints, as it had been traveling in the center of Knobelsdorff's march column and had barely been saved from destruction by his tanks.

After a week of fierce close-in fighting around Polotsk in Belarus, Knobelsdorff on July 13 began his first classic operation as a panzer general, attacking northeastward into Russia proper through Nevel to Velikiye Luki, a major rail center deep in the Soviet rear, a distance of nearly 100 miles.

Fighting through sandy terrain that slowed vehicles, as did many lakes and swamps, Knobelsdorff two days later took Nevel with a skillfully executed pincer attack. The capture of the town severed the Soviets' Kiev-Leningrad supply route. The Russians had destroyed a bridge there and, during the first night, truck after Soviet truck, operating without headlights, drove off the span and crashed into the ravine below. Soviet tanks then moved up and probed the city from the east, and the fighting ignited part of the city and, much to Knobelsdorff's dismay, burned down a vodka factory.

The next day, Knobelsdorff pushed on, moving so quickly that his troops captured bridge after bridge before the surprised Soviets could destroy them. Knobelsdorff's account of his time as division commander shows that he was a model panzer leader, nearly always advancing with his foremost elements to take control of the situation immediately when the unexpected occurred.

On July 17, the German spearhead encountered an antitank screen south of Velikiye Luki, and Knobelsdorff smoothly brought his panzers forward and seized the dominant high ground south of the city. He then pushed his infantry forward and took the city

quarter by quarter. The Soviets counterattacked the next day and cut Knobelsdorff's only road to his rear. Faced with the threat of encirclement, he struck back furiously with tanks and an infantry regiment and restored the situation by mid-afternoon.

During the first six weeks of the Eastern campaign, Knobelsdorff's division had covered 800 miles of ground, which he boasted was "unique in Prussian-German military history."

Knobelsdorff nearly reached Moscow. Joining Army Group Center's renewed offensive toward the Soviet capital, the 19th Panzer Division was among the first to penetrate the concrete bunkers and antitank obstacles of Moscow's outer defenses, maneuvering through seemingly impassable terrain to take the Soviet defenses from the rear near Ilinskoye on October 16. Knobelsdorff was overseeing the elimination of heavy bunkers with direct artillery fire when the commanding general of Fourth Army, Generalfeldmarschall (Field Marshal) Günther von Kluge, appeared to personally praise the division's performance.

Riding with his panzer regiment, which advanced alone until other mobile elements could recover their trucks and catch up, Knobelsdorff on the 18th pressed on toward Moscow and captured two bridges over the Protva River intact. Luftwaffe planes buzzed overhead, constantly in communication and able to alert the ground troops of Soviet forces in their path. The lead company, blasting away, charged through antitank fire to seize the next bridge. Knobelsdorff thought it his panzer regiment's greatest day.

The division's own infantry caught up on the 19th, but the neighboring infantry divisions were still stuck 40 miles to the rear at the Moscow defense line. The Soviets attacked the exposed panzer division from the front and flanks. Knobelsdorff reported that without tank reinforcements his division was too weakened to advance farther. The 98th Infantry Division finally worked its way forward, and Knobelsdorff's panzers crossed the Nara River. But that was it. The German drive had exhausted itself. Knobelsdorff was but 40 miles southwest of Moscow. Winter arrived with a vengeance on the 27th, and the temperature dropped to 40 degrees below zero centigrade.

The first Soviet counteroffensive of the war blasted out of the ice and snow on December 5 along a 500-mile front, primarily against Army Group Center, which reeled back from the outskirts of Moscow. Knobelsdorff's divisional history suggests that he began to lose faith in his Führer, who had continued to throw exhausted troops fruitlessly against Moscow's defenses during November, wasted irreplaceable manpower, and now issued stand-fast orders against the pleas of his senior generals. After the war, Knobelsdorff's interrogators recorded that he was an outspoken critic of the Nazi Party.

Despite orders to the contrary from the high command, Fourth Army pulled back from its forward positions near Moscow in late December; Soviet cavalry had gotten into the rear areas and threatened to cut off XII and XIII Corps. The much weakened 19th Panzer Division attacked on December 28 through deep snow to clear an escape route for the two corps. Passing the battlefields where he had lost so many of his men, Knobelsdorff recorded, "We were ashamed before them to have to retreat, those who had only known attack and success."

Kluge took command of the disintegrating Army Group Center on December 19. Hitler had just taken direct command of the army. Kluge wanted to pull back, but Hitler stiffened his spine and averted disaster. Most German records from this chaotic period went missing, but it is known that Knobelsdorff was evacuated due to illness on January 6, 1942.

On the frigid night of January 7, 1942, a massive blow struck the right wing of Army Group North, and a month of fierce fighting ensued. By February 8, Soviet pincers had surrounded six divisions of Sixteenth Army's II Corps in the Demjansk pocket, including the SS Totenkopf Division. (Two officers in that division—Oberführer Max Simon and Standartenführer (Colonel) Hermann Priess—would survive and later fight at the head of XIII SS Corps under Knobelsdorff's command in Lorraine.)

Knobelsdorff returned to duty and on May 1 took command of Sixteenth Army's X Corps at the northern end of the Eastern Front near Lake Ilmen. Though this was primarily an infantry corps, Knobelsdorff was a fitting commander for it because a day earlier the corps had launched an attack with effective artillery

akg-images / Interfoto

and close air support against a thinly held stretch of the Soviet line at Kobylkino to meet a corresponding attack by II Corps' Totenkopf Division at Demjansk, which had just reestablished contact with the rest of Sixteenth Army. Knobelsdorff's troops fought their way into Cholm on May 5 and established a firm link with the besieged corps. The Führer was watching the battle intently and urged that the corridor to II Corps be widened.

Only one month later, on June 1, Knobelsdorff was transferred to command the beleaguered II Corps. His fight there was mainly a defensive one, though he jabbed westward at the Soviets with the battered Totenkopf Division, fighting to widen the corridor. Knobelsdorff successfully defended the Demjansk salient over the summer against fierce Soviet efforts to eliminate it. As autumn arrived, the general's corps, now labeled Gruppe General von Knobelsdorff, appeared twice in the Army high command's daily briefing for Hitler in late September and early October, attacking and gaining ground.

Knobelsdorff returned to mobile warfare October 10, taking charge of XXIV Panzer Corps, which was part of the Second Hungarian Army in Army Group B, deployed on the Don River south of Voronezh. No corps, army, or army group records have survived from this period, so nothing is known about Knobelsdorff's actions. Given the importance of his next assignment, however, he must have done well.

By December 1942, the situation along the Chir River northwest of Stalingrad looked grim for the Germans. The Soviets were on the attack and creating an unbreakable ring around Sixth Army at Stalingrad. Generalfeldmarschall (Field Marshal) Erich von Manstein's newly established Army Group Don had taken over the Chir River sector on November 28, nine days after the Soviets launched their offensive. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Mellenthin was just arriving at XLVIII Panzer Corps headquarters, the stiffener for the Romanian Third Army, to take up duties as chief of staff.

Looking at the situation map at the

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-078-3076-02A; Photo: Fischer

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TOP: With a Nazi Party flag draped across its turret to show accompanying Luftwaffe planes that these are German troops, columns of tanks roll toward a burning Soviet village. ABOVE: A Soviet 76mm ZiS-3 divisional field gun opens up on advancing German troops, summer 1941.

Führer's Wolfschanze headquarters in East Prussia on November 27 while in transit to the front, Mellenthin recalled, "I tried to find the location of my XLVIII Panzer Corps, but there were so many arrows showing breakthroughs and encirclements that this was far from easy. In fact, on 27 November the XLVIII Panzer Corps was itself encircled in a so-called 'small cauldron' to the northwest of Kalach."

By the time Mellenthin arrived, the corps had fought free and, along with the rest of the army, had taken a line along the west bank of the Chir, which was assessed to be a tank obstacle except for several fords. Generalmajor (Brig. Gen.) Hans Cramer, an experienced panzer general who had fought beside Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in North Africa, took temporary command of the corps on November 30. The corps, consisting of the 22nd Panzer, 1st Romanian Armored, and 7th Romanian Infantry Divisions, was just wrapping up a desperate and successful fight to stop the Soviet thrust through the Romanian front by attacking its flanks.

On December 3, Cramer handed over his stretch of the line to II Romanian Corps. The panzer corps was to receive the 11th Panzer, 336th Infantry, and 7th Luftwaffe

Field Divisions and was to attack on Fourth Panzer Army's left in a planned operation to relieve Sixth Army stranded at Stalingrad; elements of all three divisions were already arriving. But it had been snowing so heavily that movement was difficult.

On December 5, Knobelsdorff arrived to replace Cramer. The decision to move him from XXIV Panzer Corps on November 30 was a sign of desperation because a large Soviet buildup east of the Don facing Second Hungarian Army showed that the Soviets would soon strike there, too. Knobelsdorff, Mellenthin found, "was a man of remarkable attainments, flexible and broad-minded, and highly esteemed by all members of his staff."

Knobelsdorff was just in time to meet the Fifth Tank Army, which was crossing the Chir in force. The key German strongpoint at Rytschov was just barely fending off tank-supported attacks and had lost two of its 88mm multipurpose guns.

Generalmajor (Brig. Gen.) Hermann Balck, who would later be Knobelsdorff's superior as the head of Army Group G in Lorraine, arrived on the Chir at the head of his 11th Panzer Division on December 6, just as the Soviet I Tank Corps was knocking a hole in the XLVIII Panzer Corps line of isolated *Kampfgruppen* (battle groups), despite intervention by the newly arrived 336th Infantry Division. Balck went to corps headquarters about noon, and Knobelsdorff ordered him to seal the breach. He told Balck to rush his antitank guns and a panzergrenadier battalion to Rytschov.

Knobelsdorff's headquarters called at 9 AM the next day with the alarming news that 50 Soviet T-34 tanks had burst through the line of a regiment of the 7th Luftwaffe Field Division where it joined the 336th Infantry Division. The latter division was pushing its right wing forward and had its strength concentrated there, and it would be a short time before the hole widened to three miles and the Soviets would reach the artillery positions. If the Soviets pivoted, they would take the 336th Infantry Division in the flank. The 336th Division's commanding general begged Knobelsdorff for help from Balck's panzer regiment.

At 9:15 AM, Fourth Panzer Army approved Knobelsdorff's request to counterattack with Balck's panzers, and 10 minutes later his orders reached Balck. The weather was improving slightly, and the Luftwaffe, which had been grounded all morning, ordered every available plane into the air. The 11th Panzer Division was rested and ready, having enjoyed a relatively quiet November near Smolensk, but nearly a third of its vehicles had fallen out during the march north.

Balck acted with incredible speed, and his 15th Panzer Regiment arrived at the Soviet breakthrough by 10:45 AM. The Soviets, meanwhile, were pushing more tanks, motorized infantry, and artillery—an estimated total of two infantry divisions and a tank brigade—into the hole. Knobelsdorff had lost contact with his infantry elements at the point of penetration, and at noon he ordered the rest of the 11th Panzer Division to follow the panzer regiment.

By 5 PM, the 110th and 111th Panzergrenadier Regiments and a motorcycle battalion arrived and sealed off the road to the south that led into the 336th Division's rear. The counterattack blocked the Soviet advance, but Knobelsdorff ordered the division to stop pushing forward until it could gather its strength.

Rather than make a frontal attack, Knobelsdorff wanted to attack the next morning against the enemy's flank and rear and issued orders to that effect. The 11th Panzer Division was to keep its forces tightly together. Mellenthin later implied this had been Balck's idea, but XLVIII Panzer Corps records suggest that was not the case. Still, under the German practice of *Auftragstaktik* (mission-type orders), Balck had a free hand in deciding how to execute the orders.

Balck struck at 4:30 AM and conducted a brilliant slashing panzer drive across the Soviet rear—the maneuver made all the more effective because the Soviets had committed 50 of their tanks against the left wing of the 336th Infantry Division where they could be cut off.

At first, progress was slow against a strong defense. The rolling hills were not tank friendly and offered the defenders good concealment. The panzers nevertheless caught the Soviet armor in the flank, destroyed many of the tanks, and pushed on. Then the 2nd Panzer Battalion caught a motorized infantry column in the open, and the Soviet defenses began to unravel. Stukas, meanwhile, crushed a Soviet breakthrough on the 336th Infantry Division's left, and the Luftwaffe conducted effective attacks across the corps front.

By 2:30 PM, the 11th Panzer Division had cut off the Soviet troops that had broken through. When the day was over, Balck had nearly destroyed the enemy corps, including most of the 46 tanks counted on the battlefield. His own losses had been slight. "With the coming of dark," Knobelsdorff's operations staff recorded, "the corps can look back on a great success."

Until December 22, Knobelsdorff had used the 11th Panzer Division like a rapier. Balck, moving night and day, fell upon one Soviet penetration after another and destroyed nearly all of them. Working hand in glove with two infantry divisions, Balck gave a *Kriegsakademie*-perfect display of flexible defense.

Despite Knobelsdorff's and Balck's successes, Germany faced a strategic disaster in the East in early 1943. The main point of the Soviet winter offensive was aimed at the southern end of the German front. As of late January, Army Group A's First Panzer Army was hurriedly withdrawing from the Caucasus through Rostov while Manstein's battered Army Group Don struggled to keep the escape route open.

In Stalingrad, Generalfeldmarschall (Field Marshal) Friedrich von Paulus's 270,000-man Sixth Army capitulated on February 1, which released considerable Soviet forces. Army Group B was in tatters, which exposed the entire southern wing of the German front to potential envelopment by forces driving through Kharkov and swinging down to the Sea of Azov. Army Group Don estimated that the

Soviets on its front held a manpower advantage of eight to one.

Manstein, in an argument with Hitler on February 6, won permission to withdraw from the lower Don and eastern Donets basin to the Mius River line and to concentrate First and Fourth Panzer Armies on his left wing. Manstein's strategic shift was just in time—three Soviet armies took Kharkov on Manstein's left in mid-February.

The Soviet offensive finally petered out in late February, and the Germans were able to establish a line along the Dniepr River capable of holding back the now exhausted Soviet troops, who had advanced some 300 miles.

The brilliant Manstein scripted the final scene in orders he issued on February 19. First and Fourth Panzer Armies and Army Detachment Kempf (controlling the corps southwest of Kharkov), reinforced by refreshed panzer divisions, rushed forward by rail, attacked the Soviet Sixth Army, First Guards Army, and Popov's Mobile Group from two directions southwest of Kharkov and destroyed Sixth Army and Popov's Group and savaged the Third Tank Army, which had entered the battle. Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps and Obergruppenführer (Lt. Gen.) Paul Hausser's SS Panzer Corps played the key roles in this crushing counterblow.

As late as the 25th, Soviet troops were fighting fiercely and receiving reinforcements, but only two days later Generaloberst (Col. Gen.) Hermann Hoth's orders from Fourth Panzer Army to Knobelsdorff were: "Pursue the defeated enemy."

Knobelsdorff played a leading part in Operation Citadel, the German attempt to eliminate a large Soviet salient at Kursk in July 1943. The Battle of Kursk was Germany's Gettysburg, the last time Hitler would launch a major offensive in the East. The scale was gargantuan, by most accounts the largest tank battle of the war.

But first Manstein's renamed Army Group South struck northward toward Kharkov on February 28 with Hausser's SS Panzer Corps on the left and Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps on the right. Manstein's blow completely surprised the Soviets and took three corps opposite Army Detachment Kempf in the rear. The Luftwaffe's Fourth Air Fleet, under General Wolfram von Richthofen, flew 1,000 sorties per day and for the last time protected a major ground operation through complete dominance of the skies.

Manstein pressed on toward Kharkov on March 5 with Hausser's corps screened on its right by Knobelsdorff and on its left by Army Detachment Kempf's Corps Raus. Hausser advanced in a wide arc north of Kharkov and enveloped the city, cutting off the enemy's retreat, while the Grossdeutschland Division advanced on Belgorod; the corps secured Kharkov after three days of costly street fighting. The bulk of the SS Corps advanced to Belgorod starting March 16, and the 2nd SS Das Reich Panzergrenadier Division linked up with the Grossdeutschland Division. This created the launching pad for the next great German offensive at Kursk.

British historian Sir Basil Liddell-Hart called the counterstroke at Kharkov "the most brilliant operational performance of Manstein's career, and one of the most masterly in the whole course of military history." Knobelsdorff had been a key lieutenant under this exceptional commander in this extraordinary historical event.

Following the victory at Kharkov, German divisions had a breather to refit thanks to Soviet exhaustion and the spring rains that turned Russia into a sea of mud. Hitler wanted to regain the initiative on the Eastern Front completely. Hitler's first order for Operation Citadel, issued on April 15, specified that "the best commanders" be assigned to the main effort. Knobelsdorff's name evidently was on that list.

The Soviet salient at Kursk was the natural objective, being a bite big enough to stall the Soviets and, it appeared, small enough for the Germans to chew. An early attack—initially set for May 25—would gain the element of surprise and catch the Soviets before they could fully recover. But delays in the delivery of tanks, especially the new Mark V Panther, led to postponement. Hitler finally set the attack date for July 5.

The plan was simple: Army Group Center was to attack southward with Ninth Army

BELOW: German troops enter a burning suburb of Kharkov, March 1943. Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps was instrumental in the German victory here. OPPOSITE: Considered the largest battle in history, the Battle of Kursk resulted in over a million casualties. Knobelsdorff's men fought skillfully but could not overcome massive Soviet troops and tanks, shown here, at Kursk.

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1976-010-31, Photo: KI

from Malo-Arkhangel'sk while Army Group South's Fourth Panzer Army and Army Detachment Kempf struck northward from Belgorod. They were to meet on the heights north of Kursk and destroy trapped Soviet forces to the west. The southern group fielded five corps with nine panzer and panzergrenadier divisions and eight infantry divisions. Army Group Center fielded five corps with six panzer and 15 infantry divisions. The equipment, training, and morale of the units earmarked for the offensive were the highest they would ever be on the Eastern Front.

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In the south, Fourth Panzer Army was to make the main thrust with Knobelsdorff's XLVIII Panzer Corps on the left (3rd and 11th Panzer Divisions; the Grossdeutschland Panzergrenadier Division; 10th Panzer Brigade—the 51st and 52nd Panzer Battalions—with 188 factory-fresh Mark V Panthers; and elements of the 167th and 332nd Infantry Divisions) and II SS Panzer Corps (redesignated in April and consisting of the 1st SS Leibstandarte, 2nd Das Reich, and 3rd Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Divisions) on the right. Army Detachment Kempf (XI and III Panzer Corps) was to screen the right flank, while LII Corps, with two infantry divisions, screened the left.

On the Soviet side, General Konstantin Rokossovsky's Central Front defended the northern zone of the Kursk Salient while General Nikolai Vatutin's Voronezh Front held the southern zone.

Knobelsdorff would be at the center of one of the deciding armored battles of the entire war. The divisions of XLVIII Panzer and II SS Corps had been out of the line since April and had undergone extensive training from the commanders down to rankers in breaching fortified defenses, antitank ditches, and antitank strongpoints, and in coordinating with the Luftwaffe.

