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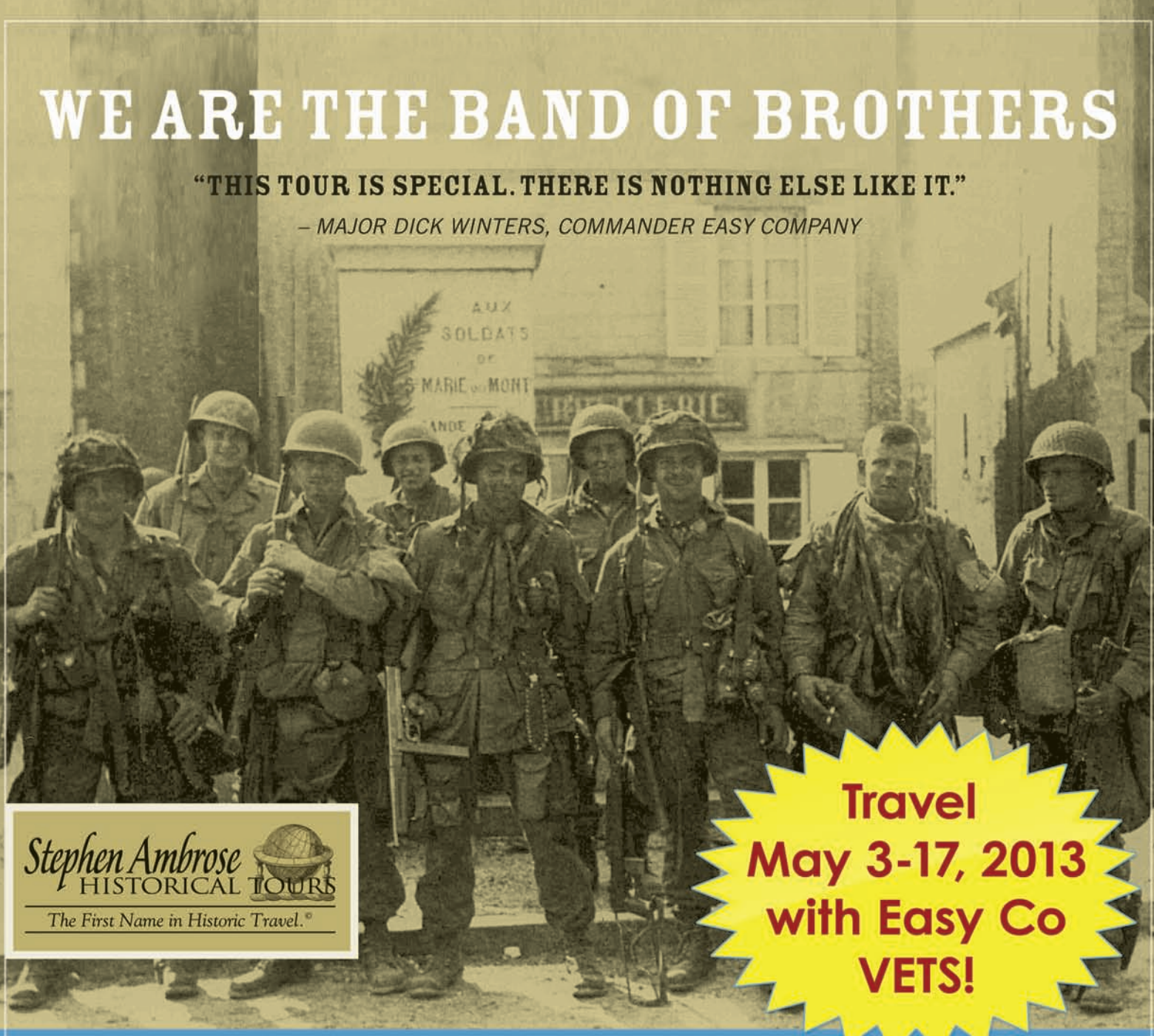

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COVER: A American soldier stares blankly while wrapped in layers of clothing to stave off the bitter cold during the Battle of the Bulge. See story page 14.
Photo: National Archives

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Are you tired of feeling "foggy"... absent-minded... or confused?

IS YOUR MEMORY SLIPPING AWAY?

Find out how some people stay sharp and mentally focused --- even at age 90! Here's their secret...

By Steven Wuzubia; Health Correspondent;

Clearwater, Florida:

Nothing's more frustrating than when you forget names… misplace your keys… or just feel "a little confused". And even though your foggy memory gets laughed off as just another "senior moment", it's not very funny when it keeps happening to you.

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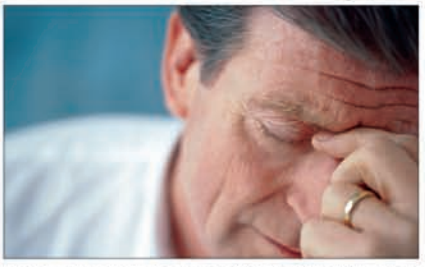

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Our Fine Feathered Friends

NOT LONG AGO, I came across an article about the remains of a carrier pigeon that had been discovered lodged in the chimney of a 17th-century home in the village of Bletchingley, Surrey, some 18 miles due south of London.

Attached to what was left of one of its legs was an encrypted, handwritten message inside a red capsule, about the size of a 35mm film canister. Experts called in to examine the find agreed that the bird was one of many that had been used by the Allies during World War II to carry messages from the European battlefields back to England.

This particular bird was found in the chimney of a home owned by David Martin, a retired probation officer, while he was renovating his fireplace. Some historians suggested that the bird was making its way from behind enemy lines, likely from Nazi-occupied France during the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion, and heading toward Bletchley Park, north of London, where Britain's top-secret code-breaking establishment was located. Others say the carrier pigeon probably got lost, became disoriented in bad weather, or was simply exhausted after its trip across the English Channel, and took refuge in the chimney.

Experts from Britain's Government Communications HQ code-breaking unit were given the handwritten message in hopes that they could break it, but they soon gave up, saying that the message, written by a "Sergeant W. Stott" nearly 70 years ago, was too difficult to decipher. One GCHQ historian said, "The sorts of code that were constructed during operations were designed only to be able to be read by the senders and the recipients."

The historian noted that it was probably based on a so-called "one-time pad" that uses a random set of letters, known only to the sender and the recipient, to convert plain text into code and is then destroyed. "If it's only used once, and it's properly random, and it's properly guarded by the sender and the recipient, it's unbreakable," he said.

Another expert, Colin Hill from the Bletchley Park Code-Breaker Museum's pigeon exhibition, confessed, "I thought no way on earth can I work this one out."

No matter how the bird, identified as "40TW194," ended up in the chimney, it is interesting to note that more than 250,000 carrier pigeons were used during the war. They were members of the National Pigeon Service and were heavily relied upon to transport secret messages.

The history of carrier, or homing, pigeons goes farther back than World War II. The ancient Greeks used them to announce victories, and Julius Caesar's legions also employed them to swiftly deliver important messages. During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the besieged citizens of Paris used pigeons extensively to convey news and to summon help.

And during World War I, before the invention of radio, the birds were invaluable couriers on the battlefield. One famous incident took place in October 1918 when a 554-man battalion of the U.S. 77th Division became trapped in no-man's land in the Ardennes and was being shelled by friendly artillery. An urgent message to halt the shelling was carried by a pigeon named Cher Ami and received by the battery; the shelling stopped.

Although badly wounded by Germans trying to shoot it down, Cher Ami survived the war and received the Croix de Guerre. The bird's stuffed body today resides in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

During World War II, pigeons were used by most of the major combatants because of their uncanny ability to find their way back home, even when home hundreds of miles away.

The Dickin Medal, Britain's highest animal's decoration for valor, was awarded to 32 birds, including a U.S. Army Pigeon Service bird named "G.I. Joe" that reportedly saved the lives of hundreds of British soldiers in Italy that were being bombarded by their own planes.

There probably will be no way of knowing what the message 40TW194 was carrying said, or how it may (or may not) have changed the course of the war. It remains one of the war's many mysteries.

Flint Whitlock, Editor

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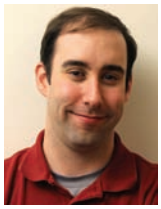

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Correction

In Stephen L. Wright's article, "The Last Drop" (Winter 2013), one of the photographs on page 91 is incorrectly captioned "Lt. Col. Jeff Nicklin." The photo is actually that of Corporal George Topham, recipient of the Victoria Cross.

During 1944-1945, the Volkssturm, or People's Militia, was designed to promote "a violent burst of fanatic rage against the invaders" and thus salvage victory.

ON OCTOBER 18, 1944—the 131st anniversary of the Battle of the Nations' victory over Napoleon in 1813—Reichsführer-SS (National Leader) Heinrich Himmler stepped up to a microphone to make a national radio address announcing the formation of the Nazi Party-controlled Volkssturm, or People's Militia.

Author's Collection

With a Wehrmacht soldier serving as a backdrop, this wartime poster depicts an SA man handing a rifle to the older civilian at right, who is competing in a marksmanship contest. Trained and outfitted by both the Nazi Party and the German Army, Hitler hoped the Volkssturm, or "People's Militia," would fight to the death to save the homeland.

Standing with him was the new Chief of the General Staff, General Heinz Guderian; Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, head of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin; and Gauleiter (Regional Leader) Erich Koch. The site of the address was at Bartenstein, East Prussia, on Koch's turf, and he was already organizing his own local forces to fight the Red Army coming from the East.

Indeed, conjuring up images of the 1813 War of Liberation against the defeated French, the new VS had already won its first victory over the Soviets on October 7 at Memel, Lithuania, which the Nazis had taken in 1939.

Guderian had come into office the day after the failed bomb explosion to kill Adolf Hitler, and the latter had virtually lost most of his faith in the regular German armed forces to win the war. The radical Nazis—Dr. Josef Goebbels, Dr. Robert Ley, Himmler, and most of all Reich Leader and Secretary to the Führer Martin Bormann—were urging Hitler to turn to the very force that had brought him to power in the first place: the Nazi Party and its various organizations.

What all of them feared most was a second 1918-style collapse of the German state from within, an internal-type revolt that had toppled Kaiser Wilhelm II when the German Army was still fighting in the field on the Western Front. It was their belief that the Party had rebuilt the state from that catastrophe starting anew in 1933, and now—11 years later—a similar program of rejuvenation was to be the order of the day.

This time, there would be no home front failure, and thus on September 25, 1944, Hitler, through the use of his familiar "Führer Decree," announced the creation of the Volkssturm and Himmler's

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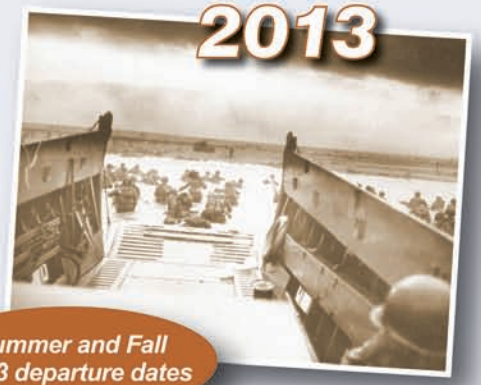

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ABOVE: A teenage member of the Hitler Youth distributes grenades to a motley group of Volkssturm troops. Some men carry panzerfaust antitank wepons, others outdated rifles. RIGHT: Nazi Propaganda Minister Dr. Josef Goebbels (left) congratulates Hitler Youth Willi Hubner in Breslau who, as a member of a Volksgrenadier/Home Guard Grenadier regiment, was awarded the Iron Class 2nd Class for helping to retake the German town of Lauban from the Red Army in 1945.

control of the organization; Bormann would be in charge of the administrative issues.

Thus, right from the start, there was the divided leadership that would plague the VS until the very end of its days in the defense of smoldering Berlin—in which it played at least half a part. Hitler, like his rival, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had the leadership style of giving several different men the same functions, believing that competition would make them perform better and get the overall job done faster. This was also the overall leadership principle of the Nazi Party as a whole.

The key individual, from inception to ultimate VS demise, was Bormann. In his unique position of being at the Führer's elbow night and day, he had Hitler's ear on virtually everything and thus was able to convince Hitler to create the VS along the lines of the 1813 Home Guard, and also to place it under Lammers's Reich Chancellery. Bormann believed that only the Party could run the VS properly and ensured that service in it was mandatory for all civilian German males between the ages of 16 and 60.

This included the all-important Class of 1928—those who would turn 17 in 1945—the 550,000 boys of Artur Axmann's Hitler Youth, literally the final remaining military manpower pool of Nazi Germany. The older men—ridiculed as "Grandpas" by the younger generation—were veterans of World War I or those who had already fought in World War II and been wounded.

The VS would be organized on the model of the 42 Gaue, or Regions, of the Third Reich, all controlled by Bormann as virtual domestic dictator while Hitler ran the war. This had been the setup ever since Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, and thus Bormann understood his task thoroughly, governing the Reich via teleprinter, telegraph, radio, and telephone from wherever Hitler's "Führer Headquarters" happened to be. He would rule the VS through the Gau, Kreis (county), and Ortsgruppenleiters (town leaders).

Author's Collection

In Bormann's mind, the VS would fight like the sturdy Japanese in the Pacific: to the last man, bullet, and breath. The nature of Bormann's vision for the VS was unity overall, Party control, and formations based on the members' place of residence. The last factor was all important in his view, as he believed that it was critical to the fighting success of the VS as a combat unit that would be called into action when the enemy arrived at the edges of their towns and cities, most of which had been officially declared "fortresses" by the Führer anyway.

The Führer Decree of September 25 gave the Gauleiters the power to organize the VS in their domains, which included more than 800 counties in the Reich proper. The average age of those who served (the national oath-taking was conducted on November 12, 1944) was between 45 and 52, and Bormann—aping Hitler, here— refused to call up women, unlike the Soviets. Of those men who were called up, most were white-collar workers, unaccustomed to the harsh life of a soldier in the field.

On November 27, 1944, Himmler took command of Army Group Upper Rhine, thus making him Bormann's first serious rival for power, as both wanted to succeed Hitler as Führer. Each reasoned that if they were able to win the war for Germany, they would accede to the mantle, and there was, indeed, some logic in their positions. As it turned out, Himmler's tenure as commander was brief, as he proved to be completely incompetent in the position.

Even though Bormann irritated Himmler by referring to the units as "my VS," it was a top SS man—General Gottlob Berger—who was chief of staff of the Volkssturm and who reported directly to Himmler, not Bormann. Indeed, it was Berger who announced that the VS would be trained and ready for combat against the Russians and Western Allies no later

National Archives

Under Wehrmacht supervision, Volkssturm troops set up a makeshift barricade in a Berlin street in hopes it would stop the advancing Red Army. The VS men shown here wear military uniforms, unlike many others who were simply provided an armband worn over their civilian clothes.

than March 31, 1945.

In training, Berger wanted individual rifle marksmanship stressed for the civilian warriors, while Bormann opted instead for small antitank weapons with which to defeat the masses of Russian T-34s and American M-4 Sherman tanks. In the end, Bormann prevailed, and in this instance his view was militarily sound as events were to prove, especially in the defense of Berlin and other German cities.

The citizen-soldiers trained on weeknights and for six hours on Sundays, and what rifle training was provided was given by SA Chief of Staff Wilhelm Schepmann's brownshirted Stormtroopers. Schepmann had wanted a real wartime role for the SA ever since 1939, and he saw the VS as a way of achieving it at the expense of the SS (its hated rival since 1934), the Party, and the German Army (which it had wanted to replace as early as 1930).

Hitler and Bormann, too, saw this danger, and they were not about to let Schepmann achieve an ambition that had eluded the murdered SA leader Captain Ernst Röhm in the Blood Purge of June 30-July 2, 1934. Thus, Schepmann would be allowed to arm and train the VS but not lead it.

Nor would Dr. Josef Goebbels in his capacity as Hitler's appointed Reich Plenipotentiary for Total War. Despite the famous wartime newsreels of the leather-coated propaganda minister reviewing VS troops passing on parade, his role with the Volkssturm was really quite minimal, except for exhorting them to fight for Berlin, of which he was Gauleiter.

Then there was the National Socialist Motor Corps led by Erwin Kraus that provided courier motorcyclists and truck drivers to transport the VS men to their sites, as well as units of the Nazi Fliers Korps (NSFK).

It seemed that every Party organization wanted its finger in the VS pie, and for a very simple reason, then and now still

incomprehensible to those in the West: the Nazis believed that the war could still be won!

First, from Hitler on down, the true Nazis took it as an article of faith that racially pure Germans of good stock would defeat the tainted Slavs from the steppes of Russia and the corrupt Americans, British, and Canadians from the West. Dr. Goebbels's propaganda screamed its slogans: "Never again, 1918! Our walls may break, but our hearts never!"

The citizen-soldiers of the Third Reich—indoctrinated as true believers—would also be fighting for their own homes and families on German soil, and the threat from the East also induced in the Germans of East Prussia the very real fear of Red Army retaliation for the atrocities that had been committed by the Germans in the USSR during 1941-1944.

As one historian put it, "Wars were winner-take-all affairs." To the Nazis, negotiations equaled weakness and surrender. In this respect, Hitler, Bormann, and Goebbels were far more "Nazi" than either or both Himmler and Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, who in the end in 1945 wanted to treat with the enemy.

Thus, especially after the failure of the July 20 assassination attempt—when, in their eyes, the traitors had been unmasked—the Nazis wanted to renew—not end—the fighting. It is significant to note that more people in Europe died after July 20, 1944, than in all of the five years of war before it.

To the Nazis, the VS was both a valid and rational response to the events of 1944-1945, just as the rise of the Party itself had been to the fall of Imperial Germany in 1918-1920. Indeed, if anyone's morale would collapse, it would be that of the Allies, not the German people led by the Nazi Party under Hitler.

Ironically, too, as the German armies retreated—and this included the battered Waffen SS as well—so, too, did the power of the Party increase within the borders of the pre-1939 Greater German Reich; thus, as Himmler lost power, Bormann gained it.

By the spring of 1945, Himmler ceased to be a real factor in VS power struggles

Continued on page 94

Film captured after the battle shows men of Kampfgruppe Hansen, an element of the 1st SS Division, around American vehicles destroyed in action earlier at Poteau, Belgium, December 18, 1944.

National Archives

PART 2

In the first installment, a large German force made a surprise counteroffensive against American positons along the Belgian-German border—an operation that became known in the West as "the Battle of the Bulge." In this conclusion, some SS troops, in their ruthless desire to succeed at all costs and perhaps force the Allies to reconsider their demands for unconditional surrender, executed Belgian civilians and U.S. soldiers who had surrendered.

It is not our intention to write the definitive account of the events; they have already been covered from virtually every angle. Later in this article there are references to the Malmédy Massacre as it was reported to soldiers in the field at the time, and it is their perspective that we will focus on.

VOICES *of the* BULGE

Survivors of the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler's last major offensive in the West, recall their harrowing experiences.

BY MICHAEL COLLINS & MARTIN KING

While the "Battling Babies" of the 99th U.S. Infantry Division fought with every ounce of strength they could muster in the north, the 106th ("Golden Lion") Infantry Division reported at 1:15 PM on December 16, 1944, that it could no longer maintain contact at the interdivision boundary, and by this time observers had seen strong German forces pouring west through the Lanzerath area.

Panic and chaos began to take hold as the young U.S. defenders of a very thinly held line began to feel the extent and ferocity of this German attack. The intelligence section of the 106th Division staff analyzed the enemy plan correctly in its report on the night of December 16: "The enemy is capable of pinching off the Schnee Eifel."

In actual fact, only one German division, the 18th Volksgrenadier, formed the pincers poised to grip the 106th Division. After all, the entire 62nd Volksgrenadier Division stood poised to break through in the Winterspelt area and to strengthen or lengthen the southern jaw of the pincers. Through the early, dark hours of the 17th, the enemy laid down withering mortar and artillery fire on the frontline positions of the 424th Regiment of the 106th Division.

While the German forces pounded away relentlessly on the Schnee Eifel and at the harassed defenders of the Elsenborn Ridge, the 1st SS Division poured through the Losheim Gap virtually unmolested. General Courtney Hodges, CG of First Army, decided to plug the southern approaches to the ridge with his tried and tested veterans of many campaigns from North Africa to Normandy. The Germans knew of the 1st Infantry Division. At that moment, the Big Red One was recuperating after being engaged in heavy fighting during the November offensive and was spread out as far south as Paris. The troops were hastily summoned to report for duty on the morning of the 17th. By the evening, they were speeding north to protect the southern flank of the Elsenborn Ridge and relieve pressure on the 99th Division.

It should be noted here that one of the most prominent features of the U.S. Army in 1944 was its capacity to displace from one location to another at great speed. Speed and mobility were going to prove

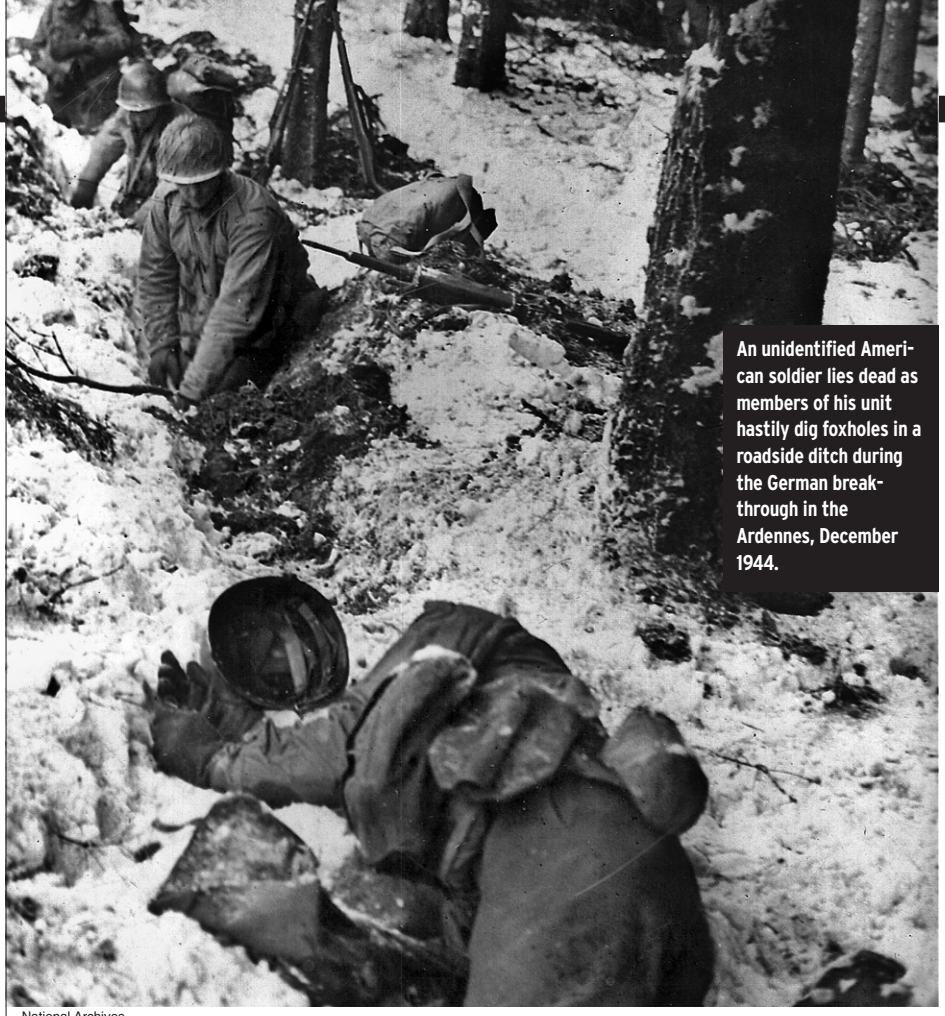
key factors in this offensive. The 82d Airborne Division was located at Camps Suippes and Sissonne, France, undertaking normal ground divisional training when, on December 17, 1944, first orders were received to move to the east. Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin received a phone call while at dinner with his staff, stating that SHAEF considered the situation at the front critical and that the airborne divisions were to be prepared to move 24 hours after daylight the following day, December 18.

On both sides of the battle, line reinforcements were on the move, the Germans to close the pincer on the Schnee Eifel troops, the Americans to wedge its jaws apart. The battle had continued all through the night of December 16-17, with results whose impact would only be fully appreciated after daylight on the 17th.

Colonel Mark Devine, the 14th Cavalry Group commander, left the 106th Division command post about 8 AM on December 17 without any specific instructions. The previous evening, V Corps had asked VIII Corps to reestablish contact between the 99th Division and the 14th Cavalry. This call had been routed to Colonel Devine, at St. Vith, who spoke on the phone to the 99th Division headquarters and agreed to regain contact at Wereth—a town that was to become the scene of one of the most brutal massacres of World War II.

December 17 would go down in history as the day that the Malmédy Massacre occurred, perpetrated by members of Kampfgruppe Peiper. But that was not the only massacre that occurred on that frozen December day in 1944. Eight GIs were murdered at Ligneuville just outside the Hotel du Moulin, and 11 African American GIs suffered the same fate at Wereth.

Participation by African American GIs in the Battle of the Bulge is not well known or recognized. The majority of the African American GIs in World War II, 260,000 in the European Theater of Operations, were simply never acknowledged. They are the "invisible" soldiers of World War II. They included 11 young artillerymen of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion who were murdered by the SS after surrendering. The 333rd Field Artillery Battalion was a 155mm howitzer unit that had been in action since coming ashore at Utah Beach on June 29, 1944. Typical of most segregated units in World War II, it had white officers and black enlisted men.



An unidentified American soldier lies dead as members of his unit hastily dig foxholes in a roadside ditch during the German breakthrough in the Ardennes, December 1944.

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At the time of the Battle of the Bulge, the unit was located in the vicinity of St. Vith, Belgium. Specifically it was northeast of Schönberg and west of the Our River in support of the U.S. Army VII Corps and especially the 106th Infantry Division. By the morning of December 17, German troops and armor were penetrating virtually all sectors of the thinly held line. While many personnel tried to escape through Schönberg, 11 men of the service battery went overland in a northwest direction in hopes of reaching American lines.

At about 3 PM, they approached the first house in the nine-house hamlet of Wereth, Belgium, owned by Mathius Langer. The men were cold, hungry, and exhausted after walking cross-country through the deep snow. They had two rifles between them. The family welcomed them and gave them food. But this small part of Belgium did not necessarily welcome Americans as "liberators."

This area had been part of Germany before World War I, and many of its citizens still saw themselves as Germans and not Belgians. The people spoke German but had been forced to become Belgian citizens when their land was given to Belgium as part of the poorly assembled Treaty of Versailles. Unlike the rest of Belgium, many people in this area welcomed the Nazis in 1940, and again in 1944, because of their strong ties to Germany.

Mathius Langer was not one of these, however. At the time he took the black Americans in, he was hiding two Belgian deserters from the German Army and had sent a draft-age son into hiding so that the Nazis would not conscript him. A family friend was also at the house when the Americans appeared. Unfortunately, unknown to the Langers, she was a Nazi sympathizer.

About an hour later, a German patrol of the 1st SS Division, belonging to Kampfgruppe Hansen, arrived in Wereth. It is believed that a Nazi sympathizer (possibly the Langer family's friend) informed the SS that there were Americans at the Langer house. When the SS troops approached the house, the 11 Americans surrendered quickly, without resistance. The Americans were made to sit on the road, in the cold, until dark. The Germans then marched them down the road. Gunfire was heard during the night.

In the morning, villagers saw the bodies of the men in a ditch. Because they were afraid that the Germans might return, they did not touch the dead soldiers. The snow covered the bodies, and they remained entombed in the snow until mid-February, when villagers directed a U.S. Army Graves Registration unit to the site. The official report noted that the men had been brutalized, with broken legs, bayonet wounds to the head, and fingers cut off. Prior to their removal, an Army photographer took photographs of the bodies to document the brutality and savagery of this massacre.

An investigation began immediately with a "secret" classification. Testimonies were taken from the Graves Registration officers, the Army photographer, the Langers, and the woman who had been present when the soldiers arrived. She testified that she told the SS the Americans had left. The case was then forwarded to a War Crimes Investigation unit. However, the investigation showed that no positive identification of the murderers could be found (i.e., no unit patches, vehicle numbers, etc.), only that they were from the 1st SS Panzer Division.

By 1948, the "secret" classification was cancelled and the paperwork filed away. The murder of the 11 soldiers in Wereth was seemingly forgotten and unavenged. Seven of these unfortunate men were buried in the American cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, and the other four bodies were returned to their families for burial after the war ended. It is remarkable to know that the identities of the Wereth 11 remained unknown, it seemed, to all but their families.

Herman Langer, the son of Mathius Langer, who had given the men food and shelter, erected a small cross with the names of the dead in the corner of the pasture where they were murdered, as a private gesture from the Langer family. But the memorial and the tiny hamlet of Wereth remained basically obscure and were not listed in any guides or maps to the Battle of the Bulge battlefield. Even people looking for it had trouble finding it in the small, German-speaking community.

In 2001, three Belgian citizens embarked on the task of creating a fitting memorial to these men and additionally to honor all black GIs of World War II. There are now road signs indicating the location of the memorial.

As Battle of the Bulge got under way, the members of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion were among the many engineer battalion soldiers who picked up rifles and fought off the German assault. Throughout the war, the Germans feared and detested the American engineer battalions because not only could they blow up bridges, they could fight off German soldiers just like the infantry. The engineers even had the capacity to take out tanks with explosives and dynamite—these guys implemented multitasking long before it became a contemporary buzzword.

After the German Army began its thrust through the Ardennes, the 291st was sent to Malmédy and ordered to hold the town at all costs. The engineers set up a series of roadblocks in and around Malmédy, where there were only about 128 men holding the line against the whole Sixth Panzer Army. Their initial roadblocks would be the only barriers between Kampfgruppe Peiper and the roads toward the Meuse River. Since most of the U.S. Army was in disrepair after the first day of the Bulge, the engineers would have to make do with what they had to buy the rest of the American forces time to regroup.

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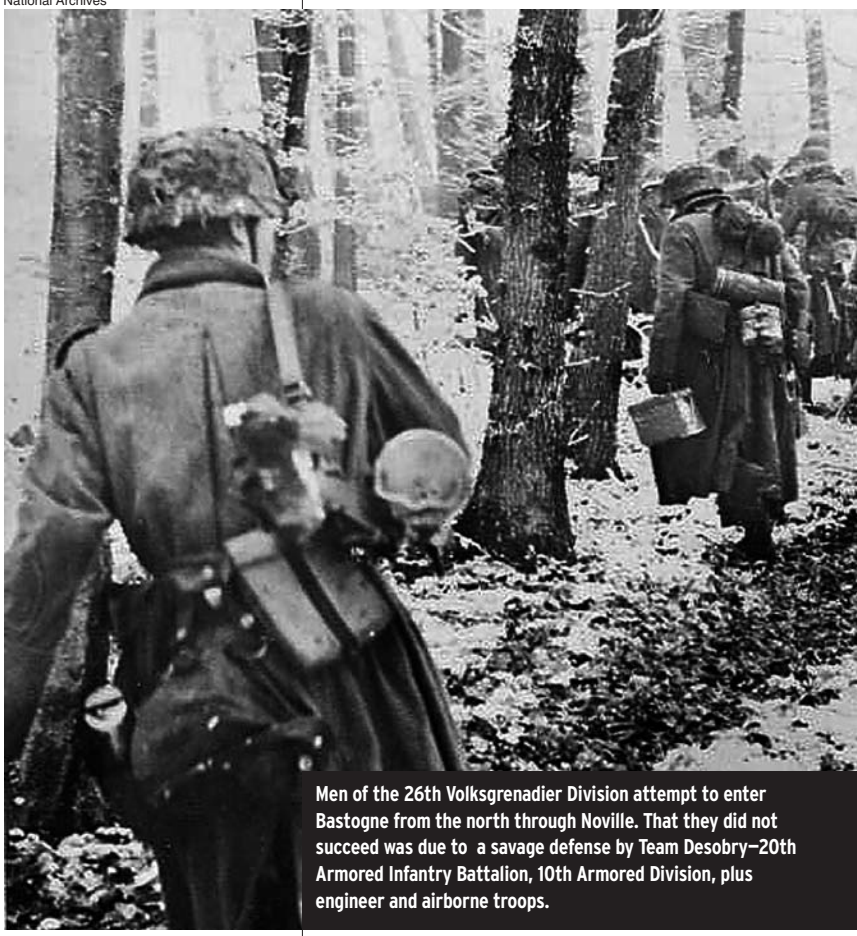


Men of the 26th Volksgrenadier Division attempt to enter Bastogne from the north through Noville. That they did not succeed was due to a savage defense by Team Desobry–20th Armored Infantry Battalion, 10th Armored Division, plus engineer and airborne troops.

Ralph Ciani of Company C, 291st Engineer Combat Battalion, swept for mines and was involved in many different actions the 291st took part in during the Battle of the Bulge: "When we went into Belgium, we were working at a sawmill in Sourbrodt, and we thought we would be going home for Christmas. In the morning, we saw swastikas on the houses, and we heard shots

being fired around but did not know what was happening. When they broke through, we got orders to go to Malmédy and hold it all costs. We went with a company of men, and the heaviest piece of equipment was a bazooka, with only a few mines.

Both: Author's Collection

LEFT: Ralph Ciani, 291st Engineer Combat Battalion. RIGHT: Harold Stullenberger, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion. BELOW: This monument at Wereth honors the memory of 11 African American soldiers murdered by the SS.

Department of Defense

"As we were pulling into Malmédy, there was an MP there, and he asked us, 'Who are you guys?'

"'Engineers,' we replied.

"'Well, good luck—I am getting the hell out of here,' the MP replied. When we went into Malmédy, we did not know what to expect, and it was scary."

Frank Towers of Company M, 120th Regiment, 30th Infantry Division, said, "At about 10 PM the night of December 17, our division was ordered to move out—to where, no one seemed to know. Just follow the vehicle ahead of you! Soon, we were able to realize, by orienting on the stars above, that we were moving south, but to where and why were still big questions.

"Finally, in the early hours of the morning, with some of the men still awake and partially conscious and listening to the American Forces Network on their radios, there was a break-in on that frequency by our nemesis and rumor monger, 'Axis Sally,' the major German propagandist, who informed us, 'The 30th Infantry Division, the elite Roosevelt's SS Troops and Butchers, are en route from Aachen to Spa and Malmédy, Belgium, to try to save the First Army Headquarters, which is trying to retreat from the area, before they are captured by our nice young German boys.

"'You guys of the 30th Division might as well give up now, unless you want to join your comrades of the First Army HQ in a POW camp. We have already captured most of the 106th Division and have already taken St. Vith and Malmédy, and the next will be Liege.' We were stunned, since only then did we have any clue as to where we were going, or the reason for this sudden movement.

John Hillard Dunn, Company H, 423rd Regiment, 106th Division, recalled, "There was a strange quiet Sunday morning the 17th. No rolling thunder of a dawn barrage. A false and temporary optimism ... from the west we heard planes.

"A couple of former Air Force men were overjoyed and not above rubbing it in that the planes were coming to our rescue. Then we saw that the P-47s were dumping their loads a long way to our rear. Now we knew that somewhere back there the German spearhead was grinding along.

"But the P-47s gave us hope that we might be able to break through and reach whatever American forces lay to the west. Clouds gathered swiftly, and a steady, soaking rain was falling by noon, turning knee-deep snow into ankle-deep mud. Those former Air Force smart alecks didn't have to tell us that the ceiling was zero and that the P-47 fliers whose luck hadn't run out were back swigging coffee someplace in France.

"Rumors were thicker than rain clouds that afternoon, and as we wallowed about in mud, moving aimlessly from one place to another, we heard that an armored division was battering its way through to us and that we could expect to see Georgie Patton racing around the corner any minute.

"By evening the magnitude of the German effort was more apparent. GIs with 'rear echelon' patches on their shoulders—and a hunted look in their eyes—began showing up and offering us the clothes off their backs if we would trade an M-1 for a .45-caliber pistol."

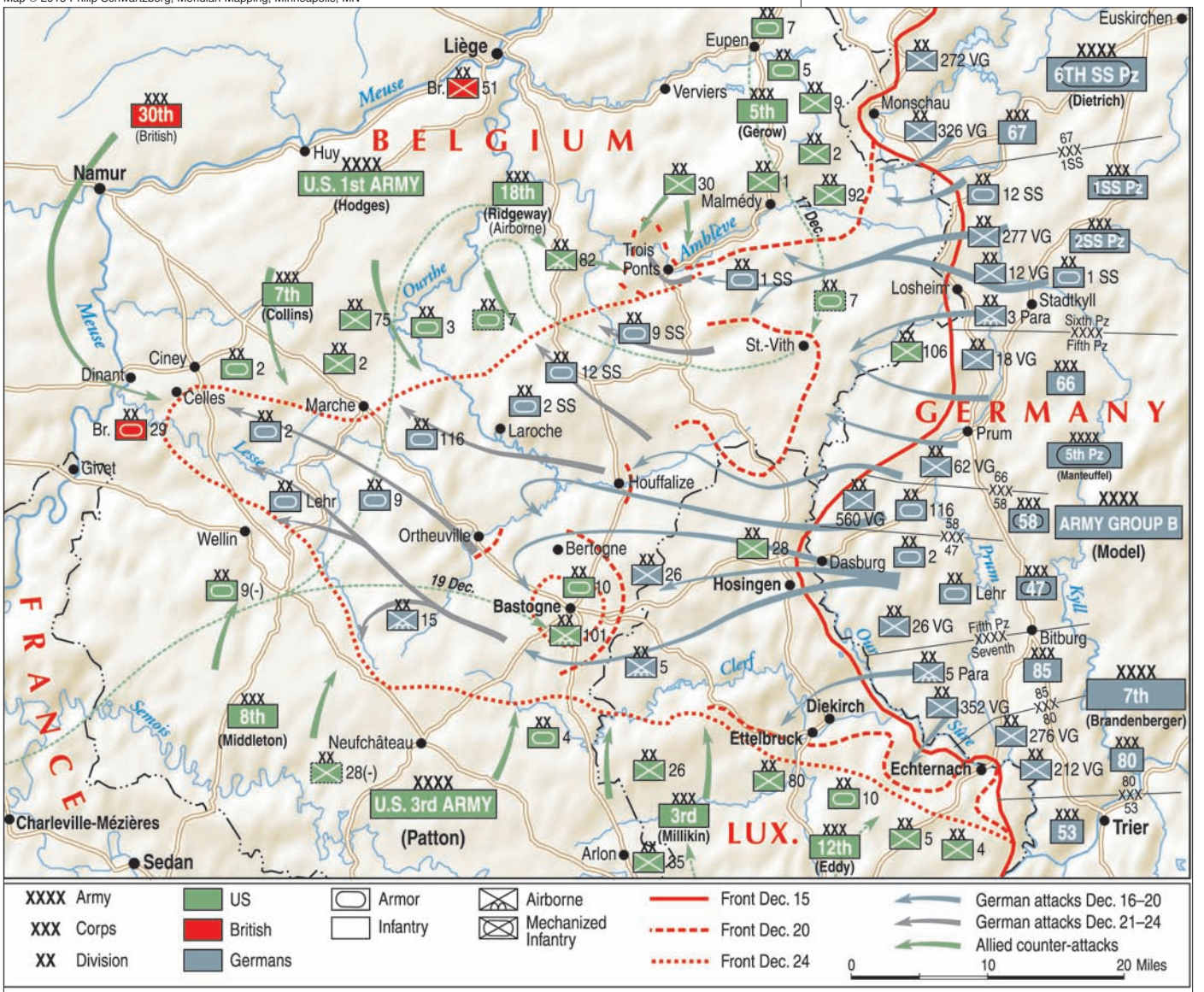
Dunn continued, "Sunday night is still a nightmare. We holed up in a pinewood, putting our still-present prisoners in a three-sided wooden stockade. Two men were assigned to guard them in four-hour reliefs. Another newly made MP and I had a relief to midnight. As we stood there in the drenching rain, he talked almost hysterically of his wife and four children. He's cracking, I thought. Now and then a prisoner wisecracked in German.

