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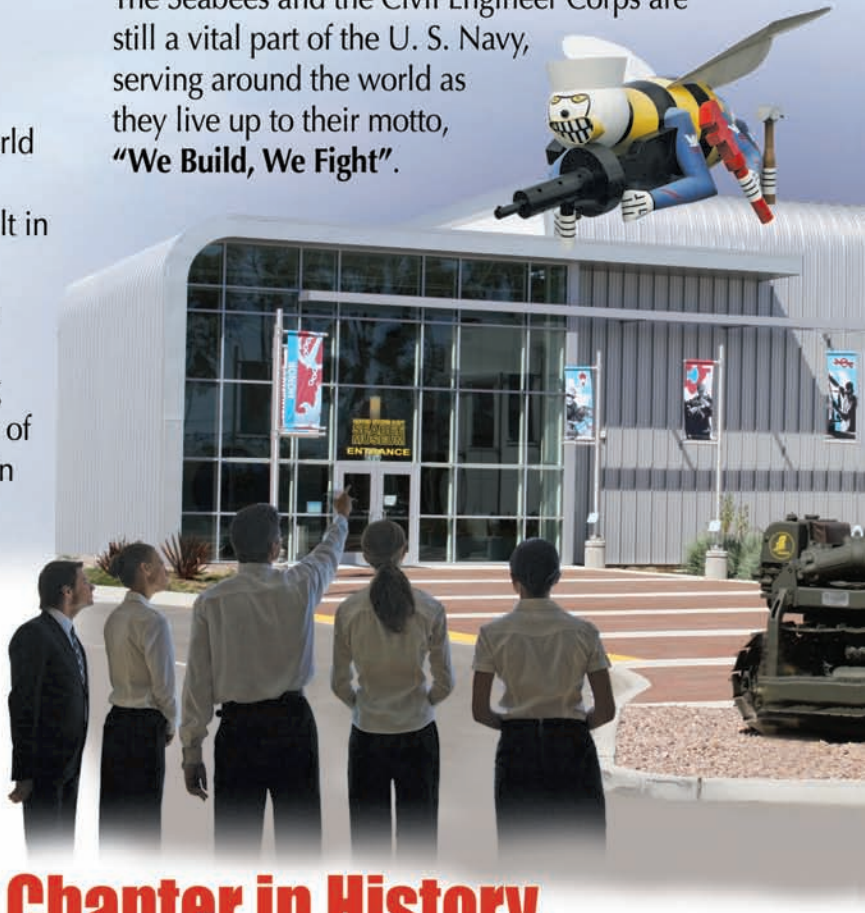

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Photo: © SZ Photo / The Image Works

Features

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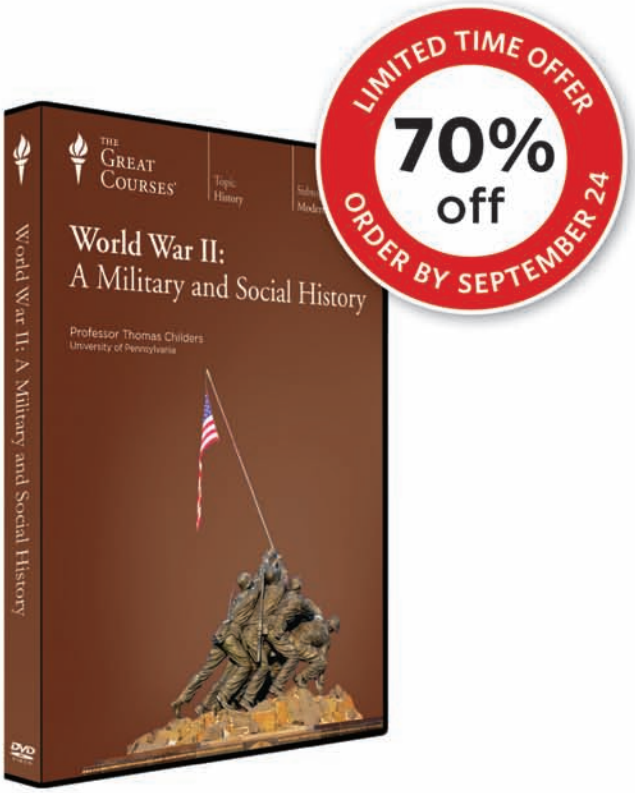

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WWII in the news—a continuing saga

IN LAST SUMMER'S ISSUE, I posed the rhetorical questions: Is World War II still relevant? Are people still interested in the topic?

To show its relevance, I presented a number of news items that had recently appeared in the papers. Since that time I have kept a growing file of clippings that relate to the war and how it remains in the national conscience. Here is some of what I've collected:

Last October the U.S. House of Representatives, in a 422-0 vote, paid tribute to four African American Marines who joined the service in 1942 and were subjected to considerable racial prejudice and harassment by their fellow Marines; more than 300 lawmakers from both parties were co-sponsors of the legislation. The four men received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor given by Congress. As Sanford Bishop of Georgia said, "People forget they were fighting two wars—both foreign and domestic."

A month later, Washington, D.C., lawmakers honored three units made up of Japanese American soldiers—the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Infantry Battalion, and the Military Intelligence Service—also with the Congressional Gold Medal. About 1,250 people attended the award ceremony, a quarter of them recipients, including Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye, who lost his right arm fighting the Germans with the 442nd.

In December 2011, my eyes caught another news item: Augusta Chiwy, a black, Congo-born Belgian nurse who saved the lives of hundreds of American soldiers in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, was recognized with the U.S. Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service. The honor was delayed 67 years because it was presumed she had been killed when a bomb destroyed her hospital. However, she was located by a British historian and, at age 93, presented with the award by the American ambassador to Belgium.

In late February, former lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton, a member of the famed "Band of Brothers" 101st Airborne company made famous in the Stephen Ambrose book and HBO series of the same name, passed away. A major-league baseball hopeful, Compton became a lawyer after the war and headed the team that prosecuted Sirhan Sirhan, Robert Kennedy's assassin. He also wrote his biography, *Call of Duty,* with frequent *WWII Quarterly* contributor Marcus Brotherton (2008).

In March 2012, construction workers in the southern French port city of Marseilles struck (but luckily did not detonate) a buried German bomb with a backhoe, thus forcing the temporary evacuation of 1,000 area residents while the bomb was defused.

And on March 17, John Demjanjuk passed away at age 91 in an old-age home in southern Germany. The Ukranian-born former Cleveland autoworker, whose real name was Ivan Demjanjuk and who came to the U.S. in the early 1950s, had a dark past as a small cog in the very large Nazi Germany killing machine.

In the 1970s, Holocaust survivors identified Demjanjuk as being an especially brutal SS guard known as "Ivan the Terrible" at the Treblinka death camp. In 1977 the U.S. Justice Department started proceedings to revoke his U.S. citizenship.

In 1986 U.S. authorities deported Demjanjuk to Israel to stand trial. He was sentenced to death in 1988 but his identity as "Ivan the Terrible" came under question and the sentence was overturned. During the trial, however, substantial evidence emerged that identified Demjanjuk as a guard at the Sobibor extermination camp.

He returned to Cleveland in 1993 and had his citizenship restored five years later. Holocaust survivors and activists, however, frequently protested outside his home. Then the Justice Department again filed a request to strip him of his U.S. citizenship and he was deported in 2009 and flown to Germany to face a new trial for his Sobibor activities. He was subsequently convicted of over 27,000 counts of accessory to murder at Sobibor and, due to his age and poor health, sentenced to only five years in prison; he was allowed his freedom while his lawyers appealed.

And so the stories of World War II—from heroism to the ongoing aftermath—continue to make the news. With an event as history-changing as the war was, we can only hope that the world will be continually reminded of its importance for decades to come.

—Flint Whitlock

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Shifty Powers, one of the "Band of Brothers," recalls how he survived the war without a scratch, only to be nearly killed at war's end.

BACKSTORY: Darrell "Shifty" Powers was a soft-spoken machinist who never aspired to greatness. He was born, grew up, got married, raised his family, worked, retired, and died in Clinchco, a remote mining town in southwest Virginia. Aside from a few years he spent working in California and his years in the war, he seldom traveled outside his tiny hometown. Shifty was a self-described mountain man, a hillbilly. He enjoyed fishing, hunting, working in his vegetable garden, and shooting rifles at targets from his front porch. He began the war as a lowly private and ended the war as a squad leader, never leading a group larger than 12 men. After the war, he was never the boss of anything. He never held public office. He never made much money. He never chased any of the contemporary definitions of success—popularity, power, or position. Yet, despite this humble life, the world knows his name today.

Why?

Certainly much of Shifty's notoriety has to do with his association with the Band of Brothers. Shifty Powers was a soldier with the now-legendary Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.

The Band of Brothers formed and trained at Camp Toccoa, Georgia, under the tough and controversial Captain Herbert Sobel. After training stateside, the men rode the troop ship *Samaria* to Aldbourne, England, for further battle preparation. They parachuted into Normandy on D-Day and later into Holland for Operation Market-Garden. They fought their way through Belgium, France, and Germany, faced overwhelming odds, liberated concentration camps, and drank a toast to victory in April 1945 at Hitler's Berchtesgaden hideout in the Alps. Along the way they encountered horrors and victories, welded themselves into a family of soldiers, and helped swing the tide of World War II and, ultimately, the course of history.

The company was first chronicled in 1992 by historian Stephen Ambrose in his book *Band of Brothers*. In 2001, Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg turned Ambrose's book into a 10-part HBO miniseries by the same name. The series won six Emmys and numerous other awards and still runs frequently on various networks around the world.

Shifty Powers fit well into this group of elite soldiers. His paratrooper unit didn't have snipers by name, but if a man was particularly handy with a rifle, he could

National Archives

Men of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division ("Screaming Eagles") enter the Bavarian town of Berchtesgaden, April, 1945.

"How I BEAT My... Acid-Reflux Nightmare!"

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By Ralph Burns;
Former acid reflux sufferer

Here's My Story:

I've Suffered With Acid Reflux for Almost 40 Years Now. Unless you experience it you can't imagine how horrible it is. Every time I ate spicy foods I would get what I called "ROT GUT". Like something was rotting in my stomach. But now I can eat anything... No matter how spicy. Even if I never could before.

Let me explain… **For the better part of my life I purposely avoided a lot of foods.** Especially ones with even a tiny bit of seasoning. Because if I didn't, I'd experience a burning sensation through my esophagus— like somebody poured hot lead or battery acid down my throat. Add to that those disgusting "mini-throw ups" and I was in "indigestion hell".

"I was beside myself. What was I gonna do? Keep taking the pills, or suffer with problems that could ultimately be my demise."

Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. But nothing worked. Or if they did, it would only be for a brief period. And then boom! My nightmare would return.

Sometimes, I felt like I was dying. The pain was unbearable and nothing could make it stop.

But then my wife, who occasionally suffered with the same problem gave me one of her prescription acid blockers. It was a miracle. I felt like I could live again. Because before that, I was just miserable. I wanted to kill myself. But thankfully, it worked, and worked well.

I felt great, until about one year ago, when I read an FDA warning that scared the heck out of me. It went something like this…

FDA WARNING! Using proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) on a long term basis, increases your risk of hip, bone and spinal fractures.

That's a particular concern to me, since many acid blockers are PPIs. I've gone through two back surgeries and bilateral hip replacements. I had to ask myself, could PPIs have been responsible for my medical woes? After all...

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I was "between a rock and a hard place". Stop using the PPIs and I'm a "dead man in the water". It would be unbearable. I wouldn't be able to eat anything. I'd have to go on a water diet.

But that FDA warning was scary. I knew I had to stop or else risk developing spinal stenosis. My mother had that. And I watched her die a horrible death. Her spine just fractured. It was the worst death. She didn't deserve that. And neither do I.

I had to quit. So I stopped taking PPIs for a day or so. But my indigestion was worse than ever. I would rather take the chance of a spinal fracture than to live like that again. I tried everything. Even started using home remedies like Apple cider vinegar. But it just felt like I was pouring even more acid down my throat.

Then one day at dinner, a friend of mine said, "Why don't you try an aloe drink?" I said, "Aloe drink? Jeez. That doesn't sound good at all!" The next day he brought me a case of something called ***AloeCure***®. I was skeptical, but I was desperate! So instead of being an ingrate I decided to try it.

I was shocked! ***AloeCure***® tasted pretty good too. It has a pleasant grape flavor that I actually enjoy drinking. I decided

63-year old Ralph Burns enjoying a spicy hot portion of Lobster Fra Diavolo. Just 15 minutes after taking AloeCure®

to experiment. I stopped taking the PPIs altogether and replaced it with a daily diet of ***AloeCure***®. Then something remarkable happened… NOTHING! Not even the slightest hint of indigestion.

And here's the best part. The next day we had Italian food — my worst enemy. But for the first time in 40 years I didn't get indigestion without relying on prescription or OTC pills and tablets. Finally, I just didn't need them anymore!

I was so thrilled; I wrote the *AloeCure*® company to tell them how amazing their product is. They thanked me, and asked me to tell my story... The story that changed my life. I said, "Sure, but only if you send me a hefty supply of ***AloeCure***®. I just can't live without it."

But don't believe me. You have to try this stuff for yourself. I recommend ***AloeCure***® to anyone who suffers with the same problem I did. It gives you immediate relief. You'll be grateful you did. I sure am. It's the best thing that's happened to me in a long, long time.

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qualify as an "expert marksman." Shifty Powers was one of only two men in a company of 140 soldiers who initially achieved this designation. When it came to shooting rifles—and hitting what needed to be hit—he was the best of the best.

Fellow soldier Earl "One Lung" McClung described Shifty this way: "He was an excellent shot, as well as an excellent friend. On patrols, he knew exactly what he was doing—that's why he was one of the very few old-timers in the company who was never wounded. He had the best ears of any man in the company. He could hear anything, including enemy sentries, better than most men, so he would often lead our patrols. Shifty Powers was a great man, one of the kindest people I've ever known. I've never heard him say anything bad about anyone."

Despite his fame today, Shifty wasn't portrayed prominently in the book or the series. He wasn't a main character, like Major Dick Winters. Shifty didn't have a single episode in the miniseries that focused on him, like Doc Roe did. You never heard Shifty's interior monologue throughout an episode, such as you did with Carwood Lipton's. Yet, in spite of that, Shifty Powers has become well known today, for at least three reasons.

Played by actor Peter Youngblood Hills, Shifty was one of just a handful of men to be portrayed in all 10 episodes of the HBO series. He's seldom seen in a main role, but he's solidly (and perhaps strategically) placed in the background of many scenes. He was the sharpshooter in Carentan the men called upon when they needed a particularly difficult shot taken. He was the rifle expert in Bastogne whom men asked to verify what kind of weapon was being fired at them. He could do it just by the sound. Shifty Powers was the type of quiet, go-to man that others could always depend on. That's admirable.

Second, Shifty Powers (in real life, in addition to the series) was a gentleman. He was the good friend to everyone. For instance, when Private Walter Gordon is shown being ordered by Captain Sobel to run Mount Currahee alone as punishment for committing some minor infraction, Shifty is one of three men who voluntarily

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Darrell "Shifty" Powers, ca. 1944. BELOW: Maj. Gen. Maxwell Taylor, photographed in France after the D-Day invasion.

join Gordon on the run. Friends who knew him well say that he was exactly this sort of man in real life, one with a deeply altruistic and kind spirit. His granddaughter-in-law, Dawnyale Johnson, described him this way: "You just fell in love with him. He had this warmth about him. He didn't care what you looked like or if you had a Ph.D. He was very honest—what you saw was what you got. He'd be the same person to Tom Hanks as he'd be to the person working at Food City."

And third, Shifty is well known today because his death on June 17, 2009, came at an arguably hero-starved time in American history. Shifty is widely admired because his example helps us sort out what's truly valuable in life. He was an ordinary man who trained to become the best and ultimately did extraordinary things. He did a difficult job well and didn't call attention to himself. He came home from the war with his life intact and chose to live it in service to his family and community. Shifty's life story is inspiring because it sounds so simple. It's inspiring because it's so rare.

What follows is the first chapter from the new book, Shifty's War*:* The Authorized Biography of Sergeant Darrell "Shifty" Powers, *the legendary sharpshooter featured in* Band of Brothers. *This work is a posthumous memoir that reflects the recollections of Shifty Powers's experiences. Author Marcus Brotherton retold those experiences in Shifty's voice.*

General Taylor's Lottery, Austria, 1945

By my 22nd birthday, you know, I had killed eight men. Eight that I was certain of, eight that I could plainly count. That information was stuffed deep within my gut, and if anyone ever asked if I killed someone during the war, particularly if a child ever asked, I vowed I'd shake my head no, that information was never coming out.

Less than a month after my birthday, the war was declared over. Everybody drank a lot of champagne, then this weariness set in. Everybody just wanted to go home. I think it was weariness we were feeling, anyway. It was hard to rightly put the feeling into words. Frustration, maybe. Like everybody else, home is where I longed to be, but I wasn't heading stateside soon. A man needed 85 points to be discharged from the Army, and though I had trained at Toccoa as one of the original men in the company and served every day on the front as rifleman, scout, and sharpshooter in every campaign from Normandy forward, I didn't have enough points. I was missing one piece of important battle experience when it came to Army thinking. Maybe it was a special angel looking over my shoulder, don't rightly know, but I had dodged all bullets aimed my direction. Unlike most men in Easy Company, I had no Purple Hearts. In a company that suffered 150 percent casualties, I was an acute rarity. You see, I'd never been wounded.

Wasn't complaining, mind you, wasn't talking to anybody about the trouble I felt. Come war's end we was pulling occupation duty in Zell am See, a middling-sized town in Austria near the foot of the Alps. Fine country to be soldiering in. No one was doing much work no more, some running maybe, some drilling to keep us sharp. Was a beautiful place, truly, with that glassy lake in the center of town. Why, shoot—compared to the aggravation we'd just fought through, the place we now stayed made a fellow feel almost lighthearted in spite of his weariness, as if he was relaxing on his front porch after a hard day's work.

Not even the Krauts felt like stirring things much up. Most days you'd see enemy soldiers hike out of the Alps and surrender to Allied troops. They came down by the hundreds all hungry and beat down, such a far sight from the killing and fussing we'd just been through with them. A lot of those soldiers—well, I've thought about this often—that man and I might have been good friends. We might've had a lot in common. He might have liked to fish. He might have liked to hunt. 'Course, they was doing what they was supposed to do, and I was trying to do what I was supposed to do. But under different circumstances we might have been good friends. When they surrendered, we'd set a couple guards on them, feed 'em, and that was how it was for us come the end of the war.

It's funny how passing through a heap of combat draws your outfit tight as brothers. I guess some of the fellows in the company got to grumbling among themselves on my behalf. The high-points men only had about three weeks before they'd go home, but me, well, it might be another six months or year or maybe more. Rumors floated around about us joining the fight in the Pacific, and I was never one to shirk duty if it came to that. But if it was just the same as not, and hopefully that war in Japan soon would be finished, too, then I'd surely rather go home now and not later. I'd seen enough gore to last me forever.

Those same fellows must have been fussing loud enough for someone important to hear, because one sunny afternoon Captain Speirs led us in a troop formation near the town square, and I noticed one or two old-

timers with unmistakable twinkles in their eyes. Wasn't no doubt something was up, but I couldn't rightly say what. Such a fine day it was that same afternoon, early June 1945, when all 140 of us in Easy Company assembled in the square. Most fellows you didn't even recognize anymore. Replacements, they came in when one of us got wounded or killed. You'd try your best to pair up a replacement with one of the older men, a fellow who'd seen combat already and made it to the other side. If you made that pairing, well, you might get the replacement used to what was going on, he might get settled in, he might even make it. Was easier said than done, though. I know a few old-timers got so they didn't care to learn a replacement's name. As soon's you did, why, you'd turn around and the boy's guts would be bleeding, he'd be screaming for his mama, and after it happened more than once like that, well, you needed a certain wariness of who became your friend.

Three platoons formed a half circle around Captain Speirs. He barked out the usual "Company, platoons, 'tenshun!" and the stamp of our boots and clack of our rifles echoed off the cobblestones. Bordering the square was a manor and a steepled church, and when Captain Speirs growled "At ease!" the echo wasn't as noticeable then, and we stepped apart and shook our shoulders a bit.

"General Taylor is aware," Captain Speirs called out, "that many veterans—including Normandy veterans—still do not have the 85 points required to be discharged. On this, the anniversary of D-Day, the general has authorized a lottery to send one man home in each company. Effective immediately."

Several men gave low whistles at the good news. A fellow to my side swallowed loudly, his throat dry from possibility. Lieutenant Harry Welsh, a gutsy scrapper and our unit's staff officer, fished his fingers around in an outstretched helmet filled with slips of paper that each bore a man's name. Lieutenant Welsh paused, leveled his eyebrows at the helmet for a moment, smirked, I guess, then handed his chosen slip of paper to our commander.

Captain Speirs unfolded it and read the name silently to himself, then straightened his shoulders, his expression unchanged. We all leaned in and listened for the lucky name. I noticed a calm breeze stirring the early summer leaves of a beech tree to my right. Somewhere up on the forested hillside behind the manor came the high-pitched ti-ti-ti-ti-ti call of a grouse. "C'mon, c'mon, c'mon," a man behind me muttered.

"For Easy Company...," Captain Speirs drew his words out for emphasis, "... the winner is ... serial number one, three, zero, six, six, two, six, six ... Sergeant Darrell C. Powers." His voice rose like a radio announcer as he said the last part of my name. The captain, known mostly for his fearless and killing ways, musta had a softer spot to him after all.

Cheers erupted from the men. Lieutenant Welsh's smirk had turned into an indisputable laugh. "That's how it's done, Shifty!" someone hollered. I think it was George Luz, the fellow everybody got along with and who could do a dead-on mimic of anyone. Bull Randleman, a bear of a man and a fine soldier, grinned from several rows over and looked like he wanted to slap my back. "Congratulations, Shifty!" Randleman bawled. "It couldn't have happened to a better man!"

I shook my head in disbelief. I had won General Taylor's lottery. Home—I needed to let that sink in for a minute. A slight smile spread its way across my lips. Me, Shifty Powers, I was going home at last.

As soon as the formation was dismissed, two replacements ran up to me and grabbed my arm. "I'll give you a thousand dollars for that trip home," said one, all breathless. The other looked like he'd do the same. Wasn't no doubt they was serious. A few men won heaps of money gambling and such, and well, it was true: a thousand dollars would've meant a hill of money to a fellow like me. But I didn't need to roll that decision over in my mind before I shook my head and said, "No, I think I'll just go home." So that was that.

One of the old-timers, Sergeant Paul Rogers, strolled up just as the replacements were leaving. Everyone called him Hayseed. He smiled as big as a sunrise and shook my hand. He was one of my best friends in the company still alive, and I was mighty glad he made it to war's end. I didn't know what to say to him except, "Shoot, Paul, I've never won anything in my life."

Hayseed smiled even wider and shook my hand harder. "We all wanted this for you, Shifty." His eyes bore that same twinkle I had seen earlier in some of the men. He handed me an empty duffel bag like he had been preparing for this and added, "C'mon, I've got something to show you."

Hayseed was our platoon sergeant, a man tasked with caring for the soldiers nearest him. I didn't have much gear to gather up, not many souvenirs from combat. Back when we went through Berchtesgaden I swiped one of those big red banners of Hitler's with its black swastika. Didn't know what I'd ever do with that big ole ugly banner, but I figured a find like that was something a down-home fellow like me didn't come across every day. That's about all I had.

We started walking. I guessed Hayseed was just leading me back to the barracks to help gather my gear, but soon we turned and headed toward a supply building a few streets away where I had spotted comings and goings. A single guard nodded to us when we reached the door. He rattled the lock and let us in. The building was windowless, pitch-dark inside. Hayseed switched on the overhead light. I gasped.

"Now, Shifty," he said, "you go pick out whatever you want."

Dadgum, if there wasn't a whole room full of 'em. Confiscated from the Krauts. Stacked in boxes and lying on shelves and filling the floor. Guns. Heaps of guns, mounds of guns. Rifles and pistols and carbines and shotguns and submachine guns. A grin spread wide across my face.

"Figured it would make a fitting going-away present for the best shot in Easy Company," Hayseed said, and handed me the duffel bag.

"Aw nah," I said, and stepped forward. "You're forgetting Buck Taylor. He's a much better shot than I ever was. And Earl McClung, that's for sure, best in the company by far. Now, back home in Virginia, you know, my daddy ... now, there was a man who could shoot. Daddy was an excellent shot, yes he was. Why, that man could shoot the wings off a fly."

"Just fill your sack, Shifty," Hayseed

National Archives

GIs in a convoy pass armed Germans providing security In Zell-am-See, Austria, just a few weeks after Germany surrendered.

said. But he wasn't aggravated, not really.

I chose pistols, easiest to carry I reckoned. I'd already be taking my M-1 home and didn't need the extra nine pounds of another rifle, so it was just pistols then. Ten, maybe twelve went into the duffel bag, fine pistols. As best find of the collection I spotted two .25 automatics, matched sets, pearl-handled, mighty fine pistols. Next to them lay two shoulder holsters for the pistols, one for the left, one for the right. I strapped those pearl-handled pistols directly on under my uniform jacket and beamed like I was getting ready to eat one of my mama's homemade chocolate pies, my favorite dessert.

"Truck's leaving soon," Hayseed said. "Better shake a leg." He shook my hand again for good measure. I nodded. Wasn't no time for saying proper good-byes. I think we both knew the limitations of a man's words at a time like that, for he swatted me on the shoulder, grinned wide again, and I nodded again. That was how we said good-bye.

Hayseed walked back to join the company. One more thing was needed before leaving, though—needed to ask a question. I knew what it was, but didn't know how to coax that dang question out of me so it made sense when I asked it. It sprung from a particular feeling that'd been gnawing on my insides ever since the war was declared over. Really, I'd been feeling it longer than that, but the war's end made me realize I was gonna need to get it out of me someday, maybe sooner, maybe later. It was rammed in my craw like a stuck piece of cornbread. That's where I held it tight. So, I reckoned if any man would know the answer to that question, it'd be Major Dick Winters.

The major was quartered some streets away in officers' housing. Upstairs and through the drawing room, the guard said when I knocked on the door, and the wood floors made nary a creak as I padded up. The major sat outside on the drawing room's balcony. He was framed with sunlight, in contrast to the dark drawing room through which I glimpsed him at first. As I walked toward him, I noticed he worked at a small desk he had carried out there for his paperwork. A glass of drinking water rested on his desk. Far behind him, an afternoon mist lay hazy and warm on the hills overlooking the lake.

Major Dick Winters was with us in the beginning. Back at Camp Toccoa when we started training three long years earlier, he was a regular officer, a lieutenant and platoon leader in Easy Company, maybe 40, 50 men in his charge. He fought shoulder to shoulder with us and led us all through Normandy, where he became company commander. He was there in the rain and wind of Holland, the snow and blood of Bastogne, the shelling and muck of Haguenau. The higher brass all saw what an admirable leader he was, and all the time he rose through the ranks swift as a hawk taking off from its perch. By the time we were in Austria he had replaced Colonel Robert Strayer as commander of our battalion. Major Winters was now responsible for leading some seven hundred men.

"Don't mean to interrupt you, sir. Just wanted to say good-bye."

The major concentrated on the chart in front of him. He finished what he was reading, stood, and nodded at me.

"You know, sir ... you was...." I searched for words, and tried again. " You was...." I stopped, listened. Somewhere to my left water burbled from a creek. I decided to try again. "Well ... it's been a long time...." Wasn't nearly the point I wanted to get across.

The major set down his pen on the table. "Got everything you need, Sergeant Powers?" His voice was unruffled, steady as it ever was.

"Yes, sir. I gathered up my loot. Pistols mainly. Paperwork will be done soon. I'll get my back pay when I get down to headquarters."

The major's head gave a slight tilt to one side, inviting me to say what was truly on my mind. I shifted my dress cap from my right hand to my left.

"Well, back home in Virginia...." I began, then wobbled at the knees. A thought flew through my mind. It unfolded all at once, over and done with quicker than a hair trigger's pulled, but I'll try to lay it all out for you here so you see how my mind was churning just so.

Was that image of the water glass resting on the major's desk that jumbled everything. That water—so clean—just sitting there anytime a fellow felt like a sip. It sparked a recollection of a time Easy Company was holding the line at Bastogne. We was completely surrounded by the Krauts, all freezing in the snow. Hungry, cold, dirty, smelly. Scared. Near our foxholes lay a frozen creek and we'd chop it for water. You seldom had a chance to light fires for ice melting, surely never when the Krauts'd see you. So our throats were dry most way through Bastogne.

This particular day the thirst's got the company real bad, you know, and ole Wild Bill Guarnere and Babe Heffron are talking. They're two of the toughest men in Easy Company and Bill says, "Babe, pick up that jerrycan over there. We need to get some water for the men." One of the guys from another company had been out to the creek the day before with his bayonet, hacking away at the ice. His helmet was lying there now with a hole dead center from a .50-caliber. Some other fellow saw what happened. "Oh yeah," the other fellow says. "A P-47 came down and was strafing and hit him—he was a kid from I Company—killed him instantly." Babe says, "Geez, one of our own planes—friendly fire."

In spite of the danger, we got to have water, you know, so Babe decides to go. The creek's maybe 200 yards away. All the time he's in the open, he's glancing into the woods and we're listening up into the sky, nervous at what we all know is out there but can't be seen as yet. He's near where that helmet is because it's the only place to go, and fills the jerrycan quick and shuffles through the snow lickity split back to us in the woods. Bill hollers in a whisper, "Come on up, guys, one at a time, fill your canteens." That's the strategy. You couldn't line up in a bunch. If a shell came in, it'd wipe out the whole group.

So the fellas go up one by one and get their water, and I'm near the end and I come up holding my canteen. They turn over the jerrycan into the container and Babe says, "Goddam, Bill, look at this," and Bill says, "Aw Jesus," and he's looking at the last little bit of water in the can. They can only now see the state of affairs for what it is, now that the jerrycan's nearly empty. It's got pieces of the kid's brains floating in the water, the kid killed by the P-47. Babe says to Bill, "What do you want me to do?" All our canteens are full of the stuff, and Bill's like, "You gonna drink yours?" And Babe turns behind to the guys and hisses, "Throw your goddam water purification pills in your canteens." So that's what we drank.

"You see, sir...." It was back to the sunlight on the balcony, and I tried forming my question again in front of Major Winters, although my voice had a clear-cut crack in it now. "I ... I just don't rightly know how I'm gonna explain all this back home.... The things I've done. The things I've seen." I swallowed hard again.

Richard Winters family

ABOVE: Major Dick Winters, photographed in Holland during Operation Market Garden. BELOW: 101st soldiers head to the front near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

National Archives

The major's eyes glanced down at the table, then focused on me again. "You're a hell of a fine soldier, Shifty. There's nothing you need to explain."

I got to studying his words a moment and my chin became more resolute. It was truly time for me to go. "Thank you, sir," I said, and saluted.

The major returned the salute, then, to my surprise, held out his hand like a man might to a friend. We shook. As I turned to go, I noticed the glass still resting on his desk. The water still looked cool and clear, though tiny beads of condensation had slipped from its sides and made the table the slightest bit wet. Just like maybe the major's eyes were. Maybe not.

The truck's motor idled with a growl. The driver slapped his hand against the side of the door. "You the guy from Easy Company? Get in. Gotta get a move on." Three other men lounged in the bed of the truck, the other lucky lottery winners, from Dog, Fox, and Headquarters Companies. I didn't recognize them further than that.

The kid from F Company offered me a hand climbing up and the truck began to roll. Zell am See, Easy Company, K-rations, sleeping on the ground, the war—it was all behind me now. I regretted not getting a chance to say good-bye to my good buddy Earl McClung. He thought he had died and gone to heaven in Austria and was seldom around. His job was to hunt stag and chamois, those little goats with the hooked horns, so we had something to feed ourselves and the prisoners. Mostly he stayed up in the hills around town and camped out. We saw McClung maybe once or twice a week. I'd write him a long letter once I got stateside.

"Where ya heading, Jack?" the kid from D Company asked me. He had sandy hair and long legs that stretched in front of him. I wondered if he played basketball before the war, just like me.

"Clinchco, Virginia. Little coal mining town in the southwest corner of the state. You?"

"Other side of the country. Got a girl there. Gonna get married soon. It's all home now."

We grinned. The truck picked up speed and the wind whistled past our ears. The truck was taking us to headquarters so we could clear up our paperwork. From there it was a straight shot to the coast and a boat ride home. An American GI car pulled in tight behind us and looked like it might pass on the curvy road. It honked and the blare echoed off the mountain rock. I craned my neck up. Over the top of

our truck I glimpsed another GI truck heading toward us as it rounded a curve. The driver must have been searching for something because he was inching across the center line. Maybe he was drunk.

"Get any good souvenirs?" asked the kid from D Company. "Me, I got some—"

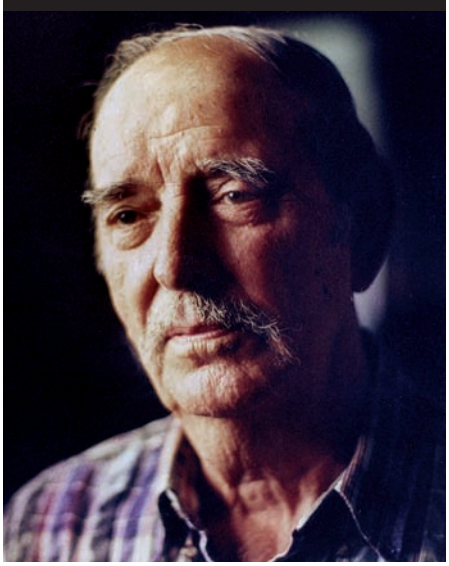
Don't remember no fuss. Don't remember no sound of metal against metal. Just remember flying ragdoll-style over the top of our truck with this car horn going off behind us. Echoing. Echoing. Bouncing off those rock walls. My wrist hit the middle of the road first and broke like someone snaps a twig while walking through the forest. My pelvis hit the blacktop next and something inside me rattled and busted, like a rock hitting a windowpane. My head hit the pavement last and I skidded along, still with the mind-set to wish the car behind wouldn't run me over. All was black and blue for a moment and I fought to come back. My mind returned, and rubber tires were squealing and gravel was flying, striking my arms and chest like we was under fire. I saw the mashed-up cab of our truck from my periphery. That other truck was crunched into us, head-on. Steam and smoke gushed up and the motors were rammed into each other's cab. I propped myself up, trying to scramble out of the way, but my arm buckled and my insides jumbled and I scrunched my eyes and tried not to holler at the pain.

A woman bent over me. She wore a long gray coat-dress, and her hat bore a tiny crimson cross. Don't know how much time passed. The side of the road looked closer now, and she was flicking the seal of a morphine syrette, getting ready to stick my leg. The kid from D Company lay a few feet away, the kid going home to his girl. His sandy hair was matted red now, his long legs motionless, his complexion colorless when a medic pulled a blanket overtop his face.

The drug hit and everything got swirly and I thought about heading in for my mother's homemade chocolate pie. So creamy and good, and I was there sitting in our kitchen again. Mama wore her Sunday dress with her best apron tied behind her and she was telling me to stay at the table and have seconds on dessert. Don't worry

Powers family

ABOVE: Three members of Easy Company at a 1999 reunion in Denver, Colorado (left to right): Buck Taylor, Earl McClung, Shifty Powers. BELOW: Shifty Powers, photographed shortly before his death on June 17, 2009, at age 86.



Mark Cowena

about me, Mama, I said. My name's Sergeant Darrell C. Powers, and I won General Taylor's lottery. I'm coming home soon, Mama, I'm really coming home soon.

Shifty was in and out of army hospitals for a year following his accident. After the war he came back to the coal mines of Clinchco, Virginia, and worked as a machinist for the coal companies. He and his wife Dorothy had two children, Wayne and Margo. Wayne was named in honor of Shifty's good buddy from Easy Company, Wayne "Skinny" Sisk.

This article is an excerpt from the book *Shifty's War: The Authorized Biography of Sergeant Darrell "Shifty" Powers, the Legendary Sharpshooter from the Band of Brothers* by Marcus Brotherton, published by Berkley Caliber in May 2011.

Flying With the FIFTEENTH

BY TOM ROWE WITH JAMES BILDER

OVERSHADOWED BY THE MIGHTY EIGHTH IN ENGLAND, THE Fifteenth Air Force flew out of Italy and played no less important—and every bit as dangerous—a role in bombing targets in Nazi Germany and elsewhere.

Flight Engineer Tom Rowe "backed into" service in the Army Air Corps' Fifteenth Air Force but went on to complete 25 missions, including a narrow escape from German-occupied Yugoslavia after being shot down. Here is his story as he tells it:

The attack on Pearl Harbor had galvanized the country. Whatever feelings we had about the war before December 7, 1941, were now all replaced by a desire for victory. I went down to the Naval Recruitment Center on December 8. The Navy seemed like the logical choice since my brother-in-law was serving on the destroyer USS *Winslow*.

I had married in 1936, and my wife and I had two daughters. The U.S. Navy recruiter saw my 3-A rating from the draft board and simply said to me, "Go home and take care of your family."

I was working then as a bellman at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago. It seemed by 1942 that everyone was in uniform. I kept getting questions from patrons like, "How come you're not in service?" and "My boy's in uniform—why aren't you?" This began to weigh heavily on me, and I started drinking. Finally, my wife Marion said to me in the late summer of 1942, "If it means that much to you, go down and enlist!"

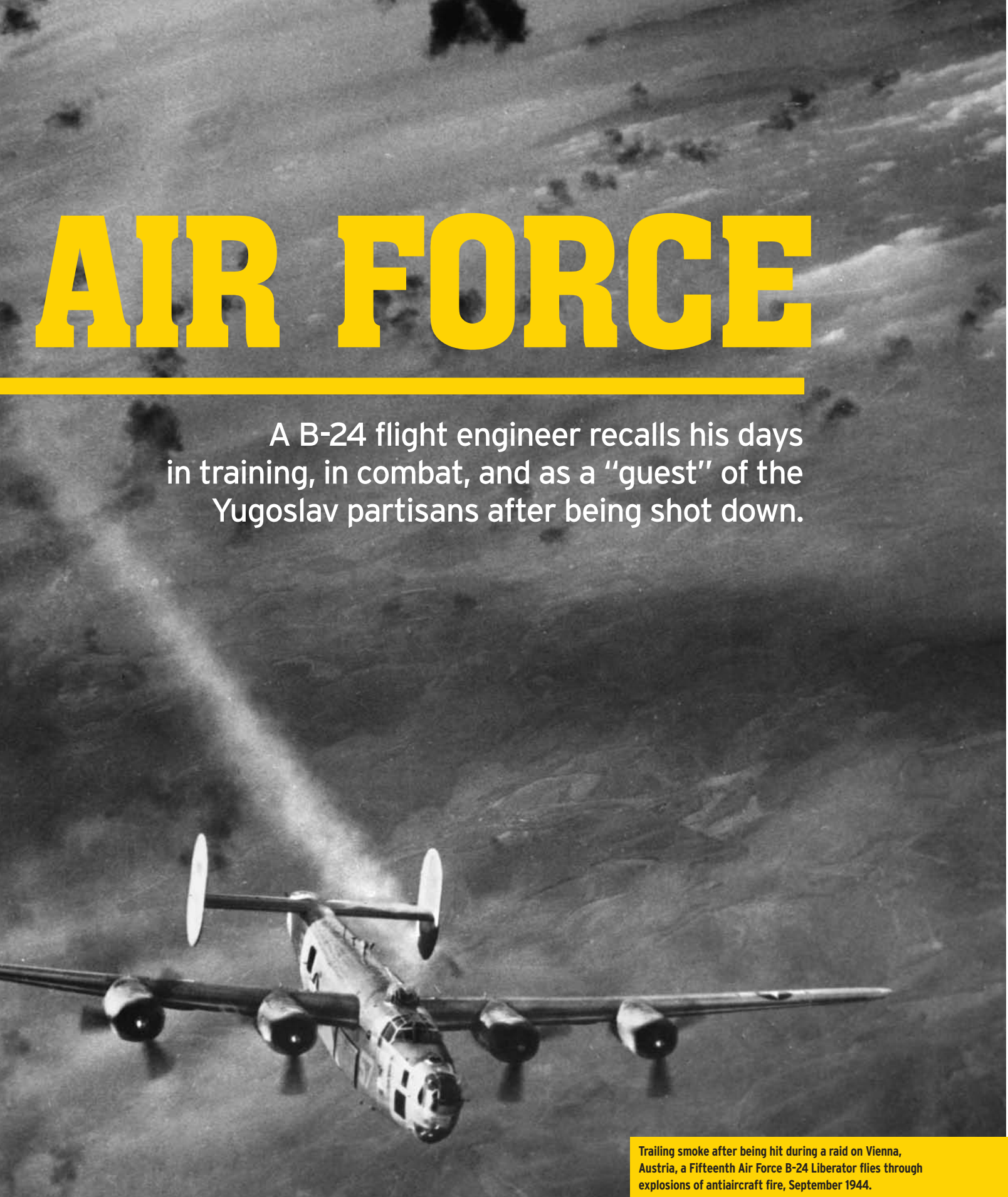
I passed my physical and was sent to Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois, for induction and processing. I spent two or three days there before being sent to Kessler Air Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, for 10 weeks of basic training. Someone had told me that paratroopers earned extra pay so, as a married man, I thought that would be best for my family. When I completed basic training, I told my superiors that I wanted to be a paratrooper, and they said that was fine.