Knobelsdorff, who had been directed by Hoth to commit the 10th Panzer Brigade with the Grossdeutschland Division at the main point of the corps's attack, knew the new Panthers were suffering severe mechanical teething problems and doubted they would live up to Hitler's high hopes. Still, between Grossdeutschland's own 92 tanks (including 14 heavy Tigers) and the panzer brigade, that division on July 5 controlled nearly as many tanks as all of II SS Panzer Corps.

The stage was set for a massive confrontation. The struggle involved some 900,000 men, 2,700 tanks, and 2,500 aircraft on the German side, and 1.3 million men, 4,200 tanks, and 2,650 aircraft on the Soviet.

Fourth Panzer Army launched preliminary attacks on July 4 and captured observation points on both corps fronts necessary for direction of the artillery preparation the following day. Knobelsdorff's corps battled thunderstorms as well as the Soviets and on the 5th had to cross a seemingly bottomless sea of mud along a rain-swollen and heavily mined creek under troublesome flanking fire. There was little air support, aircraft having been concentrated that day on helping II SS Panzer Corps. Knobelsdorff, as usual, was well forward, visiting first the 3rd Panzer Division, then Grossdeutschland, and then the 11th Panzer Division.

Knobelsdorff's account says he held his panzers back until Grossdeutschland's own panzer regiment had crossed the water obstacle. The division's engineers simply could not build a bridge that would stay in place, and the planned mass tank attack by Grossdeutschland never did come off.

Still, Knobelsdorff broke through the first belt of Soviet defenses by 7 AM, according to the Fourth Panzer Army *Kriegstagebuch*. He finally got all his panzers across by evening. On July 6, Grossdeutschland's panzer regiment reported it had penetrated the second belt at one spot. Finally, thought Knobelsdorff, the route north was free! Moreover, the Panthers were finally forward and doing some fighting.

Knobelsdorff visited Grossdeutschland's command post only to find the report was false and the division was still engaged in hard fighting in the middle of the defenses. At 9 PM, the panzer regiment—now in control of the Panthers, too—really did crack through the belt. But the Panthers were breaking down right and left.

The following day, Knobelsdorff ordered the Grossdeutschland and 11th Panzer Divisions to attack the flank of Soviet forces hitting II SS Panzer Corps from Oboyan and then to advance in close parallel to the SS Panzer Corps.

Grossdeutschland surged forward, but

the 11th Panzer Division was still fighting its way free of the second belt and was under heavy air attacks. The 3rd Panzer Division on the left failed to cross the Pena because of swampy terrain and heavy enemy fire. Knobelsdorff, demonstrating his flexibility, decided to pass it forward behind Grossdeutschland.

Hoth told Knobelsdorff that he should expect a major fight with the Soviet tank reserves in the next few days. Indeed, Fourth Panzer Army's advance provoked furious counterattacks by the First Guards Tank Army, including the II Guards and V "Stalingrad" Tank Corps, as well as by the lead elements of the fresh VI Guards Tank Corps. Air reconnaissance had failed to detect the Soviet concentration, which came as a surprise. "Thus came the panzer battle sooner than we had expected," Fourth Panzer Army recorded.

Hoth told Knobelsdorff he intended to smash the First Tank Army from both its flanks. The aim was not merely to push the Soviet forces back, but to pin them and destroy them! Knobelsdorff got the upper hand that day and thrashed the Soviet tanks on his front, but neither corps gained noteworthy ground.

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1976-124-12A; Photo: Karl Müller

Grossdeutschland, which had started with 300 panzers, now had only 80 combat capable, in large part because the Panthers were clogging the maintenance system with breakdowns. "It is to be hoped," recorded Knobelsdorff's operations chief, "that tomorrow's envelopment succeeds, that after the annihilation of his panzer forces we push forward again, and that he has no stronger reserves north of the Psel."

General Friedrich Fangohr, Fourth Panzer Army's chief of staff, later recalled, "7 July marked a complete victory for General Knobelsdorff's men. They had not only routed Soviet tank forces in a meeting engagement but—more critical from the overall perspective of the offensive—had succeeded in slogging their way close enough to Oboyan to bring the Psel River crossing, the last major barrier before Kursk, under artillery fire."

Hoth's planned double envelopment of the Soviet tank forces on the 8th did not succeed. The XLVIII Panzer Corps left flank was open and vulnerable, and when word reached Knobelsdorff that the main body of Soviet tanks was about to attack him from the north and northeast, Grossdeutschland and the 11th Panzer Division had to stop and throw out defensive screens. The corps held its line, just barely, under the combined assault of VI Guards Tank and III Mechanized Corps.

The II SS Panzer Corps maneuver to hit the Soviet left flank with the 1st and 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Divisions pushed even more Soviet forces against Knobelsdorff's front, but his divisions were able to destroy them. The II SS Panzer Corps claimed it had destroyed some 250 Soviet tanks because they attacked in penny packets, which allowed the Germans to engage in mobile defense. Fourth Panzer Army reckoned actual tank kills as 95 opposite XLVIII Panzer Corps and 100 opposite II SS Panzer Corps.

Soviet resistance suddenly eased on the 9th, and air reconnaissance and reports from ground troops indicated the Soviets were falling back to the north. Knobelsdorff's troops, finally supported again by the Luftwaffe, rolled ahead, and the panzer corps estimated that Grossdeutschland that day destroyed 66 enemy tanks and the 11th Panzer Division 35 at virtually no cost to themselves. The lead battalion of II SS Panzer Corps's Totenkopf Division cleared the last bunkers south of the Psel and forded the river. But Fourth Panzer Army was only halfway to Kursk.

On July 10, II SS Panzer Corps readied to attack Soviet forces at Prokhorovka, while XLVIII Panzer Corps fought to clear a bend west of the Psel River. Constant tank battles raged during the day on Knobelsdorff's front, and the panzers won every engagement. Grossdeutschland alone claimed to have destroyed 49 Soviet tanks. Hausser's II SS Panzer Corps also fought large Soviet forces near Prokhorovka, which relieved some of the pressure on Knobelsdorff's flank.

Manstein met with Kempf and Hoth on the 11th and asked their advice on whether to discontinue the attack in light of Ninth Army's halt on the 9th of its attack on the north face of the salient. Kempf wanted to stop, but Hoth wanted to continue to the Psel River along its length and destroy as many Soviet divisions on the south bank as possible. Manstein ultimately agreed with Hoth.

That day, Totenkopf tried but failed to expand its bridgehead across the Psel River, while Knobelsdorff's corps fought off more powerful counterattacks—the X Tank Corps had appeared on its front—and encircled and destroyed 100 Soviet tanks. The Fifth Guards Tank Army, the strategic Soviet tank reserve in the south, arrived at Prokhorovka, and a huge battle with the SS erupted there.

The Soviet attacks were so strong on July 12 and 13 that Fourth Panzer Army, assessing that it was hit by at least parts of nine tank and mechanized corps as well as multiple rifle divisions, could barely hold its own. Knobelsdorff, on his front,

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-J27512; Photo: Broenner

ABOVE: After absorbing a Soviet counterattack in July 1944, the Germans went on a counteroffensive of their own, only to be halted on Hitler's orders. Here mechanized Grossdeutschland troops counterattack in August. Knobelsdorff was then transferred to fight Patton in the West. OPPOSITE: Men of the Grossdeutschland Division, accompanied by a PzKpfw V "Panther" tank, enter a village in southern Russia, 1944.

aggressively followed up each withdrawal of repulsed Soviet tank forces to strengthen his defensive positions, but he had to direct the weight of Grossdeutschland and the 3rd Panzer Division to the west rather than the north to deal with a Soviet breakthrough in the zone of the 332nd Infantry Division, which had taken charge of the corps' flank security.

The drive northward had, in effect, stopped. Rain slowed movement everywhere, and Hoth worried that he would not be able to restore momentum. But the tank attacks from the northeast had been replaced by infantry attacks, and it seemed possible that the enemy had pulled back his armored reserve.

According to Manstein, Hitler summoned Manstein and Kluge to his headquarters on the 13th and told them that the Allies had landed in Sicily, the Italians were not fighting, and the island was likely to be lost. Because the next step would probably be an invasion of Italy or the Balkans, the Führer had decided to stop Operation Citadel in order to transfer divisions from the Eastern Front to strengthen his armies in those areas. Kluge said Ninth Army was stuck and supported abandoning the effort. Manstein argued that the issue in Fourth Panzer Army's zone was still open and that to stop was to throw away a victory.

On the 14th, Hoth did reclaim the initiative, and Knobelsdorff's left wing seized high ground overlooking the Psel west of Oboyan. The XLVIII Panzer Corps now faced human waves of infantry, which mortars and corps artillery mowed down. German losses were light, and morale in the corps was high.

The next day, the 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Division punched through Soviet defenses and found freedom to maneuver. Army Detachment Kempf finally linked up with II SS Corps and enveloped the Soviet forces that had stood between them. It appeared that Soviet resistance had been smashed, and Fourth Panzer Army was believed to be on the brink of a major victory.

But the situation in Army Group Center, struck from the east by a Soviet counteroffensive, had continued to deteriorate, forcing a decision to break off Army Group South's attack to transfer forces to the north. Fourth Panzer Army received word that it was to halt offensive operations northward on the 15th. The Soviets on the 17th added to the pressure to remove divisions from the Kursk battlefield by attacking Army Group South's Sixth Army. Operation Citadel was over.

Knobelsdorff, from February 26 until September 4, 1944, was transferred to command XL Panzer Corps, also labeled Gruppe von Knobelsdorff and Panzergruppe von Knobelsdorff at various times, in the Ukraine. Generalleutnant (Maj. Gen.) Hasso von Manteuffel, as it happened, had arrived in the sector just before him to take command of the Grossdeutschland Panzergrenadier Division in the neighboring XLVII Panzer Corps sector; Manteuffel and his division were subordinated to XL Panzer Corps on March 11. He would fight beside Knobelsdorff again in Lorraine against Patton as commanding general of Fifth Panzer Army.

The two panzer corps, fighting along the Bug and Dniestr Rivers, were just beginning a withdrawal movement in anticipation of a major Soviet offensive, dropping back overnight to a "B Line," with further phased night withdrawals to follow. On March 10, after weeks of quiet, the Soviets launched a ferocious attack on the Grossdeutschland Division, part of a general offensive aimed at the

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escape to TASHKENT

BY REBECCA MANLEY

IN THE FALL OF 1941, the Polish writer Aleksander Wat, recently released from confinement in a Soviet prison, made his way east across the vast expanses of the Soviet Union. In his memoirs, he depicts a railway station en route: "I saw a striking image of suffering there.... All of Russia was on the move ... peasant men and women, whole families, middle-class people, workers, intellectuals, all on the miserable floor of the train station."

Wat described the scene as an expression of "Russian nomadism." Those en route, however, were not traditional Russian migrants. Nor, properly speaking, were they refugees. Unlike the archetypal European refugee, they were displaced but not stateless. In official Soviet parlance, moreover, they were "evacuees," not refugees.

The term highlights the specificity of their experience. They were compelled to depart not only by a devastating war but by a government, their own government, which sought to protect the lives of its citizenry, to keep valuable "human resources" from falling into enemy hands, and to assure the security of the state by clearing frontline regions.

Between the German invasion in June 1941 and the autumn of the next year, approximately 16.5 million Soviet citizens were evacuated to the country's interior. The scale of the operation was unprecedented. Evacuations were carried out in eight different

Courtesy TsGAKFFD SPb

With cattle, children, and all the possessions they could cram into their wagons, civilians escape from the approaching German invaders near Leningrad, July 1941. Over 16 million Soviet citizens became refugees—probably the largest mass migration in history.

To Soviet citizens rushing to escape the 1941 German invasion, the far-off, exotic Uzbek city of Tashkent represented survival and safety—and a journey filled with danger and hardship.

Soviet republics and from territory that was home to approximately 40 percent of the Soviet population on the eve of the war.

As Wat's description of the train station suggests, moreover, the evacuation touched Soviet citizens from all walks of life.

Evacuation was conceived by the Soviet state, in keeping with prewar developments, both as a form of economic mobilization and as an attempt to manage migration from the front lines. Although not punitive in nature, the operation was heavily indebted to the practices of population transfer developed over the previous decade.

Furthermore, the operation was structured around a hierarchy of people and places that reflected both an existing system of privilege and an ideologically informed vision of the Soviet polity. Finally, evacuation was conceived to protect not merely certain sectors of the population but the entire socialist state. At its core, the operation aimed to retain control over Soviet space, threatened, in the eyes of the state, not only by German forces, but by "enemy elements" and internal dissolution.

THE EVACUATION

On June 24, 1941, two days after the German invasion had begun, an Evacuation Council was hastily created by joint decree

of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars.

Evacuation was in many ways thrust on the Kremlin. German forces had already wreaked havoc along almost the entire length of the Soviet Union's western border; taking advantage of the state of surprise, they had destroyed communication lines, dispersed defending forces, and broken through the system of frontier defenses.

By the time the decision to establish the Evacuation Council was made, officially sanctioned evacuations had already begun in both Latvia and Belorussia. Panteleimon Ponomarenko, then first secretary of the Communist Party of Belorussia, recalls having called Stalin on June 23 to request permission to commence evacuations in the Belorussian Republic. Stalin was allegedly surprised by the request and wondered whether it was really necessary.

National Archives of the Netherlands

Postwar photo of Panteleimon Ponomarenko, then first secretary of the Communist Party of Belorussia, who first urged Stalin to evacuate areas threatened by war. OPPOSITE: German soldiers set fire to a farm during the ruthless invasion of the Soviet Union, summer 1941. German troops and special police battalions also slaughtered Soviets in their path.

Still captive to the principle of an offensive war and slow to grasp the scale of the disaster unfolding on the front lines, Stalin had, only the day before, ordered the General Staff to launch a counteroffensive and to invade enemy territory.

Ponomarenko's report, however, left little doubt as to the gravity of the situation: such was the rapidity of the German advance that a large-scale evacuation from some of the western regions of the republic was, in his estimation, no longer possible, and any delay in the evacuation of Minsk and the eastern regions would be "irreparable." The next day, following countless hours of impromptu meetings in Stalin's office, the Evacuation Council was established.

JOURNEY FROM THE FRONT LINES

The mass evacuation was fraught with difficulties. Stalingrad was perhaps the most extreme example of a systematic German policy of bombing transport, but such incidents occurred in many other places as well. In Leningrad in mid-July, for instance, an official reported of an evacuation train carrying children that "enemy aircraft bombed the train, as a result of which many children were killed or wounded."

In the westernmost parts of the country, which were evacuated only when the cities were already under heavy bombardment, losses were particularly heavy. Alexander Kovarskii, a child at the time, later recalled how the train on which he traveled east with his mother and aunt from Vitebsk to Tashkent was forced to stop several times en route as enemy planes bombed the railways.

Raisa Yasvoina, traveling east from Kiev with her mother and her younger brother, had a similar experience. "I remember," she later recounted, "how the bombing started…. We got out of the train, and everybody was screaming and crying. It was terrible, a nightmare…and I somehow lost my mother."

Fortunately for Raisa, they soon found each other, and continued on their journey together. Thirteen-year-old Tania Aizenberg, who was evacuated from Kiev in late August 1941, was not so lucky. Several months later, in Tashkent, she recounted her experiences to Lydia Chukovskaia, daughter of the famous Soviet author Kornei Chukovskii. The train on which she and her mother were traveling had stopped and she was playing outside while her mother prepared lunch in the railway car. All of a sudden, German planes appeared overhead.

"I ran into the fields," Aizenberg recalled. "The fields were very wide. The wheat was already lying in sheaves. I hid in the sheaves. I looked up from under the wheat: the train was on fire, as was the railway car, where Mama was." Aizenberg made the rest of the journey to Tashkent on her own.

The journey by boat could be equally treacherous. In Odessa, boat became the sole means of evacuation in August 1941. As Sophia Abidor later recalled, the "Germans had surrounded Odessa from all sides, and it was no longer possible to leave by train."

Memories of the evacuation are invariably associated with bombardment. Sophia Abidor recalled how her boat was bombed en route from Odessa to Sevastopol. Fortunately, the fire was extinguished.

Less fortunate were those traveling on the ship Lenin on the fateful day when it hit a mine shortly after leaving Odessa. In his memoirs, Saul Borovoi recounts how an acquaintance had offered to secure him a spot on the Lenin, but he had declined; the "thought that I would have to ask something of someone was unbearable to me."

Instead, Borovoi traveled on the less comfortable Voroshilov, from which he observed the tragedy firsthand. The Lenin sank, and only a fraction of the ship's 4,000 passengers survived. Borovoi, who participated in the rescue effort, recalled one survivor in particular: a young man whom he pulled out of the water, "almost naked, but in his hands he had his Komsomol [a Soviet Communist youth organization] membership card. He was terrified of losing it."

In other cases, people traveled by car or truck. In this respect, the military, managerial, and political elite were particularly well provisioned. Despite directives issued in Belorussia forbidding the requisitioning of state cars to this end, the practice was widespread, particularly among military officers who regularly requisitioned cars to evacuate their families.

A command issued to the troops of the Western Front in early July noted that "at the same time as active units at the front have a desperate need for motor transport, a significant number of cars settle in the rear and are used in a most disorderly manner." Party members and factory directors likewise requisitioned cars to evacuate either themselves or their families.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

In Kursk, for example, the manager of an alcohol trust "decided to take his family from Kursk to Cheliabinsk oblast [an administrative region or province], illegally procuring documents for their departure, even though an evacuation of Kursk oblast and the city of Kursk was not underway. Using his position, he departed with his family in a car belonging to the trust, which he filled with 425 kilograms [51 gallons] of petrol."

Given the scarcity of transportation, many traveled by foot. In the town of Klintsy, where evacuations were left until it was already too late, the civilian population had little choice.

The sheer volume of people passing through individual stations on a daily basis overwhelmed authorities and the facilities at their disposal. During the most intense period of evacuations, as many as 17,000 or 18,000 people passed through the Sverdlovsk evacuation center each day.

During the war, "passing through" could take anywhere from a couple of hours to a couple of weeks. As Aleksander Wat explained in his memoirs, "When changing trains you had to have your ticket validated again at the window, and it always turned out that there were no seats for the next two, three, four days. Since there were no hotels, there was no choice but to camp out at the station."

If a new ticket was required, the wait could be even longer. Inna Shikheeva-Gaister and her small circle of traveling companions moved from their apartment in Ufa "to live at the train station, to make it more convenient to stand in line for tickets." They reached their turn in line after one week.

The primary cause of delays was the acute shortage of railway cars. As a report from the city of Kuibyshev put it, "Railway authorities do not provide the required number of railway cars for the dispatch of evacuees." The transportation of millions of people and goods posed a formidable challenge, which tested the limits of the country's infrastructure.