"It was necessary for me to leave the stockade to check on our relief. As I returned to the stockade, I could hear muttering and moaning in the darkness. I thought one of the Heinies was sick. But when I drew up to the tall pine that I had used to mark our position, I realized that the moans were from my companion.

"He was on his knees in the snow. His hands were raised, and he was crying and praying in a loud, piercing wail. What he had done with his weapon, I don't know. The Heinie prisoners were stirring and jabbering. I had to do it. I swung with my fist as hard as I could on my kneeling buddy."

Harold "Stoney" Stullenberger, C Company, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion, 10th Armored Division, noted, "Two or three of us were in some little town near Metz. It

Map © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



An essential part of Hitler's massive attempt to inflict heavy losses on American forces in Belgium was the capture of the road-junction town of Bastogne; the Germans nearly succeeded.

was pretty cold, but we had a chance to take a bath in a stream. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. A runner came down there and told us we had to get back and get our gear and get ready. We had no idea where we were going.

"That first night I stayed in a schoolhouse in Arlon with my platoon, and then the following day we moved toward Bastogne. We went there around 5 or 6 o'clock, and it was quiet. There was no activity at all. We then moved up to Magaret and stopped between there and Longvilly. The head of the column was all the way up at Longvilly. Our second squad, Wayne Wickert was the sergeant; they were 500 yards ahead of us. It became dark that first night, and there were a lot of stragglers coming back from the 9th Armored and the 28th Infantry. They changed the password on us about three or four times, so we figured something was going on, but we still had no idea. So we sat there all night."

John Kline, M Company, 423rd Regiment, 106th Division, commented, "German activity was reported along our front the 17th (remember the Bulge started on the 16th). The commander called me back to the command post. He informed me that I should be prepared to move my gun to his area to protect the command post.

"While visiting with him, I noticed that he was very nervous. His .45 Colt pistol was on the table, ready for action. Our master sergeant, who was also present, seemed equally concerned. Later, I was to learn the reason for their anxiety. I suspect, in retrospect, that they had been made aware of the German breakthrough yet did not yet know the importance of the news.

"While in the vicinity of the command post bunker, I watched a U.S. Army Air Corps P-47 Thunderbolt chase a German Messerschmitt Me-109 through the sky.

They passed directly in front of us. Our area being one of the highest on the Schnee Eifel gave us a clear view of the surrounding valleys. The P-47 was about 200 yards behind the Me-109 and was pouring machine-gun fire into the German plane. They left our sight as they passed over the edge of the forest. We were told later that the P-47 downed the Me-109 in the valley. As it turned out, my machine gun was not moved to the command post.

"During the night of the 17th we heard gunfire, small arms, mortars, and artillery. We also could hear and see German rocket fire to the south. The German rocket launcher was five-barreled and of large caliber. The rocket launcher is called a Nebelwerfer. Due to their design, the rockets make a screaming sound as they fly through the air. Using high explosives, but not very accurate, they can be demoralizing if you are in their path of flight."

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German soldiers watch as Americans captured during the Battle of the Bulge are marched to the rear.

Clair Bennett of Company F, 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized), 10th Armored Division, said, "As we traveled up from Sierck, France, we stopped for about 15 minutes around 12 o'clock. I did not intend on going to sleep, but I fell asleep. First thing I know someone kicked me in the back down in the turret, I roused, and there's no doubt that I used the aircom in the tank, which we had for communications, since naturally you can't see each other all the time.

"With the noise and whatnot, it is virtually impossible to hear each other. I said, 'What do you want? What's the problem?' And George Sutherland, the tank commander, said, 'I've been trying to wake you up for the last 20 minutes!'

"As we continued onward we came to a place, and we were getting pretty darn close to our location. I lost track of the blackout lights, since you can only see for 50 or 75 feet. I cut across, and I went through a grove, and I started to go toward a ravine. I went through a German bivouac area, but I finally got back on the road. I could see where other tanks had been, but I was exhausted, there was no question about it."

Nelson Charron, Company D, 422nd Regiment, 106th Division: "December 17th, we continued to fight; there was nothing else we could do. We all wanted to fight; it was either be captured or killed. The officers told us to surrender, and we had to destroy our weapons. On their tanks they had 88s, and anybody who tried to escape was shot. There was a group who tried to get out, but they did not make it because of those 88s.

"At first we walked. There were 3,000 of us who were captured, and we walked and walked for about a day and a half, and we were put in boxcars. One night we were bombed by the British, and the Germans locked us in the boxcar, and they left, but they left us to be bombed. Some of the cars were hit, and we lost some men there. The next day, the Germans came back, and then we continued on to Stalag IX-B. They took all the Jewish boys, and they took them down the road and shot them. They massacred them. Just in our barracks there were maybe 10 or 15 of them."

William "Richard" Barrett with the 420th Field Artillery Battalion, 10th Armored Division, recalled, "The next morning we mounted up again and headed out. On the way up there I remember seeing a sign on the side of the road. I was in my machine-gun position, and Corporal Dillon was on the other side of the tank. I said, 'Dillon, that sounds like a name that you might find in a history book—Bastogne, 14 kilometers.'

"That afternoon we pulled through Bastogne, people standing around, watching us drive through, and headed out north and east, set up in the firing position like we normally did out in a field. We got everything set up and got our ammunition ready to go—no firing mission because it was foggy and you couldn't see nothing. They had a sergeant call there. He called all the section chiefs and told them to keep everything because we might have to move fast."

John R. Schaffner noted, "The 2nd Battalion of the 423rd Infantry Regiment, in Division Reserve, was ordered to hold positions in front of the 589th [Field Artillery Battalion] while it withdrew to the rear. Meanwhile, the 589th held on in the face of heavy small-arms and machine-gun fire until the infantry was able to move into position shortly after midnight.

"About 0400 on the morning of December 17 our battalion was ordered to move out to the new position. By now the enemy was astride the only exit for the C Battery position so that it was unable to move. The battalion's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Kelly, and his survey officer stayed behind and tried to get infantry support to help extricate this battery, but they were not successful. The infantry had plenty of its own problems.

"C Battery was never able to move and was subsequently surrounded, and all were taken prisoner. While all this was happening, I was given orders by Captain Brown to

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Soldiers of the 99th Infantry Division are on the alert for the enemy. The snow and sub-freezing conditions added more misery to the combat experience.

take a bazooka and six rounds and, with Corporal Montinari, go to the road and dig in and wait for the enemy attack from 'that' direction. This we did and were there for some time waiting for a target to appear where the road crested. We could hear the action taking place just out of sight, but the battery was moving out before our services with the bazooka were required.

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LEFT: Clair Bennett, 90th Cavalry Recon Squadron. RIGHT: James W. Hanney Jr., 168th Engineer Combat Battalion.

"As the trucks came up out of the gun position, we were given the sign to come on, so Montinari and I abandoned our hole and, bringing our bazooka and six rounds, climbed on one of the outbound trucks. I did not know it at the time, but my transfer from A Battery to B Battery was a lucky break for me, since Captain Menke, A Battery's commanding officer, got himself captured right off the bat, and I probably would have been with him.

"A and B Batteries moved into the new position with four howitzers each, the fourth gun in A Battery not arriving until about 0730. Lieutenant Wood had stayed with the section as it struggled to extricate the howitzer with the enemy practically breathing on them. Battalion headquarters commenced to set up its command post in a farmhouse almost on the Belgian-German border, having arrived just before daylight.

"At about 0715 a call was received from Service Battery saying that they were under attack from enemy tanks and infantry and were surrounded. Shortly after that the lines went out. Immediately after that a truck came up the road from the south, and the driver reported enemy tanks not far behind.

"All communications went dead, so a messenger was dispatched to tell the A and B Batteries to displace to St. Vith. The batteries were notified, and A Battery, with considerable difficulty, got three sections on the road and started for St. Vith. The fourth piece again, however, was badly stuck, and while attempting to free the piece, the men came under enemy fire. The gun was finally gotten onto the road and proceeded toward Schönberg. Some time had elapsed before this crew was moving.

"B Battery then came under enemy fire, and its bogged down howitzers were ordered abandoned, and the personnel of the battery left the position in whatever vehicles could be gotten out. I had dived headfirst out of the three-quarter-ton truck that I was in when we were fired on. I stuck my carbine in the snow, muzzle first. In training we were told that any obstruction of the barrel would cause the weapon to blow up in your face if you tried to fire it.

"Well, I can tell you it ain't necessarily so. At a time like that I figured I could take the chance. I just held the carbine at arms length, aimed it toward the enemy, closed my eyes, and squeezed. The first round cleaned the barrel and didn't damage anything except whatever it might have hit. As the truck started moving toward the road, I scrambled into the back over the tailgate, and we got the hell out of there.

"Headquarters loaded into its vehicles and got out as enemy tanks were detected in the woods about 100 yards from the battalion command post. Enemy infantry were already closing on the area. The column was disorganized. However, the vehicles got through Schönberg and continued toward St. Vith. The last vehicles in the main column were fired on by small arms and tanks as they withdrew through the town.

"As the vehicles were passing through Schönberg on the west side, the enemy, with a tank force supported by infantry, was entering the town from the northeast. Before all the vehicles could get through, they came under direct enemy fire.

The A Battery executive officer, Lieutenant Eric Wood, who was with the last section of the battery, almost made it through. However, his vehicle, towing a howitzer, was hit by tank fire, and he and the gun crew bailed out. Some were hit by small arms fire. Sergeant Scannipico tried to take on the tank with a bazooka and was killed in the attempt. The driver, Kenneth Knoll, was also killed there. The rest of the members of the crew were taken

prisoner, but Lieutenant Wood made good his escape. His story has been told elsewhere. Several of the other vehicles came down the road loaded with battalion personnel and were fired on before they entered the town. These people abandoned the vehicles and took to the woods, and with few exceptions they were eventually captured."

By December 17, 1944, Allied intelligence had a slightly better idea of the strength and objectives of the attacking German forces. Under mounting pressure, General Eisenhower, at the request of Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges, the U.S. First Army commander, decided to commit his reserves: the XVIII Airborne Corps. Lt. Gen. James Gavin received notification that the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions had been alerted to move into action at daylight the following day and head, without delay, toward the town of Bastogne.

Lieutenant General Gavin left for Spa, Belgium, and a meeting with Lt. Gen. Hodges. On arrival, Gavin received more information regarding the latest situation and was ordered to attach the 82nd Airborne to V Corps and to bolster the defenses in the area of Werbomont, northwest of St. Vith—their mission to support existing units in the area and block the advance of the Sixth Panzer Army.

The 101st Airborne Division, under Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe, established its headquarters in the town of Bastogne to reinforce the defense of this vital location. The troops in Reims boarded trucks and departed with all haste to their allocated positions. Many men were pulled from leave, and many others were devoid of proper equipment or arms, but they were notified that these would be collected at their destination, so they departed with all speed. By 8 PM on December 18, the lead elements of the 82nd had arrived in Werbomont, where they trudged through blizzard conditions along muddy, snow-blocked roads toward their defensive positions.

William Hannigan, a member of H Company, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, said, "We had come off the line for rest and kind of repair. We were in Ramerville [sic] in France when the Germans invaded the forest. And we were pulled out on trucks; inadequately armed and given, you know, clothes. We were just pulled out in necessity in this thing. Wasn't well thought out, but we did get up on these trucks and were taken right up to Bastogne. My brother was at Bastogne [in the 101st Airborne], and I always told him that we saved his skinny little butt.

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Men of Company C, 291st Combat Engineer Battalion, pose for a photographer near Malmédy after the crisis had ended.

"Now we went up and were put in there. We had leadership in Lieutenant James Megellas, another special officer named La Riveriera, and Jack Rivers, and we had Ted Finkbeiner, an excellent leader. I asked him just recently, "How come you never had the fear that the rest of us had, normal fear?' and he said, 'I grew up in the swamps in Louisiana with a gun in my hand in the woods and the rivers hunting all the time.' And he said he found great joy in it. And I thought, well, these people didn't send us into battle ... they led us, that was important.

"Now the battle is a confusion of things that I just know a very small amount about. A couple of things I remember are that toward the end we captured some Germans who'd been pulling back from the Battle of the Bulge, and I asked a noncommissioned officer (NCO) in the German Army, 'Why when you knew you lost the war did you fight so viciously?' And he said, 'My family. For eight or ten years that's all we had, one another, so we protected and fought viciously for one another.' I thought it was interesting.

"First we got off the trucks in Werbomont and started moving north, and we had engagements then. It was a question of survival and lack of equipment, and they talked about getting two guys in a hole in the ground. They called it 'dig a foxhole.' Well, if three guys got in there and you slept 'spoon fashion,' the guy in the middle got warm, and you did that and turned it over. Now it sounds a little out of sync, but you did some things you normally wouldn't do in order to survive. And I want to tell you that I spent a lot of years trying to forget this and I succeeded."

The 101st arrived at 11:45 PM on December 18, and at daylight the next morning the soldiers began taking up positions at the roadblocks around Bastogne in support of Team Cherry, Team O'Hara, and Team Desobry at Noville under the command of the distinguished William R. Desobry. The 501st arrived first and moved into areas around

Longvilly. The unit proved to be a stubborn barrier that would allow the necessary time to build Bastogne's defenses.

Ralph K. Manley of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne, said, "I was in Paris on a 24-hour pass after we just returned from Holland, and a loudspeaker came on saying, 'All units report to your units immediately, as quickly as possible, any way possible.' So, we returned then from Paris back to our unit and immediately got on what clothes we had. I still had on my Class A's, of course, for being in Paris, and we loaded onto port battalion trucks—these semi trucks that had four-foot sidewalls on them and open tops—without overcoats and without overshoes and headed toward the Bulge, and it was very cold.

"We met troops that were coming out, wounded, walking as we crossed paths, us going in, and them coming out—those who were disenchanted, having been overrun by the Germans and so on—a truck with maybe a series of bodies on it, and as one rounded the corner, some of the pieces of bodies fell off the truck.

"At that time they had grouped together clerks, anybody who was a soldier, to go to the front, and some of those not having seen that just keeled over in their tracks because they had not seen that type of wartime before. We did not know actually what was going on. As we got back to our unit in Mourmelon, France, then we got our equipment and our guns and what have you and were on trucks in minutes, headed off to Bastogne.

"We didn't know the situation, we just knew it was cold, and we had to go as we were without overshoes or overcoats. Again, with zero degrees, you can imagine—in open-

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ABOVE: Two Germans put on boots they have stripped from dead Americans in Honsfeld, Belgium. RIGHT: As a GI guard stands watch, a German prisoner found wearing American clothing is forced to remove his captured trousers. His feet are wrapped in rags to replace the GI boots he has already surrendered.

air trucks, going there, put in like cattle you might say, on trucks that weren't covered. They were actually port battalion trucks that were used to haul merchandise from the ships out to the warehousing areas, so that's what we rode to Bastogne on.

"Once we got there, of course, it was just dismount and head up the road to the city, on foot. We just missed others as they were coming out—both wounded, disabled, and what have you, who were hobbling and going out in trucks, hauling bodies that had been

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killed and so on. That's what we met as we were going into Bastogne.

"Being a demolitionist, I was out on the edge, in a foxhole. In this case, the ground was frozen, but we were in a barn lot with all the feces and cattle stuff, so it was easier to dig a foxhole there. You can imagine what I must have smelled like. We disabled some tanks that were coming through with the bazooka, but they got very close. Oftentimes you maybe had two in a foxhole, but in this case it was just one because the ground was so hard to dig, at least on the surface with the snow.

"Also, you didn't want to reveal your position because of the black dirt on top of the white snow, so you had to get snow and cover over the soil that you had dug out of the foxhole."

Out on the freezing Prumerberg just east of St. Vith, a few hundred members of the 168th Combat Engineers were fighting tooth and nail against the whole 18th Volksgrenadier Regiment, who were attacking their position with devastating ferocity. They had no idea how long they were going to have to hold that ridge.

One of those serving with the 168th Engineer Combat Battalion was James W.

Hanney, Jr. For six long days and nights, Hanney and the rest of the 168th resisted sustained attacks of the determined enemy in the most inhumanly cold conditions. It was minus 18 degrees Fahrenheit on that small ridge, and they had to contend, not only with the Germans but also with a scythe-like wind that skimmed in across the icy hills of the Schnee Eifel. James was eventually wounded and helped down from the ridge by his best friend, Frank Galligan.

Some years ago, co-author Martin King accompanied Hanney and a few members of his family back to the battlefield. King said, "We even managed to locate what we believed to be the actual foxhole that he dug back in 1944. The soldiers of the battalion were ordered to dig in on the ridge just to the east of St. Vith and hold their positions until they received further orders. I recall asking him how on earth they managed to dig into that frozen ground up there on the ridge. 'It was easy,' he told me. 'We just tossed hand grenades to loosen up the ground and then dug in.'

Seventy years on, perhaps the best-known incidents in the entire Battle of the Bulge are the atrocities committed against both U.S. service personnel and Belgian civilians in December 1944, by a German unit known as Kampfgruppe (Battle Group) Peiper, an element of the Sixth SS Panzer Army.

The events that occurred in the small village of Baugnez, Belgium, in December 1944, are referred to in most history books as the Malmédy Massacre, despite the fact that Malmédy is about five or six kilometers east of the site.

Survivors of Battery B of the ill-fated 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, the unit that was unmercifully gunned down after having surrendered, have written and rewritten numerous accounts of their experiences, but what is not so readily available is the testimony of the perpetrators.

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SS Colonel Joachim Peiper, infamous commander of Kampfgruppe Peiper, accused of committing atrocities.

Endless testimonies about that particular atrocity have been given, and it has been covered at great length in many books about the Battle of the Bulge. That the massacre occurred is an indisputable fact of history, but the circumstances under which it occurred have been contradicted time and again.

One only needs to follow the line of progress (Rollerbahn D) of Kampfgruppe Peiper to see that it was not an isolated incident; other cold-blooded murders occurred along the route. In spite of this, this incident always appears to raise more questions than answers.

The Malmédy Massacre was a pivotal event that changed the psyche of the American soldier during the Battle of the Bulge. There were many massacres during the battle, but when 86 defenseless soldiers from the 285th were murdered in a field in Baugnez, Belgium, the war became even more personal for the average GI. The phrase "take no prisoners" became part of the American soldier's motto.

Ted Paluch of Battery B, 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, was in one of the half-tracks that came under attack while the convoy headed past Baugnez to see how far Peiper's advance had come.

Paluch recalled, "On December 17 we were in Schevenhutte, Germany, and got our orders to go. We were in the First Army; we got our orders to move to the Third Army.

Both: National Archives

Troops from H Company, 82nd Airborne Division, advance in a snowstorm behind a tank. The packhorse, which was not U.S. government issue, was likely "borrowed" from a local farm. LEFT: Men of the 505th Parachute Regiment, 101st Airborne, move into a town during the Battle of the Bulge.

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ABOVE: A GI surveys the snowy field littered with dead Americans massacred at Baugnez, near Malmédy. LEFT: With their hands up, American soldiers surrender to men of the 1st SS Panzer Division in a Belgian village.

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Belgian civilians who were unfortunate to be in the path of advancing SS units also were gunned down.

There was a tank column going with us, and they took the northern road and we took the southern road. That would have been something if they had gone with us south.

"Right before we left, a couple of guys got sick and a couple of trucks dropped out of the convoy, and they were never in the massacre. Also, there were about 15 sent ahead to give directions and all, and they escaped the massacre. From the massacre you saw guys ... they got one guy named Talbert, I remember him, both arms, both legs, across the stomach. He lived to the next day.

"We had no idea that it was going to happen. We took a turn, like a 'T' turn, and the Germans were coming the other way. We were pretty wide open for I guess maybe half a mile, and their artillery stopped our convoy. We just had trucks, and all we carried was carbines. We might have had a machine gun and a bazooka, but that was about it; we were 'observation.'

"They stopped the convoy. We got out, and the ditches were close to five or six feet high because I know when I got in it, the road was right up to my eyes. There was a lot of firing; I don't know what we were firing at or who was firing at anything, but there were a lot of tracer bullets going across the road.

"Finally, a tank came down with the SS troopers behind it. They wore black, and on one collar they had a crossbones and skull and on the other collar they had lightning. They just got us out, and we went up to the crossroad, and they just searched us there to get anything of value—cigarettes, and I had an extra pair of socks, and my watch, everything like that. They put us in the field there that was their front line—ours was 2 1/2 miles away in Malmédy.

"When we were captured and being brought up there, the people who lived there or in that general area brought up a basket. I guess it was bread or something, and they brought it up to them to eat. Every truck and half-track that passed fired into the group, and why I didn't get hit too bad ... I was in the front, right in the front, the first or second or third right in the front. Each track that came around the corner would fire right into the group in the middle so that they wouldn't miss anything; that's why I didn't get too badly hit. We laid there for about an hour, maybe two hours. While we were lying there, they come around, and anyone who was hurt, they just fired and would knock them off.

"Someone yelled, 'Let's go!' and we took off. I went down the road, there was a break in the hedgerow, and a German that was stationed there at that house came out and took a couple of shots at me, and I got hit in the hand. If he saw me or not I don't know, he went back and didn't fire at me anymore. I was watching him come, and

Continued on page 98

CORREGIDOR:

When Marine Private Donald Versaw arrived on the fortress island of Corregidor in the Philippines on December 28, 1941, three weeks after Pearl Harbor, he was impressed by how normal everything looked. Trolley cars rumbled through streets crowded with people going shopping or on their way to work. Barracks and other buildings were impressive structures, bordered by well-kept hedges and a kaleidoscope of brilliantly colored tropical flowers. Versaw's 4th Marine Regiment had been sent to the island to bolster its vulnerable perimeter from land attack.

Versaw and the Marines were happy about the assignment. Corregidor was a legend in its own time, a place that was called the "Gibraltar of the East." The appellation was no idle boast. There were 23 gun batteries on the island, with no less than 45 coastal guns and mortars. "I thought it was a break for us to be sent to Corregidor," Versaw admits today. "I heard that it was armed to the teeth with big guns and was protected by a big minefield. It was known that one gun ashore is worth three or more afloat."

Courtesy Don Versaw

With Japan and the United States already at war, Lt. Gen. Masaharu Homma's veteran 14th Army landed on December 22, 1941, at Lingayen Gulf on the main island of Luzon. The knowledge that war was literally approaching their fortress only added to Corregidor's air of unreality.

The Marines soon occupied Middleside barracks, a concrete structure that looked so solid they believed the Army scuttlebutt that it was bomb proof. That first day on the island the 4th Marines were taken around to better acquaint them-

BY ERIC NIDEROST

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

THE EMBATTLED ISLAND IN MANILA BAY WAS—AND REMAINS—A SYMBOL OF AMERICAN AND FILIPINO COURAGE IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING ODDS.

GIBRALTAR OF THE EAST

Japanese soldiers pose for a victory photo on the island of Corregidor, Philippines, May 6, 1942. The soldiers are gathered around a 12-inch M1895A2 gun at Battery Hearn. The powerful gun, one of several large-caliber artillery pieces and mortars, had a range of 15.7 miles but could not prevent the enemy from taking Corregidor. OPPOSITE: Marine Private Don Versaw, 1941.

selves with their new home. "It was a paradise," Versaw recalls. Topside was the highest point on the island, rising some 500 feet above the waters of Manila Bay. The young Marine gazed in awe at its "the huge parade ground" and impressive Topside barracks, three stories high and supposedly a mile long.

Versaw and his buddies learned that Middleside was a small plateau near the center of the tadpole-shaped island. To the east was Bottomside, where the barrio (town) of San Jose was located. Still farther east was Malinta Hill, where the Malinta Tunnel could be found. The tunnel housed a hospital and the headquarters of USAFFE (United States Army Forces, Far East). Corregidor ended in a curved, snaking tail, featuring an airfield (Kindley Field) and a Navy radio intercept station.

Though they didn't know it at the time, Private Versaw and the other leathernecks were given a glimpse—a sadly fleeting glimpse—of how life had been on the island since World War I. Bristling with guns, it seemed impregnable, and garrison life was so comfortable even enlisted men considered duty there a plum assignment. But Corregidor's golden age, like all golden ages, was not destined to last. Within 24 hours, the first Japanese bombs would fall and signal the beginning of a four-month ordeal that would earn the island a hard-won immortality.

In many respects Corregidor's story begins in 1898, when the United States took over the Philippines from Spain in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. With the acquisition of the Philippines, the U.S. Navy now had access to Manila Bay, one of the finest natural harbors in Asia. An American naval station was established at Cavite where the Spanish once had had a similar base. Cavite became very important as a support and repair facility for the U.S. Asiatic Fleet.

There were other considerations as well. The great bay, some 30 miles across, is the doorstep to Manila, the political and administrative capital of the Philippines. The mouth of Manila Bay is about 12 miles wide and provides access to the South China Sea. The Bataan Peninsula is on one side of the bay entrance, while the other side is dominated by the looming Pico de Loro Hills of Cavite Province.

American planners in the early 1900s focused on a group of volcanic islands that spread across the entrance of Manila Bay like a rocky necklace. There was the solution to their problems: fortify these islands, convert them to fortresses, and any enemy ship attempting to enter the bay would have to run a gauntlet of interlocking shellfire.

Responding with alacrity, the U.S. government declared the Manila Bay islands military reservations on April 11, 1902. The Army Corps of Engineers made surveys, and the first of many batteries on Corregidor was begun in 1904. Work continued for more than a decade, and steady progress was made. By 1920 the various island fortifications were complete. They were state-of-the-art at the time, but would soon fall into obsolescence.

Corregidor, formally named Fort Mills, was the main post and headquarters for the harbor defenses of Manila Bay. The majority of Corregidor's batteries featured 12-inch, breech-loading rifled artillery backed up by 12-inch mortars, the latter providing plunging fire that ideally could pierce a warship's relatively thin deck armor.

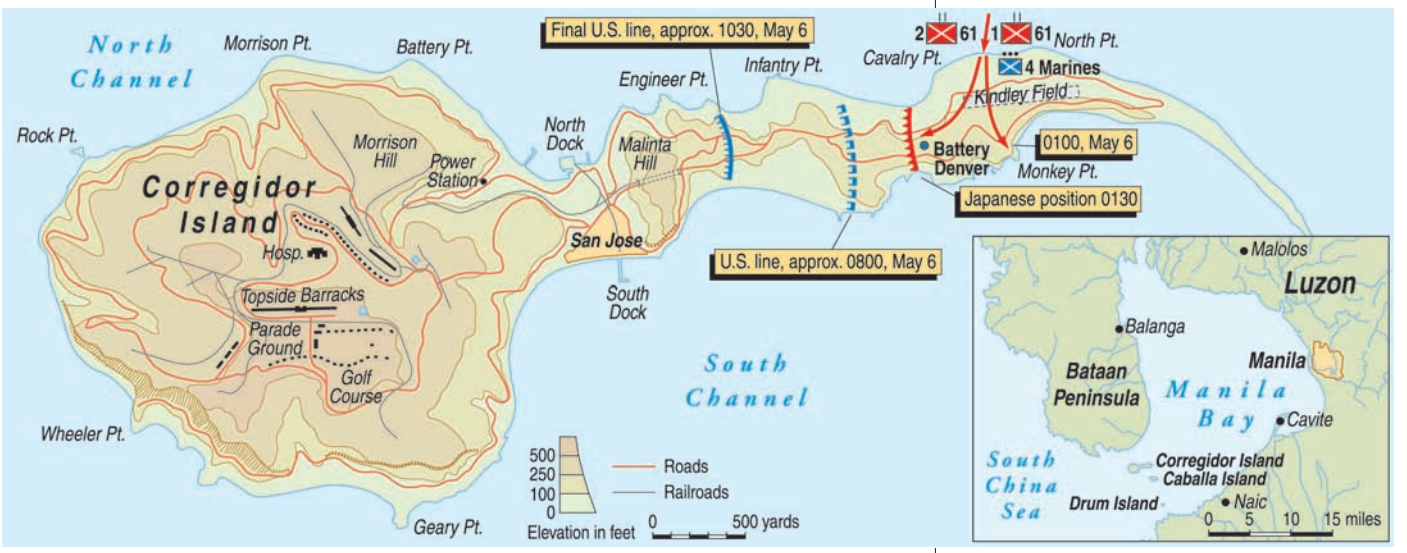
Battery Cheney, located on Corregidor's Topside, was typical of what could be found on the island fortress. Cheney featured two 12-inch guns mounted on "disappearing" carriages. When ready to be fired, counterweights suspended under a gun would raise it into firing position. This placed the long barrel "snout" over the reinforced concrete parapet, a position called "in battery."

When one of the guns was fired, the recoil pushed the barrel backward and below the parapet, sheltering it from enemy shells. In this "crouched" position, called "from battery," it could be reloaded. There was a lower level to each gun position that contained the battery's magazine. Ammunition was brought from the lower level to the upper level by electrically powered chain hoists.

Battery Cheney's upper level included not only two gun platforms, but also observing stations, a plotting room, and the battery commander's station. Like the other batteries on the island, Cheney was built when air power was in its infancy. Large concrete emplacements like Cheney were vulnerable not only to air attack, but also to land attack, should enemy infantry manage to set foot on the island.

Though Corregidor consumed much time, money, and energy, the other Manila Bay islands were not neglected. Carabao Island, just off Cavite Province, was also fortified and named Fort Frank. In similar fashion, several batteries were constructed on Fort Hughes, formerly known as Caballo Island.

Perhaps the most unusual fortification was Fort Drum, located on El Fraile Island. In essence, the top part of the island was scraped away and replaced with a large reinforced



The tadpole-shaped island fortress of Corregidor, guarding Manila Bay, bristled with guns but proved no match for overwhelming Japanese forces that landed on the north shore between Battery Point and North Point. OPPOSITE: Riding atop Type 89 I-Go medium tanks, Japanese troops close in on Manila, December 22, 1941. Vehicles that got in the way were simply shoved aside.

concrete structure so formidable it was nicknamed "the concrete battleship." Fort Drum featured two twin 14-inch guns in special turret mounts. Battery Wilson was the upper turret, while Battery Marshal was the lower turret.

Fort Drum also bristled with 6-inch artillery and 3-inch antiaircraft guns, and its main structure boasted steel-reinforced concrete that was 25 to 36 feet thick. The "concrete battleship" proved one of the most effective tools for the defense in the coming campaign. A tough nut to crack, it would resist repeated Japanese artillery and bombing attacks. Its formidable guns could fire at both Bataan and Cavite with relative ease.

The island fortresses of the Philippine Coast Artillery Command were headed by Maj. Gen. George F. Moore and consisted of three coastal artillery regiments: the 59th, the 91st Philippine Scouts, and the 92nd Philippine Scouts. These were supplemented by one antiaircraft unit, the 60th. When the war broke out there were also about 600 Filipino soldiers training to become artillerymen. They were attached to the Philippine Scouts.

Though the Manila harbor defenses were the best of their time, changing technology and shifting political and economic currents served to undermine their effectiveness. The Washington Naval Treaty specifically forbade construction of additional fortifications and prohibited the modernization and upgrading of existing ones. The Great Depression of the 1930s made inroads on military budgets, with Congress adopting a penny wise, pound foolish series of cuts that did much to curtail the expansion of the U.S. armed forces.

The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 further extinguished the last hope of modernizing the harbor defenses. The measure granted independence to the Philippines in 10 years (later amended to 1946). Congress saw little reason to spend American tax dollars on what would soon become a "foreign" country.

Attitudes changed in the late 1930s when it was obvious that Japan and the United States were on a collision course. Malinta ("Full of Leeches" in Filipino) Tunnel was dug under Malinta Hill; it consisted of a 1,400-foot-long, 30-foot-wide main passage augmented by 25 laterals, each 400 feet in length. The subterranean complex was reinforced with concrete walls, floors, and overhead arches, blowers to furnish fresh air, and an electric car line along the east-west main passage.

In 1937 Corregidor's defenses were bolstered by the addition of 155mm tractor-drawn guns and 3-inch antiaircraft batteries. A beach defense plan was finally arranged, 75mm guns were deployed, and barbed wire strung in vulnerable areas. All the coastal artillery regiments were brought up to strength, though many of the men manning them were raw recruits.

General Douglas MacArthur was originally sent to the islands in 1935 (with Major Dwight D. Eisenhower as his chief military aide) to act as an adviser to the semi-independent Commonwealth of the Philippines under President Manuel L. Quezón. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt was happy to see MacArthur go because he felt the general was a dangerously ambitious man and a possible political rival.

In 1941, with war plainly on the horizon, Roosevelt federalized the newly forming Philippine Army and simultaneously made MacArthur commander of the United States Army Forces, Far East. MacArthur had some 80,000 men on Luzon, but most were raw Filipino recruits fresh from island farms and villages. Many of them didn't even speak the local Tagalog language, much less English, but had various native languages of their own. The backbone of MacArthur's forces was about 12,000 Americans, including the 31st Infantry Regiment, and about 13,000 crack Philippine Scouts.

MacArthur was in a race against time—and time was plainly running out. When Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, Philippine defense preparations were still incomplete. And Japan was preparing to invade.

General Homma's 14th Army, consisting of over 40,000 men, sailed from Formosa and other debarkation ports on December 17, 1941, and, after much initial confusion on the morning of December 22, landed at several points along the western shore of Lingayen Gulf. American warplanes attempted to halt the invasion, but their efforts were unsuccessful, as were the efforts of U.S. and Philippine ground troops in the area; Homma's men advanced with little real opposition, at least at first.

Mauled by the overpowering invasion, the Lingayen Gulf defenders had no alternative but to fall back into the Bataan Peninsula and try to hold out until help came. It was a logistical nightmare from the first because some 100,000 people, including many civilian refugees and dependents of Filipino soldiers, crammed into the tiny peninsula. Bataan was a wild region, thick with jungle and laced with soaring mountain peaks. Food became scarce, and tropical diseases lurked everywhere.

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On December 23, Maj. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright, commander of U.S. forces in the area, telephoned MacArthur's headquarters at Manila, explaining that further defense of the Lingayen beaches was "impracticable." He requested permission to withdraw behind the Agno River, a request that was quickly granted.

The next day, another smaller invasion force led by Lt. Gen. Susumu Morioka came ashore at three points along Lamon Bay. With Homma's army heading south from Lingayen Gulf and Morioka's 16th Division moving north, Manila was about to be caught in a vise.

But the Japanese soon found that American and Filipino resistance stiffened with every hard-fought mile. For the next four months the Filipinos and Americans, weakened by hunger and disease, would conduct a courageous holding action against the odds. As the weeks wore on, optimism faded, and even MacArthur's bombastic "help is on the way" communiqués could not mask the grim realization that the Philippines had been written off.

Corregidor, far behind the lines in the early stages of the campaign, got its first taste of war on December 29, 1941. Shortly before noon, Japanese medium bombers appeared over the island like sinister birds of prey, dropping their 225- and 550-pound bombs from an altitude of 15,000 feet.

Air-raid sirens wailed, but at first many of the men took little notice. There had been false alarms before, and Corregidor's many buildings—never mind its bomb shelters—were said to be blast proof. The myth of Corregidor's invulnerability soon vanished in in flame and smoke.

Marine Private Warren "Jorgy" Jorgenson was having lunch with his buddies when all hell broke loose. "As we spilled out of the galley," Jorgenson remembers, "Corregidor's antiaircraft guns were already opening up. A hasty glance at the sky showed formations of high-flying bombers proceeding … silvery in the sun and clear blue sky, approaching directly overhead."

Donald Versaw had just finished a work detail, washing down the area behind the barracks mess hall. It was a nice, sunny winter day, and Versaw softly whistled "Lady Be Good" as he glanced up into the sky. The young leatherneck then caught a glimpse of Japanese bombers flying in a "V" formation "like geese" when the air-raid sirens started screaming out their warnings.

Versaw found shelter of sorts in a small wooden building, and from the windows "looking up through the trees, I could see enemy planes flying overhead and sticks of bombs falling, tumbling down from them."

The bombing lasted over two hours, with formation after formation peppering the island with explosives. After the Japanese Army bombers were finished, naval aircraft from the Japanese 11th Air Fleet came in and dropped their payloads. Casualties were light, but Topside and Middleside barracks, the Officer's Club, the hospital, and the Navy fuel depot were destroyed or damaged.

Fires raged as wooden buildings were consumed, and thick, black coils of smoke rose high into the air. The 3-inch antiaircraft batteries, supported by machine-gun fire, had performed well. Thirteen Japanese planes were shot down, including nine heavy bombers. After this, Japanese aircraft—dive bombers were the exception—tended to fly above 24,000 feet to avoid the antiaircraft fire.

Periodic bombing continued for the next four days, but after that there were several lulls. In the whole month of January there were only two additional raids, much to the relief of the weary garrison. On January 29 the Japanese bombers returned, but with a paper barrage—propaganda leaflets urging surrender. It was said the men welcomed the leaflets because they came in handy as toilet paper.

Technically, the 4th Marines were responsible for beach defenses, but as the weeks and months wore on, leatherneck ranks were swelled by sailors, soldiers, Army Air Force pilots who didn't have planes, Philippine Scouts, and many, many others. Colonel Samuel Howard, who had commanded the 4th Marines in Shanghai, was formally placed in charge of Corregidor's beach defenses.

Corregidor wasn't yet under full siege. Small ships brought in a trickle of supplies until mid-February, when the Japanese blockade finally became more effective. Even after this time, the island fortress was visited by U.S. submarines that brought in medicine and a few necessities. The "silent service" boats also evacuated personnel, such as U.S. Commissioner Francis B. Sayre and Philippine President Manuel L. Quezón. Also, the Philippines' gold and currency reserves were removed to Corregidor; the national treasury was evacuated by the American submarine USS *Trout* and taken to Pearl Harbor for safekeeping.

During lulls in the bombing, the men dug additional foxholes, strung barbed wire, and improvised additional defensive measures. Private Versaw was with E Company, 2nd Battalion, on the bulbous "tadpole" head of Corregidor. Versaw and his companions were in foxholes along South Shore Road atop jagged cliffs from Geary Point to the end of the road at Battery Monja, where two 155mm guns were emplaced. Some stretches of the road had permanent, concrete-lined trenches along them, and also metal-domed storage areas.

Curious, Versaw and some others of E Company looked inside one of the storage areas and found ammunition boxes. When the boxes were opened, they were found to contain bandoliers of .30-caliber ammunition of a kind that was used for the 1903 Springfield rifles. Since the Marines and soldiers were all carrying Springfields, at first it would seem this was an unexpected bonanza. Unfortunately, the ammunition had deteriorated to such an extent that bullets would fall out of their shell casings.

"The date on the boxes was 1921," Versaw remembers. "I don't think those boxes saw fresh air since 1922." It was yet another example, albeit in microcosm, of the penny pinching that had plagued the military for decades. Yet, necessity is truly the mother of invention. Since the Marines of 2nd Battalion were perched on high cliffs, 25-pound fragmentation aerial bombs were used in a new way.

As Versaw recalls, "Wooden troughs were constructed, complete with wire rigging to suspend them from cliff edges over the beaches. To use it, a bomb would be put in the trough, then you'd tie arming wires to a screw at the top and give it a shove, sending the bomb down to the unsuspecting enemy on the beaches below." The contraptions were never used, since the Japanese never scaled the cliffs.