After congratulating us for finishing basic, we were all told to put on our overcoats and board a train. Once on board, I discovered our destination was Lincoln Army Air Field in Nebraska; we were told that we were going to be trained to be airplane mechanics. I got up from my seat and explained to a sergeant that there must be some

Modaddori/Getty Images

AIR FORCE

A B-24 flight engineer recalls his days in training, in combat, and as a "guest" of the Yugoslav partisans after being shot down.



Trailing smoke after being hit during a raid on Vienna, Austria, a Fifteenth Air Force B-24 Liberator flies through explosions of antiaircraft fire, September 1944.

mistake since I was supposed to be in the paratroops. He looked at my small frame and commented, "You haven't got enough weight to pull the cord on a parachute," and told me to go back and sit down.

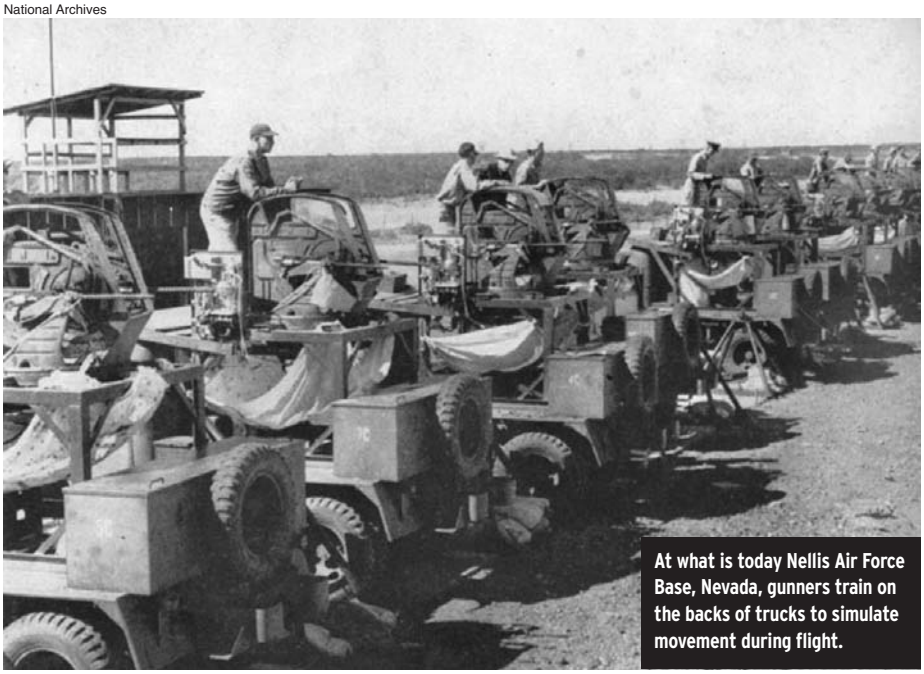
The mechanics training was engine related and at first was nothing more than high school level physics. I decided I would get into the paratroops by intentionally failing my exams. An officer called me into his office and said to me, "We know what you can do. What did you enlist for? If you fail, we'll make you take this whole course again." There was more than an implied threat that it would not be a pleasurable experience. I knuckled down and finished 11th in a class of approximately 300 men.

The Army Air Corps planned to make me an instructor of mechanics. We were to work on Curtiss P-40 Warhawks, Republic P-43 Lancers, and P-47 Thunderbolts, and my favorite: the Lockheed P-38 Lightning.

Once, during a preflight inspection of a P-38, I was teaching kids how to start an engine. I had my third student of the day in the cockpit while I stood on the wing leaning in to supervise. There was a civilian employee from Lockheed on the ground nearby with a large fire extinguisher. I had stressed over and over again to my students how they were never to prime a hot engine. Well, as one might expect, this student primed the engine and instantly set it on fire.

The civilian employee immediately panicked and fled, yelling, "Run! It's gonna blow!" Everyone scattered, but I wasn't going to leave this kid trapped in the cockpit or abandon my plane. I removed the inspection plate and stuck the hose of the small extinguisher I had into the hole and released the chemical. Thank God it put out the fire, but the engine was badly damaged. The Army rule was that if you broke it, you paid for it, so, as instructor of this class, I was the man responsible for the equipment. I thought I'd spend the rest of my life in the Army paying for this engine. Instead, I was promoted to Technician 3rd Grade (corporal) and put in charge of five mechanics. Many of these men were self-taught and knew a great deal.

National Archives



At what is today Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, gunners train on the backs of trucks to simulate movement during flight.

A master sergeant recommended that 14 of us be sent to the Lockheed facility in California to conduct 100-hour inspections on P-38s. It was customary during these inspections for the punch (fix) list to be compiled and then return the planes to the factory for repair. These repairs were usually minor, so we began simply making them ourselves so that the planes could be put immediately into service.

Since we weren't near a military facility, the Army gave us coupons for meals, and the local diners and restaurants gouged us. They simply took the coupon for the meal even though the coupon was worth more than what we ordered. The Lockheed people told us to eat in their cafeteria where the prices were cheaper and they actually gave us change, in coin and currency, for the difference.

California was always fearful of an attack by the Japanese, and the factory where we worked was camouflaged, with antiaircraft guns on the corners. In fact, the Douglas Aircraft plant was camouflaged to look like a farm from the air!

By this time, I had given up on ever becoming a paratrooper, but the idea of flying intrigued me. So, I applied for the aviation cadets. My instructor took me up and noticed my gloves became wet from perspiration. His opinion was that I was too nervous to fly. My opinion was that I was simply anxious. His evaluation prevailed, and I was dropped from the program.

I was then sent to an area north of Las Vegas, Nevada, for seven weeks to attend Air Corps Gunnery School for Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers. Today, this area is Nellis Air Force Base. We started out with BB guns, then we moved up to .22s, and then shotguns. You had to hit 25 out of 26 skeet targets before qualifying; I did it the first time. They put us in the back of a truck that was supposedly going 30 mph, but it felt more like 20 mph. We were moving on the ground, and so were the targets we shot at. We had to hit 18 out of 36 targets, and we all qualified.

We continued to advance to higher caliber weapons. We fired .30-caliber machine guns, then Thompsons, and finally .50-caliber machine guns. We had to strip and reassemble a .50-caliber machine gun while blindfolded and wearing gloves. We tried to keep the parts in some form of order, but the sergeants would come and mix them up on us. This was to simulate combat conditions on a plane but, believe me, there was no one alive who could perform this function on a plane in combat.

Then they took us into a room that had a 360-degree view to conduct operations sim-

ulating action in the ball and top turrets of a bomber. The .50-caliber machine guns fired red flashes of light at simulated enemy planes, and every person had to take turns in both the simulated ball and top turrets.

The Air Corps also had jeeps at 500- and 1,000-yard distances pulling red sheets. We fired .50-caliber machine guns that were mounted on a pedestal. The bullets had paint on them that clarified the holes we put into those red targets.

In actual air practice, we flew in Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses and fired at targets towed 100 yards behind North American B-25 Mitchell bombers. We also had simulated attacks where we flew in formation and our cadet crews were attacked by cadet fighter pilots. One overzealous pilot flew right in between our formation, which was both dangerous and reckless. Our guns had nothing more than cameras on them, and I was called out more than once for continuing to fire on my target long after I had successfully destroyed it. I flew on training missions manning the top turret and the waist gun of a B-17. I was promoted to tech sergeant and told that I would be assigned as the flight engineer of whatever crew I ended up with.

At the base, I was the barracks chief. In my barracks there was a guy named Saxby, who was quite a character. In civilian life he had been a card dealer in a syndicate gambling joint in Detroit, and then a staff sergeant and cook in the Air Corps. He was made a mess chief but got caught bootlegging and drew a seven-year sentence in the prison at Fort Leavenworth. The Army told him that they would clear his record if he went to gunnery school, so he accepted.

In the morning, Saxby wanted to sleep in, so I would cover for him at morning roll call and announce, "All present and accounted for." He even missed breakfast most mornings. Someone arrived late one morning to PT and the sergeant announced he was going to deny everyone's weekend pass as a result. Saxby was small but had used his time in prison to really build himself up. He challenged the sergeant, saying that the passes should only be denied if the sergeant could outdo him in chin-ups. The sergeant accepted, thinking he would easily best Saxby.

Saxby did them overhand rather than underhand and quickly outdistanced the sergeant, who was now obligated to issue everyone their weekend passes. Six of us went into Las Vegas to El Rancho Vegas, which was the city's best nightclub at the time.

We were watching a blackjack game when Saxby informed us it was crooked. "They're using diamondback readers," he told us. "I can read those cards better than they can," he said. We established a set of signals and sat down at the table. Saxby sat closest to the dealer so that his hand would be the last one played.

We were betting $5.00 a hand while Saxby bet only 50 cents. He would signal us as to whether or not to take the hit. He would also foul up the dealer by taking a hit even when he didn't need it. The pit boss caught on to us and closed the table. Since we were military personnel, they couldn't give us any trouble. Once outside, we split $300 in winnings between the six of us.

We all assumed we would get furloughs after we finished gunnery school. Instead, the Air Corps sent us to Mountain Home, Idaho. I can only describe it as Tobacco Road with a Coke machine. We spent a month there doing a little more testing, training, and processing. Then they told us we were headed for Gowen Airfield in Boise.

Most of us had had enough, and I went with a friend to see our commanding officer. We politely but firmly informed him that if we didn't get furloughs, the entire outfit would go AWOL. It was a bluff; the other guys in the outfit had chickened out, but we got the CO's attention. When we lined up to get our pay; there were MPs and buses with their motors running, waiting for us. When we arrived at Gowen, there were MPs waiting for us there, too. We were brought into a large hall where the CO apologized for not being able to issue us furloughs, but he promised after we completed our classes that we would get leave.

"To show I trust you," he said, "you're all going to get Class A passes." There was good food in the mess hall and a dance band playing, but no women present.

I had to learn everything about B-24s. Since I would be there for roughly three months, I had my wife and two daughters come out and stay in Boise for almost 10 weeks.

ABOVE: Crew members grab refreshments at "Joe's Red Top Drive-In" between 767th Headquarters and the flight line at Torretta Field Air Base at Cerignola, Italy. Rowe (fourth from right) said, "'Joe' was a young Red Cross lady who always had fresh coffee and doughnuts any time we came by. I don't know when she slept." BELOW: A shot of some members of the B-24 crew at their base in Cerignola, shortly before the plane was shot down. Thomas Rowe is at far right.

Both: Author's Collection

Our crew formed up. Our pilot was 2nd Lt. Robert Crinkley, 2nd Lt. James Owens was co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Francis Deans was bombardier, Rufus Breland was the nose gunner, and Walter "Shorty" Wright was the ball-turret gunner. He had been in Clark Gable's gunnery class. Edwin Hand was the top turret gunner, James Shipman

the tail gunner, Wilbur Penno the radio operator and right waist gunner, and I was the flight engineer and left waist gunner. We did not yet have a navigator. Every day, we flew four hours and had four hours of classroom instruction. It was grueling, but we were all up to it.

After about two weeks, a second lieutenant named Nate Berliner joined our crew as navigator. Deans, our bombardier, had been doing the job for us until this time, but Berliner soon proved his worth. We got lost one night over Cheyenne, Wyoming, due to heavy clouds; Berliner did an outstanding job of getting us back quickly on the proper heading. After that, there was never any doubt in our group about his ability to navigate.

Berliner was an especially interesting individual. Before the war, he studied to be a brewmaster in both France and Germany. He was working for a brewery making an incredible $25,000 a year when he got drafted.

Even training stateside had its share of risk. During one training mission, we had engine trouble and had to land in Clovis, New Mexico, where we spent the night while an engine was replaced. Back then people still rode horses, and Indians slept outside wrapped in blankets. I felt like I was visiting the Wild West of yesteryear.

Another time we were making our approach to land. As the flight engineer, I stood between the pilot and co-pilot calling out air speeds. The regulation landing speed was 127 mph. All of a sudden the left wing tipped and the pilot called out, "Hard right rudder!" We started to stall, and I found out later that the instructor pilot in the plane behind us told his students, "They're going to crash, they're caught in prop wash." But our pilot regained control and brought the plane around for another approach. "I knew we'd be OK," I said after we landed.

Our training now completed, it was time for Marion and the kids to return home. It was all right because we all got 10-day passes so we could go home before reporting to Topeka Army Airfield.

On our scheduled arrival day in Topeka, everyone had to report by noon. I was early and met our radio operator. We decided to visit a nearby bar before reporting. Almost immediately after our arrival, a fight broke out. Someone threw a full beer bottle and hit the poor girl sitting next to me right in the forehead. She was knocked out cold, and we dragged her out the back door. Army MPs were right outside the door and ready to go in just as we were coming out. They were about to arrest us when a friend of the girl we were helping explained what had happened.

B-24s of the Fifteenth Air Force on a bombing mission over Italy, June 1944. More than 18,000 B-24s were produced during the war.

National Archives

At Topeka, we were told that in three days we would be leaving for Italy. Half the crews would fly over, and half would go by ship. The pilots drew lots, and our pilot got us stuck on a boat. We took a train to Norfolk and waited two days for our boat. Our transportation overseas was via a Liberty ship, the SS *Joseph Gale*. We traveled in a convoy, and the journey took 23 days; there were 350 men living in our cargo hold. We got one shower a week with salt water, which didn't fully rinse the soap off and it dried like glue in our hair. We shaved our heads.

We arrived at the port of Naples in August 1944. Our Liberty ship's personnel claimed that the debris we saw floating in the harbor was from a recently sunk enemy sub. We never did find out whether it was true, but it impressed upon us that this was real war and we were now where the action was. Everybody grabbed two duffle bags at random as we left the ship. I had the misfortune to grab a bag that belonged to a guy who lifted weights.

At the railroad station we saw rails all coiled up, bombed-out buildings, and a lot of other war damage. The civilians were in lines waiting for soup and bread. Our train took us across Italy to our new home—Torretta Field at Cerignola. On October 17 we were designated Crew #6233 and assigned to the 767th Squadron of the 461st Bombardment Group, Fifteenth Air Force. We would be flying B-24 Liberators on missions over southern and central Europe—mostly Germany.

The first thing we were told upon arrival was that we could expect tough going and that all of us should consider ourselves dead already. They separated the officers from the enlisted men, and we were told to put up our tent, which would be shared by six enlisted men. None of us had been trained how to put up such a tent and, during a rain

storm that night, all the tents collapsed. We were able to get plywood and used the tents as roofs. We also dug slit trenches outside our canvas abodes for shelter during air raids.

We had an instructor pilot who flew in 2nd Lt. James Owens's co-pilot position during our first combat mission. There were problems with our number one engine and the supercharger wouldn't work. We were falling back and the instructor said it was the flight engineer's job to fix the problem. I pulled out the amplifier and put in a spare fuse, but that blew too. So did all the other fuses I put in. Finally, I used the foil paper from a pack of cigarettes to run a bypass. But by then we had fallen too far back and were ordered to abort the mission.

We had our own crew for our second mission. There were no enemy fighters, and the antiaircraft fire was inaccurate. I remember thinking, "This ain't so bad." My thinking was reinforced after our third mission, which was a real "milk run."

It was our fourth mission that turned out to be the thing of which nightmares are made. On November 20, 1944, our mission was to bomb the south plant of the synthetic oil refinery in Blechhammer, Germany. This was the fifth time that this target was to be hit by our group, and during the pre-mission briefing you could hear guys groaning when they heard what the target was.

This time the mission was highly successful, as it was the first time that winds had prevented the Germans from obscuring our targets with smoke. Twenty-three of the 26 planes in our group took flak hits—and we were one of them. We got hit during the bomb run and the bomb bay doors wouldn't close. Then Deans, our bombardier, yelled, "I've been hit."

I was ordered to go down and close the bomb bay doors manually, using a crank. On my way down, I looked into the nose of the plane and saw the entire floor covered in red. All I could think was, "Oh, geez, poor Deans." The smell of cordite (smokeless powder) from the German AA rounds permeated everything.

I wore no parachute as I stood in the bomb bay area cranking those doors shut. I could see the ground far below and was thinking that I was going to be nothing more than a grease spot and my family would never know what had become of me.

Author's Collection

The crew of Rowe's B-24 (back row, left to right): Francis Deans, bombardier; Robert Crinkley, pilot; James Owens, co-pilot; Nathan Berliner, navigator. (Front row, kneeling): Rufus Breland, nose gunner; Wilbur Penno, radio operator; James Shipman, tail gunner; Walter Wright, belly-turret gunner; Thomas Rowe, flight engineer; Edwin Hand, top-turret gunner.

I let Lieutenant Crinkley know that I had closed the doors, and he told me to go and help Deans. I went into the nose and saw that Breland, our nose gunner, was hit as well. "Take care of Deans," he said. "He's hit worse." Breland was wrong but didn't know it yet. He had been hit by something between his eyes that had exited through his mouth. I told Deans that he would have to help, so he used his feet to push himself as I pulled him under his arms.

I got Deans out of the nose, and we cut his pants open to see the wound. He had been grazed in the hip, and it was nothing more than a deep scratch. The red liquid all over the floor of the plane's nose was hydraulic fluid!

I went back for Breland, and he said to me, "You've been hit; there's blood on your shoe." I cut my pants leg open, and there was a jagged piece of shrapnel sticking out of my right shin. The blood made it too slippery to pull out with my hand, so I took out a pair of pliers from my pocket and used that.

In all the confusion over the target, the squadron leader made a wrong turn after our bomb run. We were soon separated from our group and lost in the clouds. There was no visibility, and Crinkley asked us if we wanted to fly blind to the south or southeast or drop down and get a fix on our position and risk being seen by the enemy. We opted to drop down. Within five minutes, Berliner knew where we were.

We stayed low, and 20 minutes later we heard a big bang as the Germans opened up on us again. A round had gone through the bomb bay and hit the wing; then Shipman reported that our tail was busted up. Our plane was low on fuel and full of holes. We were now over Yugoslavia, and Crinkley told everyone to get their chutes on; he would hold the plane steady while everyone bailed out.

One by one everyone jumped. Shorty waved to me before he bailed out, and soon it was just the pilot and me. I tried to jump out but couldn't; I ended up falling out and was turning summersaults in midair. I was thrilled to be out and didn't hesitate to pull the ripcord. I held onto that

ring tightly and didn't let go, even after the chute had opened.

We had British parachutes, which were better than our American ones. I saw the slits in the panels (there to help with navigation) and mistakenly thought I had a defective chute. I was also coming down backwards. I saw a lake and sure as hell didn't want to land in that, so I pulled the shroud lines (thank God for those slits) and managed to steer clear of the water. I could see a stone fence coming up under my feet and was happy when I thought I cleared it, but it angled around and I cracked my tailbone when I slammed into another section of it.

From the air I had estimated the wall's height at around eight feet, but in reality it was only two. Still, that was tall enough to give me one hell of a jolt. Sore, I got up and situated myself. Standard operating procedure was to bury our chutes, but all I had was a trench knife, and I couldn't dig with that. So, I threw my stuff into some foliage. I walked on and came across Deans hanging in a tree. I told him to get down right away. "No," he said, "I'll fall." I looked at him and said, "You're only a foot off the ground!"

National Archives

A B-24 (with another flying below) shown on a mission to Linz, Austria, July 25, 1944. Although harder to fly, and not as sleek as the B-17, the B-24 was considered a more rugged aircraft by many of its pilots and crew members.

We knew the Germans would be looking for us, and we heard movement. We moved south by southeast and eventually met up with Penno and Shorty. The procedure was to travel in pairs, so the four of us would have to split up. Penno could speak German, so I wanted to go with him. Besides, neither Shorty nor Deans drank, so I figured they would make a good pair.

The escape kits we carried were supposed to have food for several days, but, even eating very sparingly, they only lasted for a day. We had canteens but no water, so we used snow.

On the third day, we went up a plateau that had bushes on each side. It seemed safe enough. We soon saw a guy in uniform come running at us with a rifle and bayonet. We first thought he was a German, but as he got closer we saw that his uniform looked more like something from a military school as opposed to that of an infantryman. Also, he had a red star on his cap. "Amer-ican-sky! Amer-ican-sky!" we yelled, as we pointed to the flags on our shoulders. Our captor was a 17-year-old Yugoslav partisan who immediately began to smile and wave his arms. About 25 other men then burst from the brush and promptly began to hug us and kiss our cheeks.

This partisan group was led by a little red-haired guy who spoke English with an American accent; he told me that he was from Brooklyn. He had been visiting his grandparents when Yugoslavia was invaded, and the Germans wouldn't let him leave. He led this group with such professionalism and skill that I have always suspected he was really an OSS agent.

We were taken to a farmhouse, and there were Deans and Shorty; the partisans had already picked them up. Berliner showed up next; his chute had not fully opened, and he was busted up rather badly. One by one, nearly our entire crew was reunited.

Deans and Shorty had been drinking what I thought was water. I was partially dehydrated and when they handed me a glass I took four big gulps before I realized it was vodka! We were famished and they gave us the only things they had available: anchovies with black bread and butter. Shorty couldn't get the butter off the roof of his mouth and he threw up.

They kept us in the farmhouse until dark, when a truck showed up. They told us that they were going to take us down to Zara (Zadar) on the Adriatic Coast in Croatia; it was currently occupied by British commandos. We were concerned about German patrols, but the partisans assured us that the Germans never came out after dark; at night the countryside belonged to the partisans. The truck kept its lights off as it drove over dangerous mountain roads. We were concerned, but again the partisans reassured us as they explained that they knew every inch of the territory we were traveling over.

We passed Zagreb, the country's second-largest city, and everything was going well. Then we saw a lantern light in the middle of the road being waved from side to side. The truck stopped abruptly, and we all held our breath. A bayonet on the end of a rifle came between the curtains on the back of the truck and pushed a curtain to one side. We breathed a sigh of relief when we saw it was a partisan.

In Zara, we saw land mines stacked up along the roadside. We were then taken into

National Archives

Crewmen from a downed aircraft of the Fifteenth Air Force escaped capture with the help of Yugoslav partisans. Here they arrive in Italy wearing Yugoslav blankets.

a church and brought to a British colonel who said, "We'll get you Yanks back to your unit. While you're here, do you want to meet Tito?" Josip Broz, better known as the communist Yugoslav guerrilla leader Marshal Tito, was famous even then, so we were excited at the chance to meet a celebrity.

Tito was wearing a black suit with a white shirt and tie and had four aides with him. He asked, "Did you bomb Berlin?" We were explaining our actual target when the colonel told us that was all the English Tito spoke.

The British later told us they had a gunboat that would take us back to Italy, but it looked like nothing more than an undersized yacht. Its challenge gun was very small, and its other guns were only .30-caliber machine guns. We were at the dock when the British crew was told to be careful of an Italian cruiser, now in German hands, that was sinking Allied boats in these waters. We boarded and hoped for the best.

In the middle of the night, alarms and sirens started to go off, and the British went to battle stations. In the distance we could see a light atop a larger ship that shined down directly on our little craft, and I thought, "Oh no, we made it through all this and now these damn fool Brits are going to fight it out with a cruiser and get us all killed." But signal lights started sending messages back and forth between the two ships, and it turned out that this particular ship was a British cruiser searching for the enemy cruiser.

The next morning the British gave us a breakfast of stewed tomatoes and bread. They offered what I thought was tea and, since I didn't like tea, I declined. My comrades asked me why I refused a drink and, after they informed me that it wasn't tea but rum, I ran after that Brit to get my share.

In Italy, we arrived at the port city of Ancona. The British flew Vickers Wellington bombers out of there, and we were surprised to see that their runways were not paved. Inside their quarters, they had a bar and sofas—even a waiter!

I asked one member of a British aircrew how many missions he had flown on. He said, "Yank, we don't go by missions. We're here for the duration." I found out later that this was untrue. I also learned that the British had sergeants in charge of planes, which surprised us since in the American Air Corps only officers could fly.

An American Douglas C-47 transport plane picked us up and flew us to Bari, the headquarters of the Fifteenth Air Force. The shrapnel wound in my right shin had become infected, and it was worrying me a little but the doctors treated it successfully and I was sent back to duty.

Now back in Italy, we were reunited with Sergeant Breland, the wounded nose-gunner, and Lieutenant Crinkley. Crinkley had been badly injured in the jump and would require a lot of recovery time, so our crew would need a new pilot. Penno and I went to see our commanding officer, Major Frank Poole, to recommend Crinkley for the Distinguished Flying Cross. The major told us, "An enlisted man can't recommend an officer for a decoration but go ahead—what's your story?" We told him how Lieutenant Crinkley had kept the plane steady as every one of us bailed out. "He did his job," Poole answered. "So did you." That was that.

A few days later, Major Poole said that he had a potential replacement in a newly arrived pilot. The major said he would fly along as co-pilot on a practice flight. The flight went along all right, but we bounced on our landing. The major had given me veto power over this choice, and I exercised it. Our crew was then broken up.

Those flying on missions had to be awakened at 4:30 AM for preflight briefing. Men assigned a mission put a towel on the end of their bed so people knew who to awaken. We also had to be clean shaven so that our oxygen masks fit properly. This day, December 19, 1944, I saw that Shorty's hands were shaking. He looked at me and I asked, "Do you want me to fly for you?" He nodded.

The pilot for that mission was Lieutenant Robert Roemer. I think we were to bomb yet again the south oil refinery in Blechhammer. After we took off, I climbed into the ball turret in Shorty's place and saw fuel coming from our wing. I called the pilot and reported, "We've got a gas leak." The flight engineer looked out and said, "No, we're siphoning," then told the pilot I was "just

nervous 'cause he got shot down."

But aviation fuel had a blue dye in it to make it visible, and I knew what I was seeing. "I may be nervous," I replied, "but that's still a fuel leak." The captain sided with his flight engineer, so I told him again, but this time on the interphone so the entire crew could hear. Then I used the interphone to tell the guys in the waist to put on their chutes. Lieutenant Roemer came back to have a look and told the captain to abort the mission.

When he got back to base, the colonel in the control tower came out with Major Poole. They were mad as hell, and our flight engineer was quick to point out to them that this was my call, implying he didn't agree with it. The officers made it clear that I had better be right about this. They asked me why I was so certain that there was a fuel leak. I explained that siphoning runoff comes from the fuel tanks, not the edge of the wing.

We all waited while an air inspector came out and examined the wing. Sure enough, a clamp had come loose from a hose on a fuel cell; we had indeed been leaking fuel. The colonel and major simply walked away satisfied with my work. Lieutenant Roemer asked me to fly with him on a regular basis, and I agreed.

We were sent up the next day to bomb the synthetic oil refinery at Brux, Czechoslovakia. The weather was so bad over Yugoslavia that we got orders to hit a secondary target at Linz, Austria, along with the 484th Bomb Group.

I wanted to see the target as it was bombed and had my face pressed against the Plexiglas window. Suddenly, an antiaircraft shell went off and shattered the window. I had shrapnel wounds in my leg, arm, and head. The wounds to my head and arm were relatively minor, but I reached down and felt a hole in my leg.

Our waist gunner had been the head of a garment workers' union back home and could have been an officer. He refused to become an officer so that he could work on an even level with his fellow proletariats. He was also Jewish and wanted to do something that allowed for more direct conflict (like firing a machine gun) against the enemy.

He stood there in shock just looking at me while I lay on the floor yelling for him to get me the first aid kit. I pulled the small piece of shrapnel from the side of my head with my bare hands. I was still without the first aid kit when the pilot announced that we were going to go around again to line up for another bomb run against our target. We hit the target without further incident, and someone got me the first aid kit.

A large cloud of dark smoke in the distance indicates that the Fifteenth Air Force's attack on the German-controlled oil-production facilities at Ploesti, Romania, May 1944, is successful. Ploesti was bombed 22 times by the Fifteenth Air Force.

National Archives

As we approached our base, I saw the red flares going off, signaling that there were wounded [me] aboard our plane. I had seen wounded airmen being carried on litters out through the windows of a plane, and now it was my turn. They set me down outside the plane under its wing. A doctor gave me a shot of whiskey, but I was disappointed that I didn't get the traditional doughnut and coffee.

I was taken to the dispensary where the doctor picked up a long steel probe and said, "Now this is gonna hurt." He inserted it into the wound in my leg to see if there was anything else in there. It didn't hurt as much as I thought it would. The doctor removed the couple of small pieces I had in my right arm, and I was then sent to the 26th Field Hospital in Bari.

I was ambulatory a day or two later, and the doctor took me to the NCO club. We had cherry brandy with grapefruit juice and Spam sandwiches. This was my second hospitalization for a wound, but I was still denied any opportunity of going home. I used my artistic skills to draw pictures for the nurses, and they doctored my chart to say that I had a fever and could not be discharged. The head nurse caught on and sent me back to my unit.

I had only completed six missions and had been wounded twice. The night before my next mission, I was plagued by nightmares, but the mission went off OK. I could feel a bad case of nerves coming on and went to see a doctor about getting myself grounded. He told me to "go over to the chaplain and get your TS card punched."

The chaplain took me over to see the major and the flight surgeon. They knew I had trouble sleeping and asked me about it. The major told me that he would know that I was not sane if I wasn't afraid—like something out of *Catch-22*. "We're all afraid," he said. Then Lieutenant Roemer made me an offer I couldn't refuse—to fly with him and the major on their next mission.

On that mission, we were approaching our target on the bomb run and the major, who usually chose to forego wearing a helmet and flak jacket, decided to put them on this time. The flak was very heavy, and there was a minor fire in the bomb bay. This in and of itself wouldn't have been too bad, but there was also a fuel leak. I was ready to jump without orders and leave them if necessary, but I scrambled and used the spent shell casings from two .50-caliber rounds on the floor to plug the leaks.

I had fuel on my flight suit, and the major told me to go and lie down on the floor. He told me not to use my earphones, lest a spark ignite me. He brought the plane down low, and I was able to take off my suit and throw it into a flight bag. I sat down and pouted.

The flight engineer is supposed to be the last person off the plane, but as soon as we landed, I was the first person off and the first to get on the truck. "That's it!" I thought to myself. "They can court-martial me. I'm not going back up again."

The major knew I was upset. He said to me, "Kid, I can't ground you. You did your job. How would you like to be my engineer?" The major exuded confidence, and I just knew he was going to come through this war all right. I accepted, and he was right. The remaining missions were without serious incident, and I reached a total of 25 completed missions. Our activities ended a month before V-E Day.

We were playing cards and had open liquor in our quarters. The major came in and saw this. For a moment, we thought there was going to be big trouble. Then he asked what the stakes were. "Dollar ante, half-the-pot limit," we told him. "I'm going back to my tent and get my money—and a bottle," he said.

With no missions being flown, the Army had to keep us busy, and the major had come to see me about taking a new detail. There was no way I would ever turn down a request from this man. The colonel had sent the major to ask me about running our stockade for American military prisoners. "Sir," I said, "we don't have a stockade." However, I was told that I would soon have about 125 prisoners and that they would build it. I was honest with the prisoners and told them that I had never even seen a stockade. The prisoners went ahead and designed it and then built it.

When V-E Day arrived, I overheard the lieutenant who was the officer of the guards say that he was sorry to see the war end, as the war was responsible for the most money he had ever made. He had previously been in the coastal artillery but relished overseeing the stockade for its black market operations.

On rations day, we got three bottles of beer, Coca Cola, soap, candy, and the like, but the prisoners got nothing. I went to the colonel to ask about them. He thought I was goofy at first, but he acquiesced and said they could have rations, "but no beer!" The prisoners were allowed to write one postcard a week and one letter a month. They were also allowed reading material.

I went to the colonel to ask if my prisoners could go to the USO show, and he said to me, "What are you running? A country club?" He relented and told me I could take the men but, if even one got out, I would have to finish his sentence. "How do you like that?" he asked. "Sir," I answered, "I'll take my prisoners."

The show was standard USO stuff until the end, when the entertainment officer had arranged for an Italian girl to perform a striptease. Men went wild, but my prisoners stayed in order and conducted themselves as gentlemen; they were the only men there who behaved themselves. Afterward, the colonel said to me, "I wish my officers behaved that well."

The prisoners were allowed one shower a week. I got the colonel first to approve showers every three days and then on a daily basis. He even approved my request to let them have their ration of beer. I never had a single prisoner give me a problem. When we got orders to go home, I asked about the prisoners but that, I was told, was left to our commanding general to decide.

I was going to fly home with the major, but he busted his leg sliding into second base in a softball game. Instead, I flew home with a lieutenant. When I arrived in the United States, I was surprised to learn that I was classified as a POW for having been shot down behind enemy lines. I had 81 days of furlough coming, and I was anxious to get discharged. Instead, I had to report to Miami Beach to be a part of Project R. This was an FBI project to discover and report war crimes against POWs. I tried to explain that I had never been in enemy captivity, but that got me nowhere.

I was sent to the Air Corps Personnel Displacement Center in San Antonio, Texas. Even though the Army provided housing, I couldn't bring my wife and daughters down since the girls were in school. I had to wait seven weeks before I finally got a five-minute interview with an FBI agent. As soon as I told him what had happened, he said that I should never had been there in the first place and that I could leave. Go figure! I was discharged two days later. It was in November 1945. □

PART 1

PARATROOPS VS. PARATROOPS IN NORMANDY

A tough German parachute regiment was tasked with halting the Allied invasion of Normandy.

BY VOLKER GREISSER

BACKGROUND: *Fallschirmjäger Regiment 6 was organized in February 1943, under the command of Major Egon Liebach. It was part of the 2nd Fallschirmjäger Division and was stationed in France, where it trained in parachute and glider operations. It saw action in Italy and participated in the capture of Rome when Italy capitulated and where it battled against Italian troops and partisans.*

In November 1943, 2 FJD and FJR 6 were redeployed to the Russian Front, where they fought courageously throughout the brutal winter and into the spring of 1944. After suffering heavy losses, FJR 6 returned to Germany for refitting and eventual deployment to the Normandy region of France.

During this period, Major Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte, who had commanded the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Fallschirmjäger Regiment during the Battle of Crete in May 1941 (and for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross), became commander of FJR 6. Most recently he had been the operations officer of the 2nd Fallschirmjäger Division.

In order to strengthen the defence against the anticipated Allied invasion of Northwest Europe, Major Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte's Fallschirmjäger Regiment 6 was relocated in mid-May 1944 from Elsenborn, Belgium, via Maubeuge, Amiens, Rouen, and Caen to the narrows of the French Cotentin peninsula.

Tactically, FJR 6 was the assigned reserve unit for the LXXIV Corps, and the regiment adopted a switch position between Mont Castre and Carentan. The regimental staff was in Gonfreville, north of Périers, the 1st Battalion under the command of now-Hauptmann (Captain) Emil Preikschat in the area from St. Jores and Monte Castre, the 2nd Battalion under Hauptmann Rolf Mager near Lessay, and the 3rd Battalion under Hauptmann Trebes between Carentan and Périers.

In their planning, the corps assumed that the Fallschirmjäger were the best candidates for anticipating the modus operandi of the Allied air-landing operations, and therefore the best able to go up against them. The regiment was assigned to the 91st Airborne Division, under II Fallschirm Corps.

In expectation of the enemy attack, Major von der Heydte kept the Fallschirmjäger busy. In addition to the usual patrols and night-time aircraft scouting assignments, he ordered smaller exercises. According to General Eugen Meindl's battle instructions from May 11, 1944, a third of the troops always had to be in position day and night in the possible landing zones.

Amongst other things, the goal was for the Fallschir-

The distinctive helmet and camouflage jump smocks of the German Fallschirmjäger (parachutists) are captured in detail in this painting by James Dietz. The soldier at right is holding a 7.92mm G43 semi-automatic rifle.

Author's Collection

A few members of FJR 6 pose for the cameraman. Note the splinter-camouflage jump smocks, leather cartridge pouches, "stacked" 98K rifles, and gas-mask bags on their chests. One man in the center is wearing the traditional Stahlhelm and not the Fallschirmjäger helmet.

mjäger to become accustomed to the terrain of Normandy, and to improve how they used natural and man-made positions. Von der Heydte put in place effective defensive arrangements; aircraft observation posts were created, with anti-aircraft guns arranged in a 360-degree pattern covering every attack altitude. Furthermore, whole fields were planted with "Rommel's asparagus"—long wooden poles designed as air-landing obstacles in order to prevent military gliders from landing.

Under the command of Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel, who pushed the building of coastal fortifications with great urgency, whole stretches of land were flooded, turning into death traps for parachutists. On the coast, the rule of thumb was to allot one division for every 10 kilometers of defensive line.

FJR 6, however, was assigned an area 20 kilometers wide and 15 kilometers deep, and therefore had no systematically arranged bunker positions. Once more, this shows the army leadership's almost limitless trust in the combat power of the Fallschirmjäger, because this key position secured the overland entrance to Cherbourg. An Allied landing on the Cotentin peninsula could build into a wave might roll into the heart of France.

What concerned von der Heydte even more was the uneven tactical perspective held by diverse commanders. Rommel, who visited the regiment in its positions shortly after his arrival, proposed that the invasion be defeated directly on the coast, practically at the water's edge, while Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt wanted to let the enemy set foot on the coast, in order to close in on him with armored counterattacks and drive him back to the ocean.

The regiment's neighboring units were as diverse as the tactical opinions about how to handle the invasion. Battle-tested troops with experience on the Eastern Front were located next to reserve units with outdated material and captured weapons, and eastern battalions consisting of volunteers and former Russian prisoners of war. The Fallschirmjäger realized that they had only themselves to rely upon in the upcoming battles.

The higher powers of the army recognized the heterogeneous nature of the defensive forces in Normandy, and demanded that every base commander give his written word of honor that no matter how desperate things became, he would hold his position and not desert it. Without suffering any consequences, Major von der Heydte, however, refused to sign this on the grounds that it was dishonorable.

At this time, the regiment had access to 70 motor vehicles. This fleet consisted of around 50 different brands and makes, so repairs and parts replacement became a logistical nightmare. In a brief period of time, many of the vehicles failed and had to be retired because of mechanical problems and damage. Even though the regiment was

well equipped for infantry deployment, they were seriously hindered by the lack of motorized mobility.

The promised antitank guns also never materialized; at the beginning of June, von der Heydte wrote to General Kurt Student [head of German airborne forces] saying that they were "completely prepared for any air-landing invasions, but only partially prepared for ground combat because of insufficient anti-tank weapons and a lack of vehicle equipment."

In the first days of June, indications of an enemy invasion spread. Encoded radio transmissions from the French Resistance were intercepted, and Luftwaffe reconnaissance did not miss the increase in enemy air transport formations in southern England. Telephone connections were regularly cut, and often the German units' communications with one another depended on the activities of the resistance and the ability of signalers to repair the wires. It could only be days before the invasion happened; the enemy waited only on the weather and the tide.

Eugen Griesser [the author's grandfather] remembers this time well: "In the days before the invasion a tense mood reigned. Everyone knew that the invasion had to come;

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we just did not know when and where exactly. The resistance continued to make trouble, cutting electrical wires, shooting up individual vehicles, and so on. On June 2 or 3, a farmer who was friendly to the Germans gave us two rabbits that he had slaughtered. The day after, we went to pay him a visit and offer our collective tobacco rations in thanks. We found him lying in his clean living room with a crushed-in skull; his wife and children had disappeared. Someone, probably his murderers, had drawn the sign for the resistance in coal on the wall."

