WWII QUARTERLY

JOURNAL OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

PEARL HARBOR 70TH ANNIVERSARY:
Day of Infamy Revisited

Japanese Raid on the Philippines

Sinking the Battleship Yamato

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Losing the War of Logistics in North Africa

Blond Beast of Birkenau

WWII QUARTERLY • WINTER 2011 *Volume 3, No. 2*

WINTER 2012

John D. Hoptak | Faculty, School of Art & Humanities

John D. Hoptak is an American and Civil War historian and educator. Author of *The Battle of South Mountain, Our Boys Did Nobly, First in Defense of the Union*, and *Antietam: September 17, 1862*, Hoptak brings to life the riveting conflicts that divided a nation. Hoptak's laboratory is the Antietam National Battlefield, where as a Park Ranger he shares his vast knowledge about the bloodiest day of battle in U.S. history.

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Reflections on "Sneak Attacks and "Dates of Infamy"

AT SOME POINT during this magazine's three-month "shelf life," the date December 7 will fall. As human society has a penchant for observing the fifth- and 10th-year anniversaries of certain events, this December 7 will be a significant one—the 70th anniversary of the Japanese attack on American military bases in the Pacific that catapulted the United States into World War II and forever changed the course of history.

Japan's devastating aerial assault on the American installations at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and in the Philippines and Wake Island was just the precursor of a wider plan. Japanese troops in China also seized the American garrisons at Shanghai (where they also captured the American gunboat *Wake*) and Tientsin. Within days, additional strikes were also launched against Hong Kong, Guam, and Wake Island, and Japanese troops poured ashore in northern Malaya; more units landed at Bangkok and took control of the Thai capital. Other landings took place at Tarawa and Makin in the Gilbert Islands group. It was a stunning, overwhelming victory for the forces of Dai Nippon.

America was caught with its collective pants down. President Roosevelt characterized the attack as "sudden and deliberate." Soon the press and public began calling it a "sneak attack," because there was apparently no forewarning or hint that hostilities were imminent.

To tell the truth, I've always had a problem with the words "sneak attack." After Pearl Harbor, they entered the lexicon as being something especially treacherous and, by association, an unfair tactic that only the "bad guys" would do.

I much prefer the term "surprise attack," as "surprise" is a long-accepted principle of warfare: catch your enemy when and where he least expects it. In *The Art of War*, the ancient Chinese general and strategist Sun Tzu wrote, "The place [and time] I intend to attack must not be known; if it is unknown, the enemy will have to reinforce many places; the enemy will reinforce many places, but I shall attack few."

When Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, Hitler, although he rattled his sabers at Poland for quite a while, did not announce in advance that the attack was about to take place. When Germany struck both Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940, and Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands a month later, Hitler did everything possible to catch those countries unawares. When he invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, news releases announcing his intentions were not sent out ahead of time.

It goes without saying that the whole idea of a surprise attack is to keep the enemy in the dark so that he cannot mass his forces at the right time and place to meet force with force. The concept is so elemental and obvious that it seems strange that we in the United States continue to call Pearl Harbor a "sneak" attack. What it should rightly be called was a brilliant concept and execution—a perfect example of the "surprise" attack. As hard as it may be to do, we should give the enemy some credit.

Of course, for propaganda purposes, it makes sense for the aggrieved party to portray the enemy's actions as treacherous, violations of the rules of war, beyond the norm, even "sneaky." If the attacked nation characterizes the enemy's military strike as a "surprise," it somehow implies that their own intelligence was faulty and their security inadequate.

Still, the feeling in the United States all these years later remains that Japan had used tactics that were unfair or beyond the norm or somehow violated the rules of warfare—in short, "sneaky."

It should be remembered that we retaliated in kind—Doolittle's bombing raid on Japan, the assaults on Japanese-held Pacific islands, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the same token, the Allies' invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, southern France, and Holland were also "surprise" attacks and were not publicly announced before they were launched.

Today, 70 years after Pearl Harbor—and 10 years after Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks—it's time to cast aside "sneak attack," use the proper terminology, and hope that our nation's leaders have put into place systems that will keep us from ever being the victim of a surprise attack again.

Flint Whitlock, Editor

WWII History Quarterly Volume 3 ■ Number 2

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

FLINT WHITLOCK
Editor
WWIIQuarterly@gmail.com

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Michael J. Bell, G. Paul Garson, Sam McGowan, Kevin Hymel, Herb Kugel, Steven D. Lutz, Eric Niderost, Cynthia Southern, Allyn Vannoy

ADVERTISING OFFICE:

BEN BOYLES
Advertising Manager
(570) 322-7848, ext. 110
benjaminb@sovhomestead.com

MARK HINTZ
Vice President & Publisher

KATHY PAULHAMUS, MARY NOLAN, SANDRA HILLYARD
Subscription Customer Services

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

CURTIS CIRCULATION COMPANY
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100
McLean, VA 22101-4554

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:

1000 Commerce Park Drive,
Suite 300, Williamsport, PA 17701

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DONALD M. GOLDSTEIN, one of America's foremost military historians,

served for 22 years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force and is a retired Professor Emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of over 50 magazine articles and 22 books, including co-author of the Pulitzer finalist and best-selling (47 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list) *At Dawn We Slept*, which was used as the basis for the 1970 film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* For his complete biography, see: www.pitt.edu/~goldy/goldybio. He lives today in Florida.

CYNTHIA SOUTHERN is a graduate of the University of Colorado with a B.A. in History with Cum Laude honors. She has extensively studied the Holocaust, the Third Reich, and World War II. She lives in Denver, Colorado. Her website is www.cynthiasouthern.com.

An expert in the life of Lenny Thom, historian **MIKE BELL** lives in Wyoming. He grew up in Minnesota and earned a Masters degree in history from University of Wyoming and an MA in teaching from the University of Maine. He has done living-history interpretation for 20 years, presenting characters such as Butch Cassidy, General Sam Houston, and Wyatt Warp. He has given talks on Lenny Thom to groups around the nation, including PT Boat veterans and in Thom's hometown of Sandusky, Ohio. He also appeared in a History Channel program about PT-109. Bell is currently at work on a book about Jonathan Daniels, a civil-rights hero.

Frequent contributor **KEVIN M. HYMEL** is the author of *Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It*. He also leads tours of Patton's battlefields and personal tours of Normandy for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours. He currently resides in Kansas, where he is working on a research and writing project at Fort Leavenworth.

Portage, Michigan, resident **STEPHEN LUTZ**, a Vietnam War veteran, has been published in various military history magazines, including *WWII History* ("Project Habakkuk: An Iceberg Aircraft Carrier Nearly Became a Reality," Sept., 2011), *Civil War Times, America's Civil War*, and has contributed several chapters to various books of military history.

Author of two books and numerous articles, **SAM MCGOWAN** spent 12 years in the U.S. Air Force. He was stationed at Clark Field during the Vietnam War. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and 12 Air Medals. He is a retired corporate pilot and resides in Missouri City, Texas.

HERB KUGEL is a frequent contributor to *WWII Quarterly*. He writes from his home in Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia.

Leonard J. Thom, XO of *PT 109* and JFK's friend and right-hand man, is remembered as a hero to his family and those who served with him.

THE NAME LEONARD Jay Thom may not mean anything to a great many people today, and that is unfortunate. But there are some who still remember. They recall the big, blond-haired man with such a zest for life. They will never forget the gentle giant who, in the short time he graced the world with his presence, touched the lives of so many.

To the historian, Leonard Thom is remembered as the Executive Officer aboard *PT 109,* the boat that launched the legend of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He was a key player in the drama that followed that boat's sinking in August 1943. Like so many others who came into JFK's orbit, Lenny Thom has become but a footnote in the history books. He deserves so much more. Even if he had never met Jack Kennedy, Lenny's life would still be worth remembering. He was a true American hero, friend, husband, brother, and father whose life ended far too soon.

Leonard Thom was born on September 8, 1917, in Sandusky, Ohio, the oldest of eight children. In high school, the husky Lenny played football, lettering in a sport that showcased his natural talents and ever-growing size.

After high school, he attended Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, but his experiences there lasted only one year; the duration of his college years were spent at Ohio State. There he played football and was an all-star tackle and guard and was Phi Beta Kappa. Football, however, remained his calling.

P.T. Boats, Inc.

ABOVE: Lieutenant Lenny Thom photographed in 1944, hard at work at Melville. LEFT: Lieutenant Lenny Thom (right) with John F. Kennedy, "somewhere in the South Pacific."

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston

For a brief stint, Thom also played semi-pro football for the Columbus Bulls. The Chicago Bears were also interested in Lenny's talent at one point, offering him $1,000 to sign and $500 a game. Lenny had other things on his mind, though, and passed up this chance.

While at Ohio State, Lenny met a young woman on a blind date to whom he lost his heart. Catherine Holway, or Kate, as she was and is known to her friends, hailed from Youngstown and was attending St. Mary's of the Springs, an all-girls college in Columbus. She remembers this big, striking blond man walking into the room of the house where a postgame party was being held. They soon began seeing a lot of each other, and when Lenny went off to join the Navy, Kate wore his Phi Delta Theta fraternity pin.

As the war clouds darkened, Thom, like many other young men, volunteered to serve his country in uniform. At that time the U.S. Navy had instituted a program called "V-7," in which college graduates, or those close to graduation, could join as apprentice seamen. After a month of training as apprentice seamen, they were then appointed midshipmen. As midshipmen they received an addition three months of officer training and then were commissioned as ensigns, following which they were sent either directly to the Fleet or to one of the numerous special advanced schools for their final training.

Thom went through the V-7 program at Notre Dame and met a fellow trainee named Joe Atkinson. Since men like Thom and Atkinson did not have the benefit of a Naval Academy education, they went through the accelerated course to become officers in the naval reserve. Atkinson

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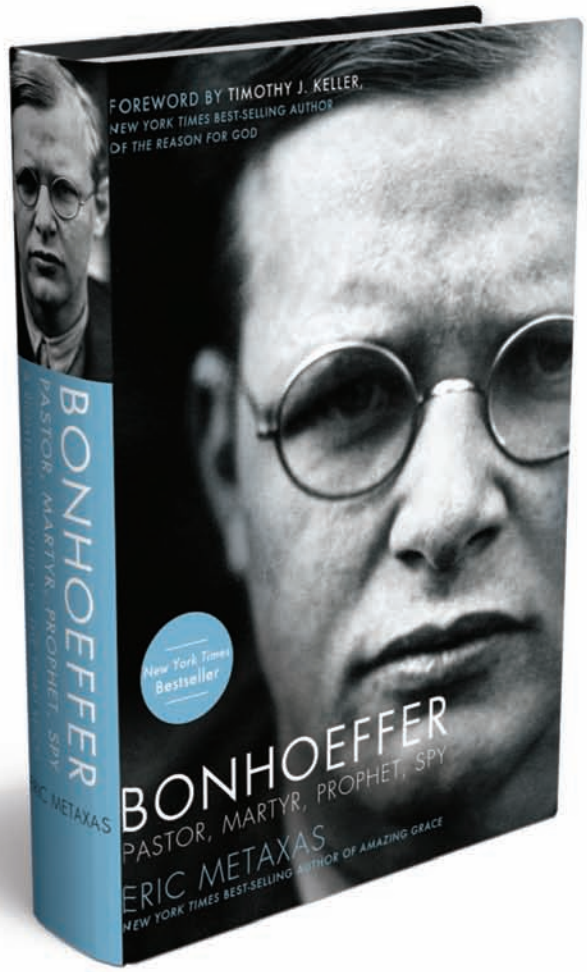

From *New York Times* best-selling author

ERIC METAXAS

WHO BETTER TO FACE THE GREATEST EVIL OF THE 20TH CENTURY THAN A HUMBLE MAN OF FAITH?

As Adolf Hitler and the Nazis seduced a nation, bullied a continent, and attempted to exterminate the Jews of Europe, a small number of dissidents and saboteurs worked to dismantle the Third Reich from the inside. One was Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a pastor and author, known as much for such spiritual classics as *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together* as for his 1945 execution in a concentration camp for his part in the plot to assassinate Hitler.

In the first major biography of Bonhoeffer in 40 years, author Eric Metaxas takes both strands of Bonhoeffer's life—the theologian and the spy—and draws them together to tell a searing story of incredible moral courage in the face of monstrous evil. In a deeply moving narrative, Metaxas uses previously unavailable documents—including personal letters, detailed journal entries, and firsthand personal accounts—to reveal dimensions of Bonhoeffer's life and theology never before seen.

Bonhoeffer gives witness to one man's extraordinary faith and to the tortured fate of the nation he sought to deliver from the curse of Nazism. It brings the reader face to face with a man determined to do the will of God radically, courageously, and joyfully—even to the point of death. *Bonhoeffer* is the story of a life framed by a passion for truth and a commitment to justice on behalf of those who face implacable evil.

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Eric Metaxas tells Bonhoeffer's story with PASSION AND THEOLOGICAL SOPHISTICATION. ***—The Wall Street Journal***

IN THIS FINE BIOGRAPHY, Metaxas stays close to the story and refrains from any efforts at theory. All the more reason to read it. ***—The New Republic***

A moving, comprehensive, and engaging biography of the martyr's life...Metaxas tells a compelling story. VERDICT: RECOMMENDED. ***—Library Journal***

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remembered Lenny as a jolly fellow and said in an interview that he loved Lenny like a brother. It was at the MTBSTC (Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Center) at Melville, Rhode Island, that Thom met a sickly looking young naval lieutenant from Boston named Jack Kennedy. The two men became fast friends, and their lives would be intertwined for the next three years.

In March 1943, newly commissioned Ensign Leonard J. Thom, USNR, was sent to the South Pacific Theater and the Solomon Islands. Thom drew an assignment as Executive Officer (XO) of *PT 109,* serving under Lieutenant Bryant Larson. After Larson moved on, Thom was pleased to learn that the boat's new commander would be his old friend, Jack Kennedy. The relationship and trust that these two men had with one another would serve them well over the next few months.

Lenny Thom was not a man people forgot. He made quite an impression. In the book *The Search for JFK* by Clay and Joan Blair, Charles "Bucky" Harris, a crewmember aboard the *109,* said of Thom, "He could rule anybody. You would just look at him and do what he told you. He was an awfully nice man." Many of his fellow offices recall with great fondness the big man who looked like a figure out of Nordic mythology, especially with the blond goatee that he grew.

Lieutenant Al Cluster recalled his arrival in the Solomons and a discussion he got into about FDR. As a Republican, Cluster was complaining about how President Roosevelt always seemed to appoint his rich cronies to high government jobs such as an ambassador to some place or another. Lenny interrupted and mentioned to Cluster that the young fellow who sat a few feet away was Kennedy. Cluster was not impressed. Thom then explained that it was John Kennedy, the son of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy. "Right from the start," Cluster said, "Lenny was helping me out, and kept me from embarrassing myself."

Cluster also remembered a time when Lenny tried to step in and calm another man down who had been drinking. The sailor shoved Lenny and sent him reeling. The next morning, when told what he had done, the man had tears in his eyes. He could not believe he had shoved Lenny.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston

Lieutenant Thom (standing far left) with officers and men of PT boats 36 and 40.

In the Solomons, mail would not arrive one letter at a time. It got backed up, and many of the men would receive a number of letters at once. Back in the States, Kate Holway wrote to Lenny nearly every day, so he would get a packet of 30 or so letters at one time. He would lovingly open one each day. (When the ordeal of the sinking of the *109* was over, Lenny told Cluster that the thing he missed most was not being able to open his letters from Kate.)

Life in the Pacific, while often boring between missions, could also be quite interesting. Johnny Iles, who lived in the same quarters with Lenny, Jack Kennedy, and Gene Foncannon, remembered a house guest they had had in their place. He was a young native boy named Lami, who told the officers that he was a cannibal. Johnny remembers Lami eyeing the big beefy forearms of Lenny Thom. Fortunately for Lenny, the New Zealand authorities were notified and soon came to take the young man away. It was not just the Japanese who posed a threat to the PT boats!

On the night of August 2, 1943, *PT 109* was on night patrol in an area of the Solomons known as Blackett Strait. Idling on one engine to keep its phosphorescent wake to a minimum (Japanese float planes frequently found that the wake helped make the PT boats a great target), the *109* was suddenly struck by the destroyer *Amagiri.*

Historians have claimed in recent works that the crew was relaxing and some were even asleep and that this was why the *109* did not see the ship until it was too late. Lenny told Kate later that is was ridiculous for anyone to hint that the crew of the *109* was not alert. "We were on patrol!" he said. The darkness of the Pacific nights and the confusion among the other boats both point to the fact that the *109* was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. The destroyer sheared off a large section of the *109*, causing an explosion seen by Dick Keresey on the *105*, some five miles distant. Two of the crew, Harold Marney and Andrew Kirksey, were killed. Lenny helped round up the others and bring them back to the hull of the *109*.

Gerard Zinser, the last surviving member of the *109* that night, said in an interview that Lenny was a "great help in getting the men back to the boat." They clung to the shattered hull of the *109* until daybreak. When it was clear that the remains of the ship would not last much longer, the men swam for an island known as Plum Pudding. It was farther away but smaller than others and less likely to hold enemy troops.

Repeatedly, Jack Kennedy swam out into open waters in a vain search for American ships. While he was gone, Lenny was the man in charge. As the days passed and the men seemed to grow more resigned to their fate, it was Lenny Thom who did not allow them to give up hope. He mustered all that

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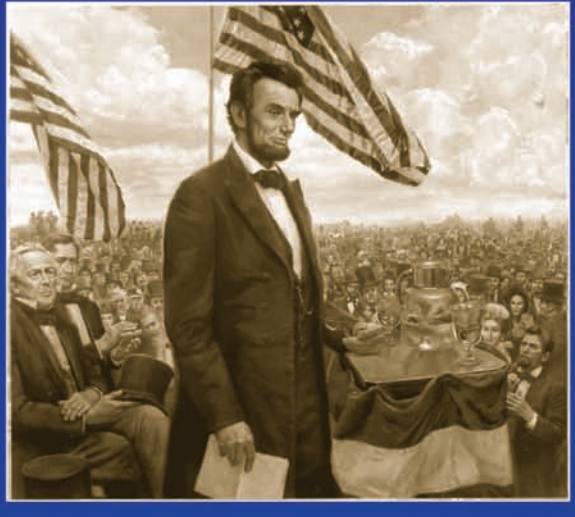

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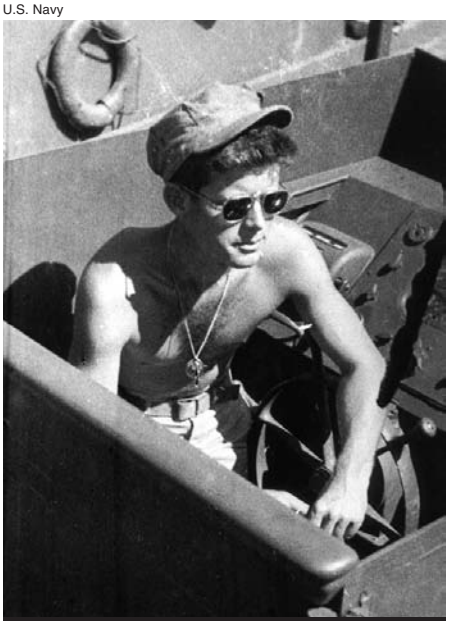
he had within him to keep their minds off the seemingly hopeless situation they were in. Many of the crew, when interviewed years later, said that it was Lenny who served as their rock.

In the Blairs' book, "Bucky" Harris said, "When Kennedy left, Thom organized us. He used to tell us stories about the farm and the college days ... and the things he was going to do. He was Great! He kept everybody's spirits up. He had no fear, not a worry in the world." Zinser remembered Thom in much the same light. He said that Lenny was a very good person and a fine officer and that he really helped keep a flicker of hope alive.

U.S. Navy



Lieutenant Kennedy in command of *PT 109*, near Tulagi, Solomon Islands, South Pacific.

After the men had moved to another island, Kennedy and Ensign Barney Ross (Ross had come along for the ride the night the *109* had gone out) continued to try to flag down U.S. ships. On the fifth day, while Kennedy and Ross were gone, natives discovered the rest of the crew. The natives seemed hesitant about approaching the bedraggled men. It was not until big Lenny Thom stepped forward that the tension eased. He repeated the phrase "white star, white star" over and over again. The natives knew that "white star" referred to the insignia on U.S. planes and that these were Americans. The natives gave the crew some C rations and water. Lenny then convinced them to take him back to their contact so he could get in touch with the base at Rendova. Lenny got into their canoe, but the canoe promptly swamped.

P.T. Boats, Inc.

One of the small, fast motor torpedo patrol ("PT") boats made by Elco. The 80-foot-long boat carried up to four Mark 8 torpedos and could attain speeds between 25 and 27 knots.

Lenny then used a pencil stub and wrote on the back of an invoice a note that the natives could take with them to Rendova. The note read as follows:

To: Commanding Officer-Oak o
From: Crew P.T. 109 (Oak 14)
Subject: Rescue of 11 (eleven) men lost since Sunday, August 1 in enemy action.

Native knows our position and will bring P.T. Boat back to small islands of Ferguson Passage off Nuru Is.

A small boat (outboard or oars) is needed to take men off as some are seriously burned. Signal at night three dashes (---) Pasword—Roger—Answer—Wilco. If attempted at day time—advise air coverage or a PBY could set down. Please work out a suitable plan and act immediately on native boys to any extent.

L.J. Thom
Ens. U.S.N.R.
Exec. 109

It was this note, along with the more famous coconut shell on which Kennedy carved a message, that eventually made it to an Australian coastwatcher's outpost and later the PT base at Rendova. Thom's note served as confirmation of Kennedy's coconut shell, which—at first glance—was thought to be an enemy trick.

At the home base on Rendova, some wanted to go out to look for the *109* but were denied permission to do so. It was felt that daylight sorties were not safe, as the Allies had not yet gained air superiority. There also seemed to be a general feeling that nobody could have survived the explosion that many had seen on the night of August 2.

Back in the States, Kate Holway had not heard from Lenny in over a week. The first indication she had that something had been amiss was when she read that Lenny had been rescued; she had not even known that he was missing. Kate later received a wire from Lenny telling her that all was OK and not to worry.

Lenny was awarded the Purple Heart for injuries he sustained and the Navy and Marine Corps medal for his efforts to save the crew. The war and that experience were having an effect. In a letter he wrote to the Ohio State Development Office following the *109* sinking, he remarked that "this too is an education and an experience that one will never forget. But one will be enough. Peace must be lasting and complete this time"—a sentiment shared by many who had gone off to war and had seen their

friends and comrades perish.

When the men of the *109* were rescued and returned to base, it was assumed that they would be going home. This was not to be. A few of the PT boats were turned into gunboats. Lenny was given command of Gunboat 60, *Nice*. Al Webb was the XO aboard the *Nice,* and he remembered Lenny Thom being a solid skipper.

Later, Thom was given command of *PT 587,* which was dubbed the "Thomcat" by its crew, a few who had served with him aboard the *109*.

When Lenny did manage to get back home, he married his sweetheart Kate on June 1, 1944, in Youngstown, Ohio. Lenny was assigned to the PT training center at Melville, and the Thoms set up house in Newport. On Labor Day weekend of 1944, the Thoms went to Hyannis Port to visit with Jack and some of the guys, including Barney Ross. There is a picture of all of them on the porch of the main house. Lenny Thom is standing off to the left, while Kate sits in a chair between Jack and Ross. They all seem so happy and carefree. The war had taken its toll, but the future looked bright.

While the Thoms were stationed at Melville, Lenny was able to indulge in his other passion, football. The PT boat men put together a team that played others from throughout the Northeast, including Harvard. Shortly thereafter, the Thoms found themselves moving again, this time to New York. After that stint, Lenny was sent to Florida in preparation for being shipped back to the Pacific to take part in the invasion of Japan. Since the invasion did not come to pass, Lenny was soon on his way home for good, arriving in January 1946.