On February 5, 1942, a new phase of the fighting began. While the Japanese attack on Bataan had been blunted by a stubborn and courageous Filipino-American defense, the enemy had access to the southern shores of Manila Bay on Cavite Province. Major Toshinori Kondo's detachment of four 105mm guns and two 150mm cannons deployed near Ternate and opened up on Corregidor, Fort Frank, and Fort Drum.

American guns roared to life, flaming in counterbattery, inaugurating a gun duel that lasted a good three hours. It was the start of a contest that would continue on and off for the next two months. The garrisons at Corregidor, Fort Frank, and Fort Drum soon found that they were at a decided disadvantage when trading shots with the enemy.

For one thing, the big coastal artillery guns were designed to slug it out with ships, not land artillery. Most of the big guns—like the 12-inchers—simply didn't have the elevation needed to clear the high ground where enemy artillery was located. Only the mortars, with their high trajectory, could be effectively used, but even in this instance problems arose.

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LEFT: Practice firing of the Battery Hearn 12-inch gun in 1936. The projectile weighed 900 pounds. OPPOSITE: Photographed April 24, 1942, the Allied Command Center deep inside the Malinta Tunnels, where General Douglas MacArthur and Philippines President Manuel Quézon had their offices during the siege.

There was plenty of ammunition available, but much of it was the armor-piercing, fixed, delayed-fuse variety. These were of a type that in essence burrowed deep into a ship's deck or other structure before detonating. But on land, they simply buried themselves deep underground, and when they exploded did little damage to enemy equipment or personnel.

What was needed was antipersonnel instantaneous fuse ammunition, something that would quickly explode in the very midst of an enemy battery and wreak havoc. The island forts did have such ammunition, but only about 1,000 shells. Understandably, Colonel Paul Bunker, who was in charge of the guns, wanted to save those shells in the event the Japanese broke through at Bataan.

Bunker improvised, modifying the fuses of some 1,070-pound mortar shells by removing their .05-second delay pellets. That meant they could detonate faster and could be more effective when used against the Japanese guns at Cavite. But there were still problems in spotting the enemy positions, in part because of a shortage of sound-ranging equipment.

On February 9, 1942, Captain Jesus Villamor of the Philippine Army Air Corps took off from Corregidor's Kindley Field piloting a slow Stearman 76D3 biplane and accompanied by five Curtiss P40E Warhawk fighters as escort. His mission was to fly a photo recon mission over Ternate to reveal the Japanese batteries there.

Even though he had an escort, his flight was an act of almost suicidal bravery. Villamor flew over the target area and managed to take enough pictures to deem the mission a success. But when he was returning, he and his escorts were intercepted by six Nakajima Ki-27 "Nate" fighters. A furious dogfight ensued, and though one P-40 was lost, at least one Japanese plane, and perhaps as many as five or six (accounts disagree), were downed.

Villamor landed, and once the film was developed the information it provided was extremely helpful. Several direct hits were scored at Ternate, but unfortunately the Japanese moved their batteries to the more

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ABOVE: Japanese troops use a Type 93 flamethrower to assault an American bunker during fighting in the Philippines. The soldier at the right carries a samurai sword. OPPOSITE: General Homma's troops disembark from landing barges on Corregidor on the evening of May 5, 1942.

remote hills to get out of range.

Malinta Tunnel was in many respects the heart of the fortress island's defense system. It became General MacArthur's headquarters after he left Manila and also housed the main communication center with the outside world. To the Marines, sailors, and soldiers huddled in foxholes, the staff that inhabited the Malinta Tunnel were privileged characters, eating well, hobnobbing with the brass, and saving their skins by rarely leaving the tunnel.

They were dubbed "Tunnel Rats" by the others, the name bestowed with a mixture of contempt and possible envy. Jokes were circulated about how Malinta Tunnel occupants would receive a "DTS" medal minted specially for them—"Distinguished Tunnel Service." The subterranean life of Malinta Tunnel was indeed a different world, but far from the paradise that many outsiders imagined.

The tunnel was overcrowded, with the situation becoming worse with each passing day as wounded were brought into the underground hospital. The ventilation system was overtaxed, and most of the fresh air from the entrances was blocked by concrete flash walls, erected to prevent the Japanese from skipping a bomb into the tunnel. Each of the smaller laterals housed two dozen or more people, who shared one toilet and one small washbasin.

Newcomers found the stench of the place nauseating. Carlos Romulo remembers, "There was the stench of sweat, or dirty clothes, the coppery smell of blood and disinfectant from the lateral where the hospital was located, and over all the stink of creosote, hanging in the air like a blanket."

The air was foul and damp, a kind of hothouse atmosphere that made normal breathing a challenge. Army staffers, Filipino government officials, clerks, nurses, refugee civilians, and many others rubbed shoulders in the dank, poorly lit gloom. Sleep was almost impossible as the rumble of artillery and muffled thunder of shells crashing outside combined with the clacking of office typewriters and the moans and screams of the wounded.

Though the hospital was generally well stocked with medicines and equipment, the overcrowded conditions and troglodyte atmosphere made it more like a circle of Dante's Inferno than a place of refuge and healing. Marine "Jorgy" Jorgenson, who was wounded when the Japanese finally came ashore in May, recalls that the atmosphere was "hot and stifling, with the smell of gangrene and ether from the hospital lateral where the survivors of Battery Geary were."

General Douglas MacArthur, one of the most famous and controversial figures to

emerge in World War II, lived and worked in these tunnels. MacArthur was a great general, one of America's best, a man capable of real strategic brilliance. Flamboyant and larger than life, handsome and egotistical, he had a talent for both making enemies and attracting admirers.

All humans have strengths and weaknesses, but MacArthur's very prominence brought his faults out in high relief, and the Philippine campaign of 1941-1942 showed aspects of MacArthur's negative side. In his 77 days on Corregidor, he only visited the Bataan battlefront once, on January 10, 1942. Of the 142 communiqués issued by his headquarters, it is said he was mentioned 109 times. And though others share the blame, MacArthur allowed virtually all of the U.S. Army Air Corps planes to be destroyed at the Philippines' Clark Field, even though he had had warning of the Pearl Harbor attack some nine hours before.

In fairness, MacArthur did his best to persuade Washington to send help, although he probably sensed the effort was doomed from the start. The general also shared the hardships to some extent, losing 25 pounds because of the scanty rations. But MacArthur had become the very symbol of American resistance to Japanese aggression. It was unthinkable that he would be captured.

On February 22, 1942, Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to transfer his headquarters from the Philippines to Australia before the defenses fell; on March 11-12, the general, his family, and a small group of staff officers departed Corregidor by PT boat. It was during this trip that MacArthur made his famous "I shall return" vow. Once settled in Australia, MacArthur was named Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area.

In the meantime, life for those still on Corregidor went grimly forward. Rations were cut, though some units fared a bit better than others by foraging and improvising. Occasionally there was some canned fruit, like peaches or pineapple. If they were lucky, Corregidor's defenders might get a pancake or two or a bit of Spam-like meat. By the end of April, even these goods were getting low and were scrupulously rationed.

"We were lucky," Don Versaw admits, "because the troops on Bataan weren't getting hardly anything at all. We did get a slab of mule or horsemeat once or twice. It was very coarse and tough, and [tasted] kind of wild, but it was meat."

There were few light moments on Corregidor but Marine mascot Soochow managed to provide a few laughs. The dog was originally a stray picked up on the streets of Shanghai, ugly as sin, but lively and intelligent. It was said that the dog was a kind of early warning system, barking like mad well before the air raid sirens began to wail. "Sooch" also had enough sense to stay with the Marines; if he had wandered off, he might have ended up in an Army cooking pot.

The Japanese forces tightened their noose around Corregidor. Now Corregidor and its satellite forts stood alone. Low on ammunition, food, and medicine, wracked with sickness and hunger, his men (and women, too) had done more than their duty. Maj. Gen. Edward P. King, Jr., commander of Luzon forces, ignored MacArthur's last-minute, long-distance demand that he launch a counteroffensive.

Sadly aware of the hopelessness of the American position in the Philippines, President Roosevelt authorized Lt. Gen. Wainwright to either continue to hold out against the Japanese or seek terms for surrender as he saw fit. At his headquarters on Corregidor, a long-suffering and hard-fighting Wainwright initially elected to follow MacArthur's order from Australia to continue the unwinnable battle to the end.

On April 9, 1942, after four months of bitter fighting, General King surrendered Filipino-American forces on the Bataan peninsula. Instead of treating their captives with respect and compassion as demanded by the rules of warfare, the Japanese, infuriated by the stubborn resistance on Bataan and the heavy losses they had themselves suffered, vented their rage on their sick and exhausted prisoners of war. Rather than being accorded the opportunity to sit out the war in a POW camp, the prisoners were marched into the jungle—a journey of brutality aptly called the Bataan Death March, where thousands died. Those who survived were then imprisoned under deplorable conditions.

National Archives

Once Bataan had fallen, it was only a matter of time before Corregidor would be taken, too. Some soldiers from Bataan managed to escape to Corregidor until there were an estimated 10,000 to 14,000 people on the island fortress enduring ceaseless, round-the-clock artillery barrages.

Japanese General Homma was a man in a hurry. The Philippine campaign was supposed to have lasted 60 days—it was now over four months, and the Americans were still resisting. He was losing face, but he also feared he might be relieved of 14th Army command. Homma was determined to reduce Corregidor as soon as possible.

At first the Japanese seemed overconfident. They placed a battery of 75mm guns in plain view of American spotters and began to lob shells at the island. Corregidor's Battery Kysor replied with its 155s and scored a direct hit. The Japanese guns and their crews were blown sky high.

The first phase of the Battle of Corregidor began with an artillery duel on April 12. Battery Geary, under the command of Captain Thomas W. Davis III, hammered the enemy with great success. Geary's mortar shells first rained down on a Japanese battery near Lokanin Point, destroying it utterly. A short time later, American 670-pound mortar shells annihilated another battery and blew up an ammunition dump.

To cap the day's successes, Battery Geary turned its attention to a group of Japanese tanks from the 7th Tank Regiment that had foolishly parked out in the open. Mortar shells pounded the area, leaving several blackened and burning wrecks in their wake. But this good fortune was not to last.

Courtesy Don Versaw

ABOVE: Don Versaw, 2012. OPPOSITE: Defenders emerge from a Corregidor tunnel with their hands up and surrender to victorious Japanese troops. Many years of captivity awaited the Americans and Filipinos, if they survived at all.

No less than 18 Japanese batteries were soon in place on both sides of the channel into Manila Bay—altogether some 116 artillery pieces. But perhaps the most destructive were the 240mm guns, whose heavy explosives began to slowly chip away at Corregidor's major batteries. On April 24, Battery Crockett was knocked out; both of its guns were put out of commission, the ammunition hoists were ruined, and whole sections of the emplacement were engulfed in flames.

Crockett's ordeal was highlighted by the exceptional courage of its doctor, 59th Coast Artillery surgeon Captain Lester Fox. When fires reached the hoist room and several men had been wounded, Dr. Fox came forward to render aid. A shellburst broke his leg, but he managed to limp around enough to organize a fire control party. This was crucial, since flames were threatening the powder magazine.

More shells descended on Crockett, and Fox was wounded again and again but continued his duties. He survived and later recalled, "I was wounded repeatedly; in the right eyebrow, losing the sight of my right eye, fracturing several ribs and generally making me very mad." Dr. Fox was eventually carried to the Malinta Tunnel hospital, where he later became a POW.

Day after nerve-shattering day, the shelling continued, with the attacks supplemented by frequent bombing runs by the Japanese Air Force. On May 1, 1942, some 3,600 Japanese shells pummeled the area around Batteries Cheney and Geary, many of them the horrific 240mm variety. One by one the batteries around the beleaguered island were badly damaged or totally knocked out. Repairs were made when possible, but it was a hopeless task.

On May 2 the Japanese bombardment intensified. During one five-hour period, the enemy gunners pounded Topside with a dozen 240mm shells a minute, a total of 3,600 rounds.

Battery Geary sustained the worst damage when a 240mm shell broke through the concrete side of its powder magazine, already pockmarked with numerous earlier hits. When the shell exploded, it detonated 1,600 62-pound powder charges. The resulting explosion shook the island like an earthquake, producing a malevolent mushroom of flame and smoke that tossed 13-ton mortars like they were children's toys. One mortar actually flew 150 yards into the air, landing muzzle down in the soft, yielding ground of the island's golf course. Miraculously, only six crewmen were killed and another six wounded, but Battery Geary's eight mortars were destroyed and played no further part in the battle.

By the end of the first week in May the handwriting was on the wall—Corregidor was going to fall. General Wainwright considered his options. Although many batteries were knocked out, enough remained to put up a pretty good fight if the Japanese invaded the island. Ammunition was fairly plentiful, and with careful rationing the food could last until the end of June.

Diesel fuel was running low, and that was a critical problem because the water pumping system needed it to draw water from Corregidor's wells. This fuel would run out mid-May, and then the garrison would have no water. Wainwright's main mission, at least as he saw it, was to try and sustain morale and hold out, tying up as many Japanese troops as possible.

Wainwright had a chance to escape when Major Bill Bradford took the last flight out of Corregidor's Kindley Field. Bradford had taken several of these risky flights, flying at night and evacuating a number of people, including two civilian war correspondents. Wainwright was urged by his senior staff officers to follow MacArthur's example and escape, but he refused, saying, "I have been with my men from the start, and if captured, I will share their lot." Later, when Wainwright surrendered Corregidor, MacArthur called him "unbalanced" and refused to endorse a Medal of Honor recommendation for the doomed commander.

Wainwright became a beloved figure, making the rounds at the hospital or chatting freely with groups of soldiers. It was something that the imperious and "godlike" MacArthur would never do. Yet Wainwright still hoped to evacuate some personnel, particularly the Army nurses, before the island's inevitable surrender.

The USS *Spearfish,* with skipper Lt. Cmdr. Jim Dempsey, was the last submarine to visit Corregidor. It left on May 3 with 25 evacuees, including 12 Army nurses. Now it was only a matter of time. The garrisons on Corregidor and the smaller fortress islands awaited their fate.

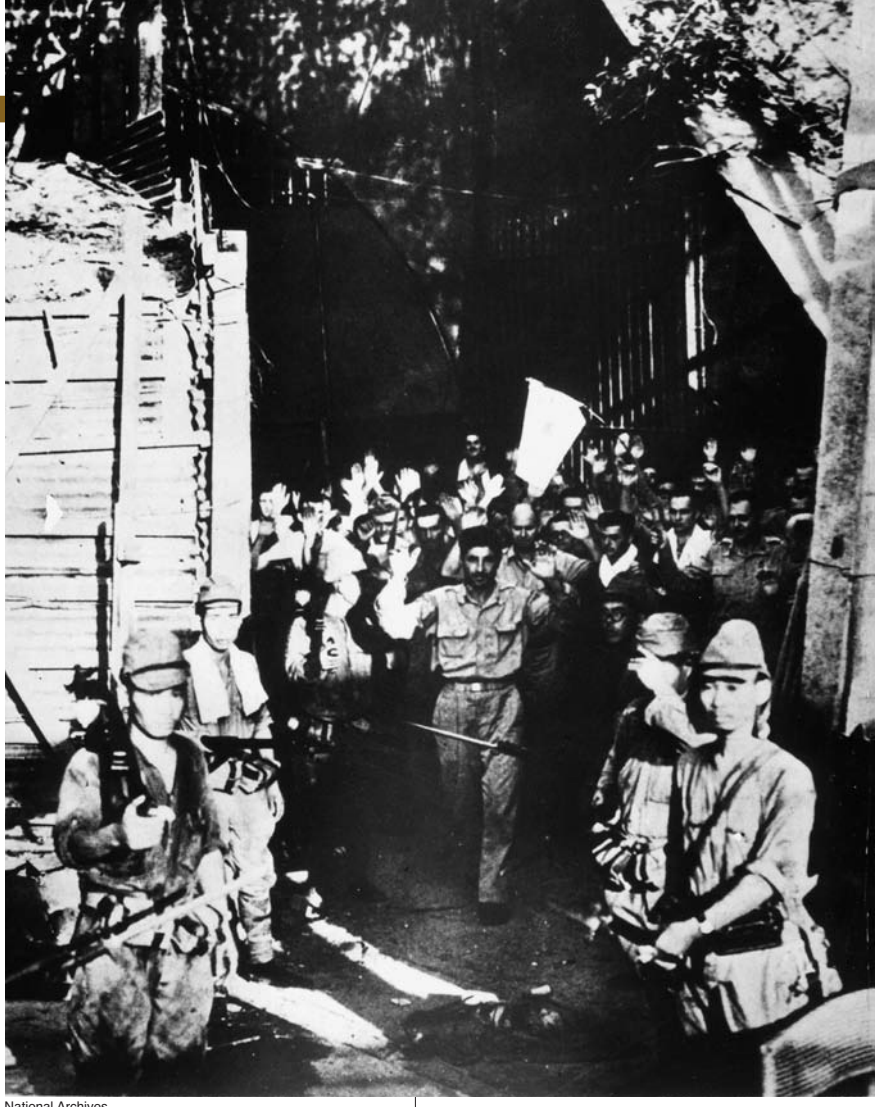
The Japanese planned to land on Corregidor the night of May 5. The assault would

be led by Colonel Gempachi Sato's 1st and 2nd Battalions, 61st Infantry, supported by tanks of the 7th Tank Regiment. The original idea was to land on Corregidor's tail between North Point and Infantry Point. Once a beachhead was established, a second group would come ashore.

The Japanese troops were in fine spirits and, as they boarded their landing craft, they sang the high, thin, haunting melody of "Prayer in the Dawn."

There was no standard size to the Japanese vessels; some carried as few as 30, while others carried as many as 170. The coxswains from the 21st Engineer Regiment guided their landing craft toward the looming bulk of Corregidor, confident that all would go according to plan.

Defense of Corregidor's eastern end fell to the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, under the command of Lt. Col. Curtis Beecher. Though nominally a Marine battalion, the force included about 360 Marines, perhaps 100 U.S. Navy sailors, a company of the 803rd Engineers, 240 Philippine Scouts of the 91st and 92nd Coast Artillery, some Philippine Army Air Force men, and even a few Filipino mess boys. This conglomeration totaled 1,024 men in all.



National Archives

Weapons were running low. The 1903 Springfield rifle was the standard armament, supplemented by Browning Automatic Rifles, four 37mm guns, and eight .30-caliber machine guns. A few 60mm mortars were on hand, as well as some .50-caliber machine guns salvaged from scuttled Navy ships. The Philippine Scouts also had a few 75mm artillery pieces available.

The 1st Battalion was divided into A Company, B Company, and Weapons Company D. Company A, 4th Marines, was given the task of defending 2½ miles of Corregidor's north shore. Commanded by Marine Captain Lewis Pickup, they faced the three-mile stretch of water that separated the island from the Bataan peninsula. They would be the first to engage the enemy.

By contrast Company B, commanded by Lieutenant Alan Manning, was assigned the south shore, though it would later find themselves heavily engaged in the coming fight. Captain Noel Castle's Weapons Company D was ready to give support wherever it was needed with heavy machine guns and 37mms.

The amphibious assault was preceded by a massive bombardment of Company A's positions along Corregidor's snaking tail. So many shells rained down that the whole eastern end of the island seemed to be one continuous curtain of smoke and flame. In theory, the first Japanese wave was supposed to hit the Corregidor beaches at 11 PM, but the plan began to unravel almost at once.

The overconfident coxswains discovered to their horror that Corregidor's familiar landmarks, so distinctive from Bataan, disappeared as the landing craft got closer. Heavy smoke from the bombardment also tended to obscure the proposed beachheads. But most of all a very strong current pushed the landing craft much father east then they originally planned.

Sergeant John F. Hamrich's squad of Company A, posted near Cavalry Point, could just make out dim shapes on the water—the first approaching landing craft. It was 11:10 in the evening, and someone shouted, "Here they come!" in the darkness. Company A needed no prompting, or even a formal order to commence fire. All along the north shore beaches, the Americans and Filipinos opened up with everything they had. Springfield rifles shot clip after clip into the enemy until barrels grew almost too hot, while .30- and .50-caliber machine guns sprayed the landing craft with a hurricane of lead.

Artillery opened up as well, including 75s and 37mm guns. The moon had yet to rise, and whenever an American searchlight was turned on it was quickly put out of action by Japanese fire. But the Americans found that their machine-gun tracer bullets gave more than enough light for the

Continued on page 96

Women install fixtures and assemblies in the fuselage section of a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber at the Douglas Aircraft Company plant in Long Beach, California. This photo is one of a series taken in 1942 by Alfred T. Palmer. With wartime industries severely impacted by the loss of male workers to the armed services, women stepped forward to fill the gaps—and forever changed American society. INSET: J. Howard Miller's famous image created for the Westinghouse Company is still popular today on T-shirts, coffee mugs, and posters. The model was 17-year-old Geraldine Doyle.

Rosie the Riveter

She helped America win the war and opened up a new, postwar world for women.

Author's Collection

Library of Congress

The iconic image of a woman in overalls, her hair tied up in a bandana, and flexing her bicep below the headline, "We Can Do It," is one of the most recognizable images from World War II. It can even be considered the precursor to the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Working women have certainly reshaped American society in the past 70 years. But how did it all start?

The Ad Council called the Rosie the Riveter campaign "the most successful advertising recruitment campaign in American history…. This powerful symbol recruited two million women into the workforce to support the war economy. The underlying theme was that the social change required to bring women into the workforce was a patriotic responsibility for women and employers. Those ads made a tremendous change in the relationship between women and the workplace. Employment outside of the home became socially acceptable and even desirable."

There is no doubt that American women played a significant role in World War II—from joining the uniformed services (WAACs, WAVEs, SPARs, and others) to handling jobs in factories and other heavy industries that previously had been a male-only province.

Prior to December 7, 1941, a number of American manufacturers were producing war matériel for the U.S. armed forces and also for America's allies through the Lend-Lease program. After the United States entered the war, industry swung into high gear, with nearly every manufacturing company receiving government contracts to produce everything from aircraft to ammunition, rifles to rations, ships to soap, pillows to parachutes. With millions of men volunteering or being drafted into service, a huge shortage of workers quickly developed in the nation's manufacturing facilities.

A National Park Service brochure says, "At first, companies did not think that there would be a labor shortage so they did not take the idea of hiring women seriously. Eventually, women were needed because

BY BORDEN BLACK

companies were signing large, lucrative contracts with the government just as all the men were leaving for the service."

Women, of course, had always worked—on farms, raising families, and as secretaries, teachers, and waitresses. But, with the United States just crawling out from under the Great Depression, most people were dead set against women working in factories and other manufacturing plants because they feared women would take jobs away from unemployed men.

But America's thrust into the war meant that the old traditions had to be cast aside. While workers were suddenly in short supply, everyone assumed that women working in the war industries would only be temporary and the situation would soon return to normal once victory was attained. However, early efforts to attract women to the workforce were tepid.

The government launched a propaganda campaign to sell the importance of the women performing war work. They promoted the fictional character of Rosie the Riveter, but it came about in an unusual way.

J. Howard Miller, a graphic designer in Pittsburgh, was hired to create a series of posters for the Westinghouse Company's War Production Co-Ordinating Committee that would be displayed at the factory for two weeks and then replaced by another series.

Working from a photo of 17-year-old Geraldine Doyle, Miller designed a poster depicting the ideal woman worker: loyal, efficient, patriotic, and feminine. The headline said, "We Can Do It." But this image was never considered to be Rosie the Riveter.

The first reference to this fictional character is believed to have come from a song, "Rosie the Riveter," written by Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb, that became popular in 1942 and furthered the efforts to attract women to industry. The lyrics went:

All the day long,
Whether rain or shine,
She's part of the assembly line.
She's making history,
Working for victory,
Rosie the Riveter

This was followed by Norman Rockwell's now-famous cover illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post* of May 29, 1943, showing a muscular woman in work clothes taking a lunch break with a rivet gun in her lap, and was the first widely publicized pictorial representation of the new Rosie the Riveter. This led to many other "Rosie" images.

The National Park Service brochure continues, "The media found Rose Hicker of Eastern Aircraft Company in Tarrytown, New York, and pictured her with her partner as they drove in a record number of rivets into the wing of a Grumman Avenger bomber on June 8, 1943…. In many other locations and situations around the country, 'Rosies' were found and used in the propaganda effort."

According to the NPS, "Women responded to the call to work differently depending on age, race, class, marital status, and number of children. Half of the women who took war jobs were minority and lower class women who were already in the workforce. They switched from lower paying, traditionally female jobs to higher paying factory jobs. But even more women were needed, so companies recruited women just graduating from high school.

"Eventually it became evident that married women were needed even though no one wanted them to work, especially if they had young children. It was hard to recruit married women because even if they wanted to work, many of their husbands did not want them to. Initially, women with children under 14 were encouraged to stay home to care for their families. The government feared that a rise in working mothers would lead to a rise in juvenile delinquency. Eventually, the demands of the labor market were so severe that even women with children under six years old took jobs."

Patriotism was a major influence, but it was the economic incentives that convinced many women to enter the work force. At the start of the war, 12 million women (one quarter of the workforce) were already working outside the home; by the end of the war, the number was up to 20 million (one third of the workforce).

Historians point out that conditions were sometimes harsh and pay often unequal, with

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ABOVE: Norman Rockwell's painting of Rosie the Riveter appeared on the May 29, 1943, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. BELOW: Jean Liparoto, seen far right in a wartime family photo, worked on 40mm shells at Monroe Auto Equipment in Monroe, Michigan. Her late husband Phil was a World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam veteran. She was also very involved with the USO in Columbus, Georgia, during World war II .

Liparoto photo

National Archives

Library of Congress

ABOVE: An African American woman is photographed working in an aircraft factory. Wartime job opportunities did much to improve the status of minorities. RIGHT: A riveting team working on the cockpit shell of a C- 47 transport plane at the North American Aviation plant in Inglewood, California.

"It was a job that had to be done, and there was *not a man* there to do it. Once given the chance, we proved to be as strong as the men."

— Liz Olen Minton

women making just $31.50 a week while the average man's pay in a wartime plant was $54.65 per week. It was still more than most women could make in traditional roles.

University of California at Santa Barbara professor Leila J. Rupp, in her study of World War II, wrote, "For the first time, the working woman dominated the public image. Women were riveting housewives in slacks, not mothers, domestic beings, or civilizers."

While the posters and songs and magazine covers mostly portrayed women breaking the sex-stereotypical image of male industrial workers (such as welders and riveters), the majority of working women filled non-factory positions, such as in the service sector, left vacant by men called to the front.

The NPS brochure says, "Most women worked in tedious and poorly paid jobs in order to free men to take better paying jobs or to join the service. The only area that there was a true mixing of the sexes was in semi-skilled and unskilled blue-collar work in factories.

"Traditionally female clerical positions were able to maintain their numbers and recruit new women. These jobs were attractive because the hours were shorter, were white-collar, had better job security, had competitive wages, and were less physically strenuous and dirty. The demand for clerical workers was so great that it exceeded the supply."

Married women often had to work a "double shift." Unlike men, once their factory or shop or office job was done for the day, women often found there was still work to be done at home—cooking, housekeeping, and caring for children.

"Rosies" held a wide variety of jobs. Liz Olen Minton had no training, but she dehydrated potatoes and worked in an aircraft plant during World War II. In 1943, while still a teenager, Minton worked at the Simplot dehydration plant in Caldwell, Idaho. She recalls that the assembly line was a long belt with women lining both sides. A hopper contained potatoes after they had been through the peeler. Minton doesn't remember the work being especially hard since they stood on wooden pallets or off the concrete floor.

"I was the 'hopper girl,'" Minton relates. "When they needed more potatoes, they would start the belt and I would let the

potatoes roll out." The women used a curved blade to remove "eyes" or blemishes. After a slicer cubed the spuds, they were spread on trays, stacked six feet high, rolled into ovens, and dehydrated. The packages were then sent to the mess halls overseas.

Minton and her sister met their future husbands and married while working at Simplot; both their husbands were shipped overseas. She says her father thought that, since both sons-in-law were in the service, the family should do more defense work, so they moved to Redondo, California. There she went to work in the Douglas aircraft factory in Torrance helping to make aircraft bomb-bay doors. She ended up bucking rivets on the Douglas A-26. "My partner worked on the outside and I worked on the inside," Minton recalls.

After they finished a door and it was being inspected, she chatted with the other girls and got to know a few of them. Other than that, Minton didn't have much of a social life. "I would get up, get ready for work, go to work, put in a day's work, and come home," she remembers. "I lived with Mom and Dad. I would help Mom, eat dinner, write a letter to Ray, read the Bible, and go to bed. The key was winning the war and helping the war effort."

She says the highlight those days was getting a letter. She wrote her husband every night while he was gone, and he did his best to write every day as well. "We got acquainted through the mail," she explains.

Minton believes that women held their own in the workplace. "It was a job that had to be done, and there was not a man there to do it. Once given the chance, we proved to be as strong as the men."

However, there was still resistance to women working in traditionally male-only jobs. The NPS brochure says, "The biggest problem was changing men's attitudes. Male employees and male-controlled unions were suspicious of women. Companies saw women's needs and desires on the job as secondary to men's, so they were not taken seriously or given much attention. In addition, employers denied women positions of power, excluding them from the decision-making process of the company. Women wanted to be treated like the male workers and not given special consideration just because they were women."

Library of Congress

Photographer Alfred Palmer captured another African American "Rosie" operating a power tool while working on an A-31 Vengeance dive bomber at Vultee Aircraft's Nashville, Tennessee, plant.

In the prewar years, the National Youth Administration (NYA) provided work and education for Americans 16 to 24 years old. June Midkiff Tinker trained at the Charleston NYA as an acetylene torch welder and also learned typing and general office work. After three or four months of training, she went to Patterson Field in Fairfield, Ohio (today Wright-Patterson Air Force Base), to work in an aircraft factory.

"My two brothers joined the Marines when the war started, and my older sister and I wanted to do our part," she explains, adding, "We had grown up in the Depression. It was living from hand to mouth. It was a chance to make money and help in the war effort."

Tinker and her sister roomed with two other girls in a family's home. She remembers fondly that one of the women would bring them hot chocolate and Ritz crackers every Sunday. "It was the nicest thing anyone could do for us. She treated us like her girls."

Tinker's job called for measuring and cutting sheet metal. Planes would come in with

the side torn out or burned, and a riveter on the outside and bucker on the inside would weld new metal in place. Tinker worked the line and learned how to rivet on the job. She found the hardest part was having to work the night shift. "I wasn't used to staying up at night. I usually went to bed at 8 o'clock," she recalls.

Until the World War II era, women wore skirts and dresses outside the home, but safety rules in the factories meant covering their hair, and pants and overalls became the norm. When she did dress up, Tinker said that silk stockings were unavailable (silk went into the manufacture of parachutes), so she would put makeup on her legs and draw a seam up the back. Comparing her fashion style then and now, Tinker laughs, "I live in jeans now."

Conditions in the plant were hard, and it was hot, but Tinker says that it was easier than at home because she had plenty to eat and money to send to the family. "When you are young, you don't think about complaining about things."

Despite the night-shift hours, she remembers they did have some fun, dancing at the USO and dating soldiers. "I enjoyed life no matter how hard it was." She went on to wed a military man and believes that marriage and her time in the plant expanded her horizons.

National Archives

National Archives

ABOVE: Women working in traditionally all-male occupations were a popular subject for photographers. Here a female welding crew and their male supervisor pose at an unidentified American shipyard. LEFT: A female worker in an ordnance plant poses with stacks of 500-pound bombs.

Tinker's career didn't end after the war. She became a bookkeeper and accountant. "I was the type of person who was very industrious. I would have done something. I know now we opened the door for all these women today who work."

Jean Liparoto remembers that the war years were rough, but she says no one complained. She was married and had a son in 1942 but still went to work in a Monroe, Michigan, war plant.

The factory, which made automobile parts before the war, was converted into the manufacture of 40mm shells. Liparoto worked the line inspecting the shells to make sure they weighed the right amount. The shells rolled down the line in hot oil. "The fumes from the oil got into your clothing and hair," she recalls. She wore gloves but no mask and says you couldn't get the oil smell out of your clothes. "People knew where you worked."

She doesn't remember men on the line but says the men showed the women what to do and checked on them.

Now 92, Liparoto feels people have become spoiled. "We did a lot of combining trips because gas was rationed. We didn't let anyone waste anything, and we shared."

When her brothers went off to war, Darlene Gottfried had to help with the family farm in Kansas. She was only 14, but there were pigs and chickens to feed and cows to milk. She says there were no male field hands to hire so her father cut back on some of the wheat farming, but during the harvest season she learned to run the combine. "You had a wheel to raise or lower the cutters when you came to a ditch," she recalls.

The family had a garden and a gigantic strawberry patch but no irrigation, so they had to water by hand to keep the plants alive. The winters were particularly rough because it snowed so much. "Dad put a rope from the windmill to the house so when you worked in the fields or milked in the barn, [you could use] the rope to get from the house to the barn without getting lost." The family often would be marooned for weeks on the farm when the roads were covered with snow.

The high point was when the family got letters from the front. "We didn't hear from them real often…. There was very little communication."

There wasn't much in the way of entertainment, either. Gottfried relates they would have mud fights. "When it rained, we had a lot of mud so we would get branches from a tree, take the leaves off, roll up mud balls, and shoot at each other."

Although Juanice Still didn't have a college diploma, she was called to southern Georgia to teach in a one-room country school when the regular teacher went off to war. "It was 1943 and I was scheduled

Library of Congress

A woman works on an aircraft engine at the North American Aviation factory in Inglewood, California.

and registered to go to college, but the superintendent called and said a school in the county didn't have a teacher and asked if I could get the roll until they could hire someone," she relates. They never did find anyone.

Three grades—third, fourth, and fifth—were taught in one room that was heated by a big stove. The boys would go out and cut wood to keep the fire going. Still remembers that the office in charge of rationing gave her enough gas to get her '32 Chevrolet to the schoolhouse, but she would have to cut off the engine and coast downhill to save gas. Her husband was assigned to work in a canning plant.

Still says that during the war there wasn't much to do. "You worked, you went home and kept house and your garden so you would have something to eat." For socializing and recreation they went to church; on Sunday there would be an all-day sing somewhere. "We sang gospel music. That's what kept you going. That's where you saw your friends," she remembers.

It took 10 years, but Still says she got her college degree by taking one course at a time at night and then went on to get her Master's degree. Her wartime job became her full-time profession, and she continued teaching for 18 years.

Even before the war Eva Daniel Ulrich was something of an oddity in the working world. She graduated from college in 1941 with a BS in business administration and accounting, one of only three women at Georgia Southern University (GSCW) to do so at the time. The young graduate took the civil service exam and became an auditor, which took her to Fort Benning outside Columbus, Georgia, for a job at Lawson Army Airfield.

While she was waiting for the construction of the airfield to be completed, Daniel worked on payroll at the old hospital building on post. She remembers coming to work one morning to find a fence had been built around her desk. "The soldiers would come in and sit on my desk while discussing (their problems)," she relates. "The sergeant put a fence around my desk so they wouldn't do that."

In the spring of 1942, the airfield opened and she was one of six sent to keep up with inventory. The men worked for her and would spend their lunch break watching airborne practice jumps. She also saw planes crash, which kept her from flying for many years.

It was at Fort Benning where she met her husband Richard Ulrich. "He asked me to marry him first time he saw me," she recalls. He worked on Sand Hill and would get home first. "He said 'I didn't get married to come home to an empty house,'" she remembers. She didn't want to give up the salary, but when he promised to give her all the money he made, Eva agreed to quit. Her days stayed busy after she gave birth to a daughter.

Despite her new baby and household duties, when her husband was sent to Europe in 1943, Eva rejoined the workforce with Metropolitan Life Insurance, taking the place of a man who joined the Navy. "I would go around and collect insurance money," she explains. "I would just walk in (a client's home) and pick it up." It was a job that had always been done by a man, but the company found she had one of the best collection rates because of her friendly manner and work ethic.

When her husband returned in 1946, she told the company she couldn't continue working. "It was a wonderful experience," she says of those days. "I haven't ever been intimidated by men in the work place. My father and mother always encouraged me so much and told me I could do anything I wanted to do."

Twenty-year-old Frances Tunnell Carter was a riveter on B-29s in a plant in Birmingham, Alabama. Formerly a kindergarten teacher from Mississippi, she says she had never even seen an airplane up close and had no training when she went to work on them, but that didn't faze her. She recalls that most of the people on the assembly line

Ramsey County Historical Society

were women. They worked in pairs—a riveter and a bucker in 10 non-air-conditioned bays. Although the work was hot and hard, Tunnel says the women didn't mind. "We were helping on the home front and not taking the risk the boys were taking on the front. They are the real heroes."

Tunnell met future husband John Carter during the war and presented him with a gift of an ashtray she had riveted. It fell apart. "If that's the way airplanes are put together," he remembers telling her, "if I get up in one, the safest thing I can do is jump out." He joined the paratroopers.

The pair got engaged through "V-mail" and later married. After the war, Frances decided she could do more than return to teaching elementary school. Both Carters returned to college on the GI Bill and received their Ph.Ds.

After the war, America's industrial resurgence faded as government contracts were cancelled and resulted in layoffs; it was widely feared that the economy would slip back to Depression levels. Although many women wanted to remain in the work force, employers laid them off in droves and told them to return either to lower paying, traditionally female jobs or to more domestic roles.

However, having been given a taste of a totally new kind of life where their contributions were celebrated and monetarily rewarded, many women decided that cooking and cleaning and caring for children were not enough. They persevered and forged a new life for themselves—and for their country.

The contribution of women to the war effort has not been forgotten. It was while teaching at Samford University in Birmingham that Frances Tunnell Carter, Ph.D., attended a meeting of women who had worked during World War II. She decided they needed an organization, so in 2003 she founded and became the first president of the American Rosie the Riveter Association (ARRA).

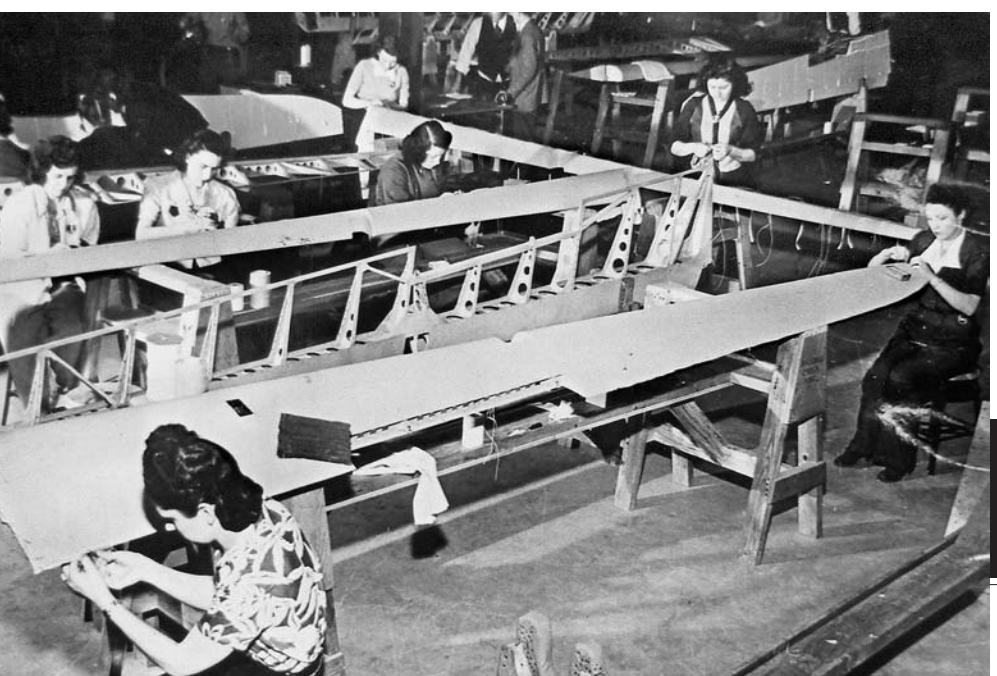
Having been given a taste of a totally *new kind of life* where their contributions were celebrated and monetarily rewarded, many women decided that cooking and cleaning and caring for children were not enough.