Given such events, the Fallschirmjäger were especially vigilant.

When the Alsatian drivers of the regimental supply train all deserted, one thing became clear: soon it would start! On June 5, Allied bombers attacked tactically important points such as bridges, roads and railway stations. The 3rd Battalion carried out a map exercise for its officers and platoon leaders; they focused on the destruction of an enemy airborne operation in the battalion's staging area.

The highest powers of the army planned a war game/map exercise in Rennes for the morning of June 6, 1944; it would be led by the Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht, General Walter Warlimont. All division commanders with their staffs were required to participate, along with the commanders of units of troops that were subordinate to the army and the respective corps.

National Archives

ABOVE: Major Baron Friedrich August von der Heydte, commander of Fallschirmjäger Regiment 6. LEFT: A Fallschirmjäger looks skyward for any signs of the Allied invasion. Note the drum magazine on the MG 42 and the sturdy poles (Rommelspargel or "Rommel's Asparagus") planted in the open field to discourage enemy glider and parachute landings.

This order also affected Major von der Heydte. Because he planned to drive to Rennes with General Erich Marcks, the commander of the LXXIV Corps, he decided not to depart on the evening of June 6, in order to use the protection of the dark to make it to Rennes, but instead to spend the night with his regiment because of the critical overall situation. During the daytime the Allied planes dark-

ened the skies; therefore the departure with General Marcks was planned for 5:00 AM on June 6.

During the night of June 5/6, the communications officer of FJR 6, Oberleutnant Dietrich, received word from Luftwaffe command that the Allied air transport units stationed in England were showing signs of heavy activity. Dietrich reported to Major von der Heydte. Contrary to the relaxed approach of his superiors, von der Heydte ordered his regiment to prepare to march and for battle. Ground observers had already been assigned to track the Allies' movements in the night sky and report anything suspicious.

While the battalions prepared, Oberleutnant Dietrich had the assignment to inform the neighboring army units. The radio connection, however, refused to function; they could not figure out why. Acting more out of desperation than anything else, Dietrich tried to establish a connection via the French public telephone network, and surprisingly it worked. Apparently the resistance had scruples against harming property of the French state.

Major von der Heydte finished a late dinner and shaved, "in order to appear respectable going into a possible battle," he explained later in his memoirs. Shortly after midnight, the first reports from the ground observers arrived: enemy paratroopers were landing between the coast and Carentan.

Shortly thereafter, they received the news from the 3rd Battalion that enemy paratroopers had landed north of Carentan. It turned out that the men of FJR 6 were the first to identify enemy soldiers having landed in Normandy; in this case, it was the pathfinders of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division, who had landed between St.-Côme-du-Mont, Baupte, and Carentan, in order to direct with light signals the paratroopers who followed. Exactly seven minutes after midnight, a ground observer noticed approaching enemy transport planes and reported them to the regimental command post.

The Allied plan involved the following strategy. In the morning hours of June 6, U.S. and British combat troops—supported by Polish, Canadian, and other Allied contingents—were set to land at five different points on the coast between Quineville and Ouistreham and form bridgeheads. As quickly as possible, they were supposed to expand and consolidate these individual bridgeheads by landing heavy armor.

An airborne attack by British paratroopers on the bridges over the River Orne and the Caen Canal would support the landings by sea, as would an attempt by American paratroopers to take the town of Carentan. In this latter sector, the Allies had divided the beaches into two areas with Carentan as the decisive point between them: the beach northeast of Carentan was called Omaha, while the beach directly north of Carentan was Utah. As long as this town was in German hands, these two sections could not be consolidated, and there was a real danger that German forces could isolate and annihilate the American troops deployed on Utah Beach.

Author's Collection

German troops gather around a captured American jeep and quarter-ton trailer. The Germans often used Allied weapons and vehicles whenever they could find them. Visible in the shadow of a French barn is a Porsche-designed Type 166 Schwimmwagen—the amphibious version of the Kübelwagen.

Author's Collection

With belts of 7.92mm ammunition around their shoulders, this machine-gun team from FJR 6 prepares to head out on patrol with their MG 42, which had an average firing rate of 1,200 to 1,500 rounds per minute and was greatly feared by the Allies.

The leaders of the Allied troops decided that landing soldiers by sea only would be too costly in lives and materials. Yet they believed the German coastal defences to be stronger than they actually were. The powerful Allied paratrooper units and airborne infantry that were deployed behind the backs of the defenders were supposed to pull German forces away from the coast and lock them in the interior, in order to weaken the resistance on the beaches and simplify the landings there.

The western flank of the landing zone became the area of operations of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division and the U.S. 101st Airborne Division, two particularly powerful divisions of paratroopers and airborne infantry. They were assigned to form a bridgehead between St.-Marie-du-Mont and St.-Germain-de-Varreville, west of Picauville at Merderet and northwest of Carentan. They planned to blow up the bridges over the Douve and occupy the causeway over the Merderet, in order to make the advance towards Cherbourg possible. Similarly, the western outlets of the dam near the Utah Beach section had to be taken, so that the advance from the landing zone into the interior could take place without losing any time.

Prior to the invasion, recon aircraft had already supplied the Allied planners with photographs of the area of operations. They had recognized the artificially constructed flooding at the juncture of the Merderet and the Douve, but they had overlooked the swamps to the north, which had been created to defend against airborne operations, and reached to the Carentan-Cherbourg railroad's embankment. This oversight was due to the dense vegetation growth in and around the water west of Ste.-Mère-Église that made, for example, La Fière appear to be fields and pastures. What actually awaited the American paratroopers there was a 600-meter-wide flood.

Rudolf Thiel, an Obergefreiter [private] in the regimental combat platoon, remembers what happened on the night of 5/6 June: "Arthur Völker, my bunker mate, had indigestion. He believed that this always happened to him when something was in the wind. I, too, could not hide my inner unease. After the relative quiet of the past weeks, I was worried about the massive bombings of the interior. Something was coming our way!

"The rations had been miserable again that day: lots of pearl barley and a little fish, a lot of marmalade and a little sausage. We hoped it would stay quiet that night and that there would be no false alarms. Arthur and I were assigned duty on the high lookout post, an airy, windy task. A strong breeze blew in from the sea; now and again the moon shone through the clouds. It was not cold, just nippy; there on the high perch one got really knocked about.

"At 2400 hours I had to relieve Arthur; until then I tried to catch a few winks of sleep. It didn't work, sleep wouldn't come. My unease grew stronger from hour to hour. I tried to read by the light of my Hindenburg light, but I could not concentrate. What the devil was being set in motion out there? The night was so calm, there was no noise of motors. Only the wind blew through the poplars. I had to relieve Arthur soon, and because I couldn't sleep anyway, I decided to relieve him earlier than scheduled.

"I dressed, belted up, checked my submachine gun and magazine, and crawled out of the bunker. The fresh air made me shudder slightly and I listened carefully to the night. It was strange; this much quiet wasn't normal. I had the feeling as if something treacherous was lying in wait for us. I went to the observation perch and called up: 'Arthur, come down. I can't sleep and will relieve you now!'

"Arthur climbed down the ladder and said: 'Shitty wind, the damned cold, nothing particular to report' and disappeared into the darkness. I climbed up to the perch and looked at my watch. Ten minutes to midnight. I hung my field glasses around my neck, loaded and secured my submachine gun, and made myself comfortable. After a few minutes I heard the familiar but distant noise of airplane motors. 'Donnerwetter,' I thought, 'that's not just a few. Hopefully they're not going to unload on us.'

"I looked at my watch again and held

the binoculars up. It was 0007 hours when I looked to the northwest and saw all kinds of red flares and glaring white light signals. That could only mean one thing to any experienced soldier: The enemy is attacking!!!

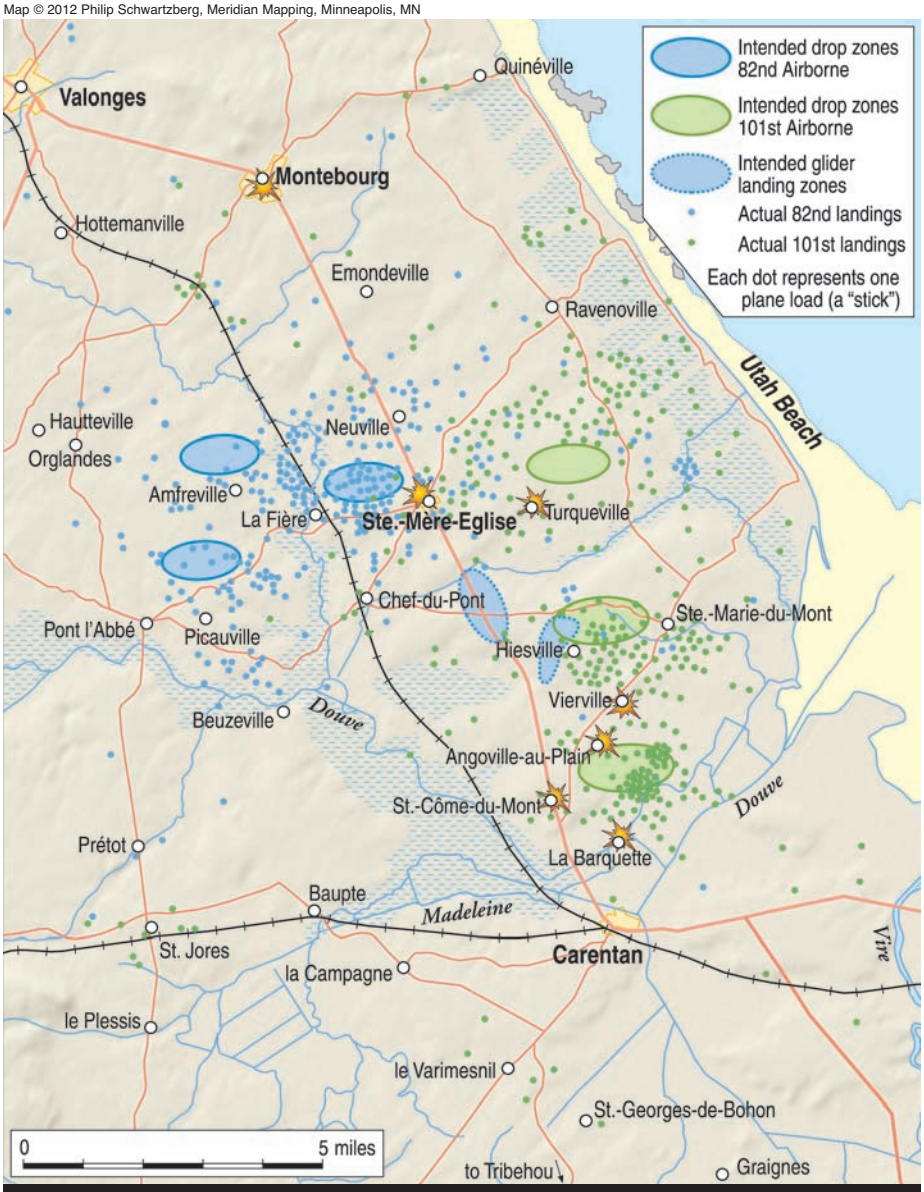
"My mind told me: this is the invasion. After the initial moment of shock, like a crazy man, I turned the crank on the field telephone that connected the observation post with the regimental command post.

"Right away I was connected with the service's clerk who sat next to the telephone. 'Obergefreiter Thiel reporting, combat platoon, red and white light signals sighted direction northwest, loud airplane noise, the enemy is attacking!' The phone at the command post was not hung up right away, so I heard how Oberleutnant [1st Lt.] Peiser gave the clerk the order to get the Major right away.

"Then I heard the quick steps of the Major and fragments of his speech: this afternoon–French–damn it–no alarm. The Major: 'Combat platoon, report!' I said: 'Obergefreiter Thiel reporting, combat platoon. A large amount of light signals in the direction of the coast and Cherbourg. The enemy is attacking. This is the invasion, Herr Major, should I sound the alarm?' I looked at my watch: 0011 hours. The Major: 'Sound the alarm. Send Oberfeldwebel [Platoon Sergeant] Geiss to report to me immediately!' He hung up. I, too, hung up, and yelled as loud as I could: 'Alarm! Alarm!' And again and again: 'Invasion, invasion!'

"While doing so, I shot out two full magazines of submachine-gun ammunition. I climbed down from the perch and Oberfeldwebel Geiss and other comrades were approaching me, looking sleepy and distraught. Everyone thought that it was just an air alarm, because an airplane motor inferno reigned above us. Oberfeldwebel Geiss sprinted to the command post, we took to our positions and our foxholes and waited for the unknown monster: invasion!"

Because of the reports of his ground observers, Major von der Heydte ordered his regiment to march in order to confront



The U.S. parachute drops north and northwest of Carentan were badly scattered, making command and control extremely difficult, but also confusing the enemy as to the size and extent of the aerial invasion.

the enemy. The scattered state of his battalions was not exactly conducive, however, to such a massive relocation.

After midnight the Fallschirmjäger received reports of the first battles against American paratroopers south of Carentan. The 3rd Battalion encountered the enemy first between St.-Georges-de-Bohon and Rougeville, where three companies of American paratroopers landed. The 13th Company of FJR 6 absorbed the enemy fire and achieved good results against the Americans, who were disoriented by the night-time landing in an unknown area.

Obergefreiter Günter Prignitz in the 13th Company notes: "St.-Georges-de-Bohon lay about 14 kilometers behind the coast. I belonged to the company troop of the 13th Company and lay with a total of 16 men divided into four tents, directly next to the churchyard. We had placed a regular observer with a battery commander's telescope in the church tower. A half an hour after midnight on June 6, I heard our ground observer calling: 'Alarm–parachutes–military gliders!' while firing off his weapon.

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ABOVE: Two members of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division, their hair shorn in Mohawk fashion, apply a little "war paint" prior to their jump into Normandy. RIGHT: In his muddy foxhole, and his helmet shiny from rain, this Fallschirmjäger, with his reliable but outmoded bolt-action Karabiner 98K, is on the alert for any sign of the American enemy.

"The first thing I heard when I left my tent was an American soldier who had landed in a giant tree, saying 'Oh, oh, broken leg!' His parachute still hung in the treetop, and he was on the ground. I disarmed him and spoke calmingly to him. His wounds weren't bleeding. He was probably the first American prisoner of war of the battle of Normandy.

"A second parachute lay laterally across one of our tents, the paratrooper who belonged to it, however, was not to be found. A Feldwebel ran around to the back of the tent and yelled: 'Halt! Password!' Only at daybreak when we found him dead did we understand why the American hadn't reacted."

Units of the 101st Airborne Division jumped between 1:00 and 2:00 AM, but their landings were heavily dispersed. They were unable to band together, and FJR 6 attacked immediately. The 3rd Battalion reported that Oberfeldwebel Peltz was bringing in the first prisoners of war. They were locked up in the church of St.-Georges-de-Bohon for later questioning.

Günter Prignitz remembers that "Numerous battles with American soldiers took place around our tents and soon we had 30 to 40 prisoners locked up in the church."

Alfons Mertens, at the time a Fahnenjunker-Feldwebel (officer candidate sergeant) in the regimental signal communication platoon, noted the confusion of the night: "The communications situation the night of June 6 was anything but clear. We couldn't get any connection to the neighboring units or senior positions. Partisans and sabotage groups had cut the wires, so we had to send out messengers and maintenance men to establish contact with the other units. One of my messengers, a young boy who had just turned 18, returned to me in the morning, distraught. I had sent him to the headquarters of the 91st Airborne Division; he had found the headquarters deserted and destroyed. He had found the commander of the division, General [Wilhelm] Falley, lying shot dead on the side of the road. At that point, at the latest, it became clear that we only had ourselves to rely upon in the next few days."

At 4:00 AM the American paratroopers landed in the area of Raids [located about 15 miles southwest of Carentan on the road to Periers] and once again, after an exchange of heavy fire, the invaders were defeated. In fact, the Germans managed to take prisoner a major, a captain, a lieutenant, and 73 other ranks. The remains of the enemy landing force pulled back to the southwest.

Eugen Griesser notes the first contact between the Fallschirmjäger and the Americans: "The American paratroopers were mostly young boys around 20, big and

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strong guys. They wore combat uniforms with sewn-on pockets in which they carried around half a colonial-wares store: rations in cans, chewing gum, chocolate, reserve ammunition, pictures of naked girls, and even explosives. It was no wonder that some of them just exploded under fire from the rifles.

"Each of them had a large combat knife tied with a bootlace to their lower leg. Many others had a second dagger on their

belt, a jackknife in their pants' pocket, and a pocketknife in their jacket pocket. The American pocketknives were very useful, because not only did they contain a knife blade, but often also a saw, bottle opener, an awl and a small screwdriver. Unfortunately I lost my American pocketknife later.

"The Americans were equipped with small metal frogs for their night-time attack. They were a child's toy that clicked when you pressed on it. The idea was that they would communicate through this clicking and be able to recognize each other. At night, sounds carried especially far, and therefore this idea that the Americans had, to communicate in the dark with these children's toys, wasn't very intelligent. If they instead had ribbited like a frog, no one in the swamps would have noticed it, but the sound of these metallic clickers was so clearly unnatural, that one would have had to be deaf not to notice it.

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"Oberfeldwebel Peltz took some officers prisoner from their scouting groups early in the morning. They were crowded around a map, shining their dim flashlights on it. They were so concerned with reading the map that they didn't even notice that they had been encircled. They also hadn't set guards; these guys were that sure of their victory."

At 6:00 AM on June 6, Major von der Heydte arrived in Carentan to interrogate the captured Americans. The pathfinders of the 101st Airborne Division were particularly striking; they had shaved off their hair except for a thin stripe in the middle, and they had painted their faces with red and white. "Now they're sending us their Indians," Hauptmann Trebes said as he led Major von der Heydte to the prisoners.

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ABOVE: A group of 101st Airborne troopers congregate in the village of St. Marcouf before heading out on their next mission. LEFT: Paratroopers from Fallschirmjäger Regiment 6 use wood, tarpaulins, and foliage to camouflage their defensive position in Normandy. OPPOSITE: The bodies of eight American glider infantry troopers from Company A, 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, lie covered with a shroud of parachute silk after their British-made Horsa glider crashed into a Normandy field near Hiesville.

Except for the usual information, including their name, rank, unit, and age, the Major received no other information from the Americans. However, the deployment of elite divisions such as the "Screaming Eagles" was enough evidence that this mission was no localized attack, but that it had to be part of a larger-scale operation. This information was directly passed on to LXXIV Corps, except for the neighboring 709th Infantry Division, with whom they could not communicate.

The enemy engaged the command post in St.-Georges-de-Bohon with mortar fire. It only had limited effect, however, and Oberleutnant Prive took action against them with an assault detachment from Rougeville; he drove the enemy back towards St.-Georges-de-Bohon. Caught in this pincer attack, and surprised by this textbook maneuver, the Americans had no adequate response. Prive's platoon took more than 60 prisoners in this action.

Later on, some of the American units' stragglers came voluntarily with hands lifted to the Fallschirmjäger's positions. At this point the situation became clear: those Americans who had landed near the 3rd Battalion west of Carentan were probably dropped in the wrong place; those paratroopers captured south of Carentan were probably part of a diversionary maneuver or a reinforced recon operation. The enemy paratroopers' main attack could be found in the direction of the coast or farther west by Ste.-Mère-Église.

From the north, the Fallschirmjäger heard the noise of more fighting. Coastal Defence Battery W5 lay in that direction and farther up the coast towards Cherbourg was the Marcouf Battery. There was supposed to be an anti-aircraft unit in Ste.-Mère-Église, therefore it was possible that these positions had already taken combat fire, similarly for the army unit at St.-Côme-du-Mont.

Major von der Heydte decided to travel towards the sounds of battle in a sidecar motorcycle to investigate. In his memoirs, he describes the situation: "On a narrow street, enclosed by bushes, I came to the place called Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, which, according to the map, was the last built-up area before the coast. In the middle of the village there was an old church with a pretty and very tall tower. After we had gotten a hold of the key to the tower, I climbed it and had a unique gorgeous picture in front of me that I will never forget. The ocean lay before me, deep blue and practically motionless. On the horizon numerous battleships lined up in an almost closed chain. Between the ships and the shore there was a brisk back-and-forth traffic of craft that were transferring the American soldiers to the shore.

"The Americans only met resistance from a single German bunker that—from my point of view it was to the right of the ships—was shooting at the landing soldiers. The Americans tried to take cover from the fire, in as much as it was aimed at them, with artificial fog [smoke]. I only needed a few minutes to get a clear impression of what was going on here. The location Sainte-Marie-du-Mont was not occupied by German troops; according to the signs in his office, the local commander appeared to have left in a hurry.

"I, too, had no reason to stay any longer in this place, upon which the American soldiers were marching in an exposed order. The location lay about 5 kilometres from the coast, and the Americans had covered about half of the distance. I hurried to return to the regiment on my motorcycle; I met the tip of my regiment on a large street towards Cherbourg in a village called Saint-Côme-du-Mont. There I gave my first combat orders."

Von der Heydte ascertained with disappointment that the army unit stationed in Ste.-Marie-du-Mont had cleared out, down to the last man, and were unable to be found. Only the W5 strongpoint, supported by the Marcouf coastal battery, offered ironclad counterfire on the coast. Nevertheless, the Americans succeeded in landing on "Utah" Beach relatively unharmed; they even managed to unload their first tanks. These actions showed that in this portion of Normandy only FJR 6 was in a position to offer serious resistance against the enemy. The regiment's lack of motorization proved to be a major handicap in this hour, because in order to put the "Utah" sector under massive pressure, it would have required the combat power of the whole regiment.

Both American elite divisions had landed scattered in the area for which the neighboring 709th Infantry Division and 91st Airborne Division were responsible. They were still able to take the strategically important point Ste.-Mère-Église and establish it as a firing basis without too much opposition from German anti-aircraft units. At this point, though, Major von der Heydte could not have known that because the radio connection to the neighboring units was inconsistent at best and there was no communication whatsoever for the purpose of coordination.

Near St.-Côme-du-Mont, Major von der Heydte encountered the 4th and 8th Batteries of 191st Artillery Regiment, the 3rd

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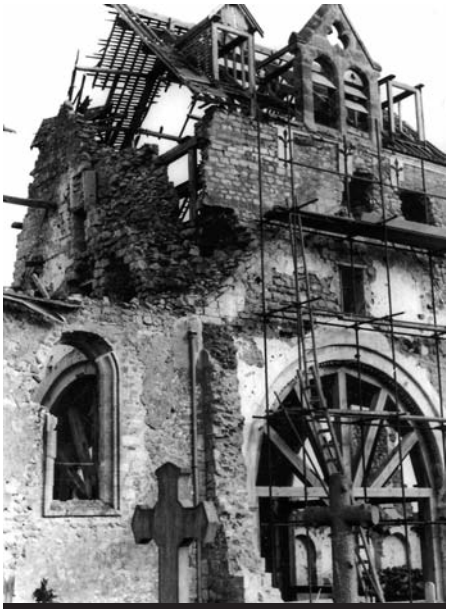


ABOVE: The church at Grainges, south of Carentan, was used by the American paratroopers of the 507th PIR, 82nd Airborne, as an observation post until it was destroyed by German forces. Nineteen wounded American paratroopers who had sought refuge in the church were removed and executed by the men of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. RIGHT: Some of the fiercest fighting of the Normandy campaign swirled around this farm known as La Fière.

Battalion of the 1058th Grenadier Regiment, and the 3rd Battery of 243rd Anti-Aircraft Regiment; without hesitation, he took these units under his command. Both units had been defeated in battle by enemy troops and had abandoned their positions. The ammunition situation was also inadequate; the infantrymen as well as the artillery had to be supplied from the reserves of FJR 6. Over the radio, von der Heydte was promised the forces of the 635th Eastern Battalion as soon as possible, but their exact time of arrival remained uncertain, and it was hard to estimate what kind of combat power the battalion had.

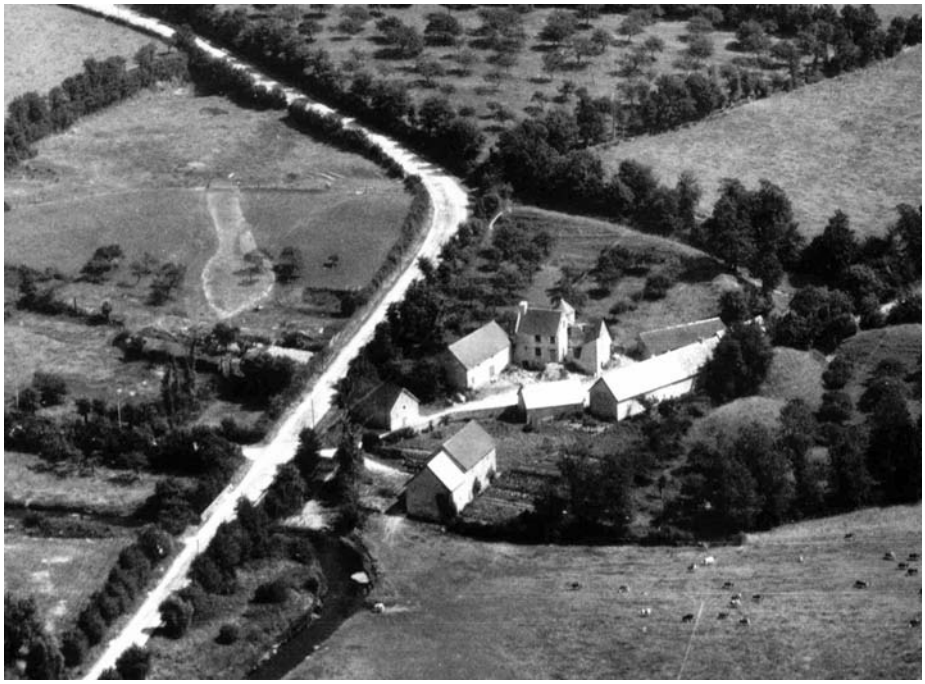
First Battalion of FJR 6 met with Major von der Heydte in St.-Côme-du-Mont early in the afternoon. From Hauptmann Preikschat, the commander of the battalion, he learned that the 2nd Battalion under Hauptmann Mager was following and should arrive soon in the village; enemy air attacks had separated the two battalions. On the way to St.-Côme-du-Mont, the battalion had exchanged fire with smaller, dispersed groups of American paratroopers. Steadily covering themselves against the enemy both on the ground and from the air was exhausting for the Fallschirmjäger.

Without hesitating long, Major von der Heydte set the 1st Battalion marching towards Ste.-Marie-du-Mont in order to build a defensive wall against the Allied troops marching inland from the coast. As much as possible, it was important to hold the village: "If the enemy pressure became too much, the battalion was ordered to fall back towards the eastern edge of Saint-Côme-du-Mont, while maintaining a delaying fight with the enemy," von der Heydte remembered.

The infantry battalion took a supporting position by St.-Come-du-Mont; due to the status of their personnel and their equipment, they were no longer in a position to lead an attack. The batteries of the 191st Artillery Regiment were annexed by the 13th Company of FJR 6 in order to deliver counterfire against enemy heavy weapons.

The 2nd Battalion received the order to perform recon on both sides of the large National Road towards Cherbourg, in order to ascertain if the village of Ste.-Mère-Église, which was elevated, was still free from enemy troops. In doing so, the battalion's right flank was supposed to stay in contact with the 1st Battalion as much as possible.

Both: National Archives



Near Turqueville, the battalion had to swing in towards the coast and, together with the 1st Battalion, perform a pincer action to constrict and attack the landing forces at Utah. In order to provide a reserve and to secure the key position of Carentan, the 3rd Battalion remained for now near St.-Côme-du-Mont.

The 1st Battalion moved against Ste.-Marie-du-Mont in a hurried tempo. Hauptmann Preikschat was aware that his battalion for the time being only had itself to rely upon against opponents of unknown strength. Nevertheless, his principal order was to prevent the Americans from building a bridgehead on the coast and, if possible, from uniting with the airborne troops and the neighboring landing zones.

Shortly after moving through St.-Côme-du-Mont, Hauptmann Preikschat let his men go into open formation: the 1st and 2nd Companies were on the right of the main road, the 3rd on the left. As they crossed the height of Angoville-au-Plain, the battalion was surprised by the sudden landing of American airborne troops in gliders. Unplanned, the

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Using the protective bank of a Normandy hedgerow, members of FJR 6 take cover from an attack by an American fighter-bomber.

1st Battalion had arrived at the centre of an Allied airborne operation; they seized initiative, however, and—following the motto "offence is the best defence"—the Fallschirmjäger set upon the Americans and fought their way through their ranks.

Leutnant Eugen Scherer, leader of the 4th Company, describes the situation: "Our battalion's attack progressed well at first and we rushed immediately into the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne as they landed from military gliders. A gory battle developed on the disorderly grounds. Man against man and group against group. It wasn't possible for the battalion to have any unified leadership, as new enemy units, which we had to fight, kept landing in the middle of the battalion's actions.

"We took hundreds of prisoners from the 501st and 506th Airborne Regiments and sent them to our rear, unarmed, with only one or two men to accompany them, because we assumed, as the regimental commander had promised us, that German soldiers would be following up behind us.

"Unfortunately, we lost time because of this battle and could no longer reach Ste.-Marie-du-Mont by nightfall. Also, even though battle noise could be heard from this direction, we could no longer establish communications with 2nd Battalion/FJR 6 near Ste.-Mère-Église, who were under fire."

Unhappy with their results so far, the battalion formed an all-around defence in an open field for the night. As darkness came, the 1st Battalion then lost the support of the 4th Battery of the 191st Artillery Regiment: a fire ambush of American naval artillery on the battery position led to the loss of 27 men, and caused the battery officers to issue an order to abandon the position.

The 1st Battalion also came under heavy fire from naval artillery. In the course of the night, more enemy gliders touched down in the middle of the 1st Battalion, these aircraft carrying supplies for the American paratroopers.

From prisoners, Hauptmann Preikschat learned that other, powerful airborne forces in military gliders had landed in the area of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont. Almost at the same time, a recon troop brought news back that Ste.-Marie-du-Mont was occupied by enemy tanks. The men deployed there, the 3rd Company of the 1058th Grenadier Regiment, were defeated and in scattered formation had to pull back to St.-Côme-du-Mont.

Given these facts, Hauptmann Preikschat decided on the morning of June 7 to pull the battalion back to St.-Côme-du-Mont, as recommended, and to prepare themselves to defend there. During their rapid crossing of the area around Vierville, the battalion ran into an American ambush that broke up and to some extent scattered the unit. The Fallschirmjäger companies engaged in a firefight in order to clear a path for their own forces.

Because the American tanks from Ste.-Marie-du-Mont also joined in the attack, and further American reinforcements closed the ring around the 1st Battalion, casualties increased dramatically until finally Preikschat gave the order to "Save yourselves if you can!" The 4th Company, under Leutnant Scherer, supported by Leutnant Krüger's antitank weapons, tried to hold back the U.S. tanks.

In small groups, the Fallschirmjäger tried to break out of the encircled area below the castle of Vierville and to withdraw towards the locks of La Barquette. The flooded areas, which had been created to hinder the Allied airborne landings, thwarted them in this plan, as the enemy now used the swamps to their advantage.

South of Angoville-au-Plain, as they waded through the reedy marsh, the Fallschirmjäger were attacked anew by strong American units. The Germans suffered heavy casualties–during the night, more American airborne soldiers had landed in this area via parachute and 150 military gliders, and they now occupied the area.

The Fallschirmjäger tried, at the edge of the swamp or while standing in mud up to their chests, to fight through the ring of Americans to the southwest. The result was further close combat with the American paratroopers, which cost the remains of the 1st Battalion bitter losses. Only a few hundred meters away from their own positions, the Fallschirmjäger were gunned down by Americans lying in ambush near La Barquette.

The men of the 1st Battalion made some gruesome observations, as Jäger [Luftwaffe Private] Manfred Vogt of the 4th Company

remembers: "In the chaos, I had lost my weapon, and I lay with an older Obergefreiter under a hedge for cover. At the edge of the swamp we observed how a few Americans gave one of our wounded a good once-over. With fists and the butts of their weapons they beat the poor guy and kicked him with their boots. When he could no longer move, one of the Americans put his foot on the guy's head and pushed him into the water until he drowned. So those were the 'Sing-Sing' [a New York prison infamous for the brutality of it guards] methods of the American paratroopers."

During the night, the staff doctor, Dr. Roos, the leading medical practitioner of the regiment, tried to break through in a Kübelwagen to the 1st Battalion under the protection of the Red Cross, in order to offer medical relief. He did not make it—Roos fell into an American ambush and was shot. Some Fallschirmjäger found him dead in his Kübelwagen near the church of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont.

Oberleutnant Wilhelm Billion, leader of the 1st Company, called to his men: "Either we get out of here or we get captured. But that is not an option for us!" A few minutes later, he fell from a bullet to the head.

Some members of the 3rd Company withdrew towards the direction of their own troops, and occupied a small street and the houses around it. An American tank unit tried to proceed down the street and break through the Fallschirmjäger positions, but was prevented by the concentrated fire of the Panzerfausts. A U.S. Stuart tank was stopped in the middle of the crossing and went up in flames. The commander, standing in the turret hatch, did not manage to escape the tank, and he burned to death at his post. He unwittingly gave the crossing its name: "Dead Man's Corner."

Obergefreiter Karl-Heinz Mayer, at the time in the 3rd Company, was wounded in the action by an American sniper: "The Americans had posted sharpshooters [snipers] in the trees. Even when one of them was hit, he did not fall down, because these boys had belted themselves in.

"I was a machine-gunner. A sharpshooter hit me in the face, in the left cheek. The bullet dug its way through my collarbone into my right breast. He probably wanted a clean shot to the head, but the smallest movement on my part probably saved my life. I crawled into the gutter by a house on the corner.

"I don't know how long I lay there, but at some point American soldiers stood in front of me. They yelled at me to stand up. One of them kicked me a few times in the side because he wanted to get at my gravity knife. I just wanted some water, but they didn't understand me. One of them threw me some chocolate, then he realized how badly wounded I was and gave me something to drink. The war was over for me."

On the evening of June 7, Hauptmann Preikschat's men, most of them wounded and unable to fight, accepted the offer of surrender from Colonel Johnson of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment [sic—the 506th's commander was Colonel Robert Sink]. Preikschat's battalion had lost over half its men since the retreat towards Vierville. Only 25 men under the leadership of Leutnant Stenzel managed to escape from the enemy and fight their way back to their own lines. On the evening of June 10, the only thing they had to report to Major von der Heydte was the destruction of the brave 1st Battalion.

Their comrades expected execution at the time. According to the order of the American general Maxwell Taylor, during the first days of the invasion no German prisoners were to be taken, so the American paratroopers prepared to execute the survivors of the 1st Battalion. Only the selfless interference of an American captain, who had been taken prisoner by the German Fallschirmjäger the night before and had been well treated by them, saved Preikschat's men from death.

While the 1st Battalion moved against the enemy, Major von der Heydte had established radio connection with the neighboring German forces. From the 709th Infantry Division, he learned that they were preparing an offensive in Montebourg on the morning of June 7. Therefore, the 2nd Battalion under Hauptmann Mager departed right away; they received the order to go around Ste-Mère-Église via Tourqueville and move against the Utah landing zone and, in an extension of the 1st Battalion's position by Ste.-Marie-du-Mont, seal off the beach section. With the U.S. paratroopers cut off from their amphibious reinforcements, it would be possible to take the American airborne troops in a pincer move.

In the meantime, the 3rd Battalion was supposed to put pressure on and destroy the

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: 101st Airborne troops march through the town of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont that had once been a FJR 6 stronghold. OPPOSITE: Three German soldiers lie dead in an American vehicle before being taken to a temporary cemetery and buried.

remains of the American paratroopers who had landed during the night. Scouts from FJR 6 reported that enemy groups had entrenched themselves in the villages of Graignes and Tribehou. Because these units could threaten the regiment's rear, the 3rd Battalion advanced against them; only the 9th Company was directly assigned to secure Carentan.

The occupation of Tribehou occurred without great difficulties, but a sudden radio report to the regimental command post stopped the operation: American recon troops had been spotted near Carentan and the 3rd Battalion received the order to return as soon as possible to the city. While the battalion was marching back, the 9th Company reported that the Americans for now had pulled back in the face of the greater numbers of the German troops. At 9:00 PM the battalion took position, and the city was secured.

The early phase of 2nd Battalion's operation was proving difficult. Because of heavy Allied air attacks, progress was slower than planned and they were forced to spread out widely. The open area south of Ste.-Mère-Église facilitated quick progress, but Hauptmann Mager's runners were unable to establish contact with the 1st Battalion. To top it all off, troops from the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment had dug themselves in here and directed heavy field artillery fire at the 2nd Battalion.

The Fallschirmjäger managed to advance to Turqueville and fall into position here, when they came under shelling from both directions: from St-Mère-Eglise came mortar fire, while from the ocean they were battered by huge naval artillery shells the size of boulders.

Nevertheless, Mager tried to complete his assignment, and Eugen Griesser received new orders: "Our battalion was supposed to offer flanking protection to the 1st Battalion, who advanced on Ste.-Marie-du-Mont against the American paratroopers, whom we suspected were northwest of us. Suddenly, we were under heavy fire from Ste.-Mère-église. Hauptmann Mager had no radio connection with the anti-aircraft division that was supposed to be in this location, so he put together two recon troops. 'You do this!' he said to me.

"We left everything that rattled and clanged with the platoon HQ and went stalking. Our approach lasted longer than suspected, because we were partially moving across open ground, which we had to do quite carefully, and because we had to go around some forward-deployed American posts. Coming from the location [Ste.-Mère-Église], we already heard the firing sounds of American mortars.

"The fact that no combat noise could be heard in the area meant that the anti-aircraft units had either been destroyed, or that they had cleared out of their positions. But we had no idea how strong the enemy in Ste.-Mère-Église was. Best-case scenario: only a heavy company with their howitzers; worst-case scenario: hundreds of Americans and more.

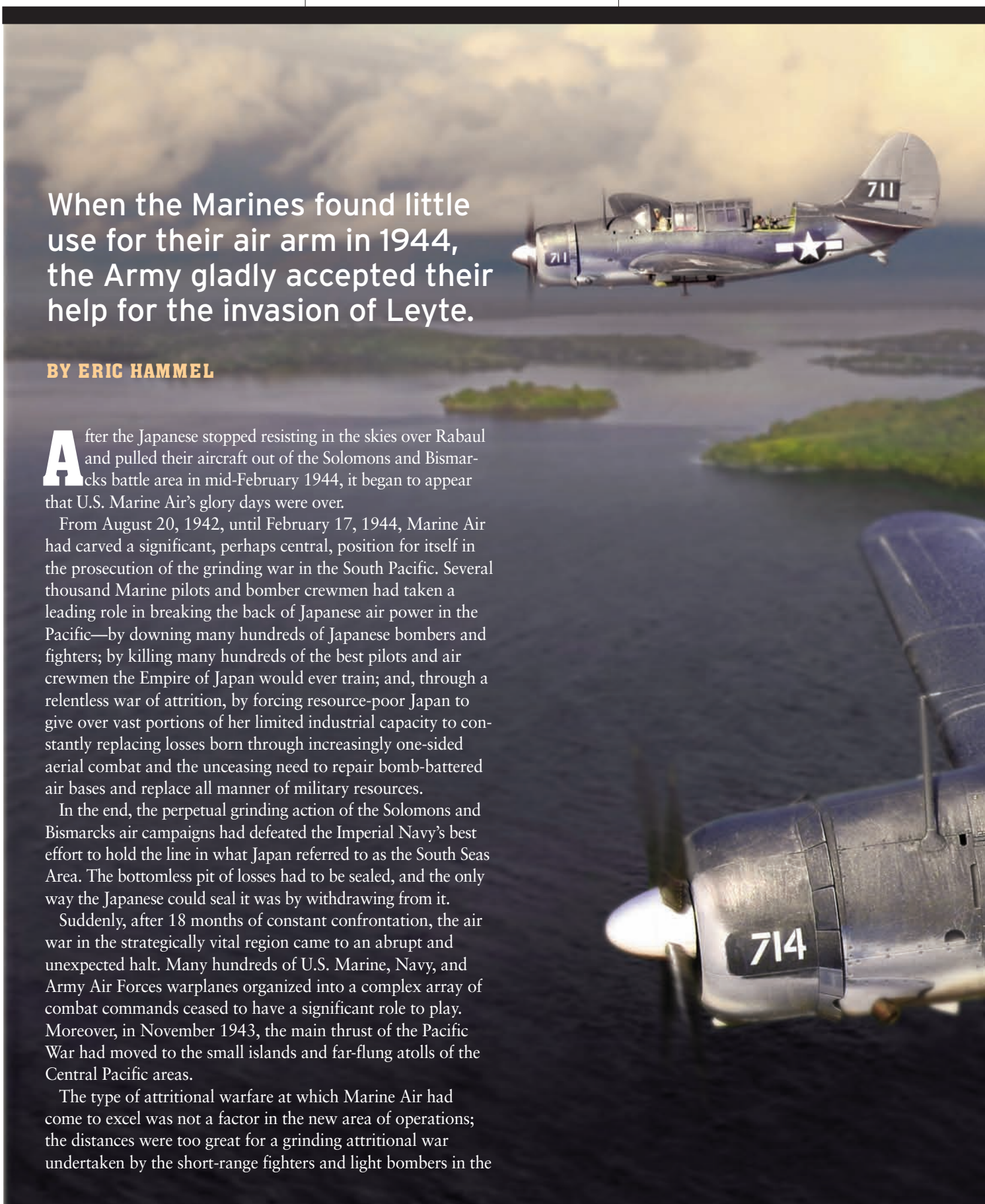
"We managed to push forward into the heart of the objective and one thing quickly became clear: Ste.-Mère-Église was occupied by at least one battalion. Until then, we hadn't seen any vehicles, but our chief would be unable to ignore a battalion with mortars on our flank.