When Lenny was finally mustered out in the winter of 1946, there was much to be excited about. Kate had recently given birth to a boy, named Leonard Jr., and before long another child would be on the way.

Like so many others who had served in the war, Lenny Thom took advantage of the GI Bill to further educate himself. He began a master's program at Ohio State and worked at Galbreaths Insurance in Columbus, making the commute between Youngstown and Columbus every week. For a time, they lived with Kate's parents, but the Thoms had soon purchased their first home in the fall of 1946. A letter from Lenny to his mother around this time speaks of the house being redecorated and of Kate finding work as a nurse.

On his way back to Youngstown late on the afternoon of October 4, 1946, Lenny took a route he had never taken before. Near the town of Deerfield, he crossed a set of railroad tracks. He never saw the train. Lenny was the only one of the three people in the car who was conscious when help arrived. "Forget me, help the other fellows," he pleaded with the rescue workers.

He was rushed to the hospital in Ravenna where he died the next day. After all he had been through, especially the dangerous experiences in the Pacific, it was bitterly ironic that he would pass away in this manner. His friends arrived from all across the country to pay their last respects to their comrade. Kennedy, Atkinson, Webb—they all came to say good-bye.

Lenny was laid to rest in Calvary Cemetery in Youngstown. Kate Thom was overwhelmed by the outpouring of friendship and support she received. She eventually remarried and had seven children with her second husband, Dr. Hilary Kelley. Her two children by Lenny were adopted by Dr. Kelley. Leonard Thom Kelley is now a lawyer in Anchorage, Alaska. Christine passed away in 2000 in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Kate and her husband live quietly in Greensburg, as well.

Lenny Thom's family has kept his spirit alive all these years by never forgetting. Family scrapbooks are full of treasured memories. The pages and pages of photographs and clippings show a young man enjoying all that life had to offer. There are testimonies to his courage under fire and the respect and affection countless others had for him. There is an outpouring of grief and utter despair following his untimely death. Lenny Thom touched the lives of a great many people and continues to do so even today.

And in a day and age where historians often seem to take a perverse pleasure in debunking heroes, it is comforting to know that there are still a few genuine heroes for people to look to as role models. Leonard Jay Thom was one such man. □

"This Is No Drill!"

IT WAS, AS the phrase goes, another perfect day in paradise. As the sun rose above the Pacific in the clear, cloudless sky east of the Hawaiian Islands, on December 7, 1941, the giant U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, on the island of Oahu, was just beginning to stir.

At 6:30 AM, USS *Antares* (AKS-3), a U.S. Navy stores and supply ship of more than 11,000 tons, was approaching the mouth of the inlet leading into Pearl Harbor towing a steel barge. On the bridge of *Antares* was her skipper, Commander Lawrence C. Grannis. He suddenly noticed an unexpected object about 1,500 yards off the starboard quarter, something that looked suspiciously like the conning tower of a submarine.

Grannis was indeed correct. The conning tower belonged to a 46-ton, 78-foot-long Type A Japanese midget submarine that carried two torpedoes and a two-man crew. It was one of five brought from Japan by five I-class mother submarines and launched five or six hours before the planned 8:00 AM aerial attack was set to begin. Its mission was to enter the harbor, lie in wait, and torpedo whatever ships it could find once the general attack was underway.

As *Antares* was unarmed, Grannis radioed the nearby destroyer *Ward* of his finding; officers aboard *Ward* confirmed the sighting and at 6:40 went to general quarters. There was no reason why a submarine should be lurking in that area, especially one that appeared to be trying to sneak into the harbor behind *Antares* during the brief minutes when the narrow channel's antisubmarine nets would be open.

Closing quickly on the submarine, which was now about five miles from the harbor's entrance, *Ward*'s skipper, Captain William Outerbridge, brought the destroyer to within 50 yards of the unidentified craft and gave the order to fire. The first salvo of four-inch shells missed, but then a round struck the conning tower at the waterline and the boat keeled over. As the sub passed beneath *Ward*'s hull, depth charges were dropped on it. It popped to the surface momentarily, then went under for good.

Outerbridge sent a message detailing his actions to the 14th Naval District watch officer, Lt. Cmdr. Harold Kaminski, who passed it along to higher headquarters. The report caused a stir, and soon it seemed that everyone was trying to get in touch with someone at a higher level who could decide what the sighting and sinking meant and what to do next.

A call went to Admiral Husband E. Kimmel's quarters on shore, where the admiral was preparing for a round of golf with Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short, commander of the U.S. Army's Hawaiian Department; Kimmel was commander in chief of the U.S. Fleet in the Pacific.

He threw on some clothes and was chauffeured to CinCPac headquarters, wondering if this was just another false alarm; there had been several "sightings" of Japanese ships, planes, and subs in the previous months, but they had all turned out to be nothing.

This time, as events would soon prove, this sighting and sinking was anything but nothing. It was, in fact, the precursor of a world-changing event, but no one at the time could appreciate just how momentous it was about to become.

As Gordon W. Prange, Katherine V. Dillon, and Donald M. Goldstein wrote in *At Dawn We Slept,* arguably the most detailed and comprehensive account of the attack, "The Navy's most serious error in this pre-attack submarine chapter of the Pearl Harbor story was its failure to advise the Army that a destroyer had sunk an obviously hostile submarine in the Defensive Sea Area. The incident might have provided just the added weight needed to move the Hawaiian Department from the No. 1 alert to No. 2

The world changed forever on a balmy, sunny Hawaiian Sunday in December 1941.

BY FLINT WHITLOCK

Sailors in a barge (foreground) rescue fellow sailors from the water as the *West Virginia* and *Maryland* (background) burn furiously. OPPOSITE: Japanese crewmen aboard the aircraft carrier *Shokaku* cheer as a Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" torpedo bomber takes off for Pearl Harbor at about 7:00 AM.

All photos: National Archives

or 3, because a submarine snooping near Pearl Harbor could scarcely have been charged up to local saboteurs."

To most of the military personnel in the Hawaiian Islands, the early-morning sinking of the midget submarine, however, passed unnoticed. Aboard the two dozen ships anchored in the shallow waters, hundreds of sailors were still in their racks, sleeping off a little too much drinking and carousing in Oahu's bars and houses of ill repute on Hotel Street the night before. (The five aircraft carriers that normally called Pearl Harbor their home station were either on maneuvers far out to sea or in port in California, or had been transferred to the Atlantic).

Elsewhere, chaplains were preparing for their weekly church services, and cooks in shipboard messes and in mess halls on land were frying eggs and bacon and brewing gallons of coffee. Belowdecks on *Arizona,* the band was donning crisp white uniforms and getting ready to assemble on deck to play its daily rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the national colors were raised on the fantail.

At Schofield Barracks, U.S. Army soldiers of both the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions, like their Navy counterparts, were either asleep or rolling slowly out of bed to begin their day. The same was true at the Army Air Bases at Hickam, Wheeler, and Bellows; the Marine airstrip at Ewa; the Naval Air Stations at Keneohe and Ford Island; and the tiny Haleiwa fighter strip. There the P-40 Warhawks and P-36 Hawks and B-17 Flying Fortresses were lined up in perfect rows so that they could be more easily guarded against sabotage—orders from General Short.

At 7:00 AM, atop a mountain known as Kahuku Point 230 feet above the sea on the north shore of Oahu, two enlisted men—Privates Joseph Lockard and George Elliott—were about to shut down their radar set at Opana Mobile Radar Station. Bleary eyed, the two men had been up all night practicing with the radar equipment—something brand-new for the Army.

Just before he threw the power switch to "off," Lockard noticed something

ABOVE: Japanese pilots rush to their planes. This photo is probably of the second wave, as the first wave took off in darkness. BELOW: A Japanese Zero fighter aboard *Akagi,* photographed prior to the attack.

unusual—an image on the oscilloscope indicating a large number of planes—more than 50—approaching the island. Neither he nor Elliott had any idea what it was. Elliott called the Information Center at Fort Shafter, where the pursuit officer and assistant to the controller, 2nd Lt. Kermit Tyler, was about to go off duty and get some shut-eye.

"Sir," said Elliott, "there seems to be a large formation of planes headed our way." He neglected to report that he estimated the number to be at least 50 planes.

Tyler thought for a moment, then remembered being told earlier that a dozen B-17s coming from California would be arriving in Oahu that morning. Those must be the bombers, Tyler assumed. "Well, don't worry about it," he told Elliott, then left the center without passing this information along to anyone else.

Deciding that the officer knew more than they did, Lockard and Elliott killed the power to the radar set and got ready to depart. The time was 7:20.

Meanwhile, a hundred miles north of Oahu, the vanguard of Operation Z—the long aerial train of warplanes that had been launched from a flotilla of carriers—was closing in on its unsuspecting target.

In his request before Congress for a declaration of war against Japan delivered on December 8, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated that the attack, while "sudden and deliberate," was also "unprovoked and dastardly." From the Japanese point of view, however, it was far from "unprovoked." Trouble between Japan and the United States had been brewing for many years, with the wheels of conflict set in motion shortly after the Great War ended in 1918.

Japan had been on the side of Great Britain and the United States, and had taken Pacific bases away from the Germans. As a result, Japan expected that she would be rewarded in some way, but was shocked and insulted when the Washington Arms Control Treaty of 1921-1922 determined the reduced size of the naval fleet that Japan would be allowed to have. Although Japan's democratic government grudgingly accepted the treaty, the ultranationalists and the hard-line militarists who held great power in the government were outraged, feeling the treaty was a slap in the face.

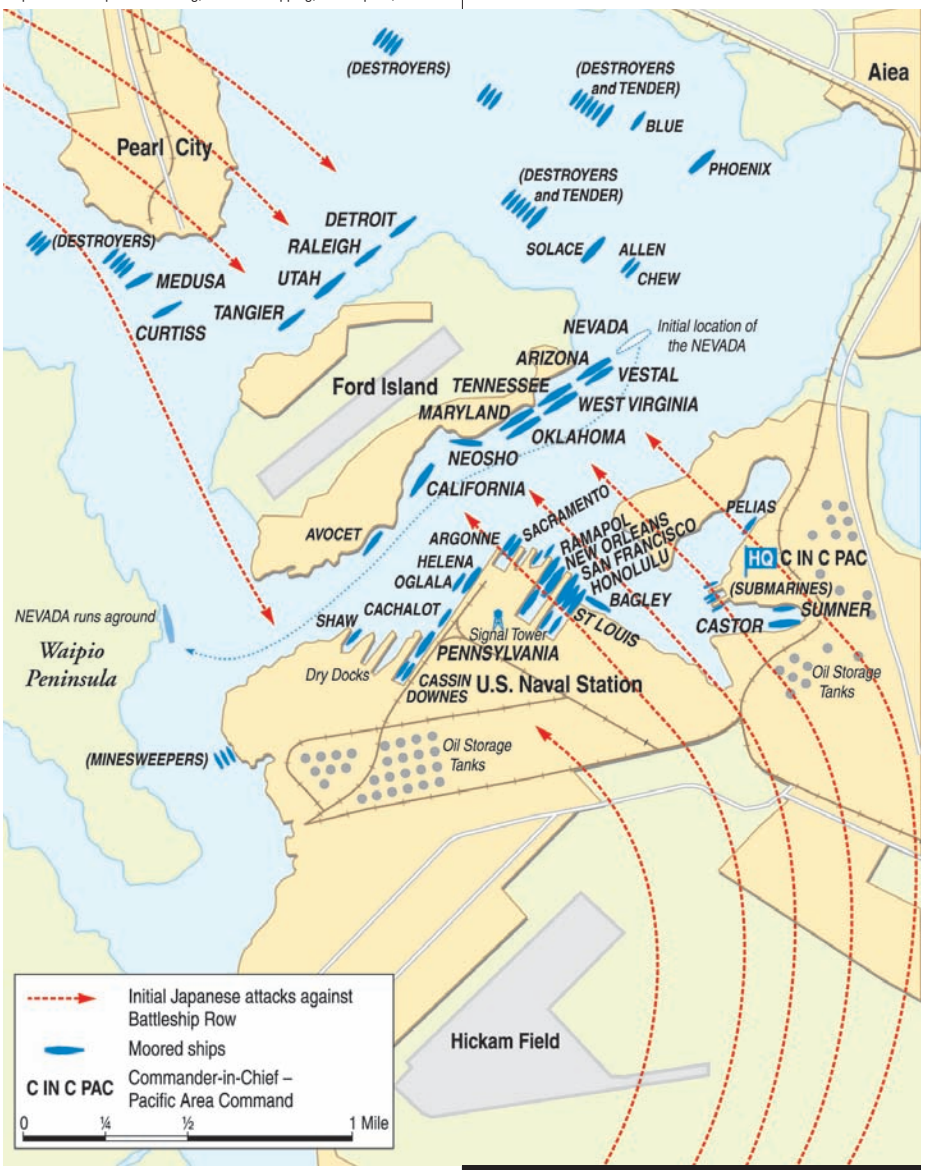
If the Western powers would not grant Japan equal status, they vowed, then they would chart their own course with their own national interests in mind. With few natural resources of its own, Japan was dependent on foreign trade, but the hardliners began plotting ways to invade its Asian rivals and grab the oil, coal, iron ore, nickel, copper, rubber, aluminum, magnesium, and other resources needed to expand and create an unrivaled military force.

Another slap came in 1930 when the London Naval Conference set further limits on the Imperial Japanese Navy and further aggravated the militarists. In September 1931, the Japanese manufactured an incident that gave them a pretext for invading Manchuria. After being accused of cruelties against Manchurian civilians and rebuked in 1933 by the League of Nations, Japan walked out of that body.

In 1937 Japanese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge in Shanghai exchanged fire with Chinese troops, and Japan, whose puppet government was by now operating under almost the full control of the militarists, launched a full-scale invasion of China, whose Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-Shek, the U.S. supported. Three years later, Japan invaded French Indochina to seize the oil resources there, then signed the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, thus creating the so-called "Axis." This set the stage for a confrontation with the United States, which had decided to impose economic sanctions against Japan for her aggressive behavior.

In November 1940, with hostilities in Europe having broken out, Japan's attention was captured by the surprise British raid on the Italian fleet anchored at Taranto. Although obsolescent, the British biplanes, operating from carriers, delivered a blow that sank or badly damaged three of the Royal Italian Navy's modern battleships against a loss of just two planes.

The attack inspired Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of Japan's



The first wave of dive-bombers and torpedo bombers hit Pearl Harbor from the northwest while horizontal bombers attacked from the southeast.

Combined Fleet, to begin thinking of how a similar attack—if war with the United States could not be avoided—could neutralize American military might in the Pacific. He began formulating a broad concept that would be a decisive, devastating katana thrust into the heart of America's interests in the region—an attack against the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hawaii and elsewhere.

To help refine the concept into a detailed, workable plan, Yamamoto called upon the advice and expertise of such officers as his chief of staff, Admiral Shigeru Fukudome; chief of the Japanese Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Osami Nagano; chief of staff of the XI Air Force, Rear Admiral Takijuro Onishi; and Commander Minoru Genda, a young, brilliant tactician and expert in naval aviation. For months the men discussed, argued, conceived, and discarded various ideas on how best to carry out such an attack—especially one that would require the undetected movement of a large fleet over vast distances.

Ironically, probably no one in Japan was more doubtful about a successful outcome than Yamamoto. In the 1920s, he had been a student at Harvard; later, he served as naval attaché in Washington. He knew firsthand the vastness of America's industrial might and capacity; when it came to the ability to wage and sustain a long war over immense distances, America was the elephant, Japan the flea. His nation's only hope was to strike such a crushing blow that America, left helpless and exposed, would be unable to prevent Japan from taking all the territory it wanted—or so the Japanese militarists believed—and would sue for peace.

Yamamoto was unconvinced that Japan could prevail in a protracted war. In a January 1941 letter to one of Japan's archnationalists, he wrote, "Should hostilities break out between Japan and the United States, it would not be enough that we take Guam and the Philippines, nor even Hawaii and San Francisco. To make victory certain, we would have to march into Washington and dictate the terms of peace in the White House."

Thus began a long, secretive process to launch a war that many (but not all) in Japan saw as "inevitable." The planning went forward, and eventually a blueprint was drawn up.

To string the Americans along and make them think that peace was possible even while plans for war marched ahead, Japan sent a new ambassador, Kichisaburo Nomura, to the United States in February 1941 to engage in protracted negotiations with Secretary of State Cordell Hull that were little more than a smokescreen hiding his nation's true intentions. Nomura himself was kept in the dark as to what those intentions were and dutifully carried out his assignment, believing that his efforts just might forestall all-out conflict.

In the summer of 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt persuaded Congress to freeze Japanese assets in the United States and shut off exports of oil and scrap iron, further infuriating Japan's hard-liners. The militarists, led by General Hideki Tojo (who would become prime minister in October 1941), felt that only one course of action was open to them: war with the United States and the other Western powers—mostly the British, French, and Dutch—who had colonies in Asia and the Pacific.

ABOVE: The carrier *Akagi,* Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's flagship. It was sunk seven months later during the Battle of Midway. TOP: Early in the attack, a Japanese aviator captured this view of Pearl Harbor just as an explosion took place between *Oklahoma* and *West Virginia.* Visible are two Japanese planes (circled).

But it was the United States that represented the most serious threat to Tojo's goals of conquest and expansion. To neutralize American power and influence in the region—unless diplomatic moves resulted in the United States backing down from its "hostile attitude" toward Japan—Japan's military leaders would have to seize the initiative and strike a blow from which America would have a difficult time recovering. It would be an immense undertaking, one that would require tremendous sacrifice and effort, and with no assurance of success.

If Japan were not allowed to trade freely with the West, Tojo argued, then Japan, which Tojo and his followers regarded as morally and racially superior to other cultures, would take the resources it needed. Tojo noted, "It goes without saying that when survival is threatened, struggles erupt between peoples, and unfortunate wars between nations result."

With the failure of diplomacy almost a foregone conclusion, Tojo moved ever closer to launching a preemptive strike. While Japanese diplomats talked peace in Washington, a large naval task force would allow itself to be seen heading from Japanese home waters toward Southeast Asia—Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Dutch East Indies, French Indochina (today Vietnam), and Siam (today Thailand). Thus, while Western eyes were concentrating on this movement (and perhaps even moving assets there to counter any hostilities), another task force would secretly head north and east, aiming at Hawaii. A third force would target the Philippines, which were then an American territory. Swift and violent attacks would be used to decimate American military installations, ships, airfields, and warplanes.

Although racked with internal doubts and conflicts about what he saw coming, Yamamoto felt that as commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, he must obey orders and do his duty—no matter how wrongheaded those orders were. In January 1941, he began looking for ways that Japan could inflict the greatest damage on the United States while suffering the least amount of pain.

Gradually the tactical concept took shape. A force of six aircraft carriers would steam through the often-stormy waters of the northern Pacific, doing its best to avoid any sea or air patrols. About 200 miles north of Hawaii, the carriers would launch a combined aerial armada of torpedo planes, fighters, and bombers before dawn on a Sunday to catch the Americans at their most vulnerable; dawn attacks have always been the mainstay of military operations.

The attackers would arrive in several waves, each with a specific mission. Midget subs would inflict further damage, and fleet submarines would lurk near Oahu to sink any American ships found coming or going. With a divine grant of fortune, the American fleet would be crippled, American airpower destroyed, and American morale crushed, and within a matter of a couple of hours the attackers would return safely to their carriers, which would then slip away as secretly as they had arrived, safe from counterattack.

At last the Naval General Staff approved Yamamoto's plan and pilots began training for their secret mission. As the British did before Taranto, the Japanese modified aerial torpedoes to work in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor. Spies in Hawaii fed Japan with a steady stream of information about what ships were in harbor and where they were berthed.

While the physical assets were being assembled at naval bases across Japan, the personnel, too, were being selected and briefed on the ultrasecret operation. Com-

Three stricken battleships (from left): *West Virginia, Tennessee,* and *Arizona* still afire late on December 7. Only the *Arizona* would not live to fight another day.

mander Minoru Genda was named air officer in charge of the aerial assault. His friend, Lt. Cmdr. Mitsuo Fuchida, was appointed to command the First Air Fleet and would lead the initial wave to the target. Only Japan's most skilled pilots would be chosen to take part.

A relentless period of training and exercises commenced for the aircrews at Kagoshima Bay in southern Kyushu, an area that bore a strong resemblance to Pearl Harbor. Using specially modified aerial torpedoes that would not lodge themselves in the bottom mud of shallow Pearl Harbor, the torpedo-bomber pilots practiced relentlessly. The dive-bombers and high-level bombers, too, dropped hundreds of dummy bombs to perfect their aim. After months of intense training, the Japanese carrier pilots were, without a doubt, the best-trained aviators in the world.

In the meantime, a flurry of messages flew back and forth between Hawaii and Washington, D.C. What the Japanese did not know was that in August 1940, after 18 months of trial and error, American cryptanalysts had finally broken Japan's fiendishly difficult J-19 diplomatic code (known as "Purple") by a protocol code-named "Magic."

Despite this breakthrough, however, the Americans had not yet been able to decipher the codes for Japan's Army and Navy, nor did many Purple messages lend themselves to easy interpretation—the "winds" messages, for example, which outlined various contingencies for going to war with either the United States, Great Britain, or the Soviet Union, were too obtuse to make much sense.

(After years of trying, the Japanese naval code, dubbed "JN-25" by the American cryptanalysts, was finally cracked in January 1942 by the Combat Intelligence Unit under the command of Commodore John Rochefort working in the basement of the 14th Naval District Administration Building at Pearl Harbor—with the aid of the rudimen-

tary IBM ECM Mark III computer.)

Whenever a new diplomatic message was received, translated, and interpreted, the people at the War Department and Navy Department would send updates to Hawaii; what they thought were alerts and warnings of possible impending hostile action by the Japanese were often viewed by the commanders in Hawaii as being vague and inconclusive, full of unhelpful contradictions and unsupported conclusions. It was no wonder that General Short devoted most of his efforts to preventing sabotage at the island's military facilities by the local Japanese population rather than preparing to repel an all-out aerial assault.

While Washington seemed to believe its warnings to Hawaii were clear enough, the Army and Navy in Hawaii were fumbling every opportunity to get ready to fend off the coming surprise attack.

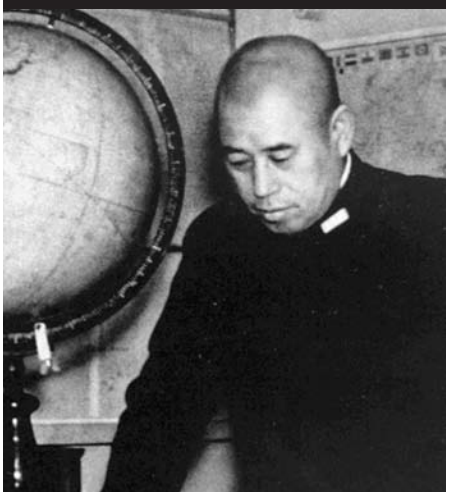
While the Kido Butai, the Imperial Japanese Navy "Operation Z" strike force, waited for orders to sail, diplomatic negotiations were reaching a critical point in the U.S. capital. In early November, Japan had sent special envoy Saburo Kurusu, a hard-liner, to Washington to assist the mild-mannered Ambassador Nomura in the negotiations. The two diplomats were instructed to ensure that an agreement (primarily aimed at getting the United States to end its freezing of Japanese assets and back down on its demands that Japanese forces leave China) was signed by November 25. Unknown to Nomura and Kurusu, if the agreement was not reached by then, Japan would give orders for Operation Z to proceed. (The deadline was later pushed back to November 29.)

The United States refused to deal the cards that the Japanese had laid before them, and negotiations appeared to be at an end. Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, head of Kido Butai, received orders to put the plan into motion.