She says she started the group to "honor the contribution of women workers on the home front during World War II and to promote patriotism and responsibility among all Americans."

There are currently more than 2,000 members of the ARRA nationwide. Women whose work from 1941-1945 was designed to contribute to the war effort (including women who did volunteer work) and their female descendants are eligible for active membership. Spouses and male relatives may become auxiliary members by attending an official local or national meeting. More information about the organization is available online at: www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usarra

Several films have brought the wartime role of working women to the silver screen and television. The first, made in 1944, was simply titled *Rosie the Riveter.* More recently was *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter,* a 1980 documentary. The popular *Swing Shift,* starring Goldie Hawn as an aircraft factory employee, along with Kurt Russell and Ed Harris, was released in 1984.

To salute the contributions to victory of America's working women, the National Park Service operates the Rosie The Riveter WWII/Home Front National Historic Park in historic waterfront buildings at the former Richmond Kaiser Shipyard #3 in Richmond, California. For more information, see www. rosietheriveter.org. □



ABOVE: American Rosie the Riveter Association founder Dr. Frances Tunnell Carter and her husband, John Carter, a former paratrooper, pose with a Rosie the Riveter poster. LEFT: A group of women build a CG-4A glider wing at the Villaume Box and Lumber Company in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Tunnell Photo

An American submariner tells what it was like to face death and survive in the underwater war.

DEADLY CAT & MOUSE GAME AT SEA

By Ron Smith

BACKSTORY: *In World War II, the American submarine force was inordinately small—just 252 total boats, compared to the more than 1,100 deployed by Germany and over 600 built by Japan. Yet, the American subs, most of which saw service in the Pacific, accounted for 54.6 percent of all Japanese naval and merchant ships sunk. However, in compiling these statistics, the U.S. Submarine Force suffered heavy casualties—over 3,400 men (22 percent of the force) killed and 52 subs lost.*

Although he was only 17 when he enlisted with his father's consent in the U.S. Navy in the summer of 1942, John Ronald Smith (called "Ron" or "Smitty" by his friends) of Hammond, Indiana, was eager to pay back the Japanese for Pearl Harbor. After qualifying as a submariner following boot camp, he became a torpedoman in the aft torpedo room (the "caboose") of the Salmon-class USS Seal *(SS-183)—at a time when the American torpedoes were almost criminally unreliable and the U.S. Submarine Force was still trying to prove itself.*

This article is adapted from The Depths of Courage: American Submariners at War with Japan, 1941-1945, *by Ron Smith and Flint Whitlock.*

At 7 AM on May 4, 1943, as part of the crew aboard the U.S. submarine *Seal* was eating breakfast, the alarm was sounded: "Battle stations submerged!" A Japanese convoy had been spotted on the surface. The motormen shut down the diesels, the electricians in the maneuvering room switched to batteries, and the sub glided silently beneath the surface.

All routine activity aboard *Seal* ceased as every man hustled to his battle station. In the aft torpedo room, the men quickly removed the bunks and stowed them in the aft engine room. Horizontal I-beams were then swung into place across the room, front and rear, to support the four extra torpedoes in the room in the event reloading was necessary. Smitty took up his battle station seated between the aft tubes, eyes focused on the TDC—the torpedo data computer transmitter—mounted on the rear bulkhead, with headphones on his ears, a microphone pressed against his throat.

While the sub continued on its way to the intercept point, Smitty glanced around at his fellow sailors in the tight space—a scruffy, unmilitary looking lot. All wore ragged, cutoff dungaree shorts; sandals, no socks; an assortment of dirty skivvy shirts with the sleeves cut off or brightly colored Hawaiian shirts. Everyone was dripping with sweat. A few covered their stringy, unwashed hair with dark blue Navy baseball caps. Those old enough to shave had full beards; a few young guys, like Smitty, sported the first scraggly suggestions of facial hair. Yet, each man was a pro, an expert at his deadly craft.

There was short, muscular John "Big Ski" Kaczmerowski, looking confident, like a quarterback in a close game. Behind him, acting as backup, was Maylon "Woody" Woodard, a reliable man in a sub-versus-ship duel. There was skinny Dillingham, nicknamed "Seagull," a torpedoman without peer. Two other sailors, one named Brown and the other nicknamed Dead Eye, stood by, ready to lend a hand and their considerable muscle with the reloading. Each man had an insouciant, almost cocky look to him, as if to say, "No big deal; we've done this a hundred times before," masking any tension they might have felt and helping calm Smitty's tightening stomach.

Lieutenant John Hanes, in the control room amidships, had already begun the plot as *Seal* moved to intercept the convoy. The TDC was being fed the distance, angle, and speed of the target, information that was entered into the torpedoes' primitive "brains." It was Smitty's job to line up the marks on the dial of the TDC transmitter to the on-

In this 1943 watercolor titled *Stand By to Fire* by Georges Schreiber, submarine crewmen prepare to fire torpedoes at an enemy ship. The illustration graphically shows the close quarters in which submariners lived and worked.

U.S. Navy

THE BUSINESS OF WAR DEMANDED THAT THEY THINK OF THE ENEMY AS EXACTLY THAT—AND ATTEMPT TO KILL AS MANY OF THEM AS POSSIBLE. AFTER ALL, IT WAS THE JAPANESE WHO HAD BOMBED PEARL HARBOR WITHOUT WARNING.

Smith Family Archives

ABOVE: Torpedoman 1st Class John "Ron" Smith, aka "Smitty," 1943. OPPOSITE: USS *Plunger* backs clear of other submarines, including *Seal* (SS-183, far right), alongside their tender in San Diego Harbor in 1940. The author, Ron Smith, joined the *Seal* crew in spring 1943.

going into the "tin fish;" he would push the big brass firing lever only if, after receiving the command to fire, the marks, or "bugs" as they were called, were perfectly aligned. An accurate plot would make the fish more likely to hit their targets, but, due to countless malfunctions, no one could be certain, even if the bugs were right on, that the torpedoes would actually detonate.

Over the headset, Hanes, referred to as "Control," alerted the other 58 officers and enlisted men in *Seal* to stand by for action; Smitty passed this news along to those around him. While the forward torpedo room was put on alert, the aft torpedo room was told to stand easy—for now.

Once the range and distance to the target—a fat oiler with the distinctly un-Japanese name of *San Clemente Maru*—had been entered into the TDC, the order to "Fire one" was given to the forward torpedo room, and the boat suddenly lurched as though it had collided with a brick wall.

"Fire two, fire three." Two more lurches as 2,000 pounds of compressed air pressure from the "impulse bottle" violently kicked the tin fish out of their tubular homes.

"Lumpy" Lehman, the sonar man, reported over the circuit, "All fish running hot, straight, and normal." Lehman had an amazingly sharp, discriminating set of ears; he could detect the faint shooshing of screws from as far away as 20 miles and tell the officers how many ships there were, what types of ship were in the convoy, how fast the ships were going, and even in what direction they were heading. Some wags aboard *Seal* swore Lumpy could even tell what the registration numbers of the ships were.

Now they all waited. Would the torpedoes strike home, or would there be nothing but silence? Some men crossed their fingers or fingered the crucifixes that hung from their necks or played with some other sort of talisman thought to bring them luck.

A few of *Seal*'s crew may have given a moment's thought to the enemy sailors at whom the torpedoes were being directed, oblivious that their world was about to be shattered, that their lives were about to come to a sudden and violent end. Like the Americans, these sailors had girlfriends, wives, mothers, fathers, and children back home.

Like the Americans, most of these sailors were just doing a job that someone in higher authority had decreed they must do. Like the Americans, most of these sailors would have preferred spending their youth in other, more peaceful pursuits. But the Americans felt it was not healthy to dwell on such thoughts, to think of the enemy in human terms.

No, the business of war demanded that they think of the enemy as exactly that—the enemy—and attempt to kill as many of them as possible. After all, it was the Japanese who had bombed Pearl Harbor without warning; the Japanese who had brutally invaded Korea and China and Malaysia and the Philippines; the Japanese who had turned thousands of Korean girls and young women into their sex slaves; the Japanese who had beheaded captured Australian and British and American soldiers and airmen; the Japanese who had slaughtered their American and Filipino POWs along the march from Bataan; the Japanese who had committed atrocities every bit as horrible as those being perpetrated by the Nazis on the other side of the world.

And so the men inside *Seal* pushed such thoughts—if they had them—out of their minds and waited with eager anticipation to hear the explosions that would signal that the despised Japanese enemy sailors were plunging in agony to their deaths.

The men in the aft torpedo room focused on the second hand sweeping around the shiny bulkhead chronometer. "First one missed," Woody muttered as the time for the intercept came and went. The second and third torpedoes also passed into the silence of failure.

Seal's skipper, Lt. Cmdr. Harry B. Dodge (USNA, 1930), swung the sub around so the aft torpedoes could be fired while the forward torpedo room reloaded, and Smitty heard Lieutenant Hanes's voice in his headphones say, "Tubes aft, stand by."

"Tubes aft standing by," Smitty replied, making his posture just a little more erect, a little more military. "Stand by," Smitty repeated for the benefit of his crewmates. Here he was, the newest and youngest member of the crew, issuing orders to these "old salts." He was at last being given a chance to show what he could do. He hoped he would not fail this, his first big combat test.

The crewmen moved quickly to their firing stations. They had no idea what their target was—a carrier, battleship, cruiser, destroyer, oiler, tanker, freighter, or transport—nor did it particularly matter.

"Tubes aft, stand by five, six, and seven," said Hanes.

"Tubes aft, standing by five, six, and seven," repeated Smitty.

Hanes directed, "Tubes aft, open outer doors on five, six, and seven."

"Tubes aft, aye," said Smitty, and repeated the command for Big Ski and Seagull. They opened the valves from the "water round torpedo"—a tank located just below the torpedo tubes—and flooded the three firing chambers with seawater to equalize pressure to the sea; the fourth aft tube, number eight, was normally held back during an attack.

"Control," Smitty reported, "outer doors on five, six, and seven open."

"Tubes aft, switch on firing circuits on five, six, and seven," said Hanes, and Smitty repeated the directive.

Seagull threw the switches that armed the torpedoes, then gave Smitty the "okay" sign. "Firing circuits on for five, six, and seven," Smitty told Hanes.

"Very well, tubes aft. Set depth 12 feet."

"Set depth 12 feet, tubes aft, aye," Smitty said as the dials on the tubes were set to the depth ordered.

"Stand by five," Hanes said.

"Stand by five, tubes aft, aye." Smitty watched the dials and waited for the marks on the TDC to line up.

"Fire five."

As the bugs came into alignment, Smitty mashed the tube's firing button at the same moment that Hanes, 50 yards away, pushed the firing button for number five, making sure that the torpedo fired even if the electric circuit failed.

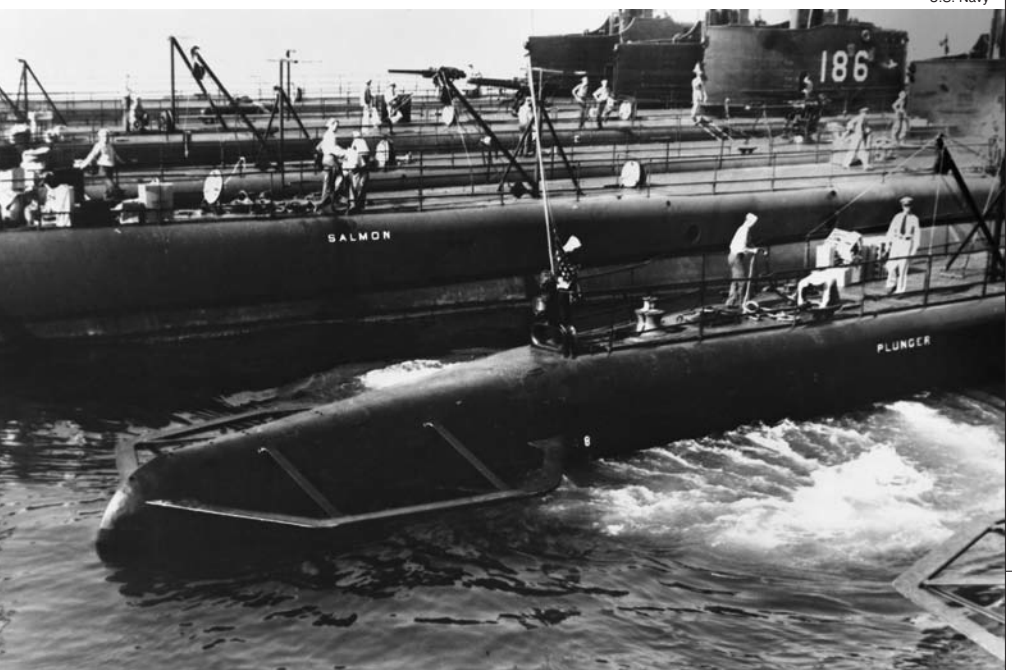
There was a loud whoosh of compressed air, a deep-throated boom, and a spray of water that spurted into the compartment from around the tube's gasket as the torpedo was launched.

The same procedure was followed for tubes six and seven, although Smitty was angry at himself for launching number six just as the TDC marks went out of alignment by two degrees; he knew that number six would miss its target.

Big Ski, cussing a blue streak, was having trouble with the number seven tube's gasket right after the fish was fired. An eight-inch stream of water was pouring in and sloshing down into the bilges. Not a critical problem yet, but one that couldn't be ignored.

"Hit the emergency valve," Woody yelled over the noise of the rushing water. "Shut 'er down!"

U.S. Navy



Big Ski moved over to tube seven and with great effort turned the manual control wheel. The stream of water was gradually pinched off, but not before Ski was a soaking, dripping mess.

"Tubes aft, close outer doors," Hanes commanded.

"Tubes aft, close outer doors, aye," Smitty relayed, and Big Ski and Seagull cranked the outer doors closed.

"All fish running hot, straight, and normal," reported Lumpy Lehman on sonar.

Then someone who was clocking the first torpedo announced that it had missed. The crew in the aft torpedo room slumped. Damn these defective fish, they collectively thought.

A few seconds later there came a thumping roar followed by a jolt that felt as if the sub had been struck with a giant sledgehammer.

"We hit the son of a bitch!" shouted Big Ski. It was torpedo number six, the one Smitty knew for sure was going to miss.

The crew members began whooping and hollering and jumping up and down and slapping one another on the back, just as if their team had scored the winning touchdown. How lucky can you get? wondered Smitty to himself.

"Tubes aft," said Hanes, "start your reload. And good shot, Smitty."

"Tube aft start reload, aye," said Smitty. "And thanks, Hanes." (Except for the skipper, submarine sailors did not call the officers "sir" or by their ranks.)

The periscope was raised, then lowered. Frank Greenup, the executive officer, came over the intercom. "We just sank a large transport freighter," he announced. "Looks like a lot of men in the water."

Cheers erupted again in the aft torpedo room, and more celebratory dances were conducted. The crew gave Smitty a new nickname: "Warshot."

Infantrymen can tell if their bullets are hitting the target just by looking; artillerists, too, can watch the results of their salvos. Airmen on bombers can scan the landscape below and note their bombs striking home, and gunners on surface ships can observe the havoc their shells cause. But sub-

mariners, with the exception of the officer manning the periscope, are denied visual confirmation of their marksmanship and must rely on aural evidence alone.

But even without sonar headphones, the men in *Seal* could hear the 7,354-ton *San Clemente Maru* breaking up as it sank. Then the boilers exploded—Ka-THWOOMP! Ka-THWOOMP! The shock waves hit *Seal*, shaking her and rattling the chinaware in her galley. Then they heard the cracking and popping noises as the freighter's bulkheads caved in while the ship sank deeper into the ocean. So that's what a dying ship sounds like, Smitty said to himself with morbid fascination.

Greenup broke into the crew's reverie and celebrations: "There are two escorts up there looking for us now. Rig for depth charge. Rig for silent running. Close all watertight doors."

Without wasting a second, *Seal*'s crewmen did what they had practiced a thousand times. The watertight doors between compartments were swung shut on their heavy hinges and dogged down. The bulkhead flappers that passed air between compartments were closed. Big Ski climbed up into the escape hatch to make sure it would not spring open from the shock of the depth charges and flood the interior. The air conditioning was shut off.

Seal plunged to 200 feet, where the oceanic pressure on the hull was 90 pounds to the square inch, and the electric motors were silenced so that not even the slow turning of the propeller screws would give their position away. Talking, walking around, dropping a tool, doing anything that might make the slightest noise was strictly verboten. This was the moment every submariner dreaded. The worm had turned; the hunter had become the hunted.

While they sweated it out down below, *Seal*'s crew knew that the enemy's destroyers were crisscrossing above them, doing their best to locate them. Sonar operators on the destroyers, using submarine-locating equipment, were "pinging"—sending electronic signals into the deep water and listening for the telltale echo that would tell them a large metallic object was down there.

Once that echo was heard, depth charges would begin to cascade down on the immobile prey. Sometimes there would be only a handful of charges; at other times the depth charging would go on for hours. No one could be certain when—or how—it would end.

Japanese depth charges were generally regarded as less powerful than the American variety—containing 242 pounds of explosive and detonating at a relatively shallow depth—about 150 feet at the maximum.

By diving to 200 feet or more, the submarines were relatively safe, but not always. The charges could still be plenty lethal; no one knew how many submarines did not return because a lucky shot had split the pressure hull or damaged the propulsion or steering mechanism or wrecked a valve on a ballast tank, making it impossible for a sub to gain positive buoyancy and return to the surface.

Smitty and his mates in the aft torpedo room suddenly discovered they had a problem—a big one. When the order to rig for depth charges came, torpedoes had already been loaded into tubes five and seven, but the torpedo for tube six was only halfway in. As *Seal* dove to 200 feet, the outer pressure compressed the steel hull just enough to make it a tight fit for the torpedoes; consequently the torpedo in number six tube was stuck.

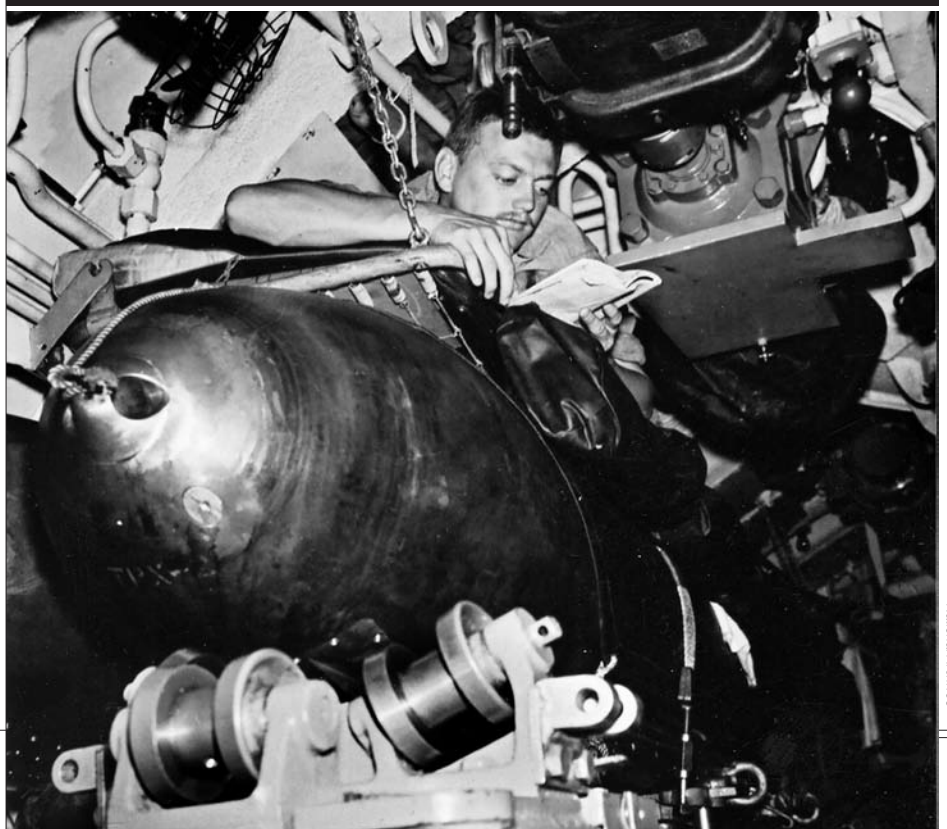
Everyone knew that a depth charge going off near the stern might jar open the outer door to tube six and cause a sudden inrush of seawater. If the blast were severe enough, it might even rip the outer door off its hinges, blow the torpedo back into the compartment, and cause the aft torpedo room to flood, killing everyone in the sealed-off compartment and making it hard, if not impossible, for the sub to surface. The crewmen manhandled the tin fish, trying to shove it home, but it wouldn't budge.

Somebody had once told Smitty that he would hear a click just before the depth charge detonated; it was the trigger mechanism and would give those in the boat only a fraction of a second to grab something, grit their teeth, and hang on. Then it happened.

Click ... KaBLOOM!

As feared, a depth charge went off close to the stern and water immediately began pouring into the compartment from around the protruding torpedo. Click ... KaBLOOM!

A submarine crewman reads a book in his bunk just a few inches above on the the torpedoes. OPPOSITE: USS *Seal*, undergoing repairs at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, March 21, 1943, about the time Ron Smith joined her crew.



National Archives

Another one, then another. The lights flickered off and on, and the whole sub lurched and rocked as though some giant sea creature were pummeling *Seal* with its monstrous fists.

Click ... KaBLOOM! With each explosion, the glass faces of gauges throughout the sub shattered. Lightbulbs popped, sizzled, then went out. Cork insulation and chips of paint flew. Cockroaches scurried for safety. The boat's welded seams seemed ready to split apart, and water continued to gush in from around the half-inserted torpedo.

"Get that goddamned thing in there before the whole ocean pours in!" yelled Woody. Brown and Dead Eye did their best with the block and tackle, but the tin fish wouldn't move. Five-feet, five-inch Big Ski went to lend a hand, grabbing the line in front of Dead Eye, but Dead Eye called him a dumb Polack and shoved him out of the way. Big Ski slipped on the wet deck and came up with a tube-door crank in his hand, ready to split Dead Eye's skull. Dead Eye grabbed a mallet, and for a minute it looked as if the two Americans had declared war on each other.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Two more charges went off nearby, shaking *Seal* violently and bringing the two combatants back to their senses. More water gushed in; the outer door could blow at any moment.

Big Ski dropped the crank handle, shoved past Dead Eye and the others, and yanked the chock and block and tackle from the rear of the torpedo. He then pulled a wiping rag from his back pocket, placed it against the rear of the fish, and, grunting and straining with almost superhuman effort, shoved the torpedo fully into the tube all by himself. Everyone watched with stunned disbelief. It was a miracle; no one, especially not someone five-feet-five, could do that alone.

Click ... KaBLOOM!

Coming out of his momentary stupor, Seagull Dillingham slammed shut the inner door to tube six as Smitty cranked it around into the dogs and locked it closed. Exhausted, Big Ski dropped to the deck, sitting with his head between his knees, sweating hard, his breath coming in clumps, the veins in his neck bulging like snakes. Everyone moved around him cautiously and quietly, not daring to say a word.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

The depth charges continued to rain thick and fast, and Smitty prayed that they would soon cease. After another 10 or 15 explosions, the hammering stopped. The entire battle had lasted about four hours, but to Smitty it seemed like several eternities.

Finally, Smitty spoke quietly into the throat mike: "Control, tubes aft. All tubes reloaded."

"Very well, tubes aft. Stand easy."

The sub hunters had gone, and *Seal* swam silently out of the area, propelled at a slow but steady three knots. Eventually the order came to secure from depth charges and silent running. The boat surfaced, fresh air poured in, and the bunks were returned to their normal places in the torpedo rooms. Exhausted men fell into them.

Smitty took stock of himself. It had been his first combat, and he was surprised to find that he had been excited but not terribly frightened—he had been too busy to be really scared. He also noticed that he was more exhausted than he ever remembered being. As soon as a bunk came available, he slid into it, just a stiff mattress covered with green plastic, his nose only three inches from the oil pan under the 30-horsepower electric motor that powered the stern plates. Heedless of the motor's noise, he fell asleep in seconds.

Several weeks later, in June 1943, after refitting and considerable additional training, *Seal* left Midway to begin her seventh war patrol. According to the secret orders in the sub's safe, *Seal* was to patrol in Japanese waters off the home island of Honshu—a very dangerous place—some 3,000 miles from Midway.

U.S. Navy

After five days at sea, *Seal* ran into a typhoon, the Orient's version of a hurricane. Plunging into waves taller than houses convinced the crew that this was no ordinary storm. The boat was rolling 30 degrees from side to side, and everything loose within the sub had to be lashed down or securely stowed. Sleeping men even had to be tied into their bunks to keep from being dumped onto the deck. Everyone except the saltiest of old salts got violently seasick. At the height of the storm, Smitty volunteered for a topside watch as starboard lookout. "I couldn't sleep and I couldn't eat," he said. "Might as well do something useful."

The storm was the most powerful, violent thing Ron Smith had ever experienced. The wind was blasting the rocking sub at speeds up to 100 miles an hour, and the rain, instead of coming from just one direction, seemed to be coming from all directions at once. *Seal* was battered from one wave to another like a shuttlecock. Smitty, on topside watch, fastened a lifeline around his waist, secured it to the railing, and held on.

National Archives

U.S. Navy

ABOVE LEFT: USS *Seal* photographed from almost directly astern while off the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, March 24, 1943. Mare Island, near San Francisco, was one of the Navy's principal bases in WWII. ABOVE RIGHT: A submarine skipper uses the periscope to target an enemy vessel while the executive officer (foreground) uses a manual "Is-Was" slide rule computer to target where the target will be, based on where it was and is. OPPOSITE: The 308-foot-long USS *Seal*, photographed in 1943 heading out from California for one of her 12 war patrols.

"A swell would form like a hole in the ocean 50 to 70 feet deep," Smitty related, "with a black wall on the other side just as high. *Seal* would fall into the hole like an airplane in a freefall dive, then slam into the wall of water on the opposite side, shuddering as she wallowed back up and over it."

Most of the wave washed over the boat, and Smitty shut his eyes and held his breath, hanging on with all his might when he saw it starting to crest over him. Then down the black wave would crash, smashing into him like a giant wet fist, trying to rip him from the tenuous safety of the boat and throw him into the sea.

There was one redeeming feature to the storm: if any enemy ships were out their in the roiling sea, the Japanese sailors would be in the same stew—fighting Mother Nature instead of the Americans.

After enduring several hours of being banged around in the storm and soaked to the skin, Smitty was at last relieved and struggled to get below, where it was dry. He retreated to the mess hall that was pitching back and forth and grabbed a mug of hot coffee that kept sloshing all over him. He then dripped his way to the control room. "Why're we riding this out on the surface, Chief?" he asked Red Servnac, an old salt and veteran submariner. "Why don't we just submerge and get out of this shit?"

"Didn't know it was going to be this bad," Servnac answered. "It'd be hard to dive in this now. We'd probably take as much air into the dive tanks as water. Not sure we could dive."

Lieutenant Jack Frost, the engineering and diving officer, leaning against the gyroscope table to keep his balance, joined the conversation. "It's better we ride it out on the surface, Smith," he said. "*Seal* can take it. She's a tough girl."

Still skeptical, Smitty nodded and headed back to the caboose—the aft torpedo room—stripped off his sopping clothes, wrung them out, and put them back on before sliding into a bunk and strapping himself in. At least my clothes got washed, he thought, sighing with resignation about the situation.

After three days, the storm moved on and *Seal* once again swam in calm seas, heading for Honshu.

After a week—half of which had been spent struggling against the storm and the other half engaging in battle drills to sharpen the crew's combat skills—*Seal* finally arrived off the northeast coast of Honshu, the enemy's front yard. With daylight lasting 20 hours a day at this latitude, Dodge kept *Seal* submerged most of the time, coming up for only about four hours in the darkness to charge the batteries.

It was a risky thing to do, for if *Seal* were spotted by the enemy she would have to dive and get out of there fast—and who knew what would happen if the batteries didn't get a full charge?

Being this close to Japan, the traffic was terrific. Ships went left and ships went right, but Dodge bided his time, staying low, refusing to shoot. Everybody wanted to know what the hell they were waiting for.

One day the dim thumping of depth charges detonating a long way off reverberated throughout the sub, but no one knew why. "Ask Control what's going on," one of the torpedomen directed Smitty, who was on the headphones.

"Control, tubes aft. We're hearing explosions back here. What's going on?" Smitty asked.

"Tube aft, Control," said "Cowboy" Hendrix, a sailor manning the phones in the control room. "We hear it, too. Don't know what it is, but it's definitely not for us. Too far away."

"Ask him if anyone else is close," Big Ski told Smitty.

Cowboy reported that Mr. Greenup, the executive officer, thought that *Runner* was nearby, to the south of *Seal*.

The tempo of the explosions picked up, like the final minute of a Fourth of July fire-

works show, but still at quite a distance.

"Sounds like they're working someone over pretty good," said a sailor named Lago. Men just stared at the bulkheads and listened.

At about 9 PM, the thumping stopped, and the crew in *Seal* relaxed a little. Then, about 45 minutes later, Lumpy Lehman came on over the circuit; he had picked up an emergency signal. "Sounds like the *Runner.* Weak signal, hard to read. Sounds like they are saying they're stuck in the mud or something. Can't make it out."

Lieutenant Hanes's voice came on. "Sound, Control. Maybe they've run aground. Keep listening."

"Sound, aye," said Lehman.

The men of *Seal* were quiet. The signs were clear—*Runner* had probably gone down. A sister submarine was dying. Or dead. *Seal* was filled with a sobering silence. They knew that it could be their fate, too.

At 10 PM on July 7, 1943, *Seal* surfaced again in darkness to recharge her batteries. All four diesels ran at full power to squeeze as much juice as possible into the lead-acid cells during the short time available.

At 3:40 the next morning, radar picked up the blips of a large convoy streaming north at 12 knots: three big transports, five or six smaller ships, and a few escorts. The convoy was hugging the coastline, exposing only the starboard side and giving *Seal* little maneuvering room.

Dodge thought it was risky but worth a shot; he put *Seal* on a northerly course at flank speed on the surface to intercept the convoy. Throughout the boat, men practiced their procedures of preparing to engage. When *Seal* got to the ambush point, she went to battle stations submerged and dove to periscope depth. Target range, speed, and distance were fed into the TDC. Everything was ready for the attack.

Lumpy Lehman suddenly reported, "Small fast screws closing from port side." It was a Japanese sub homing in for the kill!

"Drop her to 150 feet," Dodge commanded. Lieutenant Frost ordered all ballast-tank vents opened, sending *Seal* on a steep plunge. The command had not come a moment too soon, as all hands on board heard the distinctive, high-pitched screeeeooooom sound of a torpedo ripping through the water just above them. Smitty nearly jumped out of his skin at the noise.

"Periscope depth," ordered Dodge, and *Seal* rose at his command. They were still going to attack the convoy!

"Stand by, tubes forward," said Hanes.

"Tubes forward standing by, aye," said Rick "Big Wop" Bonino, with a hint of glee in his voice.

Smitty listened intently on his headphones as Dodge maneuvered *Seal* into position for a shot from the bow tubes. In his mind's eye, Smitty could see his counterparts in the forward torpedo room doing everything needed to prepare for the attack.

"Fire one," said Dodge, and *Seal* lurched under the kick of compressed air. Two more torpedoes left the sub in quick succession. "All ahead full," directed Dodge. "Tubes forward, start your reload. Take her down to 100 feet."

"Tubes aft, stand by," said Hanes. "Open doors five, six and seven."

"We're going under the son of a bitch!" exclaimed Big Ski.

"If those first three fish hit him, he'll come down right on top of us!" yelled Lago.

"Knock off that shit, Lago," shouted Woody. "The Old Man knows what he's doing." The torpedomen began cranking open the outer tube doors.

It was now clear to everyone: shoot from the bow tubes, go under the target, then hit him again from the other side with the stern tubes. It was a brilliant maneuver, one that, as far as Smitty knew, no one had ever tried before. But weren't they too close to the shore? Wouldn't *Seal* run aground once she got on the other side of the target ship?

There was no time to worry as Hanes's voice crackled in Smitty's headphones. "Tubes aft, Control. Stand by to fire five."

"Tubes aft standing by to fire five, aye," said Smitty as he intently focused on the

"HOLY MOTHER OF GOD," GASPED BIG SKI AS HE STARED AT THE DEPTH GAUGE. "WE'RE AT 365 FEET!" EVERYONE KNEW THAT *SEAL'S* MAXIMUM TEST DEPTH WAS 90 FEET SHALLOWER; SHE HAD NEVER BEEN THIS DEEP BEFORE.

U.S. Navy

TDC box, waiting for the bugs to come into line.

Suddenly—Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Three shock waves smashed into and through *Seal*. The caboose was plunged into total darkness as the light bulbs blew out. It quickly became very cold and very wet as water began spraying from pipes burst by the force of the torque that had twisted the ship. Men were yelling, swearing, praying, giving commands, shouting warnings.

Instinctively Smitty reached out and grabbed anything he could find to steady himself and keep from being tossed around the blackened room with all its hard, protruding surfaces. He felt the boat tilt upward at a sickening angle. At that moment the dim emergency lighting came on.

"Holy Mother of God," gasped Big Ski as he stared at the depth gauge. "We're at 365 feet!" The old hull groaned under the weight of 200 pounds of pressure per square inch. Everyone knew that *Seal*'s maximum test depth was 90 feet shallower; she had never been this deep before.

Click ... KaBLOOM!

"Rig for depth charge! Rig for silent running!" came the order from Control. Smitty, scared out of his wits, repeated it.

"A little late for that," somebody wisecracked as the aft torpedo crew dogged down the watertight door, closed the bulkhead flappers, and secured the outer tube doors.

Click ... KaBLOOM!

"What the hell happened?" somebody demanded to know.

"The sons of bitches caught us with our pants down," Woody replied.

Click ... KaBLOOM!

Seal shuddered as though being beaten with a baseball bat the size of a smokestack.

"We're getting gang-banged," shouted Dead Eye as he hung onto a loading rack.

Water continued to spray into the compartment from ruptured lines. With the upward slant of the deck, the icy water was knee deep down near Smitty's station and getting deeper.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Smith Family Archives

Although the men of the *Seal* didn't know it yet, seven Japanese destroyers had positioned themselves between the convoy and the coast, invisible to *Seal*'s periscope and radar. At the first salvo of torpedoes, the enemy tin cans had swung through the convoy, pinged *Seal*, and started dropping their deadly munitions. *Seal* had run into a captain—or seven of them—who could drop depth charges "down the hatch."

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Sound and pressure waves reverberated through the hull, and Smitty was amazed that he could actually see the steel bulkheads bend and move with each shock as though the sub were made of aluminum foil.

The men in the caboose tried to climb higher, away from the rising water, but the deck, slick with an oily film, prevented traction. The water, only a couple of degrees above freezing, chilled the air and the men could see their breath clouds.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Damage reports from the different sections of the sub were coming in thick and fast over Smitty's headphones, and he relayed the depressing information to his mates: "Forward torpedo room flooding; a gasket on the sound head is leaking; control room is dry but the pump room is flooded almost to the control-room hatch; after-battery room has some water, still about eight inches from the batteries."

This last bit of news was especially ominous, for if the water reached the batteries, it would combine with the acid to create chlorine gas and kill everyone on board.

"Forward engine room reports minor leaks, not much water in the bilges," Smitty continued reporting to his mates. "After-engine room flooded to the decks."

It was Smitty's turn to report to Control: "Outer doors closed, water about halfway up the deck, stern depth gauges reading 365 feet."

"Very well, tubes aft," came the calm response from Control. Smitty wondered how Hanes could be so unflappable at a time like this, but the officer's calmness helped to settle Smitty's nerves. Maybe things aren't as bad as they seem, he said to himself.

"What time is it?" a torpedoman named "Hopalong" Cassedy asked Smitty, who

moved so he could see the chronometer.

"Zero seven-twenty," Smitty replied. It was July 9, 1943. He wondered if he would live to see July 10.

"It's been less than an hour since the attack started," Woody said quietly in disbelief. It seemed as if they had been under fire for hours. Somebody mentioned that the depth charging had ended about a half hour earlier. They were starting to breathe easier, but were still worried about water reaching the batteries.

"All compartments, we're going to try to correct our trim," Control said, but no sooner were the valves noisily opened than another rain of depth charges cascaded down.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

"The sound of a depth charge cannot be described," Smitty later said. "There is no other sound like it. Worse than the loudest thunder, 10 times louder than a large bomb, a sound so powerful that it goes through the spectrum of physical sound that the ear can hear and turns into a pressure wave."

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

"It don't get no closer than that," the crewman named Brown growled as his knuckles turned white from holding onto an I-beam.

The charges kept coming in a seemingly endless deluge. Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! There were so many explosions, the men began to think that the enemy destroyers were returning to port, reloading, and coming back to drop more. Maybe all of the depth charges in Japan were being used to sink *Seal*.

Smitty started to grow really scared. His fellow crew members were the best in the business, but they had no way to fight back, no shield to deflect the blasts, no magic wand to make the enemy disappear and the bombing stop.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

When, dear Lord, will it end? ran through each man's mind. How much more of this shit do You expect us to take?

Lieutenant Frost, the diving officer, was unable to change *Seal*'s awkward angle by correcting her trim. Each time they tried pumping water from the tanks, the Japanese sonar men would hear the noise and more depth charges would come down. They definitely had *Seal* pinned to the mat and were not about to let her up.

Three more hours passed, but there was no cessation in the assault on nerves and eardrums.

"Sound, can you tell us anything?" Control asked Lumpy Lehman at one point.

"Control, I make seven destroyers and some smaller craft nearby, probably destroyer escorts." This was the first time anyone had heard about the number of hunters who were up there. No wonder the cannonade never seemed to cease.

"Very well, Sound," Control acknowledged quietly, again without emotion, almost as if he had just been given a weather report for fair skies and calm seas.

It was getting colder by the minute in the aft torpedo room. Is this my tomb? Is this where I'm going to die? Smitty thought. He wondered how his dad would take the news. And his girlfriend Shirley back in Hammond. They won't even have a body to bury. The thought depressed him even further.

Lumpy Lehman gave his assessment of the situation: "Sounds like they're circling us and takin' turns runnin' across the circle and droppin' a load on us."

Smitty repeated what he heard, and Brown tried to lighten the tension: "Sounds like the Indians got our wagon train circled." The men in the caboose laughed a little harder than they might ordinarily have done. Then the room grew quiet again. Each man in the group would close his eyes and lower his head every once in a while. The others knew he was praying, as they all were.

Smitty issued his own silent prayer. Please, dear God, please help me, please help us. I don't mind dying if it will help get this war over, but I don't think it will. Please give me the strength to do whatever I have to do.