By November 20, 1941, 914,380 railway cars had been sent east carrying raw materials, industrial goods, machinery, and people. One year later, the number had risen to more than a million and a half. This represented a substantial proportion of the country's overall transportation capacity. In July 1941, almost half of the existing stock of railway cars was involved in the evacuation.

Evacuee transport was significantly complicated by the seemingly limitless needs of the front. In the eastern Ukrainian Republic, for example, officials noted that the "directors of the stations are incapable of sending the evacuees anywhere due to the lack of passenger trains and the absence of covered rolling stock, used only for the needs of the front."

A similar problem was reported on the Black Sea during the evacuation of the Crimea in August 1941, when repeated requests for boats were refused on the grounds that it would simply not be possible "until the freeing up of ships from Odessa." The shortage of railway cars had

Courtesy TsGAKFFD SPb

ABOVE: Evacuees line up to depart Leningrad in a PS-84 airplane, the Soviet version of the Douglas DC-3, October 1941. OPPOSITE: Despite their unknown future, and the fact that the Germans often attacked the trains, mothers (right) smile as they and their children prepare to depart Leningrad by rail, June–July 1941.

a dramatic impact on both the efficiency of the overall process and on the conditions in which people traveled.

The situation was particularly dire in Stalingrad. In late November, a special commission was dispatched to Stalingrad to investigate reports of problems in evacuee transit. They found "two hundred thousand evacuated people, not only on the trains but at the stations, evacuation centers, and harbors, on the streets, in the stadium, on city squares, and…on the outskirts of town."

The city on the lower Volga that was to become the site of one of the most famous battles of World War II was, in the first year of the war, one of the primary reception points for evacuees. In the first seven months of the war, 438,500 people passed through the city's evacuation center. According to monthly reports from the center, not a single evacuee spent fewer than two full weeks waiting for connections.

Predictably, such conditions sparked bursts of outrage. In mid-November 1941, Nikolai Shvernik, chairman of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions, received an irate letter from a communist stranded in Stalingrad on his way from the Donbass region of the Ukraine to Novosibirsk in southwest Siberia.

Describing in vivid detail the general disarray, he charged: "I didn't see such disorder, chaos, and helplessness in all the years of the revolution. The people move east at will, literally starving, enduring unbelievable suffering. And what is really bad is the inability of authorities on the railway line and in cities to organize the mass distribution of food, hot water, and warm clothes for living people."

In Stalingrad, it was reported that only one of the city's five evacuation centers had hot food. When author Kornei Chukovskii stood in line for bread at a stop by the Aral Sea, he got nothing. What set Chukovskii and his traveling companions apart, rather, was the willingness and ability of higher authorities to intervene on their behalf. Writers, the "engineers of human souls," traveled with candles and sausage procured for them before their departure from Moscow by Alexander Fadeev, the secretary of the Writers' Union.

Telegrams requesting preferential treatment, moreover, were dispatched on their behalf to stations en route. The relative comfort of the intellectual and cultural elite was ensured not only by the likes of Fadeev, who stood at the head of the literary establishment, but by the highest levels of the political establishment. No less than Aleksei Kosygin, deputy chairman of the of People's Commissars, saw to it that the evacuated "artists, writers, and honored scientists" were adequately provisioned. In several cases, those who lacked appropriate documentation were simply refused food outright.

Making one's way through the hurdles required companions. As author Georgii Efron, contemplating his upcoming evacuation to Tashkent, noted in his diary: "I'm not going alone—that is already very significant."

In this sense, the collective really had become a basic unit of Soviet society. As in Soviet life more generally, travel on one's own made the journey significantly more difficult. One person was required to stand with the luggage while another stood in line.

Companions were essential. Stories of the railway journey frequently revolve around the new and transitory communities that formed en route. The adolescent Inna Shikheeva-Gaister and her younger siblings banded together with another young woman whom they met on the journey east. Writer Zinaida Stepanishcheva's whole railway car grouped together under the leadership of one particularly enterprising individual. And Soviet historian Nikolai Druzhinin recalled how a "distinctive 'commune' formed en route, which existed until the end of our journey."

At the same time, evacuees set about reconstituting the communities that had only recently been rent apart. They sought to reestablish contact with those they had left behind and to bridge the widening gulf that separated them from their loved ones.

Evacuees sent hurried letters to family and friends informing them of the progress of their journey and in some cases of their departure. Kornei Chukovskii dispatched a telegram to his daughter Lydia, evacuated earlier that summer to Chistopol, from Penza: "Going to Tashkent." He urged her to join them there. Elena Dobychina wrote to her sister on August 4, "I don't know if this postcard will reach you…. I am on the train. I am going to Tashkent."

The memoirs of Zinaida Stepanishcheva offer a glimpse into the mechanics of such a journey. She had been given a ticket for Penza, but on departure from Moscow, she had joined an unofficial, collectively formed echelon bound for Tashkent. When the group reached Penza, the same enterprising individual asked each of the "Tashkenters" for a

bit of money, and secured their passage to Chkalov by bribing the coupler to simply attach their car to the outbound train.

"In Chkalov," Stepanishcheva recalled: "he did the exact same thing and we were attached to a train that went to Tashkent…. We traveled from Penza to Tashkent without tickets. Everyone had documents from the evacuation center, designating various destinations, but we all went to Tashkent. In the chaos that prevailed in the country, nobody checked either our tickets or our documents."

A representative on the Penza railway line reported that the "evacuated population travels in a disorganized fashion, in all manner of trains, and frequently without tickets." Stepanishcheva and her traveling companions were clearly no exception.

DESTINATION TASHKENT

One of the most sought-after sites of refuge in the interior that seemed to possess an almost magical appeal to the evacuees, even though most had never been there, was Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

"Everyone wanted to go south," recalled Aleksander Wat. "Everyone wanted to go to Tashkent. Why Tashkent? Because Tashkent was a 'city of bread.' … That's the power of a title: Tashkent, City of Bread. Magic words. The book had been published in Russia, but it had been translated into Polish. The Poles didn't know about it, but all the Jews, even the ones who didn't read, had heard about it from others."

As Wat's comments suggest, Tashkent's appeal was, in no small measure, the product of a fictional account: Alexander Neverov's *Tashkent, City of Bread*. Written in the early 1920s, it was adapted into a popular children's book and was translated into a host of other languages including Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew. The novel, set during the famine of 1921, followed a young boy on his journey from the famine-stricken Volga region east to Tashkent in search of bread for himself and his family.

The book's title alone helped forge an image of the Uzbek capital in the popular imagination and inspired in the panicked evacuees a desire to reach it.

Tashkent was indeed one of the most popular wartime destinations. Although no one commented on the phenomenon quite as lyrically as Wat, he was but one of many to describe it. "A great number of evacuees are headed for Tashkent," reported one official in Penza in the fall of 1941. "There is reason to fear that an excessive number of people will accumulate there and that it will be necessary to transfer them to other regions."

A report from the Kazakh city of Arys likewise noted that "significant masses of people move haphazardly to Uzbekistan and, as a first priority, to Tashkent." According to Saul Borovoi, who journeyed across the Caspian Sea from Makhachkala to Krasnovodsk, "the majority of refugees sought to go to Tashkent."

Courtesy TsGAKFFD SPb

Whether in Moscow, Penza, Kazakhstan, or on the shores of the Caspian Sea, observers repeatedly noted the same phenomenon: in the words of an official in Uzbekistan, "Everyone is headed for Tashkent."

Tashkent's appeal stemmed from its southern location as well as its almost legendary food supply and distance from the front. Although evacuees would later complain bitterly about the inhospitable climate, many were originally drawn there on its account.

Georgii Efron, who was of two minds about leaving Moscow, reasoned in his diary that, "at least one need not fear the cold in Tashkent and its surrounding area." In Leningrad, where evacuees were sometimes informed about the climatic conditions in different parts of the country by an onsite geographer, Tashkent seemed like an indisputably better choice than Novosibirsk, Cheliabinsk, Sverdlovsk, or one of the many other northern cities that also served as important reception sites for evacuees.

As one Polish refugee explained, "The moderate climate, with its mild winters, was attractive to many refugees, who were poorly prepared for the severe winters in other regions of the Soviet Union."

Evgenii Pasternak, son of the Nobel Prize-winning author Boris Pasternak, later recalled his mother's thinking when presented with the possibility of going to Tashkent; among other considerations, she had felt that "Tashkent always seemed a wealthy, well-fed city, and in winter it was warm there." Likewise, anticommunist activist Vladimir N. Petrov recalls that the passengers in his train heading south from Novosibirsk to Tashkent "were very pleased to be going south."

The journey to Tashkent was long and arduous. Moreover, as Georgii Efron noted in his diary en route, the "routes that lead there are numerous." Those traveling from the north tended to take the route through Chkalov, formerly Orenburg. The Orenburg-Tashkent line had been built in the early 20th century, connecting the central Asian colony to the metropole.

Before the war, the journey usually took under a week. For those traveling east in

1941, however, the journey was almost always longer. Whereas Kornei Chukovskii traveled the distance in just over a week, Maria Belkina's train took 11 days, Zinaida Stepanishcheva's 15 days, and Georgii Efron's over three weeks. Elena Dobychina, setting out from Leningrad, journeyed for 20 days, and Victor Zhirmunskii one month.

The railway lines were overburdened in both directions. On some lines in the region, trains were moving on average no faster than 200 kilometers (124 miles) per day. Georgii Efron's diary contains a running chronicle of his echelon's progress: on the fourth day of the journey, he noted that "our train advances by 100 to 200 meters, then stops for a good half-dozen hours. It would be truly comical if it weren't so sad."

TASHKENT, THE CITY

The city that greeted those displaced by the war struck most as foreign and unfamiliar. Tashkent did not yet boast the distinctively Soviet-style apartment blocks that would come to dominate its urban landscape after the earthquake of 1966. In 1941, plans to transform the city into a model Soviet city, a modern outpost in Central Asia, remained by and large paper projects.

Tashkent was still a city of small one- and two-story houses and dirt lanes. It was divided between the Russian section of the city, built as a European colonial outpost in the late 19th century, and the Muslim district, or old town.

Author Nadezhda Mandelstam later recalled the "small, squat houses and tall trees—a contrast peculiar to Tashkent." The city was full of such contrasts. On the one hand, there were the "steep and narrow alleys." On the other, there were broad streets and European squares.

Mandelstam recalls one particular square that she and Anna Akhmatova christened L'Étoile, after the square of that name in Paris. "We conceived a fancy that General Kaufman, in laying out Tashkent, had indulged his nostalgia for Paris by making all the streets converge into this square modeled on the Étoile."

Whatever pretensions to Europeanness the new city in particular might have had, however, Tashkent was, in the eyes of most evacuees, an inescapably Asian city. The journey into evacuation was conceived as a passage from Europe into Asia.

Kornei Chukovskii, sick and preoccupied with the fate of his soldier son on the front lines, noted, "I am nonetheless happy that I have gotten to see Tashkent, even if in old age." Indeed, Chukovskii was positively enchanted by the city, which he described as having a "special poetic quality, a melodiousness."

"I walk the streets," he wrote in his diary, and it is as if I am listening to music—so wonderful are the rows of poplars. The canals and thousands of varied bridges across them, the views of single-story homes, which seem even lower in contrast to the high poplars—and the southern life on the street and the kind and courteous Uzbeks—and the bazaars, where there are raisins and nuts—and the abundant sun—why have I not been here before—why didn't I come before the war?"

A similar romanticization of the city is evident even in the writing of those who were otherwise very critical of the Uzbek capital. Tatiana Lugovskaia wrote to a friend who had disappointed her by not coming to Tashkent, "Don't come, please. And you won't see Tashkent. You won't see the streets, planted with poplars, the distances, covered with dust, the camels—single and in whole caravans, the starry sky."

Sovfoto

Courtesy TsGAKFFD SPb

ABOVE: Evacuated residents of Leningrad await transportation and ponder their future after crossing Lake Ladoga in April 1942. OPPOSITE: With worried looks, these Russian families, forced out of their cities and villages by the German invasion, seek safety hundreds of miles from the front. Many headed for the fabled city of Tashkent.

Such descriptions of the city, although not altogether uncommon, are surprisingly rare in evacuee memoirs, diaries, and letters. Evacuation, after all, was no ordinary trip, and evacuees were not tourists, a fact of which they were all too aware. "It would have been nice," wrote an evacuee in Kazan, praising the architecture of the university, "to see all this as a tourist, and not as a refugee, which is what we are."

The tendency to romanticize the new and foreign setting was undercut by the hardships of daily life and by a persistent longing for the familiar. The cinematographer Boris Babochkin wrote to his wife on arrival in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, from Tashkent: "The city is beautiful, you could fall in love with it. It is the opposite of Tashkent in every respect—the air is marvelous, there is no dust, it is an enormous park, not a city, there is asphalt everywhere, good houses, few people, no banditry, there are no poor people altogether, and—most important—it is a Russian city. The first impression is charming."

Babochkin's praise of Alma-Ata, after several months in Tashkent, underscores the prevailing vision of Tashkent among many evacuees. It was dusty and terribly overcrowded. Moreover, it was dangerous. There is not an account of the city from this period that does not at least mention the high levels of crime. "Banditry" preoccupied evacuees.

Zinaida Stepanishcheva later recalled the large number of swindlers who took advantage of ordinary inhabitants. She recounts how her mother bought two bottles of baked milk, "but it turned out that the milk was only in the neck of the bottle and the bottles themselves were filled with mashed potato…. Such things happened not only to my mother but to all our acquaintances. Everyone told each other the most unbelievable stories of deceit and swindling."

Rare was the evacuee who did not have something stolen. Alexander Kovarskii lost his new galoshes to a thief; Nadezhda Mandelstam was robbed of a ration of fish; Evgeniia Galina's mother had her purse stolen, Olga Boltianskaia's son his passport, and Olga herself some newly bought bread.

Like crime, dirt and disorder pervade the writings of evacuees. Dmitrii Ushakov wrote in one of his first letters after arriving in the city that "Tashkent's misfortune is dust and dirt. When it is hot, the dust lies like powder, several centimeters thick; you come home all gray. It rains, and the dust turns into mud that one cannot get out of, fine, slippery, viscous enough that it pulls your galoshes off your foot."

Tatiana Lugovskaia described Tashkent in a letter to her friend Leonid as "wild"; "there is nothing here," she wrote, "besides dust."

Moreover—and perhaps most important—Tashkent was a foreign city. The city's urban layout, the flora and the fauna, seemed distinctly un-"Russian," and Russia itself seemed distant and removed.

This sentiment was captured with particular poignancy in one of Tatiana Lugovskaia's subsequent letters to her friend. Soon after her arrival in Tashkent she wrote: "I've found myself in Tashkent, a city where even the water smells of dust and disinfectant, where in the summer water exposed to the sun begins to boil, where in the winter there is mud that has no equal anywhere else in the world (it more closely resembles a quick-drying carpenter's glue); a city where lady-bimbos (damy-fify) and grief have assembled from all over the Soviet Union, where on the streets, moving alongside the trams, there are camels and donkeys…. In this city, made for death, I have ended up. Why, for what—I cannot understand."

If the urban landscape, the sights and sounds, almost invariably struck newcomers as foreign, there were some respects in which Tashkent was nonetheless familiar. The squat houses, winding alleys and caravans of camels masked what was an all-too recognizable feature of the urban landscape—its institutional architecture.

Despite the continued frustration of authorities in both Moscow and Tashkent at the failure to make Tashkent a truly modern city, it was an undeniably Soviet city. And what happened to evacuees once they arrived in Tashkent, their struggle to survive, is in many ways a typical Soviet story.

"TASHKENT, CITY OF BREAD"

The war led to a precipitous decline in living standards across the Soviet Union, and Tashkent was no exception. In the first year of the war, the population of Tashkent grew by nearly 20 percent. The city was, in Maria Belkina's words, "bursting at the seams." Or, as Evgenia Pasternak put it, "Tashkent … has gone mad from the flood of evacuees." The sheer number of people put an incredible strain on the city's resources. Tatiana Okunevskaia compared Tashkent to a "leech that has sucked its fill." It is "bursting," she wrote, "there is nowhere left to settle, nothing to eat."

The struggle for survival on the Tashkent front fell disproportionately on the shoulders of women, who accounted for nearly two-thirds of the city's evacuee population. As Nadezhda Mandelstam put it in a letter to a friend, "in general there are a lot of people, but they are all women."

Many women were faced with the task of supporting themselves, their children, and their elderly parents. Tatiana Lugovskaia wrote in a letter that "I have become the head of a fairly large family: two infirm—Mama and Volodia; Polia, who came with us; and Liubochka, whom I befriended here in Tashkent."

Sovfoto

Daily life in Tashkent, moreover, was not easy. Olga Boltianskaia described her daily routine in her diary: "I have to walk a lot … to sell things at the market, purchase and lug home fuel from the market, stand in line for bread and at the cafeteria for soup and dumplings. I walk all day, covering terrible distances as the trams aren't running, and I come home, and it is like a cellar in our room—I have to heat the stove, prepare dinner, clean up, and so on. Toward evening I feel faint."

The heavy burden that fell on women's shoulders took its toll. Lugovskaia confided in a letter that "I never in my whole life felt like such a baba. I am very tired of this emancipation…and I want to lean my head on somebody's shoulder, but now, of course, is not a time to even dream about it." It was, in Olga Boltianskaia's words, a "terrible period for women."

Letters intercepted by the censors and excerpted for a report on the needs of the families of servicemen in Tashkent present a bleak picture of life behind the front lines. "I am living through difficulties the likes of which I have not yet encountered in my life," wrote one woman. "Life is a full-blown nightmare," another wrote to her husband. "It would be better to live under bombardment than in these conditions. It is a slow death."

Tashkent, which had seemed like an oasis from afar, now appeared to be, in Tatiana Okunevskaia's words, an "émigré hell." Even the climate, one of the city's main attractions, was a source of seemingly endless misery. As one Muscovite complained in a desperate letter to authorities back in Moscow, "I cannot even describe how tormented I have been and continue to be at present. In the summer it became even more difficult because of the heat. I have malaria and my son is growing sickly thanks to the climate, which does not agree with him."

Olga Boltianskaia's doctor even recommended she leave Tashkent. "In the north," the doctor told her, "it would be easier for me." The two most persistent causes of complaint, however, and the source of seemingly endless torment, were the daily struggle for food and the search for shelter.

A GOOD STAR

Tashkent was home to tens of thousands of displaced people during the war and ranked among the most significant reception sites for evacuees in the country. It was not for nothing that the poet Iulia Drunina christened the city a "good star." Referring to the "women and children" who flocked to Tashkent during the war, she wrote: "Yes, it really was a good star! And the most generous city on earth."

As the many people who were refused entry attests, however, the gates of the city were not open to all. Nor was life in Tashkent easy. Aleksander Wat, reflecting on conditions in the fabled "city of bread," could not but be ironic: "I, too, was in Tashkent: hunger, typhus from hunger."

A panoramic photo of civilians and soldiers fleeing the fighting in the Ukraine, 1941. Artists, writers, intellectuals, Party officials, and other prominent individuals often received privileged treatment during the evacuations.