True to expectations, the naval force sent by Japan toward Southeast Asia was spotted and watched intensely by the Western powers. At the end of November, during this bit of deception, the Kido Butai, consisting of six aircraft carriers, two battleships, two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, nine destroyers, and several oilers, all under Admiral Nagumo, sailed undetected northward from Tankan Bay in the Kuriles, heading for Kwajelain and then the Aleutians.

On December 5, 1941, a Soviet freighter, the *Uritsky*, bound for Vladivostok from San Francisco, spotted the Japanese fleet. It could have raised an alarm but remained silent; the Soviets, perhaps knowing of Japan's intentions, had notified the Japanese in advance that the *Uritsky* would be in the area. The Japanese, for their part, had warned that they would sink any foreign ship they encountered. The Soviets, in turn, said they would declare war on Japan if the transport, loaded with Lend-Lease goods, were fired upon. If allowed safe passage, however, the Russians promised not to alert anyone to the sightings of a Japanese battle fleet in northern Pacific waters.

Aboard his flagship, the battleship *Akagi,* Admiral Nagumo lifted the veil of secrecy



TOP: Admiral Husband E. Kimmel (right), in command of the U.S. Pacific Fleet on the "day of infamy," shown with his operations officer, Captain Walter S. DeLany, five days before the attack. CENTER: Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the brains behind the Japanese attack. BOTTOM: Mitsuo Fuchida, commander of the aerial assault on Pearl Harbor. He later became a Christian minister and U.S. citizen.

and announced to the captains of the task force's ships that Japan, unless it received a last-minute recall message from Tokyo, was going to war with the United States and that the fate of the empire rested on the success of every man involved in the mission. The message was then delivered by the captains to the crews of their various ships.

To underscore the importance of the mission, on December 6 Nagumo ordered that the Imperial Japanese Navy's most precious relic—the flag that had flown over Admiral Togo's ship during the 1905 victory over Russia at the battle of Tsu-Shima—be raised above the *Akagi*.

As the second and final attack wave ends, three bombs hit the destroyer *Shaw* in dry dock, exploding her magazines. Incredibly, she was repaired and saw action later in the war.

A disturbing bit of information then arrived; intelligence reported that none of the five U.S. carriers were at Pearl Harbor. Although disappointed, Nagumo did not let the news cause him to cancel or delay the attack. The fact that plenty of battleships and cruisers and destroyers were in harbor was reason enough to proceed as planned. Signal officers stood near their radio sets to listen for the "recall" message, just in case.

At this point, however, the historic waters get muddy. Some sources say that it became obvious that Pearl Harbor was the target of an intended Japanese attack and that President Roosevelt and others close to him pretended not to know in order to ensure American involvement in the war, while others say the opposite.

At any rate, Ambassadors Nomura and Kurusu were waiting at the Japanese embassy in Washington on that fateful Sunday, December 7, for instructions to arrive from Japan. The instructions were delayed, then had to be decoded, translated, and typed in English. By the time Nomura and Kurusu were ready to meet with Secretary of State Hull, the strike force was in the air, approaching the island of Oahu.

Nagumo's Kido Butai had taken up station 230 miles north of Oahu early on December 7. Radio silence was total; communication between ships was conducted by lamps and flags. Preparations were then made for the launch. The planes were fueled and loaded with bombs, torpedoes, and machine-gun ammunition. Pilots solemnly said good-bye to each other and to their crews on the carriers' decks. The mechanics and armorers presented their pilots with *hachimaki*—the traditional white headbands decorated with the red "rising sun" symbol and inspirational slogans written in kanji characters—and wished them well on their journey.

The strike force was launched just before dawn, with 43 Mitsubishi A6M2 "Zero" fighters lifting off to provide cover over the fleet while the rest of the first wave—89 Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" level bombers and 51 Aichi D3A2 "Val" dive-bombers—took off and assembled in midair. With the first wave launched, the crews on the carriers hustled to bring the second wave up to the flight decks on elevators.

Flying in the lead plane over black waters, Commander Mitsuo Fuchida was nervous, his mind and body in a heightened state of readiness. Did the Americans know that he and his men were coming? Would they meet a wall of American planes as they approached Oahu? Would the crews on the ships at Pearl Harbor be on the alert, ready to fill the sky with anti-aircraft munitions? He did not know, and he needed to know because it would dictate which of Genda's attack patterns would be employed. If surprise were gained, Fuchida would fire one "Black Dragon" flare indicating that the torpedo bombers were to lead the attack. If the Americans were on the alert, he would fire two flares, indicating that surprise had been lost and that the fighters were to go in first.

Somehow the signals got botched. As he approached Oahu, Fuchida mistakenly thought that the fighters had missed the first "one flare" signal, so he fired another flare for their benefit. But the torpedo bomber pilots had seen the first flare and then the second and thought it meant that surprise had been lost and fell back in the formation.

In the end, the mix-up in signals made no difference. As Fuchida glided above Pearl Harbor, he saw that the sky was clear of American planes and the decks and AA gun tubs of the ships below appeared to be empty. At 7:53 he transmitted the success signal—*Tora, Tora, Tora* ("Tiger, Tiger, Tiger")—back to the fleet. His planes banked into the attack.

Just minutes before, an unsuspecting Captain Howard D. Bode, commander of the battleship *Oklahoma*, had left the ship for liberty and was being carried to shore by a launch; he had left Commander Jesse L. Kenworthy, Jr., in charge during his absence.

One of the first Americans to become aware of the attack was Rear Admiral William

R. Furlong, whose quarters were aboard the old minelayer *Oglala,* berthed at 1010 Dock across the channel from the southeast side of Ford Island. He saw the initial flight of aircraft, assumed they were American, and cursed the pilot who was careless enough to allow an unsecured bomb to fall from his undercarriage and explode on the island. Moments later, Furlong saw the red ball insignia on the plane's fuselage. He sounded the attack alarm and ordered all ships at Pearl to sortie. For most it was too late.

The first to feel the bombs was the Naval Air Station at Ford Island. Next came the airfields at Hickam, Wheeler, Bellows, Ewa, and Kaneohe; Genda knew that if the first attacking wave could knock out the American planes before they could get airborne, his pilots would have unfettered access to the ships anchored in the harbor and would only need to worry about the AA fire.

In *Pearl Harbor,* author H.P. Willmot wrote, "At the time of the attack, there were 394 aircraft on Oahu, of which 139 Army and 157 Navy aircraft were operational. Of these only 88 were fighters, but such was the fury and violence of the assault that only a handful of them were able to try to get into the air to give battle on equal terms."

American pilots tried their best to scramble their planes and to get airborne to battle the Japanese formations, but almost all their efforts were in vain. The Kaneohe Naval Air Station was hard hit, with all 33 of its aircraft destroyed on the ground. At Ewa, located west of the entrance to Pearl Harbor, 33 of the 49 aircraft stationed there were destroyed or disabled. At Wheeler, Hickam, and Bellows Army Airfields, 77 planes were knocked out in a matter of minutes. By the time the attacks on the airfields were over, 164 American aircraft had been destroyed and another 129 damaged, although some estimates are even higher.

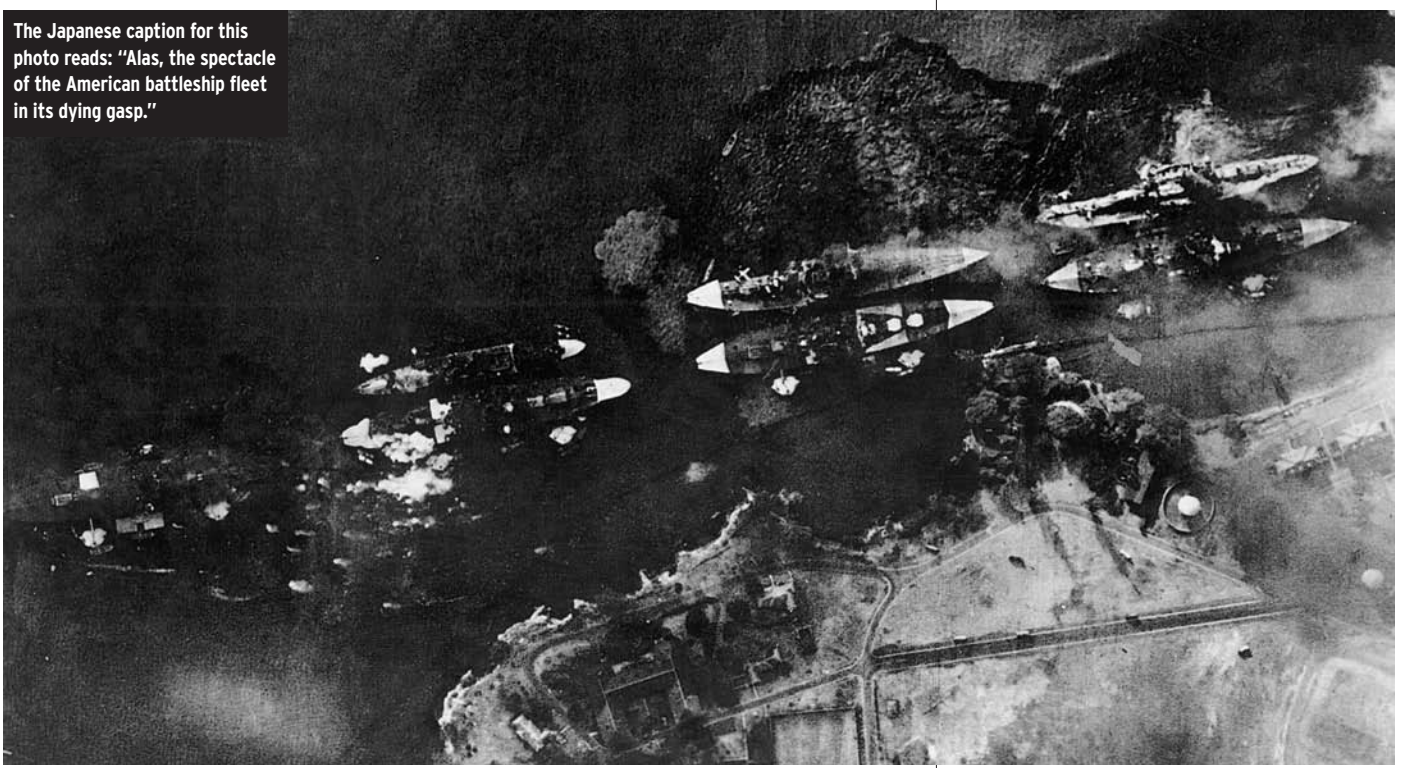
At Haleiwa Fighter Strip, northwest of Honolulu at Kaiaka Bay, a small group of American pilots of the 47th Pursuit Squadron drove wildly in two cars from Wheeler Field, dodged strafing bullets along the way, jumped into their P-40s, and took off. Second Lt. George Welch scored four victories, while Kenneth Taylor and three other pilots downed three additional Japanese aircraft; some reports had Army pilots shooting down as many as 12 planes. Both Taylor and Welch would be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

While the airfields were being hit, other planes went after Schofield Barracks, bombing and strafing the installation while American soldiers ran around in panic, searching for weapons and ammunition with which to fight back.

During this period, Fuchida's high-altitude bombers, torpedo planes, and dive-bombers directed their attention toward the ships, many of which were lined up like fat sitting ducks along Battleship Row on Ford Island's southeast side.

But the first ship to be attacked was *Utah,* an old battleship that had been planked over and converted into a gunnery training ship, moored on the opposite side of Ford Island at F11. She looked to the Japanese pilots like an aircraft carrier and soon caught the brunt of the attack, along with the cruiser *Raleigh*. The enemy pilots slammed two torpedoes into *Utah*, causing her to almost immediately capsize. The attack killed at least 54 men, who still remain entombed within her.

At Battleship Row, the torpedo planes came in low and launched their fish. *West Virginia* was hit at 7:57 by Lieutenant Murata Shigeharu; Lieutenant Jinichi



The Japanese caption for this photo reads: "Alas, the spectacle of the American battleship fleet in its dying gasp."

Goto, leading a second column of torpedo planes, set his sights on nearby *Oklahoma,* moored at F5 inboard of *Maryland*. He and another pilot both struck home. These were followed by further attacks, and soon *Oklahoma* was ablaze and listing badly. At 8:00, a torpedo penetrated the hull amidships near frame 65 and an enormous belch of flame rocked every inch of her.

The scene aboard *Oklahoma* was sheer bedlam. Sailors were running everywhere, some trying to get to their battle stations, some trying to get below to escape flaming fuel oil and flying ordnance, others jumping overboard. Kenworthy gave the order

Mess Attendant Dorrie Miller became the first African American to receive the Navy Cross for his actions in the attack.

to abandon ship, but it was too late. The ship quickly keeled over, dooming more than 400 sailors trapped within her.

As the Japanese planes continued swooping in and dropping more bombs and torpedoes, alarms were going off all over the harbor. Men barely awake and in various conditions of undress were suddenly energized by bursts of adrenaline and sprinted for their guns, retrieving the anti-aircraft and machine-gun ammunition, quickly loading, and peppering the sky that was now swarming with enemy planes.

One pilot, streaking low across Ford Island, took aim at *Pennsylvania,* moored in dry dock. But, seeing that the mooring slip would block his missile's path, he diverted his flight toward nearby *Oglala*. His aerial torpedo went too deep, slipped under *Oglala*'s hull, and slammed into the light cruiser *Helena,* tied up inboard of her; the subsequent explosions wrecked both ships.

While all this was happening, Admiral Kimmel, at his office at CinCPac headquarters, was, incredibly, being briefed over the phone by Commander Vincent Murphy about *Ward*'s attack on a mystery sub when a breathless courier rushed into Murphy's office with a report on the obvious: "Sir, there's a message from the signal tower, saying the Japanese are attacking Pearl Harbor and this is no drill!"

Indeed. At the Pacific Fleet's Message Center, the word was already going out: "Air raid on Pearl Harbor X This is no drill."

The battleship *Pennsylvania* was in a somewhat protected position—in Dry Dock No. 1, with the destroyers *Cassin* and *Downes* docked at her head and the submarine *Cachelot* at her stern; three spaces away in another dry dock was the destroyer *Shaw*.

Bill Trimmer was a 23-year-old Electrician Third Class aboard *Pennsylvania*. At about 7:50 on the morning of December 7, he went below to the electrical shop on the third deck for muster at his duty station. "I had just gotten into the shop," he said, "when the PA system came on, sounding 'General quarters, air defense, and this is no drill!' A lot of background noise of planes roaring and bombs exploding could be heard."

Trimmer took off running for his battle station on the fifth deck in the forward distribution room, where he donned headphones that connected him to the battleship's various electrical departments.

At precisely 8:00 AM, a flight of 18 aircraft from the carrier *Enterprise*, at sea 200 miles to the west, arrived over Oahu, planning to land at Ford Island, and flew into the maelstrom. Radioing back to the ship, the pilots told the carrier what was happening and the ship's skipper, George D. Murray, changed course and headed west, out of range of any potential attackers.

The Big E's pilots, however, were caught in the battle over Pearl. Gunners on ship and shore did not bother to first check the identity of the new arrivals; they simply continued blasting away at anything that had wings, assuming all were foes. Several were shot down in the melee. One of the *Enterprise* pilots, Ensign Manuel Gonzales, radioed, "Please don't shoot! Don't shoot! This is an American plane." Moments later, he ordered his aircrewman, Leonard J. Kozelek, to bail out: neither man was ever heard from again.

Shortly after 8:00, the USS *Arizona,* tied to her mooring F7, caught the attention of the torpedo planes. Although aging, the 29,000-ton *Arizona* was still a powerful symbol of American naval might and a prime target of the Japanese, but, although protected outboard by *Vestal,* she was still not immune to the torpedoes; one slid under *Vestal* and slammed into her hull.

At 8:05, *California,* tied up alone at berth F3, was struck by two aerial torpedoes. The ship's hatches were open, awaiting a full inspection, and allowed torrents of water to pour in; she quickly sank with just her superstructure protruding from the water.

Then the high-altitude bombers came over with their deadly ordnance. One bomb hit *Arizona*'s boat deck between the No. 4 and No. 6 guns, splitting the deck wide open and touching off fires. Men rushed with hoses to fight the flames, but with no water pressure, they were helpless.

At 8:10 came the coup de grace for *Arizona.* A dive-bomber pilot, Tadashi Kusumi, and his bombardier, Noburu Kanai, took aim. Their lone Type 99 bomb struck near the No. 2 turret and exploded in the forward magazines full of shells for the 14-inch guns. Suddenly the old ship detonated in a terrible fireball and shockwave, throwing debris and pieces of sailors hundreds of feet into the air. Gone in an instant were 1,177 of her crew and Marine detachment, along with her skipper, Captain Franklin van Falkenburgh and Rear Admiral Isaac Kidd, both of whom had been on the bridge. Burning oil

A B-17 from California arrives during the raid. The timing of the flight of B-17s caused confusion because the Japanese planes were initially mistaken on radar for the B-17s.

flared out from her, and the badly damaged *Vestal* was quickly tugged out of harm's way.

Two bombs also found *Tennessee* and *West Virginia* at F6, causing both to sink. A whirling piece of jagged debris from the exploding *Tennessee* scythed through the air and into the bridge of *West Virginia,* disemboweling her captain, Mervyn Bennion. Doris "Dorie" Miller, an African American cook aboard *West Virginia,* carried wounded sailors to safety, then tried to help his dying captain. When that proved impossible, he rushed to a .50-caliber machine gun and blazed away until ordered to abandon ship. For his courage, Miller was awarded the Navy Cross.

Commander Fuchida, circling high above the devastation, recalled, "By 8:00 there were no enemy planes in the air.... While my group circled for another attempt, others made their runs, some trying as many as three before succeeding. We were about to make our second bombing run when there was a colossal explosion in Battleship Row [the *Arizona*]. A huge column of dark red smoke rose to 3,000 feet. It must have been the explosion of a ship's powder magazine. The shock was felt even in my plane, several miles away."

In far-off Washington, D.C., the shock was about to be felt there. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was in his White House study with adviser Harry Hopkins in the early afternoon when Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, phoned. "Mr. President," Knox said, "it looks like the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." As Doris Kearns Goodwin noted in *No Ordinary Time,* "Hopkins said there must be some mistake; the Japanese would never attack Pearl Harbor. But the president reckoned it was probably true—it was just the kind of thing the Japanese would do at the very moment they were discussing peace in the Pacific. All doubt was settled a few minutes later when Admiral [Harold] Stark [head of the U.S. Navy] called to confirm the attack."

Back in Hawaii, the nightmare was continuing. The flight of a dozen unarmed B-17s that Lieutenant Tyler mistakenly assumed were represented by the earlier radar sighting suddenly arrived in the midst of the battle. Originally scheduled to land at Hickam, the flight leader told his pilots to land anywhere they could. All of the planes were attacked and hit, but only one was lost.

All along Battleship Row, ship after ship was exploding, burning, dying. *Nevada,* moored alone at F8 at the northeast end of the row, had been under partial steam and she, along with five destroyers, was able to get underway. Her skipper, Captain Francis W. Scanland, was ashore that morning, so Lt. Cmdr. Francis Thomas was at the helm as she made her way south to the exit channel.

Seeing *Nevada* making a run for it, the Japanese descended upon her like hawks on a field mouse, hoping to sink her in the channel and bottle up the harbor. Bombs crashed all around her, but the ship's gunners engaged in a running gun battle with the attackers, downing three of them.

Suffering from a huge torpedo wound, *Nevada,* listing to port and down at the head, was slowing. Then someone on the bridge spotted signal flags that had been raised at the Naval District Headquarters, ordering the ship to stay clear of the channel. So Thomas swung her in a wide arc and backed her into the shore on the Waipio Peninsula across from Hospital Point.

Dead in the water and ablaze, *Nevada*

continued to attract a crowd and received a further pummeling. The old girl then settled onto the bottom of the shallow harbor (where she would remain for the next two months while repairs were being made; she would fight again in support of the Allied landings in Normandy in June 1944). Of her crew of nearly 1,500, 50 officers and men died on her on December 7, and 109 were wounded.

At 8:17, the destroyer *Helm,* the first ship to get underway that morning, had reached the harbor entrance and encountered another midget sub outside. Although contact was lost, *Helm* radioed her sighting to the fleet. At 8:30, the destroyers *Breese* and *Monaghan,* and the seaplane tender *Curtiss* and repair ship *Medusa,* saw another sub and went into the attack, sinking it with deck-gun fire and depth charges.

The Japanese caught most of the U.S. planes on the ground.

The Japanese attack was building in intensity. At 8:40 AM, the second echelon, a flight of high-level horizontal bombers from the carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku,* led by Lt. Cmdr. Shigekazu Shimazaki and Lieutenant Tatsuo Ichihara, arrived over smoke-shrouded Pearl Harbor. Their mission was to bomb the hangars and other permanent facilities at Hickam Field and elsewhere; despite the smoke, their bombardiers' aim was true and they inflicted much damage. Even the naval hospital was not spared.

Curtiss was then hit by a bomb that exploded on her main deck, killing 20 and wounding another 58. Still in the fight, though, her gunners zeroed in on another bomber that crashed into one of her big topside cranes and exploded but caused only minor damage to the ship.

The "Kate" dive-bombers, too, were still engaged in their deadly business, dropping their 250-pound eggs—whenever the pilots could glimpse their targets through the thick, roiling smoke—on whatever ships seemed to be the least damaged.

The Americans were now peppering the air with munitions of all types; the bombers had to fly through a thick storm of lead and steel being thrown up at them. Gunners on *Maryland* and *Helena* downed three of the attackers, and those on other ships chalked up further scores. Fuchida reported, "Enemy anti-aircraft fire began to concentrate on us. Dark gray puffs burst all around. Most of them came from the ships' batteries, but land batteries were also active."

Throughout the harbor, chaos and casualties continued to mount. At about 9:00, dive-bombers struck *Pennsylvania* in dry dock. Bill Trimmer, aboard the immobilized battleship, recalled, "A bomb blew our power lines in two. All the lights went out and all the machinery stopped running. It was pitch dark until we turned on our battle lanterns—large, battery-powered lights. Our emergency lights then came on, taking their power from batteries. They were very dim, but better than the battle lanterns.

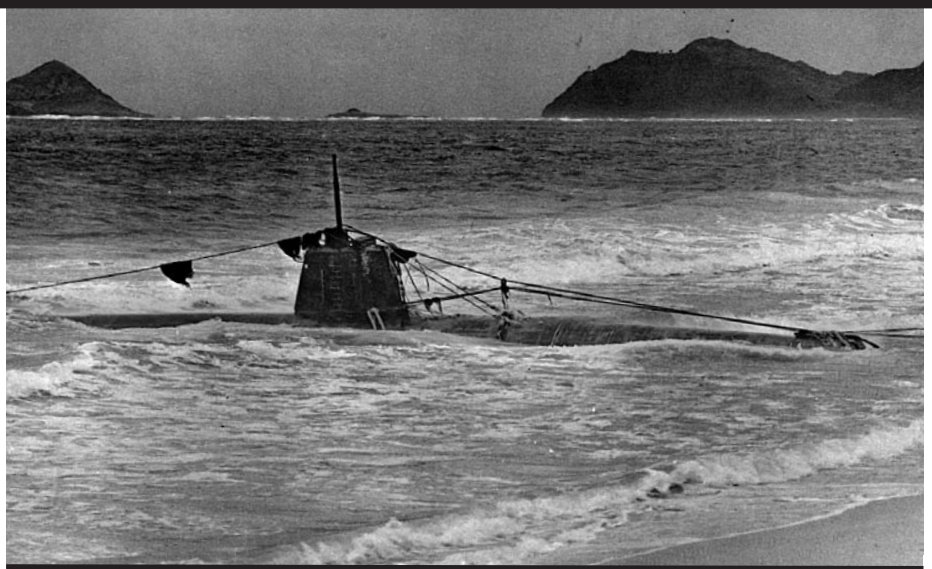
"I could hear all kinds of reports coming over the headphones, such as, 'There goes the *Cassin,* the *Downes,* the *Oklahoma,* the *California,* and the *West Virginia*.' I'm reporting all this to our chief, a man named Moorehouse. There was a little humor down there when one of the men asked Chief Moorehouse, in all sincerity, if he thought this would make the papers back in the States. The Chief said, 'I guess so.'