Lago tried to relieve the tense atmos-

Both: Smith Family Archives

ABOVE LEFT: Woody Woodard, one of Smith's fellow crewmen in *Seal*'s aft torpedo room. ABOVE RIGHT: Harry B. Dodge, commander of *Seal*. OPPOSITE: Ron Smith (circled) is visible during practice with *Seal*'s five-inch MK40 deck gun. The Salmon-class *Seal* had a complement of five officers and 54 enlisted men.

phere with a dirty joke, but it fell flat.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Woody also made a contribution, but before he could get to the punch line, he was interrupted by Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Suddenly a new sound—a sharp, loud POING!—rang through the hull as though *Seal* had been turned into a large gong.

"Sonar," said Dead Eye. "He's pinging on us."

"That son of a bitch really has us now," offered Big Ski, standing up and facing the bulkhead. It was the first time Smitty had seen Big Ski scared. The destroyers had zeroed in on *Seal* with their active sonar and were echo-ranging, bouncing the signal off the massive steel hull of the helpless sub and calculating her position. It was the only sound that submariners dreaded more than the sound of depth charges. It meant the destroyers knew exactly where *Seal* was, as though she had a giant flashing neon target painted on her side.

A new sound now greeted the submariners' vibrating ears: Pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop. It sounded like a string of large, underwater firecrackers.

"Shit. Depth bombs," Woody said.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Eight more depth charges went off, and a lot more bombs.

"They probably got an airfield near here," said Hopalong.

"Yeah, and a goddamn bomb factory, too," said Big Ski, shivering, "and we're right at the end of the assembly line."

National Archives

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Big Wop Bonino, in the forward torpedo room, was keeping score of the number of charges dropped and periodically reported his count quietly over the circuit. "Two hundred and twelve," came the latest total.

Somehow, incredibly, they were all still alive. Since their demise no longer seemed imminent, thoughts of living took over, especially thoughts of food.

"I'm starved," said one.

"Me, too," said another.

Suddenly the men started pulling cans of food out from secret storage places, such as from behind the spare torpedoes, and pooled their wares. There were several cans of Dole pineapples, some sardines, and a tin of soda crackers. The sailors broke out their knives and cut open the cans. "It would have made a nice picnic except for the freezing cold and the continuing explosions of the depth charges," Smitty later said.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

"Boy, those bastards just ain't givin' up," said Big Ski, his mouth stuffed with crackers.

The hours dragged by, but the Japanese destroyers refused to slacken their efforts to kill the picnickers. Strangely, it was becoming as routine as depth-charging could become. And, surprisingly, despite *Seal*'s odd upward angle, Dodge was managing to keep the submarine moving forward at reduced power, hoping to slip away from the enemy.

Damage reports came in from various parts of the sub. The pump room was flooded and out of commission, some vents were damaged, and engine mufflers had been blown away. Worse, the fuel tanks had been punctured and *Seal* was leaking diesel fuel; the oil would form a shiny rainbow on the ocean's surface, making it very easy for enemy destroyers to track her movements.

A diminishing supply of oxygen was also becoming worrisome. Dodge ordered everyone to open five-gallon cans of a white powder—carbon dioxide absorbent—and spread it around to help preserve the oxygen. Cigarette breaks were cut down to five minutes every hour, but when the men lit up, they found it virtually impossible to keep the tobacco burning.

SMITTY THOUGHT, WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO DIE FOR SOMETHING I DIDN'T START? AFTER ALL, IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT YOU HAVE AS LONG AS YOU HAVE ENOUGH FOOD, HAVE A WIFE AND KIDS, AND ARE LEFT ALONE.

Smith Family Archives

U.S. Navy

ABOVE LEFT: The Smith brothers (Ron, Rex, and Bob) at war's end in Hammond, Indiana. Bob served aboard the submarine *Bluefin* (SS-222). ABOVE RIGHT: USS *Seal*, photographed in Boston after the war when the sub was used as a training vessel. She was retired and sold for scrap in 1957. OPPOSITE: Control room of a submarine. The diving officer (left) is directing the actions of the men at the wheels controlling the stern and bow planes that determine the angle of the dive or resurfacing.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

Would it never cease?

Smitty slowly began to realize that their chances of making it out alive were diminishing by the minute. Not only was the oxygen running out and the water getting closer to the batteries, but the Japanese could continue to bomb and depth charge them from now until the end of time. After all, they were just off the coast of Japan. When a destroyer ran low on depth charges, it could just pull into the nearest port and reload. How stupid was Dodge for attempting this stunt? Smitty thought. How stupid was the Navy for sending them practically into the emperor's bathtub?

Smitty was sitting on the inclined deck, his bare knees drawn up and his arms wrapped around them, his teeth chattering from the cold. How stupid was he for not bringing any warm clothes on this patrol?

Bitter thoughts ran through his head. Why did we have to get involved in this war, anyway? The Japs attacked us because we tried to keep them from getting the oil and rubber and steel they wanted. What business was that of ours? If they had done the same to us, wouldn't we have attacked them first?

Smitty thought, Why should I have to die for something I didn't start? After all, it doesn't make any difference what kind of government you have as long as you have enough food, have a wife and kids, and are left alone. I bet the poor, dumb bastards in Japan and Germany feel the same way. I don't mind dying if it would make a difference, but it won't. Why are we humans so stupid? We're all going to die, and it won't make a damn it of difference in this war. Hell, we didn't even sink the target!

Smitty continued with his black thoughts. And the Japanese continued to send their depth charges down.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

The seven sub hunters hung around all day, taking turns gleefully bombarding *Seal*, like bullies beating a puppy. The air in *Seal* was getting really foul. The batteries, too, were running out. Smitty didn't know if there was even enough high-pressure air left to blow the ballast tanks and bring her to the surface. They were, Smitty knew, as good as dead. The destroyers just had to stay up there a few more hours and it would all be over. Maybe he should just close his eyes and give up.

Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM! Click ... KaBLOOM!

It was July 9, 1943. The chronometer read 2300 hours—11 PM. *Seal* had been submerged for 18 hours, and many of the men wondered if this would be the day of their death.

Lieutenant Commander Harry Benjamin Dodge had other ideas. To him, it was time to bring *Seal* to the surface and slug it out if need be. If he didn't, he and his crew would certainly all have their names carved into a memorial slab somewhere. The chances of being able to outrun the enemy ships were slim to none, but they were better than lying 365 feet beneath the surface and waiting for the inevitability of asphyxiation.

Suddenly the order, "Battle-surface crew, report to the control room," came over the headphones. Startled, Smitty repeated the command and stood up.

"What the hell is this?" grumbled one of the other sailors in the caboose, but he also stood up because he, too, was on the battle-surface crew. In fact, everyone in the aft torpedo room except Big Ski had some function on the battle-surface detail, and they all filed out.

Smitty was the last to leave the compartment and, as he did, he turned to Big Ski. Their eyes met. For a moment Smitty thought he might never see Big Ski again.

"You gonna be okay?" Smitty asked.

"It's okay, Smitty," Ski said, holding out his hand and shaking the youngster's, almost as though he knew what Smitty was thinking. "Give 'em hell, kid."

The control room, illuminated only by red bulbs to preserve night vision, was already packed by everyone on the gun crews. Dodge climbed a couple of rungs on the conning tower ladder so everyone could see him. "I'm proud of all of you," he said. "We're not going to stay down

Continued on page 95

During the 1943 Allied invasion of Sicily, the British and Germans fought pitched battles for two key bridges: the Malati and the Primosole.

BY MARK SIMMONS

Both: Imperial War Museum

BATTLE

"As I floated down, the whole dropping zone seemed to be on fire; tracer bullets had set the tinder-dry stubble alight. There was no time to get my bearings before I landed with a hell of a thwack on my back in a deep ditch. I felt something warm trickling down my leg. 'Oh my God' I thought, 'I've been hit!' I pulled my hand away and it was water. My water bottle had burst and was crushed flat. When I had got my breath back I picked myself up and set about gathering up the rest of my chaps and finding our weapon containers. Fortunately, we were all complete, but two of our weapon containers were missing."

FOR THE BRIDGES

British paratroops train on a beach in North Africa prior to Operation Fustian—the British airborne portion of Operation Husky that began on July 10, 1943. The combined air and seaborne invasion of Sicily involved a total of 180,000 U.S., British, and Canadian troops, 3,200 ships, and 4,000 aircraft, and caused Italy to drop out of the war. INSET: Using a North African beach to rehearse their role in the upcoming invasion of Sicily are British commandos and a Royal Navy beach party.

So recalls Lieutenant Peter Stainforth, 1st Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers, of the 1st Parachute Brigade landing near the Primosole Bridge on the night of July 13, 1943, in Sicily.

Three days earlier, Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, had begun with the British and Canadians landing on the beaches to the south of Syracuse on the Pachino peninsula, while the Americans landed farther south and west on beaches near Gela.

The beach landings by General Bernard L. Montgomery's Eighth Army were successful. The Italian coastal defenders put up a weak resistance and had their coastal batteries silenced by naval gunfire or by assault troops. By 8 AM, July 10, the British 5th Division had entered Casabile and marched on past Syracuse, diverting some troops into the city, while the main force struck north along the coastal road toward Augusta. However, early on July 11 it ran into Group Schmalz, a battlegroup of the 15th Panzer Division at Priolo, well dug in and supported by Tiger tanks and antitank guns, which brought the advance to a halt. The British 50th (Northumbrian) Division waded ashore at Avola to the south, passing quickly on to Casabile. Farther south the XXX Corps, made up of Highlanders and Canadians, was pushing inland against light opposition.

On July 11, Montgomery arrived at Syracuse, the port having fallen virtually undamaged, with his tactical HQ from Malta. He was keen to give Operation Fustian—the British airborne portion of the invasion—the go-ahead.

Lieutenant Colonel John Durnford-Slater, commanding officer of No. 3 Commando, was summonedto XIII Corps headquarters in Syracuse to receive orders for a new attack that night, July 13. He met General Montgomery, Lt. Gen. Miles Dempsey, commander XIII Corps, and Admiral Rhoderick McGrigor on the quayside near the old officer's quarters of the Italian Navy; Eighth Army troops and equipment were pouring ashore nearby. Monty was in high spirits and eager to use his special forces to speed the advance.

This mission was assigned to Durnford-Slater's Commandos and the 1st Parachute Brigade landing behind enemy lines that night to seize important bridges on the road north for XIII Corps. The Commandos would land from the sea near Agnone, advance inland, and take and hold the Ponte dei Malati Bridge over the River Leonardo. The 1,856 paratroops dropping from the air would take the Ponte dei Primosole Bridge, the

ABOVE: Men of the 6th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, with some of their Italian prisoners. In most places the Italians surrendered quickly, leaving the fighting to their German partners. The DLI would also be involved in the battle for the Primosole Bridge.
BELOW: One of the most storied and heroic of all British officers, Lt. Col. John Durnford-Slater (left), commander of No. 3 Commando, talks with General Montgomery (center) and Lt. Gen. C.W. Allfrey, V Corps commander, after receiving the DSO, October 19, 1943.

only bridge over the River Simeto, five miles to the north. Seizing and holding the bridges would open the route to Cantania and forestall any attempt by the enemy to establish defensive lines on the two rivers.

No. 3 Commando had already been in action; at midnight on July 10 it had come ashore from the assault ship HMS *Prince Albert* south of Syracuse to capture a coastal battery near the town of Cassibile. Although there was some small-arms fire directed at the Commandos, they got ashore dry and without loss, and quickly captured the battery.

Durnford-Slater was concerned with the lack of time to plan the Agnone landing, but intelligence indicated the Malati Bridge was only held by Italians and not in strength. But Monty was positive: "Everybody's on the move now. The enemy is nicely on the move. We want to keep him that way. You can help us to do that. Good luck, Slater."

The landings were planned in two waves, two troops of the first landings, 1 and 3, would push forward straight away to take the bridge. The others would hold the beach waiting for the second wave to come ashore. Further troops would then move inland, and 4 Troop would send out patrols to make contact with the paratroops at Primosole Bridge while another would link up with 50th Division advancing up the Catania Road, which was expected to reach them at first light on July 14.

If No. 3 Commando's plan was last minute, 1st Parachute Brigade's scheme to capture the Primosole Bridge in Operation Fustian had been planned for months. The commandos were supposed to have gone in on the evening of July 12, but Eighth Army had been delayed and the operation was postponed. At 4:30 PM the next day the final approval was given.

Lieutenant Colonel Alistair Pearson commanding 1st Parachute Battalion was frustrated: "The airfield was a sandy strip in the desert. We got there at midday and the only shade was under the wings of the Dakotas [transport aircraft]. We lay underneath and waited and slowly baked. By the time we got the code word, the problems of the Airlanding Brigade had filtered back. The fact that a large number of our aircraft had been shot down by friendly naval vessels did not help our morale." In fact, more of the gliders had been released at the wrong time, many falling into the sea, and exploding flak from the defenders had blinded the inexperienced pilots.

The 51st U.S. Troop Carrier Wing would carry the British troops in 105 of its Douglas C-47 transport aircraft. This was aided by 11 British Albemarles from the Royal Air Force's 38th Wing. The 1st Parachute Brigade's 1,865 men would be carried in these aircraft, while heavy equipment would be in 19 gliders towed by more RAF Albemarles and Halifaxes—and carrying 10 6-pounder antitank guns and 18 jeeps along with 77 gunners.

According to the plan, the three parachute battalions would land at the same time all within two miles of the bridge. The 1st battalion would capture the bridge; the 2nd would land to the south and the 3rd to the north to prevent enemy incursions. The gliders would also land in the same zones. At 10 PM the aircraft began to take off.

The Primosole Bridge, spanning the Simeto River, was surrounded by olive and almond groves and vineyards interspaced with tree-lined fields. It was constructed of steel gird-

A Brief History of the Parachute Regiment

Winston Churchill was highly impressed by the exploits of German parachute and glider troops during the invasion of the Low Countries and France in 1940. On June 22, 1940, then as newly appointed prime minister, he sent a message to the War Cabinet stating, "We ought to have a corps of at least 5,000 parachute troops."

Thus, No. 2 Commando was turned over to parachute duties, the Commando forces themselves having been only recently formed. In November 1940, the Commandos were renamed the Special Air Service Battalion. In September 1941 the unit was redesignated 1st Parachute Battalion, and its first operation, known as Biting, was carried out in February 1942 to capture a German radar installation on the northern coast of France.

After this success, the Parachute Regiment was greatly expanded. By the end of World War II the regiment had grown to 17 battalions and served in all major theatres of the war. It was German paratroops who gave them the nickname "the Red Devils."

Two brigades of the Parachute Regiment took part in D-Day, capturing bridges over the River Orne and on the Caen Canal (most famously Pegasus Bridge), while also destroying the Merville gun battery a few miles to the east.

www.commandoveterans.org

ABOVE: Survivors of No. 3 Commando, photographed in Sicily four months after the island was secured. This unit also participated in battles at Dunkirk, Dieppe, St. Nazaire, Merville Battery (Normandy), and many more. RIGHT: A British RAF tug pilot (left) and the pilot of a glider that he will be towing study a map of Sicily prior to the invasion.

ers, 400 feet long and eight feet above the river. Four pillboxes had been constructed on the bridge, two at each end. The bridge on Highway 114 was 10 miles from Lentini to the south and seven miles from Catania to the north.

At 9:30 PM, HMS *Prince Albert,* having earlier dodged an E-boat attack, began lowering its assault boats containing No. 3 Commando. As the boats ran into the shore, the whole world seemed to have gone mad. Catania could be seen under bombardment to the north. Very lights and tracer bullets to the west criss-crossed the sky, and to the south an antiaircraft barrage and star shells over Syracuse lit up the shore. Overhead, the Dakotas and glider tows roared toward Primosole.

With the boats about 200 yards from shore, the Germans opened fire and the Commandos returned fire as best they could from their rocking craft. With the near collapse of the Napoli Division the day before, the whole Axis line had been in danger of disintegration, so troops of the 1st German Parachute Division and the Hermann Göring Division had been moved in to plug the gap.

The Commandos quickly overcame the two pillboxes on the beach. Major Peter Young marshalled 1 and 3 Troops and set off quickly for the bridge, which was five miles inland.

The country was difficult to cross at night, covered in cacti and shrubs, interspaced with vineyards and deep streams, but it got easier when the troops picked up the railway line leading to Agnone railway station and on to the objective. The Commandos even bumped into a group of British paratroops who had been dropped well to the south of their objective. They were invited to join the Commandos but declined, moving north to try and reach the Primosole Bridge. By 3 AM, Major Young and his troops had reached the River Leonardo and the northeast end of the Malati Bridge, 250 yards long.

Imperial War Museum

The pillboxes there, manned by Italians, soon fell to grenades through the loopholes, and the demolition charges on the bridge were removed. The Commandos then deployed around the bridge, through orange groves and shallow ravines, building defensive positions with rocks, as the ground was too hard to dig in.

Operation Market-Garden, in 1944, when it tried to capture bridges over Holland's lower Rhine at Arnhem, remains the Parachute Regiment's most famous action. Like the battle for the Primosole bridge, the paras were unable to hold on against vastly superior German forces. The paras went on to take part in the Ardennes campaign in December 1944, and the Rhine crossing known as Operation Varsity.

Since the end of World War II, the Parachute Regiment has taken an active role in all of Britain's conflicts. Today the 1st Battalion is under the direction of Special Forces Support, while the other battalions of the regiment make up the parachute troops of the British Army in the 16th Air Assault Brigade. The record of the "Red Devils" remains a proud one. □

Men of the 1st Parachute Brigade pose with a souvenir German helmet taken during the daring raid on the Bruneval (France) radar installation, February 1942.

Imperial War Museum

The second wave was late reaching the beach, for the LCAs (landing craft, Assault) returning from the first lift got lost on the way back to the ship. Reloaded with troops and again on the approach back to the beach, the LCAs came under fire. However, the escorting destroyer HMS *Tetcott* blinded the defenders on the cliff with smoke shells. By dawn Durnford-Slater had 200 to 300 men in position armed with light platoon weapons.

Earlier during the night, the 1st Parachute Brigade's aircraft suffered a similar fate to that met by the American pilots during in the invasion. Many were mistakenly hit by antiaircraft fire from Allied ships,

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-570-1612-20; Photo: Haas

and as they neared the coast they were hit by the enemy flak barrage. Some were shot down in flames. Others broke formation, dropping the paratroops over a wide area, one stick being dropped as far away as Mount Etna. It was a rough ride for men crammed inside the bucking, twisting aircraft, while others were released at too low an altitude, resulting in horrendous injuries.

Lieutenant Colonel Alistair Pearson, in one of the planes, recalled, "I thought we were going in too fast. We seemed to be going downhill as well. Out I went over the DZ and I didn't think my chute had opened, because I was down on the deck as soon as I'd jumped. I'd gone out number ten, my knees hurt, but I was all right; my batman at number eleven was all right but the remainder of the stick all suffered serious injuries or were killed."

Less than 20 percent of the brigade was dropped in the correct locations, while a further 30 percent were taken back to base. It was later confirmed only 12 officers and 283 other ranks took part in the battle.

Together with his batman, Private Lake, Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, the brigade commander, headed for the Primosole Bridge in the dark; they had been dropped three miles away. He had jumped with his stick at 11:30 PM from a height of about 200 feet; fortunately for Lathbury, he had landed on soft, plowed ground. The two men paused briefly en route to pick up weapons from a container. There they met other members of the brigade HQ. Farther on they met Lt. Col. Johnny Frost and 50 men of his 2nd Battalion making their way to the objective. Lathbury divided his force into four sections but, arriving near the bridge, he learned that the 1st Battalion had already taken it. However, he was concerned that no radios seemed to have survived the landings so far.

Through the night, small groups of paratroops continued to straggle in to the bridge. Frost took his men to high ground overlooking the bridge, while Lathbury deployed another 40 men either side of the river; during the day another 120 men reached the bridge where the battle had already begun.

Lieutenant Peter Stainforth saw the battle develop: "The Germans had put barbed-wire road blocks at both ends of the bridge, but opened them up to allow a truck towing a field gun to pass through just as our assault party charged in. In the firefight that followed. Brigadier Lathbury was on the receiving end of a grenade and got several splinters in him.

So when I came up there was the brigadier, trousers around his ankles, bent over, having shell dressings applied to his backside. As mine was the only sapper section to arrive, the brigadier told me to get the demolition charges off the bridge as quickly as possible."

The Italian pillboxes at either end of the bridge contained useful weapons that the paratroops quickly turned against their former owners: several Breda heavy machine guns well supplied with ammunition. Covering the roads were two Italian 50mm guns and one German 75mm antitank gun in concrete emplacements. These, too, helped to stiffen the paras' defense.

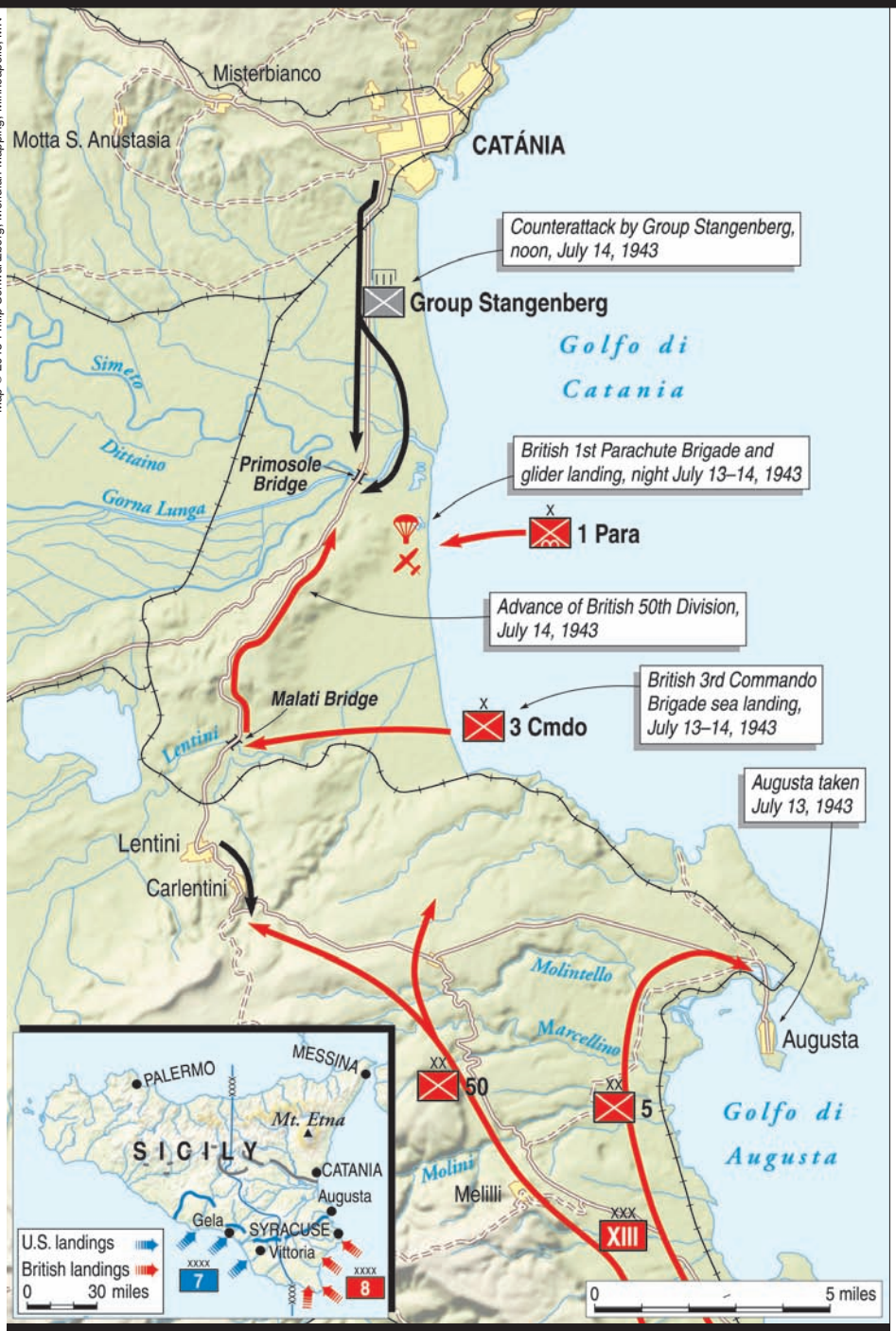
To the south at the Malati Bridge, the Commandos, with daylight, came under pressure but initially, as Durnford-Slater indicates, had "a marvellous time shooting up everything which came and causing complete confusion." A PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) on the bridge knocked out a German ammunition truck that blew up spectacularly.

However, heavier German units were joining the fight. A Tiger tank started shelling the bridge, knocking great lumps out of the pillboxes and bombarding and machine-gunning the meager cover to which the Commandos clung. Casualties began to rise.

More German tanks arrived during the morning, together with three battalions of a panzer grenadier regiment along with an Italian group of tanks and infantry.

About 5:20 AM, Durnford-Slater held a brief conference with Major Young and acknowledged they were rapidly losing control of the situation. There was no sign of the 50th Division. Casualties caused by mortars and tanks were increasing.

More Commandos had arrived from the beach. Captain Pooley tried to work his way to the enemy flank with 5 and 6 Troops but was driven back by heavy fire; the Tiger tank was the main cause of the Commandos' difficulties. Lying among cypress trees on the



ABOVE: Because the Malati and Primosole Bridges were vital for British forces to advance from the invasion beaches in southeast Sicily to Catania, they were assigned to the crack troops of the 1st Parachute Brigade and No. 3 Commando. OPPOSITE: Two paratroopers of the Hermann Göring Division man an MG 42 against invading Allied forces on Sicily.

other side of the bridge, almost hull down, it was out of range of the PIATs, and to approach it over open ground was suicide.

Vastly outnumbered and with nearly a third of his men killed or wounded, Durnford-Slater had no choice. He ordered his surviving men to break into small groups and make their way back to British lines. Most of them did, although odd groups, cut off, continued the fight, keeping the bridge under fire.

Over 150 officers and men were dead, wounded, or missing from No. 3 Commando, but they had held the Malati Bridge and removed the demolition charges, so it was still serviceable when 50th Division finally reached it.

Five miles to the north, an equally desperate fight was taking place at the Primosole Bridge over the Simeto River, where the airborne troops had stirred up a hornets nest and were coming under increasing enemy pressure. The British paratroops held both ends of the bridge, frantically fighting off continuous infantry attacks with rifles and Bren guns, bombarded by artillery and mortar fire, and even strafed by Focke-Wulf 190 fighter bombers. Again and again the Germans tried to take the bridge by storm.

After the heavy losses suffered by his parachute and glider forces during the invasion of Crete in May 1941, Hitler had decreed no more airborne assault landings. But local German commanders in Sicily decided to override the Führer's order and called for a parachute drop by the 4th Fallschirmjäger Regiment at the Primosole Bridge.

Gradually the German paratroops of the 4th Fallschirmjäger, who had been dropped accurately into the area an hour before the British landings, worked their way close to the bridge and into the reed-covered river banks.

At about the same time that the York and Lancaster Regiment, the lead element of the 50th Division, was moving slowly north on the Lentini road, the 4th Armoured Brigade was coming forward from Augusta, but both ran into strong resistance from Group Schmalz. The largely German group consisted of the 115th Panzergrenadier Regiment, 3rd and 4th Parachute Regiments, and three fortress battalions.

The previous day, 50th Division's lead battalions of the 69th Brigade had reached Sortino but were exhausted. Just after dawn Maj. Gen. Sidney Kirkman came up to see Brigadier Edward Cooke-Collis, urging him not to rest but to push on to Lentini. Kirkman said, "Don't let the enemy reform," insisting that there was little in front of him at the moment, but tomorrow he would have to fight for the ground.

Imperial War Museum

Troops of the 51st Highland Division rush to capture the Sferro railroad station, west of Catania, July 1943. This photo was staged for the photographer after the action.

Soon Kirkman was called back to Miles Dempsey's XIII British Corps HQ. There Montgomery outlined the plan to take the bridges on the route north. He ordered him to get his men moving "at all possible speed," which was what Kirkman had been trying to do; no doubt he felt the journey back to headquarters a waste of precious time.

The 50th Division's drive from outside Sortino had to reach the Primosole Bridge by the morning of July 14. Taking it would involve the 69th Brigade making an advance from Sortino to Lentini via Carlentini along a single-track road. The second round would take them onto the Malati Bridge and the relief of No. 3 Commando, and then on to Primosole. On the 50th's right, coming up the coastal road, would be the 5th Division, both roads converging on Carlentini.

All afternoon and late into the evening of July 13, the 69th Brigade pressed forward. Both Generals Kirkman and Cooke-Collis were close to the rear of their lead battalions, but it was becoming obvious that strong positions in front of Carlentini would require a full-scale assault to clear the way before they could continue on to Lentini that night. The advance was already behind schedule.

Dempsey at XIII Corps HQ was worried, but it was too late to postpone the airborne operation again, and the Commandos were already embarked at sea. The 69th Brigade had no choice but to press on, as any further delay would give the enemy time to blow the two bridges.

Cooke-Collis's tired battalions carried on. A heavy rolling artillery barrage descended on Carlentini that night, as the 1st Airborne Brigade's aircraft were leaving Tunisia. The next morning at 8:30, the 7th Green Howards attacked Monte Pancoli as it was blasted by divisional artillery and long-range fire of heavy mortars and Vickers machine guns. The hill finally fell, and the advance was resumed into Carlentini.

The Green Howards struggled on to Lentini, but thankfully here the enemy lacked the high ground and British artillery and tanks blasted a way through. With the fall of Lentini, the 5th East Yorkshire took over the lead to the River Leonardo and the Malati Bridge; they were delighted to find it still standing. With the light fading fast, the bridge was captured after a short firefight.

The advance was now taken up by the 151st Brigade, with the 9th Durham Light Infantry and tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade leading toward the Primosole Bridge. That day the fight at the bridge had been a desperate business.

On three hills covering the southern approaches to the bridge, Frost (2nd Battalion) and about 140 men were trying to hold off a growing mass of the enemy, retreating away from 50th Division.

On the bridge itself, Lathbury's men were holding on against pressure from the north. The situation was fast developing into a back-to-back action. However, help was on hand from an unlikely source—Lieutenant Peter Stainforth.

He said, "We were the brigade's reserve on the south side and could do nothing useful at the moment. Pearson [1st Battalion] was holding off the Germans on the north side and there was quite a lot of firing going on up in the hills where John Frost was.

"He had an artillery officer with him who eventually made contact with a Royal Navy cruiser, the Arethusa [it was actually the HMS *Mauritius* of Rear Admiral Cecil H.J. Harcourt's 15th Cruiser Squadron]. Things apparently had got pretty desperate until she began sending over six-inch shells, which made a hell of a difference." Also providing naval fire during Operation Husky were the Royal Navy cruisers *Newfoundland* and *Arethusa*.

The accurate naval fire blew the spirit out of the German attack. Each time they tried to reform for an assault, crashing salvoes were brought down on their heads, reducing

them to sniping and small-arms fire. The forward observation officer who brought down the cruiser's fire was Captain Vere Hodge of the Light Regiment Royal Artillery.

Lathbury at the Primosole bridge had little idea what was going on behind him. The reduction in noise from that direction gave him the feeling perhaps Frost and his men had been overrun. However, Frost could see what was happening below him but was unable to use the naval firepower to support Lathbury's men as they were too close to the enemy.

By late afternoon and with no sign of the 50th Division, Lathbury decided to pull back the remains of 1st and 3rd Battalions across the river and abandon the northern end. Alistair Pearson noted, "With only about 200 men, including a couple of platoons of 3 Para, I formed a defensive position around the approaches to the bridge. The Germans put in a series of attacks in the afternoon. We weren't in any danger of being overrun but we were suffering casualties and were running short of ammunition. But I considered we could hold out until dark.

"However, at 1830 hours I was ordered to withdraw by Brigadier Lathbury, with which I disagreed. But in the end I had to do as I was told and withdrew my battalion up to the hills. Before I withdrew I took my provost sergeant 'Panzer' Manser and my batman, Jock Clements, and made a recce of the river bank because I had a gut feeling I was coming back again. It was stinking and the mosquitoes were there in their millions. About 500 yards along I found a ford where we crossed and made our way back to the battalion lines."

The retreat to the southern end of the Primosole bridge for a while produced a stronger position with more concentrated firepower. However, the Germans brought up antitank guns close to the northern end of the bridge and blasted the pillboxes apart.

One by one the casemated guns fell silent, and ammunition ran out. The Brits' own Vickers machine guns were down to their last belts of bullets. A final well-planned and concentrated German attack down both sides of the river covered by the smoke from burning reeds got among the British paras. In places the fighting was hand-to-hand. With no sign of relief, Lathbury was forced to order another withdrawal. The order was passed, and the paras melted away in the failing light toward the hills still held by the 2nd battalion. It was about 7:30 PM.

Peter Stainforth recalled, "Colonel Hunter [he probably meant Major David Hunter], thinking that the Germans might cross the river and take us in the rear, asked me to go with our Bren gunner onto the right flank where there was a Vickers machine gun. By this time the 1st Battalion, almost out of ammunition, had withdrawn to the south side of the bridge, so the Germans, having been reinforced from Catania, turned their full fury on us. Lathbury had no alternative but to abandon the bridge. The brigade major, who crawled along to our position, gave me the impression it was every man for himself. I must have been one of the last to leave because there was hardly anyone about."

Some of the men, including Lt. Col. Alistair Pearson, made it back to Frost's 2nd Battalion; however, Peter Stainforth had to make a long detour west to bypass the enemy, at times hiding in scrub, which took him out of the fight.

A short time later, at twilight, Bren gun carriers of the 9th Durham Light Infantry supported by tanks of the 4th Armoured Brigade came into view below the positions of the remnants of the 1st Parachute Brigade.

The arrival of fresh troops denied the Germans any attempt to move forward or to lay new charges to blow the Primosole bridge. They were followed by the other two battalions of the Durham Light Infantry, and their commander, Brigadier R. H. Senior, who was able to establish a

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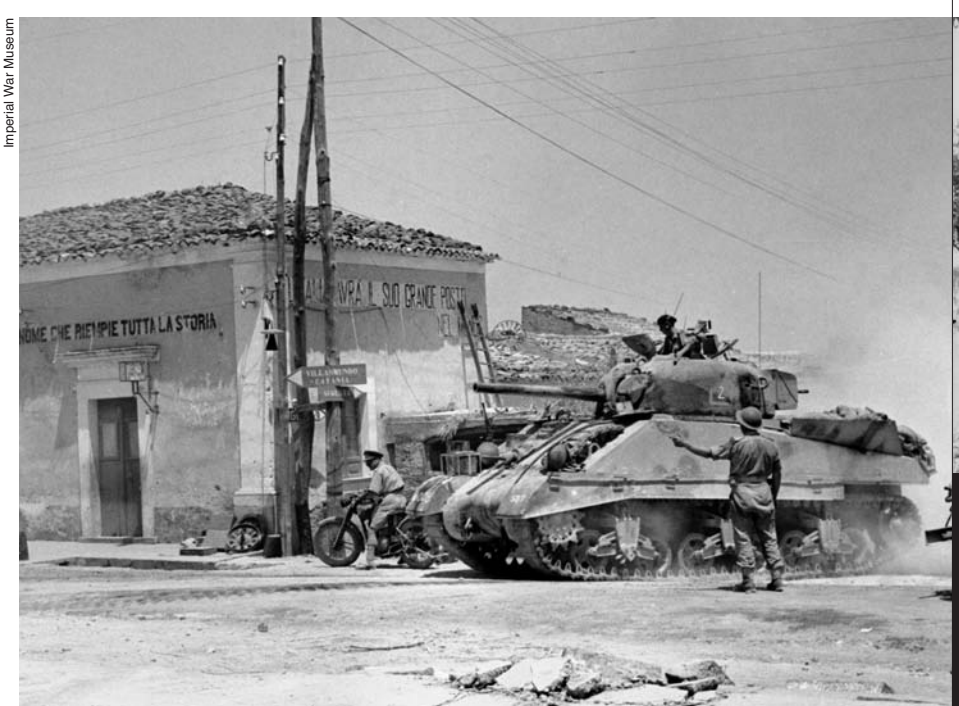


Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-303-0555-34; Photo: Dohm

ABOVE: With his helmet well camouflaged, a Hermann Göring Division paratrooper moves to take up a defensive position with his 7.9mm MG 15. The weapon, originally used as an aircraft gun, had a rate of fire of over 1,000 rounds per minute. LEFT: The timely arrival of the Durham Light Infantry and Sherman tanks of the 4th Armoured Brigade kept the Germans from blowing the Primosole Bridge.

large perimeter at the southern end of the bridge. His men were too worn out to launch a full-scale attack that night, but preparations were made for an assault across the river at 7:30 the next morning.

That night, A Company, 8th Durham Light Infantry, cleared the southern end of the bridge, holding on in slit trenches and under intense mortar and machine-gun fire at the slightest movement. With first light, Royal Engineers came forward to clear mines.

On the opposite bank, various units of the German 1st Parachute Division were also digging in. These included machine-gun and engineer battalions of General Richard Heidrich's division, supported by a battery of paratroop artillery, two 88mm guns from a flak regiment being used in the ground role, and remnants of two Italian battalions. Further north around Catania, men of the Schmalz Group were reforming, while the 4th Parachute Regiment, largely complete, was ready to move south.

Leading the British assault unit the next morning, July 15, would be the 9th Durham Light Infantry, wading the river and supported by field artillery and tank fire. The attack lacked imagination and would require considerable courage. The troops would be exposed crossing the river either side of the bridge, the covering barrage would have to lift too early to cover the infantry, and the German paratroops were well dug in on the other side.

A few platoons managed to struggle across under a withering fire. Some determined men got to hand-to-hand fighting but were too few to storm the positions and had to fall back. The *London Times* reported on the fight for Primosole bridge that the German troops "fought superbly. They were troops of the highest quality, experienced veterans of Crete and Russia: cool and skilled."

As Alistair Pearson watched the assault of the 9th DLI that morning, he may have been impressed by the skill of the German defenders, but he was not by the handling of the British troops.

"I was called up to Durham's Brigade HQ to see what the next move was," he said. "I listened in amazement as the brigade commander put forward the idea of another attack that afternoon. I said, in a voice louder than I should have done, 'If you want to lose another battalion, you're going the right way about it.' There was a deathly silence as the two brigadiers gave me a long look."

Luckily for Pearson, Lathbury was also there, so he did not get a dressing down; instead, his brigadier persuaded the other senior officers to hear him out. Lathbury told them he could take two companies of 8th DLI across the river upstream from the bridge and place them on the flank of the enemy.

Shortly after 2 AM, Lathbury led his men across the Simeto at a point where the river was 30 yards wide and four feet deep. Once across the river, they turned east and moved toward the bridge. As soon as they attacked, the signal of a Very light (flare pistol) was seen; this was the signal for the rest of the battalion and supporting arms to storm across the bridge to form a lodgement.

The flanking force managed, by surprise and with grenades and bayonets, to force its way through. The German paratroops not killed in the rush withdrew into the vineyards and olive groves close to the road to Catania. By dawn the bridge had been crossed by the two remaining companies of the 8th DLI with tank support. They eagerly pressed on but soon came under fire from all sides, and the Durhams were soon in serious trouble. They had managed to get only 300 yards beyond the northern end of the Primosole bridge when, according to the divisional history, "Lively fire was exchanged on both sides at ranges decreasing to 20 yards."

The main holdup was caused by two 88mm guns that had knocked out four Sherman tanks. The tanks were stalled by these well-sighted guns, and the infantry could not move

The prize: Royal Engineers repair damage to the bitterly contested, 400-foot-long Primosole Bridge over the Simento River several weeks after its capture by the British.