The deprivation and difficulties that characterized daily life in Tashkent were in no small measure a function of the war. Loss of territory and resources coupled with the necessity of shifting economic production from a civilian to a military footing put a significant strain on the Soviet state and its capacity to provide for the population.

At the same time, the war set the limits of the Soviet system into stark relief. Access to scarce state-supplied resources was dependent on status, institutional networks, and connections.

Russian historian Militsa Nechkina later recalled a "conversation between people in the film industry on the train" to Tashkent. "One of them, a prominent cinematographer, almost in tears, said to the other: 'I don't want to be a refugee.' 'You are not a 'refugee,' his friend reassured him. 'You are an honored evacuee' [pochetnyi evak]." The friend was quite right. "Honored evacuees" and refugees lived in very different circumstances.

That said, not even "honored" evacuees were above the struggle to survive. Ironically, even those who were rescued by the state were sometimes left to languish in the rear. Akhmatova had been flown out of the city of Leningrad, but she nonetheless had to rely on friends to secure access to both shelter and sustenance.

As Boris Romanov, likewise flown out of Leningrad, remarked of his evacuation in a letter to a friend: "Instead of the salvation of the golden fond—illness and poverty." "Illness and poverty" could not but breed frustration with the Soviet state. That said, the country was at war. For the most part, moreover, evacuees regarded the war not simply as "a war," but as "our war."

Whether recalled with nostalgia or bitterness, for those who lived through it the evacuation was an experience not to be forgotten. In historical scholarship and fiction it is common to focus on the "frontline experience" as a defining moment in the lives of an entire generation. For the many people who did not serve on the front, however, the evacuation rather than the front defined their wartime experience. As Iania Chernina later remarked, "Tashkent is my war."

Evacuation constituted a journey into the unknown, from which few returned unchanged. Samarii Zelikin observed, "in the moment when we crossed the threshold of our home and set out for the train station, my world was completely transformed."

As he put it on another occasion, "my generation was in many ways formed by the evacuation." □

GI PHOTO ALBUM

AN ARMY MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHED HIS UNIT'S ODYSSEY ACROSS EUROPE DURING WORLD WAR II.

BY NEAL FAUSSET

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1. The 809th Tank Destroyer Battalion prepares to move out from the French port of Le Havre on January 22, 1945. The equipment consists of M20 command and reconnaissance cars belonging to the 809th's A Company. The M20 was a variant of the M8 Greyhound, with the turret and 37mm cannon removed. **2.** My father, Major Louis R. Fausset, photographed on February 3, 1945 (his 26th birthday), near Maucomble, France. The battalion was en route to the front lines in Holland and bivouacked for 10 days in Maucomble (approximately 75 miles northeast of Le Havre, in upper Normandy). The battalion's first combat action would occur on February 20 near the town of Berkelaar, Holland. **3.** The effects of what the Russians call *rasputitsa* (sea of mud) that occurs due to spring snowmelt. Here a kitchen truck belonging to the reconnaissance company attached to battalion headquarters is stuck in hardened mud. (Photo taken April 21, 1945, in Halberstadt, Germany.) **4.** Members of the reconnaissance company (attached to battalion headquarters) pose with a souvenir banner of the National Socialist Women's League, an organization that collected scrap metal, provided refreshments to German troops at railroad stations, and disseminated Nazi propaganda materials to women. **5.** A German medic lies dead near Linne, Holland, February 27, 1945. The 809th was supporting the 314th Infantry Regiment, 79th Infantry Division, attacking through Linne toward the Roer River, and stood ready to repel any German armored counterattacks. The battalion crossed the Roer River on February 28, 1945.

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THE 809TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION WAS an independently attached unit of the U.S. Army. The battalion was activated on March 18, 1942, at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, and remained in the United States through most of the war. The unit shipped out for the European Theater of Operations (ETO), arriving in Liverpool, England, on December 8, 1944. The battalion arrived at the port of Le Havre, France, on January 20, 1945, equipped with M18 Hellcat tank destroyers, M8 Greyhound light armored cars, and M20 scout cars. The battalion commanding officer throughout the war was Lt. Col. W.R. Lawson, Jr.

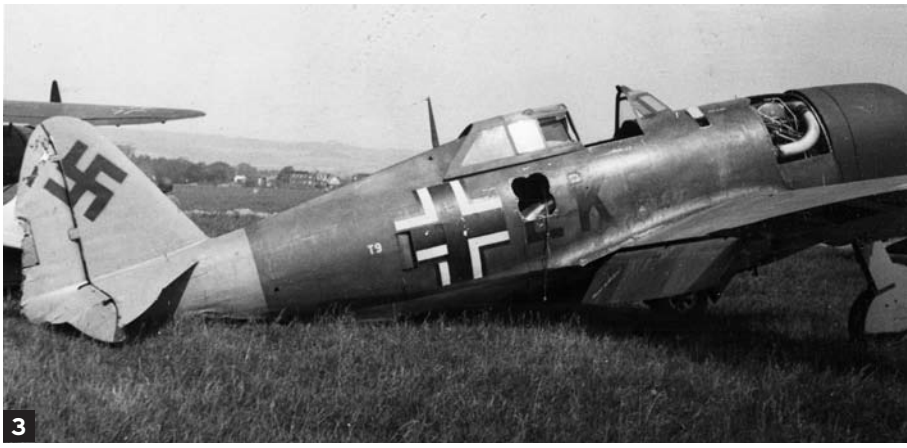
The Hellcat was manufactured by Buick, and was formally called the "76mm Gun Motor Carriage M18." It weighed 17.7 tons, was lightly armored, and was the fastest tracked armored fighting vehicle during the war (top speed 60 mph). This high speed was useful in flanking German tanks, which had relatively slow turret traverse speeds, and allowed the tank destroyer to shoot at the enemy's thinner side or rear armor. On February 9, 1945, the 809th was attached to the 8th

Armored Division and fought in the crossing of the Roer River, near the Holland-Germany border, in late February 1945. On March 20, the unit was attached to the 79th Infantry Division and crossed the Rhine River on the 27th at Bruckhausen, Germany, a suburb of Duisburg. The battalion was then attached to the 95th Infantry Division to participate in fighting around the Ruhr Pocket during early April. The unit was again attached to the 8th Armored Division on April 13, 1945.

In late April, the battalion converted to M36 Jackson tank destroyers and saw additional combat action in the Harz Mountains. Battalion campaign credits include the Rhineland (September 15, 1944, to March 21, 1945) and Central Europe (March 22 to May 11, 1945).

My father, Major Louis R. Fausset, was the battalion's S-3 (operations officer) and took a number of photos of his unit's time in the ETO. He attained the rank of full colonel and retired from the Army in 1972. He returned to college on the G.I. Bill, and graduated from the University of Idaho with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1977, the same day I graduated from Boise State University. He passed away on November 10, 1999, at the age of 80, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. □

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are interested in publishing photos taken by other veterans. Please contact the editor at WWIIQuarterly@gmail.com before sending any photos.

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1. An American peers into the hatch of a knocked-out Panzerkampfwagen Tiger Ausf. E (Tiger I) heavy tank in the Harz Mountains near the town of Schierke, April 29, 1945. **2.** German prisoners of war riding in a 2.5-ton 6x6 truck are being transported to a POW stockade. Photo taken in Wolfenbuüttel, Germany, April 17, 1945. **3.** This photo, taken May 15, 1945, shows a captured Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter aircraft in German markings at Göttingen airfield in central Germany. Göttingen was a base for the Zirkus Rosarius, formed by Hauptmann Theodor Rosarius in 1943, a special test unit of the Luftwaffe high command. The unit tested captured British and American aircraft (called *Beuteflugzeug*) that were repainted with German insignia. The purpose was to discover the enemy aircraft design strengths, vulnerabilities, and performance, and to use the information to enable German pilots to develop countertactics. **4.** Cologne was bombed 262 times during the war. This photograph (looking west) shows a destroyed bridge over the Rhine River with the Cologne Cathedral (built between 1248 and 1880) in the background. The cathedral was, and is, the largest Gothic cathedral in northern Europe. Although the cathedral did sustain damage, it was not destroyed and was restored in 1956. **5.** Troops of the 809th gather near the weather station tower (background) atop Brocken Peak, May 1, 1945. (The weather station is near the world's first television transmission and radar tower, built in 1935; it transmitted broadcasts of the 1936 Summer Olympics from Berlin.) The capture of the peak was one of the last battles of the war in the ETO, and was the last combat action for the battalion. Brocken Peak is the highest point in the Harz Mountains (north-central Germany) at an elevation of 3,743 feet. Although other installations on the peak were destroyed in an April 17 Allied bombing raid, the tower survived intact and remains there today. **6.** An unidentified 809th TD Battalion officer poses in front of an M36 Jackson tank destroyer. The battalion operated with M18 Hellcat tank destroyers from the beginning of their deployment until April 11, 1945 (Baker Company) and April 13, 1945 (Able and Charlie Companies), when they were replaced with M36 tank destroyers in Soest, Germany. **7.** Three GIs inspect a Panzerkampfwagen Tiger Ausf. B (King Tiger, or Königstiger) heavy tank, disabled in the Harz Mountains of north-central Germany near the town of Schierke. Photographed on April 29, 1945. **8.** After crossing the Rhine River on March 27 near Duisburg, my father accompanied the battalion's reconnaissance company along the east side of the river for a brief trip south to Dusseldorf and Cologne. This photo shows some of the destruction in Dusseldorf. **9.** After the Allies began uncovering concentration camps, General Eisenhower directed that as many units as possible visit Buchenwald, outside of Weimar, to bear witness to Nazi atrocities. My father and other officers visited the camp in late May or early June of 1945. Here the visitors are snapping photos of Buchenwald's main gate.

The men of Rudder's Rangers had a suicidal D-Day mission: knock out the Germans' big guns atop Pointe du Hoc.

AGAINST

IN the early morning of June 6, 1944, LCA 668 (Landing Craft, Assault), carrying First Sergeant Len Lomell, Staff Sergeant Jack Kuhn, and most of the 2nd Platoon, 2nd Ranger Battalion, cut through the choppy, green waters of the English Channel.

As the men poked their helmets out of the top of the boat, they were looking at what would be center stage of one of the greatest amphibious landings in history. They saw, heard, and felt the intense bombardment on the shore, demonstrating the full might of the American and British battleships, destroyers, and bombers.

The sight mesmerized the 22 young Rangers. Through the smoke and fire, the men watched as scores of rockets from a naval barge ignited and streaked through the air.

Not far behind Lomell, LCA 858 carried Lieutenant George Kerchner and his 1st Platoon. Massive shells from the battleships passed directly over their heads.

"We were close enough to hear and feel some of the muzzle blasts," Kerchner later remarked. "One of the rocket-firing craft that was near Omaha Beach fired their rockets. This was also a terrifying thing; I think there were a thousand or more rockets on these landing craft, and they fired in salvos of maybe 10 or 15 at a time. It was just one continuous sheet of fire."

"How can anybody live through that?" thought Kerchner.

As the small flotilla of British-crewed craft carrying the Rangers of Force A plowed through waves of the channel, something seemed off. In LCA 668, Lomell knew it. Through the mist and spray, the dark, rocky cliffs of what appeared to be Pointe et Raz de la Percée came into view.

Len Lomell turned to his close friend Jack Kuhn. "Hey, Jack! Look at this. That's not the Pointe. That's C Company's target."

Kuhn nodded.

Lomell moved across the crowded landing craft towards the British coxswain who was piloting the craft and asked him if they were headed in the right direction. The coxswain nodded affirmatively.

Lomell pressed the issue. "Are you sure you are right about this?"

From the photos that Lomell looked at during the training exercise, he was sure the 10 landing craft, three DUKWs, and other small boats in Force A were at least two miles off course from Pointe du Hoc and heading in the wrong direction.

In the dense smoke and haze, guiding the flotilla in ML-304 (Motor Launch), Lieutenant Colin Beever of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve was in fact dangerously off course. In Beever's defense, the new 970 radar equipment was at fault. Introduced a month earlier, the equipment tested well in controlled settings but failed on D-Day.

Dog Company and the rest of Force A were mistakenly heading toward Pointe et Raz de la Percée, Force B's objective. The error in navigation would change the course of history by putting Force A nearly 40 minutes behind schedule in reaching their target. About 100 yards from what was clearly Pointe et Raz de la Percée, Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder, commanding the 2nd Ranger Battalion, realized the error and ordered Beever to change course and turn west toward Pointe du Hoc.

The operation's entire timetable was now blown. The follow-on force known as Force C—which included Able and Baker companies and some elements of Headquarters Company of the 2nd Ranger Battalion and Lt. Col. Max Schneider's Fifth Ranger Battalion—would not be heading to Pointe du Hoc because they never received the appropriate radio signal from Force A.

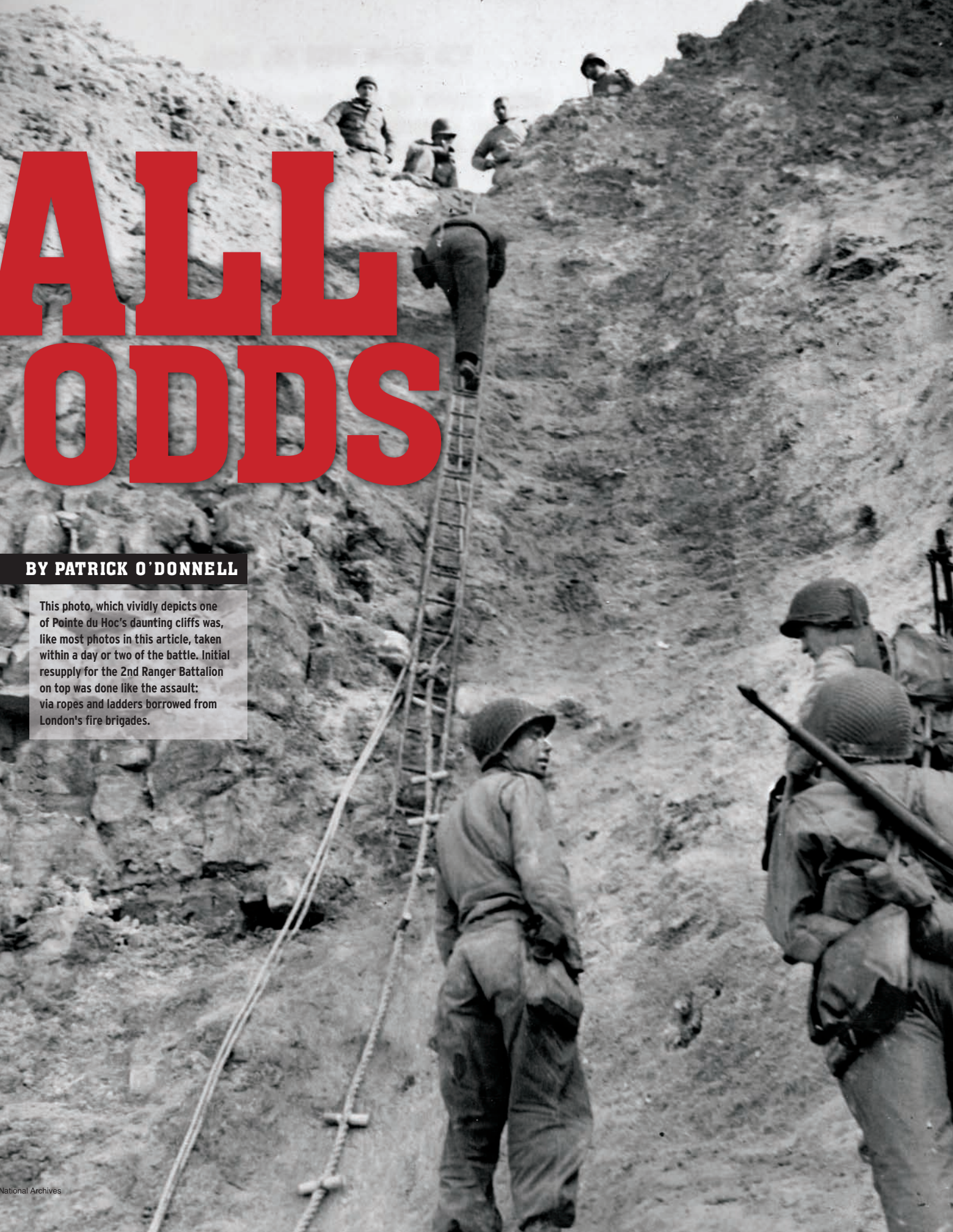
Hence, Force C headed to its second objective, Omaha Beach. Dog Company, along with the rest of Force A, was now on its own and outgunned, heading straight for Pointe du Hoc with no follow-on reinforcements.

Late, but back on course, the DUKWs and assault craft of Ranger Force A raced towards Pointe du Hoc. With the flotilla just a few hundred yards from the Norman coast, the Germans peppered the landing craft with machine-gun fire, hitting several men.

ALL ODDS

BY PATRICK O'DONNELL

This photo, which vividly depicts one of Pointe du Hoc's daunting cliffs was, like most photos in this article, taken within a day or two of the battle. Initial resupply for the 2nd Ranger Battalion on top was done like the assault: via ropes and ladders borrowed from London's fire brigades.



National Archives

As bullets flew by, fierce waves pounded the incoming landing craft, and the icy froth of the churning channel waters soaked the men, who frantically bailed water to avoid sinking.

Most of the men became seasick. The Army had issued them paper bags, but no one had time to use them. "We were taking on water," Men were throwing up as we were bailing seawater out of the landing craft. I know I did."

The turbulent channel waves relentlessly lashed LCA 860, nearly capsizing the craft carrying Captain Harold K. "Duke" Slater, Lieutenant Morton McBride, Sergeant Antonio J. Ruggiero, Technician 5th Class Raymond J. Riendeau, and 17 other men from Dog Company. With his boat a mere 20 yards in front of them, an anxious Lomell stared back at The Duke. The roar of the waves crashing into the boats drowned out the dull hum of the craft's motor.

Inside the British-made boat, Slater and his men feverishly bailed water with their helmets to keep from drowning. Waves from the channel cascaded over the sides of the craft, filling the boat, and drenching everyone inside. They were sinking, and Force A's supply boat was also taking on water.

Remarkably, despite the swirling seas and incoming German fire, the men were focused on a standing bet they had made about who would reach shore first. One hundred dollars would go to the winners. Spawned at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, the Rangers' highly competitive ethos and winning spirit permeated their every bone and fiber. Lomell and the men of LCA 668 were determined to win.

Focused on being the first boat to land on shore and not realizing the deadly force of the channel's currents, several men on board Lomell's boat and Kerchner's landing craft cheered and applauded when they saw Duke Slater's craft going down. Lomell remembers some of the men saying, "That's one less group we have to compete with. We've only got Kerchner now."

Over a half an hour late, Rudder's flotilla, minus Slater's foundering LCA and the Rangers' supply boat, headed for the eastern side of Pointe du Hoc. The original plan called for Dog Company to land on the western side of the Pointe, but Rudder, in an effort to keep everyone together, ordered all craft to land on the eastern side of the 500-yard rocky peninsula, landing at approximately 7:08 AM, nearly 40 minutes behind schedule.