"It was about this time that I felt the ship shudder and a loud boom come from starboard aft. We had been hit with a 500-pound bomb that penetrated two-and-a-half decks and exploded."

Trimmer asked permission to go topside for a look around; Moorehouse granted the request. Coming up during the brief lull between attack waves, Trimmer was greeted by scenes of utter devastation. The destroyers *Downes* and *Cassin,* resting in the same dry dock as *Pennsylvania*, were shattered wrecks engulfed in flame. Within the dry dock and beyond, the water was covered with a carpet of floating debris. Ships of all description were burning, listing, capsizing, sinking. Sailors young and old were in the water, some hurt, some burned, all swimming for their lives.

Trimmer said, "I was feeling so helpless knowing I couldn't reach them; to jump in to help, I would just become another victim. Other sailors worked frantically everywhere to douse the fires and prepare for a follow-up attack, which was not long in coming."

Trimmer was right. As *Pennsylvania*'s anti-aircraft guns opened up on the next wave of onrushing planes, he "flopped face down on the six-foot-wide starboard catwalk, looking to where our gunners were shooting at a Japanese torpedo plane. The pilot was flying very slow and low. As they say in basketball, I thought he had 'good hang time.'



The Japanese midget sub of Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki was damaged during the attack and washed ashore near Bellows Field. Sakamaki was the first Japanese captured by the United States.

The plane was low—about 100 feet—and about 50 yards down the starboard side of our ship. The plane had dropped its torpedo and was flying with its rear gunner strafing anything he could. I could see his machine gun firing at the anti-aircraft guns just above me. At that time I was hit in the head and shoulder with fragments and thought I was going to die."

Trimmer's wounds were not as serious as he first feared, and he scrambled to the ship's stern, where he encountered scenes of horror. "I saw one kid that had been hit laying there, and I pulled him up under Number Three turret and went to help others. I left the boat deck to go down to the afterdeck, where they were bringing out the dead and wounded. I helped with this and won't ever write about it because it was so gruesome. I also tried to help fight the fire caused by the bomb. I didn't have a mask and the fumes were heavy, so I couldn't do much."

Not far from *Pennsylvania* was the destroyer *Shaw,* held in Floating Dry Dock No. 2. At 9:12, a quick succession of three bombs penetrated her fuel tanks, which then, at 9:30, touched off *Shaw*'s forward magazine and caused a giant belch of fire, smoke, and flying debris.

The Japanese pilots, searching for more targets, found them away from Battleship Row. The destroyer tender *Dobbin,* moored at the north end of Ford Island, came under attack and was blasted unmercifully. The cruisers *Honolulu* and *St. Louis,* docked at the Southeast Loch's finger piers, were attempting to make steam and get underway, but an explosion crippled *Honolulu*. *St. Louis* somehow managed to escape and was moving by 9:31 past all the flaming wreckage of the harbor, heading toward the exit channel. Miraculously, she made it to open water—and even hit and sank the fourth of five midget submarines lost by the Japanese.

Military personnel weren't the only ones to suffer, for what goes up must come down. In Honolulu, Pearl City, Red Hill, Ewa, Wahiawa, Waipahu, and elsewhere, the anti-aircraft ammunition that was fired at the Japanese planes and missed began raining down with deadly effect. Off-target Japanese bombs also took their toll. Thirty-two civilians were killed in Honolulu, with the worst mass casualties occurring at the intersection of Kukui Street and Nuuanu Avenue. A shell dropped onto a restaurant there, killing the Japanese-American owner, his three children, and another relative, along with seven diners having breakfast. A bomb exploded at Judd and Iholena Streets, killing three members of the McCabe family in a car while on their way home from church. The final civilian death toll was reported as 69.

By the time the attack ended, 2,403 American soldiers and sailors were dead or missing, and 1,178 more lay wounded. The most devastating attack in American military history was over by 9:45 as the Japanese pilots headed north to their awaiting carriers.

It had been a tremendous victory. More than 30 American warships had been either sunk or damaged to varying degrees. The American air force in Hawaii was all but wiped out—all at a cost of just 29 aircraft, five midget submarines and one large submarine, and 65 men.

In the face of great disaster came great heroism. For their actions on December 7, 1941, 15 men would receive the Medal of Honor, making that day's total unique in the history of America's highest military decoration: Rear Admiral Isaac C. Kidd (USS *Arizona,* posthumous), Captain Mervyn S. Bennion (*West Virginia,* posthumous), Captain Samuel G. Fuqua (*Arizona*), Captain Franklin van Falkenburgh (*Arizona*, posthumous), Commander Cassin Young (*Vestal*), Lieutenant John W. Finn (Kaneohe Naval Air Station), Lieutenant Jackson Pharris (*California*), Ensign Francis C. Flaherty (*Oklahoma,* posthumous), Ensign Herbert C. Jones (*California,* posthumous), Warrant Officer Thomas Reeves (*California,* posthumous), Chief Boatswain Edwin J. Hill (*Nevada,* posthumous), Machinist's Mate Robert R. Scott (*California,* posthumous), Chief Watertender Peter Tomich (*Utah,* posthumous), Machinist Donald K. Ross (*Nevada*), and Seaman James Ward (*Oklahoma,* posthumous).

When they landed back on their carriers' decks, many of the Japanese pilots were bursting with enthusiasm and eagerness to return for another strike. There were still plenty of targets to be hit—especially the fuel farms, submarine pens, and shore installations, not to mention the absent American carriers—but Admiral Nagumo said no. The task force must return to Japan before the Americans could locate it; the carriers and other ships would be needed for further operations in the event that the United States failed to

capitulate. Incredulous, many in Genda's air staff tried to get the admiral to change his mind but it was no use. Kido Butai would return to Japan immediately.

In Washington at 2:40 PM, Ambassador Nomura knew none of this by the time he and special envoy Kurusu were ushered into Hull's office carrying the long-delayed translation of the final part of Japan's message—the part that said that, in light of America's intransigence, Japan was breaking off diplomatic efforts to reach a consensus and that war was likely to follow—a message that Hull had already read, thanks to the Magic intercepts.

Once in Hull's office, Nomura and Kurusu were not offered chairs. Instead, Hull, burning with a barely contained fury, told them, "I must say that in all my conversations with you during the last nine months, I have never uttered one word of untruth. This is borne out absolutely by the record. In all my 50 years of public service I have never seen a document that was so crowded with falsehoods and distortions—infamous falsehoods and distortions on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any government on this planet was capable of uttering them."

Then, with a nod of his head toward the door, Hull dismissed the Japanese representatives. Hurt and puzzled, Nomura did not learn until he returned to his office that his country had already struck the first blow.

Two days after the bombs stopped falling, the recriminations and hunt for scapegoats began. On December 9, Navy Secretary Knox flew to Oahu to initiate his own investigation; Kimmel told him that, contrary to Washington's belief, he had received no warning of a possible attack until the attack was already underway.

Courts of inquiry and formal hearings (the "Roberts Commission") began in late 1941, and both Kimmel and Short were ultimately held responsible for "dereliction of duty;" both officers retired in February 1942, and both would request courts-martial as a way of clearing their names. Further congressional hearings would take place.

Roosevelt's role was not seriously scrutinized at the time but has since been the subject of criticism and charges of collusion in order to get America into the war. Several books and magazine articles have attempted to put the blame directly on the president's shoulders and to claim that a conspiracy and cover-up were then at play. (See the sidebar by Donald M. Goldstein.)

Patrick N.L. Bellinger, who had been in command of all scouting aircraft in the Pacific Fleet, later called the attack on Pearl Harbor "a deep-eyed deliberate plan to get this country into war with Japan and Germany by needling the Japanese into making the first war move.... In my opinion, Roosevelt and his cohorts criminally failed to keep Admiral Kimmel informed of information that was available—information that the simplest mind would have known was of vital importance to the protection of the Pacific Fleet."

Whether this was true or not still remains, after 70 years, a matter of intense speculation and debate. Beyond dispute, however, is the fact that America's involvement in the war led to the ultimate defeat of the Axis powers, ushered in a new world order, and quite

REMEMBERING PEARL HARBOR: WHERE CONSPIRACY THEORIES GO TO DIE

BY DONALD M. GOLDSTEIN
Professor of History Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh, and coauthor of At Dawn We Slept.

Seventy years have passed since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In the perspective of history, the span of 70 years is only a flash, but it is a long time in the life of an individual. Those today who remember Pearl Harbor as a direct experience have attained senior citizen status, yet the subject continues to fascinate them and others.

Instead of clarifying the subject, however, the years have compounded it and, as Admiral Kimmel's lawyer once told me, "Pearl Harbor never dies and no living person has seen the end of it."

Many questions were raised then. How could it have happened? How could the Japanese sail more than 4,000 miles across the Pacific without being detected? How could they have developed a torpedo that would not sink in the mud of Pearl Harbor, which was less than 40 feet deep? How could they have developed a bomb that would penetrate the decks of American battleships?

In short, how could they come into the very heart of the great American Navy, sink or damage eight battleships, kill more than 2,400 people, wound 1,178 more, destroy 164 aircraft, damage another 128, and lose only 29 aircraft and 59 men, one large submarine, and five midget subs, and not be caught?

Where were the U.S. aircraft carriers? What about the U.S. radar? How much did President Roosevelt know? Was there a third wave? Why didn't the Japanese finish off the Americans when they could have? How about the breaking of the Japanese code? Most important: Could it happen again?

After 70 years, these and many other questions remain. Deriving from these questions were the myth and theory, which still exist today, that the Japanese could not have possibly launched the attack without being detected; that President Roosevelt knew about the attack and let it happen so that the United States could enter the war on the side of the Allies; and that the two commanders, Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lt. Gen. Walter Short, were sacrificial lambs for the president.

Hence, instead of concentrating on the attack itself and what could be done to prevent such an attack from happening again, authors have tended to write about the conspiracy theory. Thus a spate of books have been written about Pearl Harbor indicating that FDR and his

Three civilians lie dead in their car after it was hit by fragments from falling antiaircraft munitions.

literally saved the free world from destruction at the hands of the Germans and Japanese.

As Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson noted later on December 7, "When the news first came that Japan had attacked us, my first feeling was of relief that the indecision was over and that a crisis had come in a way which would unite all our people.... For I feel that this country united has practically nothing to fear while the apathy and divisions stirred up by unpatriotic men have been hitherto very discouraging."

Instead of causing the United States to retreat and allow Japan unfettered rampage throughout Asia and the Pacific, as Tojo predicted, the exact opposite happened. No longer isolationist or "neutral," America and the American industrial machine, although idled by the Great Depression, began turning out military goods at an unprecedented rate, while millions of aroused Americans rushed to recruiting offices to prepare themselves for a fight to the death with the country's enemies.

Although Yamamoto is widely (and erroneously) quoted as having said after the Pearl Harbor raid, "I fear all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve," Yamamoto's actual words were written to Ogata Taketora, the ultra-nationalist editor of the Tokyo newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* on January 9, 1942: "A military man can scarcely pride himself on having 'smitten a sleeping enemy'; it is more a matter of shame, simply, for the one smitten. I would rather you made your appraisal after seeing what the enemy does, since it is certain that, angered and outraged, he will soon launch a determined counterattack."

Yamamoto was certainly correct. And he would not live to see the end of the war that he and his country's leaders, along with Adolf Hitler, had provoked—a war that caused the deaths of 50 million people and changed forever the course of world history. □

staff knew the attack was coming and let it happen.

Along with my mentor, Gordon W. Prange, and my assistant, Katherine V. Dillon, I have been studying the Pearl Harbor attack for more than 50 years and nowhere could we find one document that actually implicates FDR. What we have found are generalities such as "would have," "could have," "should have," "must have," and "might have." We have read every telegram, every document, and every message we could find on the attack—all to no avail at uncovering any conspiracy.

What we have found is several messages that indicated the Japanese might attack Pearl Harbor, but they were either entered into the record late or translated after the attack. In short, using an old sports adage, if we had known Sunday what we knew Monday, we would have thrown the ball to the tight end and won the game. Even though the United States had several warnings and indications, we refused to believe that it could happen.

A closer look at the attack reveals the following: Roosevelt did not line up the airplanes bumper to bumper so that they could be destroyed. He did not open the antisubmarine nets at Pearl Harbor so that Japanese subs could sneak in. He did not spot the Japanese airplanes on radar and mistake them for his own planes. He did not allow scout planes to fly over Pearl Harbor two hours before the attack and report that Pearl Harbor slept. He was not responsible for the failure to do anything about the midget submarine sighting and sinking just before the attack. He did not order the carriers out to sea, nor did he change the alert system to the confusion of the leaders in Washington. All these changes and errors were made by and under the command at Pearl Harbor—Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lt. Gen. Walter Short.

It is true that FDR wanted to get into World War II, but he wanted to fight in Europe, not Asia. Hitler did him the favor of declaring war on the United States four days after Pearl Harbor.

In the next five years, papers will be released from the British archives that may shed new light on this important subject, but after 70 years there is no proof that FDR knew the Japanese attack was coming. However, there are still many unanswered questions. Doubt will probably always linger. It does keep people interested, and it does sell books.

In the military, the man in charge—the one on the bridge—is the one responsible. It may not be fair, but that's the way it is. Kimmel and Short were not the only ones who bear responsibility. There were others who dropped the ball, but Kimmel and Short were the ones in charge.

In the final analysis, like the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the enemy caught us asleep and, unfortunately, *At Dawn We Slept.* □

THE PHILIPPINES

THE "OTHER" PEARL HARBOR

American airpower barely escaped total destruction but lived to fight another day. BY SAM McGOWAN

While the surprise Japanese attacks against U.S. military bases in the Hawaiian Islands on December 7, 1941, are certainly the best-known aspect of the opening of hostilities between the two nations, they were not the only ones.

Less well known today were the Japanese attacks on Clark Field and Iba Field on the opening day of hostilities in the Philippines. While these raids caused tremendous damage, they did not knock Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton's United States Far East Air Force out of the war, as is commonly believed.

In the early morning hours of December 8, 1941 (still December 7 in Hawaii), Japanese land-based naval bombers and Zero fighters from Formosa were detected by radar heading over Lingayan Gulf in the direction of Manila. American planes were alerted and took off from Clark Field and Iba Field but, after hours of searching, they failed to make contact. The Japanese, on the other hand, had no problem finding their American targets.

The most serious aspect of the raid was the destruction of and damage to the 18 Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses that were on the ground at Clark in the midst of refueling and rearming when the attack came. Most of the Curtis P-40 Kittyhawk fighters of the 20th Pursuit Squadron were lost when 10 of the warplanes were caught in the Japanese bomb pattern as they were preparing to take off, while several of the 3rd Pursuit's fighters ran out of fuel and had to crash-land. The radar facility at the remote airfield at Iba was destroyed.

But half of the 35-plane force of B-17s had been deployed to Del Monte Field at Mindanao, and more than half of the P-40s in the islands had not been involved in the attacks at all. Although its strength had been greatly reduced, the U.S. Army Air Force in the Pacific was still very much in the war.

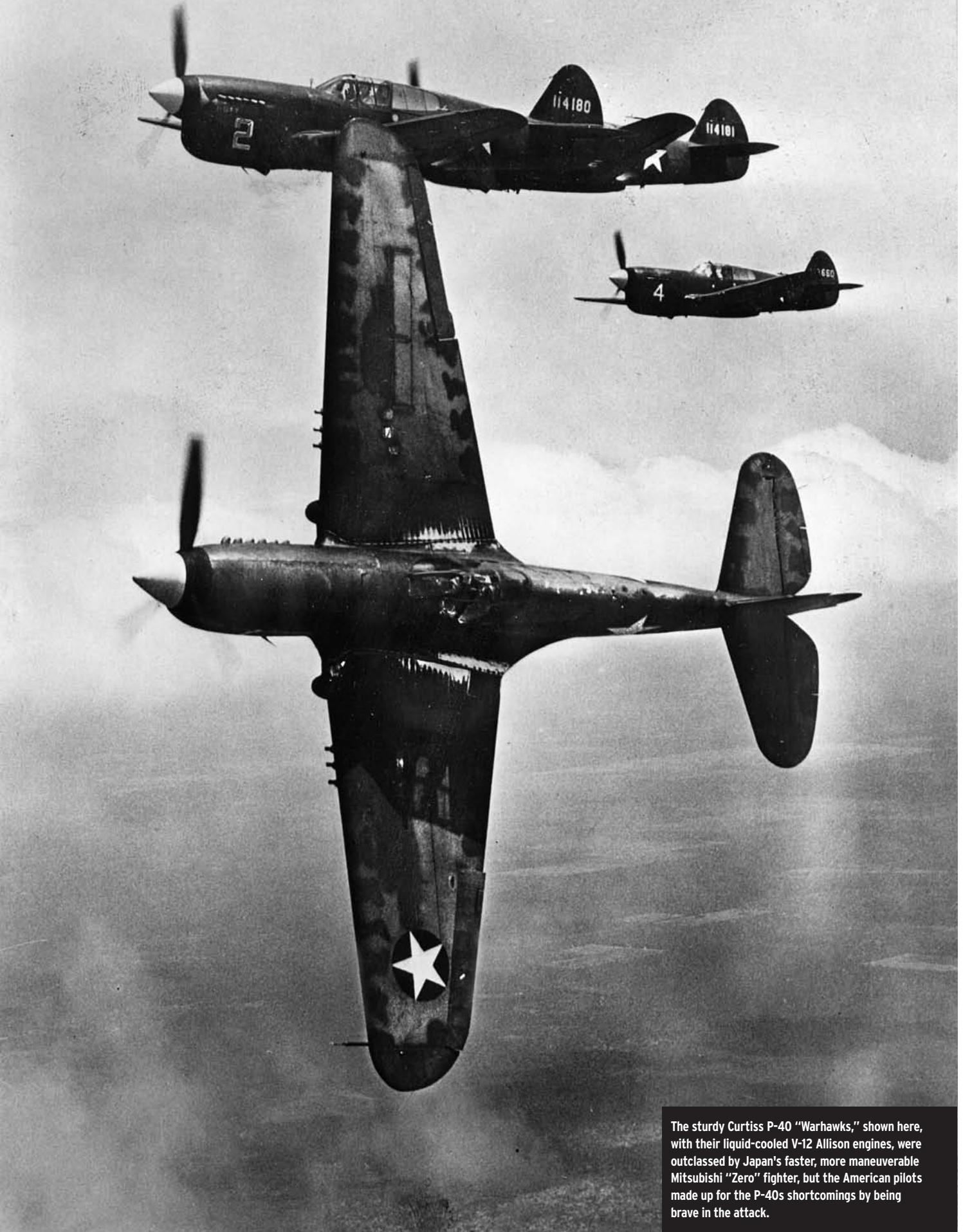
After the Japanese bombers and fighters vacated the skies over smoldering Clark Field, the defenders began taking stock of the situation and working to return the airstrip and damaged airplanes to operational service. Luckily, not all of the B-17s at Clark were destroyed; one of the Clark-based Fortresses had been on a reconnaissance mission, and one of the airplanes from Mindanao arrived in the midst of the attack. Both landed safely.

In addition, three of the damaged B-17s were repairable, and mechanics began working feverishly to return them to flyable condition. Two were flown to Mindanao to join the remnants of the 19th Bombardment Group.

On the afternoon of December 8, the 21st Pursuit Squadron was brought up to Clark from Nichols Field, which had yet to be struck. While Clark was under attack, the squadron had been patrolling over the naval facilities at Cavite and never joined the battle. The 17th Pursuit had also been on patrol away from Clark. The planes returned to their base at Del Carmen, a fighter strip some 20 miles south of Clark.

The repair work was carried out largely by individual initiative. From all indications, large numbers of Air Force service personnel abandoned their posts and fled into the cane fields in panic during the attack. But while many of the service troops succumbed to temporary fear, most of the combat crews and the engineers remained on the base and pitched in to repair the damage and return the airfield to service.

In addition, Lt. Col.—later Brig. Gen.—Eugene L. Eubank, commander of the 19th Bombardment Group, V Bomber Command, stayed with his troops on the flight line, helping to refuel planes and guide in fighters during darkness with a flashlight. As the situation settled down, the men who had fled the stricken base began returning, although their morale remained low. Major Emmett C. Lentz, an Air Force surgeon, rounded up



The sturdy Curtiss P-40 "Warhawks," shown here, with their liquid-cooled V-12 Allison engines, were outclassed by Japan's faster, more maneuverable Mitsubishi "Zero" fighter, but the American pilots made up for the P-40s shortcomings by being brave in the attack.

National Archives

National Archives

A Mitsubishi Ki-51 Type 99 "Sonia" dive-bomber, comparable in size and performance to the German Stuka Ju-87 and U.S. Army Douglas A-24 "Banshee" (similar to the U.S. Navy SBD "Dauntless"). This Sonia was photographed after a raid against targets on Luzon.

a crew of men and supervised the construction of a dugout infirmary. Master Sergeant George R. Robinet, mess sergeant for the 30th Bombardment Squadron, refused to evacuate his mess equipment and set up facilities by the hangar. (Robinet was famous at Clark, then on Bataan and at Mindanao, for the quality of his mess. He continued to provide the best food possible, even after he was captured and went into a Japanese prison camp.)

Even after the Japanese vacated the skies over Luzon, losses continued among the fighters. A major problem was the dust that covered the airfields, reducing visibility and making flight operations hazardous. The 17th Pursuit lost two aircraft that first night when a pilot tried to take off too soon behind the plane in front of him and collided with another P-40 that was parked nearby. The pilot survived but was seriously burned.

A similar incident the next morning at Clark claimed two P-40s and a B-17. One P-40 pilot taxied into a bomb crater in the dusty darkness and the other, Lieutenant Robert D. Clark, became disoriented and rammed Colonel Eubank's personal B-17.

Such incidents continued to plague Interceptor Command; at least as many fighters were lost to accident, engine failure, or fuel starvation as to enemy action. By contrast, more than 140 Japanese aircraft would be destroyed by American fighters, bombers, and B-17 gunners. The tragedy was that although the Japanese could send more airplanes down from Japan, whenever an American fighter was lost, it couldn't be replaced. Within days, few flyable aircraft were left, forcing the young fighter pilots and their ground crews to be assigned to ground-combat duty.

The 34th Pursuit Squadron had seen action on December 8. No orders had been sent to their headquarters at Del Carmen, and they didn't get off the ground until after the attack. When they did get airborne, they headed for Clark. Although none of their kills were confirmed, the P-35 pilots claimed several Japanese airplanes shot down during a fierce battle near Clark.

The squadron joined the 17th Pursuit in combat patrols over Luzon on December 9, then landed at the satellite field at San Marcelino for the night. There they were joined by some of the B-17s that came up from Mindanao. (Two squadrons of B-17s had been sent to Del Monte Field in early December, and they escaped the carnage that befell their peers at Clark on December 8.) Part of the flight landed at Clark and part at San Marcelino, where they faced miserable conditions. There they found no quarters, food, or potable water. What water there was had to be boiled, and it remained tepid in the tropical heat and humidity of the islands.

The men of the 21st Pursuit were more fortunate. When they landed at Clark, they were directed to a camp that had been set up by the 20th Pursuit in the foothills of the Zambalese Mountains, a few miles from the airfield. There they found some bamboo huts, a few cots, mess facilities, and a flowing stream of fresh water.