Imperial War Museum

either without armored support.

Sergeant Ray Pinchin of A Company, 8th DLI, recalled, "The battle was very noisy and very bloody. It caused us all a lot of grief. After we'd crossed the river and taken up a defensive position behind a low stone wall, I had my section dig in and we all had our heads well down."

Brigadier Senior crossed the river to assess the situation and got promptly pinned down himself on the other side. General Kirkman then arrived and had to communicate with his brigadier by radio. With the attack badly stalled and even the tenuous lodgement in some doubt, Kirkman informed general HQ that the division would be unable to support an amphibious plan to capture Catania.

Montgomery agreed to a 24-hour postponement of the landings. He then set off for the front along with Dempsey to see things for himself. Arriving at 50th Division HQ, Monty was told that another attempt to secure the front on the north side of the Simeto would be made that night.

At 1 AM on the 17th, the 6th and 9th DLI crossed the river via the "Pearson" ford to the left of the bridge. Again they came in on the flank, but this time the attack was made by two battalions instead of two companies. The Durhams reached the Cantania road and overwhelmed the defenders—German paratroops and detachments of the Hermann Göring Division—and dug in just in time to beat off a counterattack by German paratroops and tanks.

More British tanks got over the river, expanding the bridgehead and prompting isolated groups of the enemy to surrender. The cost had been high; the two assault battalions of DLI lost 220 men. Of the 292 officers and men of the 1st Parachute Brigade who reached the Primosole bridge, 27 had been killed and 78 wounded; many were also missing. Some 400 other members who never reached the bridge had been killed, injured, or captured during the landings.

With the benefit of new intelligence, Montgomery had to reassess the situation. Between the River Simeto and the city of Catania on a fairly narrow coastal plain were a lot of determined German troops with new units arriving, like the 15th Panzergrenadier Regiment from the 29th Panzergrenadier Division, which had gone into action late on July 16.

It was obvious now that the 50th Division would find it difficult to break out from the Simeto bridgehead and link up with seaborne landings further north. The amphibious plan was abandoned; a new way would have to be found to get to Catania.

Alistair Pearson came across Montgomery when the 1st Parachute Brigade was withdrawn to Syracuse. Pearson was asleep in the front seat of a moving truck; his batman Jock Clements woke him to let him know Monty was just behind their small convoy. The khaki Humber staff car swept past them, and the driver indicated they were to stop.

Pearson takes up the story: "I thought a rocket [chewing out] was impending for being asleep, but not so. He greeted me by name like a long-lost friend and congratulated us on our efforts and then said he'd like to talk to the men.

"My RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major] who was right behind me was pretty quick-witted and moved off to wake them. But he was a clever bugger, old Monty. He got his ADC to throw some packets of cigarettes into the trucks where the men were.

"Then he said, 'Walk with me, Pearson.' So we went about 200 yards down the road while he told me that although our casualties had been high, the cost was worth it. He then walked slowly back again. When we got to the trucks he was greeted by cheering men all smoking Monty's fags [cigarettes] and saying, 'How's Alamein, sir?' There he was lapping this all up, all the cheers. It was very, very clever how he knew where I was and a great morale raiser."

The positive air Montgomery was skilled at exuding was good for morale; however, his race against time to take Catania was over. He had gambled on a quick victory and failed. The campaign ahead would be prolonged with heavy fighting. The hope of cornering large numbers of the enemy was gone. Catania did not fall until August 5, and Eighth Army reached Messina on August 17, having had to fight its way around both sides of Mount Etna.

Author's Collection

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: Today a lonely monument stands near the rebuilt Primosole Bridge to tell travelers of the momentous events that took place here. BELOW: With the Primosole Bridge (background) now in British hands, a Bren gun carrier heads toward the Catania Plain after the battle.

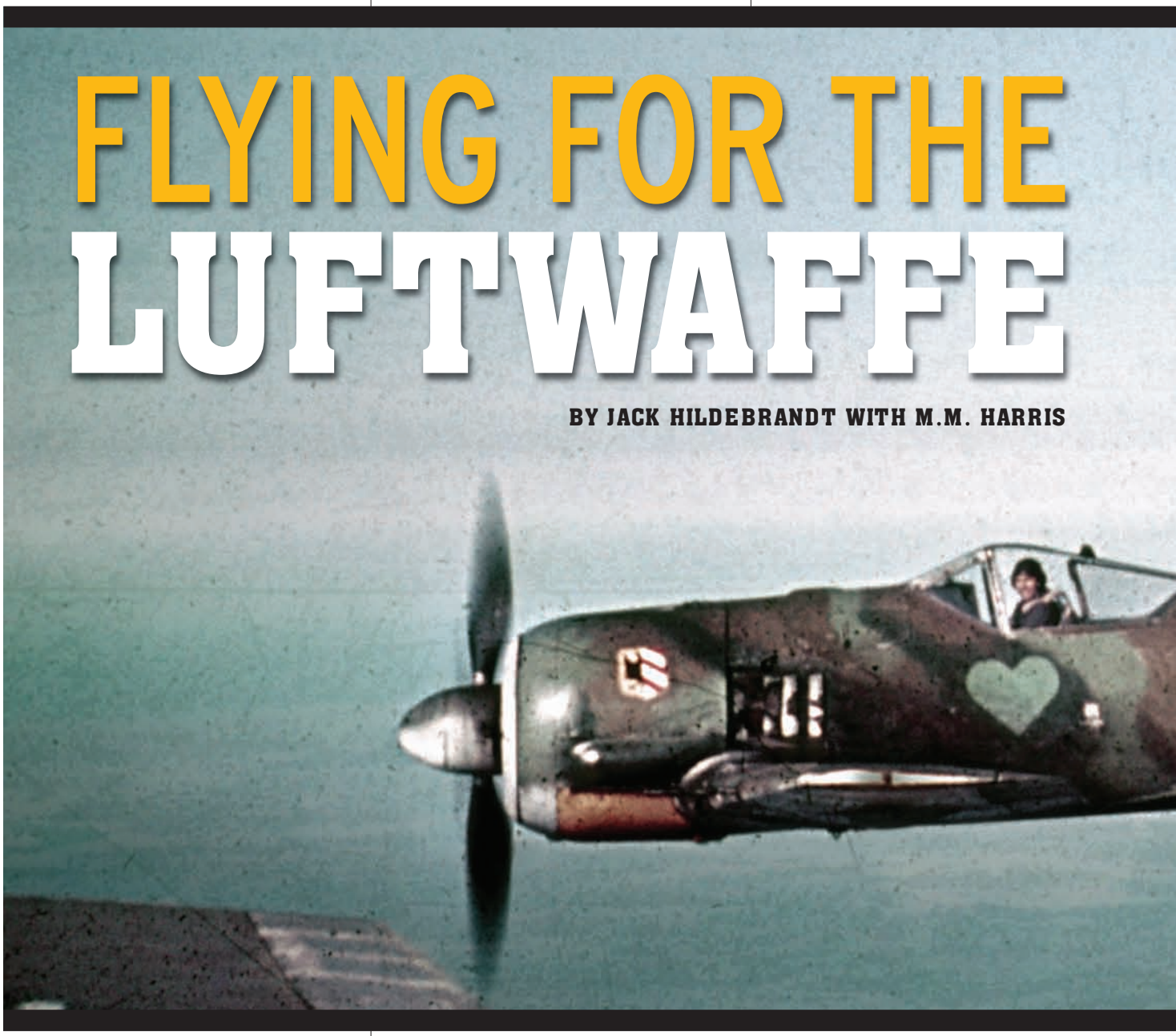
Indeed, it was true that some parachutists had landed on Mount Etna; Captain Victor Dover, adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, and his stick had been dropped there. Dover and another man took a month to find their way back across country to Allied lines; the rest were captured.

Montgomery was impressed with the exploits of No. 3 Commando at the Malati Bridge, which he renamed "3 Commando Bridge." A plaque with that name remains on the bridge today. Although it is no longer the main road, being overshadowed by the autostrada, a stone pillbox remains at one end to commemorate the battle.

Continued on page 97

FLYING FOR THE LUFTWAFFE

BY JACK HILDEBRANDT WITH M.M. HARRIS



IT WAS NOVEMBER 1, 1944. I, Feldwebel (Technical Sergeant) Gustav Jack Lothar Carl Herbert Julius Hans Jergen Hildebrandt von Lengerke (aka "Jack" Hildebrandt), had just completed a successful strafing run against British General Bernard "Monty" Montgomery's advancing army along the southern end of the Dutch-Belgian border.

Enemy ground fire had forced me to break out of the Schwarm (formation). Alone and feeling threatened, I piloted my Focke-Wulf FW-190 Würger ("Butcherbird") down low to 500 feet and applied evasive maneuvers such as hedge-hopping to avoid enemy flak. The antiaircraft guns were well concealed between the Waal River and the Dutch canal.

Approximately 30 miles away and barely visible on the horizon was the German line in the Netherlands. Safety was only minutes away.

WHAM! The fighter lurched violently up and to the right. The cockpit glass imploded and freezing air and smoke swirled around me. I was stunned by the explosion. Thank God for my goggles and oxygen mask. A few seconds passed before the oozing of blood spreading across my flight suit and searing pain in my left arm and leg snapped me back to reality.

My left hand swelled up in seconds like a donut, and my left leg did not work the rudder too well. I managed to raise my arm, and I almost passed out by what I saw. I could see daylight through my elbow!

My bum began to throb, so I must have stopped some hardware as well. However, my physical condition was the least of my worries. The 190's engine was on fire, and the flames started licking toward the left wing and the cockpit. Already I was too low to bail out, and with the engine on fire there was no chance or time to climb. My only

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

A squadron of Focke-Wulf Fw-190s in flight, 1941. Many aviation experts regard the 190, of which 20,000 were produced, as one of the war's best all-around fighter-bombers—at least during the early years. INSET: Author Jack Hildebrandt with his dachshund Otto, photographed in 2006.

A GERMAN POW'S STORY OF COMBAT, CAPTIVITY, AND COURAGE—AND A NEW LIFE IN AMERICA.

M.M. Harris

hope was to belly land—anywhere—as quickly as possible.

Over the nose and through wisps of smoke, I spotted the Huisden Bridge over the Waal River. Beyond it was the German line and a sprawling pasture. Aiming for the pasture, I fought desperately to keep the crippled plane in the air. Adrenalin kicked in. I was half paralyzed from shock and pain. Fighting nausea and a strange sense of euphoria, I forced myself to stay focused. "Put the damn thing down as fast as you can, before the fire gets to you!"

The fire was spreading—I was about to be burned alive! As the bridge over the river loomed ahead over the nose, I knew I had reached the German lines. The pasture was dead ahead. I released the controls, reached under the canopy, and fired the explosive cartridge that blew off the canopy. The fighter hit the ground with a ferocious impact, its force slamming my head into something sharp. The plane cartwheeled and skidded, then came to an abrupt stop.

Stunned and disoriented, I do not remember how I got out of the wreckage and into one of the numerous foxholes the Germans had dug along the roads in occupied Hol-

land—a good 150 feet away. They were necessary because of the enemy Thunderbolts, Mustangs. and Lightnings that wreaked havoc with anything that moved on the roads.

What I do remember is the plane blew up in a large fireball. Then I must have passed out. The time was 3:30 PM, and this was the somewhat ignominious end of my flying career with the Luftwaffe. I had flown 86 missions, having been shot out of the air by ground fire rather than a glamorous finale brought about by an enemy fighter.

I had been shot out of the air once before—in March 1943 behind Soviet lines, but at that time I didn't stop any lead with my small body. This truly was journey's end.

As I regained consciousness, I began to shake uncontrollably and my teeth chattered—from shock, I suppose. I don't know how long I remained in that foxhole, drifting in and out of consciousness, before a German Army roving patrol arrived on the scene. They had seen the remains of the fighter and looked for the pilot in the roadside holes. They found me alive, much to their surprise (so I was told). They carried me to their vehicle and took me to a front-line aid station, where I passed out again.

The next time I regained consciousness, I was on a stretcher wearing a green sleeveless sweater I had never seen before—and nothing else. Those rotten German medics had stolen everything I had on my body—my automatic, my sealskin wallet with my personal pictures in it, my Luger (Pistole 08), flying boots—everything. I had been warned about those thieving German medics, but you can't do much for yourself when you're unconscious.

I was lying on the floor in a large, cold room with the windows apparently blown out. This was northern Europe in November, and the temperature was below freezing. The chill caused my oozing wounds to feel as if they were crawling—a ghastly feeling. I began to scream. A young German doctor rushed over and quickly gave me a shot of morphine. Then he ordered me prepared for transfer to the local hospital in Utrecht for surgery.

Author's Collection

Luftwaffe ground crewmen push into position a Focke-Wulf Fw-190 of the type flown by the author.

The medics carried me on a stretcher and placed me in another room already filled to capacity with other severely wounded and dying soldiers. They were lying—just as I was—on straw mats placed directly on the freezing concrete floor. The nonstop whirlpool of crying and moaning was, in itself, indescribable agony.

The morphine removed the edge of pain and fear. I felt myself begin to slip into a state of blissful uncaring. Maybe I was afraid I would never wake up again. In spite of the pain, I gritted my teeth and forced myself partially upright. There was a body next to me. I reached out and touched him. Nothing. He was dead. I turned away. On the other side of me was another soldier, half moaning and half crying. I knew the feeling.

But something was different about him. Through bleary eyes, I noticed that his uniform was a strange khaki color, not the green worn by Germans. Sensing an intruder, he looked straight at me. Then he spoke—not in German, but in English. American English.

Taken aback, I mumbled something in what few words I could come up with in English. We formed an immediate bond. We didn't seem like enemies; we were seriously wounded soldiers. Our newfound comaraderie distracted us from our own unbearable pain. Although our conversation was halting and stilted, it was friendly and meaningful. While we talked we shared a government-issue German cigarette.

I learned he was an American prisoner of war, a paratrooper from the 101st Airborne Division, the Screaming Eagles. This man held a great fascination for me, for I had never met an American before. Bob (I think that was his name) was from Wisconsin, and he spoke nonstop of his love for his country, America. What a wonderful place, so seemingly different from the Old World's traditional nationalistic hatreds, rivalries, dense population centers, and narrow mindedness.

We got along famously for about two hours, and then, suddenly, four medics appeared and carried him out, away from me. They did not want me to talk to the American. I was instructed never to speak to any prisoner of war under any circumstances; it was considered treasonous conduct. If Bob is still alive and happens to read this, I want him to know he was one of the factors that convinced me the United States was where I wanted to be.

After my new friend was taken from me, I once again sank back into pain and despair.

About two hours later they shoved me into an unheated ambulance. The ride to Utrecht was a real "ball breaker"—that ambulance sported a suspension like a Mack truck. The fact that we were constantly strafed by Spitfires on the way added little to the enjoyment of the ride. Two of us four guys in the ambulance were dead by the time we got to the hospital.

Upon arrival, there was total chaos because this was close to the advancing Allied front. There were too many wounded German soldiers and not enough medical staff. The German nurses and most of the surgeons had all been evacuated. Only a few very brave and dedicated doctors stayed behind.

A rather stunning blonde Dutch nurse seemed to take a shine to me and persuaded a German surgeon to operate on me. My proverbial good luck appeared to hold, and soon my gurney entered the operating room. Survivors of the world, unite! I received ether and went under. Good night, world....

I woke up screaming in pain. My left arm, cut completely open from the inside of my elbow down to my hand, stuck straight out from my side, revealing bone, tendons, and muscles through pieces of bloody flesh. I was flat on my back strapped to an operating table. The surgeon was lying dead across my body, still clutching the bloody scalpel in his hand. The operating room nurse lay dead in a grotesque heap on the floor.

Above me, the ceiling of the operating room had departed the building, exposing a beautiful wintertime blue sky dotted with fluffy white clouds. In the distance, birds chirped away as if nothing terrible had occurred. What was once the makeshift operating room of a hospital was now the ruins of a bombing raid; rubble, bodies, and debris were strewn everywhere.

I shattered this otherwise beautiful day with my blood-curdling screams: "Medic! Medic!" Oh God, the pain!

Wonder of wonders, a medic showed up. He had assumed I was dead along with everyone else—that is why nobody bothered with me. He gave me a shot of morphine and said he would try to get me out on a hospital train that was leaving for Germany within two hours, with any luck. The entire hospital—what was left of it—was being evacuated in a hurry. The doctors put a chest cast on me to support my arm that stuck out forward from the left shoulder. My left lower leg and bum were heavily bandaged.

The so-called "hospital train" was, in reality, a string of cattle cars filled with stretchers—36 men per cattle car, I believe. They were stacked both vertically and horizontally as close together as possible with barely any clearance between them. I was on the bottom and—wouldn't you know—the malodorous community chamber pot was beside me.

Wounded German soldiers in the Soviet Union await a hospital train that will take them to medical facilities well behind the lines.

I kept rolling out of my stretcher because my chest cast, nicknamed "Stuka" because it stuck straight out like the wing of a Stuka, elevated my arm to shoulder height and stuck straight out, making it impossible to lie straight in my stretcher. This did little to alleviate my intense pain.

I tried to hang on tight, but each jiggle and each turn brought on unendurable spasms of pain. Sometimes I had no choice but to let go, ending in a face-down landing in the chamber pot.

During this arduous ride, a medic let it be known to me that my squadron, SG 63, or Schlachtgeschwader 63 (Wing Squadron Number 63), comprised of approximately 30 aircraft, had been transferred to the Dutch Channel Island of Walcheren where the entire unit perished during an Allied bombing raid.

Delirious from pain and exhaustion, I couldn't stop the flood of tears. Why them and not me? I felt sick that I was alive and they were all dead. My nanny's witty aphorisms echoed through my mind. "You can't kill an ill weed!" she used to say. "This boy was never properly born. He fell off a donkey galloping out of hell!"

I loved my nanny. Her aphorisms were country earth. I couldn't help but wonder: Was she still alive? Or was she, too, dead? I was obsessed with their deaths and heavily laden with guilt as to why I escaped death's grasp over and over again while everyone around me perished. Guardian angels came to mind....

It took us almost two weeks to cover the 200 miles from the Netherlands to Burgsteinfurt in northern Germany. The train was bombed time and again. People died like flies. Not me. The tracks were torn up by bombs and had to be fixed. As soon as they had been fixed and we moved a few miles, they were bombed again.

For injured soldiers traveling on a train with inadequate facilities to protect and care for them was hell. Other than morphine, there were no medications on board. During the ride, my arm turned

green and reeked of gangrene. With no other medication to fight the infection, my condition deteriorated rapidly. I heavily depended upon the morphine. My arm became gangrenous, and I lived on morphine all the way from Utrecht to Burgsteinfurt. Frankly, I was barely alive.

Upon arrival we were all taken to a hospital that was conveniently located one mile from a V-1 buzz bomb launching site, which did little to add to my emotional tranquility. This place was run by nuns.

Let me tell you about nuns. Mine was wearing a black dress with large white headgear and some sort of white apron in front. I don't know anything about religion, except it tells you to be merciful, kind, and helpful to your fellow man. This nun must have been standing in the goulash line when they were passing out mercy.

I had wasted away to 115 pounds from my diet of mostly morphine with a little food for the past two weeks. I was hefted on a table for a change of dressing. This purveyor of kindness ripped off my old dressing in a manner that would make a Gestapo man proud. My bare elbow bone was sticking out, cruelly exposed for everyone to see, and this angel of mercy took the old dirty bloody paper bandage—the front line had run out of gauze dressing months ago—and wiped my bare elbow bone with fierce dedication. I hauled off and sent her flying across the room, and then I passed out again.

I woke up in a hospital room in a bed with clean sheets, properly bandaged and sedated, and the doctor came and apologized. I could tell the Germans were losing the war and the end was near.

Have you ever heard of the fire raids on Hamburg and Dresden where tens of thousands died and melted in the streets? Well, there was another fire raid on Würzburg in March 1945, which I was about to find out.

The previous December, they had shipped me from Burgsteinfurt to Würzburg to a hospital for the gravely wounded. There were 46 military hospitals in Würzburg at the time and very little else except medieval architecture and its famous Franconian Boxbeutel wine.

The hospital business was very good in Germany in 1944. I arrived at 1:30 AM on a bitter cold December day. The cattle car doors were slid open, and the wounded were removed, one by one, to ambulances waiting by the track. While this was going on, we waited with the doors wide open and an outside temperature of minus 7 degrees Fahrenheit, with a much worse wind chill factor.

I was frozen stiff when I was loaded into an ambulance about an hour and a half after we arrived. We were delivered to Marian Hill Military Hospital for the seriously wounded, where we were immediately put into warm rooms with clean sheets on the beds. They really took good care of us when they could.

The chief surgeon, Professor Narath, made the rounds with his surgical staff. He took one look at my arm, and I was on the operating table in 15 minutes. This was at 3:30 AM. I have never seen such fast action again in any hospital.

While I was lying on the operating table inhaling ether and half under, there were a number of people in white surrounding me, and I could hear them talk. They thought I was already under, but I wasn't. Being German and from the wine land of the Rhine, I have had a fondness for libations from early childhood, and maybe that is why it took me longer to succumb to anesthesia.

One surgeon said, "Advanced gangrene. The arm is black. We'll have to amputate. We'll have to take it off above the elbow, maybe that will do it."

Professor Narath announced, "Amputation will be futile. This little guy will be dead by tomorrow night. The gangrene has gone too far. It will affect his vital organs before too long. Let's just drain him and send him to his room." There were 31 more cases outside waiting to be operated on.

If you have ever had a whiff of a decomposing body, that is what I smelled like because I was sort of decomposing while I was alive. But I hung in there. Remember what my old nanny used to say? "You can't kill an ill weed!"

Right then and there I became determined not to die, if only to spite them. Lo and behold, the next night the chief surgeon looked in on me and shook his head in disbelief. I was still alive—just barely—but alive.

The next morning by my bedside, there was my father, whom I had not seen in 14 years since my parents' divorce, and my mother, who was crying. The hospital had sent them a telegram saying I was dying. Ha! Fat chance! You just listen to my nanny.

My father was on military leave and had only one day. He had never worn a uniform in his life and had no use for the military, being a corporate lawyer. My father never could keep his mouth shut when speaking out was needed, and I truly admired him for that, but he kept speaking out against the regime—a very unhealthy habit in Germany after 1933.

So the Gestapo had rounded him up and placed him in a penal battalion with the assigned duty to collect dead bodies from shelters while Allied air raids were in progress and bombs were falling all around. This was the Gestapo's ingenious method to avoid overcrowding of death camps.

My father had to leave me the following day, but my mother stayed a whole week. They had given her one week's compassionate leave from her assigned national service job in a medical manufacturing plant where bandages, stretchers, prostheses, and such were made. My mother managed to come up with all kinds of unavailable culinary treasures such as eggs and red wine and chocolate to give me strength. Where and how she

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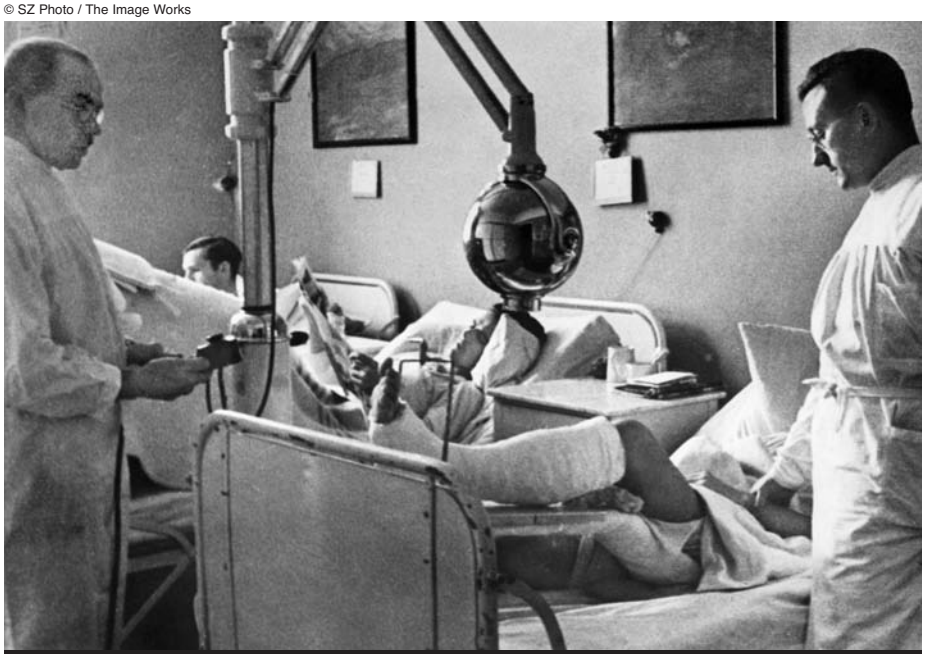

German medical personnel tend to wounded soldiers in a military hospital, photographed earlier in the war. By 1945 the experience of wounded German soldiers was grim.

got this bounty, I'll never know. She died in Germany in 1989, two days before her 100th birthday. She never could complete anything.

By the way, my father made it through the war. He was saved from death at Nordhausen near Kassel by the advancing Americans just as the Germans were getting ready to execute him. Nordhausen was an underground site buried in a mountain where the Germans produced the V-2 ballistic missile launched against England. They expended slave labor to manufacture these missiles. My father had been sent there to contribute to the consumption of expendable Germans.

Miraculously, my health began to improve despite the pain, which did not subside. All that held me in check were the four hefty doses of morphine I received daily. Soon, predictably, the effect of the drug diminished, and my relief from pain declined. In short, I was addicted.

By now, only people who had to tend to me came anywhere near my room. I certainly wasn't anything to look at. My chest cast was gray and dirty, and my lower leg was wrapped in bandages where the surgeon had taken out a six-inch piece of metal. My arm exuded mephitic vapors. I had a six-week-old beard. I could not take a bath because of the Stuka.

Still in pain and terribly malodorous, I was getting better, but not much. The gangrene was going into remission! Can you believe it? I believe I am the only case in German medical history until 1944 of gangrene reversal.

By this time I was getting four injections of morphine a day. The dosage was getting heavier and heavier because I was addicted. My dependence had become ruinous. The pain relief period grew shorter and shorter, and the dosages needed to be increased constantly.

After a while, the doctors resorted to what I believe was called "S.E.E.," something on the order of pentothal which was normally used for general anesthesia but which, at this stage of my addiction, was the only drug that relieved the 24 hours a day, seven days a week agony—but only somewhat. The last injection of the day would be administered at 9 PM. I would lie in my bed and promptly at 8 PM—I could set my watch by it—the pain would begin to intensify until 8:45 PM, when the torment became so savage it was almost unbearable.

Those last 15 minutes before the night nurse arrived with the morphine were sheer hell. I suspect in the beginning they gave me morphine to keep me quiet because I was a rather testy and demanding patient.

As a result of my addiction, I lost my appetite but drank about 40 bottles of seltzer water a day because of the raging fever from the gangrenous arm. I now shared a room with a man who had a near-fatal case of malaria. He was moved out of my room because I smelled so awful, because even he could not stand it—and he was unconscious half of the time, when he was not delirious.

If you have ever had a whiff of a decomposing body, that is what I smelled like because I was sort of decomposing while I was alive. But I hung in there. Remember what my nanny used to say? "You can't kill an ill weed!" Dear old nanny. How right she was. I bet she is up there looking down on me, saying, "I was right. That boy fell off a donkey galloping out of hell!" I hope she is in a good place, because if anyone ever deserved it, my nanny did.

Several days later, Professor Narath, the chief surgeon, looked in on me. I was not healing, he told me. I was losing weight, and I was too skinny already. The wounds continued to suppurate. It was all due to almost three months of morphine four times a day. He was taking me off the morphine—cold turkey—as of right now.

This was ominous news. I was so hooked on morphine I could hardly get through three hours without it. What was I going to do? Do you remember *The Man with the Golden Arm,* starring Frank Sinatra as a drug addict making a gut-wrenching effort to shake the habit? Well, my friends, I have known the hell through which he went trying to achieve freedom.

The first day and the first night, I honestly believed I was going to die from the pain. At that time, dying looked like a promising prospect because the agony was so savage it defied description. I was thrashing around in my bed, Stuka and all, writing on the floor and practically climbing the walls, grunting and groaning

like a wounded animal.

The second night around 3 AM, I was half mad with pain. I got out of bed and peeked around the corner to make sure there was no one in the hallway, gritted my teeth, clenched my fists, and hopped down to the nurse's office on my shaky good leg. I was wearing a very short shirt that came down to my hips and was tied on the sides to fit over the Stuka. My lower half was uncovered and completely exposed to the freezing temperature. There was no heat in the hallways or the john—this was January 1945 in Germany.

I hopped along to the nurse's office. No one was there. Peachy keen! I hopped inside and there they were, lying on the medication table: dazzling little ampules. I started to saw off the tip of one vial when I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. I looked up at the chief surgeon, Professor Narath, all 6 feet 3 inches and 245 pounds of him. I am only 5 foot 6.

Courtesy Jack Hildebrandt

Jack's girlfriend Doris, who reunited with him while he was recovering in Würzburg and who barely escaped the city's bombing. She met a tragic end after the war.

He escorted me back to my room and stated, "Starting at 0700 hours today, I am going to post an armed sentry in front of your room with fixed bayonet and I am going to order him, if you attempt to wrestle him, to stick you—not very badly, but enough to discourage you! No more morphine, is that understood?" What could I say? He outranked me.

There followed 30 days that probably were the most desperate period of physical agony I have ever experienced. But to this day I am deeply grateful to Professor Narath for putting me through this agony. It showed me I could overcome any addiction if I determined to do so.

When I was finally free of the morphine—the monkey on my back—I began to heal quickly. After I completely healed, I had a sequence of neurosurgical procedures—also performed by Professor Narath—to repair the severed nerves in my left elbow. Lucky for me, the professor was one of Germany's foremost neurosurgeons.

My left elbow had been smashed when I was shot out of the air. The nerves were severed, and my left arm was useless. I could not move the fingers of my left hand. I could not move the elbow at all. There was no medical record of what surgery had been done on me in the Netherlands; during the bombing raid on the hospital, all records had gone up in flames.

So, Professor Narath started from scratch. I had six sequential nerve sutures, and each procedure was followed by a lengthy recovery. All were an astonishing success. My arm was not amputated. Eventually, I regained full use of my left arm and hand. Just one more miracle in my life!

"Hello, Hero. I'm Doris."

At first I thought I was hearing things. I was almost asleep when the melodious voice of an angel seeped into my dream world. My eyes squinted open. All I could see was a shadow of a feminine figure behind my bed curtain. This was some dream!

I blinked rapidly while simultaneously giving thanks to whatever higher power must be responsible for this apparition. Was I hearing things? Just then, a well-manicured hand reached in to pull back the curtain. Slowly, this wide-eyed brunette peeked around the corner. "Hello, Hero. I'm Doris. Remember me?"

Doris? The only Doris I knew was a freckle-faced girl from across the street whom I used to try and shoot in the bum with my BB gun in my hometown of Wiesbaden. Doris? And how! Doris had huge, beautiful brown eyes and bright red luscious lips, and she sure had filled out in all the right places. Before I could answer, she pulled up a chair and made herself comfortable. It was soon revealed that my mother had notified her by mail of my hospitalization after she learned that Doris and her parents had moved to a nearby town on the outskirts of Würzburg.

From that day on, Doris was my constant companion. It didn't hurt that she established herself as the nurse's pet, which afforded her the privilege of staying beyond visitation hours. Our chemistry was potent. Lucky for her, my Stuka was attached to the ceiling, thus discouraging any contact. Lucky for me, I was approaching a condition where I could perhaps get out of bed and ask for a pass to go into Würzburg, but not quite yet. Doris came to see me every day and, depending on who the duty nurse was, usually stayed beyond visiting hours.

About two weeks after Doris's first visit, the medic came in and announced, "Your Stuka is coming off." Boy, was I ever glad! With shears, clippers, scissors, and muscle power, the two medics removed the cast. When it was off, my left arm looked like a purple pencil. It hurt so badly hanging down in its natural position, I wished the medics would put the Stuka back on.

Then the dispenser of military medicine told me, "Follow me!" We proceeded into the bowels of the ancient building, which resembled a torture chamber. I found out later that was exactly how other patients referred to it. It had the appearance of a dungeon with an array of sinister looking devices.

I was holding up my left arm with my right hand. The medic told me to sit down in one of these medical marvels, strapped me down, and attached my left arm to some

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A nurse provides a drink to a wounded soldier in a Luftwaffe hospital in North Africa, 1942.

receptacle. He turned on the machine, left the room, closed the door behind him, and left me screaming while the machine bent and extended my arm without mercy. I nearly passed out from the pain. It was only my rage that kept me conscious.

Thirty minutes later, the medic returned to stop the so-called physical therapy. You think the Germans only treat non-Germans that way? Think again.

Several of these tender, humanitarian episodes later, my arm was somewhat more flexible. And—oh joy!—I could now ask for a pass. When Doris came to see me the next time, I told her I could go out on pass, and we planned for a day together. There wasn't very much to be had in restaurants in Germany in February of 1945, but in Würzburg there was still Boxbeutel, the famous Franconian wine, and some basic fare.

After three months of confinement, I could hardly wait to get out of my hospital garb, get into my uniform again, and see the city. But in order to do so, first I had to be in uniform to walk three miles to the air base on top of the hill, where I would be issued a new Luftwaffe uniform. I was allowed to rummage through the hospital supply room, where I found an Army uniform that was several sizes too large. I looked like a clown, but I didn't care.

At last I got myself a new Luftwaffe uniform, complete with all my medals and my pilot wings, and an overcoat, which was badly needed in this cold climate, but which I could only wear draped over my shoulders a la Napoleon because I was unable to get my new, smaller cast through the left sleeve.

Doris came to the hospital around 2 PM. There was a brief moment that brought tears to both our eyes when she saw her hero in uniform for the first time. During that undefinable moment, I was consumed by the realization that not only was I alive against all odds, I was also given someone extraordinarily special with whom to share this moment. For one afternoon, we had the most wonderful gift of all: a normal life. I felt a twinge of guilt.

With Doris proudly by my side, we marched arm-in-arm through the beautiful city of architectural jewels, made even more spectacular by the shimmering frost of winter. We crossed the Rhein Main River on the ancient Lowenbrucke (Lion's Bridge), so named because of the golden medieval lions guarding the bridge at each end. From there we hiked up the steep mountainside to Kapellenberg (Chapel Hill), named for the tiny Catholic chapel that stood in the midst of vineyards.

Farther up the hill was the Festung Marienburg, a massive fortress that offered a panoramic view of Würzburg. The excitement was exhilarating! Every now and then, my eyes would get misty. Holding each other's gloved hands, we skipped down the hill as the sun was sinking. It was quite romantic. I was so grateful to be alive and walking among the Würzburgers, who appeared to still enjoy life undaunted by the imminent cataclysm of a massive military defeat. Here, with Doris, I had a brief return to normal life.

Since my first combat mission in November 1942, death had been my constant companion. It was all around me, day and night. And now, here I was! Against all odds, I was not only alive and healing, I was about to explore a beautiful city with a wonderful young woman. Why me?

Doris took me to one of the medieval monastery wine restaurants for which Würzburg is famous. I believe it was the Julius Spital, established around AD 1300 as a hospital operated by monks. Six hundred and forty-four years later, the monks were still there, but now the Spital was a convivial, cozy wine restaurant—all dark wood and brass and copper and pewter that had been there for centuries.

Doris had saved her ration coupons from the time she had first come to see me at the hospital. As it turned out, they weren't needed. After more than four years of Army chow, considering what was available in Germany in February 1945, we had what I considered a fabulous meal. Having been a combat trooper most of my service career, I had no concept of the harsh wartime privations the civilian population had to endure.

The waiters and the clientele were falling

all over me. People volunteered to give up their table for us, and the waiters served us before anyone else. This privileged treatment delighted Doris no end. I suspect her bemedaled, wounded pilot was a bit of a trophy for her, and she relished it to the hilt. I wasn't complaining. We had two bottles of Boxbeutel, and our conversation became quite animated.

Dinner was over. I leaned in close and asked, "What would you like to do now?" Doris replied, "Let's find a hotel room"—and so we did. We took a room on the fourth floor above the restaurant and did what all lovers do, especially in wartime when you don't know whether you will see tomorrow.

Beween waking and dreaming, I wallowed in the scent of Doris's freshly washed hair and the creamy softness of her skin. I didn't want to lose this moment by falling asleep. Her head was on my chest. I could feel her breath on my skin. Even in sleep, she had a satisfied smile on her face.

Something distracted me from my drowsy state. At first I chose to ignore the shrill, escalating, ear-piercing blast of an air-raid siren, denying the dreaded intrusion. I drew the comforter up over our heads. This couldn't be happening! Not now!

Doris must have heard the sirens because she began to stir, not quite yet aware of what awakened her. Then, with a start, she sat straight up in bed. Terror filled her eyes. When the reality of what was happening sank in, she tore back the comforter and started to bolt. I grabbed her arm and pulled her back into bed. She fell into my arms. Moments later, we were clinging together, wrapped in the cocoon of our comforter. I could feel her heart racing with fear, yet she didn't pull away.

In the distance, I could hear the terrifying drone of the approaching British Royal Air Force bombers. Still, Doris heard me clearly when I said, "Doris, I think we should stay up here. If we die, we die together; if we don't, so much the better." She responded with a deep lingering kiss just as the British started unloading death upon the city. Legend has it you never hear the shell that has your name on it, but not so with bombs. I think the Royal Air Force ditty from the Battle of Britain conveys this message best:

The Angels, they are a sing-a-ling-a-ling
They've got the goods for me.
The bells of Hell are a ring-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.
Oh Hell where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling
Oh Grave thy victory?
The bells of Hell are ring-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.

We held each other tightly as our building shook and swayed. Horrifying explosions silenced screams as buildings all around us began to collapse. Shards of glass ripped through our comforter and cut our skin when our windows blew inward.

Hours later, the nightmare ended. We were badly shaken, but only scratched. As dawn broke, we could see fires and piles of rubble where buildings once stood through the smoke and dust-filled haze. The cries and moans of the injured and terrified were all around us. Already there were teams of people in the streets searching for anyone who might still be alive. Already they were removing bodies from the destruction.

The question neither of us dared to ask was whether anyone with whom we had enjoyed our evening meal last night was among them. Was it possible that only hours ago this city had been alive with its history and glimmering beauty? I tried to shield Doris from this horrible sight, but it was in vain. I did the best I could. I held her hand and led her through the carnage back to the safety of her home.

At the hospital, I had made friends with a Fallschirmjäger—a paratrooper—a really nice guy, about my age, who had caught a bullet in his spine. Surgery had left him limited in mobility from the waist up, thus he walked around quite stiffly. He had been studying engineering in the Ruhr, the industrial powerhouse of Germany, when he went into the service. I assumed he had volunteered because paratroopers, like pilots, were all volunteers. This was March 23, 1945. We both had a pass to go into town, and so we did. We went to the Julius Spital, minus Doris, for some good food and wine.

Around 11 PM, just as we were leaving, the air-raid sirens sounded. Having already both just experienced the previous air raid, we ducked into the nearest shelter inside one of the many downtown military hospitals. Like most air-raid shelters, it had a steel door, two inches thick, which was locked by pulling down two large handles—something like the bulkheads on a ship. The bombers were still on their way.

People came into the shelter from the street; doctors and nurses came down from the upper floors of the hospital. Then a bunch of medics carried in about seven patients in body casts all the way from their feet to their necks, legs spread apart. They were quadraplegics, we were told. They had suffered severe spinal injuries and/or were brain damaged. I had never seen anything like this before.