"WE RECEIVED NO ORDERS TO FIRE, BUT THE ENEMY WAS THERE BELOW US SO WE FIRED! AT THAT MOMENT WE WERE NERVOUS BUT ACTIVE. WE FIRED FROM THE EDGE WITH OUR MACHINE GUNS.... WE TARGETED THE AMERICANS AS THEY EXITED THE LANDING CRAFT."

Shortly after landing, communications officer Lieutenant James Eikner signaled "Tilt," indicating that Force A was behind schedule and Schneider's Force C should pursue their secondary objective, Omaha Beach. Mysteriously, the radios were not operating properly.

Acknowledgement was "receipted," according to Eikner, but Schneider's records show that they never got his message; the only message received by the 5th was a word that "sounded like Charlie." Even the guide-crafts' radios were inoperable and unable to send the same message.

These two bizarre circumstances—Beever's navigation error and the inoperable radios—created an auspicious chain of events that resulted in Force C landing on Omaha Beach instead of their primary objective, Pointe du Hoc.

After waiting an extra 10 minutes, with still no message from Rudder affirming his landing on Pointe du Hoc, Schneider redirected his boats to their secondary target, Omaha Beach. This alteration in Schneider's plans changed the outcome of the invasion by putting his men exactly where they were needed, though the initial wave sustained heavy casualties.

The first elements of Force C to reach their objective, "Dog Green" beach, were craft bearing A, B, and Headquarters Companies of the 2nd Ranger Battalion, which landed on a shoulder of the Vierville Draw, where the Germans constructed a deadly Widerstandsnest or "Resistance Nest."

In a bloody scene immortalized in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, waves of men from the 2nd Ranger Battalion were cut down in a kill zone containing numerous bunkers with enfilading machine-gun fire. German antitank guns and mortars mercilessly fired upon the incoming Rangers, who later dubbed the area "The Devil's Garden."

Seeing Dog Green was shut down and the enormous losses A, B, and Headquarters Companies were taking and being waved off by landing control on the beach, Schneider, a veteran of Ranger landings in Africa, Sicily and Italy, ordered the 5th to land on a quieter beach known as Dog White, located next to Dog Green beach. (Elements of Force C landed on the boundary between Green and White beaches. Captain Edgar L. Arnold's B Company landed on Dog Green and the 5th's A Company and the HQ boat on Dog White. Other portions of the 5th landed to the east on Dog Red.)

The extra battalion landing in the right place at exactly the right time proved crucial to the American breakout from Omaha Beach. Near the seawall on the beach, men of Schneider's battalion ran into Brig. Gen. Norman Cota, assistant division commander of the 29th Infantry Division, who uttered the famous command to the men of the 5th: "Rangers, lead the way!" With that, the 5th broke out of the beachhead and flanked the German defenses at Omaha.

Force B's attack on Pointe et Raz de la Percée would also prove critical. Using "bayonets and their bare hands," the men of Charlie Company scaled the cliffs and took out numerous German mortar positions that were zeroed in on Omaha Beach.

At Pointe du Hoc, the delay of Rudder's Force A had given the Germans precious time to recover from the initial shore bombardment and contest the landing. The original Allied plan called for the shore bombardment to cease at 6:30 AM, only minutes

before the Rangers were supposed to begin assaulting the cliffs. (Beever's navigation error likely saved the lives of many of Rudder's men. Their delay in landing on Pointe du Hoc prevented them from being hit by B-26 bombers, which bombarded the Pointe 20 minutes late (between 6:25 and 6:45 AM—the exact time when Force A was scheduled to land). But now, the Germans were ready and waiting for Dog Company's frontal assault, due to the extra 30 minutes afforded by Force A's late arrival.

Nineteen-year-old German Private Wilhelm Kirchhoff of 2nd Battalion, Werfer-Regiment 84 vividly described the scene: "The American landing craft were coming from the [east] and were fully loaded with men and material. When they arrived, the waves were very high and the little boats were thrown about violently. Once they hit the beach, the ramps dropped and the men charged out.

"We received no orders to fire, but the enemy was there below us so we fired! At that moment we were nervous but active. We fired from the edge with our machine guns.... We targeted the Americans as they exited the landing craft. They were firing up [at us] but were out in the open."

Kirchhoff and the other members of his regiment were dug in near a bunker on the eastern edge of the Pointe. All told, about 120 of them, including 15 men from the Werfer Regiment, took full advantage of their superior position and firepower to resist the Rangers' landing.

"From the Pointe we started throwing grenades until we couldn't see them anymore," recalled Rudolf Karl, an artillerist NCO atop the Pointe. "For the Americans down on the beach, the effect would have been devastating. They had no protection there at all."

Machine-gun bullets slapped the water in front of the Rangers' incoming boats and "potato-masher" grenades rained down on the Americans. According to Kirchhoff, even "radio and telephone operators in the trenches ... fired with their weapons. I continued firing my machine gun but also witnessed grenades being thrown. There were also mortars ahead of me [that] fired onto the beach below. I stood up from my trench, picked up my weapon, and kept firing, uncertain how many times I fired."

One Ranger recalled the fury of the German defense: "As we approached these cliffs, all hell broke loose. We could hear the zing of the bullets, and a few artillery shells being lobbed in .... [We] heard the splatter of the machine guns and the German riflemen up on the edge of this cliff shooting down at us. There was a Ranger sitting across from me who was shot in the chest. A Stars and Stripes photographer vomited on me."

National Archives

Marching through the southern English port city of Weymouth, U.S. Rangers head to the boats that will take them across the English Channel to either death or glory.

Fittingly, Rudder's craft hit the 30-yard strip of rocky beach first. Bombs and artillery shells from the Allied ships had blasted away part of the cliff face where it met the narrow beach, creating massive underwater craters near the base of the peninsula.

As Jack Kuhn's landing craft approached Rudder's boat near the rocky shore, Kuhn looked up at the ominous precipice.

Momentarily stunned by what he saw, his Thompson slipped out of his hand and into the several inches of seawater and floating vomit that filled the bottom of the craft.

Inside the cramped boat, Kuhn turned to Corporal Sheldon Bare and snapped, "Bare, I lost my Thompson!"

Bare reached down into the filthy, brackish water and fished out Kuhn's weapon. "Here you go, Jack," he said as the boat neared the shore.

From his position on LCA 668, Lomell ordered the grapnel rockets fired at the cliff. Ironically, "the grapnels seemed like a lifeline, but were just as likely to lead the men to death as to life. Climbing the ropes would take the men out of the frying pan of German machine-gun bullets and potato mashers landing on the beach and into the fire of the battle on top of the cliff."

Several yards away from Lomell, Fox Company Commander Captain Otto Masny tensely estimated when to fire the grapnels from his boat. He noticed several craft had fired too soon, causing the rockets to fall short and miss the cliff. Masny barked at the British coxswain guiding his craft to the Pointe, "Don't fire those things until I give the word! We've got plenty of time."

To hammer home Masny's order, Lieutenant Richard A. Wintz pulled out his .45. "You drop those gates or let those charges go before I give the order, and I'll put a bullet in your head."

On board LCA 668, the loud explosion caused by the coxswain's firing the grapnel rockets jarred Lomell as he stared at the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc looming in front of him.

SPLASH!

The ramp dropped, and the coxswain barked, "All right, everybody out!"

Lomell's boat had stopped several yards short of the shoreline. "We had amphibious DUKWs but [there were] so many underwater craters they couldn't get in too close to the cliff."

Lomell led the group. As he stepped off the ramp, he completely disappeared from view. A massive underwater bomb crater had swallowed up the first sergeant. The icy water, just 42 degrees, rushed around him as he quickly submerged eight feet below the surface. Bullets pierced the silence underwater as he swam out of the crater and joined the other men, who had avoided the hazard.

"Ow!" Lomell felt a sudden sting of pain through his right side. A German machine-gun bullet barely missed his ribs and went through the fleshy portion of his torso. Not realizing where it came from, Lomell spun around and came face to face with Private Harry Fate.

"Harry, you son of a bitch. You shot me!"

Fate pleaded his innocence. "I didn't do it! I didn't try to kill you!"

"I was about to kill him for doin' it," Lomell admitted later. After all, Lomell had busted Fate from sergeant to private just a few weeks prior. After losing his stripes, Fate had made a veiled threat to Lomell: "That's all right. You know all first sergeants get their due in combat. I'll see you in combat."

Breaking the standoff, Bill Geitz, Lomell's medic, socked the first sergeant in the jaw and knocked him down, yelling, "Len, he didn't do it! He didn't do it!"

The altercation lasted only a few seconds before Lomell snapped out of his rage and focused on assaulting the cliff towering in front of his men.

Minutes later, George Kerchner's LCA 858 touched down next to Lomell's boat. Before the craft landed, Kerchner thought about the half-hour delay and felt an overwhelming sense of foreboding.

"Holy hell," he thought, "someone made a hell of big mistake sending us in here. We'll never get up there."

Kerchner looked in front of him. Twenty feet of murky water stained with a reddish mixture of Ranger blood and clay from the cliffs lay between him and the shore. Kerchner looked back at his men, "OK, let's go!"

As he turned back around, the green lieutenant slipped and found himself submerged in eight feet of water in the same shell hole Lomell had fallen into minutes earlier.

"Oh, hell, here we go!" he thought angrily as he "doggy paddled" to keep his head above the water. The men of 1st Platoon saw what happened and moved around the crater. "I remember being angry because I was soaked ... wringing wet. I turned around and wanted to find someone to help me cuss out the British Navy for dumping me in this eight feet of water," remembered Kerchner.

But the ripping sound of a German bonesaw MG 42 machine gun as it zeroed in on 1st Platoon silenced any cussing Kerchner intended to unload on the British coxswain. From the top of the cliff, the German soldiers relentlessly fired down on the incoming Americans.

As German machine gunner Kirchhoff related, "Until that moment, I had probably fired 10,000 rounds. I had switched barrels several times but the flash hider still sometimes got red hot."

On the beach, a bullet ripped into Sergeant Francis Pacyga's arm. The same bullet blew out the kneecap of Pfc. Lester Harris, causing him to drop his weapon.

BELOW: Pointe du Hoc is shrouded in smoke and dust from bombs dropped by Ninth Air Force A-20 "Havoc" medium bombers, April 15, 1944. Unknown to the Allies, the raid caused the Germans to relocate their 155mm guns over a mile inland. OPPOSITE: Map shows position of the Germans' big guns before they were secretly moved back from the cliffs. To reach them, the Rangers had to climb sheer cliffs and fight their way through closely knit machine-gun and 37mm anti-aircraft gun positions while avoiding minefields.

National Archives

Kerchner, armed with just his .45, grabbed Harris's discarded M1 and led his men to the side of the cliff.

Running about 25 yards down the beach, Kerchner found Rudder. Kerchner informed him that Duke Slater's boat was missing and "presumed capsized," so Kerchner now commanded Dog Company. Under heavy fire, Rudder turned to Kerchner and yelled, "Get the hell out of here and get up and climb that rope!"

As the men of Dog dashed toward the cliff, MG 42 machine-gun bullets kicked up the gravel around them. "I thought I was kicking up pebbles and dirt. But they were actually bullets that were hitting the sand and kicking up the dirt around me," one Ranger explained.

Months of training kicked into gear. The men ran like rabbits towards the base and began to climb. Several Rangers returned fire as they rushed to the ropes, but the German defenders took their toll as more and more Rangers went down.

When Dog started climbing, Sheldon Bare fired at the Germans, but as the men neared the top, he ceased fire. "I stopped firing because I didn't want to hit our men on top of the cliff," recalled Bare.

Then it was Bare's turn to make the hazardous climb. "The ropes were slippery, and the Germans were cutting them. (Some of the grapnels contained burning fuses, which deterred the Germans from cutting the ropes because they mistook them for explosives.) Some dropped grenades," he remembered.

"Further to my left, I saw the grappling hooks that the Americans fired to the top of the cliff. But one of the artilleryman crawled forward and cut the rope," recalled Kirchhoff, the German Werfer-Regiment private. "The Americans were unable to climb up. They remained on the beach but kept trying."

Some of the men, like Private Sigurd Sundby from Dog Company, struggled with the ascent. "The rope was wet and kind of muddy; my hands just couldn't hold. They were like grease, and I came sliding back down. I wrapped my foot around the rope and slowed myself up as much as I could, but my hands still burned."

As Sundby slid back down the rope, he landed near another Ranger. "What's the matter, Sundby, you chicken? Let me—I'll show you how to climb."

Corporal Wilbur K. "Bill" Hoffman described the confusion: "I was assigned a specific rope [and] to a specific [German] gun. I was supposed to do some specific damage. I had a big stick of C-2 in my pocket. I just grabbed a rope, and somebody yelled, 'Hey, hey, that's mine!' They were firing down at us and throwing down potato-masher grenades, and they also cut some ropes. I don't really know how we got up the cliff."

As the 225 Rangers from Assault Force A crowded the tiny beach, machine guns, grenades, and small arms fire peppered them. Making the climb even more perilous, the Germans had also booby-trapped the cliff face with "roller mines." (According to interviews with French civilians living in the area, the Germans had suspended numerous shells in intervals along the cliff face.) Precursors to the IEDs of today, roller mines were old French artillery shells suspended on wires. Cutting the wires would detonate the shells. Accounts suggest that the Germans detonated one shell, causing a landslide near Easy Company climbers.

Lomell soon realized the ropes his boat had fired at the cliff weren't allowing the men to climb fast enough. He ordered the

Rangers to assemble the four-foot metal sections of ladder they carried to assist with the climb. With the ladders in place, Lomell concentrated all of his energies on climbing. Adrenaline coursed through his body, allowing him to ignore the searing pain from the gunshot wound in his side. Exhausted, Lomell's muscles strained to carry him upward.

Climbing next to the first sergeant was 2nd Platoon's radio operator, Sergeant Robert Fruhling. Interspersed with the din of battle, Lomell could hear the ominous sound of crumbling rock as the face of the cliff gave way with each foothold. Running out of strength from making the treacherous hand-over-hand ascent while avoiding enemy fire, the wounded Lomell clung to the wet rope. Straining to lift his body the last few feet, he finally crested Pointe du Hoc.

RRRRRRRRRR!

The incessant fire from the MG 42s rained down on the men. From the top of the cliff, Lomell looked down and spotted Fruhling, who was now near the summit, but barely hanging on. Fruhling cried out for help.

Unable to reach the radioman, Lomell provided covering fire from his Thompson and shouted, "Hold on! I can't help you!"

Lomell then spotted Sergeant Leonard Rubin, an "excellent athlete with a powerful build," and called out, asking him to help the struggling Ranger. Just as Fruhling was slipping down the rope, Rubin grabbed him by the nape of his neck and, with a mighty swing, hoisted him over the top of the Pointe.

"Medic! Medic!" Cries of dying and wounded men sounded up and down the beach.

Ranger medic Frank South struggled to answer each call. South carried on his back what amounted to an aid station, complete with plasma, bandages, and other first aid supplies.

A machine-gun nest on top of the cliff had a "superb enfilading position," South noted. "We were caught in its field of fire."

South scrambled to assist his fellow Rangers. Dodging the machine-gun fire from the cliff, he reached one Ranger with a sucking chest wound and dragged him towards an indentation in the cliff face where it met the beach. There he began to treat the man. Moving as quickly as he could, the medic was soon joined by the battalion surgeon, Doc Block.

As Block looked up from treating one of the wounded Rangers, he saw one of Fox Company's strongest climbers, Sergeant L-Rod Petty, scaling the cliff above him. Each boat had two or three excellent climbers or "top monkeys."

But at that moment, the waterlogged rope was getting the best of Petty. As he slid back down, a nearby Ranger joked, "Hey, L-Rod, you're going the wrong way!"

Petty landed a few feet from Captain Robert W. "Doc" Block of the battalion medical section. As Petty looked over towards Block, the surgeon ordered, "Soldier, get up that rope to the top of that cliff! It's up you're supposed to go."

"Pissed off" Petty acidly snorted, "Go to hell, captain! What's it look like I'm trying to do?"

Petty scrambled back up the rope. Nearby, his close friend and "pet ape" from F Company, Staff Sergeant. Herman E. "Herm" Stein, struggled to make his way up the slick line. Suddenly, Stein felt as if the rock itself was pushing him away from the rope. Stein looked down and realized that his "Mae West," or life vest, had inflated. Tearing it off, he continued to hoist himself up the slimy rope.

THUD! Small arms fire had just hit the Ranger in front of him. Yelling down, Stein barked, "Cole's been hit! Hit the dirt!" so the men climbing below him would stay low when they reached the top of the cliff.

Throughout the carnage, Dog stayed focused on the mission and most of the men in Force A made it to the top. When one man fell, another took his place. By 7:20 AM, nearly all of the 22 men in Lomell's boat successfully scaled the cliff. Sniper, machine-gun, and 37mm antiaircraft fire ripped through the air. Lomell thought to himself, "God damn it, we made it this far; we will beat them! We're in their land. We're gonna regroup here."

As they had been trained to do, small groups of men now set out to complete their mission: find the guns of Pointe du Hoc and destroy them.

Somehow, Sheldon Bare survived the onslaught of machine gun fire and potato masher grenades that rained down while he slowly hauled his 185-pound frame over the top of Pointe du Hoc. But his ordeal wasn't over. More small arms and artillery fire greeted him and the other men of Dog Company like a swarm of angry bees.

Finding unknown reserves of energy, the young Ranger dove into a shell hole occupied by Captain Sammy Baugh, E Company's commander. "A sniper got me,"

Using a mound of rubble created by shelling that made the initial climb during the attack somewhat shorter, Rangers raise supplies to the top of Pointe du Hoc.

National Archives

Baugh told Bare. A bullet had gone through the back of Baugh's hand, piercing the grip of his .45-caliber pistol and exploding the magazine.

"His hand was a bloody mess, so I gave him white sulfa powder and bandaged his hand," recalled Bare. It was Bare's first taste of combat. With the bravado and naiveté that comes with "being only 21 years of age," the green Ranger turned to the severely wounded officer and said, "I'll get that son of a bitch."

Reflecting on the incident 65 years later, Bare said, "I don't know how he knew it was a sniper…. I got out of the crater hole and started in the direction Baugh told me. I don't know how far away the German was from me, but I got out of the crater hole about 15 feet and got shot."

The German bullet seared into Bare's right shoulder and burrowed into his back. It felt like it "almost took my arm off," he recalled. "Mother******! Son of a bitch!" Bare blurted at the German sniper, dropping his rifle and diving back into the hole with Baugh.

After the Allied air forces and warships bombarded Pointe du Hoc with hundreds of tons of bombs, the pockmarked top of the cliff resembled the surface of the moon. The men of Dog Company dashed from one shell hole or bomb crater to another.