Although the Americans did not yet know it, the raids on the aviation facilities were a precursor to an amphibious invasion of the Philippines. The B-17s were brought up from Mindanao in preparation for an attack on the Japanese airfields in southern Formosa. The plan called for a strike by 15 B-17s, with P-40s and P-35s from the 17th and 34th Pursuit Squadrons providing fighter cover before going in to make their own attacks when the bombers departed. A few obsolescent B-18s that had been given to the recently

arrived 27th Bombardment Group were also scheduled to join in the attack.

But then reconnaissance patrols detected large Japanese convoys approaching Vigan and Aparri in northern Luzon. V Bomber Command was instructed to cancel the Formosa mission and to direct its efforts against the Japanese invasion. It flew a reconnaissance mission in a P-40 and came back with detailed information on the approaching enemy fleet, but only five B-17s were able to make the attack. Major Cecil Combs, commander of the 93rd Bombardment Squadron, led the flight out of Clark to the target. Each of the five Flying Fortresses carried 20 100-pound bombs, weapons that were too light to do much damage to ships.

The attacking American planes came at 12,000 feet over the beach where the Japanese were preparing to land. They dropped part of their bomb load, then made a second pass from the opposite direction and dropped the rest; they observed some hits and thought one transport was sinking. After unleashing their ordnance, the bombers turned south toward Clark while the escorting P-40s dropped down low to drop fragmentation bombs and strafe the landing barges. Two fighters were lost to engine failure, but the pilots bailed out and eventually made their way to safety.

Combs wanted to rearm and go back for another mission, but the brass at Clark were fearful of another Japanese attack and ordered him to take his airplanes back to Mindanao.

A flight of 16 obsolescent Seversky P-35 fighters took off from Del Carmen, but their worn-out engines began giving problems and 11 of the pilots had to turn back. The other five arrived over Vigan to discover that the earlier P-40 attack had disrupted the landings and that several of the barges had been sunk. P-35 pilot 1st Lt. Samuel H. Marett led his wingman in a daring strafing attack that sank several additional barges and started fires on three transports, including a 10,000-ton troopship.

During Marrett's final pass, which he made right down on the deck through a wall of gunfire from several ships, his bullets hit the transport's magazine and set off an explosive cargo. Marett's P-35 caught the full force of the explosion and shed a wing, then dove into the sea and sank. Marett was killed; his family later received his Distinguished Service Cross, awarded posthumously.

All of the five P-35s that turned back returned to Del Carmen and were parked side by side. Just after the others returned from the mission to Vigan, a flight of 12 Japanese fighters arrived over the field, hitting the fuel trucks and all of the P-35s, destroying a dozen and damaging the other six. Within minutes, the 34th Pursuit Squadron was out of the war.

Early in the morning of December 10, Major Emmett O'Donnell, commanding the 14th Bombardment Squadron, took off from San Marcelino for Clark. O'Donnell and his men in B-17s arrived in a pouring rain, but only three were allowed to land; the authorities at Clark were expecting another attack and didn't want to risk having six bombers caught on the ground. Three others returned to San Marcelino, then were ordered to Mindanao later in the day.

Not wanting to miss the action, O'Donnell took off alone with eight 600-pound bombs and set a course for Vigan. He attacked a cruiser and destroyer escort but had problems with his bomb-release mechanism. Intent on the target, O'Donnell and his crew made five passes on the two ships and managed to drop all of their bombs, but observed no hits.

While O'Donnell was en route to Vigan, the three bombers that had landed at Clark were being refueled and armed with bombs for an attack on the Japanese invasion area. The loading was interrupted when word came of an approaching Japanese aerial formation and the three B-17s were ordered into the air. Lieutenant George Schaetzel was carrying a full complement of eight 600-pound bombs, but Captain Colin P. Kelly had only three, and the other B-17, piloted by Lieutenant G.R. Montgomery, was carrying only one. Montgomery took his one bomb to Vigan and dropped it with negligible results.

He returned to Clark and was reloaded with 20 100-pound bombs and sent out on another mission to bomb transports sitting just offshore at Aparri, where Japanese troops were also coming ashore; this time Montgomery plastered the target.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton, commander of the U.S. Far East Air Force based in the Philippines. BELOW: Lt. Col. Eugene L. Eubank (shown as a major general), commander of the 19th Bombardment Group.

The crew saw one ship burning when they left the target area. When they reached Clark, they were told to proceed to Mindanao, but they ran into a tropical thunderstorm and became lost. After failing to find Del Monte, Montgomery ditched the B-17 in the water off Zamboanga.

National Archives

ABOVE: North American A-27s of the 17th Pursuit Squadron photographed at Nichols Field in 1941. BELOW: Smoke rises from Clark Field after a Japanese air attack.

Time Life Pictures / Getty Images

Although the airplane was lost, the crew made it to safety.

Colin Kelly and George Schaetzel went out with orders to attack a Japanese aircraft carrier that had been reported north of Aparri. Schaetzel ended up dropping his bombs on the transports sitting off the beach, but clouds beneath them prevented the crew from seeing their bombs' impact. Schaetzel's B-17 was quickly intercepted by four Zeros, but despite the bomber's being shot full of holes, the crew made it back to San Marcelino with no injuries.

Colin Kelly became a legend of World War II, but the publicized version of his heroic actions was false. After ordering his crew to bail out, Kelly was reported to have sacrificed his life by diving his B-17 into the Japanese battleship *Haruna*. In fact, there was no Japanese battleship in Lingayen Gulf at the time, and the real story is considerably different from the legend.

Kelly and his crew flew north toward Formosa and came within sight of the Japanese-controlled island. When they encountered a thunderstorm, Kelly turned back and set a course for Aparri, where he knew there were targets. The bombardier, Corporal Meyer Levin, dropped his bombs on what he thought was a battleship, but which was actually a large cruiser, the *Natori*. The crew saw the flash of a bomb exploding on the stern, followed by a column of smoke emitting from the ship, but could not determine the extent of the damage.

As he circled over the Japanese cruisers, Kelly's B-17 was jumped by a flight of Zeros. During the ensuing aerial battle, the radio operator, Sergeant William J. Delehanty, was killed and belly turret gunner Pfc. Robert E. Altman was wounded. The intense enemy fire ruptured the fuel tanks in the left wing and the wing caught fire. A third pass cut the elevator cables, forcing Kelly to order his crew to bail out. The bomber exploded in midair before Kelly could parachute to safety—the first American B-17 shot down in combat. The rest of the crew survived, in spite of being strafed by the Japanese fighters while they hung in their parachutes; they were taken prisoner.

The bomber crashed on the plains between Clark Field and Mount Arayat, a dormant volcano just east of the field. Kelly's body lay nearby, with his unopened parachute still strapped to his body. Captain Colin P. Kelly was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

No appreciable damage was done to the Japanese forces at Aparri, but the attacks on the Vigan beachhead had completely disrupted the enemy's amphibious landings. But the knowledge of what they had done compared to what they could have done if they had had the strength frustrated the young American airmen. The men of the 27th Bombardment Group, whose Douglas Army A-24 Dauntless dive-bombers were still at sea on a different ship than the one that brought them to Manila, were especially frustrated. The dive-bombers were perfectly suited for attacks on ships, as Navy crews would prove later in the war, but these seaborne planes were useless for the time being.

The commanders feared that it was only a matter of time before the Japanese returned in even greater strength and destroyed the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines completely. Therefore, the remaining B-17s were ordered to Del Monte Field on Mindanao and flew no more missions from Clark.

As it turned out, the American pursuit force was nearly wiped out in one fell swoop on the afternoon of December 10. When the Japanese struck Del Carmen, they also hit Nichols Field. At the time the enemy appeared over Luzon, the P-40s of the 17th and 21st Pursuit Squadrons were on patrol, and had been for some time. Approximately 46

P-40s still remained operational, and many of them were in the air at the time of the attack. Some pilots had been airborne for several hours; their airplanes were low on fuel and they were returning to Nichols when they learned that Luzon was under attack.

In spite of their low fuel state—and having no other real choice—the P-40 pilots rushed skyward to engage the enemy. The Japanese bombers were at 20,000 feet—too high for the P-40s to reach in time to intercept them. Suddenly, the fighters were attacked by Zeros, and a major battle ensued that spread over many miles across the sky. The battle was so fast and furious that the P-40 pilots were unable to keep track of the airplanes they shot at—and no one claimed an enemy plane, although it is known that several were shot down.

Even though American pilot losses were light, nearly all of the P-40s were lost. A few limped back to Clark, but three pilots were killed, eight more either bailed out or crashed, and several landed in fields and roads or ditched just offshore in Manila Bay.

Japanese losses were even greater than those of the P-40s, but there were more Zeros to begin with. The high-altitude Japanese bombers were able to make their runs without molestation, their bombs doing tremendous damage to Nichols Field and the U.S. Navy facilities at Cavite. The onshore naval facilities were practically wiped out, a blow that convinced the Navy that it was time to move its surface ships away from Manila.

At the end of the day, the Far East Air Force's strength was down to 18 B-17s and 30 fighters, with 22 of the fighters being the capable P-40s. The Philippine Air Corps still had a squadron of antiquated P-26s, but their airplanes were no match for the superior Japanese fighters. With air strength rapidly dwindling away, the American command decided that the remaining combat aircraft should be held in reserve for observation work. On the evening of December 10 an order came down that prohibited further combat missions.

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

Captain Colin P. Kelly, depicted here in a 1942 painting by Deane Kelle, was killed when his B-17—the first B-17 to be lost in the war—exploded by Japanese fire while on a mission.

Even though the American Air Force was suffering heavy losses, there were some bright spots, and some of them were contributed by the Filipino fighter pilots. Captain Jesus Villamor, squadron commander of the Filipino 6th Squadron, broke up a Japanese bomber formation on December 10, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. One of his pilots, Lieutenant Jose Gozar, attempted to ram a Japanese bomber after his guns jammed. Although the Japanese bomber was too fast for the slower P-26, the attempt caused the enemy pilot to break off his bomb run and flee the area.

Two days later, on December 12, Villamor and six of his men again broke up a Japanese formation before they were attacked by Zeros. Luckily, only two of the P-26s were lost, but the mission was the last interception effort by the Filipinos. They joined their American peers in the reconnaissance role.

After the fighter pilots were officially ordered off combat operations, they continued to take the fight to the Japanese when the opportunity presented itself. They took advantage of their apparent weakness by suddenly striking where and when they were least expected. Lieutenant Grant M. Mahony was on a reconnaissance mission on December 11 when he decided to attack a Japanese-held radio station and the airfield at Legaspi. After he was jumped by nine Zeros, Mahony took his P-40 down to treetop level around an 8,000-foot mountain, then led the enemy planes right back over their own field, where he calmly made another strafing pass!

One of the most exceptional pilots of the Pacific War, Mahony had already realized that the P-40 was faster than the Zero at low altitude. When he was done strafing, he led the Japanese back into the mountains and lost them, then headed home to Nichols Field. Mahony was later killed in action (January 3, 1945) and, like Kelly and Villamor, received the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously.

In another spectacular effort, Lieutenant Boyd D. "Buzz" Wagner took on two Zeros, then wiped out several others on

the ground at Aparri. A trained aeronautical engineer, Wagner knew the P-40 inside and out, and when the two Japanese appeared on his tail, he let them get as close as he felt he could, then throttled back his engine. The startled Japanese flew past the suddenly slowing Kittyhawk, and Wagner promptly shot them both down. He then headed for Aparri at low level to find a dozen Japanese planes on the strip. Wagner strafed the strip and left five Japanese planes burning. It was only when his fuel supply began to dwindle that he returned to his home base.

On December 16, Wagner and Lieutenant Russel M. Church, along with a third pilot, Allison W. Strauss, were dive-bombing an enemy airstrip at Vigan. As they went into a dive against the parked enemy planes, Wagner and Church came under intense ground fire. Church's plane was hit and set afire but, instead of bailing out, he stayed on his run, released his bombs, then crashed to his death. Wagner continued to pummel the field; he and Church accounted for nearly 20 planes on the ground. Wagner, along with Church's family, received the Distinguished Service Cross.

The day the war began, General Brereton summoned some local civilian pilots to his headquarters and informed them that they were now in the Army. Paul I. Gunn was a former enlisted naval aviator who had retired in the Philippines, where he had been instrumental in organizing Philippine Airlines. His airplanes would be invaluable to the war effort, so Brereton commissioned him as a captain and told him to organize a transport squadron. Immediately upon finding himself back in the military, Gunn showed the stuff that would make him a legend in the Pacific.

He headed to Grace Park, an old airfield on the northern outskirts of Manila that had been incorporated into a Chinese cemetery, and started getting it ready for his new squadron. He knocked down a few tombstones next to the old runway and taxiways and moved his airline to the field. With the airplanes hidden under foliage, for the next several weeks Gunn and his new squadron operated from Grace Park without being discovered by the Japanese.

Gunn threw himself into the fight with a vengeance. Flying as low as he could, he cruised all over the islands in his Twin Beech, transporting a variety of cargo and passengers. He and his six pilots (two Americans, Harold Slingsby and Louis Connelly; the four others were Filipino) carried dispatches, aircraft parts, and passengers to airfields all over the Philippines. Shortly before the holidays, Gunn even flew a load of turkeys to Mindanao for the men of the 19th Bombardment Group and the 5th Air Base Group who were based there. Many of his passengers were military personnel who were being "sent south" to Davao or Zamboanga on the first leg of their journey to Australia.

National Archives

Time Life Pictures / Getty Images

ABOVE: Captain Jesus A. Villamor, Filipino 6th Squadron commander, earned a DSC for his actions on December 10. LEFT: Hopelessly outclassed by Japanese aircraft, this Serversky P-35, one of only 76 built, was photographed over Clark Field in 1941.

Gunn and his men were sometimes joined by William R. Bradford, another American pilot who had been in the Philippines for many years and who had run his own air taxi company until he sold it to Philippine Airlines. After the sale, Bradford had joined the staff of Brereton's Far East Air Force as Technical Inspector of Air Service Command. The American airmen gained important knowledge of the islands—knowledge that would prove invaluable later in the war.

On Christmas Eve 1941, Captain Gunn was ordered to fly a load of Far East Air Force staff officers to Australia and to remain there to organize an air transport unit with whatever resources he could find. He left his wife and four children at their home in Manila and told them he would see them again as soon as he could. That day would not come for more than three years.

After the December 10 attacks on Vigan, all of the B-17s of the 19th Bombardment Group were pulled back to Del Monte. Sixteen airplanes were parked on the field but,

as of December 12, only six were in commission. All six were scheduled for a raid on Vigan that morning, but one of the airplanes, one of the survivors of the attack on Clark, lost two engines on takeoff—including the one that powered the hydraulic system to operate the brakes. The pilot had to ground-loop the Fortress to avoid plunging into a steep ravine at the end of the runway.

Four of the B-17s bombed the target and returned to Mindanao, while a fifth, which took off late and never caught up with the formation, bombed the target alone, then landed at Clark. When he arrived, the pilot, Captain Cecil Combs, was called to a meeting with Colonel Eubank, who told him he wanted the 19th Bombardment Group to mount a mission against Legaspi with everything they had, and the sooner the better. Combs loaded another B-17 crew into his aircraft for an eventful flight back to Del Monte through heavy thunderstorms. The same storms apparently took the life of Major David Gibbs, who was scheduled to assume command of the 19th Bombardment Group operations at Del Monte, when he crashed later that evening in a B-18.

The immediacy of an attack on Legaspi was necessitated by the presence of a Japanese aircraft carrier. A B-17 crew, commanded by Lieutenant William Bohnaker, spotted the carrier on December 13. Their Flying Fortress broke out of a cloud deck at 2,000 feet and the carrier was right below them, its decks lined with aircraft. But Bohnaker had been ordered not to attack and the Air Force missed its chance to bomb a fat target. When an attack was finally launched on December 14, the carrier was nowhere to be found.

Once again, the 19th Bombardment Group could get only six airplanes—less than one third of the unit's available strength—into operating condition. One of those blew a tire upon takeoff and two had to turn back, leaving only three B-17s to go on to the target. They flew north over Leyte and approached Luzon from the east. One airplane dropped back when an engine quit, and the pilot had to drop to 10,000 feet before it started again. The other two B-17s also became separated, and were 90 seconds apart when they came over the target—a bay full of ships of all kinds.

Lieutenant Jack Adams's crew was the first to attack; his bombardier dropped their whole stick of bombs on one pass. Lieutenant Elliott Vandevanter followed; his crew made three passes to drop their bombs before they managed to find sanctuary in the clouds and made their way back to Del Monte.

Lieutenant Hewitt T. Wheless was several minutes behind the other two Flying Fortresses, and his aircraft was attacked by fighters just as he began his bomb run. Nevertheless, he was able to drop eight 600-pound bombs, but the crew was unable to assess the results as they were too busy warding off enemy fighters.

As they came off the target, Adams's B-17 was jumped by six fighters. The Zeros struck again and again before he managed to reach the safety of a cloud bank. But the damage was done; the stricken B-17 was dropping lower and lower, and Adams had to crash-land in a rice field just on shore on the island of Masbate, southeast of Luzon. One of the fighters strafed the wreck while the crew was climbing out but failed to set the airplane on fire; Filipino civilians rescued the crew. Adams and most of his men eventually made their way back to Mindanao, but the injured radio operator had to be left behind in a hospital on Panay.

Meanwhile, Wheless and his crew were subjected to a 25-minute running gun battle with 18 Japanese planes. The radioman was killed, all four gunners were wounded (one fatally), the No. 1 engine was shot out, and a cannon shell pierced one of the gas tanks. The Japanese fighters drew alongside the damaged B-17, then pulled away and inexplicably left their quarry alone. The B-17 had lost several thousand feet by the time the battle ended and was down to 3,000 feet and still losing altitude. Realizing they couldn't make Del Monte, Wheless elected to try for a crash-landing at Cagayan, an airstrip a few miles northwest of their base. As night closed in, he found that the airfield had been barricaded, but he had no choice but to land. The landing was made with three flat tires (the result of enemy action) in semidarkness; the only damage sustained upon touching down was four bent propellers, and none of the crew was injured in the landing. His superlative bit of flying

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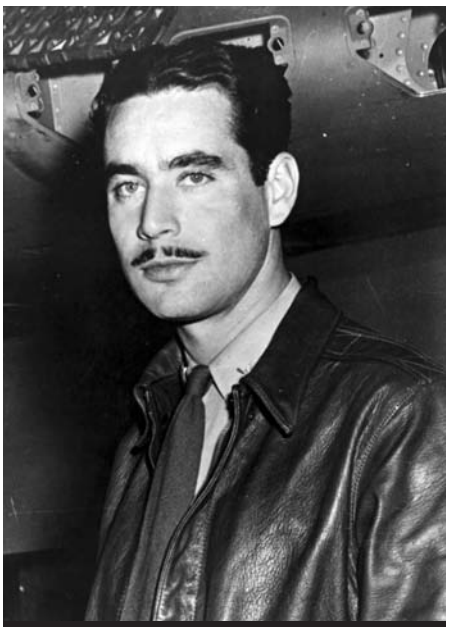


ABOVE: Lieutenant Boyd D. "Buzz" Wagner was awarded a DSC for his part in knocking out a score of enemy aircraft. BELOW: Lieutenant Grant M. Mahony fought off nine Zeros during his attack on ground targets.

National Archives

earned Wheless the Distinguished Service Cross. (Wheless would later become a three-star general.)

The mission to Legaspi was costly, with two valuable heavy bombers lost. Any results from the bombing were unknown, although gunners on the three B-17s shot down several fighters. It was the last mission flown by the 19th Bombardment Group from Del Monte. The group was down to 14 airplanes and, when Major Birrell Walsh arrived from Clark Field to take command of the group, he requested permission to take the entire group to Darwin for badly needed maintenance and rest for the crews. Some of the bombers would return to Del Monte, but only to use the field as a staging base for missions farther north.

The evacuation of the B-17s to Darwin was but the beginning of an exodus of the Far East Air Force from the Philippines to Australia. Although no one in the islands was informed, President Roosevelt, considering the precarious situation with the Navy after Pearl Harbor, had decided that the Philippines were indefensible, and the troops there were to be abandoned to their fate. That decision, though, wouldn't be made until just before Christmas. Meanwhile, the airmen and troops in the Philippines still held out hope for reinforcement—and would continue to do so right up until the bitter end.

U.S. Air Force

National Archives

One group in particular was especially frustrated, because they had been in the islands without their airplanes since just before December 8. The 27th Bombardment Group (Light) was supposed to have been equipped with Douglas A-24 Dauntless dive-bombers, but the personnel were sent to Manila on one ship while their airplanes followed on another. The A-24s were still several days from Manila when the Japanese attacked, and the ship carrying them was diverted to Brisbane.

Since their arrival, the men of the 27th had been given a variety of tasks. Some of the pilots had been sent to Clark as replacement pursuit pilots but found themselves assigned to ground duties when they got there; the ground crews were put to work filling sandbags. The only airplanes assigned to the group were a handful of decrepit Douglas B-18s.

On December 17, Lt. Col. John "Big Jim" Davies called some 20 of his best pilots to 27th Group headquarters at Fort McKinley in Manila for a secret meeting. When they were all assembled, Davies told the men that their A-24s had arrived in Australia and they were going to get them. That night, the 20 men left Nichols Field in a Douglas C-39 and two B-18s, one of which had been assigned to the group. One pilot from the 24th Pursuit Group had also been assigned to the flight—Lieutenant Grant Mahony. Mahony was on his way to Australia to organize another fighter squadron. He would fight in Java, then move to India to fight in Burma. He would return to the Philippines in early 1945 and die in the crash of a P-38 while supporting the landings at Lingayen Gulf.

Davies and his men flew to Del Monte, and from there to Darwin. As soon as they arrived, Davies arranged for the three transports that had brought them to return to the Philippines with badly needed .50-caliber ammunition. The 27th contingent finally found passage to Townsville aboard a Qantas Airlines flying boat. When they got there, they discovered that the A-24s were indeed there, but due to a snafu, the airplanes had arrived without needed equipment. It turned out that the group had been given worn-out Navy Dauntlesses instead of new ones, and they were lacking the

ABOVE: A B-17C model, photographed at Clark Field in 1941, before the Japanese attack. INSET: Captain William E. Dyess, Jr., led an attack of P-40s against targets at Subic Bay, but all four planes were lost and he was captured.

equipment needed to fight with the Army.

The combination of the foul-up with the airplanes and the changing situation in the Southwest Pacific dictated that the 27th Group pilots would not return to the Philippines. Davies and his pilots would see service in Java, then would join the 3rd Attack Group when it arrived in Australia. The men left in the Philippines would go on to Bataan to fight as infantry, be captured, then make the infamous Death March to the POW camps. The unit designation was transferred to one of the new groups that was organized as America geared up for full-scale war.

Unlike the 27th pilots, some of the 19th Bombardment Group crews continued the fight in the Philippines. The first B-17s arrived at Batchelor Field, a remote outpost in the wilderness some 45 miles from Darwin, on December 17. Five days later, nine 19th Group B-17s were on their way back to the Philippines, this time on a mission to attack Japanese shipping in Davao Gulf, where Japanese landings had commenced two days previously. It was a 1,500-mile mission, and each B-17 had to be modified with additional bomb-bay fuel tanks, leaving room for only four 500-pound bombs. The bombers were to arrive over the target just at dusk, then proceed to Del Monte to refuel and rearm.

They caught the Japanese by surprise and dropped their bombs accurately with very little enemy resistance. Several bombs struck the dock area and one 10,000-ton tanker was reported sunk. Darkness and a gathering evening storm sheltered the Flying Fortresses as they made their way to Mindanao.