"Suddenly, from a window two meters to the left of me, a submachine gun started firing, and from the other side of the square machine guns clattered. But they were not aiming at us; the fire was directed at a second recon troop somewhere to our right. We stood in the blind spot of the shooters in the window, and had not yet been discovered. Gerd Kerl and I pulled out our hand grenades and tossed them into the window. The firing from the window stopped right away. I shot off a few bursts of gunfire from my submachine gun, to be sure, and looked into the room; apparently we had blasted a radio station.

"Now one of the machine guns from the church tower was shooting at us, so it became time to return to the battalion. We ran along the alley, as fast as our feet could carry us, and I believe we could have broken any world record in this moment. An American emerged from behind a house corner, planted himself in our path, lifted his rifle and yelled something at us in English. We just ran over him; we couldn't have stopped anyway, we were running that fast.

"Once clear, we just threw ourselves behind a hedge, in order to catch our breath; then we slipped back to the battalion. After we had made our report, we just had enough time to pick up our things from the company troop and drink a sip of cold coffee, then our first attack on Ste.-Mère-Église began." □

In the continuation of the story in the next issue, FJR 6 fights furiously for its life in and around Ste.-Mère-Église in a desperate attempt to wipe out the American paratroopers.



When the Marines found little use for their air arm in 1944, the Army gladly accepted their help for the invasion of Leyte.

BY ERIC HAMMEL

After the Japanese stopped resisting in the skies over Rabaul and pulled their aircraft out of the Solomons and Bismarcks battle area in mid-February 1944, it began to appear that U.S. Marine Air's glory days were over.

From August 20, 1942, until February 17, 1944, Marine Air had carved a significant, perhaps central, position for itself in the prosecution of the grinding war in the South Pacific. Several thousand Marine pilots and bomber crewmen had taken a leading role in breaking the back of Japanese air power in the Pacific—by downing many hundreds of Japanese bombers and fighters; by killing many hundreds of the best pilots and air crewmen the Empire of Japan would ever train; and, through a relentless war of attrition, by forcing resource-poor Japan to give over vast portions of her limited industrial capacity to constantly replacing losses born through increasingly one-sided aerial combat and the unceasing need to repair bomb-battered air bases and replace all manner of military resources.

In the end, the perpetual grinding action of the Solomons and Bismarcks air campaigns had defeated the Imperial Navy's best effort to hold the line in what Japan referred to as the South Seas Area. The bottomless pit of losses had to be sealed, and the only way the Japanese could seal it was by withdrawing from it.

Suddenly, after 18 months of constant confrontation, the air war in the strategically vital region came to an abrupt and unexpected halt. Many hundreds of U.S. Marine, Navy, and Army Air Forces warplanes organized into a complex array of combat commands ceased to have a significant role to play. Moreover, in November 1943, the main thrust of the Pacific War had moved to the small islands and far-flung atolls of the Central Pacific areas.

The type of attritional warfare at which Marine Air had come to excel was not a factor in the new area of operations; the distances were too great for a grinding attritional war undertaken by the short-range fighters and light bombers in the

MARINE AIR *in the Philippines*

PART 1

© Jack Fellows

In this painting by Jack Fellows, Curtiss SB2C Helldiver aircraft of VMSB-244 ("Bombing Banshees") are shown off of Mindinao in June 1944. VMSB-244 went on to attack targets on Leyte Island prior to December 1944. VMSB-244 was the first USMC squadron to operate the SB2C, which was in the Philippines.

SBD Dauntless dive bombers of the 1st Marine Air Wing return from a mission providing close front-line support for Army ground troops in the Philippines. Inter-service rivalries were forgotten and close cooperation was the hallmark of combined air-ground operations.

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Marine arsenal, the battles were too brief and needed support for only limited periods, and the Japanese simply did not react with the all-out aerial counteroffensives that had characterized the much longer campaigns in the Solomons and Bismarcks. In short, there was no aggressive, essential role in the Central Pacific that matched or required Marine Air's hard-won experience and rather specialized capabilities.

Now, from early 1944, thanks to the Allies' successful bypass strategy, it appeared that Marine Air would be increasingly relegated to a minor role in the Pacific Theater's many operational backwaters.

The ultimate backwater in early 1944 remained Rabaul and several bypassed Imperial Navy airfields in the northern Solomon Islands, chiefly at Kahili and Buka-Bonis. Although bypassed and to a degree inaccessible from other Japanese bases, these airfields and their supporting infrastructure had to be kept in a nonoperational status. Even though the big war had passed them by, these bases—especially Rabaul—were manned by large garrisons that rather doggedly tried and succeeded at maintaining the airfields at some level of operational readiness.

Although deemed of little importance by increasingly confident Allied commanders, the bases needed to be visited on a regular basis by bombers capable of destroying what little the Japanese garrisons were capable of building back up. To the degree that Japan wanted to sink more matériel into the ongoing maintenance of her bypassed South Seas bases, the bombing campaign had an ongoing if small impact in the war against the empire's industrial and economic infrastructure long before Allied bombers could reach Japan's factories.

So Rabaul was surrounded and cut off by a network of Allied air bases that were manned in large part by the bulk of Marine Air assets that had been and still were being deployed to the Pacific Theater. These assets were the end product of training and procurement programs that achieved maximum efficiency in the United States—just as the need for Marine Air's unique war-driven capabilities precipitously diminished in the suddenly quiescent South Pacific.

From February 1944 onward, Marine Air formed the backbone for attritional bombing missions against Rabaul. Bombing attacks were mounted almost daily. Targets were hit, and some Marine aircraft were downed by Japanese antiaircraft fire, but the gunfire and operational accidents were about the only elements of danger posed in a campaign in which the Japanese did not otherwise resist.

There was virtually no useful role for Marine Air in the Gilbert or Marshall Islands, which fell to U.S. Marine and U.S. Army infantrymen in late 1943 and early 1944. Marine air groups composed of fighters and light bombers were deployed to the newly captured Central Pacific bases, but their role was purely defensive—to stand against rare attacks by Japanese bombers, and to help co-located U.S. Navy and Army Air Forces patrol bombers track and pursue the odd Imperial Navy submarine that ventured into the area.

Marine PBJ medium bombers (the same as Army Air Forces B-25s) arrived in the South Pacific at the end of January 1944 and went into action against Rabaul in mid-March. The PBJs had adequate range to have been useful in bypass missions and, indeed, pre-invasion bombardment regimes that were being undertaken by then in the Central Pacific by identical island-based Seventh Air Force B-25s, but apparently any notion to deploy any of the new Marine PBJ squadrons to the battle area was quashed; all the PBJs were used against Rabaul.

Marine Air played a rather small and purely defensive role in the Central Pacific through the end of the war. Beginning in the Marshalls, Marine light bomber squadrons

undertook purely routine attacks against bypassed Japanese bases that came within their range from a growing network of island airfields. As in the South Pacific, there was some small danger posed by antiaircraft guns, but aerial opposition was nil. Most losses were the result of operational accidents.

Following the withdrawal of Japanese defensive fighters from Rabaul on February 17, 1944, Marine fighter action in the South Pacific all but ceased. During the rest of February, hitherto extremely busy Marine F4U Corsair pilots downed just four Imperial Navy aircraft in the region, and a Marine night fighter crew downed one other, in only three days of action. In March, action on just four days produced five victory credits. And there were just two others in the region through the end of the war: a VMF(N)-531 night fighter crew downed a floatplane near Matupi on May 11, 1944; and a VMF-222 F4U pilot downed an Imperial Navy fighter over Kavieng, New Ireland, on June 13, 1944. Otherwise, thousands of Marine fighter sorties over the region between March 15, 1944, and September 1, 1945, reaped no fruit whatsoever.

In the Central Pacific, from November 1943 through the end of November 1944, Marine fighter pilots accounted for 11 aerial victories in just three encounters: on March 26, Marine F4U pilots from VMF-113 downed eight Imperial Navy fighters over the Japanese air base on Ponape Island, in the Marshalls; on April 14, VMF(N)-532 night fighter pilots downed two medium bombers over Eniwetok; and on October 31, a VMF(N)-541 night-fighter pilot downed a floatplane over Peleliu.

PBJ-1D Mitchell medium bomber assigned to a Philippines-based Marine Corps bombing squadron. The elongated "snout," commonly called a "hose nose," encompasses the sophisticated APS-3 search radar antenna. By 1943 eight VMB squadrons had been formed.

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In a way, the bypass strategy, which was designed to cause vast Japanese resources to "wither on the vine," came perilously close to causing the Marine Corps' enormous investment in its aerial arm to wither on the vine as well. Marine Air, from mid-February though November 1944, played a useful role in the Pacific, but not a vital one. There was a plan in motion to base Marine squadrons aboard aircraft carriers—so they could provide close air support for Marine landing forces in future island battles—but this small program was late getting started and would never amount to a great deal because the Navy's own burgeoning air arm had first call on the carriers. In sum, Marine Air really had no means in 1944 to support Marines.

Well then, thought the Marine Air general who was overseeing the air war in the South Pacific backwater, how about supporting U.S. Army troops—in new ways for which Marine Air was uniquely organized and qualified? And so began the movement of numerous Marine combat squadrons from the backwater to the forefront. The place was the Philippines, and the time would be early 1945.

The involvement of Marine Air in the Philippines was the brainchild of Maj. Gen. Ralph Mitchell, who in mid-1944 was serving concurrently as commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW) and Aircraft, Northern Solomons. Mitchell knew that the headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area force was planning the invasion of the Philippines at Mindanao, and he went to sell the Southwest Pacific commanders and planners on the many advantages he saw in their using his well-trained, enthusiastic, combat-experienced Marine airmen.

At the time, no role could be envisaged for Marine Air in the Philippines, but as the invasion date neared, it was demonstrated to the planners that the southern and central Philippines were not as well defended as had been previously thought. Thus, MacArthur and his staff opted for a bold strike directly to the heart of the Philippine Islands, at Leyte, in the center of the archipelago.

The difference this decision made to Marine Air was based on distance. Mindanao, the original invasion target in the southern Philippines, was marginally within range of some Allied fighters based in New Guinea and nearby islands. But Leyte was not. So, in addition to acquiring fighter bases in the Palau and Molucca Islands, halfway between New Guinea and Mindanao, the Allied planners decided to hedge their bets and employ Marine fighters and light bombers to supplement the U.S. Army Air Forces air groups that would be available from the U.S. Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces.

The decision to temporarily bypass Mindanao in favor of invading Leyte was

taken on September 15, 1944, and the landing date was set for October 15—two months earlier than the anticipated Mindanao invasion. On September 22, MacArthur's Far East Air Forces announced that it had decided to add seven Marine dive-bomber squadrons to the roster of Army aviation units to be employed in the Philippines.

And on October 10, Colonel Lyle Meyer, the commanding officer of Marine Air Group 24 (MAG-24), was told by 1st MAW headquarters to get ready to support U.S. Army ground forces in the Philippines. A short time later, the MAG-32 headquarters, then in Hawaii, was ordered to assume control over the 1st MAW's three remaining dive-bomber squadrons, also for duty in the Philippines. Colonel Clayton Jerome, who was serving at the time as the chief of staff for Aircraft, Northern Solomons, was given command of MAG-32 for the upcoming operation.

Planning for the entry of Marine Air into a new theater overseen entirely by U.S. Army forces fell to Lt. Col. Keith McCutcheon, the MAG-24 operations officer. And time was short. In addition to his considerable planning skills, McCutcheon was a particular enthusiast and expert on the emerging role for Marine Air of providing close air support for ground troops. While Marine Air had claimed an expertise in this realm dating back to 1927, actual experience and results had been unimpressive throughout the long Solomons campaign of 1942 and 1943. Indeed, it was not until late 1943 that an actual classic close-air ground-support mission was run by Marine Air, on Bougainville.

Nevertheless, McCutcheon had done the studies and seen what needed to be done. Just about the time he was tabbed with the job of planning the entry of Marine Air into the Philippines, he completed the writing of the Marine Corps' first doctrinal paper on procedures for close air support of ground troops, and training was just about to get under way. Of course, the period McCutcheon had originally set aside for training Marine airmen and ground air-control teams had to be shortened. It lasted from October 13 to December 8, 1944, and was as much a test bed for McCutcheon's doctrine as it was a training course. All in all, it was a busy period in which impressive results were attained.

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A trio of Dauntless SBDs patrols the skies. The aircraft, of which nearly 6,000 were built, was slower than its Japanese counterpart, the Aichi D3A2 "Val," but was steady in a dive and more resistant to battle damage.

By the end of November 1944, everything was moving along rapidly as planned. But just as MAG-24 and MAG-32 had nearly completed their training, the planned entry of Marine dive-bombers into the Philippines was upstaged by an answer to a call for urgently needed fighters.

Following intense pre-invasion bombardment by the U.S. Army Air Forces' land-based bombers and U.S. Navy carrier aircraft, the U.S. Sixth Army invaded the central Philippines at Leyte on October 20, 1944. The landing was a complete success, and most D-day objectives were taken without much of a struggle. Among the early prizes was Tacloban Airfield on Leyte's west coast opposite Samar Island. Dulag Airfield fell on October 21, as did three smaller airstrips near Burauen. Once rehabilitated and expanded, these bases and several new ones to be built by Army engineers would form the main structure for air support in the region.

Japanese air reaction to the invasion began massively on October 23 and soon resolved itself into the intense Battle of Leyte Gulf, which lasted until October 26 and ended in a complete American victory—a monumental strategic windfall. Nevertheless, on October 25, Japanese kamikaze aircraft making their combat debut took out several U.S. Navy carriers and made refugees of the carrier air groups.

It so happened that Maj. Gen. Ralph Mitchell, the 1st MAW commanding general, was inspecting Tacloban Airfield at the time the carrier fighters and bombers were looking for a safe place to land. Realizing that the only suitable landing area was to the right of the water-logged runway, Mitchell acquired a pair of signal flags and personally guided the carrier aircraft to earth in the role of a landing signal officer. The Marine general's guidance resulted in no losses whereas, at Dulag, which was also waterlogged, eight of 40 carrier aircraft were damaged or destroyed in landings that were not so guided.

So, at the outset, the participation of Marine Air in the Philippines had an immense benefit—before even one Marine combat airplane arrived. Indeed, the scores of displaced U.S. Navy carrier aircraft played an important, if unplanned, role in supporting U.S. Army ground troops on Leyte—an earlier than expected turn of events owing in large part to the serendipitous contribution of a Marine aviator.

On October 25, Army engineers began laying steel matting over Tacloban's runway. They completed the job on October 27, and the first Army Air Forces fighters and

fighter-bombers arrived the same day. (Medium and light bombers were withheld because the steel-matted runway was, at 2,500 feet, too short, and expansion was hampered with the advent of the rainy season.) By October 30, 182 USAAF P-38 and P-40 fighters had staged into Leyte and were well able to defend the new bases and provide support at sea and over the land. Two of the small captured airstrips at Burauen were abandoned because of drainage problems, but a new all-weather strip was started at Tanauan in November.

When the call from the Philippines came to Marine Air, it came at an unexpected time, for unexpected units to fulfill unexpected needs.

The big headache in the central Philippines was the growing threat posed by Japan's first directed use of kamikaze aircraft, which were being vectored against Leyte's seaborne lines of supply. An Army Air Forces P-61 Black Widow night fighter squadron was on the scene, but the two-place, twin-engine P-61s were unable to fly as fast as many of the one-way attackers. There were also U.S. Navy F6F night fighter detachments aboard several of the carriers, but it was felt that the carriers were pushing their luck by remaining tied to Leyte for so long a period as they were required to act as a mobile first line of defense. At the end of November, it was decided to swap a portion of Peleliu-based VMF(N)-541 (in F6F night fighters) for a portion of the outclassed Leyte-based P-61 squadron, and it was also decided to effect an immediate, unplanned transfer of four MAG-12 F4U squadrons to Leyte from the Solomons.

VMF(N)-541 was alerted for its move on November 28, and on December 1, MAG-12 was ordered to get VMF-115, VMF-211, VMF-218, and VMF-313 moving toward Tacloban by December 3. To support these thoroughly unplanned commitments, Marine R4Ds and Army C-47s based throughout the Pacific region were rallied to General Mitchell's command to airlift Marine groundcrew personnel and aviation supplies to Leyte.

On December 2, a day early, MAG-61 PBJ medium bombers led 85 MAG-12 Corsairs from the Solomons to Leyte. The aircraft refueled at Hollandia, New Guinea, where three Corsairs dropped out with mechanical problems. The remaining 82 Marine fighters reached Tacloban on December 3, as did an F6F night fighter detachment from VMF(N)-541, following a 600-mile direct flight from Peleliu.

Marine Air had come to fight in the Philippines.

VMF(N)-541 F6F night fighters logged their first missions of the Philippines campaign on December 3, the evening of the day they arrived at Tacloban. There was no contact with the enemy, but the night fighters provided cover for U.S. Navy PT-boats operating in the Surigao Strait. Flight operations were closed down by weather on December 4, but December 5 proved to be a red letter day in that VMF(N)-541's 2nd Lt. Rodney Montgomery, Jr., became the second Marine F6F night-fighter pilot in history to down an enemy airplane—an Imperial Army Ki-43 Oscar fighter he downed at sea at 6:30 AM. That evening, a VMF-115 F4U probably downed an Imperial Navy Zero fighter over Dulag. Two days later, two VMF(N)-541 pilots each downed a Japanese bomber, one at 1:45 AM and the other at 6:10 AM.

Marine F4U day fighters scored their first confirmed victories of the Philippines campaign three years to the day after Japanese aircraft opened the war in the islands with air attacks against American bases on Luzon. At 4:10 PM, VMF-313 F4U pilots downed two Oscars and probably downed another near Negros Island's Alicante Airdrome. These were the squadron's first aerial victories of the war.

In addition to air interdiction, the Marine day fighters began taking part in support operations. At first, despite heightened expectations, there were no close-support missions scheduled on behalf of the U.S. Army ground troops battling to pacify Leyte. Frankly, Army ground commanders were wary of close air support, and so an ongoing selling effort would have to be waged before there were assignments in that fundamentally untried arena. In the meantime, there were ample important assignments available for the four MAG-12 Corsair squadrons.

On the morning of December 7, in conjunction with Army Air Forces attacks on the same targets, 12 VMF-211 F4Us were dispatched against seven Japanese troop- and supply-laden vessels making for Leyte's Ormoc Bay. When the Marines arrived, they found the ships at anchor, well covered by a powerful Japanese fighter umbrella. Eight F4Us engaged the top cover while four bomb-laden F4Us went after the ships. Three F4Us were downed in the action, but

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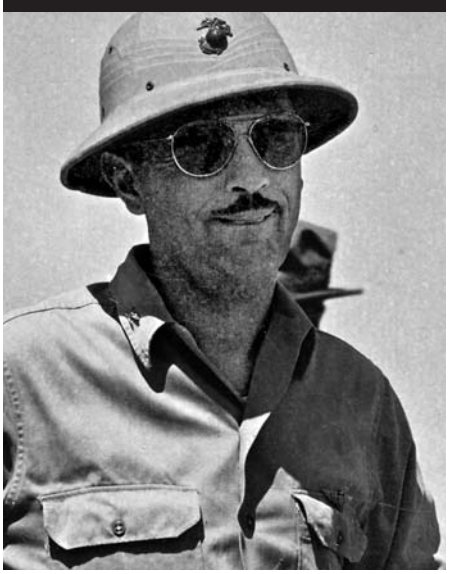

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ABOVE: Maj. Gen. Ralph Mitchell (left), commander of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, awards the Legion of Merit to Colonel Clayton Jerome, May 1944. Jerome later served as C.O. of MAG-32. BELOW: Colonel Lyle Meyer, commander of Marine Air Group 24, carried out close-air ground support missions in support of the Army.

With white phosphorous shells marking the target, two Marine Corps SBD dive bombers prepare to work over Japanese positions in the Philippines.

National Archives

credit was given for a bomb hit on an Imperial Navy destroyer.

During the afternoon—while American transport ships arrived in another part of Ormoc Bay to land a U.S. Army infantry division—Marine F4Us joined Army Air Forces P-38s in repeatedly attacking the Japanese ships. Bomb-equipped F4Us from three squadrons, escorted by Army Air Forces fighters, were credited with sinking a troop transport, three of the cargo ships, and a destroyer. In return, Japanese aircraft, including kamikazes, attacked the U.S. convoy through heavy cover provided by P-38s. The Japanese severely damaged a transport and a destroyer, both of which had to be abandoned and scuttled by friendly fire, and a landing ship that also had to be abandoned. On the other hand, the American landing was a success, and the Japanese reinforcement and resupply effort was not.

On December 10, at 4:40 PM, two VMF-115 F4U pilots teamed up to destroy a Japanese reconnaissance plane near Leyte. Another Japanese reinforcement and resupply convoy made a dash toward Leyte on December 11 and was discovered early. Among other attack groups, 27 Marine F4Us from all four MAG-12 squadrons attacked the ships 40 miles from Panay Island with 1,000-pound delay-fuse bombs. The VMF-313 pilots attacked a large troop transport and scored two direct hits, and VMF-115 pilots set a cargo ship afire with at least one direct hit.

VMF-211 pilots scored no hits, and VMF-218 pilots were unable to observe the results of their attack because they were bounced by seven Imperial Navy Zeros as they came off their target. In the ensuing melee, the Marines claimed six enemy fighters downed, but no official credits were ever issued.

Thirty bomb-laden Marine F4Us escorted by P-40 fighters attacked the same convoy at sea during the afternoon of December 11. Attacking from masthead height, VMF-313 was credited with sinking a large troop transport, a destroyer, and a cargo ship, and with damaging two freighters. Two F4Us were downed by antiaircraft fire, and two others were severely damaged. VMF-115 pilots hit two cargo ships, but two Corsairs were knocked down in the attack; VMF-218 pilots claimed hits on a cargo ship and left a destroyer burning while losing one of their number to antiaircraft fire.

Throughout the day, as many of their comrades attacked the Japanese convoy, other MAG-12 F4Us flew defensive air patrols over U.S. Navy ships bent on similar missions, also in Ormoc Bay. A VMF-218 pilot downed an Imperial Navy D3A Val dive-bomber over Ormoc Bay at 7:45 AM; pilots from three squadrons downed nine Japanese fighters at sea west of Leyte between 11:00 and 11:30 AM; and Marine F4U pilots from all four squadrons downed nine Japanese fighters over Ormoc Bay and to the west between 3:30 and 5:16 PM. In all, victory credits were awarded for 18 fighters and one dive-bomber—the best one-day total by Marine fighters since January 23, 1944, when 45 Japanese aircraft were downed by Marines over Rabaul.

On the morning of December 12, VMF(N)-541 F6F night fighters were vectored to the west coast of Leyte to intercept an incoming air strike. At 7:20 AM, the night pilots found 33 Japanese bombers and fighter escorts heading toward the U.S. Navy ships in Ormoc Bay, and they broke up the attack and downed 11 of them—without loss.

Three days later, Marine F6F night-fighter pilots downed an Imperial Navy fighter and three Imperial Navy dive-bombers near Negros Island at 8:40 AM. And while covering the U.S. Sixth Army's invasion of Mindoro Island, VMF-211 F4U pilots downed five Imperial Navy Zero fighters at 9:00.

Thereafter, Japanese air attacks pretty much petered out. Marine fighters were credited with downing nine enemy aircraft, mostly in areas north of Leyte, but the bulk of their late December missions were undertaken in a point-defense role.

Though hardly the sort of duty the Marine day fighter pilots expected to be engaged in following their freewheeling offensive experience in the Solomons, the protection of friendly airfields and convoys and attacks upon enemy shipping were certainly missions they were qualified to undertake, and their success was a shining example of their do-all versatility.

December 1944 was also noteworthy for Marine Air in that their first ground-attack missions in the Philippines were clocked during the month. The first of these was mounted by Marine F4Us on December 10, against Japanese troop bivouacs. These were hardly the precision, on-call, ground-guided close-support missions for which Marine dive-bomber pilots were training to undertake in the Philippines, but to the extent that results could be observed, the F4U pilots left fires raging at all the sites attacked.

National Archives

ABOVE: Combat engineers installing Marsden Matting, a perforated steel runway material. After landing on northern Leyte in October 1944, construction crews began building the Tacloban airstrip from which air attacks could be launched. BELOW: Tacloban airstrip on Leyte Island, originally built as part of a commercial airport known today as Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport.

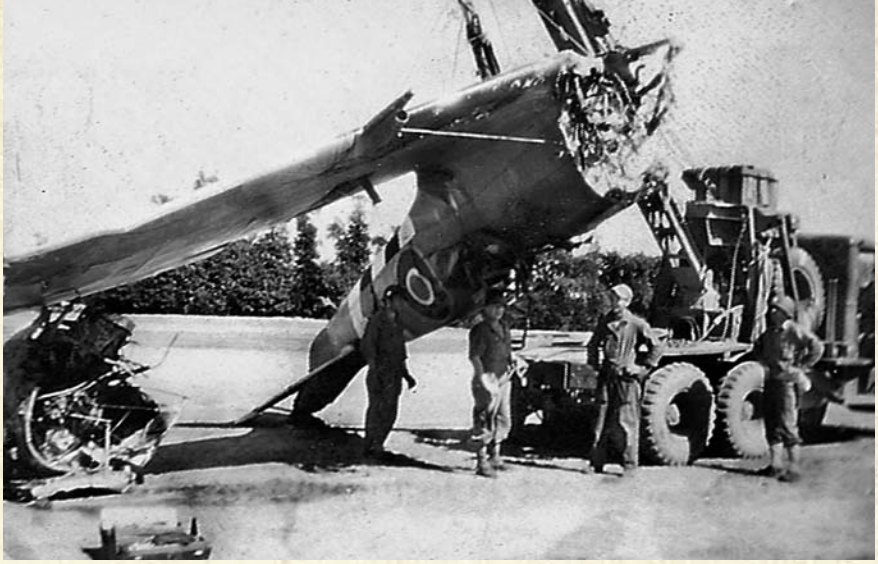
National Archives

Flights composed of 12 bomb-laden F4Us struck ground targets again on December 17 and 19, and then the MAG-12 ground-attack missions through the rest of the month were devoted to interdicting Japanese airfields on Mindanao and Luzon, the main islands to the south and north of Leyte, respectively. Also, during the latter part of the month, in missions assigned by U.S. Fifth Air Force planners, Marine Corsairs began to be employed interchangeably with two Army Air Forces fighter groups in attacks on trains, rail lines, bridges, and crossroads towns on Luzon, which was scheduled to be invaded on January 9, 1945.

In all of December 1944, Marine day fighters based at Tacloban (and, after December 27, at the new all-weather air base at Tanauan) flew 264 combat missions. They were credited with the destruction of 22 vessels ranging in size from small coastal craft to warships and ocean-going transports and freighters. And official credit was awarded to Marine day-fighter pilots for the downing of 31 Japanese aircraft. VMF(N)-541 flew 312 sorties out of Tacloban in December 1944, and its pilots were officially credited with downing 20 enemy planes, both at night and during the day. VMF(N)-541 returned to Peleliu on January 11, having downed two additional Japanese aircraft.

Although its introduction into the new Philippines theater was both early and unexpected, Marine Air performed a wide variety of missions extremely well. Serving in unique aircraft types under the command of the U.S. Fifth Air Force, Marines with inter-service experience in the Solomons dating back to 1942 smoothly integrated themselves and their capabilities into the theater air big picture and functioned admirably as part of the team.

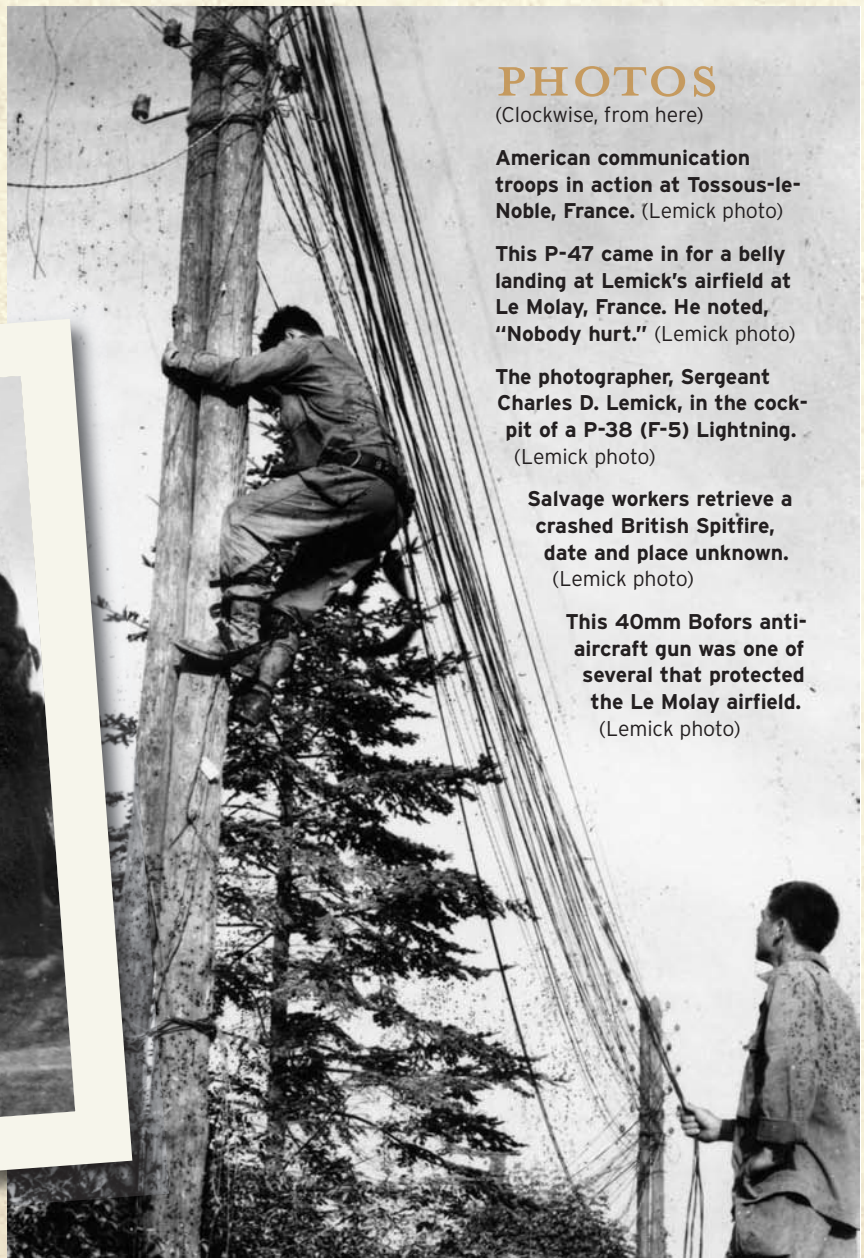
Certainly, they added the punch and power Army-based Philippines command needed and welcomed. But the year ended for the Marines without their having been called upon even once to demonstrate their new forte: close air support of ground troops in combat. That would come on an island to the north of Leyte, in the new year. □



SERGEANT CHARLES D. LEMICK, AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER, RECORDED HIS WARTIME JOURNEY THROUGH EUROPE.

AUDREY LEMICK

PHOTO ALBUM



PHOTOS

(Clockwise, from here)

American communication troops in action at Tossous-le-Noble, France. (Lemick photo)

This P-47 came in for a belly landing at Lemick's airfield at Le Molay, France. He noted, "Nobody hurt." (Lemick photo)

The photographer, Sergeant Charles D. Lemick, in the cockpit of a P-38 (F-5) Lightning. (Lemick photo)

Salvage workers retrieve a crashed British Spitfire, date and place unknown. (Lemick photo)

This 40mm Bofors antiaircraft gun was one of several that protected the Le Molay airfield. (Lemick photo)

When most people think of the U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II, the first image that usually comes to mind is that of the heavy bombers, the B-17s and B-24s, that ravaged targets in Europe and the B-29s that wreaked havoc on Japanese cities in the Pacific.

Second comes recognition of the fighter squadrons that dueled with enemy pilots to protect the aerial fleets of bombers or strafe targets on the ground—trains, truck convoys, and enemy positions.

Hardly any thought these days is given to the brave pilots who risked their lives taking aerial photographs so that the bombers could find their targets and later assess the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the bombing.

Photo reconnaissance was a vital part of the Allied war effort, and the 30th Squadron, 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group of Lt. Gen. Lewis Brereton's England-based U.S. Ninth Air Force played a key role in aerial photo mapping, target selection, and documenting enemy troop concentrations and fortifications.

The squadron's mission was to take still- and motion-picture films of enemy positions, bomb-damage assessment photos following bombing raids, and included, as a 1943 Air Force booklet pointed out, "securing information necessary for planning the employment of a striking force." The 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its most storied job of flying missions "at minimum altitudes along the Normandy invasion beaches immediately preceding Allied landings [on June 6, 1944]."

Eventually, the group's converted P-38 (F-5) Lightning and P-51 Mustang (F-6) camera planes flew more than 5,000 missions, took over 2,200,000 photographs, operated over France, Belgium, and Germany, and were the first American planes to operate from bases east of the Rhine River. At war's end, members of the squadron became witnesses to Nazi atrocities at the Buchenwald concentration camp outside Weimar, Germany.

Sergeant Charles D. Lemick of Gary, Indiana, an instrument repair specialist who performed maintenance on instruments carried by unarmed P-38 camera planes, served with the squadron. An avid amateur photographer, Lemick recorded his wartime journeys through England, France, Belgium, and Germany. Although orders were issued prohibiting GIs from taking pictures in combat zones, that order was, luckily for historians, widely ignored. The result is a remarkably candid view of the war by amateur photographers.

These photos were graciously provided by Lemick's widow, Audrey, of Highlands Ranch, Colorado.

We are interested in publishing photos taken by other veterans. Please contact the editor at WWIIQuarterly@gmail.com before sending any photos. □

PHOTOS (Clockwise, from top right)

Human organs, preserved in formaldehyde and photographed by Lemick in the camp's pathology laboratory, were taken from prisoners who died or were killed at Buchenwald. Many of these exhibits were later introduced as evidence in the Nazi war crimes trials. (Lemick photo)

USO singer Dinah Shore entertained the troops at Le Molay, France, summer 1944. (Lemick photo)

A camera plane recorded this low-angle scene of German troops installing obstacles along Normandy's Omaha Beach and running for cover shortly before the Allied invasion. (U.S. Army Air Forces)

An American three-quarter-ton Dodge weapons carrier WC-51 passes a destroyed German armored vehicle, a victim of the fierce fighting in Carentan several weeks earlier. (Lemick photo)

The aircraft mechanics and technicians of the 30th Squadron, 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, Ninth Air Force, photographed at their English base in Chalgrove, Oxfordshire, April 8, 1944. (U.S. Army Air Forces)

PHOTOS

(Clockwise, from right)

A high-angle BDA (bomb-damage assessment) photo of Nevers, July 17, 1944. Bomb craters and smoke from burning freight cars in the railroad marshalling yard are clearly visible. (U.S. Army Air Forces)

Piles of emaciated corpses were left at Buchenwald as silent witnesses to the Nazis' brutal treatment of inmates. (Lemick photo)

A group of GIs inspects the portable gallows that were used to execute inmates who had committed crimes at Buchenwald, such as stealing, sabotage, and attempting to escape. (Lemick photo)

Audrey and Charles Lemick, photographed in Normandy in May 2004, during a 50th anniversary D-Day trip to France. (Lemick photo)

After the first American troops entered the Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, Germany, on April 11, 1945, General Eisenhower insisted that as many units as possible visit the camp. Here, two U.S. soldiers walk among liberated prisoners. The sign on the barracks wall reads, "The German Political Prisoners Greet Their American Friends." (Lemick photo)

THE SUPPLY FRONT: ALLIES' KEY TO VICTORY

BY GLENN BARNETT

Of all the factors that helped the Allies win the war, none was more important than the vast, unbroken flow of supplies from the home front to the front lines.

After the war in Europe was won, General Dwight D. Eisenhower had many opportunities to review various campaigns with the leaders of the Soviet Army— including even Josef Stalin himself.

Without exception, the Russians wanted to ask Ike one thing. "It was," Eisenhower wrote in *Crusade in Europe,* "to explain the supply arrangements that enabled us to make the great sweep out of our constricted beachhead in Normandy to cover, in one rush, all of France, Belgium and Luxembourg, up to the very borders of Germany. I had to describe to them our systems of railway repairs and construction, truckage, evacuation, and supply by air. They suggested that of all the spectacular feats of the war, even including their own, the Allied success in the supply of the pursuit across France would go down in history as the most astonishing."

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Twentieth-century warfare brought with it an urgent need to move massive amounts of supplies to far-flung battlefields around the globe. Before the mechanical age, horses and mules moved wagonloads of supplies the short distances that armies could march on foot. Horses could feed on any local hillside and drink from any stream or pool. Most often men, too, lived off the land.

Mechanization changed warfare as much as the machine gun did. Motorized vehicles carried everything from soldiers to heavy guns, requiring vast amounts of fuel, lubricants, spare parts, mechanics, and motor pools. Aircraft required ground

As the American army pushed farther eastward, the supply pipeline needed to be kept full to support the troops in the field. Millions of tons of supplies were offloaded at Antwerp's port, shown here. INSET: Often excluded from combat duties, African American troops were mostly used in support roles. Here a group of black soldiers handles supplies at the port of Antwerp, Belgium, winter 1944.

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

National Archives

crews, regular maintenance, and huge fields from which to operate.

The vast distances to the fronts in Europe and the Pacific required the movement of men and material from America by ship over thousands of miles of submarine-infested oceans.

When World War II began, the United States was not yet able to produce or deliver great quantities of supplies to its own armies, let alone its allies. It was an enormous frustration for the nation to watch the isolated garrisons on Wake, Bataan, and Corregidor wither on the vine and be conquered from want of supplies and reinforcements.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the first round of the supply war in Europe. It was fought to keep supplies flowing to Great Britain and the Soviet Union to sustain them while American troops added their punch against the common enemy.

The Army Transportation Corps came into its own in 1942. It was an amalgamation of the railway transportation duties of the Corps of Engineers, the motor transport function of the Quartermaster Corps, and other assets that were involved in moving men and matériel. This included engineers who could build and maintain roads, bridges, railroads, harbors, and warehouses.