The medics propped them up against the wall of the shelter; there was no other place to put them. The rest of us—soldiers, doctors, civilians, and nurses—were already packed in as tightly as could be, so we stood pressed up against them. There wasn't an inch to spare. When the shelter was filled to capacity, the steel door was locked.

This was the basement of an old building from the turn of the century. It had two small windows shaped like an orange section above our heads and level with the sidewalk outside. The atmosphere was so tense, you could smell the fear. The air-raid sirens came to a sudden halt, followed by the dreaded, ominous silence. All we could hear were whimpers and choked sobs.

Minutes later, the roar of hundreds of RAF bombers was directly over target—and boy, did they unload! The bombs were waltzing over Würtzburg. The bombs missed the shelter by mere inches! Violent explosions rocked the ground and shook the walls, break-

UIG via Getty Images

Aerial view of the nearly totally devastated Würzburg after a raid by 225 British Royal Air Force bombers on March 16, 1945. Approximately 90 percent of the city was destroyed in less than 20 minutes, and an estimated 5,000 people died during the raid and subsequent firestorm.

ing the windows. Flames flashed through the small windows over our heads. Some of the nurses became hysterical. Others sobbed. I thought about the men pressed against the wall, totally helpless in their body casts. I guess my stiff-backed buddy, the paratrooper, was thinking about them too, for he looked at them and then at me. I suspected he thought, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

The raid went on and on and on. New waves of bombers arrived overhead and unloaded death on the city. I had 2 1/2 years of combat behind me. I had flown 86 combat missions. I had been exposed to three weeks of hand-to-hand combat in the Soviet Union and had persevered reasonably well, but being confined in this small basement during an air raid gave me the willies. There was nothing we could do except wait—for death or survival.

My frustration transformed itself into a rage against the bombers overhead. I shouted imprecations to vent my fury. I felt great respect for all the people in Germany who had endured these raids night after night, for years on end, and still did not break. At this time, all things considered, I would rather have been at the front flying missions than cooped up in that rat hole. It was hell in the shelter.

At first I thought it was all those people jammed together, but then, on the sidewalk, from what we could see through the small window, it became like daylight. Then I realized—fire storm! The British were conducting a fire raid against Würzburg like the one in Hamburg. The city was ablaze from one end to the other. The temperature in the shelter was rising. Breathing became difficult.

It was so hot that people started to choke from lack of oxygen. Our building was on fire! We tried to open the steel door, thinking maybe we could get everybody out of the shelter and out on the street, but it was so hot we could not touch it. It began to change color, and then it glowed red from the heat. We had no other choice than to get through the small broken window. We boosted the nurses and females out the window, one by one. Next were the doctors and civilian men.

That left my paratrooper buddy and me and the men in body casts, who were now lying on the floor. They would not fit through the small window. They had no way out. If we left them there, the fire would roast them alive—an unspeakable, excruciating death. We asked them what they wanted us to do. We were both carrying Walther 7.65 automatics.

"Shoot us," was the reply from those who could communicate. And so we did. It was one of the hardest things I had to do in my life, and that went for my buddy, too. I get tears in my eyes to this day when I think about it.

There was no time left. I was too short to reach up to the window. Besides, I had this useless arm. So I stood under the window, and my buddy stood upon my shoulders and climbed out. Then he lay on his stomach and reached down for me. He was a six-footer with rather long arms. I grabbed his left hand with my good arm. He grabbed me under the left shoulder and pulled me out to the sidewalk. As I got up, I looked around. It was a scene from Dante's Inferno.

We were three blocks from the same Löwenbrücke I had crossed with Doris on an earlier and happier occasion. The surface of the road was on fire and melting. High-voltage cables snaked across the street arcing blue sparks. There were several time-delay bombs scattered on the surface of the street between us and the Löwenbrücke. The city was a raging inferno. There was no point in trying to return to the hospital. Most likely it was on fire like the rest of the city. Where to go?

"Let's walk to Doris's house. No use staying here. There might yet be another raid!" I said to my buddy. Looking at those time-delay bombs gave us pause, so I followed the old Luftwaffe axiom. "When in doubt, firewall it!" I yelled. "To hell with these bombs! Charge!"—and we dashed across the bridge.

Once across the bridge, we were on the

outskirts of town and not too far from where Doris lived. We high-tailed it to Doris's house. The roads were strewn with thermite bombs, some half burned and others unexploded. We arrived around 3:30 AM, all out of adrenalin, dead tired and hungry. We banged and banged on the door before her father answered it, with a scared Doris and her mother peeking around from behind him. Due to the tearful begging of his daughter, I suspect, he finally allowed us in.

Doris fed us and put us up for the night. The next morning, my friend and I said good-bye to Doris and her family, thanking them for their refuge that terrible night. I had no idea, at that time, that it would be the last time I would see Doris until well after the war ended, when I returned to Germany a married man.

My friend and I went to the Kapellenberg and surveyed the city. I wondered why the British had destroyed it. Many had been killed. There were nothing but hospitals in Würzburg. There was no industry, and certainly there were no military installations. But I guess after Auschwitz and various other German projects, the Germans had it coming.

My buddy and I marched through the city and up the hill to Marian Hill Hospital. Clean-up details were busy clearing the rubble, and shops were open. You had to hand it to those Germans—they had lots of intestinal fortitude, and they shone in adversity.

Marian Hill Hospital had been badly hit but was functional. My room was still intact and I resumed my residence. During the air raid, a bomb had landed in the operating room. Professor Narath, who had done my nerve sutures and saved my left arm, had been operating at the time. He was killed.

The Allied armies advanced into Germany. The Third Reich was in its death throes. Chaos was everywhere. The SS and the Nazi Party faithful rounded up all able-bodied men for Armageddon. Fortunately, they left my hospital alone. I had seen some men strung up on lamp posts with signs on their chests: "I am a traitor. I refused to fight for the Third Reich!" The convulsions of a dying, evil force were everywhere. The final solution had come for Germany this time, and none too soon.

On April 2, 1945, the United States Army entered the hospital and took me prisoner in my hospital room. Need I mention they encountered no resistance? We were herded into a truck and taken to a tennis court area enclosed by a cyclone fence, where we encamped under the open sky in the rain with no food, no shelter, and no cover. We were handed over to the Yugoslavian guards.

There were others, too. There were boys, about age 12—no doubt formidable members of the dreadful Werewolf (the loosely knit Nazi guerrilla movement). There were men in their early 70s, probably unwilling members of the last ditch Volkssturm (Home Guard), pressed into service by the party bosses. Then there were just plain men of all ages and description. We were under heavy guard by half-tracked vehicles with 20mm cannons.

April in Germany is not the greatest time of year. As a matter of fact, any time of the year in Germany is not so great—the climate being what it is. Spring in Germany comes once on a Thursday afternoon between 3 and 5 PM, I am told. We spent three days and nights on the surface of this tennis court in a cold rain. I do not recommend being a prisoner of war, especially not when you have just come out of a hospital—it does little for your general well being. "But them's the breaks" when you lose a war. Better not to start one unless you really need one.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

Courtesy Jack Hildebrandt

ABOVE: Jack Hildebrandt, smiling in the cockpit of a Messerschmitt Me-109. During his Luftwaffe service, he flew a Focke-Wulf Fw-190. OPPOSITE: German soldiers and civilians clear rubble from Domstrasse in Würzburg, March 1945. In the distance is St. Kilian's Church, circa 1050.

The U.S. Army loaded us into semi-trailers—100 men per semi (have you ever looked into an open sardine can?)—and conveyed us to Worms, an ancient city on the Rhine. There we were deposited in a sea of mud enclosed by barbed wire. We lived on five hardtack and a pint of water per day.

Adding to our delight, the soldiers threw rocks at us so we would get mad and charge them so they could legally fire on us. Some of the German prisoners were dumb enough; now they don't have to worry about income taxes anymore.

Like I said, I don't recommend being held prisoner. But "adversity builds character," 'tis said. I built a lot of character in those days. Here I was, 50 miles from my hometown, Wiesbaden. I had not had any mail from my mother in nine months. The entire country had come to a halt—no trains, no mail, no phone, no gas, no heat, no water, no food—no nothing. I had no idea whether my mother was dead or alive, or whether our apartment house was still standing. Here I was, so close yet so far, unable to contact my mother and not knowing where I would be sent next.

Having been kept in these exquisite accommodations for three weeks, our numbers had been reduced somewhat by those who had expired, environmental conditions being what they were. We were then loaded into cattle cars together with cartons of C-rations, which to me were like manna from heaven. The doors were locked, and we were on our way to God knows where.

That turned out to be southern France—as far south as you can go in France. This was the Camargue—a desolate region up in the hills, northeast of Marseille, composed mostly of red sand which the mistral, a hot wind from the Mediterranean, blows into your face day and night.

While our train chugged through France, the French threw rocks at us when we stopped. Couldn't blame them. We were the loser, and from what I hear the Germans had not been very cordial when they occupied France. I was one of those guys who dodged bullets in the Soviet Union when everyone else was a conquering hero in France. When I finally made it to the Western Front, the invasion had started, and I picked up where I had left off—dodging bullets. But then, I had volunteered for combat. Never volunteer; if something happens to you, you only have yourself to blame.

Epilogue

While he was a prisoner of war held by the Americans, Jack Hildebrandt's badly injured arm kept him from hard labor and in the office of Sergeant Joe Finklestein from the Bronx. The two formed a fast friendship, and the end result was that Jack learned American English—with a Bronx accent! Once back on home soil in Wiesbaden, Germany, Jack's perfect American English landed him a job with the U.S. Air Force Europe Criminal Investigation Division (USAFE CID).

Jack's lifelong dream to become an American citizen came true in July 1950. After moving to California, he again landed a civil service job with the Air Force and married an American woman. His German heritage and perfect English brought him right back to where this all started—Germany—thus beginning an odyssey as a Cold War spook.

Being forever loyal to his combat buddies, he tried in vain to find the crew he never got to say "goodbye" to. His quest to find his wartime love, Doris, also ended in sadness. Months went by before he finally found Doris, tragically incarcerated in an insane asylum. After a brief visit, he returned months later, only to be told she had died. Although suicide was never mentioned, he understood what had happened; Doris's death haunted him for the rest of his life.

Jack achieved his lifelong dream, and for 35 years he faithfully served his adopted country as a civil servant in the USAF. For the rest of his days he lived in Palo Alto, California, a happy man. A popular member of the Commemorative Air Force's Golden Gate Wing, Jack's story made him one of their more popular speakers. He passed away in May 2010. □

Scandinavian volunteers took part in Nazi Germany's 1942 summer offensive against the Soviets—and paid a heavy price at the Demyansk Pocket.

DISASTER AT DEMYANSK

ON the surface it may seem odd that men of conquered nations would eagerly sign up to fight for their masters, but that is exactly what happened in Scandinavia in the 1940s.

Although a small number of Scandinavians served in the German armed forces before 1940, it was not until after the invasion of Denmark and Norway in April 1940 that Waffen-SS recruiting offices were opened in Copenhagen and Oslo.

This was a result of Himmler's order to establish a Waffen-SS unit composed of volunteers from the two countries and the Netherlands: SS Wiking—which was to be filled by what was referred to as "Germanic recruits."

The plan called for one regiment of Germans, one regiment of Dutch (Westland), one regiment of Scandinavians (Nordland), and a Finnish battalion. However, recruitment was not a roaring success as only 3,000 Scandinavians, including Finns, signed up.

BY HENRIK LUNDE

A long line of German soldiers in snow camouflage, along with a Panzer III, prepare to meet the Soviet foe near Demyansk, spring 1942.

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1972-042-42; Photo: o.Ang

The Germans tried again in 1941, hoping that the war between the Soviet Union and Finland would spur the recruitment effort. However, now the Danes and Norwegians were organized in national legions—the Norwegian Legion (DNL) and Frikorps Danmark.

The German attack on the Soviet Union, and Finland's participation in that attack, made potential volunteers of right-wing nationalist groups who were not National Socialists and had, up to then, been skeptical. Anti-communism became the dominant recruitment theme. Potential recruits were encouraged to enlist in a war described as a crusade to protect Europe against Bolshevism. Furthermore, physical requirements for volunteers diminished in subsequent years as the war on the Eastern Front resulted in heavy casualties.

Many nationalities served in Germany's elite Waffen-SS during World War II, including Scandinavians, and particularly Danes. The recruitment of foreigners was designed to overcome the strict limits imposed on the growth of the Waffen-SS by the Wehrmacht, which had established a virtual monopoly on recruiting in Germany. This forced the Waffen-SS to look outside Germany for manpower.

Prior to 1940 there were only a few volunteers, but after the invasions of Norway and Denmark in the spring of 1940, their numbers increased considerably. The Scandinavians in German service were primarily Norwegians and Danes although there was also a smattering of Swedes and one battalion of Finns.

There is general agreement in the sources that over 20,000 Norwegians and Danes joined the Waffen-SS during the war. These break down to around 13,000 Danes, 7,000 Norwegians, 1,500 Finns, and a few hundred Swedes. Of approximately 13,000 Danish citizens who volunteered for German armed service during World War II, some 7,000 were accepted.

The vast majority—around 12,000—volunteered for the Waffen-SS, and that organization admitted around 6,000. In looking at the number of Danes, it should be remembered that the size of the prewar Danish Army was only 6,600. The Finns spent most of their time in SS Division Wiking but were withdrawn to Finland in 1943. The Swedes served for the most part in Army Group North's sector.

At any one time, about 3,000 Scandinavians served at the front and acquitted themselves well. The SS Division Nordland, for example, won the fifth highest number of Knight's Crosses of all the Waffen-SS divisions. However, the Scandinavian volunteers never reached the large numbers envisioned by SS chief Heinrich Himmler.

The greatest number of Danes served in three different formations: Frikorps Danmark (Danish Legion), SS Division Wiking, and, after the disbandment of the so-called legions in 1943, the SS Division Nordland. Approximately 1,500 Danish volunteers came from the German minority in southern Jutland, and they served mainly in SS Division Totenkopf and to some extent in that division's infamous 1st SS Brigade.

The first group of Danish volunteers was deployed in the summer of 1941 when SS Division Wiking participated in the attack on the Soviet Union; only a few hundred Danes served in this division at any one time. The majority of them were transferred to SS Division Nordland after two years of serving in Wiking; most Danish volunteers were still undergoing training in Frikorps Danmark when Wiking fought in the Ukraine.

Frikorps Danmark was created on June 25, 1941, within a few days following the German invasion of the Soviet Union. About 500 volunteers signed up in the first couple of weeks, but the unit grew to about 1,000-1,200 in the following months. The creation of the Frikorps was accepted by the Danish government and the Danish Army, and officers who wished to serve in the Frikorps were given a leave to do so from the Danish Army. Both the government and the army sent representatives to the departure ceremony of the Frikorps as the troops left Denmark and marched off to war.

Many of the Scandinavian volunteers were veterans from the Finnish Winter War against the Soviets or had seen service in the Norwegian and Danish Armies; similar legions were recruited in the Netherlands and Flanders and were organized in cooperation with SS headquarters in Berlin and the various national Nazi parties. This arrangement with the various Nazi parties in occupied Europe served to underline the national character of the legions and gave them some autonomy by appointing officers from within their ranks rather than Germans. It was also designed to foster the anti-communist theme and counter the belief in the occupied countries that the volunteers were composed only of people who were pro-German. However, recruits continued to come mainly from Nazi circles in the occupied countries.

Library of Congress

The legions never reached full regimental strength in the early years. Their training and

equipment were not the best, they had no armor, and there was a shortage of heavy weapons.

In early 1942, the Norwegian Legion (Den Norske Legion) was sent to the siege lines around Oranienburg and Leningrad, where they spent a frustrating 18 months slugging it out with the Russians in almost World War I-like conditions as their strength dwindled and reinforcements dried up. The Danes faced equally dismal or worse conditions when they were sent into the Demyansk Salient to reinforce the SS Totenkopf Division in the summer of 1942.

Some of the general histories of World War II on the Eastern Front make only brief reference to the epic struggle that took place over the Demyansk Salient during the spring and summer of 1942. Consequently, the reader will find it useful to learn what this struggle was all about and how it factored into the strategic plans of both the Soviets and Germans.

At times Demyansk is described as a salient extending eastward from the main German defensive lines, and at other times, when totally encircled, as a pocket. Depending on the situation, it will be referred to here as one or the other.

© SZ Photo / The Image Works

Marching behind the Danish colors, volunteers in the 1st Battalion of Frikorps Danmark march to their barracks upon arrival in Germany, July 1941. Before long they would be fighting in the snows of Russia. OPPOSITE: "Norsemen—Fight for Norway" urges this recruiting poster. With their "Aryan" heritage, Scandinavians were sought after by the Germans to augment the SS's ranks.

While the role of the Danish Waffen-SS was, in many respects, minor in the overall scope of the conflict on the Eastern Front, it resulted in the worst single bloodletting suffered by Danish volunteers in Word War II. Since little has been written in English about the Scandinavian volunteers in the Waffen-SS, here is a summary that attempts to fill that void.

THE STRATEGIC SETTING

The primary purpose of the Soviet winter offensive that began in December 1941 was to eliminate the German threat to Moscow posed by Generalfeldmarschall Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center. The Soviet success in the battle for Moscow delivered a serious blow to the mantle of German invincibility and caused Stalin and the Soviet High Command (Stavka) to become overly optimistic and ambitious. The result was that Stavka extended the offensive the whole length of the Eastern Front—from northern Finland in the north to the Black Sea in the south. The hoped-for results were the destruction of Army Group Center, the relief of Leningrad, and driving the Germans out of the Crimea and the Donets Basin.

In retrospect it is obvious that Soviet objectives were too ambitious. While the battle for Moscow had been a serious setback for the Germans, they were by no means as shattered and exhausted as the Soviets seem to have assumed. By attacking everywhere, the Soviets diluted their efforts. Also, by extending the conflict through the spring thaw, they created a condition favoring the defenders.

This allowed the Germans to mount an extraordinary defense in a climate characterized by bitter cold and deep snow—conditions for which the German soldiers were neither prepared nor equipped. The Soviets also suffered; a look at the casualty figures tells the story. The Soviets suffered a staggering 620,000 killed between January and March 1942 while, at the same time, the German death toll was roughly 136,000.

This ratio remains essentially the same when total casualties (killed, wounded, captured, and missing) are considered. Furthermore, the Soviet mobility, operational effectiveness, and supply apparatus were not yet capable of supporting these massive offensives over extended distances. In his memoirs Soviet Marshal Georgi Zhukov notes angrily, "If you consider our losses and what results were achieved, it will be clear that it was a Pyrrhic victory."

The Soviet strategy of wearing the Germans down did not work, and, in return for huge losses, the Soviets gained little territory and were faced with having to rebuild their weakened forces before an expected German summer offensive, which the Soviets assumed would have Moscow as its main objective. When the Germans struck with the main effort in the south, they found the Soviet military in a precarious posture similar to that of the previous

year. This was to a large extent the result of the widely dispersed Soviet efforts in the winter and spring.

ARMY GROUP NORTH'S SOUTHERN SECTOR AND DEMYANSK

On both sides of the boundary between Army Groups Center and North, the Russians had managed to drive deep into the German front. At one point it appeared that they would be able to encircle the Ninth Army and the Third Panzer Army. This possible calamity was averted, however, and Feldmarschall Günther von Kluge, commanding Army Group Center after Bock was relieved in early 1942, was even able to push the Soviets back in some areas.

The Russians did control a huge bulge extending into German lines around Toropets, in the northern part of Army Group Center's sector. The northern part of the bulge actually extended into Army Group North's sector as well, from Kholm in the southwest to Demyansk, a city located approximately 100 miles south of Leningrad, in the northeast.

Army Group North, commanded by Feldmarschall Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, consisted of two armies, the Eighteenth under General Georg von Küchler and the Sixteenth under General Ernst Busch. The Eighteenth Army was in the north, around Leningrad, and its front extended south as far as the northern shore of Lake Ilmen. Busch's Sixteenth held the southern part of the army group's sector from Lake Ilmen to a point near the town of Kholm.

The Soviets hurled nine armies against Army Group North in their winter offensive, trying to break the siege of Leningrad and push the German front away from Moscow by levering it away from the strategic Valday Hills. It was even hoped that Küchler's and Busch's armies could be encircled and destroyed.

Sixteenth Army tied into the LIX Corps of Army Group Center in the vicinity of Kholm. Its front was long because it incorporated a large salient extending toward the Valday Hills and ran northeastward from Kholm, then east past the city of Demyansk, and then back in a west-north-

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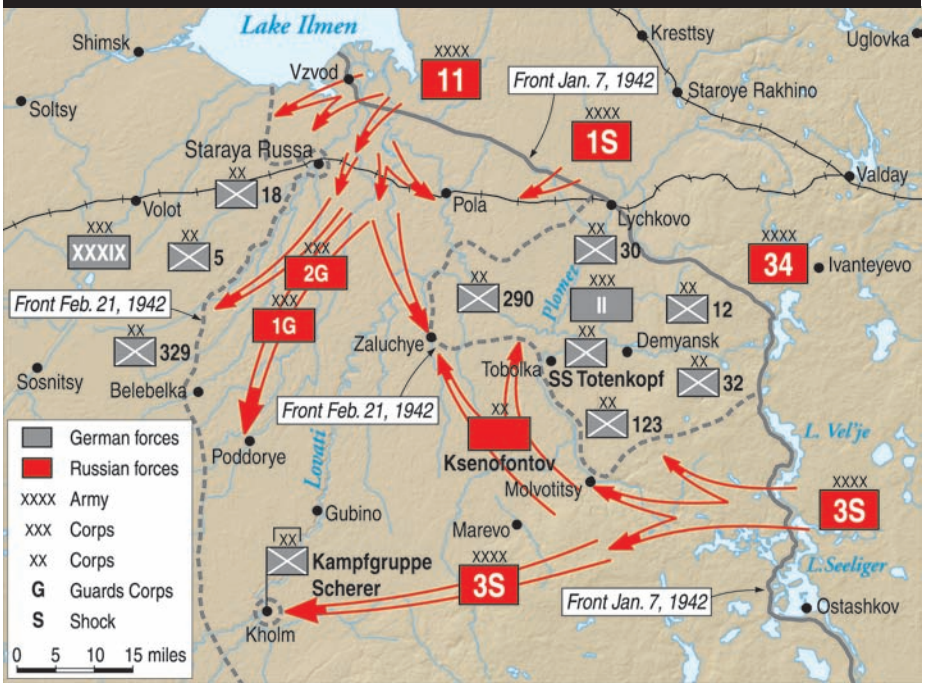
ABOVE: White-clad Red Army infantry, accompanied by a T-34 tank, charge toward German-held positions during the Soviet winter counteroffensive in the Demyansk and Kholm pockets. BELOW: Soviet forces (shown in red) punch through defensive lines and encircle Germans south of Lake Ilmen at Demyansk and Kholm.



Map © 2013 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

west direction to the city of Staraya Russa, south of Lake Ilmen.

During the German drive to the east in 1941, II Corps of the Sixteenth Army, under Lt. Gen. Walter Graf Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt, had captured Demyansk, reached the strategically important Valday Hills, and cut the railway line between Moscow and Leningrad. But here the corps became stuck. They held out in these forward positions throughout the early winter, although the Soviets gave this salient, sticking out like a finger eastward for over 60 miles from the main German line of resistance, special attention.

The elongated salient was important to both the Germans and the Soviets, and for much the same reasons. Hitler and the OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres) viewed the salient as an ideal jumping-off point for a possible resumed offensive against Moscow. Stavka was well aware of this, and the salient took on added importance in its calculations as the Soviets misread the enemy intentions in the expected German offensive: Stavka referred to the Demyansk Salient as a dagger pointed at Moscow.

The salient also posed a serious flank threat against the gigantic bulge the Soviets had driven into Army Group Center in the Toropets-Velikiye Luki area. If the Ger-

mans could mount a southward offensive from the Demyansk Salient in conjunction with a northward offensive by Army Group Center, a large pocket of Soviet forces would be encircled.

While the Germans were aware of the opportunities presented by the Toropets bulge and the overextension of their enemy, they were unable to do anything about it. The German armies were bled white in the offensive of 1941 and the subsequent Soviet winter offensive. The bloodletting could not be offset by replacements that were slow in arriving, and there were virtually no reserves. The observations of General Gotthard Heinrici, commander of the Ninth Army, show how drastic the personnel situation was. He reported that his battalions were down to about 70 men in strength, with an average of seven light and heavy machine guns each.

Because of its importance to both sides, the Demyansk Salient became one of the most hotly contested areas of the Eastern Front, and both sides fought over it bitterly. Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt, commanding II Corps assigned to the Sixteenth Army, was given the mission of defending the Demyansk Salient. He was a 54-year-old aristocrat who had entered the German Army in 1907 and had distinguished himself as a corps commander in the French Campaign of 1940.

When the Soviet offensive began in Army Group North's sector in January 1942, Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt's II Corps had three divisions: the 12th Infantry Division from Mecklenburg, the 32nd Infantry Division from Pomerania and Prussia, and the 123rd Infantry Division from Brandenburg. These divisions from northern Germany had taken part in the German invasion of Russia in 1941, and, as a result of the eastward drive and subsequent fighting, they were, as other German units, well below their authorized strength.

In addition, the men were fighting in summer uniforms with the temperature at times falling to below minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit, virtually immobilizing both men and machinery. While frontline troops were given additional clothing by rear area personnel, it was of little help since those personnel also had only summer uniforms.

The Soviet Northwest Front was commanded by Lt. Gen. Pavel Kurochkin. Its mission was to encircle the northern flank of the Sixteenth Army—a goal to be accomplished by two large drives by troops from both the Northwest Front and the Kalinin Front.

Three armies made up the northern drive. The 11th Army, under Lt. Gen. V.I. Morosov, attacked in the Lake Ilmen area; the 34th Army, under Maj. Gen. Nikolai Bersarin, concentrated on the Valday Hills area; and the 1st Shock Army.

The southern drive was made up of the 53rd Army, under Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Ksenofontov, the 22nd Army under Lt. Gen. V.A. Yashkevich, and the 3rd Shock Army. These units were to make the breakthrough to Kholm and constituted the southern force that was to encircle Demyansk. These attacks were supported by large-scale partisan activities in the German rear, particularly in the Staraya Russa area.

The attack in the north was initiated on January 7, 1942, by the 11th Soviet Army, elements of the 1st Shock Army, and two Guards Rifle Corps (1st and 2nd) released from Stavka's strategic reserve. Two days later the 3rd Shock Army from the Kalinin Front, along with the 53rd and 22nd Armies, attacked westward against Kholm and Lake Seeliger on the boundary between Army Group Center and Army Group North. A successful breakthrough in this area would leave the Soviets in a position to drive into the rear areas of both German army groups.

The German X Corps, commanded by General Christian Hansen, on II Corps' left flank, was also driven back by relentless Soviet pressure. The X Corps, like II Corps, had three divisions, and these all ended up in the Demyansk Salient. These were the 30th Infantry Division from Schleswig-Holstein under General Kurt von Tippelskirch, the 290th Infantry Division from Hanover and Schleswig-Holstein under General Theodor Freiherr von Wrede, and the 3rd SS Totenkopf Division under the ruthless SS Obergrupenführer (equivalent to General der Infanterie) Theodor Eicke, who had once been in charge of all concentration camp guards.

The Soviets infiltrated between the strongpoints of the 290th Infantry Division and the 30th Infantry Division on the night of 7/8 January. Dawn on the 8th found strong Soviet infantry and tank formations already behind the 290th Infantry Division, and Soviet transport gliders also brought in troops and tanks onto frozen Lake Ilmen.

These infantry and tank forces crossed the ice and reached the junction of the Lovati, Redya, and Polisti Rivers, 25 miles to the rear of the 290th Division. A total of 19 Soviet infantry divisions, nine brigades, and several independent ski and tank bat-

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-004-3644-26; Photo: Richard Muck

Ignoring a dead Soviet soldier (foreground), two German soldiers man their frigid MG 34 machine-gun position at Demyansk.

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ABOVE: Dressed for the weather: Soviet ski troops ride into battle aboard tanks and sledges. BELOW: Too cold to shave: General Theodor Scherer, commander of the 281st Security Division and commandant of Fortress Kholm, was photographed in the city during the seige.

talions were meanwhile attacking the fronts of X and II Corps.

The main effort of the 11th Soviet Army was against the front of the 290th Division near Tutilovo. To the north, the Germans mounted a desperate defense but were overrun in vicious fighting. The right flank of the division held for another day, and then it collapsed. Withdrawing to the west to avoid encirclement, the 290th ran into fierce battles around various towns and strongpoints on its way.

The 1st and 2nd Soviet Guards Corps drove southward behind the 290th Infantry Division. The 2nd Guards attacked Parfino while the 1st Guards attacked toward Salueje; Soviet ski troops were approaching Staraya Russa. The Germans scraped together a motley array of rear area troops to try and hold them back while the 51st Infantry Regiment of the 18th Motorized Infantry Division was brought in from Simsk in an effort to stabilize the situation.

But the 290th Division became encircled and could only be supplied by air after January 25. The division repulsed a total of 146 enemy attacks between January 8 and February 13, the day it, with superhuman effort, finally was able to break out of the encirclement.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-004-3633-39A; Photo: Richard Muck

The II Corps front was also collapsing. The Soviets placed the main effort of their offensive on the boundary between Army Groups North and Center. Here they attacked on January 9 after a two-hour artillery preparation. Six rifle divisions along with several tank and ski battalions attacked on either side of Ostaskhov on Lake Seeliger.

The 53rd Army and elements of the 22nd Army and 3rd Shock Army smashed into and virtually annihilated two regiments of the 123rd Infantry Division, creating a large gap through which Soviet troops poured.

The 34th Soviet Army, reinforced by two Soviet airborne brigades, was meanwhile pressing against the salient from the east. By January 12, General Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt had received permission to withdraw the easternmost part of his front.

When Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt was appointed commander of all German forces in the pocket, X Corps commander Hansen, minus his divisions, was transferred to Staraya Russa to command German forces in this area.

The salient held by the Germans around Demyansk looked like a "misplaced thumb" on the map, in the words of U.S. Army historian Earl F. Ziemke. The pocket was threatened from the east by the Soviet 34th Army while the base of the salient was threatened by the First Shock Army from the north and the Third Shock Army and the 53rd Army from the south.

Operationally, OKH thought, the pocket performed two services: it kept Russian troops tied down, and it might be used as one arm of an encircling operation against the Toropets bulge, but the question was whether anything of the sort was intended or could be executed. If not, Feldmarschall Ritter von Leeb maintained, the pocket was valueless.

Leeb was greatly concerned about the situation on his front and called Führer Headquarters on January 12, proposing that his armies be withdrawn behind the Lovati River. Not surprisingly, Hitler immediately turned down the proposal. Leeb thereupon flew to East Prussia to personally argue his case; Hitler again refused. Leeb then requested to be relieved of his command, and Hitler agreed. General Georg Karl Friedrich Wilhelm von Küchler was given command of the army group; his place as commander of the Eighteenth Army was taken by General Georg Lindemann.

By mid-January the southern front of the Sixteenth Army had ceased to exist. The battered 123rd Infantry Division was reduced to defending strongpoints in the vicinity of

Red Army infantry leap from their accompanying T-34 tanks to attack German positions in a village.

Molvotisyn, and the division's 415th and 416th Infantry Regiments were separated from the rest of the front. In 10 days of vicious fighting these two regiments made their way through enemy lines and back to their own front. When they arrived, their combined strength was a mere 900 men.

The 32nd Infantry Division (Maj. Gen. Wilhelm Bohnstedt) and the 123rd Infantry Division (Maj. Gen. Erwin Rauch) from Brandenburg managed eventually to construct a temporary southern front—a front 118 miles wide. However, the combined strength of the two divisions had fallen drastically to about 12,000 men.

The Russians could not fully exploit their initial successes because isolated German units formed strongpoints in villages that were bypassed by the initial Soviet assaults, and follow-on Russian units had to divert forces to try to overcome them. Some of the strongpoints fell, while others held out for weeks. The desperate resistance by these strongpoints helped to stabilize the front.

However, the situation became critical as II Corps was in danger of being encircled. Fresh Soviet divisions poured into the 56-mile-wide gap in the south, forcing Bohnstedt's and Rauch's divisions to fall back. A message from II Corps to the Sixteenth Army stated that they would withdraw behind the Lovati River as soon as an opportunity presented itself. The answer, from OKH, was short and curt: Demyansk was to be defended to the last man.

The II Corps withdrew all battalions that were under the control of SS Obergruppenführer Eicke and hastily transported them to the Salueje area to block the western front where these combat groups occupied a baseline in case the Soviets cut the salient near its base. They managed to do this just in time since the troops of the 34th Soviet Army and the 1st Guards Corps met on February 8 near Rambushevo on the Lovati River. The Demyansk Salient had become the Demyansk Pocket, containing approximately 100,000 German troops ready to be slaughtered.

By January 23 the city of Kholm, about 56 miles southwest of Demyansk, was encircled by the 3rd Shock Army. The Germans' 81st Silesian Infantry Division had just arrived in Army Group Center's sector and was immediately sent north toward Kholm. The troops had no winter clothing or winter equipment, but they repulsed the attack of four Soviet divisions in minus 46-degree cold. Although this action disrupted the attack of the 4th Shock Army, the situation remained critical.

Kholm served to break the force of the Soviet flood. If the Germans lost this city, the Soviets would be able to drive into the rear of both Army Group Center and the Sixteenth Army. Maj. Gen. Theodor Scherer, commander of the lightly armed 281st Security Division, was appointed commandant of Fortress Kholm. He scraped together whatever troops he could lay his hands on, which eventually numbered about 5,000.

Contact between the troops in Kholm and their neighbors was lost at the end of January. Kholm, like Demyansk, had become a pocket that could only be supplied by air.

The six divisions available to Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt in the Demyansk Pocket were disposed as follows: The 12th Mecklenburg and the 32nd Pomeranian Infantry Divisions were located east and south of Demyansk, while the remnants of the 123rd Division were fighting in the southwest part of the pocket. The two infantry divisions from northern Germany—30th and 290th—defended north of Demyansk, while part of the SS Totenkopf Division [under SS Standartenführer (colonel) Max Simon] was in the northeast. The combat groups under Eicke held positions in the west. The size of the pocket was 1.865 square miles, the length of the front that had to be defended was about 186 miles, and the distance across the pocket was some 30-45 miles.

In his first order of the day after the pocket was formed, Brockdorff-Ahlenfeldt defiantly stated, "There are 96,000 of us. The German soldier is superior to the Russ-

ian; this has been proven. So, let the difficult times come; we are ready."

Unlike the earlier pocket at Sukhinichi, Hitler refused to abandon either Kholm or Demyansk. After being assured by the Luftwaffe that the reinforced 1st Air Fleet could deliver the required 240-265 tons of daily supplies to the two pockets, Hitler ordered that the pockets be defended until relieved.

SUCCESSFUL RESUPPLY

On February 18, the OKH ordered the redeployment of the air transport command out of the Smolensk area and into Luftflotte 1's area of operation—an operation that used almost all of the Luftwaffe's transport capability, as well as elements of its bomber force. Since the Demyansk Pocket contained two usable airfields at Demyansk and Peski, the supply effort involved both airdrop and air-landing (glider) operations.

The weather improved in the middle of February, but there was still considerable snow on the ground. Supply operations were generally successful, due primarily to the weakness of the Soviet air forces in the area.

The Luftwaffe flew 33,086 sorties until the Demyansk Pocket was evacuated in March 1943. The two pockets—Demyansk and Kholm—received 59,000 tons of supplies by both ground and air. A total of 31,000 replacement troops were brought in and 36,000 wounded evacuated. But the cost to the Luftwaffe was significant. It not only lost 265 aircraft, but the loss of 387 experienced airmen was even more serious. For their part, the Soviet Air Force reportedly lost 408 aircraft, including 243 fighters.

Author Werner Haupt incorrectly writes that this was the first air bridge in history, while Paul Carell notes that in 14,500 missions—apparently when the pocket was encircled—the Ju-52 transport planes of the Luftwaffe established the first airlift in history; other writers have made similar incorrect statements. In the 1940 German invasion of Norway, an air bridge was established from Germany and Denmark to Norway. Five hundred eighty-two transport aircraft flew 13,018 sorties and brought in 29,280 troops and 2,376 tons of supplies. In addition, smaller air bridge operations took place from Oslo to the other isolated landing sites on the long Norwegian coast.

But the success of the Luftwaffe in bringing in supplies and replacements in Russia, as well as evacuating casualties, convinced Hitler and Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring that they could conduct effective airlift operations in other places on the Eastern Front. Later, when the Sixth German Army was encircled at Stalingrad, Göring proposed that it be supplied by air. He and Hitler theorized that the outcome would be similar to Demyansk and Kholm since the Sixth Army was in fighting condition.

They went on to posit that with the Luftwaffe supplying the army, the Soviets would expand their strength to contain the encirclement and this would allow the time needed by the German forces to regroup and counterattack.

However, the conditions under which the two operations (Demyansk and Stalingrad) had to be conducted differed greatly. While a single corps with about six understrength divisions was encircled in Demyansk, a heavily reinforced army was trapped in Stalingrad. Whereas the Demyansk and Kholm Pockets together needed around 265 tons of supplies by air each day, the Sixth Army required an estimated daily supply of 800 tons, which had to be delivered over much greater distances. The Stalingrad airlift also faced much better organized Soviet air forces.

By the winter of 1942-1943, then, the German air transport forces had already suffered heavy losses, and the distances to good airfields with maintenance and repair facilities were much greater. The Luftwaffe simply lacked the resources needed to supply Stalingrad.

A Luftwaffe Ju-52 loads supplies to be dropped to encircled troops in the Demyansk and Kholm areas. The two pockets needed 265 tons of supplies daily.

THE LAST STAND

Ernst Busch's Sixteenth Army began planning to break into the Demyansk Pocket from the west after Hitler's refusal to allow a withdrawal behind the Lovati River. A group was formed under the command of General Walther Kurt von Seydlitz-Kurzback, the commander of the 12th Infantry Division. (This was the same Seydlitz who was captured at Stalingrad and became a key figure in a Soviet-sponsored anti-Nazi faction.)

Seydlitz's group was substantial and included two infantry divisions, two light infantry divisions, a motorized infantry division, a security regiment, a panzer regiment, a Luftwaffe field regiment, and various construction units, assault gun batteries, and air

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-004-3641-10; Photo: Richard Muck

ABOVE: Bleak future: A German soldier tries to stay warm in the shelter of a demolished building while keeping a eye out for Soviet attacks in the Demyansk Pocket. BELOW: Christian von Schalburg, commander of Frikorps Danmark, was killed during heavy fighting in June 1942.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

defense battalions. The plan called for a simultaneous westward attack by forces in the pocket; it was hoped that the two attacks would link up on the Lovati River.

Group Seydlitz-Kurzback and the attackers from within the pocket reached the Lovati River near the destroyed village of Rambushevo on April 21, 1942. The men of the SS Totenkopf Division and the spearhead of Group Seydlitz-Kurzback were still separated by a 1,000-foot-wide swollen and turbulent river.

As soon as bridges were built, a corridor existed again between the main German front of Sixteenth Army from Staraya Russa to Kholm and the divisions in the Demyansk area. The Demyansk Pocket had again become the Demyansk Salient, as the corridor barred to the Soviets the way across the land bridge between Lakes Ilmen and Seelinger.

The Rambuschevo Corridor was worryingly narrow in the beginning, though, and the Germans set out to widen it. There was a serious danger that the Soviets could cut the salient off at its base. That would have annulled the fighting for the corridor, which had cost the Germans 3,335 killed and over 10,000 wounded.