When they reached their staging base at Del Monte, orders were waiting, directing them to fly a mission the next evening against Japanese ships in Lingayen Gulf, then to continue on to San Marcelino. Captain Cecil Combs, mission commander of the flight, felt that landing at San Marcelino would needlessly expose the valuable B-17s to the threat of enemy attack, so he decided to play the situation by ear. The six B-17s that were operationally ready took off at 3:00 AM the following morning in a driving rainstorm. Their takeoff was planned to put them over Lingayen at dawn.

Shortly after takeoff one airplane lost an engine but, instead of returning to Del Monte, the pilot elected to continue on to Darwin; only four B-17s made it to Lingayen Gulf. After bombing, the crews turned south since it would have been suicidal to land at San Marcelino while being trailed by Japanese fighters. They flew nonstop to a Dutch airfield at Ambon, where they spent the night before continuing on to Batchelor Field near Darwin.

A few days before Christmas, General Brereton received orders to evacuate the headquarters of the Far East Air Forces to Australia, a move precipitated by President Roosevelt's decision to abandon the Philippines. Brereton himself and several members of his staff left Manila in a U.S. Navy PBY flying boat and Captains P.I. Gunn and Harold Slingsby took out 11 others in two of the Philippine Airlines Twin Beeches, while the Air Force units remaining on Luzon were ordered to move to Bataan and equip to fight as infantry until the "promised relief" arrived from the United States.

When the Far East Air Forces headquarters pulled out for Australia, Air Force strength on Luzon consisted of only 20 operational fighters—16 P-40s and four P-35s. Colonel Harold George replaced Brereton on MacArthur's staff and as commander of the Air Force remaining in the islands. There were several brand new P-40s in various stages of assembly, with four almost ready to fly, on the day the withdrawal to Bataan began. In addition to the fighters, a few liaison and observation planes were still operational.

Captain Richard Fellows, commander of the Philippines Air Depot, chose to disregard orders to displace his entire command to Bataan in eight hours. Fellows and his men put forth a herculean effort to move as much of their stock of supplies to Bataan as they could, including the four P-40s, then went out and located badly needed aviation gasoline and .50-caliber ammunition that could keep the remaining aircraft in the air. By early January 1942, all of the air forces on Luzon had relocated to Bataan.

National Archives

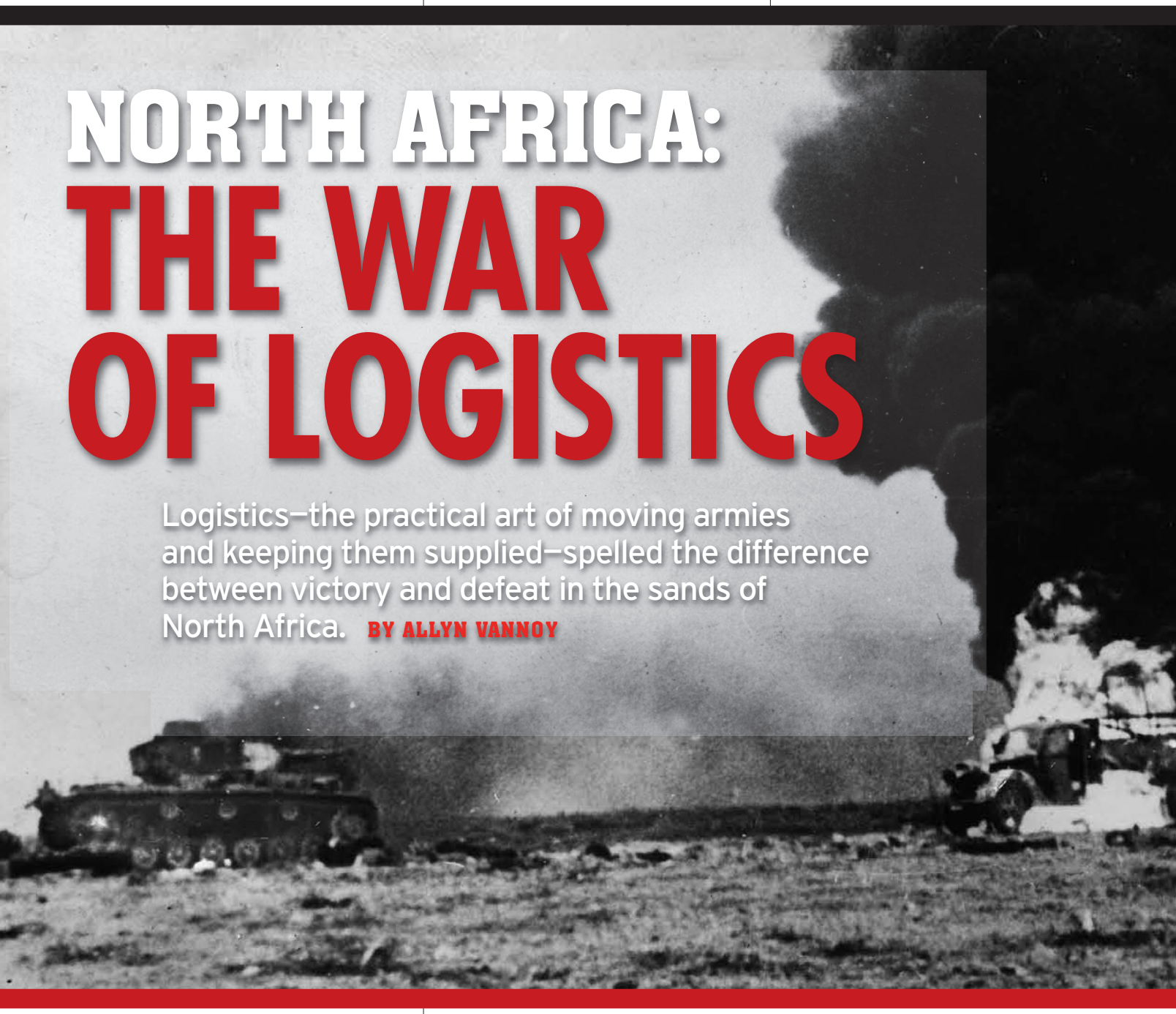
Paul "Pappy" Gunn, a retired naval aviator, fought the Japanese with skill and cunning.

After the move to Bataan, the Air Force crews continued to get in their licks whenever they could. Although the situation was becoming desperate, the fighter pilots strafed Japanese lines of communication. One February mission was an attack on Nichols and Neilson Fields at Manila, which were now in Japanese hands.

The best known of the missions from Bataan was carried out on March 2 when Captain William E. Dyess, Jr., led a flight of four P-40s on a bombing mission against Japanese ships in Subic Bay. Two transports were reported sunk and several smaller ships damaged. Unfortunately, the mission ended with the loss of all four fighters. One was shot down during the other attack and the other three all cracked upon landing back at Bataan.

Contrary to popular belief, the Americans in the Philippines were not cut off from all resupply and reinforcement after the initial Japanese attacks. American transports and converted bombers continued to make flights from Australia to Del

Continued on page 98



NORTH AFRICA: THE WAR OF LOGISTICS

Logistics—the practical art of moving armies and keeping them supplied—spelled the difference between victory and defeat in the sands of North Africa. BY ALLYN VANNOY

"Good generals study tactics, great generals study logistics."
—General Omar Bradley

Bradley could have been referring to German General Erwin Rommel. While Rommel was winning the war of desert armor tactics during 1941-1942 in North Africa, he was losing the war of logistics.

With the fall of France in June 1940, Britain was the last active enemy of Nazi Germany. British forces in the Mediterranean and the Middle East faced a bleak and uncertain future. With Italy's entry into the war a new front was opened that Britain hardly seemed able to defend.

Hitler, in a July 31, 1940, meeting with his generals, did not wholly oppose a possible Mediterranean strategy as Generals Walther von Brauchitsch, commander in chief of the Army, and Franz Halder, chief of staff in the Army high command (OKH) proposed sending panzer forces and aircraft to Libya to help the Italians, who were planning an offensive into Egypt. But Hitler wouldn't agree to commit a panzer corps. The only thing in the Mediterranean that interested him was the possibility of capturing Gibraltar and thereby closing its western access to the British.

Kriegsmarine Grand Admiral Erich Raeder weighed in on the Mediterranean strategy during September 1940 as he showed Hitler, step by step, how Germany could defeat

Tanks and supply trucks of the Afrika Korps burn in the Libyan desert during the campaign in Cyrenaica. With his supply lines stretched thin, the burden of providing his armored forces with fuel, ammunition, spare parts, maintenance items, food, and replacement personnel became Rommel's Achilles' heel.

Britain without crossing the English Channel and maintained that doing so would put Germany in a commanding position against the Soviet Union as well.

Raeder argued that the Axis should capture the Suez Canal and then advance through Palestine and Syria as far as Turkey. "If we reach that point, Turkey will be in our power," Raeder emphasized. "The Russian problem will then appear in a different light. It is doubtful whether an advance against Russia from the north (Poland and Romania) will be necessary."

An advance on the southern frontier of Turkey would place the Turks in an impossible position. With Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria already allied to Germany, Turkey would be forced to join the Axis or at least to provide passage for Axis forces and supplies.

Even Churchill recognized the situation in a message to President Roosevelt, asserting that if Egypt and the Middle East were lost, continuation of the war "would be a hard, long, and a bleak proposition," even if the United States was to enter the war.

Although OKH and OKW advised Hitler to send troops to North Africa, their proposals lacked Raeder's urgency. Hitler was fixed on destroying the Soviet Union and gaining *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east.

An Axis victory in the Middle East could place German forces in Iran, blocking supplies to the Soviet Union from Britain and the United States. Russia would be left with

National Archives

only Murmansk and Archangel in the north—ports exposed to Arctic weather, U-boats, and the Luftwaffe. Even more than that, the Soviet Union's major oil fields in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea could be threatened. A German position in Iran would also pose a threat to British India.

But opening the road to the Middle East depended on achieving victory in North Africa. And the outcome in North Africa was dependent on logistics. In time Axis operations in Libya would expose several key issues.

Hitler's ambivalence about sending forces to North Africa was based on faith that the Italian offensive into Egypt would achieve a quick success. It had commenced on September 13, 1940, as the six divisions of the Italian Tenth Army, which was about three times the size of the defending British force, crossed into Egypt. But German fears, and British optimism, began to increase almost at once. Fifty miles inside Egypt, the Italian Army came to a halt at Sidi Barrani and dug-in. For weeks the Italians did nothing while the British received reinforcements.

National Archives

ABOVE: Italian Carro Armato M 14/41 medium tanks move toward the front. Unreliable and easily knocked out, they proved to be no match for the Allies. OPPOSITE: Trying to supply their troops along a long and ever-changing battlefield proved to be an insurmountable problem for German and Italian logistics specialists, and contributed to the eventual Axis defeat.

German military leaders had long harbored doubts about the ability of the Italian army given its obsolete equipment and few mechanized forces. However, the German General Staff felt the principal deficiency was its poor leadership—the Italian officer corps being ill trained.

Consequently, the Germans offered panzers and aircraft, but Mussolini didn't respond. He kept hoping that his army would show some drive, push the British back, and give him and Italy some measure of glory. But it failed to happen. Even so, Mussolini was reluctant to call upon the Germans because it would look like an admission of failure, but he also didn't want to lose Libya.

With the Italian Army at Sidi Barrani in October 1940, the German high command sent a panzer expert, General Wilhelm von Thoma, to find out whether German forces should help the Italians—and also, unofficially, to look over the Italian Army. Von Thoma was a veteran who had led German-created panzer forces for Franco during the Spanish Civil War, seeing action in 192 engagements while in Spain

After returning from Libya, von Thoma was called to Hitler's headquarters. Von Thoma reported that only motorized forces were of any use in the desert. He believed that to ensure success, "nothing less than four panzer divisions would suffice," and that this was also "the maximum that could be effectively maintained with supplies in an advance across the desert to the Nile Valley." This small force would have to be of the highest quality (meaning not Italians). Hitler told von Thoma he could spare only one panzer division (the 15th Panzer), whereupon von Thoma replied that it would be better to give up the whole idea. Von Thoma's comment angered Hitler, saying that his concept of sending German forces to Africa was political, designed to keep Mussolini from changing sides. Hitler remained fixed on Russia, hoarding his panzer forces to use there.

The German Army had developed a single-minded concentration on the operational aspects of war to the detriment, if not outright neglect, of everything else. The Army's doctrine, training, and organization were geared to fighting and little else. Before 1939, no preparations had been made in the German Army for desert warfare. Operations, organization, and training had been limited to fighting a war on the European continent.

During December 1940, British General Richard O'Connor's Western Desert Force attacked the Italian forces at Sidi Barrani. By mid-February, the British overran eastern Libya, destroying the Italian Army, capturing 130,000 prisoners. Rather than pushing on to Tripoli the British dispatched forces to Greece and others to finish off Italian forces in East Africa.

The British success forced Hitler to come to Mussolini's aid. In January 1941, Luftwaffe units arrived in Sicily and began air attacks on British bases on Malta. In the middle of the Mediterranean, Malta provided a vital strategic base for Allied operations as it lay astride the direct route between Italy and Libya. The air assault allowed General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps to reach Libya with few losses.

When the first German units were shipped to Africa, they had no information on the nature of operations and circumstances in the desert. Information furnished by the Ital-

Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ians was extremely meager. One of the key features of Libya was a lone, all-weather (hard surfaced) road, the Via Balbia, which ran from the provincial capital, Tripoli, to the Egyptian frontier, where it met a British military road leading to Alexandria, the Suez Canal, and on to Palestine.

The logistics problems facing the Germans in North Africa were to be extremely challenging. The primary Italian ports for shipping and embarkation to Libya were Naples, Bari, Brindisi, and Taranto. The main port in Libya was Tripoli, capable of handling five cargo ships or four troop transports at a time, or approximately 45,000 tons of cargo a month across its docks.

Although the Italians tried to improve their Libyan ports, they did so only after wasting considerable effort on repairing harbors in Albania. The small capacity of the ports also limited the size of convoys. Instead of running a relatively few large convoys, which would have been more efficient in terms of convoy defense, the Italians had to send many small ones, wasting fuel and escorts.

The Italians initially used massive escorts, including cruisers, but they were eventually forced to curtail this due to fuel shortages. Initial convoys averaged just four merchant ships with nearly as many destroyers or torpedo boats acting as escorts and at least one aircraft patrolling ahead of a convoy during daylight. Later, air cover for the convoys was greatly increased as the Italian air force made a major commitment. In time the Italian convoys were reduced in size, averaging just two ships, and becoming smaller in size as the British gradually eliminated the larger ones.

Routing and scheduling of convoys for Libya was often complex. Initially the Italians tried to sail on moonless nights. Later, the threat of attack at night was far greater than during the day, so running during daylight became preferable. The Italians were forced to make costly efforts to stay as far away as possible from Malta. As a result convoys had to either sail to the west along the Tunisian coast or far to the east, not far off the Balkan coast. Such routing doubled the travel distance across the Mediterranean, making it expensive in terms of time and fuel as well as the wear on ships.

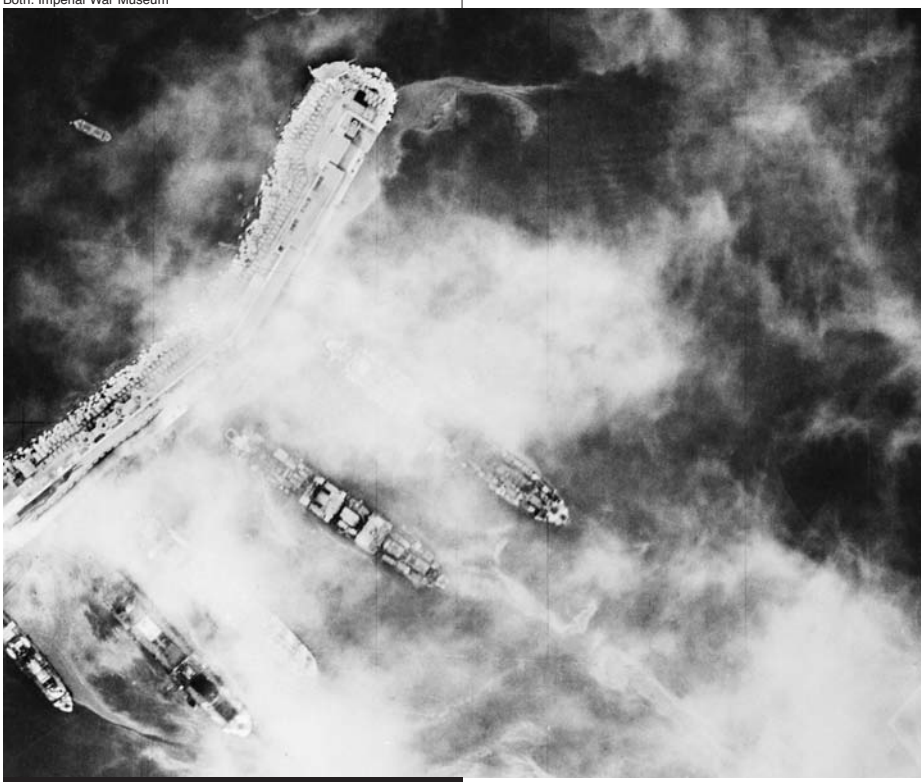
Italian shipping resources were further taxed as ships were also needed to support troops in the Balkans and the Aegean.

In terms of logistics, a German motorized division required 350 tons of supplies a day or 10,500 tons a month. To transport this quantity over 300 miles of desert, OKH calculated that, apart from the troops' organic vehicles and excluding any reserves, would require 39 columns or ground convoys each of 30 two-ton trucks, running four or five round trips a month.

The assignment of the 15th Panzer Division to the Deutsches Afrika Korps (DAK) raised the motor-transport capacity needed to maintain the DAK by 6,600 tons. This was 10 times as much, proportionally, as that allocated to the armies preparing to invade Russia. Whether Rommel received more reinforcements or went beyond the 300-mile supply range, a shortage of support vehicles was bound to ensue. Nor was there sufficient coastal shipping to help alleviate the problem. Hitler relented, however. While granting Rommel the trucks he needed, Hitler coupled them with an explicit order forbidding him from taking any large-scale offensive action that would further raise his requirements.

The force of seven Axis divisions in Libya, along with the supporting air force and naval units, required a supply level of

Both: Imperial War Museum



ABOVE: A British reconnaissance photo shows ships of an Italian convoy in the harbor at Palermo, Sicily. Two of the vessels were sunk and others damaged during a bombing raid two nights later. RIGHT: Italian supply vessel *Pietro Querini*, part of a convoy headed to Tripoli, sinks off of Tunisia after being torpedoed by the British submarine HMS *Union*.

70,000 tons per month. This was significantly more than Tripoli could handle, so a crisis was sure to develop.

Rommel then defied Hitler's orders and launched an offensive at the beginning of April. Limited initially, it found weaknesses in the Commonwealth forces and as Rommel exploited those weaknesses it gained momentum. The drive ended at Sollum, just over the Egyptian border, creating a logistical nightmare for the Axis, as it added 700 miles to an already extended line of supply.

While the British Army was having problems, the Royal Navy responded. After sinking 10 Axis ships during the first three months of 1941, they sank 26 in April and May. In one incident on April 16, four destroyers, operating from Malta, destroyed a convoy of five transports and two escorts at the cost of a single destroyer.

Despite problems, May 1941 was a peak month for shipments, no more than nine percent of the supplies embarked were lost en route to Africa. Somehow the Axis managed to put more supplies through Tripoli than its capacity. From February to May, the Axis received 325,000 tons of supplies, 45,000 more than the Army's consumption. But the problem became one of moving supplies from Tripoli to the front. As a result, supplies piled up on the wharves while shortages arose on the front line. At the same time the Italian ground forces were experiencing difficulties because its 225,000 man force had only 7,000 trucks to support it.

On April 4, the Axis reoccupied the port of Benghazi, in Cyrenaica, only 300 miles from the Egyptian border. Though designed to handle 2,700 tons a day, the port's actual unloading capacity was 700 to 800 tons a day, or 24,000 tons a month. There was also only enough coastal shipping available to carry 15,000 tons a month from Tripoli. As a result, supplies continued to pile up at Tripoli.

By his daring, yet tempestuous offensive, Rommel had placed his forces in an impossible position. With Benghazi's capacity limited, to stay where he was in eastern Libya spelled a pending disaster. Yet, retreat was also not a consideration. The only option was to try to take the port of Tobruk. However, Rommel had to concede that the force needed for such an operation would be no less than four panzer or motorized divisions—the same number originally suggested by von Thoma. But Germany's forces were already fully committed against Russia. Also, to grant Rommel's request meant that DAK would need another 20,000 tons of supplies a month, for which unloading facilities were not available. Rommel would have to do with the forces and supplies on hand. As consolation, on July 31, all Axis forces in Libya, renamed Panzerarmee Afrika, were placed under Rommel's command.

Closer examination of Tobruk revealed that it could provide little help in terms of logisitics relief. The port was reported as capable of handling 1,500 tons a day, but in practice it rarely exceeded 600. The German Kriegsmarine had dismissed it as a port of disembarkation for large ships, advising OKH to rely exclusively on Tripoli and Benghazi to keep Rommel's forces supplied. Thus, any plans Rommel had for solving his supply difficulties by capturing Tobruk seemed highly impracticable.

In the meantime, the situation on the central Mediterranean was deteriorating. Early in June most of the German 10th Air Corps, which had been protecting Libyan-bound convoys from bases on Sicily, was transferred to Greece. This allowed British naval and air units on Malta a respite to make a gradual recovery. Axis losses at sea, which had

previously been negligible, began to rise alarmingly. In July, 19 percent of all supplies, by weight, sent to Libya were lost; this fell to nine percent in August, rose to 25 percent in September, and 23 percent in October. In addition, Benghazi suffered heavy bombing by the RAF in September, causing ships to be diverted to Tripoli.

At the same time Allied submarines achieved some spectacular successes, sinking three of Italy's largest troop transports—the liners *Esperia, Neptunia,* and *Oceania* in August and September 1941. From mid-October 1941, the Italians began carrying troops almost exclusively in destroyers. Submarines remained the chief killer of Axis shipping during 1941, causing 44 percent of Axis losses.

But Rommel's logistics woes lay not just with British aggressive efforts, but also with the organization responsible for transporting his supplies. The leadership of the Italian Navy, responsible for coordinating and overseeing Mediterranean convoy protection, was staffed by many officers who were not supporters of Mussolini, while the senior Fascist authorities in the government and military were so corrupt as to be ineffective, or at least disastrously bureaucratic.

Rommel accused the Commando Supremo of inefficiency, demanding that the entire supply organization be taken over by the Wehrmacht. The Kriegsmarine agreed, voicing the suspicion that the Italian preference for the use of Tripoli was based primarily on their desire to protect their merchant fleet. But these opinions were disputed by OKH in a study showing that the Luftwaffe had neglected the protection of the convoys in favor of attacking targets in the eastern Mediterranean.

Other logistic options were weighed. The possibility of sending supplies from Greece direct to Cyrenaica was considered, but this would have placed dependence on a single-track railway from Belgrade to Nish in Yugoslavia, which was constantly being broken, i.e., blown up by partisans. On their side, the Italians argued that continued use of Tripoli was needed, claiming that they had no fuel to enable their navy to deal with the Malta-based British "Force K's" destroyers and submarines, and demanded that the Luftwaffe tackle the job. However, when OKW offered them Kriegsmarine personnel to help operate the Libyan ports, the offer was rejected.

Despite shipping losses the Italians succeeded in putting an average of 72,000 tons, slightly more than Rommel's current consumption, across the Mediterranean each month during July through October. Rommel's difficulties, for the moment, stemmed less from the threat posed by Malta and problems with Mediterranean convoys than from the impossible length of his supply lines.