The deadly fire of a 37mm antiaircraft gun zipped by. Zigzagging across the landscape, Lomell momentarily leaped into the shell hole shared by the groggy and badly wounded Captain Gilbert Baugh and Sheldon Bare. Lomell noticed Baugh's wound right away. "It blew his hand off, or most of it."

Concerned, Lomell asked him if he was OK. Lomell knew the mission came first but compassionately told both men, "We'll send back a medic."

Leaving the wounded Rangers in the relative safety of the crater, he and a small group of Dog Company men made their way to gun position number four.

When they got there, they stared at the empty emplacement in shock. To deceive Allied aerial reconnaissance, a telephone pole had replaced the 155mm gun that was supposed to be there.

Ranger Sigurd Sundby looked inside the emplacement, which held a tangled bunch of wires. Unsure what the wires were for,

he said to himself, "Well, I better cut them, just in case."

Terrified by the battle going on around him, at that moment Sundby fell victim to the call of nature. "I must have gotten scared, because I had to take a crap, so I pulled my pants down. I took a crap," he explained.

In a textbook example of Ranger tactics, the men, acting on their own initiative, broke up into small groups to achieve their objectives. Sundby separated from Lomell and his small group and emerged from the gun emplacement, bumping into Sergeant Richard J. Spleen. A strong, silent type who "kept to himself," Spleen spotted two Germans firing upon them.

"I see two of them," Spleen said to Sundby. Spleen leveled his M1 Garand at the Germans and "shot up the two Jerries." But they managed to flee into the labyrinth of tunnels connecting the bunkers atop Pointe du Hoc, disappearing into the moonscape.

Another officer then shouted at the two men to go after several snipers who were picking off Rangers on the face of the Pointe. Spleen pointed in the direction of one sniper and the two men split up. Sundby attempted to flank the German by moving around a small knoll.

As he did so, he saw two men from Fox Company behind their machine gun. Sundby approached the weapon, but saw that the gunner had been shot right between the eyes. The other man had been killed, too. "He must have put his head up, and they got him," thought Sundby.

At that moment, Sundby realized that he was standing, making himself an easy target for the snipers. A bullet snapped by his ear as he lunged to the ground.

He landed in a depression that provided cover from the sniper's bullets. Moving forward, he found that he had crawled right into a morass of manure. "You know what it was? It was the darn settling pond where they must drain out the manure for the liquid to fertilize

National Archives

Large craters caused by Allied shells pit the rocky beach below Pointe du Hoc's cliffs. A landing craft disgorging troops and supplies is visible.

their fields," Sundby remembered. Coated in the cow dung, Sundby ran for better cover.

Someone hollered, "Get down!"

Another bullet passed close to his ear.

"And this time I saw it come through a little tree right in front of me," Sundby said, "and I saw the bark snap out. Then I dove down after that. I crawled away, and I got up on the hedgerow again. And I had kind of an idea where the bullet, what direction it was coming from, so I got up there and put my rifle in there, and got behind some brush—it was kind of a bush there. And I was just looking out there, and I couldn't spot that sniper.

"But I figured, I saw a tree out there, and I thought maybe he's up in that tree. So I kept my eye on that. I didn't fire any shots right then because I thought he would move or something, so I could see him. Then I couldn't shoot. So I waited there."

While Sundby was pinned down, Lomell's small group moved toward gun emplacements five and six. Again, the 155mm guns, the focus of their entire mission, were not in their emplacements. Here, too, Lomell noticed the Germans had replaced the steel barrels of the actual guns with telephone poles. At first glance, it seemed the Rangers had undertaken the mission for naught. Where were the guns?

At this point, Lomell had gone through three emplacements without finding any guns. He said to himself, "Jesus Christ, there's no guns here. They gotta be somewhere."

Avoiding the insistent 37mm fire, Lomell dashed for another shell hole. In the crater crouched about a dozen men from Dog Company, including men from George Kerchner's 1st Platoon; Germans in nearby bunkered positions and farm buildings were giving the Dog Company men hell. Several men fixed bayonets on their M1 Garands, planning to make an over-the-top, World War I-like charge. Lomell remembered, "We were gonna charge across. We were gonna come out the shell crater as fast as we could and hit those encasements and see what the hell was there."

Staff Sergeant Morris Webb was one of the first out of the hole. "Webb jumped the gun," remembered Lomell. After ducking rifle and machine-gun fire, Webb dove back into the crater—and directly onto the scalpel-like steel of another Ranger's ten-inch bayonet. It impaled Webb's thigh, digging deep into the muscle. Lomell treated Webb, sprinkling sulfa powder on the fresh wound and throwing a bandage on it.

"Webb, you stay here," barked Lomell.

The charge across Pointe du Hoc had been costly. In the process of moving from one shell hole to another and avoiding German fire, Lomell had lost half of his men—some only wounded and some dead.

Despite the losses, Lomell knew he must complete the mission. "Our mission and the mission of the 2nd Ranger Battalion, D, E, and F Company, was to get up on those cliffs and destroy those guns. The next part of our mission was to establish a roadblock and prevent any vehicles coming from the east with Germans toward Omaha Beach. The third part was to cut off any communications that we could and hold the line."

The men separated into small groups, each trying to accomplish their primary objective of destroying the guns. Their search for the guns developed along three axes. About a dozen men from Dog Company, led by Len Lomell, moved from gun position number six toward the coastal highway. Fox Company paralleled them on the eastern side of Pointe du Hoc. Another pocket of men, led by Sergeant Frank Rupinski of Easy Company, advanced down the middle between the other two groups.

En route to the coastal highway, First Sergeant Lomell and his men knew they had to overcome several bunkered buildings that served as German crew quarters. From his training and his memory of photographs presented at various briefings, Lomell remembered that the Germans had mined the entire area. The Rangers would have to traverse these dense minefields. In addition, the 37mm antiaircraft gun on their right flank was tearing up the area around them, putting up a lot of fire.

As the Rangers advanced upon the bunkered position, Lieutenant Ted Lampres and a couple of E Company men approached Lomell. "What are you doing, Len?" Lampres asked.

"What I'm gonna do is move up and throw a bazooka into them and blow the whole God damn thing up," Lomell replied, moving the bazooka into position. Unfortunately, the loader forgot to pull the pin on the bazooka round, and it failed to detonate.

Meanwhile, the antiaircraft gun bore down on Dog Company. "The son of a bitch was giving us a really hard time," recalled Lomell. Lieutenant Lampres and

National Archives

ABOVE: Two Navy officers from USS *Texas* examine a German pillbox atop Pointe du Hoc. A box of machine-gun ammunition is at lower left, while a dead soldier, covered by blankets, lies at bottom right. OPPOSITE: The battle over, surviving Rangers take a break in a shell crater atop the cliff.

several men moved off to the right flank to try to take out the AA gun.

From the shell hole, Lomell and his men studied the crew quarters. "We're gonna hit 'em hard," Lomell told his men.

The Rangers charged. "We were hooting and hollering, yelling 'EEAAGGHH!!' We wanted to scare the shit out of them," recalled Lomell.

The Americans attacked the quarters, firing their Thompsons and M1s into the buildings. Many of the Germans were unarmed, dashing for their weapons as they were putting on their shirts and uniforms. While some of the enemy fought back tenaciously, others ducked into underground tunnels.

As the Rangers pushed inland in pursuit of the enemy, a creeping artillery barrage exploded behind them.

Lomell's men charged forward to the coastal road with a deadly rain of steel at their backs. The first sergeant's small group included his best friend, Staff Sergeant Jack Kuhn. The two best friends each led a column of men, one on either side of the sunken road. The men soon came across a centuries-old stone barn.

Suddenly, Lomell grabbed Kuhn's arm, threw him into the doorway of the Norman barn, and rushed inside himself. Kuhn was startled. "Why'd you do that?"

"Didn't you see that Jerry kneeling on the road, aiming at us?" Lomell asked in amazement.

Kuhn peeked around the doorway. Two German rounds barely missed the Ranger sergeant.

Lomell poked his tommy gun through a window of the barn and fired at the Germans. He missed. Kuhn went to fire his tommy gun, but a bullet had struck the ammunition clip where it inserted into the weapon, rendering it useless.

Meanwhile, elements of George Kerchner's 1st Platoon came up the side of Pointe du Hoc with Rudder's command group. The 37mm gun continued taking its bloody toll, while small bands of Rangers made their way toward the projected gun positions.

The Germans counterattacked, emerging from craters and trenches and the rubble of Pointe du Hoc. Similar to a game of whack-a-mole, Germans began popping up all around the maze of ruined trenches and underground shelters and bunkers. For the Rangers, the pockmarked surface of the Pointe made it difficult to distinguish friend from foe.

Kerchner rounded up most of his 1st Platoon along with other members of Dog Company. The German AA gun continued to fire at his group while 1st Platoon tried to take it out with rifle fire. Pinned down, they had difficulty even getting a shot off.

In an attempt to flank the gun, Kerchner jumped into the communication trench. "I was by myself at this time, and I have never felt so lonesome before or since in my life because every time I came to a corner in this communications trench, where I had to make a turn to see what was in the next 25-yard section, I didn't know whether I was going to come face-to-face with a German or not."

Kerchner stooped low as he darted through the trench. His loneliness gave way to sadness when he caught sight of Bill Vaughan, one of Lomell's climbing "monkeys." The Ranger officer related, "I realized as soon as I saw him that he was dying. He had been practically stitched across with a machine gun. He wasn't in any pain because he was hit too bad. I knew he was dying."

The lieutenant from Baltimore approached the mortally wounded Ranger and compassionately told him, "Bill, we'll send a medic to look after you."

Kerchner continued skulking cautiously through the trench, eventually meeting up with the rest of his men, much to his relief. Together, they found their way through the labyrinth until it emptied out near the ruins of a farmhouse. Finally out in the open, 1st Platoon pushed on toward the coastal road, their secondary objective.

When Dog Company sergeants Bill Cruz (who had been hit in the arm on the beach before scaling the cliffs, but, like many of the Rangers, he carried on in spite of the pain) and William Robertson reached the top of Pointe du Hoc, they ran into Lt. Col. Rudder. Despite also being wounded, Rudder's charismatic presence inspired the men around him.

The men were told to guard the area that Rudder had designated as his new command post, but the persistent crack of deadly sniper fire filled the air around them.

Sergeant Cruz and another Ranger fired at the sniper, but missed. Suddenly, machine-gun and antiaircraft fire from the 37mm opened up. Rudder looked at both men and said, "Go after it."

Whenever the Rangers opened fire, artillery rained down on their heads. As they

crawled forward through the countless shell craters, they came upon approximately 10 men pinned down near gun position number six, including Richard J. Spleen of D Company and Harold D. Main of E Company. Together, the Rangers held their fire "for fear of drawing 88 fire."

The small group crawled west in an attempt to get a better position on the German machine-gun nest and the AA gun. Cruz spotted a German soldier waving a helmet on a rifle, attempting to draw the Rangers' fire and expose their positions. "Somebody [in our group] came up from behind and unwisely fired on this decoy. Right away, 88 fire and mortar fire hit."

Because the men were bunched up in the craters, they took off in different directions to avoid being hit in one group. When the men separated, Cruz found himself alone in the maze of tunnels and craters. He yelled out, "Is anybody there? Is everybody all right?"

Sergeant Main responded, "[We're] OK."

Cruz waited for 15 minutes. Small-arms fire crackled in the distance. The Ranger NCO started crawling back across a crater and took fire from snipers. He reached a trench near gun position six, where he spotted Spleen, who was recently separated from Sundby, and two other men in a trench right nearby. "All the sudden, [a] lot of firing, machine guns and machine pistols ... [began hitting] close to the west. He saw Spleen's men throw down their guns out of the trench they were in, surrendering." Cruz kept quiet, hugging the ground.

"The firing died down and after the first few seconds, he saw no one. Later, crawling out back toward the command post he passed a pile of weapons, lying on the ground near gun position number six—eight or nine rifles, some pistols, and four Thompsons." Later, the Rangers found some of the packs from the captured group. Cruz was the sole survivor.

BILL HOFFMAN RECALLED:

"HE HAD NO HEAD AND NO BLOOD. HE WAS COVERED WITH YELLOW DYE. THE SHRAPNEL JUST TOOK HIS HEAD OFF, NICE AND CLEAN. HE WAS ALL YELLOW. I SAID TO MYSELF, WHAT THE HELL IS THAT? IT WAS MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO DEATH IN THE WAR."

National Archives

Another Ranger also found himself alone. Bill Hoffman was the only Ranger in an underground bunker atop Pointe du Hoc. "I managed to get over to a bunker, not the one I was supposed to be in, but I got in there. They were shelling us pretty good. Inside the bunker things got quiet."

Hoffman ended up in a room full of German bicycles, where he considered his next course of action. "I was sitting there trying to make up my mind when I heard this God-awful explosion in the corridor between the rooms. It scared the hell out of me." "What is that? What am I gonna do?" Hoffman wondered.

After a second explosion, Hoffman threw one of the bicycles out into the hallway. Seeing fins from a bazooka round nearby, he thought, "Oh, my God, they have our equipment!" Suddenly, a voice barked out, "Come out with your hands up!"

"Geez, they speak really good English," Hoffman thought. After sticking his hand out into the hallway to make sure they weren't planning to shoot, he slowly emerged. In front of him stood an American lieutenant and a sergeant, who was holding a grenade.

"Hey, Sarge! What are you going to do with that?" asked Hoffman.

"I'm going to roll it right down that hallway," replied the sergeant.

"What are you doing in here?" the lieutenant asked Hoffman.

"I'm getting out of the artillery fire."

"We got word there were Germans in here," said the lieutenant.

"There are no Germans here, just me," Hoffman replied.

Bleeding and exhausted from climbing and fighting through the trenches, First Sergeant Lomell looked at his remaining men and said, "Follow me." The firefight in the farm buildings had taken its toll.

Still, Lomell led the most sizable force on top of Pointe du Hoc. The small band headed along a dirt road that led to the blacktop coastal road. (In 1944, the coastal road was called GC32. Today it is known as D-514.) The men made their

way towards the intersection. Abruptly, a wall of small-arms fire enveloped the Ranger patrol. Jack Conaboy, one of Lomell's platoon sergeants, was flattened in the middle of the inter- section.

"Len! Len! I'm hit!"

"Where're ya hit?"

"In the ass," responded Conaboy.

"Well, get the hell over here," said Lomell. With a burst of adrenaline, Conaboy jumped up and ran towards the ditch where Lomell and the others had taken cover. Conaboy dropped his pants, and Lomell inspected the wound. The bullet didn't go all the way, through.

"You're lucky; you've got a souvenir here." Lomell pulled out the bullet and packed the wound with sulfa powder. After taking care of Conaboy, Lomell's group cautiously made their way down the coastal road. Suddenly, Lomell and Kuhn spotted a platoon of about 35 heavily armed Germans. They knew engaging them would be suicide.

National Archives

The men flattened themselves in the ditch as the Germans marched past. "Three men against 35 was stupid, and it would ruin our mission," recounted Lomell. "So we let them pass."

A stone fence paralleled the road. Suddenly, a German soldier appeared in an opening in the fence and looked down the highway. Not detecting the Americans, he ran across the road and right up to where Jack Kuhn was hiding. Kuhn jumped up and fired point blank with his tommy gun, hitting the German in his chest.

"My slugs must have cut the strap on his weapon, for it fell to the ground about three feet in front of me. The German ran a few steps and dropped."

Johnson asked Kuhn to retrieve the dead German's MP 40 submachine gun. As Kuhn attempted to grab the machine pistol, he saw another German soldier aiming at him. "I had no way to protect myself and felt I was about to be shot."

Just then, bullets from Lomell's Thompson ripped into the German, killing him, but not before one of the enemy's bullets struck the road next to Kuhn, barely missing him. At this point, Lomell and Kuhn decided to have the men pair up and keep searching for the missing guns: "There's a minefield on our left full of mines. 'Well,' we decided, 'there's nobody but us, so let's split up into twos.'"

Lomell and Kuhn set off together and soon discovered tire tracks in the lane. Lomell realized that the grooves couldn't have been made by a simple farm wagon—the impressions were far too deep. Something massive had crossed the earth. "We figured we ought to take a look."

Lomell and Kuhn moved down the sunken road, which cut through several pastures and high hedgerows. "You could have hid a column of tanks in it, that's how deep it was," recalled the first sergeant.

The two Rangers carefully traversed the road, moving about 100 yards down the country lane. Lomell scouted out the position while Kuhn covered him, then the two men switched off, or "leapfrogged," as they made their way deeper and deeper into German territory. Suddenly, Lomell and Kuhn came upon a picturesque, lush apple orchard.

"My God, there they are!" Lomell said to himself.

Lomell turned to Kuhn. "My God. Look at them. They're ready to go." The long, 155mm barrels of the guns of Pointe du Hoc loomed directly in front of them.

Five of the K418 guns—the German designation for the former French artillery pieces—had been towed inland and pointed at Utah Beach. They could easily have been turned around and used to fire upon Omaha Beach as well. Netting covered in fake leaves was draped over the five guns. But the sixth gun was mysteriously missing.

Amazingly, not a soul stood guard near the artillery. For over 65 years, historians have debated why the Germans failed to man the guns. The most plausible theory is that when the Rangers took out the German forward observation posts, they took out the German eyes on Pointe du Hoc, severing communication with the gun crews.

As Small Unit Actions notes, "All that can be stated with assurance is that the Germans were put off balance and disorganized by the combined efforts of the bombardment and assault, to such an extent that they never used the most dangerous battery near the assault beach but left it in position to be destroyed by weak patrols."

The Germans could clearly see Utah Beach. It's a mystery why they didn't fire directly on that sector, even without official orders. However, they could see about 75 to 100 Germans assembling several hundred feet away in the corner of an adjoining field.

Getty Images

ABOVE: General Henry "Hap" Arnold, chief of the U.S. Army Air Forces, and Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower inspect a 155mm German gun discovered hidden in the Normandy woods. OPPOSITE: Rangers relax or get medical treatment at Lt. Col. Rudder's rough-hewn command post while German prisoners march past Rudder, top right. Below him, the U.S. flag is laid out to let Allied ships know that the area is under American control.

"The Germans were in various states of undress," noted Lomell. "They were putting jackets and shirts on; they were being rallied. They were being talked to by some officer standing in his vehicle. This is now about eight in the morning."

It appeared to Lomell that the group included the 35 heavily armed Germans who narrowly missed discovering him and Kuhn just minutes earlier.

Lomell asked Kuhn for his incendiary grenade, adding it to his own. With Kuhn covering him, Lomell climbed over towards the guns. Armed with only a submachine gun, his .45, and two thermite grenades, he moved into position near the artillery. He placed a thermite grenade on two of the guns. "The thermite grenade was special for this type of action because we were going to lay them on the moving parts of the artillery and destroy the movable gears in the guns."

Lieutenant Lomell pulled the pins. POP! A molten, metal-like substance flowed over the parts, seeping into the crevices and welding them together so that they were inoperable. Remarkably, the nearby Germans didn't detect the first sergeant.