The Russians, increasingly anxious to wipe out the Demyansk Salient, made a number of desperate assaults on the thin Rambuschevo Corridor; Obergruppenführer Eicke had the primary responsibility for keeping the corridor open. The Germans were fighting desperately in subzero temperatures and in three feet of snow to prevent the Russians from severing the connection to Staraya Russa and the rest of Army Group North.

The influential Eicke demanded reinforcements to keep his forces alive, but there were none available from either the Sixteenth Army or Army Group North. OKH, in looking around for available forces, decided to send Frikorps Danmark into the salient.

FRIKORPS DANMARK AT DEMYANSK

Frikorps Danmark was located in Posen-Treskau where its Danish commander, the charismatic Danish/Russian aristocrat Christian von Schalburg, was training his organization, which had been plagued by internal dissent, and had transformed it into a solid and well-trained reinforced battalion after integrating 10 German officer instructors with combat experience into key posts to stiffen the unit. But, as with its sister formation, the DNL, the majority of the Frikorps commanders were Scandinavian, not German.

Frikorps Danmark had three infantry companies and one heavy weapons company. The latter consisted of two platoons of 75mm infantry guns, one platoon of 50mm antitank guns, and a combat engineer platoon, all at full strength. Most of the troops lacked combat experience, but the majority of the officers and noncommissioned officers had some, either from the Finnish Winter War, from service in the Wiking Division, or against the Germans in 1940. Although the unit was at full strength, it had only seven heavy-caliber weapons.

Frikorps Danmark was declared combat ready in May 1942. In the early days the volunteer legions were considered second rate compared to German units and were judged unsuited for anything but static warfare and antipartisan fighting—a fact that goes a long way to explain their lack of heavy-caliber weapons.

This perception was about to change. After receiving its deployment order, the Frikorps was flown into the Demyansk Salient from Heilingenbeil near Königsberg on May 8, 1942. Historian Claus Bundgård Christensen and others have written that 1,200 Danes were flown into the pocket, but other sources mention a

lower number. Christensen may have meant the total number in Frikorps Danmark or included a number of Danes already serving in the 3rd SS Totenkopf Division.

The Danes were attached to Eicke's SS Totenkopf Division and immediately thrown into the fighting where they took up positions along the Robja River with the mission of keeping the Russians from expanding a bridgehead they had in the area of Ssutoki. The Soviets were on the far bank but had managed to get some troops over to the German-occupied side where they formed a small bridgehead. If they could expand the bridgehead and ferry across some tanks, the Reds would be in a position to launch a full-scale attack that would spell trouble for the hard-pressed defenders of the Rambushevo Corridor.

The Danish commander Schalburg knew that the Soviet bridgehead had to be destroyed. He ordered Johannes Just Nielsen, a veteran of the Winter War and considered one of the best officers in the Frikorps, to carry out an attack on the small bridgehead on the night of May 27/28. Nielsen divided his force into two groups that approached the Soviets from different directions. The attackers managed to get close to the Russians in the darkness without being detected, and Nielsen threw a grenade into the enemy positions as a signal to start the attack.

The Danes rushed the Russian trenches and, although the Reds had a considerable superiority in numbers, the shock of the sudden attack threw them into a panic. Some were killed while the survivors jumped into the river and swam for safety.

While the operation was a complete success, the Russians on the far bank opened up with mortars and artillery. One barrage killed Nielsen, who fell into the river and disappeared. Instead of occupying and remaining in the Russian positions, the Danes made the mistake of withdrawing to their own lines.

Nielsen's death at Ssutoki was only the first blow to the Frikorps leadership. A few days after Nielsen's death, the Soviets

Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1977-143-15; Photo: o.Ang.

attacked across the river and reestablished their old bridgehead. The earlier withdrawal now forced the Danes to make another, more costly, attack on June 2, 1942, to try to eliminate the Russian bridgehead. The element of surprise did not work a second time as the Soviets knew the Danes were coming; they blanketed the area with artillery and mortar fire while the Frikorps was still in its assembly areas.

Schalburg went forward to encourage his men and get the attack going, but he was badly wounded when his leg was shattered as he stepped on a mine. His men tried to bring him back, but another Soviet barrage instantly killed him and the two men trying to carry him to safety.

Despite the heavy enemy fire, Alfred Jonstrup, another veteran from the Winter War, managed to recover his commander's body. The Soviet indirect fire and the loss of the Frikorps commander brought the Danish attack to a standstill despite merciless fighting that resulted in 21 Danes killed and another 58 wounded. The Soviets held their bridgehead.

Schalburg's body was brought back to Denmark, where he was given a hero's funeral with full military honors. He became a martyr for the Danish Nazis, and his example encouraged a fresh wave of volunteers for the Frikorps, which needed new reinforcements badly as a result of the continuous fighting at Demyansk.

A friend of Schalburg from Finnish Winter War days, SS Obersturmbannführer (lieutenant colonel) Knud Börge Martinsen took temporary command of Frikorps Danmark and stabilized the situation over the next few days while the Danes waited for a new commander to be appointed.

The new commander, who was appointed by the Germans within a week, was an aristocrat named Hans Albert von Lettow-Vorbeck, who had served in SS-Division Wiking and had been on his way to take command of SS-Legion Flanders when he was diverted to Demyansk.

In the meantime, parts of the SS Totenkopf Division were preparing to launch an operation code named Danebrog to secure the area up to the Pola River and establish a defensible line. The Frikorps had an important role in this operation: the capture of the town of Bolschoje Dubowizy.

Von Lettow-Vorbeck arrived on June 10 and was briefed on the operation scheduled for the next morning. The Danes made a frontal assault on the town at dawn, supported by German artillery, but had to struggle through flooded meadows and swamps before reaching their objective. The Danes entered Dubowizy in the face of bitter enemy resis-

tance and started clearing the town house by house, but their attack was interrupted by a strong Russian counterattack. Two Frikorps company commanders, Boyd Hansen and Alfred Nielsen, were killed in the battle.

By 11 AM on June 11, the Russians were on the verge of surrounding the 1st Company, commanded by Per Sörensen, a former officer in the prewar Danish Army and one of the original cadres in Frikorps Danmark. Sörensen eventually rose to head the Danish Waffen-SS before he and many other Danes and Norwegians died in the ruins of Berlin in 1945.

Lettow-Vorbeck decided to move to the front and personally order Sörensen to withdraw before the unit was encircled, but he was killed in a burst of Soviet machine-gun fire. Losing its second commander in a little more than a week had a serious impact on the Frikorps, and, not surprisingly, the Danish attack faltered and collapsed. The Soviets remained in control of Dubowizy. The Danes had 25 of their men killed in the fight for the town in addition to over 100 killed and wounded in the fighting at Ssutoki and the Pola River.

Obersturmbannführer Martinsen again took command of the Frikorps. This time the Germans did not appoint a new commander from the outside but confirmed Martinsen as the commander for the rest of the Frikorps' existence. Martinsen survived the war but was tried and executed in Denmark for having murdered a fellow Danish SS officer whom he accused of having an affair with his wife.

In early July 1942, the depleted Danes defended a long front between Biakowo and Vassilievschtshina as the Soviets launched repeated attacks against their lines with the objective of cutting the Rambushevo Corridor, which was the only overland connection existing between Demyansk and the main German lines.

July 16, 1942, started out as a quiet day. The Danish soldiers at the front were waiting for a hot meal to be brought forward from the field kitchens behind the lines, but before the food could be delivered or consumed the Danes were subjected to an exceptionally heavy Russian artillery barrage that lasted for over an hour.

In typical fashion, masses of Soviet infantry then rushed toward the Danish defensive positions as soon as the shelling stopped. The Danes, stunned by the heavy barrage, fought back, but they quickly lost contact with the German unit on their right flank and were in imminent danger of being overrun.

Every man in the rear area—cooks, clerks, engineers, and communicators—was sent forward to try to stop the Soviet attack; Luftwaffe Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers were also called in to provide support. Sörensen's 1st Company was again in the thick of things but was soon decimated and down to only 40 men from its earlier complement of 200. Sörensen called Martinsen and told him that his men would probably not be able to withstand another Soviet assault but that they would not abandon their trenches no matter what happened.

The fighting continued throughout the night. An entire Soviet infantry battalion supported by tanks drove directly into the remaining positions of the 1st Company. The Russians poured into the Danish trenches, resulting in several hours of hand-to-hand fighting as the combatants tried to kill each other with knives, grenades, and entrenching tools. The Russians finally gave up trying to overrun the Danes and withdrew after midnight. They had sustained heavy losses and simply did not have the power to capture the Danish defensive line. The Danes, too, were badly battered.

However, the battle was not yet over as the Russians brought in fresh reinforcements and the Germans also provided reinforcements in the morning in the form of two Jäger battalions—the 28th Jäger Battalion from Silesia and a battalion from the 38th Jäger Regiment. These two units attacked along the road in an attempt to link up with their comrades near Vassilievschtshina. The Russians repulsed the attack and threw the Germans back with heavy losses.

The Soviets attacked again the following

BELOW: Men of Frikorps Danmark study a map, May-June 1942—about the time they lost two commanders. OPPOSITE: Men of Max Simon's 3rd SS Panzer Division Totenkopf, many of whom are wounded, slog through Russian mud to rear positions, spring 1942.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101II-Borelli-007-21A; Photo: Borelli

morning with waves of fresh infantry supported by numerous T-34 tanks and fighter-bombers. As with the Norwegian Legion, the Danes had no armor or assault guns of their own and had to rely on the few antitank weapons and infantry guns in their heavy weapons company. For the most part they were rather helpless against the T-34s and could only crouch in their trenches as casualties mounted.

Incredibly, despite their losses, the Danes and the German Jägers managed to repel the Russians and stabilize the front line over the next few days. By July 21 the crisis was over. Stavka now appears to have concluded that the main German summer offensive was in the south and not against Moscow as in 1941 and began to withdraw forces from the northern front already in June after reportedly suffering 89,000 killed.

It is not surprising that the Frikorps casualties were heavy. Over 300 Danes were dead by early August, and only about 150 of the original force that was thrown into the fighting at Demyansk remained in the line in the form of two weak companies. The Frikorps had become combat ineffective, and in early August the decision was made to withdraw it for rest, refit, and to receive replacements.

The accomplishment of the Danes had not gone unnoticed, and General Walther von Bockdorff-Ahlefeldt wrote and thanked them for their courage: "Since the 8th of May the Danmark Legion has been positioned in the fortress. True to your oath, and mindful of the heroic death of your first commander, SS-Sturmbannführer Christian von Schalburg, you, the officers and men of the Legion, have always shown the greatest bravery and readiness to make sacrifices, as well as exhibiting exemplary toughness and endurance.

"Your comrades of the Army and Waffen-SS are proud of being able to fight shoulder to shoulder with you in the truest armed brotherhood. I thank you for your loyalty and bravery."

After this endorsement, the Danes were withdrawn to Latvia at the beginning of August before heading home to Denmark for a homecoming parade through Copenhagen and three weeks of leave. The Frikorps had been in combat for three months without a break, and in that time they had lost two commanders, a sizable number of junior officers and NCOs, and hundreds of men.

According to the latest source on the subject, they had flown into the pocket with a fighting strength of 24 officers, 80 NCOs, and 598 men back on May 8. Only 10 officers, 28 NCOs, and 171 men were able to take part in the Copenhagen homecoming parade. Some of those who were missing from the parade were wounded and still in hospitals. There is no doubt, however, that the Frikorps was decimated in the Demyansk Pocket.

They had acquitted themselves well. The SS Totenkopf's Order of the Day on August 3, 1942, credited them with killing 1,376 Russians and capturing 103 others along with over 600 heavy weapons. While this recognition was gratifying, it did little to raise the morale of the survivors, who were heckled and mocked by some of the anti-German crowd watching them march through Copenhagen.

POSTSCRIPT FOR THE DEMYANSK POCKET

The Demyansk Pocket was a source of constant concern for Army Group North. In a personal letter on September 14, 1942, Küchler attempted to persuade OKH that continuing to hold the pocket was useless. The II Corps, he wrote, had been fighting under adverse conditions since the previous winter. He worried about what might happen as winter was again approaching, and he desperately needed divisions in the salient to form reserves for both the Sixteenth Army and the army group.

General Franz Halder, OKH's Chief of Staff, answered a week later. He recognized that the army group would gain 12 divisions by abandoning Demyansk but pointed out to Küchler that such a withdrawal would also free 26 Russian infantry divisions and seven tank brigades. In any case, it was all academic since Hitler's Haltenbefehl (hold order) remained unchanged.

The Russians continued to attack the corridor linking the pocket to the main German defensive lines. The whole pocket was under continuous attack from November 1942 and,

by mid-January 1943, the fighting had drained off the last army group reserves. General Kurt Zeitzler, the new OKH Chief of Staff, told Küchler on January 19, 1943, that he intended to raise the issue of evacuating the Demyansk Pocket with Hitler.

Army Group North had just suffered a serious setback south of Lake Ladoga, and Zeitzler and Küchler agreed that the principal reason for the setback was the shortage of troops; the only way to avoid similar mishaps in the future was to create reserves by giving up the Demyansk Pocket. To both officers it was a foregone conclusion that Hitler would adamantly resist such a proposal.

However, on the night of January 31, 1943, after a week-long debate, Hitler finally accepted Zeitzler's arguments. The earlier setback around Leningrad may have influenced Hitler's change of mind since he was anxiously trying to keep Finland in the war and this involved holding around Leningrad.

OKH informed Küchler that it had been very difficult to get this decision and asked Küchler to withdraw quickly before Hitler changed his mind, but a quick withdrawal risked losing the vast quantities of equipment and supplies brought into the pocket over the past 13 months. Küchler decided to conduct a slow withdrawal that began on February 20, after three weeks preparation. He then collapsed the pocket in stages, completing the last on March 18, 1943.

POSTSCRIPT FOR THE DANISH SS

After a month's leave in Denmark, the Frikorps returned to the front in November 1941. It was originally intended that it join the 1st SS Brigade in Byelorussia, a unit infamous for its indiscriminate killing of civilians in areas associated with Soviet partisans. However, the deteriorating situation on the Eastern Front caused both the 1st SS Brigade and the Frikorps to be sent to the front at the Russian town of Nevel, some 250 miles west of Moscow. By the spring of 1943 the Frikorps had suffered so many combat losses that it was down to just over 630 men. It was withdrawn from the front line.

In the summer of 1943 the Danes from the Frikorps and SS Division Wiking were united in the new 24th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment Danmark of SS Panzergrenadier Division Nordland. Most Norwegians who had served in Wiking and other units were likewise united—in May, before the Danes joined them—into the 23rd SS Panzergrenadier Regiment Norge and also in SS Panzergrenadier Division Nordland. The third regiment was SS Panzergrenadier Regiment Nederland.

At the end of August 1943, most of the 3rd SS Panzerkorps, to which SS Division Nordland was assigned, was moved to Croatia to take part in antipartisan warfare. In December 1943, the unit was again moved north to the Oranienbaum Pocket southwest of Leningrad.

From there the division participated in the German retreat to Estonia and later to the Courland Pocket in Latvia. In January 1945, it was evacuated from Courland to Pomerania and, the next month, participated in the Sonnenwende Offensive before retreating to the Oder River north of Berlin. Already heavily decimated, SS Division Nordland retreated toward Berlin.

The remnants of Norge and Danmark, in a mixed battle group, fought in Berlin in late April and May 1945 alongside volunteers from the rest of Europe. The group was obliterated in the fighting for the German capital.

Most writers hold that about 2,000 Danes lost their lives on the Eastern Front. As a comparison, a recent book by Eirik Veum identifies 877 Norwegians who were killed on the Eastern Front. This number includes 21 frontline female nurses. But both the numbers for Danes and Norwegians are open to question. For example, a controversial memorial recently erected in Denmark—in central Jutland between the cities of Randers and Viborg—asserts that 4,000 Danish lives were lost on the Eastern Front.

Despite having authorized the Danes to serve in the Waffen-SS, the Danish government on June 1, 1945, a month after the war, adopted retroactive laws criminalizing various forms of collaboration and made armed service for Germany punishable. About 3,300 former soldiers were sentenced under this new law and served an average of two years in prison. □

akg-images

ABOVE: End of the line: After escaping from Russia, Scandinavian SS volunteers took part in the defense of Berlin. Here a dead soldier from SS Division Nordland met his end in an armored vehicle while a comrade lies dead above him, April 1945. OPPOSITE: Soviet troops cross a stream on an improvised bridge to take the fight to the enemy still trapped in the Demyansk Salient, summer 1942.

The entire history of warfare is on display at the West point Museum, America's first military museum.

THE WEST POINT MUSEUM, located in Olmsted Hall and adjacent to the Visitor Center at the United States Military Academy, about an hour's drive north of New York City, contains what is considered to be the oldest and largest diversified public collection of military artifacts in the Western Hemisphere.

Begun with captured British materials brought to West Point after the British defeat at Saratoga in 1777, the museum's collections predate the founding of the United States Military Academy; when the Academy opened in 1802, a number of Revolutionary War trophies were used for cadet instruction.

By the 1820s, a teaching collection of artifacts for use by faculty and cadets was established here and, after the Mexican War (1846-1848), West Point was designated by Executive Order as the permanent depository of war trophies. In 1854 the museum was opened to the public; the museum moved to its present quarters in 1989.

Spread over three floors, the museum does not restrict itself to just West Point, the U.S. Army, or even American artifacts, but has displays that cover the entire gamut of warfare. Starting in the "History of Warfare" gallery on the first floor, visitors can trace warfare from ancient Egypt and Rome, through the armored medieval period, to current operations.

Displays include miniature dioramas of significant battles, as well as Napoleon's sword and pistols, the safety plug removed from the Nagasaki atomic bomb, and other historical artifacts (such as a pen used at the Japanese surrender ceremony aboard the USS *Missouri* in September 1945).

Of special interest to WWII buffs are a pistol once owned by Adolf Hitler, along with Hermann Göring's Reichmarschal baton and his personal revolver. Prior to the outbreak of war Max Kehl, an admirer of the Führer, presented a gold-plated .32-caliber Model I "Lilliput" automatic pistol to him for his personal protection. The pistol had been hidden for safe keeping in the Führerbau, a government building in Munich, but was found by an American sergeant during the post-war occupation.

Rising behind a Sherman tank is Olmsted Hall, home of the West Point Museum.

Author photo

Author photo

A Norden bombsight—America's top-secret weapon during the bombing campaign.

Göring's baton also has an interesting provenance. Donated to the West Point Museum by Mrs. Alexander Patch, widow of the U.S. Seventh Army commander (who received it after Göring surrendered on May 9, 1945), this ivory baton was personally presented to Göring by Hitler in 1940. It is decorated with gold and platinum end pieces, 20 solid gold eagles, 20 platinum crosses, and 640 diamonds. Valued in 1940 at $40,000, it is today a priceless artifact.

Göring also gave up his American-made .38-caliber Smith & Wesson revolver from a Hamburg firearms dealer before the war and handed it up to American troops when he was captured in Bavaria.

The second floor has two galleries: the "American Wars" and the "History of the U.S. Army." In the former, visitors can view George Washington's pistols, the British drum surrendered at Saratoga, field glasses used by General Gouveneur K. Warren, hero of Little Round Top at Gettysburg, and the final message sent by George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Here also is the Medal of Honor Wall, which commemorates those USMA graduates who have received America's highest military award for valor.

The "History of the U.S. Army" gallery is dedicated to the Army's contributions to the growth of the nation. Here are exhibits on the opening of the Western Frontier, the Civil War, Buffalo Soldiers, and Indian Wars, the construction of the Panama Canal, the secret "Manhattan Project" that built the atom bomb, U.S. Army aviation from balloons to space exploration, and the Gulf War of 1991 (Operation Desert Storm).

The basement and sub-basement galleries contain a treasure trove of artifacts, including ancient axes, clubs, swords, polearms, vehicles, artillery pieces, replica of the "Fat Man" atomic bomb, plus machine guns and small arms.

West Point Museum, 600 Thayer Road, West Point, NY 10996

Hours: Open 7 days a week 10:30 AM-4:15 PM. Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day. Admission is free. Phone: (845) 938-3671

Website: www.usma.edu/museum

A portion of the WWII display area.

Author photo

National Park Service

HYDE PARK, NEW YORK (FDR'S HOME)

Combine a visit to West Point with a trip to another historic location that should not be missed. Only about an hour's drive north of the USMA along the Hudson River is "Springwood"—the home of America's wartime president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. All the furnishings of the stately manor are just as they were when FDR lived there, including his wheelchair.

Knowledgeable U.S. Park Service guides provide a detailed explanation of the mansion that was FDR's birthplace (1882) and boyhood home, and where he and Eleanor lived until just shortly before his death in Georgia on April 12, 1945. Here one can almost feel the weight of responsibility of leading America out of the Great Depression and directing the country's war effort, as well as the presence of the other leaders who visited the home—Winston Churchill, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and many more.

Also on the estate's 290 acres are the

National Park Service

Henry A. Wallace Visitor Center, the FDR Presidential Library and Museum, and the simple graves of Franklin and Eleanor.

FDR Home & Presidential Library/Museum
4097 Albany Post Road (U.S. 9)
Hyde Park, NY 12538

Hours: Open 7 days a week 9:00 AM-5:00 PM. Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day. Admission fee charged. Home visitation only by guided tour; call to make reservations.
Phone: (845) 229-5320
Website: www.nps.gov/hofr/index

Continued from page 13

and was replaced in these battles by Hitler's Minister of Armaments and War Production, Albert Speer, who was working hand in glove with the German armed forces—mainly the Regular Army—to prevent the Führer's decreed "scorched earth" policies designed to make the Third Reich an industrial wasteland of no use to any conquering army.

Speer—unlike hardliners Himmler and Göring—was not a true Nazi in the Hitler-Goebbels-Bormann mold and saw for himself a role as the rebuilder of the Fourth Reich under the auspices of the Western Allies at least.

In the end, however, Bormann's concept of the Volkssturm was undone by the very people he wanted to protect it from the most, and from whom he expected the least danger—the officers and men of the German Army in whose sphere of operations the individual VS units fell.

The primary reason for this was that the Party simply could not and did not supply the VS with the weapons, uniforms, and supplies that it needed, while the regular military most often did. Wherever the VS and the military worked well together, the morale was good, absenteeism down, discipline maintained, and training heightened. Thus, much to his chagrin, Bormann was faced with a situation in which the Army delivered where the Party had failed.

The reason for this, too, was that—unlike the higher ranks of the officer corps, which was, by and large, monarchist in belief and background—the lower ranking officers and most enlisted men were Nazis to the core. To them, the attempt to kill Hitler on July 20, 1944, was a disgrace to the good name of Germany.

Indeed, the Army was intimately involved with the Volkssturm from its very beginning. It was the Army that provided both the Panzerfaust (a shoulder-fired rocket similar to the U.S. "bazooka") and Panzerschreck ("Terror of the Tanks") antitank weapons that stopped many an enemy tank in its tracks. In the end, the Panzerfausts were the only weapons that were available to the VS in abundant supply for combat.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-J31320, Photo: o.Ang.

With dour expressions, three middle-aged militia members carry panzerfausts, which required little skill to operate, and wear Volkssturm armbands. Unable to provide all VS troops with uniforms, the German high command trusted that the armbands would be enough to identify the wearer as a regular military combatant and not a partisan.

One fear that all VS men shared was that, without uniforms, they would simply be shot out of hand by the enemy for being partisans or terrorists behind the lines, particularly if they were confused with Dr. Ley's proposed postwar Werewolf organization. They also disliked the Party's brown uniforms, as they feared that Red Army troops would be more likely to kill them and refuse to take them prisoner.

Some even served in civilian clothes, overcoats, and hats, with but a Volkssturm armband and a pay book to identify them officially as Volkssturm men. Negotiations were conducted with the Western Allies to recognize the VS as true combatants, and these were successful, but not, significantly, with the Soviets.

In combat in the East, the VS formations were at the disposal of Guderian (again, ironically), and here they gave a good account of themselves, even halting the Red Army advance at Gumbinnen in East Prussia late in 1944 and elsewhere, but in the West they gave up at places like Remagen when they saw the German Army retreat as well. Here, they served under Field Marshals Gerd von Rundstedt, Walther Model, and Albert Kesselring.

VS casualty rates were sometimes as high as 70 to 80 percent, while other units panicked and fled. In the East, some 650,000 VS men saw action, but when Nazi Party officials fled at the approach of the Red Army, so did the VS. When the Army left the VS as rearguard units, not too surprisingly, they returned to their homes rather than die in this manner.

In the West, some 150,000 VS men served and had helped to man the West Wall fortifications, as well as hold the Upper Rhine, but in the end, the VS had not achieved Himmler's or Bormann's goal. It is estimated that a million VS "troops" were taken prisoner by war's end, and thousands more were killed and wounded.

True, the Volkssturm was a legal militia, not partisan guerrillas, but the Nazis were simply wrong about both their People's Militia's motivation and desire to fight to the bitter end, and also their enemies' sense of moral outrage against Nazism and determination to totally defeat the Third Reich—no matter how long it took or at what cost. □

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here and die like rats. We're going to wage this battle on the surface and if we die, we die fighting, like Americans. Bring her up, Lieutenant Frost."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the diving officer. The electric motors, nearly completely drained of their energy, strained weakly to push *Seal* upward. At a depth of 100 feet, *Seal* seemed to hang, unable to make the last few fathoms to the life-giving air above, ready to slip back down in a death dive. Then, without warning, she gave one last lunge, and the periscope broke through the waves, followed by the bridge and the conning tower.

Dodge ordered the main induction valve opened so that it would draw air into the engines. "The huge engines pulled a vacuum in the boat that felt like it would suck your guts out through your nose," Smitty said.

The diesels caught and roared to life. Dodge scrambled up the ladder, cracked open the hatch, and a blast of cool, fresh air, along with a small torrent of cold seawater, poured into the superheated interior, instantly turning the atmosphere inside the control room into a thick fog. Every man began rushing for the ladder, following their leader, spilling onto the deck, running for their guns, eager to hurt the enemy before they died.

Smitty slipped and slid across the dark, wet deck as he sprinted for his 20mm gun position aft of the conning tower. He opened the ammo locker and began retrieving shells as fast as he could, feeding them to the gunner, expecting that at any second now Japanese shells would rake *Seal*, for the destroyers had been up there all day, licking their collective chops, just waiting for *Seal* to surface.

The three-inch gun swung on its mount, the gunners straining their eyes to find targets in the pitch dark. The same for the 20s. Fingers tensed around triggers. It was now or never.

There was only one problem.

The seven Japanese destroyers were gone.

The men scanned this way and that, trying to pick out the enemy. But there was nothing, no one, not a sign of anything. The sea around them was black, vacant, empty.

The crew was happily perplexed. Perhaps the enemy had run out of ammo. Perhaps they had concluded that *Seal* was lying dead on the bottom of the ocean. Or perhaps they had just gotten bored and gone home. Whatever the reasons, the Japanese had vanished, leaving *Seal* totally and mysteriously alone beneath the stars.

Everyone was silent as they secured from battle stations, cleared the decks, and returned to the sub's interior as *Seal* sped away.

They felt they had just experienced something that was beyond words, beyond comprehension.

After this brush with death, Ron Smith returned to the States for a furlough while *Seal* was repaired and upgraded, during which time he met and married a young lady. Smitty was then ordered to report to a fully refitted *Seal* for more sea duty. But he was diagnosed with what is now known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and did not return to combat. Instead, he was assigned as an instructor at Great Lakes Fleet Torpedo School at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center near Chicago, and then to a naval ammunitions depot in central Indiana.

Smitty's marriage failed, and then, with the war now over, Smitty was discharged and returned to civilian life in Hammond. There he met Georgianna Trembczynski in neighboring Calumet City, Illinois, and they were married in November 1946. He engaged in several careers, finally settling on the automotive industry; even though he swore a hatred for the Japanese, he eventually became the owner of a Toyota dealership. He lived in Austin, Texas, until his death in 2010.

After the war, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific, wrote, "During the dark, early months of World War II, it was only the tiny American submarine force that held off the Japanese Empire and enabled our fleets to replace their losses and repair their wounds. The spirit and courage of the Submarine Force shall never be forgotten." □

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task at hand.

Japanese soldiers scrambled ashore only to be cut down "like falling dominoes." Though the defenders had little love for the Japanese, at least some recalled it was a "sickening slaughter." The Japanese were also hampered by the gooey oil that clung to the shoreline, detritus of the many ships that had been damaged or sunk in Manila Bay.

In other parts of the defense line, Marines supplemented their machine-gun and rifle fire with grenades and even improvised Molotov cocktails. Some Japanese units were in such dire straits the English speakers among them shouted over the machine-gun chatter and grenade blasts, pleading for mercy and insisting they were really Filipinos. These ruses were ineffective.

But Company A's defensive line was thin in spots and gradually the Japanese managed to push through and establish a beachhead. As Marine Private Alvin Mack remembered, "There were so many of them, we couldn't handle them all. They overran us." Once the beachhead was consolidated, Colonel Sato and his men gingerly probed north, toward Malinta Hill.

Jorgy Jorgenson of Company B remembers the Japanese landing well: "We were alerted by runner (no phones or radios) that the sound of landing craft had been heard approaching from the direction of Bataan." Jorgenson's unit headed out toward Monkey Point, where the Japanese were said to be landed. But as they pushed forward, they discovered the Japanese—at least some of them—had infiltrated in the darkness and confusion and were much closer than expected.

Company B took cover and engaged in a furious firefight with the enemy. Then good news filtered through the company positions—Weapons Company D was coming with its machine guns and mortars to support them. After Company D joined the fray, a pale moon finally appeared, bathing the battlefield with a soft light. Jorgenson looked around just in time to see the Company D commander, Captain Noel Castle, take a bullet or bullets and fall to the ground dead.

Since it was fought in the semi-dark amid a blasted and rubble-filled landscape, the battle was confused and bloody. At times it was hand to hand, and the bayonet was freely used when necessary. The Americans did their best to dislodge the Japanese, but the beachhead stood firm.

The battle continued through the night and into the next morning. Jorgy and the rest of Company B were about 250-300 yards from a damaged water tank, pouring whatever fire they could into the Japanese soldiers dug in around it. It grew lighter, and daybreak finally made what must have seemed a belated appearance to the exhausted defenders.

Jorgenson's sergeant ordered "fix bayonets!" but before Jorgy could comply, "I experienced an intense, searing pain in my left side and realized I'd been hit." Jorgenson managed to get to a nearby corpsman, who dressed the wound but could do no more. The young Marine had to make it back to Malinta Tunnel as best he could.

By mid-morning on May 6, the situation was no longer in doubt. The Japanese were firmly ensconced on Corregidor, despite heroic efforts to keep them off. With much difficulty they managed to land tanks on the island, a fact that finally made Wainwright think of surrender. He feared that the tanks would pour fire into the crowded main tunnel and its laterals, which would result in wholesale slaughter.

The surrender was particularly hard on the Marines. The regimental colors were burned to prevent capture. Colonel Samuel Howard, the regimental CO, broke down and wept, lamenting that he was the first Marine officer ever to surrender a regiment. All the garrison—some 14,000 persons—became POWs, and many later endured torture and starvation as slave laborers in Japan.

But Corregidor, like Bataan, stands as a symbol of American and Filipino courage in the face of overwhelming odds. Today the Philippines commemorates April 9, the day Bataan surrendered, as a national holiday called Day of Valor. Corregidor, too, is enshrined in history as a place where men were tested, but not found wanting. □

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Lieutenant Peter Stainforth remained hiding in scrub to the south of the Primosole bridge until it was all clear. He said that he and his men walked "over ground covered with German parachutes and abandoned weapon containers bearing the letters 'FJR IV'—4th German Parachute Regiment. There were also tents lit with hurricane lamps, which were skirted as quickly as we could.

"We lay up again the whole of the next day, and the following night turned south to join up with our ground forces just north of Lentini—actually with a unit of the RAF Regiment who were hoping to put Catania airfield to Allied use!"

From there they got a lift back to Syracuse where they found the remains of the 1st Brigade collecting for the trip back to North Africa on landing craft. "As we were riding at anchor in these open craft," Stainforth said, "the Germans decided to bomb the harbour. The Royal Navy ordered smokescreens to be laid and let off volumes of acrid black smoke to cover us. So what with being bombed and shot at by the Germans, and being choked to death by the bloody navy, we were not sorry to leave Sicily!"

Although the battle for the bridges turned out to be tougher than anyone had supposed and delayed Eighth Army from moving swiftly northward to Messina, within a month of hard fighting the mountainous island would be in Allied hands. The Allies would then launch their next step toward Berlin—the Italian mainland.

Most British and Commonwealth soldiers killed on Sicily are buried either in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemetery at Syracuse, which is three kilometers west of Syracuse, or at the larger Catania CWWG Cemetery, seven kilometers southwest of Catania. Most of the Canadian war dead are buried at the Agira war cemetery, 12 kilometers from Regalbuto.

American soldiers killed on Sicily were either shipped home or are buried in American cemeteries on the Italian mainland. All German troops are buried at Motta Santi Anastasia. □

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there was a well, and I went over there. It was all covered up, and I laid down.

"There was a little hill right behind where I was, and I just rolled. I got there ... near a railroad, and I figured it would take us somewhere. I met a guy from my outfit, Bertera, and two other guys—one guy from the 2nd Division, he was shot, and another guy from the 2nd Division. The four of us came in together. It was dark when we got into Malmédy, but we could see some activity.

"I thought they would take us back, but they were on the move, so they could not afford to take us back. There were something like 75 who were killed right there. If I had been moaning, I would have been killed then."

Paluch is one of the last five Malmédy Massacre survivors left in the United States. The men who first heard about the massacre were from the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion.

William "Stu" Getz said, "We [Company C, 291st Engineer Combat Battalion] were at a town called Malmédy. There was another outfit coming up, and our colonel told them not to go that way because the Germans were ahead of them. They said they could not disobey their orders. We heard a lot of gunfire for about 45 minutes, and two or three of the GIs came down from the massacre. They were wounded but survived, and we took them to the medics. Our colonel called up SHAEF to report what happened. We did not take too many prisoners after that."

By December 20, Peiper's command had murdered approximately 350 American prisoners of war and at least 100 unarmed Belgian civilians, this total derived from killings at 12 different locations along Peiper's line of march.

So far as can be determined, the Peiper killings represent the only organized and directed murder of prisoners of war by either side during the Ardennes battle. The commander of the Sixth SS Panzer Army, Josef "Sepp" Dietrich, said under oath during the war crimes trials of 1946 that, acting on Hitler's orders, he issued a directive stating that the German troops should be preceded "by a wave of terror and fright and that no human inhibitions should be shown."

Many of his troops certainly followed Dietrich's orders—and earned lasting infamy.

The postwar trial—Case Number 6-24 (*United States* vs. *Valentin Bersin, et al.*)—was one of the American-run Dachau Trials, which took place at the former Dachau concentration camp from May 16 to July 16, 1946. It is also an indisputable fact that the testimonies of the perpetrators of this war crime were extracted under duress before the ensuing trial. More than 70 people were tried and found guilty by the tribunal, and the court pronounced 43 death sentences (none of which, incidentally, were carried out) and 22 life sentences. Eight other men were sentenced to shorter prison sentences.

However, after the verdict, the way the court had functioned was disputed, first in Germany (by former Nazi officials who had regained some power due to anti-Communist positions with the occupation forces), then later in the United States (by Congressmen from heavily German-American areas of the Midwest). The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which was unable to make a decision.

The case then came under the scrutiny of a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate. A young senator from Wisconsin named Joseph McCarthy used it as an opportunity to raise his political profile, coming to the defense of the convicted men by stating that the court had not given them a fair trial. This drew attention to the trial and some of the judicial irregularities that had occurred during the interrogations preceding the trial itself.

However, even before the Senate took an interest in this case, most of the death sentences had already been commuted due to a revision of the trial carried out by the U.S. Army. The other life sentences were commuted within the next few years. All the convicted war criminals were released during the 1950s, the last one to leave prison being the infamous Joachim Peiper in December 1956.

Manfred Thorn, a veteran of the 1st SS Division, Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, wrote a book and released a DVD titled *Mythos Malmédy* in which he claims that the massacre never occurred.

After much searching, co-author Martin King located Thorn in Nuremberg. King said, "His wife, Hazel, a British woman, answered. She seemed to be a very mild-mannered and approachable woman, so I asked if I could speak to Mr. Thorn. I asked him his opinion, which he was quite reluctant to impart when I told him that I was in the process of writing a book with a friend in the United States. He said quite sternly, 'The Malmédy Massacre was a setup; it never happened. Those bodies were placed there by U.S. intelligence to appear like they were all massacred. That is the end of it. I don't want to participate further; respect my decision.' So ended our discussion.

"Some days later, I visited the U.S. cemetery in Neuville-en-Condroz. This cemetery had been the location of the mortuary after the Battle of the Bulge. The bodies of the victims had been brought there for forensic examination and identification. It was more than apparent that many of the victims had been shot at close range due to the nature of the bullet holes in their skulls. Moreover, there's pretty compelling evidence to suggest the 1st SS Division was more than capable of completely ignoring the Geneva Convention rules."

The German counteroffensive was finally stopped at the end of January 1945—many miles short of its objective of Antwerp, Belgium. Despite inflicting heavy casualties on U.S. forces, it had failed to achieve its aims; the Americans and British did not fall out with one another, nor did they join with the Germans in turning against the Soviets. With many of its best troops, tanks, and artillery pieces now gone, Germany now had no hope of winning the war.

The complete story is captured in the authors' book, *Voices of the Bulge* (Zenith Press, 2011), from which this article is excerpted. □

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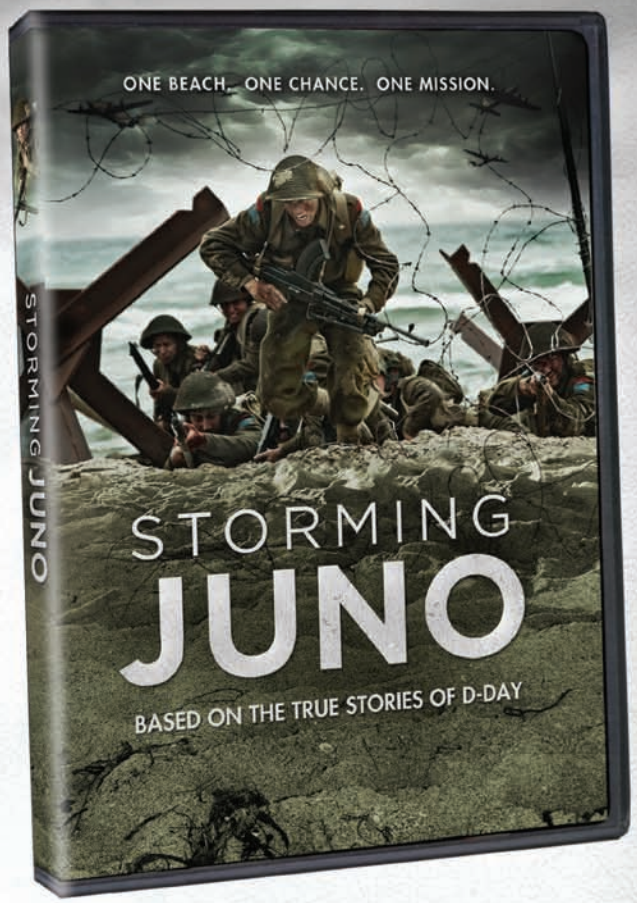

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