If the Panzerarmee needed 70,000 tons of supplies a month and 70,000 tons were received at ports, at least one-third of the tonnage or 23, 000 tons, had to be fuel to facilitate ground operations. Since one-third to one-half of the fuel received at port was used to transport these supplies, approximately 11,500 tons would be consumed delivering the goods. That would leave 47,000 tons of other supplies (food and ammunition) but result in a shortage of 11,500 tons of operating fuel. The alternative was to offset the fuel shortfall and cut other supplies to just 35,500 tons. Whatever way you cut it, the numbers were eventually going to come up short.

Also, obligated to cover 1,000 miles each way, 35 percent of transport vehicles would be undergoing repair at any given time.

On the night of November 9, a five-ship convoy carrying 20,000 tons of cargo was sunk off the Libyan coast by British warships. Supplies disembarked in Libya during the month dropped to 30,000 tons while shipping losses rose to 30 percent. However, though Rommel's main fighting force consisted of two German divisions, which together consumed about 20,000 tons a month, they still had some supply surplus available from the previous months. But this was of less immediate significance than the fact that the British offensive that opened on November 18 (Operation Crusader) made the overland routes unsafe. British aircraft and armored cars, operating in raiding parties, inflicted heavy losses on truck columns, also reducing hauling capacity by half while also limiting the movement of truck convoys to

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German military vehicles are offloaded from cargo ships at the port of Tripoli, Libya, April 1, 1941. By disrupting the Axis supply line, the Allies gained a matériel advantage over the Germans and Italians.

nighttime hours.

As Rommel retreated across eastern Libya during November-December. the Italians made an all-out effort to provide relief. Having materially assisted his retreat by using warships and submarines to bring fuel to the ports of Derna and Benghazi, they next made a major effort by sending four battleships, three light cruisers, and 20 destroyers to escort a convoy to Libya on December 16-17. The operation was a success, the Italian fleet suffering only one battleship damaged.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: Although a brilliant tactician, General Erwin Rommel (shown here helping to push his command car out of deep desert sand in February 1942) was unable to overcome his dwindling resources. OPPOSITE: A convoy of German supply vehicles climbs a mountain road to Derna, passing a wrecked German tank, May 1941. As the campaign wore on, Axis vehicles fell victim to growing Allied air superiority.

Meanwhile, the German quartermaster believed that the situation was improving. Since only 39,000 tons managed to get across the Mediterranean during December, it was clear that the improvement had little to do with increased safety of the sea-routes. Rather, it resulted from the discovery of 13,000 tons of Italian fuel reserves near Tripoli. Even more important, Rommel's retreat to El Agheila had reduced his lines of supply to a manageable 460 miles. The arrival on January 6, 1942, of a second "battleship convoy" with six vessels carrying supplies eased the situation further.

As the winter of 1941-1942 approached, much of the German Luftflotte 2 had been transferred from the Ostfront to the Mediterranean. Luftflotte 2 began attacking Malta, reducing Axis shipping losses. As a result, new panzer units and replacement tanks were able to reach Rommel.

While reinforcements raised Rommel's strength to 10 divisions—three German and seven Italian—and accordingly increased his supply requirements to 100,000 tons, he was in fact receiving an average of only 60,000 tons during February to May 1942. This was less than received during the difficult days of June-October 1941, and yet it enabled Rommel, first to take the offensive and then to prepare another and even more spectacular advance.

The demand for 100,000 tons a month was somewhat exaggerated; while it corresponded to the needs of 10 full-strength German divisions, the actual forces under Rommel were much smaller, given that his units were understrength and mostly Italian. Panzerarmee was also able to maintain itself at 900 miles from Tripoli because Benghazi, which had contributed little during the previous offensive, was now operating at full capacity. As a result, the distance to be covered by some one-third of his supplies was reduced to just 280 miles.

Logistics now dictated battlefield options. One course of action was for Rommel to stay where he was while preparations were made to capture Malta. Assuming that fuel could be found for the Italian Navy, and given the continued maintenance of the capacity of the port of Benghazi, this would have enabled Rommel to hold out for some time and to prepare a large-scale attack on Egypt.

By the first week of February 1942, the British had dug in on a line at Gazala, west of Tobruk, so Rommel halted Axis operations as well and took personal leave. Back in Berlin, he tried to persuade Hitler to let him have three more panzer divisions, but Hitler was focused on the Ostfront and agreed only to Operation Herakles (Hercules), the invasion of Malta. However, Hitler did not truly favor the operation, given the airborne losses suffered on Crete in 1941 and concerns about the quality of Italian naval support. But Malta was being sufficiently suppressed for the moment so that Axis forces in Libya were now well supplied.

During the first half of 1942, only six percent of the supplies dispatched were lost en route to Libya, thus supply problems were greatly eased in April and May. However, Rommel, fearing a British offensive before Malta was taken, decided to return to Africa and push forward with his own plans. If he succeeded in taking Tobruk, he would then wait until Malta was subdued before advancing into Egypt.

It is questionable whether an advance on Alexandria would have been practicable. Even if Hitler had the additional panzer forces available, bringing them to Africa would have increased Panzerarmee's support requirements to a point beyond the combined capacity of Benghazi and Tripoli to support operations. This in turn would have made the accumulation of stores for an attack a hopeless task, while the number of vehicles required to transport stores was beyond the limited resources of the Wehrmacht. Perhaps the only way to solve the problem would have been to rid Panzerarmee of its hapless Italian ground forces as von Thoma had recommended in October 1940, but this was not a politically viable option.

As an alternative to the Axis logistics system, the nature of desert operations required the establishment of large supply dumps close behind the front, and a penetrating attack had a chance of capturing the supplies necessary to continue an advance. Thus Rommel would be able to pursue the British using captured fuel transported in captured trucks. But planning for this was a gamble.

On May 26, Rommel opened his offensive. On June 22, he captured Tobruk with its port facilities intact. But the Axis was, in reality, in a doubtful condition to exploit this

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

success. Though shipping losses in June had risen little, as compared with May, the lack of fuel for the Navy caused the tonnage plying the route to Africa to fall by two-thirds, supplies disembarked dropping to 32,000 tons. The fuel shortage, moreover, forced the unloading of even this small amount not at Benghazi, but at Tripoli. This made the Axis situation desperate. Unable to stay in place, they could either fall back or "flee forward" in the hope of living off the enemy.

Rommel thought it was best to strike into Egypt immediately while the British were disorganized. On the other hand, Rommel's superior, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander in chief of all German forces in the south, favored an attack on Malta first, but Rommel went over Kesselring's head and appealed directly to Hitler. Claiming that the supplies captured at Tobruk would carry him to the Nile, Rommel was determined to go on, and Hitler, who had never been keen on the Malta operation, supported him. At the same time, he was promised adequate supplies by the Italians.

So Axis hopes hung on 2,000 vehicles, 5,000 tons of supplies, and 1,000 tons of fuel captured at Tobruk. After an advance of another 400 miles the Panzerarmee came to a halt on July 4 at El Alamein. Also, only six percent of the Axis supplies had been lost en route to Africa in July, giving Rommel enough to keep his forces sufficiently supplied. A renewed air offensive against Malta in July failed, however, and British subs returned to the island.

The distance from El Alamein to Axis ports made itself felt. Of the 100,000 tons of supplies needed each month, Tobruk, hundreds of miles behind the front, could barely handle 20,000. Trucks were in short supply and attempts to use the British railway from Sollum, eastward, only provided 300 tons per day instead of the 1,500 tons that had been planned. The port and the sea routes were also open to air attack. Sending ships to Tobruk or the smaller ports of Bardia and Mersa Matruh was impossibly difficult. Unloading at Benghazi or Tripoli, 800 and 1,300 miles behind the front, respectively, involved a huge expenditure of fuel and extended delays. In July, the Italians continued to opt for unloading at Benghazi and Tripoli, with the result that, although only five percent of their shipping was lost and 91,000 tons were put across the Mediterranean, it took weeks for the supplies to reach the front line. When Rommel insisted that ships be sent directly to Tobruk in August, 1942, losses rose fourfold and the quantity of supplies put across dropped to 51,000 tons.

Allied bombing of Libyan ports was increasingly effective, nullifying any advantages the Axis had gained from taking Tobruk. British Wellingtons and American B-24s bombed Benghazi and Tobruk nightly. The RAF destroyed the fuel storage depot at Tobruk in July. On August 6, a particularly effective attack reduced the port capacity at Tobruk from 2,000 to 600 tons; the port never handled more than 1,000 tons of cargo afterward. On the night of September 22-23, having learned of the arrival of the freighter *Apnania* at Benghazi with tanks and ammunition, the Allies mounted a particularly effective air attack that destroyed the freighter and seriously damaging the port.

With or without Malta in Axis control, during midsummer many ships going to Tripoli and Benghazi got through, while those sent to Tobruk came under heavy bombing. Although he had only 8,000 out of the 30,000 tons of fuel he claimed he needed for August, Rommel decided to stake everything on a final attempt to break through British lines. He was supported by Kesselring, who promised more tankers for Tobruk. When these were sunk he said he would fly in 500 tons of fuel a day, but the planes failed to arrive.

The British only managed to sink a dozen ships from late June through July. In the first half of August, they only sank three ships—all by submarine attacks. But on August 21, things began to change as British Beauforts hit the large tanker *Pozarica,* carrying fuel for the Italian Army, forcing her to beach on the island of Corfu. On August 26, ULTRA interceptions disclosed a plan to sail no less than 20 ships between August 25 and September 5. At least 16 of these ships were either tankers or were carrying barrels of fuel. Thanks British efforts, only seven reached Libya with very little fuel. As a result, in August, a third of all Rommel's supplies and 41 percent of his fuel had been lost en route to Libya.

The August attacks on Rommel's fuel supplies left the Panzerarmee with a mere 10 percent of the minimum requirement for effective operations. Ten thousand tons were stuck in Tobruk, unable to be brought forward. The supply of ammuni-

Continued on page 96

The Power *of the* Cloth

PART 2

BY G. PAUL GARSON

THE NON-UNIFORM UNIFORMITY OF THE THIRD REICH

IF THE PHRASE "the clothes make the man" is true, then it is equally true that the uniform makes the soldier. In every armed force, soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines (and their female equivalents) are issued uniforms that give the wearer a sense of purpose, dignity, importance, authority, and even power. They also give the wearer an identification with a larger organization.

The impact of a clean, smart-looking, and well-tailored uniform should not be underestimated. Few nations in the 20th century were more aware of this than Nazi Germany. Consider the imposing, all-black tanker's uniform, or the fear-provoking aspect of the black (and, later, gray) uniform of the SS. Even the ubiquitous and utilitarian gray-green M35 tunic worn by all Wehrmacht troops in the field looks even today as sharp as the dress uniform worn by the armies of most other nations.

In this, the second half of a two-part article, we look at 10 more examples of how the Nazi government outfitted its troops with a distinctive array of uniforms to provoke a sense of pride in the wearer and integration into a group while simultaneously proclaiming to its enemies that here was a force to be feared.

Be aware that there are literally hundreds of variations (different patterns, colored piping, collar tabs, insignia, cuff titles, shoulder boards, etc.), so this sampling should not be considered final by any means. □

ABOVE: Early Allgemeine-SS men

A group of young SS men, riding in a boat, display the familiar early black SS uniforms and death's-head badges on their caps. Credit for the design of the all-black SS uniform is given to SS-Oberführer Professor Karl Diebitsch and graphic designer SS-Sturmhauptführer Walter Heck, then an SA (Sturmabteilung) company commander. While widely seen in postwar films, the black uniforms were used for ceremonial events and for the most part not seen in use after the war began. In fact, the uniforms were recycled for use by Eastern European collaborationist police forces and to other Axis allies.

Describing the black SS uniform's impact, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler stated, "I know there are many people who fall ill when they see this black uniform; we understand that and don't expect that we will be loved by many people." Many of the uniforms were produced by designer Hugo Boss as well as large numbers by slave laborers in concentration camps.

The double lightning bolt symbol associated with the SS insignia had a rather prosaic derivation. Known as the SS Sig Runes, the symbol was accidentally designed in 1931 by the aforementioned Walter Heck. He happened to notice the similarity between the two sig runes and the SS (Shutzstaffel) initials. He offered the design to the SS who paid him a mere 2.5 Reichmarks; the symbol became one of the most feared and hated in European history.

ABOVE: A General "Flamingo"
Some 2,500 generals served in the German Army, Navy, and air force. Many generals chose to wear their brightly colored and highly identifiable uniforms and vehicle insignia. (A general officer was called a "flamingo" by the common soldier because of his double red trouser stripes and red-and-gold collar tabs.) This inclination served to increase "personal battlefield lethality" and was a significant factor in debilitating Nazi Germany's war machine. As many as 786 German generals—including many division, corps, and army commanders—died during 1939-1945. The death of so many high-level German military leaders had a disastrous ripple effect.

LEFT: Sword and Spurs
Posing in his barracks room, a Luftwaffe Obergefreiter (corporal) appears in full dress uniform including 9mm Luger holster, ceremonial sword, leather gloves, reinforced riding breeches, and shoulder lanyard, as well as his steel helmet, the Stahlhelm, an iconic image unto itself. He also wears the SA Sports Badge and the rare Horsemanship badge originally intended for the Army.

BELOW: Summer Whites

A major portion of the German population wore a uniform of one kind or another, the thread of militarism woven into the very fabric of Third Reich society—including postal workers, railroad employees, and those charged with bringing aid and comfort to the injured, wounded, and sick. Here, a dapper trio of Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (German Red Cross) officers poses for the camera in their "duty" uniforms. Membership in the DRK is identified by the insignia on the lapels of their "summer white" tunics.

ABOVE: New Iron Crosses

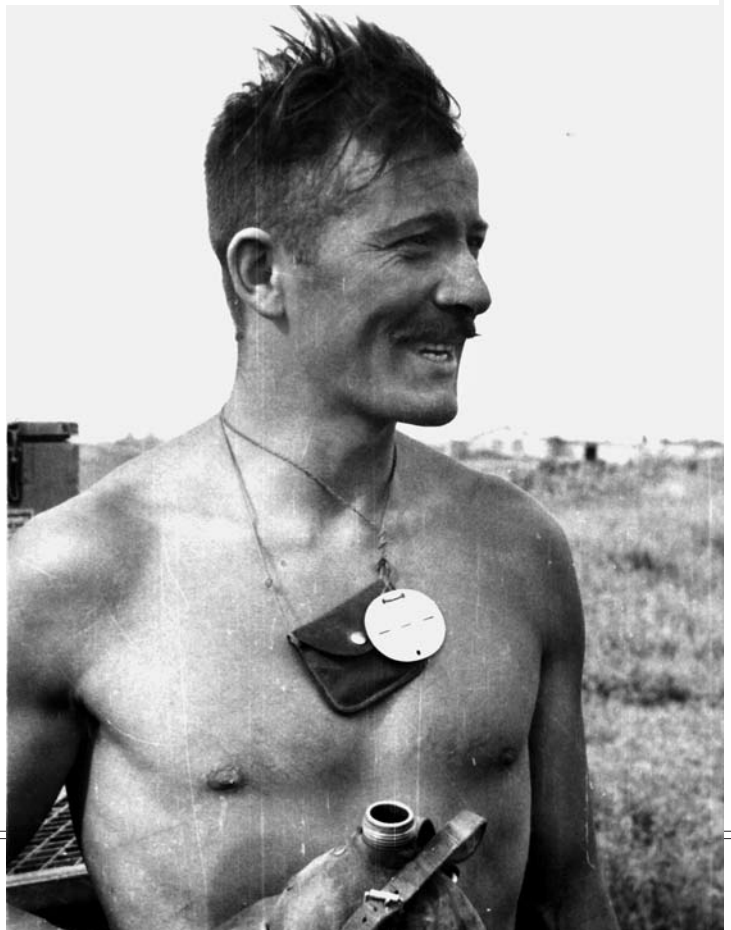
Two Waffen-SS soldiers pose with their Iron Cross Second Class awards. Waffen-SS were the combat elements of the SS and preferred to offer a view of themselves as honorable soldiers, particularly after the war's end when the SS was charged with committing atrocities and carrying out the "Final Solution." These two men wear the standard issue Army field-gray uniform. The placement of the national emblem of spread-winged eagle and swastika (das Hoheitzeichen) appearing on the upper sleeve of their uniform also identifies them as Waffen-SS.

RIGHT: Full Colonel and Lt. Colonel—Luftwaffe

Identified by their collar tabs, the lieutenant colonel stares into the camera while the full colonel (Oberst) keeps his monocle securely in place along with his Pilot's Badge and many awards, including the Iron Cross First and Second Class. The Iron Cross award, first introduced in 1813 by King Frederick William III of Prussia, then at war with Napoleon, would later become a prominent emblem of Nazi Germany and a highly respected commendation awarded for bravery and leadership to members of the Wehrmacht, SS, SD, Luftwaffe, and Kriegsmarine. WWII-era Iron Crosses have "1939" inscribed in the center.

The Iron Cross came in two grades: Second Class and First Class. The Iron Cross First Class could only be awarded to one who had previously received the Iron Cross Second Class, therefore it was more highly prized. The medals looked very similar and were worn on the same position on the lower left side of the uniform. When the Iron Cross First Class was awarded, the Iron Cross Second Class was signified with a small ribbon attached to the uniform tunic's second buttonhole.

ABOVE: Police Insignia
Quickly identifiable by the distinctive "police" insignia (eagle in an oval) on his cap, a member of the German security forces poses with his watchdog. Many civilian policemen were funneled into the Wehrmacht and SS where they performed a variety of duties depending on their organization—from guarding rivers and railroads, to directing traffic, to policing their fellow soldiers, to fighting partisans, and engaging in frontline combat. Many police units were also instrumental in carrying out the "Holocaust by Bullets," during which over 1,000,000 men, women, and children were shot to death across Europe. Most of the killers were never brought to justice.



ABOVE: Pin-up
An attractive young woman has donned an Army officer's uniform, including the shoulder lanyard (aiguillette), dagger, and boots. The aiguillette, fashioned from silver cord, was purely for display and not to be confused with the similar-looking marksmanship lanyard.

As German men were sent off to war, more and more women took their places in the factories and then as auxiliary members of various branches of the military where they served in communication, logistics, and as clerical workers. As the aerial bombardment of Germany intensified, they joined flak teams and by late 1944 the Luftwaffe Flak Artillery listed 160,000 female personnel. They operated searchlights and listening devices, many standing to their posts until killed.

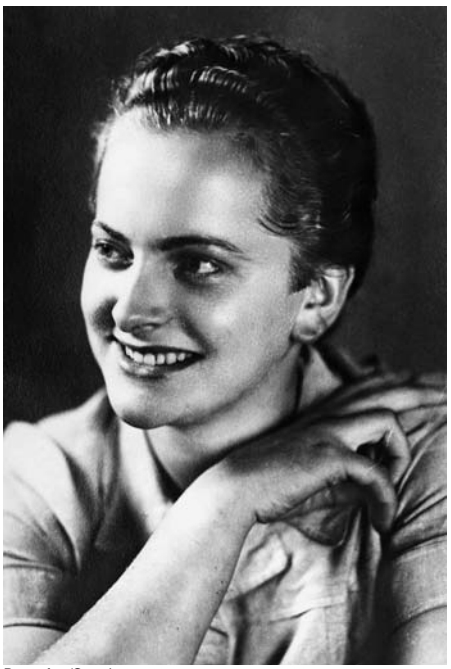
LEFT: Erkennungsmarken: Last Bit of Kit
German "dog-tags" were a perforated oval metal plate worn around the neck. Composed of two identical sections, it could be snapped in half, the top half left with the soldier's body, the other taken for record keeping by graves-registration units. The plate contained the individual's unit title, roster number, and the wearer's blood group in case a transfusion was required.

THE BLOND BEAST OF BIRKENAU AND BELSEN

Nazi camp guard Irma Grese, who reveled in the torture and murder of internees, was, at 22, the youngest war criminal hanged. BY CYNTHIA SOUTHERN

"She was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. Her body was perfect in every line, her face clear and angelic, and her blue eyes the gayest, the most innocent eyes one can imagine. And yet Irma Grese was the most depraved, cruel, imaginative pervert I ever came across."

—Dr. Gisella Perl



Popperfoto/Getty Images

That is how Gisella Perl, a female inmate doctor in Auschwitz-Birkenau, remembered Irma Grese. The blond, blue-eyed epitome of a Nazi Aryan poster child, Grese became the second-highest ranking SS Aufseherin (SS Female Overseer) at the Auschwitz-Birkenau murder camp in 1943 at age 20—and stirred panic and fear in every prisoner so unfortunate to have been deported there during the Holocaust.

Irma Grese committed innumerable acts of sadism and roamed the women's camps at Ravensbrück, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen looking for female victims to abuse. Her career of crime caught up with her at the end of the war, and she was arrested, tried, and executed by the British. Long after her death the question remains: How could a woman achieve such a horrendous reputation and commit such heinous crimes?

Irma Grese was born Irma Ilse Ida Grese on October 7, 1923, in the small village of Wrechen (pronounced "Vreken") in the beautiful rural Mecklenburg region of northern Germany. Wrechen is 50 miles north of Berlin and south of the Baltic Sea. It borders the Holstein region to the west and Pomerania to the east. Ravensbrück, the infamous concentration camp for women, lay not far from Wrechen.

Imperial War Museum

In this painting by British war artist Leslie Cole, Bergen-Belsen camp guards, under the watchful eyes of British soldiers, throw emaciated corpses into a mass grave. Part of the concentration camp can be seen in the background. OPPOSITE: This photo of the attractive Irma Grese is believed to have been taken in 1940, when she was 17 or 18.

Irma's father was Alfred Anton Albert Grese, a farmer, and her mother was Bertha Welhelmine Winter-Grese. Her mother committed suicide in 1932 when Grese was nine years old, allegedly due to marital problems with her domineering husband. Irma was one of five children. Helene was her youngest sister, but the birth order of the other three children is unknown and has been lost to history.

Alfred Grese was described as a conservative farmer, a regular churchgoing Christian, and very stern and strict with his children; beatings were not uncommon. With antipathy toward the Nazis, he forbade his daughters from joining the Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls) or any other Nazi organization.

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Irma's victims: Hungarian Jews, most of whose heads have recently been shaved, march through Auschwitz-Birkenau, June 1944. Most would die in the gas chambers.

Going against their father's wishes, both Irma and Helene joined the BDM voluntarily. The activities in the BDM also gave Irma a recreational release from her rigid and oppressive life at home. Their father hated this and eventually disavowed the existence of Irma—especially after her heinous crimes and career were made public during her war-crimes trial.

In 1933—the same year that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis came to power in Germany—10-year-old Irma began her Nazi indoctrination. Her father was given no choice over this indoctrination of his daughter because the Enabling Act of March 23, 1933, mandated a Nazi education in all elementary schools. Irma was also a susceptible and willing convert to Nazism; she felt, even at such a young age, that the Weimar Republic was overly liberal, decadent, and too permissive and had corrupted the German people. Irma naturally gravitated to the right-wing conservative ideology of Nazism.

The Nazis and the BDM also emphasized love of the land and taught that the urban setting was unhealthy and degenerate. Farmers and those who worked the land held a sacred place in the Nazi vision. Since Irma had an agrarian background, it made even more sense that she was so attracted to Nazi ideology.

Irma left elementary school in 1938 at age 14 and, after leaving home, worked as a farmhand for six months. She then worked as a retail sales clerk in a shop in Luchen. It is not known why she left home but it appears that it was due to discord between her and her oppressive father, who had monitored her comings and goings since the onset of puberty.

Per the testimony given by her sister Helene at the Bergen-Belsen tribunal as Irma's character witness, Irma was known to run away from fights and never participated in them during her elementary school years. She stated that Irma wasn't capable of beating female inmates in the camps because of her aversion to violence. But some psychologists believed that she suppressed her inner rage, releasing it in her role as a powerful female guard in the camps.