One unit of the Transportation Corps in the enormous chain of supply that linked the home front with the front line was known as the 16th Port, activated on May 24, 1943. Its mission was to repair, restore, and operate the ports to be used by the Allies in Europe. By early July its compliment of 409 enlisted men, 109 officers, and one warrant officer was filled, and in mid-July the 16th began a 13-week intensive course of basic training. All the officers and 91 percent of the men qualified in their rifle training.

More importantly, their training included the construction of the USS *Simplicity* (not to be confused with a World War I patrol boat of the same name). This was a miniature model of a Liberty ship with which the men could practice problem solving in the loading and unloading of scale-model cargo and vehicles in the most efficient manner. Later, the land ship *Gloria,* a full-sized section of a real Liberty ship, was used to practice the operation of winches, cranes, forklifts, and other machinery in cargo handling.

THE INITIAL DEFEAT OF AMERICAN FORCES IN THE BATTLE OF KASSERINE PASS AWAKENED A REMARKABLE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE ARMY AND NAVY IN ASTONISHING WAYS.

On January 8, 1944, the 16th Port shipped out from New York harbor, but not without incident. Their transport ship, the SS *Mauritania,* struck a tanker while still in harbor and was compelled to return to dock. Damage was minor, and she sailed the next day for England, arriving at Liverpool on January 18 in the midst of the D-Day buildup. The 16th Port story was but one small chapter in overall Allied strategy.

Long before the activation of the 16th, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had ruled out any invasion of Europe in 1942 or 1943 in large part because of the inability to ship the goods necessary to supply an invading army. The simpler alternative of invading Vichy-held North Africa was complicated by prowling German U-boats. Almost daily the planning staff of the invasion had to reschedule transport of vital supplies when news arrived that a cargo ship had been sunk. Further, every ship that was to assist in North Africa was a ship taken away from supplying England. In the days before great numbers of Liberty ships slid down the ways, hard choices had to be made about priorities and resource allocation.

Supply was a key factor in determining the North African landing sites. Casablanca was chosen as a beachhead because it sat at the terminus of a trans-North African railroad that stretched all the way to Tunisia. When captured, the rickety railroad was only capable of hauling 900 tons a day, a small fraction of what was needed to sustain a major operation. Railway engineers of the Transportation Corps soon upped the capacity to 3,000 tons a day. This was even before American-built locomotives and freight cars could be brought over.

The initial defeat of American forces in the Battle of Kasserine Pass awakened a remarkable spirit of cooperation between the Army and Navy in astonishing ways. Eisenhower recorded that a shipment of 5,400 trucks was to go to North Africa. General Brehon Somervell, the war department supply and procurement chief, told Ike that the vehicles could be loaded onto transports in the States within three days if only the Navy, busy with its own problems, could provide convoy protection. Ike picked up the phone and called Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Ernest Joseph King. Within a few hours, King had made the arrangements, and the trucks began arriving in North Africa three weeks after the initial request.

A humorous postscript to this affair came from one of General Somervell's aides who coordinated the shipment from Washington. At the end of a letter detailing the horrific logistical problems involved in the shipment of the trucks, he concluded with, "If you should want the Pentagon shipped over there, please try to give us about a week's notice." The new trucks contributed to improving the supply situation in Tunisia.

Besides moving men and material by ship, rail, and truck, the Transportation Corps was given responsibility for cleaning up captured harbors that had often been wrecked and operating them to bring in more men and material, as well as evacuating the wounded and enemy prisoners of war.

With each new campaign, the engineers and sea salvage experts of the Corps, working closely with their British counterparts and local civilian labor, gained more experience. By the time Naples was liberated, the harbors of Casablanca, Algiers, Oran, Bizerte, and Palermo had been cleared by these teams who by now knew what they were doing.

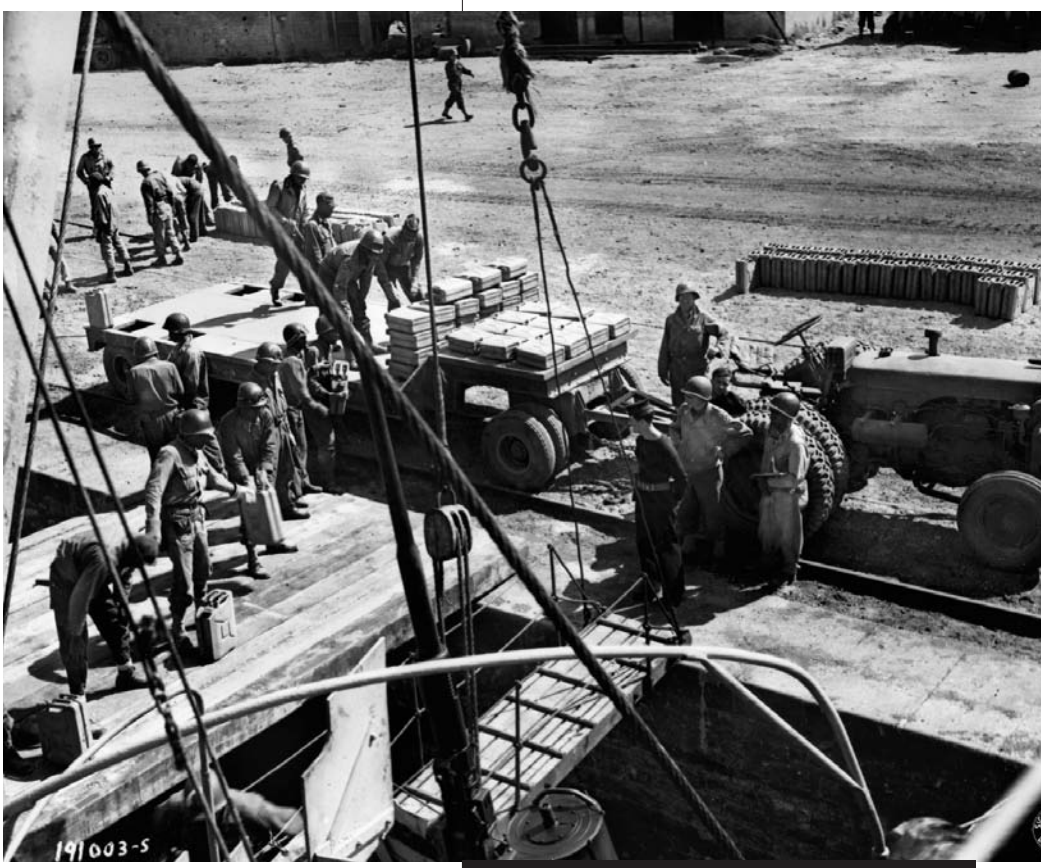
Naples was the first harbor that the Germans had an opportunity to systematically destroy before the Allies arrived. Yet, the seemingly useless mass of sunken ships, blasted docks, ruined cranes, and burned warehouses was quickly repaired and put back into service to bring in the needed fuel, ammunition, and food. As important as the Italian campaign seemed at the time, it soon became a backwater to the main event in Europe, the invasion of Normandy.

The 16th Port was now in the thick of it. When it landed in England in January 1944, it was immediately put to work. The outfit was temporarily divided and assigned to assist the 15th Port in Liverpool and the 17th Port in several busy Bristol Channel ports. They at once set about employing their new skills at unloading supplies and men in preparation for the invasion across the English Channel. At one point the Bristol ports handled 45 percent of all the cargo unloaded from the transatlantic convoys, and Liverpool was one of the largest and busiest ports in the world. The 16th got plenty of on-the-job training.

As D-Day approached, the 16th Port was reconstituted in the Bristol Channel area and given the new responsibility of loading supplies and vehicles onto invasion transports. The 16th's job was twofold; while they were loading ships for Normandy, they were still unloading the growing flood of men and material coming from the States.

One unit of the 16th based in Cardiff, Wales, unloaded more than 80,000 tons of supplies during May 1944. That included the complete cargo of 25 ships and partial unloading of five more. One transport ship, the *Texas,* made two port visits in May loaded with locomotives and tanks. On her first trip the 16th had the *Texas* unloaded within 48 hours; on the second trip the heavy cargo was removed in 36 hours.

The actual invasion itself did not give the 16th any respite. The demands for supplies of all types soared. The outfit worked a seven-day week until its orders came to shove off for France to continue its work at a Normandy port. There, new problems awaited. Invasion planners long knew that



At a French port along the English Channel, Army stevedores form a "bucket brigade" to move empty five-gallon gas cans from a ship to a trailer. OPPOSITE: Brig. Gen. Earl Hoag, left, commanding general of the Air Transport Command, talks with General Brehon Somervell, War Department supply and procurement chief and the hard-driving genius behind the U.S. Army's logistics success.

National Archives

the capture and use of northern European ports would be crucial to Allied victory.

General Eisenhower defined the problem: "A reinforced division consumes from 600 to 700 tons of supplies per day. In a fixed position most of this tonnage is represented in ammunition, on the march the bulk is devoted to gasoline and lubricants."

Two artificial harbors, known as Mulberries, were prefabricated in England, towed across the Channel, and sunk in place at Allied beachheads in Normandy. These impromptu ports received men and material until June 19, when severe storms struck the Channel. For four days, winds and high seas battered the coast, destroying one of the makeshift harbors in the American sector and grounding over 300 ships and boats, some beyond repair. The American 83rd Division was compelled to ride out the storm in its battened-down troopship for nearly a week. When calm returned, the poor GIs came ashore seasick and exhausted.

Despite the delays, by July 2 there were a million Allied soldiers (23 divisions) in the narrow enclave at Normandy. In addition, 566,648 tons of supplies and 171,332 vehicles had been brought in to support the expected breakouts of the beachhead.

Meanwhile, the Allied siege against the important French port city of Cherbourg was successful, and the town fell on D-Day + 20. Cherbourg's port facilities had to be cleared of rubble and hundreds of German mines and booby traps. It was not until July that the first supplies could be unloaded, and not until August that the port was fully operational. Cherbourg was soon woefully far behind the rapidly moving front lines.

By August 1, 1944, there were 35 active Allied divisions on the Continent; on October 1 (after Operation Dragoon, the invasion in southern France), there were 54 divisions. As the front moved rapidly, sometimes 75 miles a day, the never-ending need to transport the sheer volume of supplies was compounded by distance.

In Europe, the scattered elements of the 16th Port would be reunited and, for the first time, operate under their own command. On August 5, General William M. Hoge, commander of the 16th, and a team of five officers and six enlisted men flew to France to make arrangements for the rest of the command to follow. Landing at Cherbourg, they drove down the peninsula in the midst of some of the still-raging battles with German holdouts around St. Malo and elsewhere.

The rest of the men loaded onto LSTs for their journey to the Continent and got a taste of war on their short passage. A U-boat fired torpedoes at them, hitting one LST and sinking a small LCT that got in the way. The attack was not pressed, and the men of the 16th Port arrived at Utah Beach on August 20.

Germans wrecked the port of Cherbourg before the Americans could capture it. While it was being repaired, cargo ships such as these had to be offloaded at sea.

National Archives

DON'T FORGET THE RUSSIANS!

Supplying millions of troops on the Allies' many fighting fronts was an enormous undertaking. But the most difficult supply effort of the war was the Eastern Front. While the British made every effort to unite and cooperate with the Americans for common victory, the Russians from the start received American aid and supplies with suspicion. They were at once demanding and ungrateful. In their endless pleas for supplies, they gave as much thought to the postwar era as the present war in ordering material from the Arsenal of Democracy.

Soviet supplies were organized through the prewar Lend-Lease program. By war's end, some $9.6 billion worth of every type of export was sent from the United States to the Soviet Union. Such was Russian secrecy and American openness that planeloads of sealed suitcases marked "diplomatic immunity" could pass out of the country unchecked. A casual inspection by a few unsupported vigilant inspectors revealed that the suitcases might contain copies of American patents, mathematical equations, and blueprints of American factories.

Among the supplies requested for Russian medical experiments were heavy water, water that has been highly enriched in the hydrogen isotope deuterium, and uranium, which were sent almost without protest. While the Russians received over 1,700 fighter planes,

Their immediate assignment was to handle five small ports around the recently liberated St. Malo. Between the time they landed and September 22, the 16th Port and attached units unloaded 62,000 tons of gasoline, oil, ammunition, and rations. On out-going ships, they embarked 4,200 casualties for England. Some supplies (745 tons a day) were offloaded at St. Michel-en-Greve. There was no actual port there, only a beach where the tides were extreme. LSTs steamed up to the shore at high tide. As one observing Frenchman noted, they were closer to shore "than even the fish can swim."

Hundreds of military vehicles brought over from England are lined up on the beach near the recently repaired Cherbourg harbor, summer 1944.

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

As the tide receded, lines of trucks rushed across the beach to the stranded ships. Cargo was manually offloaded to the waiting trucks, which then roared off with their loads to the waiting supply dumps. When the tide returned to release the beached LSTs, the trucks began hauling cargo from the dumps to the front on the dedicated roads of the famed Red Ball Express, and the LSTs lifted off to procure more supplies.

During this time, the important French port of Le Havre at the mouth of the Seine River was captured, and the 16th Port was reassigned to operate the facility. In peacetime, Le Havre had been an important port for commercial steamships. The French luxury liners *Normandie, Ile de France,* and *City of Paris,* as well as many others, docked there; many Americans got their first prewar glimpse of France at this bustling port city of 170,000 people.

The port included 11 major docks; half of the 218 acres of sheltered harbor could take ships drawing 23 feet of water. For the 16th Port it was no pleasure trip. Le Havre in 1944 bore little resemblance to its prewar appearance. During four years of Nazi occupation, the port had been idle due to an effective British blockade. Only small German torpedo boats and minelayers called the port home. After D-Day fast German E-boats slipped out of Le Havre at night to attack Allied convoys in the Channel. In response, the harbor and city were bombed and at least 20 enemy vessels were sunk. Mine and torpedo storage areas were also struck, increasing the damage.

As Allied forces drew near Le Havre, the Germans systematically prepared powerful demolition charges in strategic locations along the quays and docks. Mines were laid and wired electronically. The Nazis were very thorough. The official Allied estimate was that the harbor area was 100 percent destroyed and the city 70 percent destroyed (much of the damage to the city was due to Allied bombing). Only 25,000 of the civilian population still remained in the city to greet their liberators, and these were very dispirited. Many were seen wandering among the ruins searching for loved ones in the rubble.

There was little time to assess the damage; repair work had to be done quickly.

300 medium bombers, and 300 transport planes during 1942 and 1943, they also asked for and were sent thousands of items ranging from chemicals, machine tools, metals, copper wire, paper, ink, and even women's cosmetics.

The Russians were persistent to the point of comedy. When a visiting Russian colonel indignantly asked why an American tanker truck had a red star on it, he was informed that the truck belonged to the Texaco Oil Company whose logo is a red star. The Russian seemed insulted that an American company should usurp the symbol of the great Soviet Union and demanded that the star be removed.

The United States and its Western allies endured the Russians' ingratitude for only one reason—to keep them in the war; that was the immediate and all-important goal. Throughout the conflict in Europe the Russians faced the overwhelming majority of the German Army. Whatever material and industrial secrets the Soviets may have gained as a result of fleecing American taxpayers was paid for in the blood of millions of their citizens and the utter destruction of vast areas of their nation. When General Eisenhower visited the Soviet Union after the war, he noted that he did not see a single house standing from the Ukraine to Moscow.

In the light of history, the Russians can be seen as desperate in the extreme and the Americans as generous to a fault, but it was not until the fall of the Soviet Empire that these events could be evaluated with dispassion. □

Corbis

An essential ingredient to victory was the "Red Ball Express"—an unending loop of thousands of trucks driven by black soldiers hauling supplies to the front lines. Here trucks load up with supplies transported by rail.

The 373rd Engineer General Service Regiment had overall responsibility for clearing the port, but the 16th did its part in clearing the rubble. The unit immediately cleared two stretches of the beach of mines, barbed wire, and rubble to make room for landing craft bringing in supplies. Impromptu roads were bulldozed and obstructions cleared. Formerly fashionable French beaches turned into German defensive strongpoints were now major Allied supply mini-ports as the unloading went on day and night. The task of cleaning up was begun in late September, and the first three LSTs were unloaded on October 2.

With the beaches cleared and supplies moving rapidly ashore, the next task was to restore the ruined harbor, canals, and locks. Among the other important tasks, storage space had to be cleared for 100,000 barrels of petroleum, oil, and lubricants. Fortunately, the manpower was available.

By this time in the war, the 16th Port was a miniature army in its own right. Attached to the headquarters organization of 500 men were operating units of stevedore companies to unload ships. There were truck companies to haul supplies to depots and ordnance outfits that prepared tanks and other equipment for use. They also supervised the handling of bombs, shells, and other munitions. There were also amphibious truck companies that drove the famous and indispensable DUKWs, commonly known as Ducks, from ship to shore. Eisenhower thought the Duck was one of the most important vehicles of the war.

Of vital importance were maintenance and repair units, the heroes that restored the damaged docks or built new ones; composite medical units; military police companies; harbor craft companies to operate tug boats; and air defense batteries and radar units to guard against enemy planes and U-boats. At its peak, the 16th Port would have as many as 15,000 soldiers attached to its service, plus thousands of French civilians who were employed to perform different duties.

The key to Le Havre's calm inner basin was the Rochemont lock and the adjoining Transatlantique lock. The gates of both locks had been damaged by the Germans. But the enemy had failed to sabotage a dry dock, thinking it useless in light of the other damage. What they had overlooked was that the gates of the nearby dry dock were still serviceable. These soon replaced those of the Rochemont lock.

The onset of bitter winter weather and accompanying storms in the Channel made the task of restoring the entrance to the inner harbor even more important. On December 16, 1944, the first Liberty ship made its way through the locks and into the safety of the inner basins.

There was a long list of other, seemingly never-ending, tasks to be done. The Seine River needed to be cleared of obstacles, and the Tancarville Canal, which joined the harbor to the river, needed repair. Floating docks were built and extended into the basin to accommodate the Liberty ships. Warehouses were constructed to provide sheltered storage space. There were also 286 miles of highway to maintain.

The Army was not alone in the restoration and repair job at Le Havre. The 628th Navy Seabee (naval construction) unit and the 1716th and 1717th Royal Marine Engineers worked in close cooperation to clear the harbor of its wreckage and construct pontoon piers.

One important factor always noted in the success of supply efforts was the contribution of the African American units. Segregated for the most part, these all-black outfits of stevedore and driver battalions literally carried the burden of supply. Even during the war, their indispensable labor was acknowledged by the Army at all levels.

General George S. Patton, Jr., is said to have been especially gracious to the black truck drivers as a way of assuring his own supplies.

The success of the 16th Port at Le Havre may be measured in tonnage. In October 1944, a total of 62,319 tons of ammunition and other supplies were unloaded. In November the total increased to 171,541 tons, and in December it peaked at 203,926 tons.

Troop disembarkation was even more impressive. Besides the never-ceasing cries for more supplies of every kind, the call for frontline replacements for the dead and wounded grew louder. Thus, Le Havre became the leading Allied personnel entry point of the

European Theater of Operations (ETO); a total of 1,887 personnel arrived in October, 89,825 in November, and 101,646 in December.

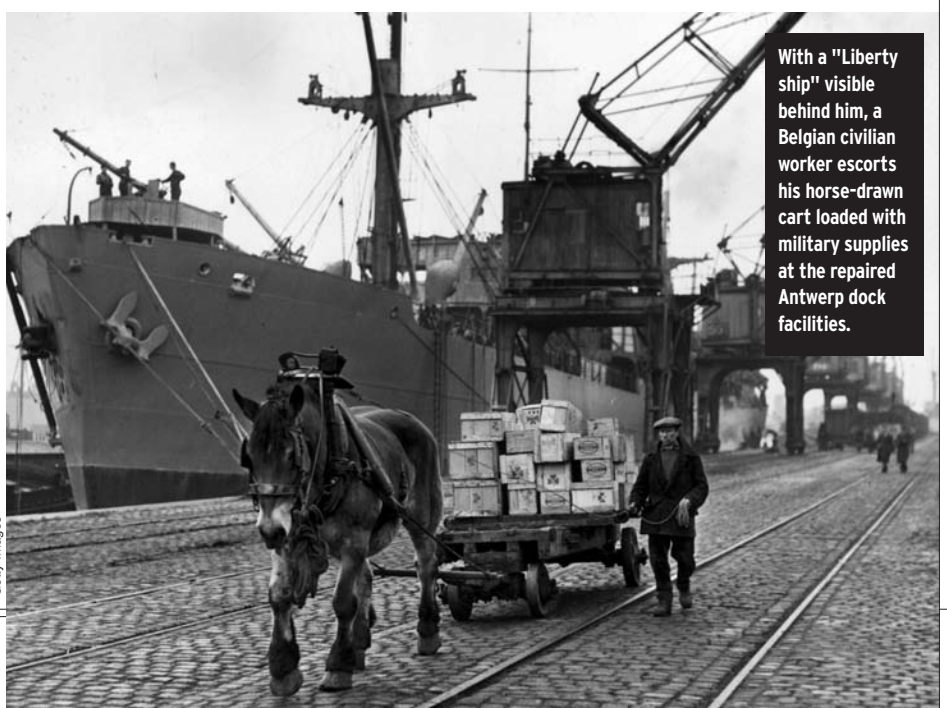
The arrival of sufficient quantities of ammunition was just as essential. Twenty-five trainloads left Le Havre for the front in October, 50 trains in November and, during December's Battle of the Bulge, 92 trains of ammunition were rushed to the front. Ammunition handling was streamlined by separating bombs and artillery shells by type and size when they were unloaded from ships. This way they could be shipped in solid carloads and forward depots did not have to perform time-consuming searches for the right ordnance. Carloads of needed ordnance could be diverted to critical spots without further handling or documentation.

Le Havre was just one port. This massive supply effort was being duplicated all over northern France. In contrast, during the month of July 1942, at the very high-water mark of German General Erwin Rommel's advance against the British at El Alamein, the Italian Navy managed to move 67,000 tons of material and 24 tons of fuel oil from Italy to North African ports. Here the Axis supply line broke down as supplies moved slowly from Tunisia and Libya forward to Egypt, causing the Afrika Korps' advance to stall.

Action in emergencies is an expected part of war. On the morning of November 11, 1944, the Liberty ship *Lee S. Overman* struck a German mine just outside the entrance to the Le Havre harbor. The mine left a gaping hole, but the captain had the presence of mind to beach his ship just before she cracked in two. The *Overman*'s cargo consisted of 36 two-and-a-half-ton trucks on deck and 6,000 tons of ammunition in the hold. The two broken halves of the ship began to bump and slam into each other from the choppy seas.

If the cargo were not immediately removed, the grinding metal of the ship's two halves might catch a shell in its maw, triggering an explosion. French civilian stevedores were rushed to the scene along with two floating cranes. By 11 PM, the entire deck cargo, including the trucks, had been offloaded onto bobbing LCTs. Rising water and spilled oil in the hold made the removal of the volatile ordnance even more dangerous. Waves pounded the cranes and LCTs and soaked the men, but the unloading procedure continued until all the ordnance was removed and sent on its way to the front.

WHEN THE 16TH PORT STATISTICS WERE ADDED UP, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT OVER ONE MILLION GIS HAD BEEN REDEPLOYED THROUGH LE HAVRE FOR HOME OR THE PACIFIC.



With a "Liberty ship" visible behind him, a Belgian civilian worker escorts his horse-drawn cart loaded with military supplies at the repaired Antwerp dock facilities.

Getty Images

The port of Antwerp, Belgium, finally became available to the Allies in November 1944, when the last pockets of enemy resistance in the Scheldt Estuary were mopped up. As Antwerp opened to shipping, the importance of Le Havre as a port of entry began to decrease, even though total tonnage of supplies and ammunition shipped through the port continued to increase.

The Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 was Hitler's last throw of the dice. His desperate bid to cut through the Ardennes in an effort to seize the Allies' port at Antwerp brought supply demands to a fever pitch. At the same time, two engineering regiments attached to the 16th Port were sent into action.

The 392nd Engineers and Company E of the 373rd Engineers were issued weapons and hastened to the Meuse River, where they patrolled and prepared defensive arrangements should the enemy threaten that sector. They planted mines, guarded bridges, and prepared charges for demolition. The Germans, with much more serious supply problems than the Allies, pushed desperately toward the important supply depots in Liége, Belgium, but were denied.

Meanwhile, the besieged 101st Airborne Division, trapped at Bastogne, received 800,000 pounds of airlifted supplies in its valiant fight against superior German forces.

With the failure of their last desperate offensive, the German war machine in the West crumbled, but the U.S. Army Transportation Corps did not let up. Eleven days after British General Bernard L. Montgomery crossed the Rhine at Wesel, Germany, one of the widest stretches of the river, American engineers high-balled the first railroad train across a newly built bridge.

Continued on page 98

Seventy years after the historic raid on Japan, secrecy and unanswered questions still remain.

The Unsolved Mysteries of the DOOLITTLE RAID

APRIL 18, 1942, will forever live in American military glory as the date of the Doolittle Raid—a gutsy, never-before-attempted combat mission to fly North American B-25 Mitchell bombers off the deck of an aircraft carrier and attack an enemy capital.

Although the damage from the bombing of Japanese targets was a blip on the screen compared to the devastation that Japan delivered to Pearl Harbor, this American retaliatory action shattered the island nation's inscrutable veneer and reminded the Japanese that they, too, were vulnerable. Although it came so early in the war, the raid launched the beginning of the Land of the Rising Sun's downward spiral and eventual defeat in World War II.

The Doolittle Raid was America's first joint action with the Army Air Forces and the U.S. Navy. This groundbreaking mission shipped 16 B-25B Mitchell land-based bombers and their five-man crews aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* to within 500 miles of the Japanese coastline. The mission climaxed with the planes bombing Tokyo and other industrial centers. The leader of the improbable raid was the legendary aviator and World War I pilot Lt. Col. James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle.

Because the success of the raid depended entirely on the element of surprise, there was a code of silence so widespread that paper trails were often nonexistent and information cryptic. Two days after the raid, the U.S. War Department reported the mission to America but not its staging point. President Franklin Roosevelt maintained this clandestine air by coyly saying the pilots had taken off from "Shangri la," in reference to English author James Hilton's 1933 best-selling book, *Lost Horizon*.The raid began and

In a painting by Robert Bailey, the B-25s of Colonel Jimmy Doolittle's raiders leave burning targets in their wake as they head for China, April 18, 1942.

INSET: The crew of B-25 #40-2344, the lead bomber (left to right): Lieutenant Henry A. Potter, navigator; Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle, pilot; S/Sgt. Fred A. Braemer, bombardier; Lieutenant Richard E. Cole, co-pilot; S/Sgt. Paul J. Leonard, flight engineer/gunner.

ational Archives

BY SUSAN ZIMMERMAN

ended in secrecy and, some 70 years later, the secrecy still flies high—the mysteries of the Doolittle Raid remain.

The Mystery of Plane 8

The eighth plane to take off from *Hornet* was the only B-25 that became mired in controversy due to its inauspicious landing in Russia and the aftermath. Although all 16 of the planes were low on fuel due to the forced premature launch from the carrier, all 15 headed for China after dropping their bombs. Plane 8 broke ranks and landed in Vladivostok, Russia. An air of

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USAAF Photo

ABOVE: Top-secret training for the mission was not without risk. This B-25 crashed at Ellington Field, Texas, March 10, 1942. LEFT: Crew of Plane 8, interned in Russia (left to right): Lieutenant Nolan A. Herndon, bombardier/navigator; Captain Edward J. York, pilot; Sergeant Theodore H. Laban, flight engineer/gunner; Lieutenant Robert Emmens, co-pilot; Sergeant David W. Pohl, gunner, not shown.

complicity that the landing was "ordered" has tailed the plane and crew ever since.

There were many questions that plagued Lieutenant Nolan A. Herndon, the bombardier-navigator on Plane 8 who, along with pilot Captain Edward J. "Ski" York, co-pilot Lieutenant Robert G. Emmens, and two other crewmen, was interned for 13 months in Russia after the unauthorized landing. Herndon felt that the true reason for the detour was to test Russia's wartime allegiance and find out if their plane would be permitted to refuel and continue to China, and also to collect information about Russia's airfield for use in possible future attacks on Japan. Herndon believed that both Emmens and York were privy to the flight's surreptitious purpose.

While the defining document instructing Plane 8 "off course" remains elusive, there is a significant black-and-white paper trail that leads to Russia's landing fields. The very last line in Doolittle's February 1942 feasibility report to General "Hap" Arnold states, "Should the Russians be willing to accept delivery of 18 B-25-B airplanes, on lease lend, at Vladivostok our problems should be greatly simplified…." Vladivostok was some 600 miles from Japan, while China's fields were double that distance, hence Russia's cooperation would have simplified matters.

The United States had its eye on Russian soil for the post-bombing landing as evidenced by Doolittle's report and the Lend-Lease Program enacted on March 11, 1941, which provided billions of dollars of war matériel to the Allied nations including the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union wanted to keep its distance from the United States, so the mission went forward without Russia's cooperation and the 15 courageous crews either bailed out over or crash landed in China due to low fuel, except for one.

Debriefing papers that were filed following the raid by Plane 8's pilot, Captain York, fueled Herndon's suspicions. York reported low fuel as his only reason for flying to the Soviet Union and also provided significant information about the airfields around Vladivostok. "In the later years of the war, 250 U.S. pilots flying B-17s from Alaska's Aleutian Islands would seek refuge in the Soviet Union," he wrote.

The Doolittle Raiders official website corroborated other events with its own repository of military reports and records from the raid. A rather incriminating disclosure revealed that Herndon once asked Doolittle about the flight to the Soviet Union and received this cryptic answer: "I'll tell you one thing, Herndon: I didn't send you there." Doolittle's rather sideways response spoke volumes. If he didn't send him there, then did someone else? And, if so, who?

There were also skeptics within the ranks of the raiders. A 2007 *Los Angeles Times* article reported that Tom Casey, manager of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders organization, called Herndon's story a "mystery" that "military officials never would confirm or deny," while Carroll V. Glines, the raiders' historian who has written three books on the subject and co-wrote Doolittle's autobiography, said, "All I know is, Nolan was there, and I wasn't, but I could never find any clues to confirm that it happened that way."

Although Herndon was mostly a lone voice of dissent over the years, Plane 9's navigator, Lieutenant Thomas C. Griffin, shared his view. In notes from a 2007 roundtable discussion, Griffin recounted seeing York at a raider reunion in which "Ed was just as evasive then as he was when Davey [Jones] and I ran across him in Washington prior to the raid." Later on, Griffin said, "I guess we will never find out if the State Department or the Secret Service set up 'Ski' York for a special secret mission. It is my belief that his clandestine mission instructions were never put in writing."

BLUEPRINT OF A BOMBING

Two weeks after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt put out the word. He wanted to strike back with an audacious air attack against Japan to boost American morale. On January 10, 1942, FDR met with, among others, Admiral Ernest J. King , Chief of Naval Operations and Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet); General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff; and General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Forces.

That same day Captain Francis S. "Frog" Low, King's operations officer, was visiting the newly commissioned carrier USS *Hornet* in Norfolk, Virginia. Low knew that Navy dive bombers couldn't go the distance to Japan because of their short, 300-mile operating radius, but thought maybe Army bombers could—if the Navy could get them within striking distance.

Low took his idea to Captain Donald "Wu" Duncan, the air officer on Admiral King's staff. The two discussed possible planes, including the B-25B, then took their report to King, who told them to take it to Arnold. On January 17, 1942, Low and Duncan presented the concept, and Arnold concurred.

On February 2, 1942, the idea was tested. Two B-25s successfully took off from the 20,000-ton *Hornet,* which proved that the medium bombers could indeed get in the air from a carrier. Once the idea cleared the decks, Arnold sent for his new special projects officer, 45-year-old James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle, a well-known racing pilot during the late 1920s and 1930s, a stunt pilot, and master of the calculated risk.

The planes would need to be modified with additional gas tanks that would allow them to be launched within 500 miles of the Japanese coast and fly 2,000 miles with a 2,000-pound bomb load. It was calculated that 16 B-25s could be squeezed aboard *Hornet* and that 80 men (16 crews of five) would be required for the mission.

Each plane was extensively altered for this mostly low-level raid (the maximum altitude was 1,500 feet)—the ventral turret was removed as was the radio equipment, the fuel load was increased to 1,141 gallons, and the top-secret Norden bombsight taken out and replaced with a makeshift bombsight. The bomb load consisted of four 500-pound bombs. To discourage attacks from the stern, a pair of dummy guns (wooden broomsticks painted black) were attached to the rear fuselage.

Lieutenant Henry L. "Hank" Miller, naval aviator, was assigned to train the men in carrier take-off procedures. Teaching Army pilots how to take off from a 350-foot runway, compared to the normal 1,000 feet they were used to, would take practice and lots of it. It was also the first time land-based bombers would fly from a carrier deck in combat.

The 17th Bombardment Group, which was then flying antisubmarine patrol groups from Pendleton, Oregon (but also had the only B-25s in service), was told to fly cross-country to Lexington County Army Air Base at Columbia, South Carolina. En route the crews stopped at Mid-Continent Airlines in Minneapolis to have the planes modified. On February 9, 1941, the crews arrived in South Carolina, where squadron commanders narrowed the selects to 140 men for 24 crews plus extras.

In early March, the men finally arrived at Eglin Field in Florida for three weeks of intensive training. Crews practiced carrier takeoffs, low-level and night flying, low-altitude bombing, and over-water navigation. Time was short to fully train the B-25 crews, and their new, extensively modified B-25B bombers still had some problems. The final modifications were made at Sacramento Air Depot.

On March 31 and April 1, the 16 25,000-pound, $125,000 B-25s were loaded onto Captain Marc A. Mitscher's *Hornet* from the dock at the Alameda (California) Naval Air Station. The mission that had been up in the air since it was conceived was ready to fly. It was payback time. *Hornet* and her escorts departed California on April 2.

Sixteen days later, still over 600 miles from Japan, trouble was spotted and heavy gunfire shook the carrier. First Lieutenant Ted W. Lawson, pilot of Plane 7 (nicknamed *The Ruptured Duck*) reported, "I got out on the flight deck and ran around a B-25 just in time to see the cruiser [USS N*ashville*] off to our left let go another broadside of flame in the direction away from us. And presently, down near the horizon, a low-slung ship began to give off an ugly plume of black smoke. Dive bombers were wheeling over it.... One of the Navy boys, hurrying past, said it was a Japanese patrol boat [the *Nitt Maru*] and that our gunnery had accounted for it within three minutes after engaging."

Fearing that the boat had alerted Japanese authorities to the presence of the convoy, Doolittle and Mitscher decided to immediately launch the strike. At 8:20 AM on April 18, Doolittle, in the lead bomber, lifted off from Hornet some 200 miles farther east than planned. Despite the early takeoff and the distance between the carrier and Japan, all 16 planes successfully launched, flew for nearly six hours without being intercepted, and dropped their bombs and incendiaries on military targets in Tokyo, Kobe, Nagoya, and several other cities. Fifteen of the crews either bailed or crash landed because the early launch cost the planes the needed fuel to reach their landing fields in China. One plane landed intact in Russia.

All 16 planes were lost, three men perished in crashes, and eight became POWs. Of these eight prisoners, three were executed by the Japanese and one died of disease while incarcerated. Five men from Plane 8 were interned in Russia for 13 months. The physical damage to Japan was minor, but the mission itself was a success, shaking Japanese confidence and proving mainland Japan was immune from attack no more. The raid dealt a major blow to the Japanese psyche that sent American spirits sky high. It was what Roosevelt wanted—and what he got. □

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Members of the *Hornet* crew watch anxiously as one of 16 B-25s lifts off, April 18, 1942.

Some 50 years later, Plane 8's co-pilot, Lieutenant Robert G. Emmens, opened up about the controversial flight and the questionable conditions of his crew's formation in a letter to a friend in 1989. "Ours was sort of a bastard crew made up of guys left over at Eglin [Air Force Base, Florida] flying on the B-25 that was a last-minute substitute for the one that bellied in the last day of training at Eglin. We formed as a crew after all the rest of the planes had left Eglin for the West Coast. We had never flown together before and had never made a practice take-off before the real one we made off the *Hornet*."

Emmens's admission that Plane 8's crew formed at the 11th hour leaves the door wide open for speculation as to why this plane was ever called into action. There were 24 crews (though only 16 would fly the mission) that spent three weeks at Eglin training and honing the critical carrier take-off skills—except for Plane 8's crew. All the planes had their carburetors carefully adjusted at Eglin to fly the 2,000-mile mission without refueling—except for Plane 8. So, why were an untrained crew and unadjusted plane called into service when there were already modified planes and trained crews at the ready?

Maybe someday those instructions for Plane 8's "AWOL" flight will surface, which might also explain why York and Emmens just happened to start speaking fluent Russian when the plane touched down in Vladivostok. Until those papers surface, however, the true story of Plane 8 remains up in the air.

The Mystery of the Long Beach Flight

A secret B-25 flight from Long Beach, California, to Gary, Indiana, that tested the bomber's maximum range was then—and still is—completely off the radar screen. In January 1942, when the top-secret raid was on the planning table, it remained to be seen if a land-based bomber could take off from an aircraft carrier and go the distance. On February 2, 1942, the well-known Norfolk, Virginia, test flight off the *Hornet* proved that the B-25s could get in the air. Then, sometime later that month, the distance was put to the test with the mysterious Long Beach flight.

The only known story about this flight appeared 61 years later in the Fall 2003 (September) publication of the *Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation NEWS* at Travis Air Force Base in California. In Fernando Silva's article, "Behind the Scenes of the Doolittle Raid," he explains that in February 1942 his father's crew (separate from Doolittle's men and planes) was instructed to fly a B-25 "configured to carry a dummy bomb load of 2,000 pounds" from the Long Beach Airport (then a USAAF Air Transport Command Base) to Gary, Indiana, near Chicago, while another crew flew a separate mission to Canada.

According to Silva's article, the flight's purpose was "to determine the maximum range that could be squeezed from every drop of gas by setting the correct throttle, prop pitch and mixing the controls ... raw data was then turned over to North American Aviation's engineers." Since the B-25s used in the raid were manufactured in Inglewood, California, about 15 miles from Long Beach, that would have given the test flight access to an unmodified B-25 for the 1,700-mile flight to Gary, which approximated the raid's greatest distance.

The cloak of secrecy surrounding the mission kept many events in the dark, especially this maximum range test that called for a "fly through the Grand Canyon and as close to its walls as possible," then to "fly at tree-top level all the way to the steel mills of Gary, Indiana." Although there are no known witnesses to the canyon's fly-through in 1942, historian Mike Anderson, who has worked in the canyon for the past 20 years, has seen military jets fly through the inner gorge, which puts them as close to the walls as possible.

America's grand geographical icon is no stranger to the military. In an October 3, 1920, memo, Lieutenant Harry Halverson detailed his photographic military flight over the canyon to Major Henry "Hap" Arnold. Some 20 years later, Arnold and Halverson would both coordinate missions in conjunction with Roosevelt's order to come up with a retaliatory raid following Pearl Harbor. Arnold would be involved in the Doolittle Raid while Halverson would direct his namesake project (aka HALPRO), a series of land-based attacks from China (which were rerouted and bombed the oil facilities at Ploesti, Romania).

Colonel Charles R. Greening, pilot of the 11th plane to launch from *Hornet,* made reference to preraid tests in his official report, "The First Joint Action, A Historical Account of the Doolittle Tokyo Raid—April 18, 1942," submitted to the Armed Forces Staff College in December 1948. Greening wrote, "Certain preliminary tests had been accomplished with the B-25 prior to the time personnel had been ordered to Eglin. Take-

offs had been accomplished from a carrier in the Norfolk area ... and preliminary gas tests had been made to determine how far the airplane could travel with a given amount of gasoline and still allow for a reasonable weight of bombs."

After the Silva story appeared in the *Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation NEWS* on November 7, 2003, Carroll V. Glines wrote to the museum's historian questioning the article's validity. "As [the raiders'] historian, I am distressed about the story in the newsletter written by a Mr. Fernando Silva concerning test flights he alleges were made in February 1942 from California to Gary, Indiana, and Canada. There is absolutely no truth to this story and I'm very disappointed that it was published without checking with me. If he insists the story is true, I'd very much [like] him [to] produce some documentation to back it up."