Kuhn wrapped his field jacket around the butt of his tommy gun, using it to smash the sights of all five artillery pieces. "I didn't know if I was going to get back, so I wanted to do as much damage as possible."

Lomell and Kuhn's actions—the actions of two men who were willing to risk their lives for the mission—had a profound impact on the entire invasion.

Not thinking about anything other than the mission, Lomell scurried back over to Kuhn and whispered to him, "We've got to get more grenades."

Kuhn and Lomell dashed back a hundred yards or so down the road, where they met other men in their platoon and asked for their incendiary grenades. With his field jacket full of incendiaries, Lomell ran back towards the guns with Kuhn at his side.

When they reached the guns, Kuhn trained his Thompson on the Germans in the field. The first sergeant placed thermite grenades on the three remaining guns. As Lomell finished rigging the last field piece, Jack said, "Hurry up! Hurry up!"

After pulling their pins, Lomell scrambled over a nine-foot-tall hedgerow, where Kuhn was standing.

Then "the whole world blew up," as Lomell and Kuhn flew off the hedgerow and onto the sunken road. "Dust and the stones and the brush came out of the sky. Ramrods and all kinds of things fell around us."

"What the hell just happened?" asked Lomell. Unbeknownst to the two men, Sergeant Frank Rupinski from Easy Company had detonated an ammunition store near the guns, causing a massive explosion. (Rupinski had led a patrol from E Company and advanced on the guns from the east. Accounts differ, but besides blowing the ammunition store, his group may have placed grenades in the barrels of the guns after Lomell had already disabled them.)

It was now approximately 8:30 AM. Two Dog Company Rangers, Leonard Lomell and Jack Kuhn, had achieved what scores of bombers dropping hundreds of tons of bombs, and the massive 14-inch guns of the battleship *Texas,* as well as a constant bombardment from off-shore destroyers had failed to achieve. Thanks to them, five of the six guns of Pointe du Hoc would never fire again. (After locating the sixth gun nearby, a patrol from Easy Company soon eliminated it.)

Rejoining the other men, Lomell dispatched two volunteers to relay the news that they had accomplished the mission. Ironically, he chose Private Harry Fate, the man he accused earlier of shooting him in the side. Sergeant Gordon Lunning accompanied Fate.

Going back through the country roads, traversing the moonscaped surface of Pointe du Hoc, Lunning and Fate fought their way back to the German bunker that Rudder had converted into a command post. The runners from D Company arrived at the command post at approximately 9:00 AM, where Lunning encountered Lieutenant James Eikner and told him the news. Eikner

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Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

The horror and chaos of battle is captured in this expressionist painting of Marines in combat by artist Harry Reeks. Chaplain E. Gage Hotaling recalled being attacked on February 22, 1945, by Japanese aircraft on Iwo Jima: "They came in fast from the sea right over the beach and up to the airfield and dropped their bombs right at the edge of the airfield, about 200 yards from us. That scared me so that I started to shiver again, and shivered and shook for quite a while."

DOING God's Work IN HELL

A U.S. Navy chaplain's Iwo Jima diary provides a personal glimpse into the thoughts of a young pastor performing services for the living and the dead.

BY REVEREND E. GAGE HOTALING

BACKSTORY: *The Reverend E. Gage Hotaling, the son of a Baptist minister, was born in Wellsville, New York, on January 21, 1916. He grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, and graduated from Brown University, class of 1935, and Andover Newton Theological School in 1940. After graduating in 1944 from the Naval Chaplains School in Newport, Rhode Island, he joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 27. Serving as a chaplain in the Graves Registration Section of the 4th Marine Division, he spent 26 days on Iwo Jima—a vicious island battle that claimed the lives of over 6,800 Americans and 20,000 Japanese.*

His son, Kerry, who provided this magazine with excerpts from his father's war diary, said that his father "felt that he would not be able to preach to this generation of people if he did not experience what they were going through." The chaplain passed away in May 2010 after a long life preaching in many parishes in Massachusetts.

This excerpt from his diary begins in January 1945, as the 4th Marine Division, part of a larger task force of 70,000 Americans, prepared to depart Hawaii for the Japanese-held island of Iwo Jima.

January 26, 1945: Went ashore on my last liberty…. I went down to Waikiki where I had lunch. When I looked at the menu I saw they had clam chowder and sirloin steak. I had them both and then finished my dinner with a bottle of milk. Previous to getting the milk, I had a chocolate milk shake. That was the best dinner I had had in ages, and my bill came to only $1.65. The steak was rare and cooked just right to suit my taste. Then with my belly full of chow, I went over to the beach and laid in the sand for a while before going in for a dip. It was a delectable experience all told.

January 27, 1945: Today we left Honolulu Harbor and the ships carrying our division all set sail in a convoy for our destination, which we learned yesterday was to be Iwo Jima. So today was a typical day in the life of a Navy chaplain serving with the Marines on the way to an operation.

The day started at 0710 when Gus called me for breakfast. I had laid in the sack for a few minutes, then dressed and went in and had my orange juice, bacon, toast, jam, and coffee. Then went back and read for an hour. The rest of the morning was spent in writing some V-mail letters and shaving.

Then for noon chow there was a hamburg[er], brown-eyed peas, potatoes, salad, and

For many men going into, or surviving, a battle, spiritual reinforcement was essential. Here a U.S. Navy priest conducts Mass for a group of Marines atop Iwo Jima's Mt. Suribachi, 1945.

National Archives

lemon meringue pie. After lunch I read some more and then hit the sack for a couple of hours. Then a nice, warm shower pepped me up for dinner. Chow tonight was bean soup, roast beef, potatoes, string beans, tuna fish salad, and apple turnover. Then I had a couple of brownies from Dell's Christmas package, changed from my khakis to my dungarees, got out the "riveter" to type a letter to Dell [Adell, his wife], read some more, and then hit the sack.

January 28, 1945: Today we had church service on the open deck for the first time, and it was very inspiring. The sun was shining beautifully and there were nearly 300 present.

The new censorship regulations were also announced today so that now we can write that we are on shipboard and on our way to combat.

January 30, 1945: To say that I am dreading combat is to put it mildly. They have already started to brief us about our target, and we know enough about it to know that a good many swell American boys are going to get hurt. Our intelligence tells us that there are some 13,000 Japs on Iwo and the island is very heavily fortified with all kinds of guns.

Even the doctors who have been with the 4th Division in other operations say this is going to be worse than any of the previous invasions. So I try to think of everything else I can except the operation, and I have so many plans for our postwar happiness, if, if….

February 1, 1945: We crossed the International Date Line today, so that we actually jumped from January 31st to February 2nd. We're now right down in the tropics where it is warm all the time, day and night, and in our berthing compartments it is terribly stuffy, especially at night when everything is shut up, for we have to proceed in total blackout all night.

February 3, 1945: One of the things we have quite often on board ship as well as back in camp is avocado. It makes quite a delicious salad, and I'm getting to think of it as a real delicacy. You sort of have to get used to the taste of it just like ripe olives, but once you do it's really good.

National Archives

After the island was secured, Navy Chaplain John H. Craven conducts services for Marines on the hatch of a troop transport leaving Iwo Jima.

February 4, 1945: We had church at 10:30 this morning on the open deck and we had the largest crowd yet. The sun was pouring down with all its intensity, yet the men sat or stood and sweated and didn't seem to mind it one bit. It was a real thrill for me to preach to that number of men crowded right around me.

In addition, we had a large number of officers present this morning for the first time, and it did my heart good to see them. Then after the sermon, Chaplain [Walter J.] Vierling held a communion service. When we were finished, we both had sweat through our clothes, because we always wear our black robes over our khaki.

My sermon today had some unexpected results. I received a large number of compliments for it, and one boy spoke to me afterwards to tell me that a small group had started to meet each night at 8:00 on deck for a hymn sing and prayer together. He asked me if I would come, and I said I'd be glad to, so I attended my first meeting tonight.

There were about 20 there and they sang everything from memory. Can you imagine 20 Marines going into battle sitting on the deck of a warship and singing "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam"? Well, that actually happened tonight, for that was one of the songs that the boys sang. It was an hour of real inspiring fellowship. Now I'm looking forward to meeting with them each night. It will do me a lot of good, and help me during the lonely evenings.

February 5, 1945: We arrived at Eniwetok today and the first thing they did was to send the mail orderly ashore with a big sack of outgoing letters. And then, when he came back, he had several bags full of those precious morale builders. I'm rationing my mail and opening only a part of it each day, so as to make it last for those hectic days just before combat.

When I opened my birthday package from Dell, I passed the brownies around. They tasted very good, being only a little hard. Dr. Saint asked me if my wife made them and I said, "YOU BET!" Then he said, "Well, if you're happily married, and she's a good

cook, that's all that matters!"

February 6, 1945: After meeting with the boys in the fellowship group at night, I suggested that we meet each afternoon also from 1 to 2 on deck so that we could see what each other looked like in the daylight and really get acquainted. So we have done that.

Most of the boys are southerners and, of course, they are much better at going to church than the boys in the north. I have also started to teach them some of the choruses I used to use at Lime Rock [Connecticut]. So now I am beginning to feel that I am a little bit more useful than I have been. There is something definite to look forward to each day, the informal chat at 1, and the fellowship meeting at 8.

I have also had an interesting time talking with a Jewish boy, Nate Friedman, who is married to a Baptist girl and wants to be baptized and join her church. So I have met him several times and talked to him about Christian beliefs, baptism, etc.

February 8, 1945: I discovered that the dentist who bunks next to me, Dr. Edward MacFarland, grew up in the Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church in Pittsburgh and knows Uncle Albert very well. He has been fixing up my teeth. I've had 3 filled so far, with 1 more to go, and possibly another that he's going to take an X-ray picture of. The equipment on this ship is the very best and the very latest. Think of having an X-ray machine right there, and taking a picture of anything that is not obvious, and then having it developed in five minutes!

February 11, 1945: We arrived at Saipan today and they brought us a big bunch of mail which made us all feel pretty good. This morning it was my turn to play the organ at church, and we just got through the service before it rained, which is the first rain I've seen in more than six weeks.

February 13, 1945: Spent a couple of hours taking a sun bath on the bridge deck. We've been cruising around off Tinian, and with our field glasses it's lots of fun watching our ships and planes and shore installations, for they are plentiful out here, and it makes us feel good to see them.

February 16, 1945: Today they impregnated the clothing of all the Marines on the ship with insect repellent, so that when we land, we won't have to worry about all kinds of insect bites. The spirit of the boys is good, and even though they are very near the target now, I haven't detected any more signs of nervousness than were evident several weeks ago.

I've read 26 books since coming on board ship, 9 of them being Ellery Queen mysteries, 5 Charlie Chan, and 5 humorous novels by Thorne Smith.

February 17, 1945: Today has been marked by more feverish activities than any previous day. Since the landing is to be made day after tomorrow, the rations were passed out as well as ammunition for the rifles. I have to carry one too, although goodness knows what I would do with it if I had to use it. I've certainly got an awful mess of equipment, and I'm beginning to wonder how I'll ever get it all ashore.

February 18, 1945: We had 2 Protestant services today, with over 300 present this morning and nearly 200 this afternoon. I presided this morning with [Earl D.] Sneary preaching, and then I assisted him in the communion service. This afternoon I preached, with Vierling presiding and taking charge of communion. It was a real challenge to know what to say, when you realize that some of the boys were probably hearing their last sermon.

I started out with my pictorial description of St. Paul walking to his death. Then I went on to say that he was the first Christian to make an amphibious landing in Europe, and I said he went through the same kind of hardships we are facing. I had 2 points, first, an amphibious landing tests a man's courage to the very limit, and second, it tests his faith to the limit. The boys listened very carefully, and I think I pitched the ball over the plate. Hope so anyway.

Tomorrow is D-day, and I am scheduled to go ashore the day after, if the beach is cleared away enough so that they can land the support troops. Tonight's chow was superb—tenderloin steak with all the fixings, and ice cream. Then tomorrow there will be an early breakfast of ham and eggs for those going ashore.

February 19, 1945: When I got up this morning and looked out, I saw Iwo Jima for the first time, all clouded in smoke because of the terrific naval bombardment which continued right up till H-hour at 0900. We were anchored some 6 or 7 miles offshore as were the other transports. There wasn't much to do this morning, as all the assault troops had left the ship early. The medical department quickly transformed the officers quarters into a dispensary, for the casualties were to be put in our quarters.

National Archives

An armored vehicle (right) burns while U.S. Marines hit the black volcanic beach at Iwo Jima, February 19, 1945. Iwo Jima would be the Marines' bloodiest battle of the entire war.

The first casualties arrived aboard around noon, and they kept coming in all afternoon. That meant we had to move into one of the enlisted men's compartments until we went ashore.

I took a nap in the afternoon, and when I got up and looked out, I found we were very close to shore, for we had moved up close to pick up casualties. About 6 we moved back out to where it was safe, as some shells had landed pretty close to us. The news kept coming in to us, so we knew the boys were having a much tougher time on shore than was expected.

February 21, 1945: The nights have been cold, and I mean cold. Yesterday dawned dark and rainy and it was cold and damp all day, with high waves. We stayed out all day, and took in only a few casualties. We were scheduled to go ashore, but the fighting was so terrific that the Graves Registration Section was not ordered in until this morning. About 10:30 we piled into a Higgins boat and started for shore. The waves were very high, and we all started to feel woozy in our stomachs.

When we got to the control boat, we were told to go in and pick up casualties near the fuel dump, which was burning very fiercely. So we all took off our packs and rifles and stacked them in a corner of the boat.

The coxswain landed us about 150 yards from the burning dump. We ran ashore and looked around but could see no casualties. Then the coxswain got scared and shoved off with all of our packs and equipment on board.

Meanwhile, we darted from one shell hole to another on the beach. The beach was cluttered with all sorts of boats and amphtracks and other vehicles that had gotten bogged down in that awful volcanic sand, the worst stuff I have ever seen. Walking in it can be compared only to walking through a foot of new-fallen snow.

After an hour or so on the beach, we located Capt. Nutting who knew where the cemetery was supposed to be, so he led us there. I lay in a shellhole and ate my lunch out of a can of C-rations which I found in the sand. Then in the afternoon we dug our foxholes, after which I started to look around for ponchos so that every man in our outfit [the Graves Registration Section] would have a poncho that night even though we had no blankets.

February 22, 1945: Last night was plenty cold. I had on a flannel shirt, my dungaree jacket, and my field jacket, with 2 pairs of heavy socks on. We slept with our helmets and boots on. I wrapped the poncho around me like a blanket and went to sleep.

About midnight I woke up cold and started to shiver. I pulled the poncho around me closer than I had before and finally went to sleep again. About 4, I woke up and heard the sound of approaching planes and knew they were Jap planes. They came in fast from the sea right over the beach and up to the airfield and dropped their bombs right at the edge of the airfield, about 200 yards from us. That scared me so that I started to shiver again, and shivered and shook for quite a while.

Finally morning came and some of the boys built a fire and we all got around it and got warm. I spent most of the day in scouting the beach for ponchos, blankets, and shelter halves for the boys and secured almost enough blankets for all. But it also rained hard all day, and we all got soaking wet. Anyhow we went to sleep tonight with a poncho and blanket under us, and we wrapped ourselves in another blanket.

February 23, 1945: The sun came out this morning and dried things off, and it surely felt good. This morning the flag was raised over Mt. Suribachi, and we looked at it through our field glasses and thrilled at the sight.

February 24, 1945: Last night was one I shall not soon forget. We had our second air raid right after dark, and all of the hundreds of ships in the harbor fired up tracer bullets at the [enemy] planes. It was as pretty a sight as I have ever seen, and fortunately they drove the planes away.

But last night was also the night of the great artillery duel. All of our artillery was scattered along the beach, and the Japs shelled our beach all night, so that all the shells passed over our heads, going first one way and then the other. It was a steady performance all night.

"One of the things I shall always remember is the sight of hundreds of Marines walking through the cemetery with their heads bared looking at the grave markers to see if they can find their buddies. When they see a familiar name, they pause for a moment or kneel before the grave and say a prayer."

National Archives

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ABOVE: Navy Chaplain Lt. (j.g.) John H. Galbreath (right center) kneels beside a badly burned Marine as Navy doctors and corpsmen administer to the wounded at a makeshift Iwo Jima aid station, February 20, 1945. OPPOSITE: Fourth Marine Division chaplains on Iwo Jima following services at 4th Marine Division Cemetery (left to right): George C. Strum, Howard V. Sartell, Sneary (first name unknown), Roger W. Barney, E. Gage Hotaling, John H. Craven, Wilson H. Singer, Harry C. Wood.

This morning we also moved to another foxhole that was vacated by some boys who were moving up toward the front. It was lined with some 96 sandbags on all 4 sides, and we rigged up good shelter over it with a poncho and 2 shelter-halves, so it should be very comfortable for us.

My foxhole buddy is a young 2nd Lt. from Buffalo, Jack Greeno, who graduated from Quantico…. He is the division personal effects officer, and will have charge of sending the personal effects home to the families [of the men killed]. He's a good egg, and we kid each other a lot. He thought I was soft at first because I was a chaplain, but I showed him I could take it, so we get along OK now.

We buried the first row (50 men) in the cemetery today. Ever since we came ashore the men of our outfit have been collecting the bodies, the engineers went over the cemetery area with mine detectors, and the bulldozer has been scooping out a large trench.

When the whole row was buried, 2 of the boys went with me and placed a flag on each individual grave while I said the committal service over it. Here is what I said: "You have gallantly given your life on foreign soil in order that others might live. Now we commit your body to the ground, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. May your soul rest in eternal peace. Amen."

February 28, 1945: We have had mortar shells and sniper fire which have interfered tremendously with our cemetery work. A mortar shell landed right by the bulldozer in the cemetery this noon and scared us plenty, for it was only about 50 yards away.

Then this afternoon 4 of our men were carrying a body when one of them stepped on a land mine not more than 15 yards from my foxhole. It blew his leg off and injured 2 of the other boys. Then one other day one of our men was hit by a sniper as he was working among the bodies, so we have had 4 casualties among the Graves Registration Section.

March 1, 1945: This morning while walking along the beach I saw some of the men who were on our ship and learned that the transport had unloaded all its equipment on an LSM [Landing Ship, Medium] which had just come in to the beach. I went aboard and discovered my pack and typewriter. Then I went back and told the other fellows in the Graves Registration Section and we went down with a truck and recovered all our gear that had been taken back to the ship the day we came ashore. But my communion kit is still on the transport as I left it with Chaplain Vierling. Now the transport is on its way with a load of casualties to either Saipan or Guam so I won't have my kit for quite some time.

Today the first mail was flown in to us, and I got 6 letters, which were mighty welcome.

March 2, 1945: Today [Division] Chaplain [Harry C.] Wood sent Sneary down to relieve me, and I was told I was to spend the day away from the cemetery, but after a couple of hours of visiting at the division CP and reading my mail, I felt restless and wanted to get back to my job. I told Harry that I didn't need relief.