The museum's publication never issued a retraction on the story, but four months later, in the Spring 2004 (March) publication of the *NEWS,* Glines authored his story that covered 17 "Myths and Facts about General Doolittle and the Tokyo Raid." For the sixth item, he wrote it was a myth that "B-25 aircraft were dispatched on secret flights from California before the Raid to determine if B-25s could fly the distance required from the carrier to the destination airfield in China."

The "facts," according to Glines, were, "No such long-range test flights took place. All arrangements were top secret. The aircraft were flown from Pendleton, Oregon, to Columbia, South Carolina. The B-25s were modified en route by the addition of fuel tanks in the bomb bays and crawlways of each aircraft; none of this work was performed in California. The B-25 could not have flown the distance required if these extra tanks had not been installed." There are two sides to every story.

The mystery of the Long Beach flight knows no bounds. In 2010, the staff at the Doolittle Museum at Travis Air Force Base, northeast of San Francisco, California, claimed that no contact information for Fernando Silva existed. In 2011, the museum's historian, Mark Wilderman, researched this matter and reported, "I went to the Travis Heritage Center Library to find the original paper copy of the *Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum NEWS*…. Neither the web or hardcopy versions had any information about the author … other than his name and the facts presented."

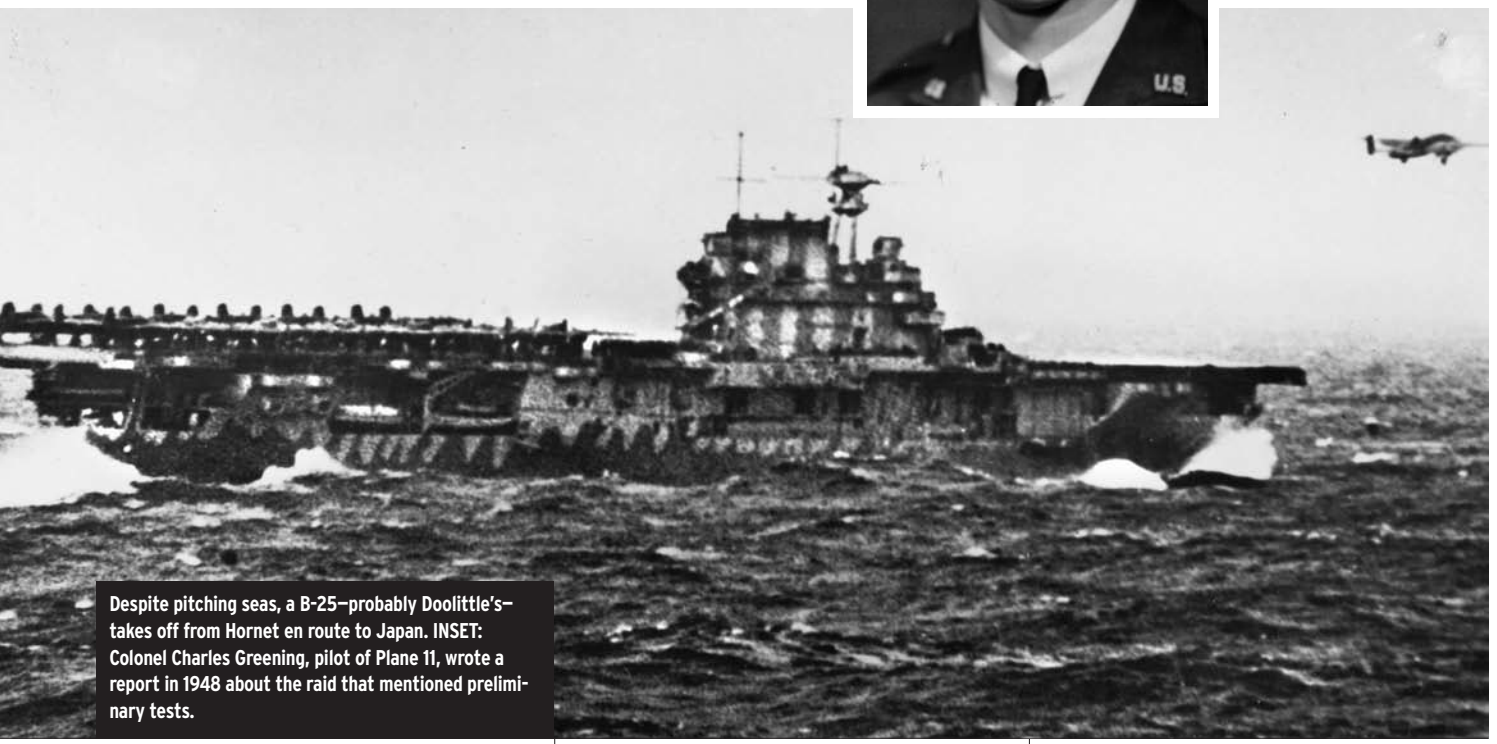
Wilderman further explained, "I also checked the entire issue of the *NEWS* from cover to cover ... and found none. There is no original manuscript of Mr. Silva's article on file at the library to obtain a mailing address or phone number. I also checked the next *NEWS* edition and likewise found no mention of Mr. Silva or acknowledgement for submitting a rather good article.... I regret to say I have hit a dead end in my search for Mr. Silva's contact information."

Just like the eighth plane, the California flight's paper trail lies scattered to the wind. The fact that to date both the Silva and Glines stories remain on the museum's website reflects the depth of the ongoing secrecy surrounding the mission.


USAAF

The Mystery at Sacramento Air Depot

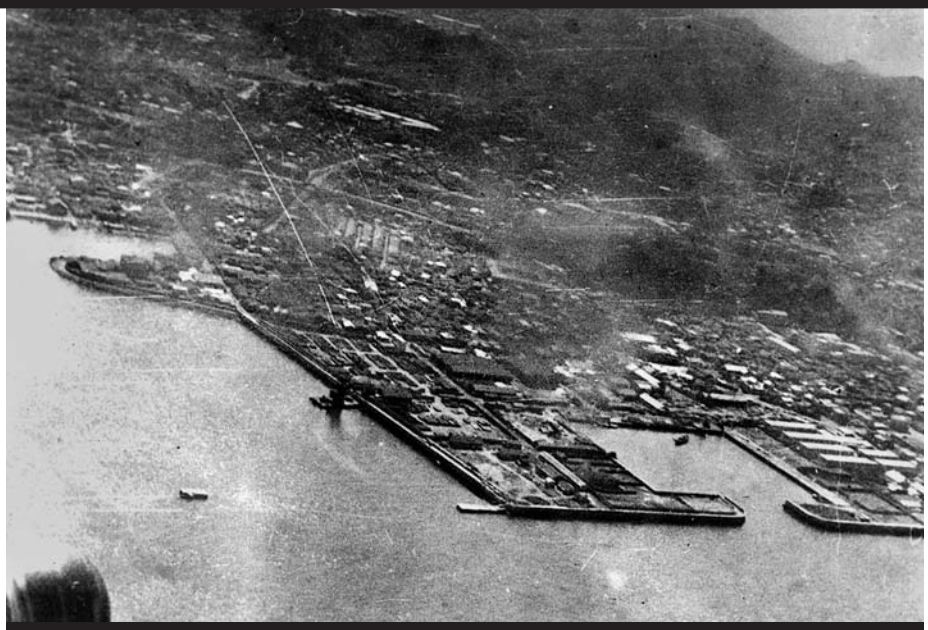
The last week of March 1942 was fraught with intrigue at Sacramento



Despite pitching seas, a B-25—probably Doolittle's—takes off from Hornet en route to Japan. INSET: Colonel Charles Greening, pilot of Plane 11, wrote a report in 1948 about the raid that mentioned preliminary tests.

National Archives

National Archives



A photo of the Yokosuka Naval Base, south of Tokyo and Yokohama, probably taken from a window of Plane 13. The surprise raid—payback for Pearl Harbor—shattered Japan's belief of invulnerability.

Air Depot where the B-25s underwent their final modifications before being loaded aboard the Japan-bound *Hornet*. During this time there was a flurry of "priority," "extra priority," and "confidential" teletypes and phone calls that sent the Sacramento personnel scrambling to follow unusual orders and track down critical missing equipment, no questions asked. According to a March 26 teletype sent to Sacramento, Colonel Doolittle was "to be given the highest priority without explanation."

Because no one at Sacramento knew the critical purpose of the work, the request for four 500-pound practice bombs took three different officers at three different bases over two hours to decipher and sort out. Unbekownst to everyone, the bombs were needed to test that the plane's bomb release mechanism still functioned after the fuel tanks were reinstalled.

The following verbatim telephone dialogue between a Major Urbani at Sacramento Air Depot and a Major Cotton at Hamilton Air Force Base, which has never before been published, begins March 27, 1942, at 12:05 PM:

Urbani: I am trying to find a 500-pound practice bomb.

Cotton: A 500-pound practice bomb?

Urbani: Do you have anything over there like that?

Cotton: There is a bomb sitting over at the end of the ordnance warehouse that looks about like that. I can contact ordnance on the telephone and let you know.

Urbani: How about calling me back?

Cotton: They may be out to lunch, but I will call you back in an hour or so.

Urbani: We have to get this bomb right away. It is for the Doolittle Project and they are not going to be here very long.

Cotton: If I can find one I will call you right back, and if I cannot find somebody who knows what it is all about, I will get them right after lunch.

Urbani: All right. Thanks.

About 20 minutes later, Major Urbani made a call to another air force base for the needed bombs. It was 12:28 PM when Urbani explained to a Colonel Kenzie in San Francisco that the Doolittle flight needed some practice bombs "as sort of a dummy or to try out something.…"

Urbani: I am after four 500-pound practice bombs. At least four if I can get them. They are for the Doolittle flight. They have to use them up here as sort of a dummy or something to try out something. Can you tell me where I can get them?

Kenzie: Where do you want them?

Urbani: I want them up here at the field.

Kenzie: Up there at the field and you want four of them?

Urbani: Yes, sir.

Kenzie: I will ship them in there just as soon as I can. I will call you back and tell you when they will get there.

Urbani: They will have to be here this afternoon if they are going to be any good to us.

Kenzie: We will get them there if it is at all possible.

Urbani: All right, sir, thank you very much.

Kenzie: I will call you back and let you know what is going on

Urbani: Thank you, sir.

About 10 minutes later, at 12:40 PM, Kenzie called back and spoke to Urbani's secretary.

Kenzie: I just talked to Major Urbani about these bombs. Do you know what he is talking about?

Secretary: He was asking for four bombs for Colonel Doolittle's flight.

Kenzie: What kind of bombs did he want?

Secretary: He wanted 500-pound bombs so that they could be emptied and filled with sand to make up the weight. That is all the information I can give you on those.

Kenzie: Will you leave this note for him?

Secretary: All right, sir.

Kenzie: We do not have any 500-pound practice bombs, but we have 100-pound practice bombs at the Sacramento Municipal. We have 500-pound demolition bombs, which you could take without the fuse for the 500-pound weight. Would you ask him to call me as soon as he gets back?

Secretary: He will be back in a few minutes and I will have him call you right back.

Kenzie: I will wait [for] lunch until he calls.

Secretary: Thank you.

About one and a half hours later, at 2:01 PM, Urbani called and made arrangements with Kenzie to retrieve the training bombs located at Hamilton. Then Kenzie suggested using the demolition bombs without fuses or drill bombs since practice bombs get dropped from the air and a drill bomb stays on the ground:

Urbani: On those bombs, I found two training bombs at Hamilton Field Ordnance. They said I would have to go through you to get them.

Kenzie: We can get them for you, but here is the thing—how about using those 500-pound demolition bombs at Sacramento? Take them without fuses.

Urbani: Without fuses? I do not know. This is for Colonel Doolittle's job and they wanted the 500-pound practice bomb.

Kenzie: We do not have any practice bombs.

Urbani: They said something about the old type and the new type; I could not quite gather it all. They said that there were two different types of bombs.

Kenzie: We do not have any 500-pound practice bombs.

Urbani: Those demolition bombs must be down at the Municipal [Airport], is that right?

Kenzie: Yes, they are right here at hand.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Japanese guards transport blindfolded Lieutenant Robert L. Hite, co-pilot of Plane 16, to a POW camp in China. The pilot, Lieutenant William Farrow, was executed by the Japanese. BELOW: Wreckage of Doolittle's plane on a Chinese hillside. Doolittle can be seen center right.

Urbani: All right. I will tell them about that. There are two practice bombs at Hamilton Field, and if they want them, we will have to get an OK from you. He will let you know later on it.

Kenzie: I do not know about these practice bombs being over there; we have no record of that, but we have what we call a drill bomb.

Urbani: That is it, a drill bomb.

Kenzie: There is a difference in those. The practice bomb is the one that we take up and drop from the air, and the drill bomb is strictly a ground bomb to practice loading and unloading.

Urbani: All right. I will tell them about those demolition bombs and use them without the fuses. They will weigh pretty close to 500, will they not?

After it finally came to light some 45 minutes later that Doolittle wanted the bombs for size and shape, Urbani opted for the drill bombs. It was 2:45 PM when Urbani called Kenzie once again.

Urbani: We will have to borrow those two bombs down there, the drill bombs, if we can get them. If you will have them released, I will send a truck over there right away.

Kenzie: We can get them to you much faster by just putting them on a truck and sending them up.

Urbani: That will be fine. Then we can give them a load of supplies going back. Will you see that he gets off this afternoon?

Kenzie: I will have them contact you when they arrive at the field.

Urbani: I will leave word here in case I am gone, so they will watch for him. Thank you, sir.

Urbani's conversation was symptomatic of the "no-questions-asked" orders that delayed getting the job done. He was completely in the dark that the success of the raid required a properly functioning bomb-release mechanism.

The Mystery of Jurika's Dossier

The 32-year-old flight deck and intelligence officer aboard *Hornet* who prepared the raiders for their day of reckoning with Japan was Lieutenant Stephen Jurika, Jr. His two-week crash course was pivotal to the success

of the raid. As the carrier sailed across the Pacific, Jurika briefed the crews on their flight routes, Japanese targets, the country's history, politics, and even psychology.

Jurika was made to order for the mission. He came aboard with an extraordinary dossier on Japan. In just under three years he served as a naval attaché in Japan, then in the Office of Naval Intelligence, and finally aboard *Hornet*. His military service reads like an open book, but Jurika's own dossier makes for some interesting reading.

In June 1939, when the Philippine-raised Jurika took up the position of naval attaché in Japan, espionage came with the job. According to retired Colonel John F. Proute, "These officers performed a number of protocol functions, but everyone knew that their primary mission was to obtain intelligence concerning the military forces of the countries in which they served." In the 2003 book *Doolittle, Aerospace Visionary,* author Dik A. Daso wrote that Jurika said, "I spent most of my time locating and pinpointing industries, industrial areas, and all manner of bomb target information."

Map © 2012 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Immediately following Jurika's three months with the ONI, in October 1941, two months before Pearl Harbor was attacked, he was assigned to *Hornet* as the ship's flight deck and intelligence officer. Then, some two months later, in mid-January 1942, he was consulting with Captain Duncan, the air officer on Admiral Ernest King's staff, about launching a bombing raid against Japan. Two months later, in March 1942, he was briefing the Doolittle Raiders.

Jurika's military service seemed to be on a stealth-directed course. In his October 27 letter, over a year before Pearl Harbor was bombed, Jurika had changed his wife's booking from December 12 on the *President Cleveland* to November 24 on the *President Taft* because the State Department wanted all wives and dependents to leave Japan. In that letter he also mentioned getting the furniture and silver packed for shipping on the *Yawata Maru* sailing on November 13.

The vast amount of classified information Jurika gathered about Japan came from his tenure as naval attaché there, which ended in August 1941. He even candidly detailed his covert work in an October 27, 1940, letter to his father-in-law, Colonel Harry Smith. "Since this is going in the diplomatic pouch, I shall tell you a bit of what I've been doing. For the past four months I've been drawing up bombing maps of Japan, by main manufacturing, districts, a job which has never been done in this office."

Jurika went on to explain that he was involved with making "plans for bombing Tokyo, its powder factories, munitions factories, government buildings; collecting and evaluating information of Japanese bases in South China, Indo China, the South Seas and getting down to business on every phase of the possible war. As a result, the Naval Attaché has requested that I be sent, for war station, to the Staff of Commander Aircraft, Battle Force as an assistant operations officer.…"

For a nation not at war, Jurika's work seemed to indicate otherwise. On September 1, 1939, Roosevelt had promised to stay neutral, but nine months after Germany invaded Poland, Jurika was drawing up bombing plans. At the end of his attaché duty in August 1941, Jurika went to work until October 1941 in the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), where he provided the information he had gathered and reported about Japan's new Mitsubishi Zero high-performance fighter. "Jurika had been a spy in the most traditional sense of the word, and now his experiences were being put to military use," writes Daso.

Jurika's movements were noticed by Mrs. Teresea Kroll de Rivera Schreiber, wife of Peru's ambassador to Japan, Ricardo Rivera Schreiber, though it came to light some 50 years later during an interview in London on July 23, 1997. A small, enigmatic notation in the margin of the transcript alluded to Jurika's serendipitous departure from Japan: "How and when, then, did Lt. Cmdr. Stephen Jurika, USN, Assistant Naval attaché at the Tokyo Embassy, and soon after Intelligence officer aboard the USS *Hornet,* briefing the pilots of the Doolittle Raid on the latest AA and searchlight positions in Tokyo, get out so timely?"

The interview's transcript says, "Mrs. Rivera Schreiber names her husband's Japanese informers probably for the first time. She kept silent for over 50 years, fearing very possible retaliations against those people in a society still harboring many diehards." The Schreiber incident, which was one of the many Pearl Harbor conspiracy theories that have surfaced over the past 70 years, happened in January 1941 when Ambassador

National Archives

ABOVE: The crew of Lieutenant Travis Hoover's Plane 2 pose with Tung-Sheng Liu, in white jacket, who helped the crew escape capture. Liu later immigrated to the United States and was named an honorary member of Doolittle's Raiders. RIGHT: Before the war, Lieutenant (jg) Stephen Jurika had served as a naval attaché in Tokyo. He attached medals the Japanese government had awarded him to a bomb dropped during the raid. OPPOSITE: Map showing the routes and the landing or crash sites of Doolittle's Raiders.

Schreiber informed America's ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, about talk of a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Jurika arranged for his wife to leave Japan over a year before Pearl Harbor was bombed, while the Schreibers, along with Ambassador Grew and other diplomats, didn't have such fortuitous timing. After the Doolittle Raid, the Schreibers were put under house arrest; they were finally evacuated from Japan in June 1942 aboard the *Asama Maru*. If not for the State Department's orders, Jurika's wife might have been in the same boat with the other diplomats, which is why Schreiber wondered "how and when" Jurika got notice.

Jurika's personal background sheds light on another perspective of his path to playing such a pivotal role in the raid. According to a June 1945 interview in the *Miami News,* when asked how he came to be assigned the intelligence role for the mission, Jurika answered, "It wasn't my fault. I was only six months old," then explained how his family had resided for years in Zamboanga, the Philippines, while spending two to three months each year in Japan.

Jurika's childhood laid the foundation for his Japanese dossier. His mother, Blanche Walker Jurika, was from California, while his father, Stefan, was a naturalized American citizen originally from Czechoslovakia who started a trading company in 1902 on the Philippine island of Jolo, then moved to Zamboanga. Jurika was born in Los Angeles but grew up in the Philippines and attended schools in the islands, and also in Japan and China.

The *Miami News* also reported that, "[Jurika] knew Tokyo like a book and its landmarks, principal industries, buildings and vital points were all photographed in his mind." The story also noted that he was eager to return to duty. "'I asked to be sent back out to the Pacific a month ago. That is my job. That is where I have to go.' His eyes show that he was thinking of Mrs. Blanche Jurika, his 60-year-old gray-haired mother, whom he had not seen since 1941."

"'She is a hostage,' he continued. 'They have moved her to a more northern island. They have a special reason. She has two sons and a son-in-law who are making things plenty tough for the Japs and are going to keep on making it tougher.' Steve was referring to his brother Maj. Tom Jurika who has fought and killed hundreds of Japanese on Bataan and to Comdr. R. Parsons, his brother-in-law."

During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Jurika's mother, his sister Katsy (short for Katrushka), and her husband, Commander R. Parsons (aka Chick Parsons), were all involved in gathering information on Japanese activities. While Parsons used his Panamanian diplomatic status to get his family back to the United States in June 1942, Blanche Jurika, who remained behind in Manila to work clan-

U.S. Navy

destinely with the resistance, was eventually executed by the Japanese.

There is no mystery why Jurika became one of the heroes in getting the Doolittle Raid off the ground, but why he was drawing up bombing plans a year and a half before Pearl Harbor was attacked, and why the State Department wanted all wives and dependents out of Japan 14 months before Pearl Harbor, opens the door for questions.

It takes time for secrets to surface and even longer for them to be answered. Some 70 years later, the Doolittle Raid still mystifies. □

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Rome's EUR

MUSSOLINI CONCEIVED OF A GRAND PLAN FOR A WORLD'S FAIR IN THE MIDST OF WAR.

BY ALAN K. LATHROP

VISITORS to a certain part of Rome today may not even be aware that they are walking in an area that came about because of an architectural vision of Benito Mussolini, Italy's infamous fascist dictator.

Mussolini is best remembered today for aligning himself with Adolf Hitler and for his bombastic speeches, his military attacks on helpless countries—namely, Ethiopia and Albania—in a vainglorious effort to create a powerful empire reminiscent of ancient Rome, and for leading his country into military fiascos. He is less remembered, perhaps, for his public-works projects at home that were aimed at demonstrating to the world the capability of the fascists to improve the lives of the Italian people and showcase the glories of his regime.

After World War I, Mussolini, a newspaperman and a veteran, founded the Italian Fascist Party in 1919 in Milan. He emerged as a national leader once the fascists forcibly took over town councils in several of the largest cities, including Milan. This action became the basis of a mass movement that culminated in 1922 with the fascists becoming the dominant political force in Italy.

Following the fascists' famous March on Rome on October 22, 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III was persuaded to appoint Mussolini prime minister to form a government out of the political and economic chaos that had descended on the country in the wake of the Great War. With his appointment, 39-year-old Mussolini became the youngest prime minister since Italian unification in the mid-19th century. Mussolini used the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, a leading socialist and critic of the fascists, to form a one-party dictatorship two years later and styled himself "Il Duce" (the Leader).

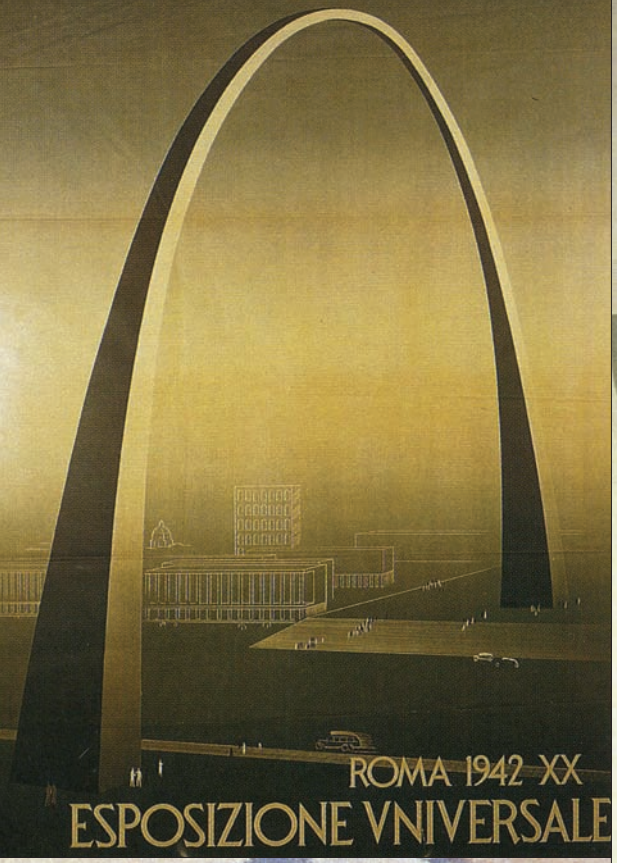
Almost from the start of his regime, Mussolini developed an obsession with Rome and its history and gave it a special prominence in his plans to merge the cultures of the ancient past and the fascist present. Virtually everything between antiquity and the modern era was ignored or forgotten.

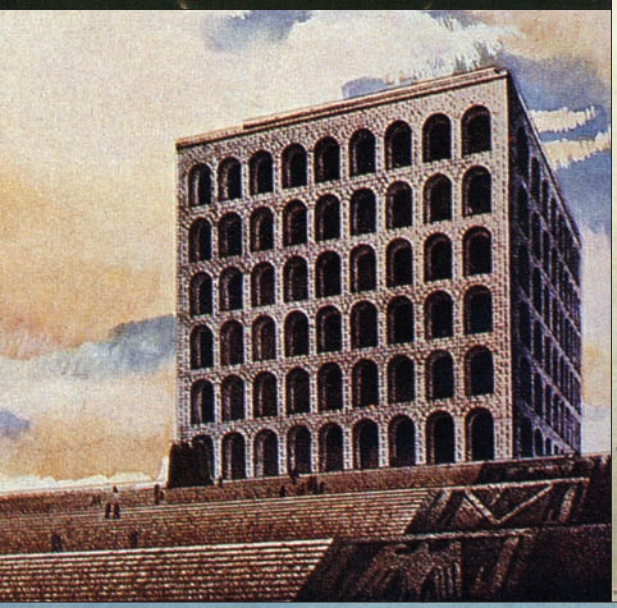
Mussolini initiated ambitious plans to turn Italy's capital city into a grand and glorious mecca for visitors from around the globe and to rehabilitate its former dominance as the greatest city in the Western world. In Mussolini's vision, the city would become the capital of a new fascist Roman Empire.

A giant reconstruction program for Rome called a regulatory plan was announced in 1926. Mussolini's ideas for remodeling Rome may have been inspired in part by a combination of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan of Washington, D.C., in the 1790s, and Georges-Eugène Hausmann's rejuvenation scheme for Paris in the 1870s, combined with touches of the Neo-Classical-inspired City Beautiful movement of the early 20th century in Europe and the United States.

The first objective was to clear space around ancient sites to free them of surrounding urban clutter and reveal them in all their awe-inspiring grandeur. Second, the spaces thus created would permit the construction of new and wider thoroughfares to accommodate the increased volume of vehicle traffic. Third, new buildings and developments would be erected as monuments to Mussolini and fascism in accordance with modern tastes and yet recall the styles of ancient Rome.

The emphasis on architecture as a significant component of the new fascist culture





Architects' renderings of the site plan and some of the planned buildings. "E 42" refers to Esposizione (Exposition) and 1942—the year the Rome World's Fair was supposed to have opened. The coming of the war curtailed Mussolini's grand vision for EUR—and for Italy.

OPPOSITE: Italian leader Benito Mussolini, shown here exhorting his followers, believed that modern fascist architecture should make the people feel subordinate to the power of the state.

Author's Collection

gave Italian architects a plethora of design opportunities and kept pencils busy on drafting boards. Many designers hastened to align themselves with Mussolini's regime in the hope of being given a chance to play a role in designing impressive buildings, public monuments, and the expositions that, in one way or another, celebrated fascism and the rise of Mussolini.

The first exposition held to celebrate fascism was the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista (abbreviated either MRF, or MdR), which opened in Rome on October, 29, 1932, a decade after the March on Rome. The Fascist Party allocated 2.5 million lire toward its construction, and the

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MRF spectacularly showcased the rise of fascism and exalted the cult of Mussolini by clearly demonstrating how he had modernized the nation.

When finished, a sleek, modernist façade emerged that featured four giant fasci, a symbol of fascism borrowed from the ancient Roman Republic. A fasces consisted of a bundle of sticks or poles tied together with ribbon with an axe head protruding from the side of the bundle representing the power of law. The fasces was carried at the head of a procession of judges parading into court.

The giant fasci outside the MRF stood 30 meters high and were made of sheets of oxidized copper riveted together. The

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ABOVE: A watercolor depiction of a monumental arch, artificial lake, and a fountain at EUR, published by an Italian tourist company. The great arch was never built. BELOW: Aerial view of the partially completed site. The dome of the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul is at the bottom, center, while the Armed Forces complex (today home of the Central State Archives) is at upper right. LEFT: As part of the ground-breaking ceremonies in 1938, Mussolini plants a tree.

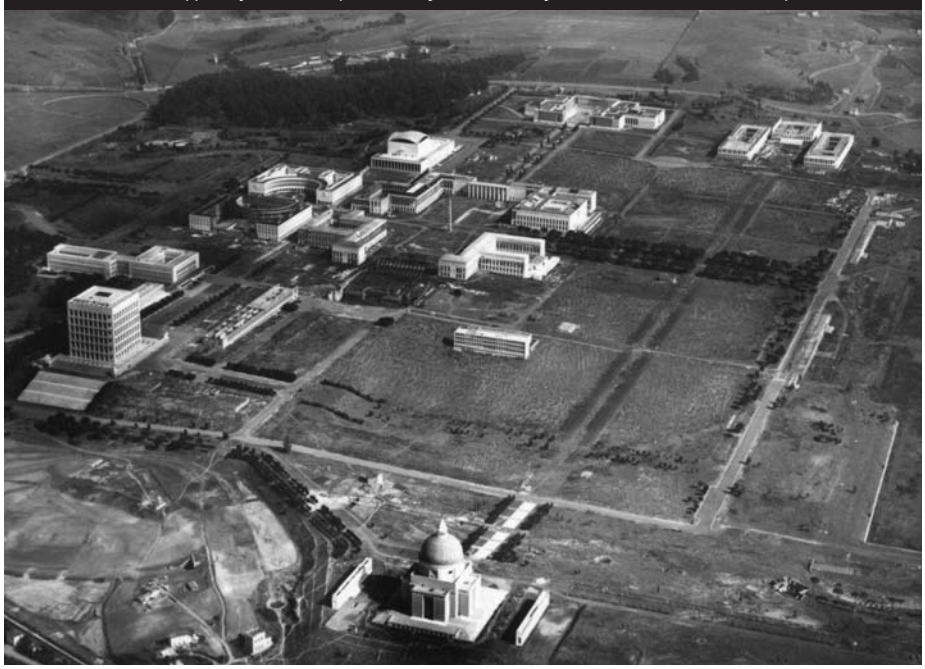

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exhibit was a smashing success and drew millions of visitors from all parts of the country to gaze in admiration at the achievements of the Fascist Party and of Mussolini.

By 1935, plans were well under way for the rebuilding of Rome in fulfillment of its "fatal destiny" as the "ideal point of convergence" for the "synthesis and broadcast of human civilization," as historian Eugene Anderson wrote more than 20 years later. At the same time, Mussolini was also planning his conquest of Ethiopia, whose capture would be the first step in Il Duce's long-cherished dream of rebuilding the Roman Empire of antiquity and making the Mediterranean an Italian lake.

The massive costs of reconstructing Rome, building new towns for workers, and increasing the production of war materials placed an enormous strain on the Italian

economy, which was already in dire straits as a result of a high valuation of the lire and Mussolini's tight control of overseas trade that made it difficult for Italy to compete in foreign markets. The lower classes shouldered the burden of financing the state while the upper classes and landed elite continued to be favorably treated so that the Fascist Party would benefit from their support. Large estates were viewed as a means of controlling the peasants, and the industrialists acted as powerful friends and advisers to the government and as a force to command the workers.

As the world watched in horror, Mussolini's mechanized army launched an invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935, crushing Emperor Haile Selassie's much weaker and poorly equipped troops. Selassie appealed to the League of Nations for assistance, and in response the League declared Italy an aggressor and called for the imposition of sanctions.

Mussolini signed the Pact of Steel with Hitler in 1936 to create the Rome-Berlin Axis. For the next seven years, Italy was almost constantly at war.

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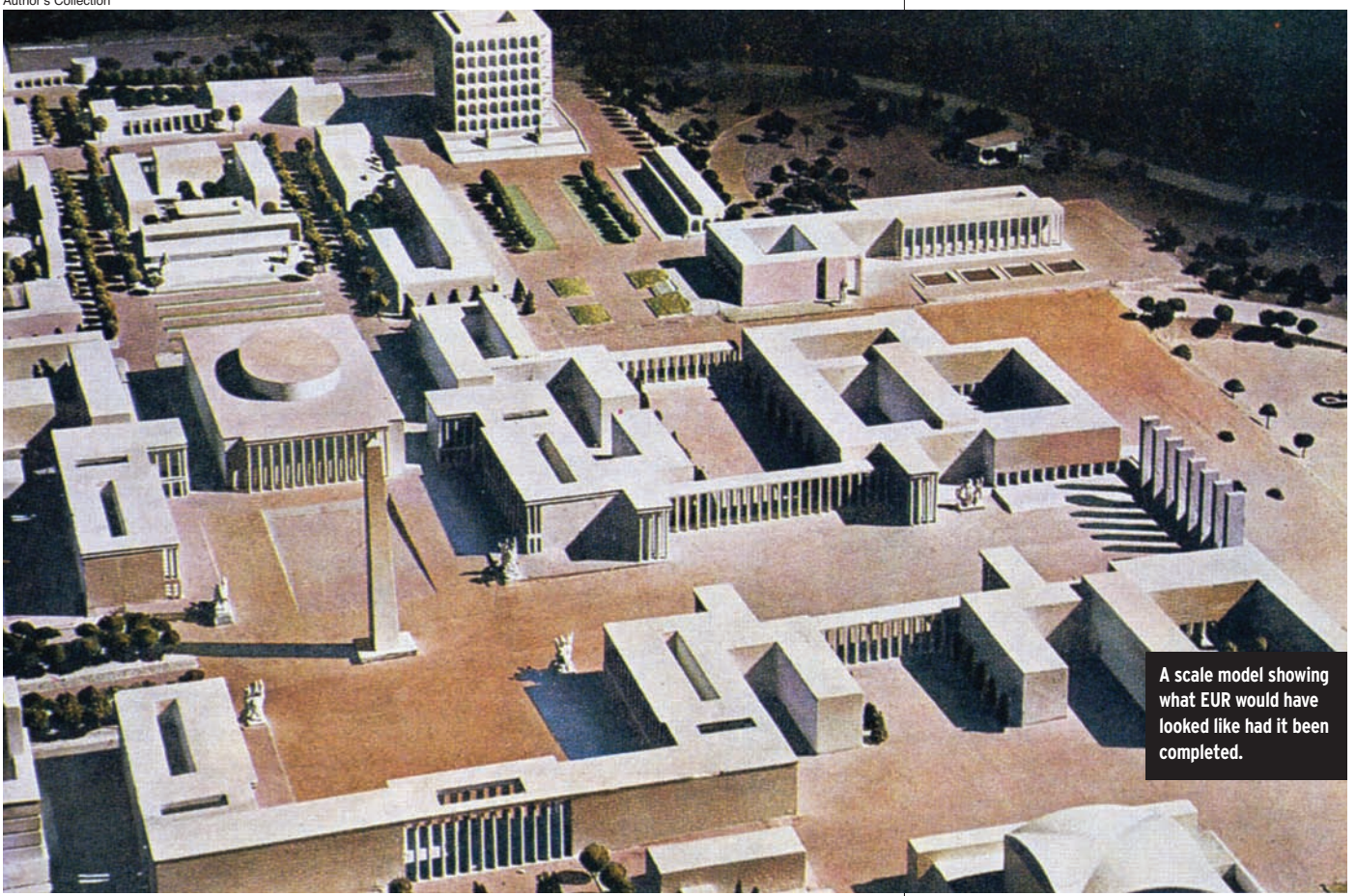

A scale model showing what EUR would have looked like had it been completed.

Concurrently with the formation of the Pact of Steel, the Italians joined the Germans in sending military aid to support General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War, which they viewed as a struggle against communism.

Within a month after Mussolini launched his attack on Ethiopia, an idea emerged in the regime for holding a large and ambitious exposition, a world's fair that would outshine all previous ones. A request was sent in November 1935 to the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) to designate Italy as the host for a "First Category General Exposition" in 1941. Such expositions were held every six years, and this one would fall a year before the 20th anniversary of the fascist March on Rome. The regime hoped to regain the support of foreign nations that it lost when it invaded Ethiopia. The following March, Il Duce declared the founding of the new Italian Empire and on June 25, the BIE granted Italy's request.

"E 42," as it came to be called, an abbreviation for "Exposition 1942," was first designated as the "Exposition of 1941-42" and then, in 1937, became the "Exposition of 1942." The theme was officially the Olimpiade delle Civilta—the Olympics of Civilization—to be held in a huge new building complex, the Esposizione Universale di Roma or EUR, which would be constructed on the southern fringes of Rome between the capital and the ancient port of Ostia. The 1944 Olympic Games had also been awarded to Italy and were scheduled to take place in the EUR, but war overtook Europe long before they could be held.

Final plans for the EUR were drawn up by 1938, and construction began in 1939. The construction of the EUR had several overarching goals: first, to convince out-

siders that Italy was a peaceful nation as demonstrated by its spending enormous sums on a project with peaceful intent; second, that Mussolini and his fascist regime held the power balance in a New Europe between Germany, Britain, and France; and, third, that an international system of industrial corporations such as Mussolini was trying to erect was a "middle road" between communism's destruction of world order and capitalism's decline in the grip of a worldwide economic depression. One will notice that the goals, taken together, sought to emphasize an Italian role as simultaneously peace negotiator and power broker in Europe and the world beyond.

In 1939, the government issued an impressive book that laid out the extravagant plans for the EUR. It was beautifully illustrated with watercolor architectural perspectives of the finished project and a narrative description of the layout and component parts. A 400-hectare site (roughly 988 acres), known as the Tre Fontane (Three Fountains), was chosen south of Rome along a highway already finished in 1928 called the Via del Mare (Road to the Sea). Today the Via del Mare is rated as Italy's most dangerous road, with some 250 deaths recorded between 1996 and 2005, most probably attributable to speed. Together with an adjacent rail line, the highway would connect Rome to Ostia, thus symbolically linking modernity with antiquity and a brilliant future with a brilliant past.

The site chosen for EUR was an empty area on which nothing had been built in modern times. A fifth of the envisioned buildings were to be permanent, consisting mainly of office structures and museums, plus such decorative motifs as gardens, fountains, and waterfalls. The site would be maintained and developed for shopping, residential, cultural, and other uses, unlike previous world's fairs such as Chicago (1933), Barcelona (1929), Brussels (1935), and Paris (1937)—all of which were demolished after they closed, leaving only one or two permanent buildings.

All of the structures erected by foreign nations, however, would be temporary and removed after E 42 ended. EUR would thus be a new city, similar to others planned throughout Italy, again showcasing fascist power, culture, determination, and prestige.

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ABOVE: Workers take a break while constructing the Palazzo della Cività Italiana, 1939. Adolf Hitler, who fancied himself an artist and architect, was greatly influenced by fascist Italy's designs and wanted something even more impressive for Germany. BELOW: A bas relief on walls of the Palazzo degli Uffici dell'Ente Autonomo shows Il Duce being hailed by Italian civilians and soldiers of the modern Roman Empire.

A dominating feature of the EUR was to have been a huge arch spanning the main south entrance into the grounds and mirrored in a large man-made lake. It was designed by architect Adalberto Libera, who also had won the competition for the design of the Palace of Congresses. The arch was never built because it was beyond the capabilities of construction technology of the time. The artificial lake, which still exists, was a key feature of the grounds where the public could find opportunities for recreational exercise and athletes could swim and participate in competitive events, including the Olympics.

The layout of EUR was on a scale to match its architecture, stressing monumentality, axiality, and balance. A modernist aspect of the exposition was to take the form of main thoroughfares ending in awe-inspiring vistas constructed on a grid and suf-

ficiently wide to accommodate a high volume of vehicle traffic, both private automobiles as well as buses.

At Mussolini's insistence, the streets were to be lined with apartment and office buildings built of glass and steel, but none of these strikingly futuristic structures were completed before war broke out—not because they were considered too daring in their architecture, but because shortages of glass and steel brought on by wartime demands forced them to be abandoned in favor of locally available marble, concrete, and masonry.

Flint Whitlock Photo

What was erected were designs that, instead of descending into stodginess because of their traditional materials, brilliantly embraced "the best of the old methods of construction without producing sterile imitations of antique structures," historian Diane Ghirardo has written.

Ground was broken for the EUR in 1938 and continued through the six-month Phoney War of 1939-1940. Real war was soon to intervene and halt its completion. On September 1, 1939, Hitler launched his attack on Poland. He declared war two days later on Great Britain and France. Italy had already continued its military ambitions by invading Albania in April 1939, and then simultaneously declaring war on the United Kingdom and France on June 10, 1940.

The Italians overran British Somaliland by August 19, then turned their attention to Egypt. The Italian Army in Libya, under Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, pushed the relatively tiny British forces back to the border, then eventually retreated, losing men and war materiel until being rescued by Erwin Rommel. In October 1940 Mussolini launched his invasion of Greece, another Italian military fiasco requiring rescue by the Germans.

By 1942, Mussolini's efforts to create an empire and turn the Mediterranean Sea into an Italian lake were in tatters, his military dreams in shreds. He was now a second-rate political and military leader, the butt of jokes, and forced to exist under the shadow of Hitler. The unsuccessful campaigns had effectively put an end to hopes of completing the splendid EUR, hosting throngs of awe-inspired visitors to a reconstructed Rome, and holding the 1944 Olympic games in Italy.

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After the Germans were driven out of Rome in June 1944, the Allies occupied the EUR and, after they moved on, the buildings were filled with hordes of civilian refugees who poured into the area from destroyed cities and to escape German

Continued on page 98

Flint Whitlock Photo

ABOVE: Today EUR, with its evocative echoes of its fascist past, is a bustling commercial and residential suburb of Rome. This architecturally "clean" building is a bank. TOP: This 130-foot-tall obelisk on the Via Cristoforo Columbo, dedicated to the inventor of radio Guglielmo Marconi, was erected in 1959 and replaced the earlier one extolling the virtues of Mussolini and fascism. RIGHT: The repetitive arches of the Palazzo della Cività Italiana, popularly called the "Square Coliseum" (today an office building), have been used as a backdrop in several Italian feature films.

YORKTOWN

A SON FINDS HIS LATE FATHER'S DIARY THAT DETAILS WAR AT SEA ABOARD A LEGENDARY AIRCRAFT CARRIER. BY PAT REYNOLDS

SUPPOSE you found a magic door that opened onto some of the most crucial battles fought in the Pacific during World War II?

That's the kind of door I stumbled upon in February 2010 when my 91-year-old father, Edward James Reynolds, died and left behind a diary that recounts nearly every day he spent as a radar man on the aircraft carrier *Yorktown* during World War II.

As I opened and read through this remarkable little gem, all kinds of questions surfaced. First, how did this book survive in such perfect condition? The guy served on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, for cryin' out loud, where salt water, humidity, and rain were constants. And how did he manage to not miss a single day? We're talking about approximately 545 days of entries, and they come from places as far flung as the Great Lakes Naval Base in Illinois, Virginia Beach, Central America, Pearl Harbor, New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, San Francisco, and sweet home Chicago at 1814 South Komensky Avenue.

And could this really be my father saying something like: "Arrived Pearl Harbor in afternoon. Impressed by Navy Band playing 'Aloha' as we pulled up to docks. Country beautiful. Women situation acute—125 men to every woman."

Questions and curiosities aside, by the time I got to the part where my father laid eyes on the shiny new aircraft carrier that was about to propel him into harm's way in the boundless blue, I was hooked. The diary became my way of experiencing the war vicariously. Gradually it dawned on me that his story belongs to everyone who benefited from his service in the Navy. If he and some 16 million other Americans had not stepped up to the plate the way they did, our lives would be profoundly different, and not in a positive way. So it is only fitting that the story

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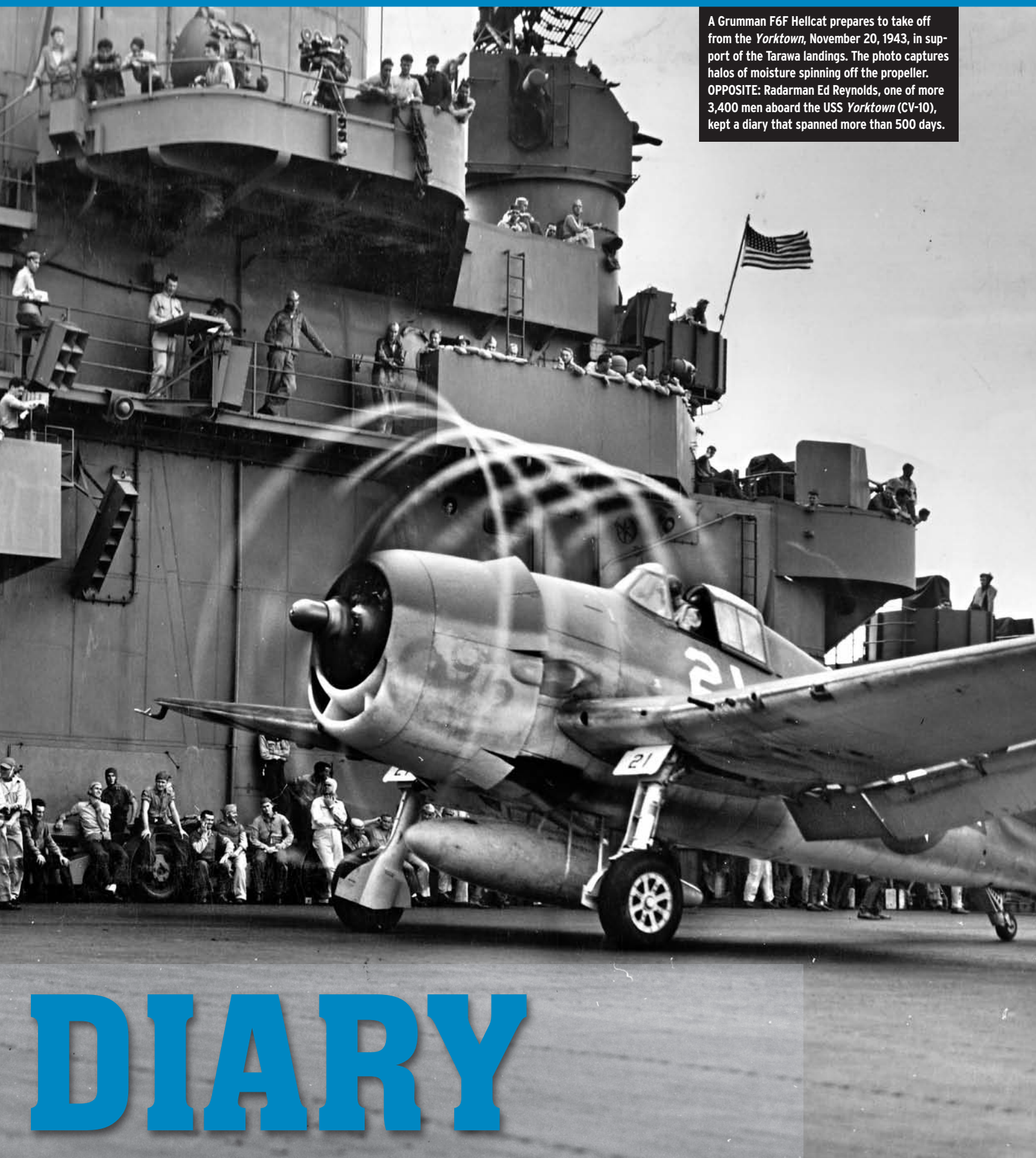

A Grumman F6F Hellcat prepares to take off from the *Yorktown*, November 20, 1943, in support of the Tarawa landings. The photo captures halos of moisture spinning off the propeller. OPPOSITE: Radarman Ed Reynolds, one of more 3,400 men aboard the USS *Yorktown* (CV-10), kept a diary that spanned more than 500 days.

DIARY

National Archives

National Archives

ABOVE: The carrier's captain, Joseph J. Clark (left), and Admiral Chester Nimitz aboard the *Yorktown.* BELOW: Ed Reynolds (kneeling, center) and some of his shipmates. "Snapper" and "Okie" are among those Ed mentions in his diary.

Author Collection

of Ed Reynolds be shared, and shared as widely as possible.

What makes his story so compelling is that it turns the impersonal into the intensely personal. We all know from reading history books that Allied assaults on Japanese island strongholds in the Pacific—the Marshall Islands, the Gilbert Islands, the Marianas—were the beginning of the end for Japan in World War II. But what if we could be right beside a sailor from Chicago during these assaults? What if we could share his homesickness, his delight in new places, his fear of the ever-present danger that dive bombers and submarines and kamikazes represented, his pride in America's military might and the rightness of its cause?

What if, through our Chicago sailor, we caught a glimpse of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet; of a ship's captain who was the first Native American to graduate from the Naval Academy; of Pearl Harbor; of Pacific atolls and the natives inhabiting them? All of this is ours to share in Ed's diary.

He begins in February 1943, when he writes that he is on leave from the Great Lakes Naval Training Base and has "nine heavenly days in Chicago." A few days later, he leaves Great Lakes bound for Virginia Beach. "Lump in throat," he tells us. "Will miss Chicago." He leaves behind a 19-year-old neighborhood girl named Mary Ellen Murphy, who will surface repeatedly in the pages of his diary. Of all the reasons Ed looks forward to returning home after his Navy service, Mary tops the list.

Ed arrives in Virginia Beach March 13, 1943, and is bivouacked in the historic Cavalier Hotel. "Impressed by hotel's beauty," he notes. And well he might have been. Built in 1927, it was a masterpiece of architecture, sophisticated ambience, and gorgeous ocean views. So how did he wind up in such splendid digs? Because the U.S. Navy commandeered the Cavalier Hotel as a radar training school. Stables were cleaned and used as living quarters for some of the sailors, while in the swimming pool area the water was drained and the bottom of the swimming pool was used as a classroom. Imagine the Navy walking into Chicago's Palmer House or New York's Waldorf Astoria one day and saying, "We'll be moving in now. And on your way out, drain that pool, will you? We may need it for something."

By April 5, Ed finds himself five miles up the road at Camp Allen. "Assigned to Yorkie," he notes. "Glad it's a big ship, you don't get so sick."

This is Ed's first reference to the USS *Yorktown,* the Essex-class aircraft carrier named to commemorate the first aircraft carrier *Yorktown* that was lost in June 1942 at the Battle of Midway.

"It was nearly the length of three football fields," he always used to tell us when we were kids, and sure enough, the *Yorktown* was 820 feet long. I should say *is* 820 feet long—it is now docked at Patriot's Point near Charleston, South Carolina. Its crew numbered 380 officers, 3,088 enlisted personnel, and 90 planes. It was commissioned on

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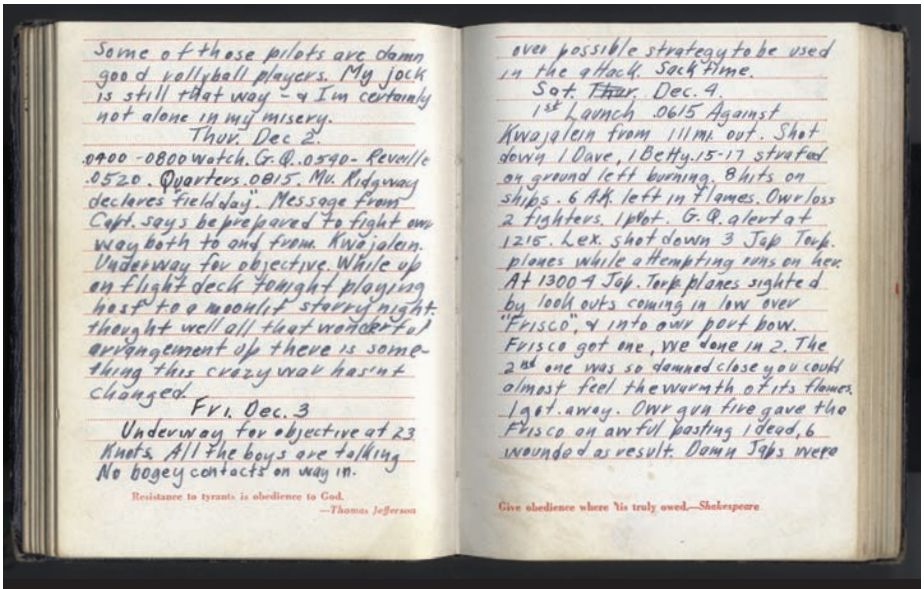

Some of those pilots are damn good volleyball players. My jock is still that way - & I'm certainly not alone in my misery.
Thur. Dec 2.
0400 - 0800 watch. G.Q. 0540 - Reveille 0520. Quarters. 0815. Mr. Ridgway declares field day. Message from Capt. says be prepared to fight our way both to and from. Kwajalein. Underway for objective. While up on flight deck tonight playing hose to a moonlit starry night thought well all that wonderful arrangement up there is something this crazy war hasn't changed.
Fri. Dec. 3
Underway for objective at 23 Knots. All the boys are talking. No bogey contacts on way in.
Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.
—Thomas Jefferson

over possible strategy to be used in the attack. Sack time.
Sat. Thur. Dec. 4.
1st Launch 0615 Against Kwajalein from 111 mi. out. Shot down 1 Dave, 1 Betty. 15-17 strafed on ground left burning. 8 hits on ships. 6 AK left in flames. Our loss 2 fighters. 1 plot. G.Q. alert at 1215. Lex. shot down 3 Jap Torp. planes while attempting runs on her. At 1300 4 Jap. Torp planes sighted by look outs coming in low over "Frisco", & into our port bow. Frisco got one, we done in 2. The 2nd one was so damned close you could almost feel the warmth of its flames. I got away. Our gun fire gave the Frisco an awful pasting 1 dead, 6 wounded as result. Damn Japs were
Give obedience where 'tis truly owed.—Shakespeare

Ed Reynolds's diary pages from December 2-4, 1943, detailed his thoughts during the battle for Kwajalein.

National Archives

With brand-new Hellcats on the flight deck, the crew boards the *Yorktown* in May 1943 for the carrier's shakedown cruise to Trinidad.

April 15, 1943, as Ed duly notes in his diary. Shortly after the commissioning ceremony, Ed and about 3,400 of his newfound comrades introduced this historic ship to sea.

A "shakedown" cruise to Trinidad included beer parties on the beach financed by the 20th Century Fox Studios. June 17 has the *Yorktown* back at the Navy base in Norfolk, Virginia. The same evening, Ed departs on leave for "four days of happiness" back in the old Chicago neighborhood. Unfortunately, he returns from Chicago to the *Yorktown* six and a half hours "over leave," which leads to this June 22-23 entry: "Spent these days 'over the side,' airgun in hand, scraping the bottom of the ship. Miserable duty."

By July 7, with the *Yorktown* on its way to Pearl Harbor by way of the Panama Canal, Ed notes, "Scout planes spotted two subs." The next day his entry talks about three "cans"—Navy slang for destroyers. These are the *Dashiell,* the *McKee,* and the *Terry,* and they show the way, writes Ed, "through sub-infested & squall-swept waters." He also notes that he spent some time on July 8 in the pilot house, which causes him to observe that "the capt. is some character." It's worth noting that the captain he refers to is "Jocko" Clark, or Admiral Joseph J. Clark. Born in Oklahoma and a member of the Cherokee tribe, he was the first Native American to come through the U.S. Naval Academy.

While in the vicinity of the Panama Canal, Ed notes sighting Costa Rica and El Salvador. Once through the Canal and sailing west through the Pacific, he writes that the coast of Mexico is 200 miles away. "Issuing steel helmets & gas masks," he notes. By now, thoughts of home are never far away. "Beautiful moonlit night. Flight deck would be wonderful spot for a dance. Heard ship's orchestra practice—wow, are they solid." And the next day: "All afternoon on flight deck gazing out over the water, thinking of home." And a few days later: "Realization I'm a long way from Komensky Ave. When will I get to see Chicago again? No mail. Just plain lonesome tonight."

Throughout the loneliness and homesickness, one thing that clearly appeals to him is the thought of being in Hawaii. Remember, he has never been farther from 18th and Komensky than Fox Lake, Illinois. So imagine his sense of anticipation when he writes: "Hawaii just 300 m dead ahead. Swaying palms, make way for E.J."

When the *Yorktown* does reach Hawaii, it's still four nights before E.J. gets up close and personal with those swaying palms. "Wish I could go ashore & just wander around on that mountain range to the West," he writes. Keep in mind that he's never seen a palm tree in his life at this point. In the meantime, he rubs shoulders with none other than Chester W. Nimitz, the commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. "Anticipating tomorrow's visit to Honolulu. Up in Radar Plot working tracking problem when Adm. Nimitz came through on inspection tour. Com. of Pac. Fleet is a nice old boy." He then adds: "Boxed in evening, ran into a stiff left."

Eventually Ed does get to see Honolulu, and he enjoys it a lot, especially Waikiki Beach, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, an aquarium and bird collection, tennis, bowling for a nickel a lane, and pool. On August 21 he writes, "Liberty with Small & Furlow. Ping-pong & pool at U.S.O. It's surprising how much food 3 guys can eat." By August 22 it's anchors aweigh from Pearl Harbor. "Rendezvous with task force," he writes. "18 ships strong headed for Jap. held Marcus Islands."

From here on, the diary entries grow ominous, to say the least. On August 30, he writes: "Exec's message on eve of attack: 'Tomorrow morning we will commence to launch attacks on Marcus which will be repeated again & again until all Japanese in the vicinity have been destroyed.' "

On August 31, which Ed calls "Dog Day," war enters the lives of both Ed and the *Yorktown*: "Reveille 0200. We attack

in 6 waves. First planes leave Yorkie 0420. First contact 0600. Japs report they're under air attack at 0620. Many fires. Sampan strafed, left in flames. Radio installations knocked out. 35% of Marcus destroyed. Yorkie lost 2 F6F's & 1 T.B.F. & 5 men. We were put into two emergency turns of 60 degrees because of sub. contacts. Our guns manned all day. Didn't fire a shot. Underway for Pearl at 1800."

Why the *Yorktown* makes such a sudden detour from battle—its very first battle—is never made clear. But for the next 14 days, all diary entries describe the *Yorktown*'s passage back to Pearl Harbor, from there to San Francisco, then back to Pearl again, and then off to attack Wake Island. While not so interesting from the military historian's point of view, this 14-day period is filled with unique glimpses into what it meant to be a sailor on board an aircraft carrier in the middle of World War II. Again, it is fascinating to read one man's observations, reactions, and inner thoughts juxtaposed against the drumbeat of all-impersonal history:

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Burial at sea for sailor Kenneth Rayford, who died of a heart attack aboard the *Yorktown* on November 16, 1943. RIGHT: On the alert for approaching aircraft, an officer and enlisted sailors man the carrier's radar plot during the invasion of Leyte, November 1944.

"Just a little closer to that 2 wks. accumulation of mail at Pearl Harbor.

"Whipped out a few letters. Sack time.

"Sun bath on flight deck. Saw a bird—land not too far distant now. "Pearl" & promise of liberty tomorrow—good duty. Night trials for pilots.

"Moored at Pearl. Welcoming band played 'Aloha.' Nice. Watched school of fish frolicking off the starboard side as we moored.

"Turkey dinner. Received 16 letters. Swell day aboard.

"Underway for Frisco at 1430. *Essex* leading the way. Abandon destroyer escort 75 m. out.

"Just us & *Essex*. Hauling ass unescorted.

"Moored starboard side just aft of *Lexington* at 1600. Nice to be back at Pearl. Kid struck by prop in hangar deck.

"All morning sunbath on flight deck. Wonderful this weather.

"Day closer to Dog Day at 'Wake.'"

You can only shake your head and wonder what happened to the poor guy who got struck by a prop in the hangar deck.

Eventually Wake Island is in range. Ed writes on October 4, 1943, "2 Bogey contacts. Impending danger sign. Marine shining up dog tags." Which is the danger sign, the Bogeys or the Marine polishing his dog tags? But the attack on Wake goes well: "0610 report says attack a complete surprise. Cruisers shelled Wake. *Yorktown* loss: 3 planes, 2 men. Jap loss: 17 planes on the ground left burning, 13 shot out of the sky."

The attack continues on October 6: "Sent in our bombers from Midway. More strikes from task force. Loss for the day: 6 planes, men. Capt. says to crew, 'Congratulations, best day *Yorkie* has ever had.' "

Probably not so good for the men who lost their lives.

From Wake it's back to Pearl and some liberty that includes bicycling in the hills above Honolulu. His descriptions of liberty are priceless little snippets of relaxation and release from the stresses of war. First, there were 18 holes of golf at Waialae Country club with Snapper, Small, and Gus followed by a "swell" meal. "The perfect liberty," writes Ed. Three days later, eight of them are back on the golf course, and this time some photos are shot. "Four rolls of pictures, including 2 shots of me in shower wearing nothing more than my newly acquired suntan."

But it's back to war by November 10. "Meeting of our unit discloses the seriousness of this mission," Ed writes. "Our new Exec Mr. Briggs warned us in Radar Plot against doping off now that we are approaching the Japs' sector searches. Exec says they know we're coming & not to expect a song & dance affair as was experienced at Marcus & Wake." And the next day: "Out to raise hell in the Gilbert Islands."

Unfortunately, the hot, humid weather raises hell with Ed's skin: "Sure hope the sick-bay-prescribed cal-o-mine lotion will in some way reduce the heat rash I have spread over even the least talked-about parts of my anatomy." Apparently his heat-induced skin rashes cause him to take a less than official approach to garb one day. "Captain had no patience at all with my non-regulation apparel up at Pilot House Sunday night. 'Out, out!' Yes, I went out, but fast."

The passage below is presented without editorial interruption because I think its immediacy and intensity best shine through that way. This is what it's like for an ordinary man to be at war. We'll circle back at the end for some explication, a term most often used by literary critics who tease out the elusive meanings of poetry. I find the term "explication" appropriate in talking about Ed's diary, too, because it reads a little like an epic poem, with Mary cast as the patient Penelope and Ed as the wandering and war-tossed Ulysses. One definition I will provide up front: GQ stands for General Quarters, which means be alert for battle conditions.

ABOVE: Antiaircraft shells explode as Japanese planes attack the *Yorktown* during an American raid on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, December 4, 1943. The Marshalls would be invaded by U.S. forces 11 months later. BELOW: A Japanese "Kate" torpedo bomber takes a direct hit from a 5-inch gun during the same engagement.

Both: National Archives

"November 17: Word was passed forequarters this morning to 'pray the dead.' The ceremonies were for 23-year-old N. Carolinian P.M. Second Class Rayford, who died of a heart attack last night. With the entire crew standing at attention on the flight deck, he was committed to the deep as the flag-clad canvas bag was slipped over the Starboard Side Forward to the gun salute of the Marines.

"We are now in the approach area, in waters subject to submarine & air attack. Squared away my preserver, gas mask, & flash clothing up in radar plot.

"November 18: Haulin ass for our operation point at Southern tip of Marshalls, where it will be our job to cruise up & down in the slot between Marshalls & Gilberts, protecting operations to our south.

"November 19, Dog Day: GQ 0420. Launch first of 9 strikes. Hit Makin, Jaluit, Milli, & Tarawa. Very little resistance encountered.

"November 20: Continued attack on islands. Land 6 divisions of Marines & tanks on Tarawa. Considerable resistance. Soldiers establish beach head on Makin. Jaluit attack destroyed 13 sea planes, 1 AK & 2 boats. Planes, though well strafed, did not burn. When AK was left, decks were awash. Report at 1320 that Adm. Turner's outfit to the south of us is under attack by several Bettys.

"November 21, D+2: GQ 0315 because of four Bogey contacts on radar. One

bogey passed within 8 m of the cloud-secluded, slow-moving *Yorkie*—we're cut down to 12 knots to reduce wakes. Broke radio silence for short transmission by Commander in Chief of our task force, Capt. Hedington: 'Bogeys on the way.' Thanks to the good Man above for no night attack.

"Radio dispatch: 'In an attack at dusk last evening, the *Independence* was 'tin fished' when attacked by 15 Bettys.' They came in low and were not detected by Radar. We splashed one Betty 52 miles astern of us on single-vector perfect interception by Lt. Stover. Periscope sighted by USS *Cowpens* at 1304. It's wide awake we'll be at dusk tonight. No mass today, don't seem like Sunday.

"November 23, D+4: 1030 Bogey contact at 330 Deg. 90 M.I. Fighters vectored out by *Lexington* Interception at 45 Mi. We splash 15 of 20 Zeros. Our own loss: three planes—only one as a result of engagement. No men lost. Picked up 5 [from] *Liscome Bay*. Fighters Lost. Just at dusk. She was operating somewhere South of us. We landed 3 of the F4Fs, & the fourth attempted landing resulted in an awful crash & fire that cost 5 men their lives while injuring 3.

"November 24, D+5: Burial services for our 5 lost shipmates in morning. "Baldy" reports *Liscome Bay* was lost yesterday as the result of either a torpedo or an explosion. I knew "Whitey" Kaskman, he used to pour the "Joe" in the aftermess hall where I often ate.

"GQ alert at 1240. Just when I was eating chow, large Bogey at 90 m. Interception by *Lexington*'s fighters at 55 m. Bogeys stacked & in two layers Ag 23 & 27. Our fighters at Ag 25. Splashed 9 Zeros, 1 Betty. Chased 2 Bettys, 1 Zero. Raid dispersed. Our loss: 1 fighter shot down in flames by 3 Zeroes.

And now for that explication: "Tin fish" is a torpedo. As for "splashed," it means shot down. "Bogey," of course, is an enemy aircraft whose specific type or class has not been identified. Bogeys were very much on the mind of Radarman Third Class Ed Reynolds because a chief responsibility of the radarmen was to know where enemy aircraft were at all times. Makin, Jaluit, Milli, and Tarawa are all islands in the Gilbert or Marshall chains. Tarawa was an atoll with a garrison commanded by Kaigun Shosho Keiji Shibasaki, who had boasted before the invasion, "It would take one million men one hundred years" to conquer Tarawa.

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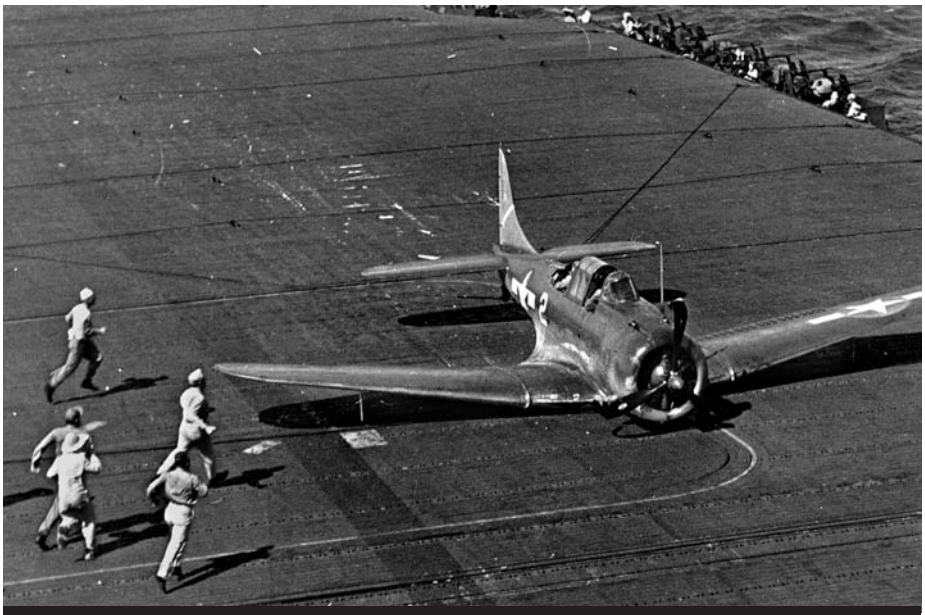

***Yorktown* crews rush to a Douglas SBD Dauntless that made an emergency landing after fighting over Truk, February 22, 1944.**

Shibasaki was slightly off on his 100 years boast; it took only 72 hours. But when Ed reports that the Marine invasion of Tarawa met with "considerable resistance," it was some kind of understatement. After 72 hours of intense fighting, some 6,000 men died, and 1,667 of them were Americans, mostly Marines. Back in the States after the battle, protests mounted when the casualties were reported. Writing after the war, when Marine General Holland M. Smith was asked if Tarawa was worth it, he didn't mince words. "My answer is unqualified: No. From the very beginning the decision of the Joint Chiefs to seize Tarawa was a mistake."

Regarding the term "Bettys," it's an Allied code name for one of the many Japanese war planes that had to be dealt with. The Betty is one of several dive bombers that the Japanese air force brought to the table. Zeros, the advanced carrier-launched fighter planes developed by Mitsubishi for the Japanese Air Force during the war, were "Zekes." Other names included "Nell" (an attack bomber), "Kate" (a carrier-launched attack bomber), and "Dave" (reconnaissance seaplane).

The explication most helpful in appreciating what Ed experienced regards the sinking of the *Liscome Bay,* an escort carrier capable of carrying 28 planes. It was sunk by a Japanese submarine torpedo and went down in an explosion so intense that flesh and debris were showered onto the battleship USS *New Mexico,* a mile away. One sailor on the destroyer USS *Hoel* described the incident this way: "It didn't look like a ship at all. We thought it was an ammunition dump. She just went whoom—an orange ball of flame." She went down in 23 minutes, and with her went 644 officers and men. U.S. ships in the area did manage to save 272 of her crew.

Armed with this information, it would appear that when Ed writes "Picked up 5 *Liscombe Bay.* Fighters Lost. Just at dusk," he means that at dusk the *Yorktown* radarmen picked up five planes trying to find their way to a *Liscome Bay* that was already at the bottom of the ocean. Of the five planes, four made safe landings on the *Yorktown*, but

one crashed, killing five and injuring three. Ed mourns the loss of "Whitey" Kaskman, who appears to be one of the five *Yorktown* men who lost their lives in the crash on the flight deck.

With three major battles under her belt, the *Yorktown* now moves toward its next target: the island of Kwajalein in the Marshall chain. Located 2,100 miles southwest of Honolulu, Kwajalein is the world's largest coral atoll as measured by area of enclosed water. Heavily fortified and a key piece of the Japanese perimeter of defense, Kwajalein was used as an outlying base for submarines and surface warships.

November 25 brings Thanksgiving and a "wonderful turkey dinner," writes Ed. "Thanksgiving, & quite a bit to be thankful for." On midnight watch two days later, he worries about collisions and "closely formed task forces almost running into one another." The heat bothers him, so he sleeps on the flight deck instead of his bunk. A day later, he wonders about the rumor of transfers, which gets him to thinking about home. "How about Komensky Ave.—will I see it soon?"

Captain Jocko Clark, on the other hand, is more focused on the task at hand. "Message from Capt. says be prepared to fight our way both to and from Kwajalein." And then my favorite moment in the entire diary: "While up on flight deck tonight playing host to a moonlit starry night, I thought, well, all that wonderful arrangement up there is something this crazy war hasn't changed."

The attack on Kwajalein commences December 4, and once again I think Ed's entry says all that needs to be said:

"December 4: 1st launch 0615 against Kwajalein from 111 mi. out. Shot down 1 Dave, 1 Betty. 15-17 strafed on ground left burning. 8 hits on ships. 6 AK left in flames. Our loss 2 fighters, 1 pilot. *Lexington* shot down 3 Jap torpedo planes while attempting runs on her. At 1300, four Jap torpedo planes sighted by lookouts coming in low over the *San Francisco* & into our port bow. *Frisco* got one, we done in 2. The 2nd one was so damned close you could almost feel the warmth of its flames. One got away. Our gunfire gave the *Frisco* an awful pasting. 1 dead, 6 wounded as a result. Damn Japs were strafing too as they came in.

"Wotje Island strike almost abandoned to supply additional fighters to repel torpedo attack. Wotje strike got 3 Bettys, 2 Zekes; hangars & oil stores left in flames. Oil slick near large cargo vessel subjected to near miss. Jap snooper reports our position. GQ alert at 1900. Bogies all over the place, looks like a hell of a night. Clear moonlit night & that doesn't help matters. Smoked a fag given me by radioman "Red." Constant stream of sandwiches & drinks for the officers. Don't that fry my ass. Bogeys all disband at 2230. They formed again to start new attack at 2315. They can see us but we can't see them damn it all. We fire spasmodically when they get in close, just can't connect. *Lexington* got one in starboard quarter at 2330. *Lexington* still able to turn over 18 knots. Steering gear out. *Lexington* will be guided in by a Can. Those 5-inchers really make a racket."

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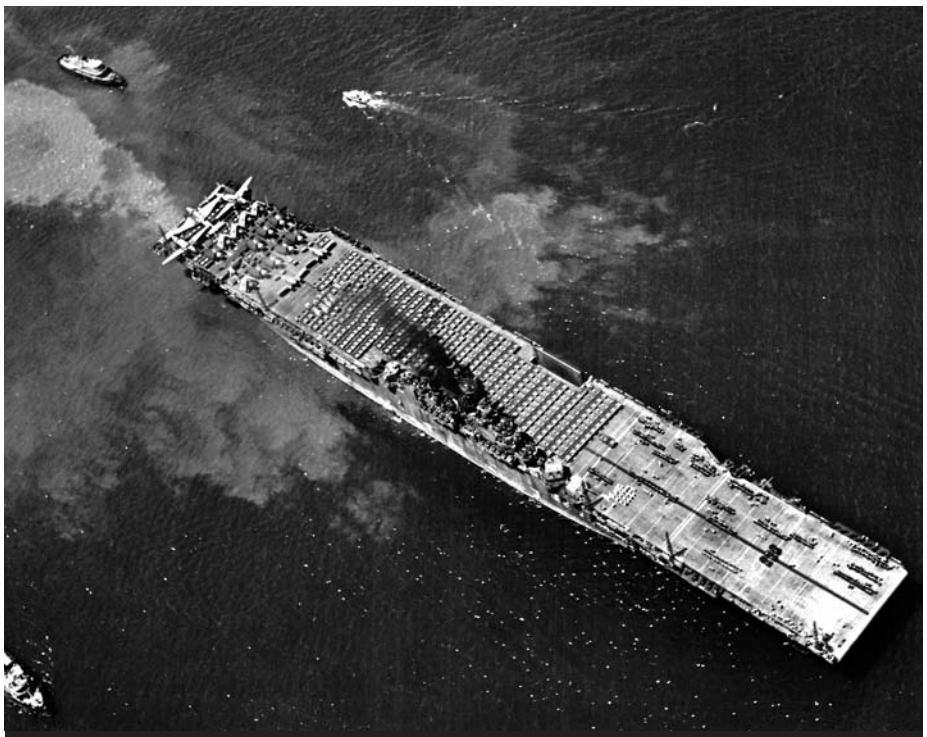

Ed Reynolds and *Yorktown* steam back into Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for training and refitting, May 11, 1944.

With Kwajalein in her rear view mirror—for the time being—the *Yorktown* heads back to Pearl Harbor. Movies onboard during this time include *Granny Get Your Gun* and *The Kid Glove Killer.* The latter, says Ed, is "cool." Back in Pearl, the days include tennis and ping-pong tournaments and the movie *The Human Comedy* ("What a movie," says Ed).

When rumors of a possible return to the States surface, he writes, "Maybe it will be Fox Lake in the Springtime for E.J." He was crazy about the Chain of Lakes just north and west of Chicago, where his mother had a cottage on Fox Lake. Christmas comes and goes. "Takes a hell of a lot more than good chow & a Christmas tree to make a Christmas," Ed notes.

On January 15 the *Yorktown* is underway at 12:45 PM, headed back to the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. All of this activity, it should be noted, was part of the United States' strategy known as "island hopping." Admiral Chester W. Nimitz executed this strategy in the central Pacific, while General Douglas McArthur, commander of the Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific, took responsibility for the South Pacific. The idea was to establish a

line of island bases close enough to Japan so that American bombers could launch from these islands and reach the Japanese mainland.

Despite the grimness of this task and the number of lives it cost, life onboard the *Yorktown* wasn't without its lighter moments. Ed writes of the long-standing naval ceremony that takes place when the ship crosses the Equator and the "pollywogs" (sailors who have not previously crossed the Equator) become "shellbacks" (fit subjects of King Neptune). It's basically a bunch of good-natured hazing. Ed is one of the sailors who makes the transition from pollywog to shellback.

"January 21: The pollywogs began to play this afternoon on the flight deck. All one guy had on was a large diaper. That boy in pink panties & brassiere sure looked good. How about those poor jerks dressed in those warm fur-lined high-altitude clothes. Lt. Coms. Lambert & Earnshaw sure looked silly dressed in divers gear. And the fighter pilots ran down the deck strafing with beans. Capt. Clark's usually stern face was lit up with an ear-to-ear smile as he watched the show from the bridge.

"January 22: We all have one thing very much in common tonight & that is a very sore butt, as the result of initiation into the "shellbacks." Nice to have become a shellback without having my hair dug out in spots or being rolled in the garbage box."

As he does throughout his time in the Pacific, especially when near the Equator, Ed rails about the heat: "I'd give a hell of a lot for a nonperspiring night's sleep at that Komensky Ave. shack."

From January 29 to February 4, 1944, the *Yorktown* and its planes return to Kwajalein, while other U.S. task forces attack the islands of Roi, Eniwetok, and Wotje, all in the Marshall Islands. In the battle of Kwjalein, 7,870 of 8,000 Japanese soldiers died, while American losses were 372.

By February 4, the *Yorktown* is anchored in the lagoon of a gorgeous tropical atoll called Majuro. Ed describes it as "tiny islets of coral, with coconut palms & grass shacks. Sure would love to go ashore & browse. Supposed to be 900 natives housed on this U-shaped atoll." A day later he writes, "A peaceful day in a sleepy lagoon. Mail, wonderful mail. Cool, quiet—nice." More mail arrives on February 6, and Ed attends Mass with Dan Murphy, the brother of Mary who waits back home.

All Ed's entries while in Majuro are peaceful, almost idyllic. "Don't those natives go like hell in an outrigger canoe with sail. Temperature ideal, breeze constant. It's nice out here." But he is also constantly aware that this is only one of those calms before a storm: "What a tremendous amount of power sitting around out here. Five big flattops, one right next to the other & about a mile apart. E*nterprise,* us, *Essex, Intrepid,* & *Bunker Hill.*"

On February 9 he writes of a "dip in the lovely blue waters of Majuro." But again, he knows this island paradise is only a brief respite: "How long are we going to stay in this place? If our next objective is Truk, maybe the peace & quiet of Majuro should be appreciated." He also makes it clear that even island paradises have their downsides: "Major engagement with jellyfish while swimming in 33 fathoms of Majuro blue."

On February 11 he notes that it is the *Yorktown*'s last day in the lagoon. After lights-out, he has what he calls an "after it's over session with Furlow & Weeg." I would imagine such sessions were a constant source of comfort to countless servicemen who were able to find refuge from the stress and mayhem of war by sitting down next to a comrade and saying, "Here's what I'm going to do when this thing is over." Sadly, plenty of servicemen—on both sides of the conflict—never made it to the days when the war was over.

Leaving Majuro lagoon at 9:30 AM on February 12, Ed learns it is indeed the well-fortified island of Truk in the Caroline Islands that the *Yorktown* will tackle next. A major Japanese logistical base, it was something like the Japanese equivalent of the U.S. Navy's Pearl Harbor. "Sounds like a very daring operation," he notes. "Rough sea. Focksle [sic] awash. This damn heat & continued perspiring has me full of heat rash again." But he is thankful for small—or not so small—favors: "No bogeys."

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ABOVE: With a temporary lull in the fighting, crew members swim around the *Yorktown* in Majuro Lagoon, Marshall Islands, February 10, 1944. OPPOSITE: Trying to attack the *Yorktown* near Truk Island, a Japanese "Jill" torpedo bomber flies through a storm of antiaircraft fire, April 29, 1944.

National Archives

On February 16 he reports, "Our score for the day: shot down in the air 25 planes, on the ground 8 planes, 4 probable. Many hits on our cruisers, destroyers, & cargo ships." He also says a friend named Smoky was down in a life raft but that a submarine had a fix on his position. "Hope he was picked up," says Ed. The tail gunner of a badly shot up Y*orktown* bomber is not so lucky, however, and dies aboard the ship. Ed's summary: "Long, bogey-crammed day."

February 18 brings this entry: "Hauling ass from Truk." The Y*orktown*'s next target is the island of Saipan in the Marianas chain, where a bomb drops 100 feet off the starboard bow. "It was exactly the kind of day you read about but not the kind you ever expect to actually experience. Planes falling on all sides of our group. Coming in just one or two at a time, they were just duck soup for our gunners. Can't understand their strategy, if you can call it that."