I guess he has his doubts as to whether I could stand it, for they told me that [since] this was my first operation, I probably wouldn't eat for several days, that I wouldn't sleep, that I would lose weight, that the smell of dead bodies would sicken me and make me puke, and if that wasn't enough, the sight of the maggots and flies crawling all over the bodies would surely finish me. But I haven't missed a meal since we hit the beach nor have I felt sick to my stomach, for I have been determined to stick it out and show them I could take it.

I conducted my first service for the men of my outfit tonight after supper. It was just a short service of scripture and prayer, but it seemed to make them all feel better, as they have been asking for a church service for several days.

March 6, 1945: Went up and visited the division hospital today. One of the doctors said that this has been the "healthiest" island that our men have ever fought on in

the Pacific, in that no one has been sick and there have been no epidemics. But in the hospital they have had at least one major operation to perform every hour of the day and night, as the men have been brought in with every kind of wound in the book—and some not in the book.

March 12, 1945: Three weeks ago this morning our men hit the beach, and the island is not secure yet, for we found about twice as many men and twice as many weapons and twice as much hard fighting as we expected to face. From where we are, we can see the engineers blowing up one cave after another a mile or so away.

March 13, 1945: One of the things I shall always remember is the sight of hundreds of Marines walking through the cemetery with their heads bared looking at the grave markers to see if they can find their buddies. When they see a familiar name, they pause for a moment or kneel before the grave and say a prayer. It has been going on all day long ever since we started to put up the markers.

March 15, 1945: Let it never be said that a man becomes a chaplain for selfish reasons. Even though they pay me $300 a month, I would gladly trade it for the chance to sit in at [my son] Billy's first birthday party tomorrow.

Today was a solemn day here. There were at least 4,000 4th Division Marines lined up around the cemetery long before the hour of dedication. They stood for many minutes in the hot sun without a sign of emotion and without saying a word to their buddies. It was as though they were in some great cathedral where every stone and every pew was sacred.

Nearly a half hour before the ceremony the general [Maj. Gen. Clifton B. Cates] arrived, and all stood at attention as he came into the cemetery. Then at last it was time for the dedication ceremony to start. It was short, far too short to pay the tribute the dead deserved.

There were the Marine Corps hymn and "Rock of Ages" played by the band, invocation by the Jewish chaplain, a few remarks by the division chaplain, the general's remarks, and the benediction by the Catholic chaplain. Then came the solemn moment, however, when the 3-volley salute was fired, followed by the playing of "Taps."

Then we all snapped to attention as the flag was raised above the cemetery and the National Anthem was played. It stirred all the emotions in me that had been suppressed during the strain of the last 3½ weeks, and I felt the tears trickle down my cheeks….

The cemetery looks beautiful now. 3 weeks ago it looked hopeless. We were attempting to set it up on a hillside above the beach where the soil was nothing but shifting volcanic silt. It took a bulldozer nearly 3 days to scoop out a level trench in order that the men might be laid in there. Meanwhile, the bodies piled up outside until at one time there were nearly 400 lying within 50 yards of my foxhole.

Still, life had to go on, and we ate 3 meals a day and slept at night in the midst of that stench. Eventually we got them all buried and then the bulldozers scooped the earth back into the trench and the trucks brought in real dirt and packed it down on top of the volcanic sand.

Then the markers were put up, the graves were mounded, a stone fence was placed around the cemetery and painted white, and a flagpole raised at one end with the Marine Corps emblem in white stones around the flagpole. On this side of the cemetery is a small plot where the war dogs are buried. The 3rd Division cemetery is right next to ours, but the 5th Division set theirs up on the other side of the island.

Both: National Archives

March 16, 1945: We got word that our men were just taken off the front lines this morning. Probably many men have been killed since Iwo was officially declared "secure" 2 days ago, for there has been just as desperate fighting during the last 48 hours.

It was 8 days after getting ashore before I had a chance to shave. By then I had quite a moustache, and so I decided to keep it….

March 17, 1945: We had our final committal services today, making a total of 1,800 men buried in the 4th Division cemetery. Of the officers who were on the same ship with me on the way out, we have buried at least 10. One of the men in our small fellowship group is also lying in the cemetery. It was as though he were one of the boys from my own parish, for I had grown to look upon the boys of that fellowship group as my very own.

The majority of men we buried were killed by shrapnel rather than bullets. Shrapnel has terrific force and literally tears a man to pieces, leaving gaping holes in the head or arms or legs or belly, or else tearing them off completely. Some of the men we buried were not even identifiable, as they had been so torn to pieces that there were only 15 or 20 pounds of body left and it was buried in a cardboard box.

When the bodies were first collected, I did not go any nearer to them than was necessary, but as the division wanted a count each day on the number of bodies, I was asked to count them about 4 every afternoon.

Aerial view of the 3rd and 4th Marine Division cemetery on Iwo Jima, with Mt. Suribachi in the background. Another cemetery on Iwo Jima, for the 5th Marine Division, held over 2,200 graves. Nearly 7,000 U.S. Marines died in over a month of furious fighting. OPPOSITE: "You have gallantly given your life on foreign soil in order that others might live. Now we commit your body to the ground," said Chaplain Hotaling, photographed at a committal service for a fallen Marine on Iwo Jima.

The first week it necessitated walking among row after row of unburied men who had died with the greatest possible violence, and counting them accurately. At first the only way I could do it was to hold my nose and smoke one cigarette after another. But day after day of living under such conditions soon changed that until I could walk among them with hardly a thought of how unbearable it was.

Eventually I reached the point where I could turn a dead man over, or pull things out of his pocket, or cut off his dog tag, or almost any other thing that was needed, and then, if I lifted up my hand and found it covered with a man's guts or his brains, I calmly brushed it off in the sand, and when I got a chance later on, washed my hands with soap.

There was a team of 5 men who registered each man before he was buried. They removed all personal effects and determined the cause of death. Then the ditty bags containing the personal effects were brought to the burial officer (Lew Nutting) who went over them with his assistant (Gus Sonnenberg) and myself.

We looked them over very carefully and made an inventory of each one. Then a tag was put on the outside of the ditty bag and it was handed over to the personal effects officer (Jack Greeno). He had to pack them in a big box and when we get back to camp, he will have to go over each one carefully, and then send them to the Marine Corps Commandant in Washington.

Most of the boys had wallets and pictures of their loved ones, and it was always heartbreaking to see a picture of a wife and child, which happened again and again. Most of them wore I.D. bracelets, quite a large number a ring of some sort, a smaller number had wrist watches, then there were other things such as cigarette cases and lighters and religious medals and rosaries and New Testaments.

We had to remove "art" pictures from the wallets, and also pictures of the Marines taken with "gook" girls in Honolulu. In addition, we had to remove a large amount of more or less filthy literature that the boys carried.

Once in a while, we ran across something funny in the midst of an otherwise humorless task. For example, there was one cartoon which showed a group of Women Marines in boot camp, nude to the waist, lined up for inspection. The male officer who comes out to inspect them says: "Good grief! I said kit inspection!"

March 18, 1945: This morning we packed up our gear and filled in our foxholes and left the cemetery area to go down to the beach go aboard ship to go back to our camp at Maui. But after waiting all afternoon and evening for an LST [Landing Ship, Tank] or an LSM to go out to my ship, the *Jupiter* (AK-43), none came, so I had to spend my last night ashore under an overturned amphtrack on the beach with a shelter-half under me and another wrapped tightly round me.

March 19, 1945: What a thrill it was to come back on board ship after 26 days on Iwo, during which I hadn't had my clothes off once! I stripped down and stepped into a hot shower. The sheer luxury of it was matched only by what followed: a wonderful shampoo, a nice, clean shave, and then a big dish of ice cream!

March 20, 1945: Last night I had a couple of hours of thinking it through, and it came to me that there were at least 3 ways in which I have changed since becoming a chaplain. First, until I left to come overseas, I had always felt a sense of inferiority and inadequacy in my parish work at Palmer [Massachusetts] because I felt so young and inexperienced. Now the very fact that I have come overseas, been with the Marines in combat, and in the toughest battle the Marines have ever fought, has changed all of that so that I will never have the same feeling of inferiority and inadequacy again.

In the second place, I had certain preconceived and very definite notions as to the way a minister and a minister's wife should act in a parish. Now I can see how much wiser I would have been had I thrown overboard a lot of those ideas and used my own common sense.

In the third place, my life at Palmer was

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Romanian oil fields, that broke through the line and was stopped only after tremendous effort by German infantry.

The Soviets aggressively followed each of the corps' steps backward, knocking small holes in the XL Panzer Corps line with tanks and infantry, but Knobelsdorff launched counterattacks that resolved many problems and deftly executed further retreats to deal with the others.

A survey of Knobelsdorff's orders to his officers and men in XL Panzer Corps reveal a commander with a fine sense of frontline combat. In one, he demands that units stop exaggerating the size of the enemy forces attacking them, as he says he knows his subordinates are, because he will make mistaken decisions on the basis of false information.

In another, he instructs panzer unit commanders that they are not to pull their tanks and assault guns back to rearm and refuel and leave the infantry stranded. Supplies are to be brought forward, and it is the duty of every panzer soldier to be the steadfast backstop for the infantry in attack and defense. He underlined, "That is why we are the Black Hussars," a reference to the black panzer uniform.

In a third order, he urges his commanders to keep in mind that their troops have been in constant battle against overwhelming odds.

Knobelsdorff was decorated again for his command of the corps during its skillful withdrawal into East Prussia during August. Further, the performance appraisal for his command of the corps noted that he was a mobile combat soldier, decisive, and a "doer." He exercised wide personal influence across the front and on all subordinates. He was firm in a crisis, unyielding, and a dedicated optimist. The only criticism was that at times he followed impulse rather than thinking through all the tactical possibilities. The commanding general of Third Panzer Army judged him suitable for command above the corps level.

Knobelsdorff took command of First Army in Lorraine on September 10, 1944, only five days after departing the Eastern Front. His sprawling army at this point faced the right wing of General Courtney Hodges's U.S. First Army in Luxembourg and General George Patton's Third Army in Lorraine. His first orders to XIII SS and XLVII Panzer Corps were to throw the Americans back across the Moselle with their reserves. This was vintage Knobelsdorff.

The panzer general battled Patton until he was relieved on November 30. Knobelsdorff had few panzers to work with, but he waged war as he had in the East, trading ground for the survival of his forces. His superiors, however, thought he traded too much territory, though he succeeded in holding Patton west of the Siegfried Line, or West Wall.

Knobelsdorff's old comrade Balck wrote in his performance review in early December that, as First Army commanding general, Knobelsdorff had continued to be an active leader and a man of clear decisions and firm will. But, assessed Balck, the previously observed fact that he was not an outstanding tactician had shown itself during the fighting in Lorraine. Knobelsdorff, said Balck, had not come up with fresh ideas.

Generalfeldmarschall (Field Marshal) Gerd von Rundstedt, head of the German Army High Command on the Western Front, nailed the coffin closed: "[D]espite laudable personal enthusiasm for action, he did not fully meet the challenges that I had to put before him as commanding general of First Army, because he did not always find the improvisations necessary for waging this defensive battle. His demanding physical activities in the East may play a role."

Knobelsdorff was relieved and did not receive another combat command through the end of the war. It was a lamentable fate for one of Germany's truly talented operational commanders. He survived the war and died in 1966. □

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of devising and training specialized armor and crews for the Normandy beaches and beyond.

Specialty tanks were required to neutralize many of the beach obstacles, as the forlorn attack by the Canadians at Dieppe had clearly shown. If the vaunted Atlantic Wall were to be breached, military intellect and ingenuity were going to be required. Hobart accepted the command only after conferring with his friend and fellow armor enthusiast, Basil Liddell Hart.

Thus, the origin of "Hobart's Funnies"—modified Churchill tanks to bridge ditches and destroy pillboxes (Armoured Vehicles Royal Engineer or AVREs), Sherman tanks with a spinning flail to clear minefields ("Crabs"), Churchill tanks with flame-throwing ability (Crocodile), and amphibious Sherman tanks to swim ashore (duplex drive or DDs) with the infantry assault waves.

Finally, there was the Canal Defense Light (CDL) tank with its 13 million candle power searchlight intended to turn night into day and blind the enemy gunners after dark. "Hobart's Funnies" ultimately proved their worth in the Normandy invasion and helped the Allied forces grab a foothold on the continent that they never relinquished.

Among his postwar honors, Hobart was knighted by King George VI. From the United States, he received the Legion of Merit, Degree of Commander. According to his friend, Liddell Hart, Hobart was "one of the few soldiers I have known who could be rightly termed a military genius."

In 1945, Hobart commanded the Specialized Armored Experimental Establishment. The next year, he officially retired from the British Army, six years after his "forced retirement" by a military hierarchy that scorned him for social reasons, denigrated him for his acerbic personality, and probably were both envious and afraid of his keen intellect and ingenuity. Sir Percy Hobart died on February 19, 1957. □

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marked by the fact that my work was my master instead of my being master of it. Now I realize that I should never hold myself to such a rigid schedule of studying again, but there should be a good balance between work and play.

There is something else which has matured me even more and given me a deeper and newer kind of faith. It goes back to the sermon I preached at Chaplains School the day before I received my orders. In that sermon I spoke of Phillips Brooks, who wanted to be a teacher but who failed and became a minister instead. It was as though he wanted sea duty, I said, but got stuck with shore duty. Then the next day I got my assignment to the Marines. It was a real test for me, for I wanted shore duty and was getting stuck with Marine duty.

I resented it at first. Why should I be the only one in my class to be sent overseas directly to the Marines? But gradually I began to see that if I could make the best of it and triumph, I would never be afraid of life again, for there could never be anything worse than this which could happen to me.

The fact is, of course, that the mental agonies I suffered from the day I received my orders until we finally landed on Iwo were a great deal worse than the actual agonies of ducking into foxholes to escape sniper fire or mortar shells, worse than the terrors of the air raid the first week, worse than the smell of death that was ever present, and worse than the sights of hundreds of dead Marines.

I can say it now that I died a thousand possible deaths before ever we landing on Iwo Jima!

Chaplain Hotaling, who served in several parishes in postwar civilian life, was a retired lieutenant commander in the Chaplain Corps of the United States Naval Reserve until his death on May 16, 2010, at the age of 94, the last of the surviving Iwo Jima chaplains. Some of his experiences were included in the book, Flags of Our Fathers, *by James Bradley.* □

factories

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respective villages to be photographed by company photographers. The idea was to show the young women strolling and picnicking as they might in any average American suburb. These pictures appeared in the July 26 issue of *Boeing News* and the September issues of *Douglas Airview* and *Boeing Magazine* even as crews were moving in to tear down those tranquil appearing villages.

These few carefree photo sessions were just about the only occasions when anyone had the opportunity to spend any time photographing these mystery towns at eye level. A few months earlier and it would have been a criminal offense. A few months later, and there was nothing left to photograph!

By the end of 1945, the blackout paint had been stripped from the factories up and down the coast, and John Francis Ohmer had joined John Stewart Detlie in hanging up his uniform for the last time. By the end of 1946, the last vestiges of the gargantuan West Coast camouflage scheme had been removed.

They were gone, removed in their entirety, but they have never been forgotten. Even Mike Lombardi, Boeing's corporate historian, continues to be amazed by the enduring fascination that the public, and even Boeing personnel, have with the hoax hamlets.

As he told me, "with nearly one hundred years of great airplanes, one would think that the most frequently asked questions directed to the Boeing history office would be about the B-17, the 314 Clipper, the 707, or 747, but hands down the most popular subject is the 'neighborhood on top of Plant 2.' To this day, the size, scope, and imagination of that project still captivate and amaze the public and employees."

These amazing villages, which almost certainly were never even seen by Japanese recon pilots, disappeared virtually overnight, vanishing like mirages. But they continue to live on in our collective memory of the American home front of World War II. □

rangers

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then informed Rudder. "Should I send a message, sir?" Eikner asked.

"Yes," Rudder answered.

Most of the Rangers' radios had been waterlogged or damaged in the landing. Astutely planning for such a contingency, Eikner had brought along a signal lamp. Luckily for the Rangers, Eikner was trained in Morse code and sent off the pre-designated signal to confirm destruction of the guns: "Blow Six." The lieutenant also requested resupply and reinforcements.

As the final contingency, in case all the technology failed, Eikner relied on the wings of a carrier pigeon to relay the message. Slipping a small note inside a tube attached to the bird's leg, Eikner released it. Initially, the winged messenger failed its duty miserably, repeatedly circling the command post. Eikner threw pebbles at the bird until, finally, it flew towards the Allied fleet.

An hour later, the destroyer USS *Satterlee* responded: "No reinforcements available—all Rangers have landed on Omaha."

Like Lomell and the rest of the men on top of Pointe du Hoc, Rudder and the others in his command post were on their own, and tragically, the guns of their comrades would pose the greatest danger.

Several forward artillery observers, including Private Henry Genther and Navy Lieutenant Kenneth "Rocky" Norton, had accompanied the Rangers. Using Eikner's signal lamp, the men now called in artillery from the nearby Allied warships. They also called in a strafing run from P-47 fighter-bombers. The Thunderbolts arrived first, and the lead plane mistakenly began a deadly dive-bombing raid directed toward Rudder's command post.

Quickly, Eikner spread out an American flag along the side of the cliff. Spotting Old Glory, the American pilot waggled his wings and flew off toward the German positions across Pointe du Hoc.

The shore-fire control party then used Eikner's lamp to call in naval fire upon the German machine-gun nests and the 37mm AA gun that was wreaking so much havoc on them. But an artillery shell from the battleship *Texas*'s 14-inch guns landed short, detonating near Rudder's command bunker. The shell killed Captain Jonathan Harwood and Private Genther, also wounding Lt. Col. Rudder and Lieutenant Norton.

The fatal round was like an armor-piercing shell containing yellow pigment known as "Explosive D" or Dunnite. A soldier said, "The men were turned completely yellow. It was as though they had been stricken with jaundice. It wasn't only their faces and hands, but the skin beneath their clothes and their clothes which were yellow from that shell."

Bill Hoffman recalled seeing one of the men killed by the shell. "He had no head and no blood. He was covered with yellow dye. The shrapnel just took his head off, nice and clean. He was all yellow. I said to myself, What the hell is that? It was my first introduction to death in the war."

Already wounded in the leg, Rudder was wounded again by the yellow marker shell. Despite his wounds, he refused to relinquish command and continued leading his men.

After Eikner sent out "Praise the Lord," indicating success, Rudder instructed Lunning and Fate to take a message back to Lomell's group, which had set up a roadblock—the second part of their mission.

Rudder's orders were simple: "Hold 'til duly relieved." □

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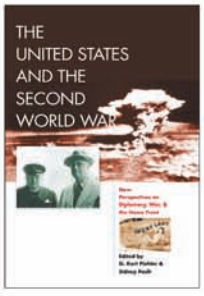

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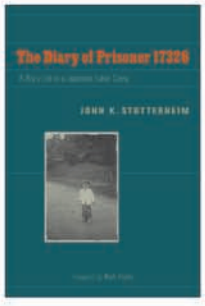

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