February 25 has the *Yorktown* headed back to Majuro, and it appears that the constant stress of battle is beginning to take its toll: "Our gang could sure use some leave. Not a day goes by anymore when we don't have a serious argument or near fight. We're all getting touchy, irritable, & less tolerant. Variety is the spice of life & there's damn little seasoning we get."

Four days later, still in Majuro: "Still sitting, waiting, and wondering about our next move." But the good news is that "beach parties" are being arranged for small groups at a time, and on March 3 it's Ed's turn. He and a fellow named "Crotch" have a great day. "Swimming, we see beautifully formed & colored coral. Pabst in cans, sandwiches—really swell. Wandered from one island to the next. Signs of where the Japs were dug in—and then dug out."

On March 8 at 8:00 AM, the *Yorktown* is underway once again, this time headed for Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides archipelago. A military supply base, naval harbor, and airfield, Espiritu Santo is generally known as the inspiration for James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*, which in turn was the source for the Broadway classic *South* Pacific. Some new pollywogs are given the shellback treatment as the ship crosses the Equator on March 11.

Ed's introspective side surfaces in a Sunday entry: "Every evidence that the sea is observing the Sabbath, judging from its very calm surface." But he's a little miffed to hear about the "revelation" that 90 percent of the shells available for use by the *Yorktown*'s five-inch guns were duds. "What a hell of a lot of protection we wouldn't have had had we needed it at Saipan," he writes.

They "drop hook" (anchor) in Espiritu Santo on March 13, and he is not happy about how hot it is: "Every indication that impetigo, ring worm, & the variety of heat rashes we have onboard will really thrive out here." But there is good news, too: "107 sacks of mail. Wonderful stuff."

Beach parties resume at Espiritu Santo, and he sees a USO show featuring Ray Milland and Mary Elliot. He also happily reports that the dud shells for the five-inchers are unloaded. He sees *Girl Crazy* and notes it stars Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland. He also describes some of the local marine life: "Strange companions off bow. Large turtle, with two sandsharks depending on him for shade. Large schools of fish raising hell with minnows."

Scuttlebutt says that the next target for the *Yorktown* is the Caroline Islands, and as other task forces join his, he's impressed by the combined firepower they bring: "95 to 105 ships in all, what a powerhouse, including *Bunker Hill, Enterprise, Hornet, Lexington,* & us."

But it's not the Caroline Islands—it's the island of Palau they're headed for. Some good news, too, for our Chicago sailor: "Ridgeway says this is the last operation and then Majuro & Frisco & finally Chicago—wonderful Chicago."

By March 29, the attack on Palau is underway, and Ed notes that the Japanese dive bombers are flying so low that radar contact is difficult to fix. He also notes, "I'm counting on that 'operating under a spiritual umbrella' that Father Farrell referred to. We'll need 'his' protection tonight." Later that day, after concerns about "sunset Bogeys," he writes: "Escaped unscathed—good old 'umbrella.'"

On March 31, the *Lexington* radar crew picks up a sampan in the predawn hours. "Investigation with a searchlight revealed Jap insignia. Sunk same. Made wonderful glow on horizon." He also reports on the fate of a life raft of U.S. airmen whose plane has gone down. "A Zeke strafing survivors in a life raft was chased & splashed by two of our V.F.s. Life raft survivors unscathed."

One more note, and a sad one at that, before the *Yorktown* leaves Palau. There are still about 100 American servicemen listed as missing in action there.

The *Yorktown* next launches its planes against the island of Woleai in the Carolines on April 1 from 140 miles out. Encountering "no fighter opposition," the ship then heads back to Majuro. "Scuttlebutt says Majuro, Pearl, then Frisco—oh, how I hope it's good dope," says Ed.

On April 7, after a basketball game on

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the hangar deck, Ed writes sympathetically about the fate of his friends whose girls back home have not been true. "Bogie got news his Arline is getting married. That makes Ward, Geres, Nelson & the Bogie who all belong to the brush-off club." More bad news comes on Easter Sunday, April 9, when it becomes clear that the aforementioned "dope" was not so good after all: "At Majuro. 0645 Mass. Loading ammunition—that settles the States deal."

Ed and crew are still in Majuro on April 12 when he gets called from a football session on the flight deck to take his Radarman Second Class test. He is clearly getting more than anxious to get back home, and his April 13 entry shows that he has grown skeptical of any news suggesting that home is a possibility anytime soon. "Pow-wow. 'Ridge' says we're covering the invasion of Hollandia in New Guinea. 'Frisco after this one,' says Ridge. I don't find that line funny anymore."

A day or so later is one of those entries that's fascinating because it demonstrates

Author Collection

ABOVE: A chaplain conducts Mass aboard the carrier. Ed is to the right in the white T-shirt with arms crossed. LEFT: Killing time between battles, *Yorktown* crewmen play cards.

how meticulous Ed was when it came to entries in his diary. Between his Friday, April 14 entry and his Sunday, April 16 entry he writes: "No Saturday. Passed time zone, gained a day." It's as if he knew someone would be reading his observations one day in the future, so he wants to make sure that whoever that someone is, they won't be able to accuse him of missing a Saturday entry.

With the *Yorktown* en route to Hollandia, we learn that "Pinkie" is in sickbay with South Pacific "complection," whatever that is, and "Dewdrop" is also in sickbay with impetigo. "Nothing to do & lots of time to do it in," writes Ed. "Too damned routine. Take me back to that Komensky Ave. shack."

When the *Yorktown* reaches New Guinea, they hit Wakde Island rather than Hollandia. Ed explains: "Got word the Japs had more planes there."

April 22 brings a rather cryptic entry describing the crash of a *Yorktown* torpedo bomber: "Pre-dawn launch T.B.F. 10 crashed *N. Orleans* on takeoff. Fouled up. Radar antennaes, killed plane crew & 1 *N.O.* sailor & injured one *N.O.* sailor, when bombs exploded." A little research on the USS *New Orleans,* a heavy cruiser, tells us that this is what happened: "On 22 April a disabled *Yorktown* plane flew into *New Orleans*' mainmast, hitting gun mounts as it fell into the sea. The ship was sprayed with gas as the plane exploded on hitting the water; one crewmember was lost, another badly hurt."

The April 22 entry also includes a reference to General McArthur: "Army (under direction of Gen. 'Mac,' who was upon the bridge of a cruiser) made landings at Humbolt Bay supported by our air group."

Strikes on Truk continued through April 30, and an entry on that day reminds us that submarines from both sides of the conflict were ever present. "Sub. made daring rescue of 8 of our pilots down in life rafts near targets. Screen destroyers picked up surfaced enemy sub. Ganged up with planes to knock the hell out of it. Oil slick, underwater explosion, & telltale flotsam confirmed sinking."

By May 1 it's back to Majuro "with a stopover for a few strikes at Ponape," writes Ed, adding, "Finally got that second stripe." Home is really beckoning by now: "More of that stuff about our trip to Pearl & then those Golden Gates—nice dreaming. Wait for me Mary—ironical & true." But there's still no guarantee about heading home. "Opinion now divided as to whether it will be Frisco or a change of squadrons at Pearl & then 'just one more raid.' "

Ed also spends more time worrying about his Mary back home. "Lost pen upon focsle [sic] last night while crapped out up there—damn it. Lost the Mary-sent bracelet, now the pen. Say, maybe by this time I've lost the donor of these gifts as well."

When the *Yorktown* reaches Pearl Harbor, initial scuttlebutt has the ship executing "just one more" mission before heading for the mainland. But some continue to believe there won't be another mission, that home is around the corner.

"The poor dopes," writes Ed. "I don't think I'll ever believe another word given to me while I'm in this outfit. From now on, 'I'm from Missouri.'" His skepticism, it turns out, is well founded. He winds up getting assigned as radar school instructor for six months at Catlin Park Military Complex in Pearl Harbor. But there are some good things: "This fresh milk sure is wonderful stuff. *Yorktown,* I don't think I'll miss you very much." And later, "Burk & I spent the evening admiring a beautiful horizon to the Northeast. Gave me kind of a nice homey feeling. Life out on the blue just doesn't compare with shore duty."

Ed manages to collide with another player in a baseball game on June 9, which results in a "metal clip in chin." He has the clip removed June 12, he tells us, and he adds this poignant detail as well: "This old fart Stokes that sleeps above me sure makes a racket with his combined farting, snoring, and grinding his teeth." On a slightly more romantic note, he adds: "Thinking of Mary an awful lot."

On June 15, Ed goes aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid*. He notes: "Strange how a smile developed on my face as my feet struck the rather familiar hangar deck of the *Intrepid*. I guess you do develop a certain amount of sentimentalness after making one your home for 14 months."

Another kind of "sentimentalness" is also constantly referred to: "Seeing guys and gals together sure makes me think in terms of Komensky Ave." And then there's this: "At Catlin & liking it. Time passes so swiftly I seldom have time to keep up this little book of memories."

A few days after Ed's July 12 entry about seeing the Bob Hope show at Maluhia, he runs out of space in his diary. So he starts a new one, nearly identical in appearance as the first but this time a softcover version. Needless to say, he does not miss a day. The original ends July 14. The new one begins July 15. Big news on July 17: "Word that Burke, Reynolds, Dekart, Marqus, Brandt to make homeward trek come Aug. 1st. Wonderful—ah, yes, wonderful. Thinking lots these days in terms of Komensky Ave. & Mary."

He notes that President Franklin D. Roosevelt comes through Catlin on July 27, but it hardly registers: "As Aug. 1st comes closer, I can think of nothing but home." Not that he won't miss the beauty of Hawaii: "I'll miss the soft air, the gardenia scent when passing the lei vendor in front of the Moana Hotel. I'll miss the purple red sunsets, wonderful cool evenings. It has been nice."

By August 3, Ed is on a troop transport ship pulling out of Honolulu bound for San Francisco. Onboard with him are a number of wounded sailors, soldiers, Marines, and civilians. Their presence reminds him of how fortunate he has been. "Surely do thank the good Man above whenever I see that sailor without the chin or the Marine without legs—or hell, any number of the many casualties we're taking Stateside." The next day his entry is a little less spiritual: "Invested in one of the many crap games on board—fine investment."

After spending August 8 in San Francisco, Ed boards the Union Pacific's Challenger for a three-day ride to Chicago. "Chicagee, stand by," he writes on August 10. Next day: "This vehicle just can't go fast enough to please me. Neighboring soldiers still have enough quarts to go around." Finally, on Saturday August 12, the entry he's been aching to make: "Arrived C. & N.W. station 11:20 AM. Taxi ride home. Home wonderful home."

Once back at 18th and Komensky, he makes an August 13 entry. I must confess, considering all he has been through, the dangers he has survived, and the promising young lives he's seen snuffed, I fight back tears every time I read it: "Raced Ann all the way to Finbarrs. Strangely enough we arrived on time for 12 o'clock Mass. Father McKenney, Marty, the Brusts—oh hell but it's swell just saying hellos to guys & gals you haven't seen for awhile."

And that's it. After 538 days of entries, the next page and all the pages after it are perfectly blank. There were no more diary entries for Ed. I guess he was too busy living.

Ed stayed in the Navy for another 14 months, training radar operators at Great Lakes Naval Base back in Illinois, the very place where his military odyssey began. His discharge papers tell us he exited the Navy on October 1, 1945.

Author Collection

Back home in Chicago, Ed Reynolds and his sweetheart Mary Ellen Murphy catch up on lost time.

As for Ed and Mary, they were joined in matrimony on May 22, 1948. The wedding was at St. Finbarr's, not far from that Komensky Ave. shack about which Ed had fantasized while at sea. Ed and Mary had seven children and nine grandchildren, and Ed lived to see one great grandson.

Careerwise, Ed returned to the Cicero, Illinois-based Western Electric Company where he had worked for two years prior to his service in the Navy. By the time he retired from that telephone manufacturing monopoly, he had 43 years under his belt. In the 1950s, Ed and family moved to the town of Lombard in Chicago's western suburbs. It remained his home until he died at the age of 91. It remains Mary's home today. □

Political in-fighting, vanity, and conspiracy led to the ousting of RAF Fighter Command's Hugh Dowding.

IN THE SUMMER of 1940, the vaunted Luftwaffe, fresh from its victories in the skies of France and the Low Countries, began its aerial assault in an attempt to either bring Britain to "peace" terms or destroy the Royal Air Force as a prelude to Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of southeastern England.

Britain's hope, after its army had been routed in France and Belgium, rested on "The Few"—a cadre of British, Commonwealth, American, and other émigré fighter pilots of the RAF. The man leading Fighter Command was a resolute, embattled air marshal nicknamed "Stuffy," who fought Winston Churchill and nearly every other minister and general in a variety of political campaigns during the prewar years. His goal was to achieve a strategy focused on radar detection, safe and reliable ground-to-ground (as well as ground-to-air) communication, and high-performance, single-seat, monoplane fighters—the Hurricane and the Spitfire.

Imperial War Museum

British wartime poster celebrating the achievement of Hugh Dowding's RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain.

To paraphrase David Fisher, "This was also a man whose mind broke from the strain at the height of the battle, who talked to the ghosts of his dead pilots, but who nevertheless was able to keep another part of his mind clear enough to continue making the daily life-and-death decisions that saved England" from the Luftwaffe's daytime onslaught during that beautiful summer of 1940. Unfortunately, the name of Fighter Command's leader during the Battle of Britain is becoming increasingly eclipsed with the passage of time and attempts at revisionist history.

What was the intrigue surrounding the maladaptive relationship between Air Chief Marshal Hugh Caswall Tremenheere Dowding, commander in chief of Fighter Command, and one of his principal subordinates, Vice-Air Marshal Leigh Trafford-Mallory?

The basis and mysterious circumstances of this malicious hierarchal relationship involved political in-fighting, vanity, and conspiracy at a time when Britain was literally battling for its life. According to Robert Wright, "For many years the name of Dowding was allowed to remain in those shadows that were created for him by lesser men. From time to time some lip-service was paid to his achievements; but a truly equitable recognition of what Dowding achieved at the time of the greatest peril to our way of life has never been fully accorded him."

Hugh C.T. Dowding was born on April 24, 1882. From the very beginning Dowding had shown marked tendencies toward forthright expressions of his own views but he learned to contain them and to express them only at the right time and to the best effect. Dowding described himself: "Since I was a child I have never accepted ideas purely because they were orthodox, and consequently I have frequently found myself in opposition to generally accepted

views. Perhaps, in retrospect, this has not been altogether a bad thing."

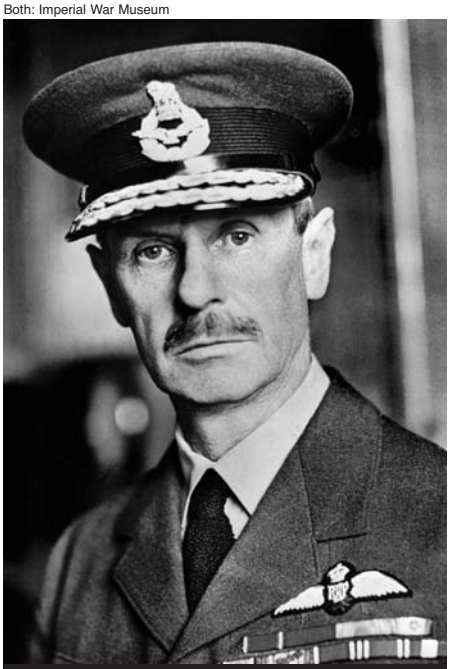
In 1909 Dowding, while commanding a Native Battery (Dowding was originally a gunner from the Royal Military Academy, Woolich) in India, met a man who was to play a vitally important role in his life in the Battle of Britain in 1940: Cyril Newall, a subaltern commanding Gurkhas. After six years of service in India, Dowding returned to England to attend the Staff College course at Camberley, which was to last two years. While there, Dowding noted, "I was always irked by the lip-service that the Staff paid to freedom of thought, contrasted with an actual tendency to repress all but conventional ideas."

In his transition from the Army to the Royal Flying Corps, Dowding attended a pilot-training course at the Central Flying School at Upavon. There, in early 1914, Dowding met Major Hugh Trenchard, who was to become one of the founding members of the RAF. In the spring of 1914, Dowding received his wings as an accredited pilot in the Royal Flying Corps.

By the end of the war in 1918, when Dowding was a brigadier general, principal characters in this upcoming story of political intrigue within the RAF during the Battle of Britain were Charles Portal, Sholto Douglas, Keith Park, and Trafford Leigh-Mallory, all of whom were majors in command of squadrons. Cyril Newall was also a brigadier general, and one of the leading proponents of the use of bombers.

Of this group, one of Dowding's main antagonists was Trafford Leigh-Mallory. Leigh-Mallory was born in Cheshire in 1892, the son of a rector. He was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge, earning an honors degree in history prior to becoming a barrister in 1914. During World War I, Leigh-Mallory joined the Liverpool Regiment as a private but was soon commissioned and transferred to the Lancashire Fusiliers. In 1915, he was wounded at the Second Battle of Ypres and joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1916 after recovering from his wounds; he became a pilot flying bombing and reconnaissance missions during the Battle of the Somme.

Both: Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: Hugh Dowding, beleaguered commander-in-chief of Fighter Command. BELOW: Keith R. Park, Dowding's senior air staff officer and commander of No. 11 Group.

Noted for his energy and efficiency by his superiors, Leigh-Mallory's subordinates regarded him as distant and arrogant. After the war, he was briefly an inspector of recruiting prior to moving to the School of Army Cooperation, where he became its commander from 1927 through 1931. He then moved on to the Air Ministry and, in 1934, commanded the first flying school at Digby. In need of a posting overseas for career advancement, Leigh-Mallory served in Iraq and was then recalled to England in 1937 as war loomed.

Dowding became the first commander in chief of Fighter Command after completing his assignment as air member for research and development where he provided oversight for the development of the Hurricane and Spitfire fighter aircraft and the emerging technology of radar. In July 1938, Dowding was notified by the chief of the air staff, Cyril Newall, that, in Dowding's words, "my services would not be required after the end of June 1939." Dowding and Newall were contemporaries, with Dowding slightly more senior, but nonetheless had been passed over for the chief of the air staff position. According to Dowding, "I've always been against all governments. Wherever I've been, and in whatever I have tried to do, it seemed that there was always somebody in the Government who was hampering my efforts."

In the summer of 1938, New Zealander Keith Rodney Park became Dowding's senior air staff officer, working directly with him at the headquarters of Fighter Command. These two officers were in complete harmony in their understanding of the development of Fighter Command as a major arm of defense against a projected attack from the Luftwaffe.

In 1937, Trafford Leigh-Mallory became air officer commanding No. 12 Group, to the north of what would become Park's command at No. 11 Group. These two men became Dowding's most important subordinates. Park was to exhibit the utmost loyalty to Dowding; conversely, Leigh-Mallory would give Dowding some of his gravest difficulties.

As a means of background for this disharmony between these RAF commanders, soon after Air Marshal Hugh Dowding became the commander in chief (C-in-C) of Fighter Command in 1936, he expected that No. 12 Group (north of the Thames) would bear the brunt of any attack from Germany based on geographical lines. To command this important group, in 1937, he chose Leigh-Mallory, now an air vice-marshal—to his everlasting regret.

At this juncture, Leigh-Mallory was an imposing man reputed to be unwilling to tolerate others' opinions. Although he had

Both: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: King George VI, left, and Dowding chat about the RAF's progress during the Battle of Britain. TOP: Chief Air Marshal Charles Portal, second from left, and Air Vice Marshal Keith Park, third from left, talk with fighter pilots while a Spitfire is fueled.

the traits of a good commander, Leigh-Mallory expected that he would lead the defenses wherever the Germans might attack. After the fall of France, it was apparent that the upcoming air battle would be heavily contested in the area of No. 11 Group in the southeastern corner of England, so Leigh-Mallory asked for an immediate transfer to this command. However, Dowding had greater confidence in Air Vice-Marshal Park, with whom he had already worked at Fighter Command. Thus, he kept Leigh-Mallory north of the Thames and allowed Park to command No. 11 Group. Leigh-Mallory and Park detested one another and this decision would come back to haunt Dowding.

The blunt fact was that Leigh-Mallory was jealous of Park's role as the Group Commander defending the area that was to be the most heavily engaged with the Luftwaffe since, after France's fall, Nazi airfields were now just across the English Channel, 20 miles away. Also, the two group commanders held different tactical views. Park agreed with Dowding's strategy of sending up small flights of fighters to attack very large Luftwaffe forces in order to husband his outnumbered RAF fighters and pilots, thereby forestalling Operation Sealion, Germany's planned invasion of Britain.

By actively avoiding a major clash with the Germans, Dowding sought a steady level of Luftwaffe attrition that would preclude Nazi control of the air prior to an invasion. Leigh-Mallory thought this fighting method was nonsense. By attacking with the strongest concentrations of aircraft—"Big Wings"—Leigh-Mallory believed he could clear the skies of the Luftwaffe and reduce casualties among the RAF pilots.

Controversy over "Big Wings" had been raging for some time in Fighter Command. In addition to Leigh-Mallory, one of the most vociferous advocates of the "Big Wing" tactic was the leader of Squadron No. 242, Douglas Bader. This tactic entailed the in-air assembly of an entire wing of five squadrons to attack the enemy

bombers in force.

Dowding rejected Leigh-Mallory's "Big Wing" method for two reasons. First, the RAF did not have to defeat the Luftwaffe in massive aerial duels. In a battle of attrition, the RAF only had to avoid being defeated. Leigh-Mallory's tactic would have resulted in gigantic, pitched air battles between the two air forces, which was Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring's goal and an anathema to Dowding.

Another reason Dowding vetoed the "Big Wing" tactic was that it took too long to bring large formations of fighters together; Fighter Command's airfields were too small to allow several squadrons to take off simultaneously. Thus, individual flights of three planes would take off and then wait to form up with the later ones to establish the "Big Wing." Dowding's radar system was not able to provide a proper time interval for such an aerial flight assembly. The German bombers would have reached their targets and unloaded their bombs before the "Big Wing" caught them.

"Nonsense," scoffed Leigh-Mallory. "All it takes is practice. And even if this were true," he continued, "so what? We'll hit them so hard that they won't come back again." In the event, it often did prove true that the "Big Wing," when employed by Leigh-Mallory, was too late to intercept the bombers before they hit their targets.

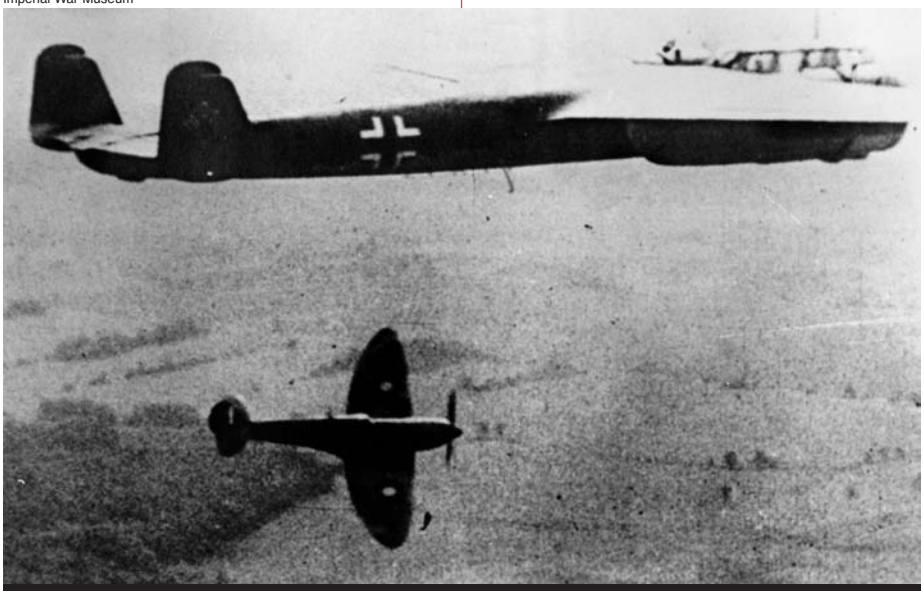
Leigh-Mallory was Dowding's subordinate and thus a debate about the "Big Wing" tactic should have been brief. Leigh-Mallory should have followed his orders to be a backup to Park's No.11 Group. Dowding's biggest mistake was not to crack down on Leigh-Mallory. Long after the personal battle was over, Dowding reflected, "Looking back on things now, I believe that I ought to have been very much firmer, in fact stricter, with Leigh-Mallory." Dowding might have considered replacing Leigh-Mallory at this time, but his attitude was to pick the best people and to delegate responsibility. His assumption that Leigh-Mallory would simply follow his orders turned out to be unrealistic and incorrect.

After a fighter defense exercise in 1939,

Leigh-Mallory started instituting standing patrols on his own initiative. Dowding disagreed and warned Leigh-Mallory not to implement strategic changes without orders. Leigh-Mallory objected to this admonition and left the meeting ranting that he would "move heaven and earth to get Dowding sacked from his job."

As the Battle of Britain raged on, Douglas Bader vehemently stirred his squadron's pilots into a frenzy for their inactivity. Leigh-Mallory should have restrained Bader but instead he encouraged the insubordinate behavior. Leigh-Mallory told Bader that he could ignore any orders emanating from No. 11 Group (Park) or even Fighter Command (Dowding). Dowding should have intervened and disciplined Leigh-Mallory (and Bader) as he had after the air defense exercises in 1939. At that time, when Leigh-Mallory had tried to insist on his right to override Fighter Command orders, Dowding told him, in front of other senior officers, "The trouble with you, Leigh-Mallory, is that sometimes you cannot see further than the end of your little nose."

Imperial War Museum



A Spitfire shadows a German Dornier 17 light bomber shortly after the Battle of Britain as enemy daylight raids against England became fewer.

The second controversy that swirled around the "Big Wing" tactic was the disagreement, dating from prewar days, between the Air Ministry and Fighter Command over the most effective way to intercept raids made by large enemy formations. Dowding's opponents at the Air Ministry, who considered him to be uncooperative and unsuited to his command, seized eagerly on others who disagreed with his policies. In this way, Leigh-Mallory and Bader were essentially used as pawns in the "Big Wing" controversy by an Air Ministry upper echelon critical of Dowding.

The Air Ministry "brass" shrewdly noted that No. 12 Group's theories were useful to discredit both Dowding and Park. Prominent among Dowding's opponents was Air Marshal Sholto Douglas. A staff officer noted that during the Battle of Britain there was little telephone conversation between either Leigh-Mallory and Dowding or Leigh-Mallory and Park, though there was "plenty between Leigh-Mallory and Sholto Douglas." This same RAF officer believed that Douglas was an *eminence grise* for Leigh-Mallory, working in the shadows of the Air Ministry to surreptitiously undermine Dowding.

In regard to the "Big Wing," Leigh-Mallory submitted a report to Dowding on Wing Patrols, which was forwarded to the Air Ministry. Leigh-Mallory wrote that, on the morning of September 15, 1940, the Wing, "on finding the Dorniers were able to destroy all they could see ... promptly destroyed the lot." He went on: "The enemy were outnumbered in the action and appeared in the circumstances to be quite helpless." Leigh-Mallory claimed 105 destroyed, 40 probably destroyed, and 18 damaged, for the loss of 14 RAF aircraft and six pilots. Douglas got these figures and they were just what he had been looking for.

Intriguingly, not all the pilots in No. 12 Group approved of "Big Wings." A Flight Lieutenant Blackwood had observed "that it was often chaos." Flying Officer Brinsden thought the Big Wing a "disaster," which achieved nothing because, in any case, "the [Big] Wing disintegrated almost immediately when battle was joined."

A special meeting was arranged for October 17, 1940, by Cyril Newall, chief of the air staff (CAS). The immediate agenda was to discuss the disagreement in fighter formation tactics, and to review the progress on night defense as the "Blitz" was intensifying. Although held in Newall's office, the CAS was taken sick at the last minute and the chair was taken by the deputy chief, Sholto Douglas. Dowding showed up expecting to give the Air Ministry a summary of his strategy in the battle, which he had just won, and to discuss the progress with radar for night interception.

To Dowding's dismay, Squadron Leader Bader was there among the assembled air marshals and air vice-marshals. Leigh-Mallory had brought him so the Air Ministry could hear the views of an actual fighting pilot. However, Sholto Douglas did not solicit the views of other squadron leaders who felt that the "Big Wing" concept was wrong. When Air Marshal Portal, who seems to have been the only skeptic in the room with regard to "Big Wings," asked Leigh-Mallory how he could defend his local area if all his strength were so concentrated, the latter assured him that "satisfactory plans were prepared."

Sholto Douglas then took the floor and essentially presented Bader's and Leigh-Mallory's views as the preferred tactic and inquired why it should not be utilized to its fullest effect. Thus, Dowding was effectively put in the position of refuting the charge. Leigh-Mallory took the floor and said he could get the "Big Wing" into formation within six minutes. No one asked him why, during the past summer, it had

Imperial War Museum

Dowding, in suit and bowler hat and accompanied by a female aide, poses with several of his Battle of Britain fighter pilots after he was sacked by Sholto Douglas.

always taken more than a quarter of an hour to do so, resulting in the Wing always being too late to engage the bombers before they reached their targets. Instead, he repeated Bader's lecture on the simple values of overwhelming force, and the assembled audience very nearly broke into hearty applause.

In essence, the room was stacked, and Dowding was ambushed. The official stance of the Air Ministry was that the Battle of Britain had been mishandled by Dowding. According to Keith Park, Dowding was condemned by this meeting with the controversy over "Big Wings" being an excuse to dismiss him from Fighter Command's leadership.

To complete the piling-on, Dowding was ordered by the Air Staff to immediately use Hurricanes in night defense rather than waiting months for his preferred radar-equipped Beaufighters. Predictably, the Hurricanes failed but, nonetheless, Dowding was fired three weeks after this fateful meeting. Preditctably, Sholto Douglas became the new commander of Fighter Command. To Dowding's credit, night defense succeeded when the Beaufighter with airborne radar was ready the following spring.

Unfortunately for Dowding, though, another powerful lobby had convened and believed Fighter Command's C-in-C was absolutely wrong. Although a political ally, Lord Beaverbrook, minister of aircraft production, intervened on September 14, 1940. He wrote to Archibald Sinclair, minister for air, to inform him that a committee was to be formed to look into night defense under one of his staff, a former CAS, Marshal of the RAF, Sir John Salmond.

The "Salmond Committee" produced its report within days and was critical of Dowding while substantiating Douglas's views on night defense. Salmond even attached a private note to Beaverbrook's copy of the report recommending that "Dowding should go." He added that he had said the same thing to Churchill, who practically blew him out of the room, but was "coming round." If Churchill failed to sack Dowding, Salmond was prepared to go to the king.

Why was Dowding removed as C-in-C of Fighter Command after having been victorious in the Battle of Britain? Who was principally responsible for his demise? Although Dowding had generated considerable enmity among his peers and superiors during his decades with the RAF, he was not devoid of political allies. He got along well with Neville Chamberlain in 1937 since the prime minister had moral reservations about bombing and, thus, insisted that air rearmament prioritize fighter defense.

Prior to the "Salmond Committee," Dowding also had the support of Lord Beaverbrook. Churchill, too, recognized the vital contribution Dowding had made to Britain's defenses. Early on, Churchill saw the need to postpone Dowding's forced retirement—but only for as long as the direct threat to Britain was there.

Churchill expected Hitler to turn east once his attack on Britain had been broken; then, his only method to attack Germany directly was with the bomber. Once the defensive battle of July-October 1940 had been won, Churchill could feel comfortable in releasing Dowding from Fighter Command.

According to historian John Ray, there were seven reasons why Dowding was replaced in November 1940. Three existed before the Battle of Britain started and included his age (58 years), his tenure of four years as C-in-C Fighter Command, and his contentious relationship with other Air Ministry officers since 1937.

As the air battle developed between July and October 1940, four other reasons emerged. First, in the eyes of the Air Staff, Dowding showed poor leadership by failing to resolve the controversy between Leigh-Mallory and Park over the use of "Big Wings." Second, as the Luftwaffe unveiled the night "Blitz" in September 1940, he appeared not to appreciate the need—widely shared by the Air Ministry, the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and politicians—for an urgent response.

Third, as 1940 was closing, the prime minister saw the RAF moving to an aggressive role, requiring a more dynamic leader for Fighter Command. Lastly, Churchill and Beaverbrook, Dowding's two powerful political patrons throughout the daylight battle, came to believe that a new man was needed. Nonetheless, these seven explanations fail to erase the fact that from the end of 1940 Dowding was treated dishonorably by the senior commanders of the RAF.

Was Dowding the victim of a vendetta? More specifically, did Leigh-Mallory and Bader collude behind the back of their C-in-C and use "political connections" to bring him down? Park believed in such a "conspiracy" and Dowding also felt that "dirty tricks" had been used by certain members of the Air Ministry. It could not have escaped Dowding's attention that a guiding hand behind the ground swell of opposition was that of Sholto Douglas, deputy CAS.

The "conspiracy theorists" contend that the adjutant of Bader's squadron, Flight Lieutenant Peter MacDonald, who was also a member of Parliament, was persuaded by Leigh-Mallory or Bader, or both, to meet the prime minister and expose the "Big Wing" controversy. In this version, Churchill followed up on the matter with speed, and plans were accelerated for the removal of Dowding and Park. On November 25, 1940, Douglas replaced Dowding and, on December 15, Leigh-Mallory took over from Park.

Was intrigue involved? A number of pressuring factors from both political and Air Service sources were seemingly operant. The fact that Douglas took the initiative and chaired the October meeting can be seen as a step taken toward his own advancement, since Dowding's failure to resolve the tactical dilemma had left a leadership vacuum to fill. The agenda of the meeting reinforces the contention that the controversy over employing "Big Wings" in daylight battles was far from the sole reason for the subsequent changes being made in Fighter Command's leadership.

When the meeting turned to night interception and Dowding's bickering with Air Ministry policy since September 7, 1940, it became clear that Dowding was intransigent in complying with Douglas's plan to form a night fighting wing with two Hurricane and two Defiant squadrons. Dowding believed that employing such a wing at night was dangerous, although he reluctantly agreed to the Air Ministry decision for a night-fighting wing. With Sholto Douglas as the "public prosecutor," Dowding and Park were condemned while No. 12 Group and Leigh-Mallory were allowed to participate in the remaining battle on their own terms.

But the day also marked the emergence of Douglas, who thus far had been involved in the controversy only clandestinely by way of meeting minutes and via staff messages in the Air Ministry. Many historians contend that it was Douglas who applied pressure from behind the scenes, using Leigh-Mallory's feud with both Park and Dowding as fodder for the controversy at the Air Ministry.

Some have argued that MacDonald's intervention was likely made on his own initiative and not as part of a conspiracy instigated by Bader or Leigh-Mallory. Sir Denis Crowley-Milling, a pilot with No. 242 Squadron at the time, has stated categorically that "Douglas Bader, Leigh-Mallory and all of us were totally unaware of this approach [MacDonald's to the PM]." Thus, it could be seen that Leigh-Mallory was accused unjustly of forming a plot to overthrow Dowding.

Leigh-Mallory remained an irritant. In 1944, shortly before the D-Day invasion of Normandy, the air marshal, whose responsibilities in the upcoming invasion

LEFT: Douglas Bader, who lost both legs in a 1931 crash, was also no fan of Dowding. CENTER: Air Chief Marshall Sholto Douglas led Air Ministry's ongoing feud with Dowding. RIGHT: Irascible Air Chief Marshall Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory worked to undermine his boss.

All: Imperial War Museum

included the Allies' entire tactical air operations, vexed Eisenhower with the prediction of horrendous losses by the airborne and glider forces, and urged that the American parachute drops and glider landings behind Utah Beach be cancelled. Thankfully, Ike chose to ignore Leigh-Mallory's advice and the airborne plan went ahead successfully as scheduled.

In August 1944, while heading to his new post as commander of air forces in South-East Asia, Leigh-Mallory died when the plane in which he was riding slammed into a mountain in the French Alps. By then an air chief marshal, he was the highest ranking British officer to be killed in World War II. Thus, Leigh-Mallory did not survive the war and he left no record to explain his policy during the Battle of Britain. Could Leigh-Mallory have been a "scapegoat," thereby acquiring the damaged posthumous reputation as being the unwitting principal foil for Sholto Douglas's sacking of Hugh Dowding?

Leigh-Mallory's critics have presented him as uncooperative and scheming, placing him centrally in a plot to unseat Dowding and Park by using political influence. Park's obituary referred to the conference of October 17, 1940, as being "instigated primarily by the AOC 12 Group." Such opinions about Leigh-Mallory are, according to one historian, "unsupported by evidence and do injustice to his memory."

In 1942, Dowding retired officially from the RAF. The Air Ministry refused to honor him by promotion to marshal of the RAF, but Churchill saw to it that he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Dowding of Bentley Priory. He was asked to write an official report of the Battle of Britain, which was never published. Instead the Air Ministry wrote its own history, without even mentioning his name.

Churchill was infuriated by this. He wrote to the minister for air, Archibald Sinclair: "The jealousies and cliquism which have led to the committing of this offense are a discredit to the Air Ministry, and I do not think any other Service Department would have been guilty of such a piece of work. What would have been said if ... the Admiralty had told the tale of Trafalgar and left Lord Nelson out of it?" □

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rome's eur

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brutality. The refugees tore the buildings apart for firewood, and gangs carried away everything else. The buildings were left stripped and deserted for five years, and virtually forgotten.

In February 1951, the Italian government announced a program to repair the wartime damage to the EUR and to complete its construction. It was carried out under the direction of architect Virgilio Testa, who restored the damaged buildings and finished constructing those that had not been started or were only partially completed.

Today, the EUR is a thriving upscale residential and shopping suburb, with government offices and several museums also located there. Among the museums are the Museo della Civiltá Romana (Museum of Roman Civilization); the Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari (the Folk Museum); the Museo Preistorico Etnografico L. Pigorini (Museum of Ethnography and Prehistory); and the Museo dell'Alto Medioevo (Museum of the Middle Ages).

Mussolini's bellicose image vastly overshadows his reputation as a promoter of architectural and engineering projects in Italy. Yet, it was the latter in which he had his greatest successes. His political stature suffered as military defeats increased and he lost the support of the Italian people. However, his efforts to modernize Rome, to promote the culture and history of Italy, to develop better living conditions by building some 19 new towns throughout the country, and to construct an efficient, viable transportation and communication network were, in the main, successful.

Undoubtedly, most of these would have been realized had his policies in Italy and abroad not been undermined by a belligerent foreign policy that cost his regime important friends and allies. This was followed by a disastrous war of his own creation that bled away irreplaceable resources and energy that could have been much better expended on infrastructure improvements at home. □

supply front

Continued from page 61

Le Havre was designated as the chief port of embarkation for the wounded and for liberated Allied prisoners of war returning home, so the 16th Port became responsible for setting up a huge camp and staging area at Le Havre for the former Allied POWs to prepare them to be taken to Britain and the States. The camp was called Lucky Strike, and at one time accommodated 47,000 freed POWs. With so many men to care for at once and the transports back to the United States limited in capacity, complaints about the camp soon found their way to General Eisenhower. A newspaper reported "intolerable conditions" in the camp, and Ike decided to investigate for himself.

Flying to Le Havre, Ike roamed the camps and listened to the men. Their two biggest beefs were the bland food and the slow pace of returning home. The cooks told the Supreme Allied Commander that doctors had been concerned that salt and pepper would not be good for dehydrated men. Ike ate a meal of the unseasoned food with the men and agreed but did not feel that he should overrule the doctors.

When he asked the soldiers if they would mind being overcrowded onto transports if it would get them home sooner, they chose that alternative over waiting longer for uncrowded passage. This set the stage for the huge throngs of soldiers on shipboard streaming into New York Harbor for joyful, tearful reunions. Other soldiers embarked through Le Havre for action in the Pacific.

With final victory came reflection. Shortly after V-J Day, when the 16th Port statistics were added up, it was determined that over one million GIs had been redeployed through Le Havre for home or the Pacific. Two and a half million tons of war supplies had been unloaded there and moved to the ever-shifting front. It was an amazing record for a single outfit. The supply front had assured the victory of the Allied armies, and the 16th Port organization had played an important, if largely unsung, role in the ultimate victory. □


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