In 1939, she decided to study nursing at Hohenlychen, an SS convalescent hospital 20 miles from Wrechen and 75 miles north of Berlin—a place where high-ranking Nazis such as Reinhard Heydrich, Rudolf Hess, Albert Speer, and Julius Streicher all sought "the cure." She trained under Karl Gebhardt, the most famous orthopedic surgeon in Europe, whose specialty was to be devastating to victims during the Holocaust. Gebhardt was also an Alter Kämpfer (old fighter) and one of the original Nazi party members who had marched with Hitler, Göring, and other Nazis during the famous Munich Beer Hall Putsch of 1923.

Gebhardt, along with Dr. Herta Oberhauser, the only female physician tried and con-

victed in the "Doctors' Trial" in Nuremberg, participated in bone-grafting medical experimentation on living human subjects at Ravensbrück and Hohenlychen. Using sulfa drugs for gangrenous wounds and transplanting bones in an attempt to regenerate severed nerves were among the medical experiments to which Gebhardt devoted himself during the Holocaust.

Watching these agonizingly painful experiments may have been Irma's first exposure to sadism. She stated during her trial that "she had tried to become a nurse," but she became known as being a sexual "deviant" during her career, and this may very well have started with Gebhardt when Irma trained under him at Hohenlychen. (This may only be a rumor as it is not known for certain.) Gebhardt was a highly esteemed man and a Nazi Party comrade who had supported Hitler early in the Nazi movement. Associating with someone so close to the Führer must have been extremely attractive to the young and highly impressionable Grese. She not only had tried to learn nursing at Hohenlychen but also was well indoctrinated there in SS and race ideology.

Irma worked as an assistant nurse during her stint at Hohenlychen but apparently didn't do well enough to become a full-fledged nurse. Gebhardt told her that she could probably use her talents elsewhere and suggested she contact one of his friends at Ravensbrück. She was then 17½ years old, and Gebhardt's suggestion would deeply impact many lives in the coming months and years.

Irma contacted Gebhardt's friend (whose identity remains unknown) at Ravensbrück and arrived there in April 1941; she was told to return in six months after she had reached age 18. In the interim, the Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service; RAD) assigned her to work at a dairy farm in Fürstenberg, near Wrechen, as a machinist from April 1941 to July 1942. She testified during her trial that she tried again to become a nurse trainee in July 1942.

She returned to Ravensbrück around this time and joined the SS as a conscript of the SS Aufseherinnen (female guards at the concentration camps, juvenile detention facilities, and police supervisory services). An advertisement at this time actively sought Aufseherinnen with the promise of full-time employment, room, board, and clothing—including uniforms. Being an SS Aufseherin was also considered a "wartime occupation." Members of this organization were never considered full-fledged members of the SS but rather as employees of the Waffen SS. Approximately 2,500 women served as SS Aufseherinnen during the Holocaust.

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Grese (center, with two other Aufseherin at an unidentified location in 1941) always did everything to appear well-dressed and perfectly coiffed.

Irma and all other recruits had to pass a medical exam and have a crime-free history. They also took a test consisting of such questions as "What is the abbreviation of SS?" and "Where did Adolf Hitler write his book *Mein Kampf*?" She passed all these tests and was hired. Grese stated at her trial that she was conscripted by the RAD to work at Ravensbrück against her will, but the record shows she joined voluntarily. She was assigned to be trained as a concentration camp guard.

Becoming an SS Aufseherin offered Grese a new future. Because she was an early convert to Nazism, the fact that she joined the service of the SS Aufseherinnen is not surprising or remarkable.

She endured three weeks of grueling training at Ravensbrück to harden her and generate fanatical devotion to the Nazi racial ideal. In her first days she is remembered as apologizing to a camp inmate when she stepped in front of her. It took four days to "cure" Grese of her politeness and humanity.

Irma first started having intimate relations with male SS officers at Ravensbrück. According to Germaine Tillion, author of *Ravensbrück*: "Sexual relations between the SS and prisoners were strictly prohibited ... but it seemed that liaisons between SS of opposite sexes were encouraged, and they lived in a kind of promiscuity some might call 'primitive,' although their situation was anything but primitive. It appeared that all the Aufseherinnen, married or unmarried, had one or more constant SS lovers. And, so it seemed, they never overlooked an opportunity to talk comparisons with their colleagues. In addition to the lovers and the shop talk, their diversions (especially around solstices and equinoxes) were monstrous eating and drinking bouts, after which they were so far gone that men and

women were unable to recall with whom they had spent the rest of the night."

It typically took a month to train an SS Aufseherin to her fullest depraved potential of sadism; Grese was trained in three weeks. She felt as though she had reached a major milestone and achievement in her life at that moment.

According to Ella Lingens-Reiner, author of *Prisoners of Fear,* "Brutality was part of the concentration camp system. The sadistic excesses in terms of sexual perversions and brutal beatings were, for the most part, rare." Grese was, therefore, an atypical example of an SS Aufseherin. Most were not brutally cruel. For the most part, SS Aufseherinnen and male SS officers and enlisted men were human beings who engaged in the business of murder but were not sadists. Grese participated in inmate beatings at Ravensbrück, and this was merely a part of her training. She made 54 Reichsmarks per month, significantly less than what her colleagues earned. Presumably she trained under Theodora Binz and learned to be sadist, as Binz was one. (Binz served in Ravensbrück during the entire war. She began her career in September 1940 and became an SS Oberaufseherin [Chief Overseer] in 1943. She held this rank until the end of the war. Binz was sentenced to be hanged on May 2, 1947, in Hameln, Germany.)

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection

Female prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau return from a work detail. Inmates here were especially fearful of Grese and her sadistic excesses.

At age 19, Irma Grese was ready to enter the next camp in her career of brutality and crime, and received orders transferring her to Auschwitz-Birkenau near Krakow, Poland, in March 1943. Prior to her transfer, she visited her father while wearing her full SS dress uniform. Because of his hatred for all things associated with the Nazis, she knew this would provoke him profoundly but apparently he did not care. During her visit, her father questioned her about her duties at Ravensbrück. They quarreled intensely about her career in the SS and he told her to never return home. Apparently he beat her, too.

When the British prosecutor, T.M. Backhouse, questioned her about this event at her trial, she wept openly in court. (Helene, her younger sister, verified this incident during the trial.) Despite his abuse of her, Irma had apparently been deeply affected by this separation from her father and his subsequent disapproval of who she was and would become. This created further resentment and animosity in Irma, and this was never resolved between them. She hated her father and that hate festered and grew.

Grese arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau and was assigned to the women's camp at BII/b in Birkenau, where the wholesale gassing and cremation of Jews and other victims of the Third Reich occurred. Irma arrived at the time that four large crematoria had been constructed and were nearing completion for their nefarious duty in the remaining years of the Holocaust. She also had other duties there, including commanding a gardening squad, being a telephone operator, and even censoring the mail. This assignment lasted for 14 months.

In May 1944, Grese was promoted to Oberaufseherin—the second-highest rank an SS Aufseherin could achieve—and given command over 30,000 women prisoners in Birkenau's camp BII/c. She became notorious in this role and is remembered by many survivors as wearing heavy boots and carrying a whip and pistol. Every survivor account refers to these three sadistic objects Grese became infamous for owning and using.

She is also remembered for her physical beauty. Survivors dubbed her "the Beautiful Beast," "the Blond Angel," and "the Blond Angel of Hell." She had natural blond hair, and blue eyes and wore expertly tailored uniforms. She was also fond of many rare and expensive perfumes, which she wore to torment the prisoners under her command who lived in filth and were in a state of physical and mental degradation; they dreamed of home, food, fine clothes, and luxuries like the perfumes Irma Grese wore.

Gisella Perl, an inmate physician and author of *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz,* wrote: "She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Her face has an angelic clarity and her blue eyes were the liveliest and most innocent eyes imaginable." Olga Lengyel, another inmate doctor and author of *Five Chimneys,* says of Irma, "It defied belief that such a pretty girl could be so cruel. When she walked through the camp with a whip in her hand, she was surrounded by a cloud of choice perfume."

Thanks to the plunder from the murdered victims in Birkenau, Irma also had her choice

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A group of female SS guards (Aufseherinnen) photographed on parade at Bergen-Belsen in 1945.

of the finest clothing from all over Europe. Madame Grete, a dressmaker and former owner of a well-known clothing establishment in either Vienna or Budapest, also tailored dresses for Grese. She was particularly fond of a sky-blue jacket with a dark blue tie.

Irma spent many hours in front of her dressing mirror styling her hair. She imagined herself as a movie star and once declared, "After the war, I am going to be in films. You will see my name as a star on the screen. I know life and I have seen many things. I feel my experiences will be useful in my career as an artist."

Grese used her whip and pistol to punish inmates for the slightest infractions of camp rules and was fond of lashing well-endowed women across the breasts with her whip. Fania Fénelon, a member of Auschwitz's women's inmate orchestra and author of *Playing for Time*, wrote, "The women had learned to dread the penalty of her attentions, the least of which meant a whip lash on the nipple."

Gisella Perl also recalled Grese's sadism and cruelty, relating that many of the women developed infections in their breasts from injuries caused by the braided wire end of her cellophane whip. Perl was called upon by Grese to operate on these women with an unsterilized knife, but she had no anesthesia available for these operations. The women screamed in agony.

"Irma Grese invariably arrived to watch the operation, kicking the victim if her screams interfered with her pleasure and giving herself completely to the orgasmic spasms which shook her entire body and made saliva run down from the corner of her mouth."

Perl also recalled this about Grese's odd behavior during these operations: "I happened to look up and encountered the most horrible sight I have ever seen, the memory of which will haunt me for the rest of my life. Irma Grese was enjoying the sight of this human suffering. Her tense body swung back and forth in a revealing, rhythmical motion. Her cheeks were flushed and her wide-open eyes had the rigid, staring look of complete sexual paroxysm.

"She did this on multiple occasions so she could relive this sadistic moment repeatedly. She always came to watch the operations of these women whose breasts had been slashed open and had become infected with the lice and dirt which pervaded the women's camp."

Perl also noted, "Irma Grese invariably arrived to watch the operation, kicking the victim if her screams interfered with her pleasure and giving herself completely to the orgasmic spasms which shook her entire body and made saliva run down from the corner of her mouth."

Grese also employed one or two huge dogs as part of her brutal reign in the Birkenau women's camp. Survivors recall her riding around camp on a bicycle with a dog at her side accompanying the female inmates on their 16-kilometer trek to work. If they couldn't keep up with the column, she ordered her dog to attack them without mercy. Judith Strick-Dribben, a former inmate and author of *A Girl Called Judith Strick*, recalled an event regarding the Strafkommando (punishment detail): "We were loading the lories. Before noon we had an unexpected visitor: Aufseherin Irma with her two leashed dogs, Frau Aufseherin Irma, blonde, with an angel face and snake eyes, the camp's chief torturer. We were very careful not to attract her attention. We pushed and pushed. It seemed to take an eternity to roll the car over the hill.

"The next team was unable to coordinate its efforts. They were completely unnerved by our visitor. They hesitated and lost control of their wagon. It swayed, bowled down the hill, and capsized, scattering stone over the whole area.

"The prisoners were completely broken, in spirit. Aufsherin Irma sicced the two police dogs on them. The girls tried to escape their fangs, but the trained killers easily overtook them. One grabbed a Polish woman who slipped on a rock. The other fell upon a Russian girl. At Irma's orders, the Kapos' underlings beat and

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kicked the girls still untouched by the dogs. The Kapo [an inmate overseer] wrote down the numbers of the delinquent team.

"The dogs were tearing at the girls' bodies. Irma came closer to observe what they were doing. Her eyes were bloodshot. The sight of the blood seemed to intoxicate her. She panted. She was sexually excited—everybody could see that. We stood in a trance, as at a gladiatorial combat."

Among Irma's other notorious exploits at Auschwitz-Birkenau was tying the legs together of a woman about to give birth and watching her agony.

Grese was also reputed to be a sexual deviant, taking lovers from the male and female populace of Birkenau. She was also alleged to have had affairs with the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele, as well as Josef Kramer, the commandant of Birkenau and later Bergen-Belsen. She is said to have stood with Mengele at selections and actively participated in deciding who lived or died.

On one occasion, during the course of a selection of Birkenau arrivals, some attempted to escape and were noticed by Grese. She beat the majority with her hands and kicked them with her boots. Per various recollections of survivors, she is said to have killed at least 30 people per day.

Grese had numerous affairs with female inmates, including a Blockova (female prisoner block leader) who was her favorite. Irma later grew bored with her and sent her to be killed. Mengele ended his relationship with her when he discovered that she was having affairs with women, breaking the provisions of the Race and Resettlement Law; homosexuality was strictly prohibited, as were affairs with Jewish inmates.

Iris Langer, a Jewish inmate of Birkenau, recalled that Grese made advances toward her. Langer pointed to the six-pointed star sewn onto her striped uniform to show Grese that relations between Jews and Germans were prohibited. Grese told her that she was a Jew different from other Jews. Presumably Grese left Langer unmolested and unharmed.

Author Olga Lengyel describes the sexual excesses probably the most thoroughly of any survivor. Lengyel recalls in great detail how Grese summoned her to her quarters and how she managed to bribe Madame Grete, Irma's dressmaker, with margarine to keep from appearing before Grese. She was successful in this endeavor but still wanted to see for herself the acts Grese engaged in.

After the British liberated Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945, the female guards, shown here, were ordered to help bury the thousands of bodies. Pictured are Hildegard Kanbach (far left), Irene Haschke (center foreground), Head Wardress Elisabeth Volkenrath (second from right, partly hidden), and Herta Bothe (far right).

She noted that Grese beat her sexual subjects and was seen dragging a naked woman around by the hair and whipping her. A Georgian man appeared next, who was the lover of the tormented woman. The man had to watch this scene unfold because he had refused Grese's advances toward him, so she tortured the woman he loved. Later, Lengyel discovered that Grese had the man shot and the woman sent to the camp brothel.

In the course of her numerous sexual affairs, Grese became pregnant. She required an abortion and had to seek one in a careful and confidential manner, as abortion was forbidden to German women by Nazi law since 1933; presumably the father was an SS officer. She went to Gisella Perl, pointed her pistol at her, and demanded that the inmate doctor perform a secret abortion. Perl faced death at that moment or in the future, as it was forbidden for a prisoner to touch a guard. Grese promised Perl a coat and a chance to share breakfast with her.

Perl agreed, thinking she had nothing to lose and she would die either way. Grese supplied the surgical instruments and demanded that Perl be there at the appointed time on the chosen day. Perl proceeded to perform the abortion on the nervous and fearful Grese. She never received her promised coat, but she wasn't shot either, as expected.

Grese is also known to have truly loved an SS man near her age. She fell in love with Unterscharführer (Sergeant) Franz Wolfgang Hatzinger, the chief engineer of the Auschwitz 1 construction department. This was the original portion of Auschwitz-Birkenau where the camp headquarters for commandants Höss and Liebehenschel were located. It was also the location where Zyklon B was first used to gas Soviet POWs in Block 11 on September 3, 1941. Hatzinger was assigned to Auschwitz from March 31, 1940, to January 18, 1945.

Irma would meet Hatzinger in the evenings. She bragged about her duties to him and let it be known that the women's camp in Birkenau was her kingdom and she did as she pleased—even having the power to dispense life and death to the women beneath her.

Irma's tenure at the camp finally came to an end in January 1945 as the Red Army advanced into Poland and neared Auschwitz. When the death factory was abandoned, Hatzinger was assigned to Bergen-Belsen, near Hanover; Grese was transferred to Ravensbrück on January 18, 1945, but little is known of her work there until she was again transferred, this time to Bergen-Belsen in March 1945, where the food, housing, and sanitary conditions were abominable.

Bergen-Belsen was in an isolated location in northern Germany, not far from Ravensbrück and Wrechen. It was originally a transit camp but in early 1945 became a dumping ground for prisoners arriving on death marches from camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau to escape the Soviet drive into Poland and eventually into Germany. Josef Kramer, who had served as commander at Auschwitz-Birkenau while Grese was there and had presided over the mass killings, had become the new commandant of Bergen-Belsen in December 1944. (This was the camp to which Anne and Margot Frank were dispatched from Auschwitz-Birkenau in October 1944. Anne Frank died from typhus in March 1945 a few days after her sister, Margot, died; Irma was likely at the camp during Anne's final days.)

It seems that many of Kramer's and Grese's former prisoners involuntarily followed them to Belsen. Kitty Hart, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Belsen and the author of *Return to Auschwitz,* recalls that when she arrived at Belsen from Birkenau via a truck convoy, "the old gang—Kramer, Grese and the rest of them—must have been sent there from Auschwitz. We knew what to expect from such creatures."

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Women's work: British soldiers look on as Aufseherinnen at Bergen-Belsen are forced to dispose of 10,000 corpses in a mass grave.

Grese's cruelty toward inmates became even worse in Belsen. There, Grese was known to make prisoners kneel for long periods of time. Prisoners also had to hold heavy rocks over their heads during long roll calls. They were also often forced to stand for hours in snow, ice, and rain from 3:00 AM to 9:00 AM. If someone did not stand up straight, she would beat the prisoner with a rubber truncheon until the prisoner was unconscious. She also greatly increased the death counts by ordering selection parades as she had in Birkenau.

She is also known to have knocked together the heads of two sisters upon the eve of liberation when she caught them trying to eat potato peel scraps by the camp kitchen. She set this trap herself in order to catch someone hungry enough to dare try to eat the potato peels. This is per the account of an anonymous survivor who was one of those sisters.

Even though she worked at the camp for only three and a half weeks, she was so cruel that the prisoners dubbed her "The Beast of Belsen."

Armed German resistance to the Allied onslaught was crumbling, and the British 11th Armored Division reached the camp on April 15, 1945, uncovering massive evidence of unspeakable atrocities. Not wanting to leave her lover, Irma remained at the camp and was arrested by the British. While her decision to remain subjected her to arrest and trial, it also put her in grave danger, for a typhus epidemic was sweeping the camp; somehow she was not infected (but Hatzinger, only 35 years old, died of the disease on April 23, 1945).

When the British discovered the camp's utter deprivation and horrendous conditions, they also were notified that cannibalism of dead prisoners had taken place. Harold Osmond le Druillenec, a prisoner at Belsen for its last 10 days, described how a prisoner took a knife and cut out a portion of a corpse's leg and then ate it. Other prison inmates told the British horrendous tales that the kidneys, livers, and hearts of corpses were being eaten by the

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In jackboots and civilian clothes, Irma Grese (along with Bergen-Belsen commandant Josef Kramer, right) stands in the courtyard of the prison at Celle during their war-crimes trial, June 1945.

starving prisoners.

During the liberation, Irma continued her brutality, but this time against the British Army troops. She attacked Brigadier Bob Daniell when he tried to enter a hut in Belsen. He recounted that the hut's lock was shot off and when he attempted to open the door he felt something poke him in the back. He turned around and saw Irma Grese standing behind him with an Alsatian dog on a long leash.

He described her as "an immaculate German woman—very tidy and very well dressed." She was pointing her silver revolver in his back. He shouted at her and she ran away. He also described saving a bullet for the Alsatian, as he did not know where the dog was and feared being attacked by it.

Irma and the other Aufseherinnen were discovered in the Belsen women's camp but were not immediately arrested like their male counterparts. They were instead assigned to bury the 10,000 corpses lying around the camp. It was at this time that Captain Derrick Sington, a liberating officer of Belsen, a member of the intelligence corps, and later a prosecution witness at the Belsen trial, eyed Grese.

Sington said he saw many homely Aufseherinnen that day with ugly expressions, dressed in men's jackboots and other military-issued garb. They did not run away from this duty. He then saw a beautiful, young blond Aufseherin and learned later that he had seen Irma Grese for the first time.

Grese was arrested on April 17 after British legal teams entered Belsen and started hearing about a strikingly beautiful SS guard. Grese and the other Aufseherinnen were temporarily imprisoned in a Wehrmacht panzer training academy about three kilometers from Belsen.

At this time she was interviewed by an English journalist accompanied by a French survivor. He asked her why she had committed the crimes she had, and she unashamedly replied, "It was our duty to exterminate anti-social elements so that Germany's future would be assured."

On June 16, 1945, Grese was indicted with Josef Kramer and 43 other Belsen personnel on charges of murder and ill treatment of prisoners at Belsen and Auschwitz. Grese and the other Belsen guards were transferred to Celle for their pretrial incarceration.

Irma was interrogated by an investigating officer from His Britannic Majesty's Legal Department, and she again stood firm, stating that she was "convinced all that had happened was right." By admitting this again, she ensured her eventual execution.

A British war crimes tribunal for Josef Kramer and 44 other people associated with the camp was convened in Lüneburg on September 17, 1945. When asked why he allowed prisoners under his charge to die, Kramer testified that there was plenty of food in the nearby Wehrmacht barracks but stated that the Wehrmacht refused to share their food with him and the prisoners in his charge. He then admitted he had never requested food from the Wehrmacht. This was typical Nazi cruelty and lying.

The 45 accused were tried according to English law before a five-officer military tribunal with a judge advocate who served as legal adviser. Colonel T.M. Backhouse served as prosecutor. All were represented by counsel; Major L.S.W. Cranfield was appointed Grese's defense attorney.

The trial opened at No. 30 Lindenstrasse in Lüneberg on September 17, 1945, and lasted 54 days. Each defendant was issued a paper placard with a number to wear during the trial; Grese was number 9. Even during her trial Grese generated the most attention because of her beauty and rumors of her monstrous crimes.

She was even concerned, according to a fellow defendant, about her appearance during her trial. She was known to carry a comb to fix her hair during her court adjourn-

ments, supposedly to keep up appearances for Hatzinger, even though she knew he had already died by this time.

She retained her calm, unrepentant attitude throughout the trial. Even when films and pictures were shown of the decomposing corpses taken after the liberations of Auschwitz and Belsen, Grese remained impassive and seemed unaffected by them emotionally. Nor was she affected by survivors' testimony against her. She continually glared at her accusers and was nicknamed "Jutjaw" by the British soldiers who guarded her.

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ABOVE: Irma Grese, the "beautiful beast," did her best to appear cool and aloof during the trial. She was hanged on December 13, 1945. BELOW: Irma's younger sister Helene testified in her behalf as a character witness.

Cranfield found himself in a difficult position trying to defend Grese. He cross-examined a crucial eyewitness for the prosecution, Ilona Stein, a Hungarian Jew who had been imprisoned at Birkenau. She described seeing Grese shooting prisoners at point-blank range when she could not verify whether the prisoners were dead. She was beaten by Grese once and testified that she saw Grese beat others and once trample a prisoner she had beaten who had fallen to the ground. She also saw Grese making selections at Birkenau. Some would hide and Grese would find them and beat them to death.

Stein was cross-examined and admitted she had not actually seen anyone personally beaten by Grese as she had worked in the kitchen far away from Crematorium 3, where Grese took part in selections. She was also sketchy about what triggered these beatings of others by Grese.

Cranfield also brought in Helene, Irma's younger sister, as a character witness on the 23rd day of the trial. Helene testified about Irma's contentious relationship with her father; only then did Irma openly weep in court. This weeping became outright sobbing. Helene also testified that Irma had run away from fights as a child. But Irma's crimes were so heinous that even the sketchy recollections of Stein and the character reference by Helene Grese failed to save Irma from her fate.

By mid-November, the trial was nearing its end. Grese used the typical Nazi defense that she had only been following orders and that she "regarded the inmates of the concentration camps as subhuman rubbish and saw nothing wrong in her wartime actions." Prosecutor Backhouse declared of her cowardice as a child that "when she was a child, she was a frightened child and a little coward who ran away, and she adopted this doctrine of Nazism which turns the coward into a bully. She went to Ravensbrück and there she found her courage, because people dared not hit back."

On November 17, 1945, Grese, Elisabeth Volkenrath, and Juana Bormann (who had served with Grese both at Auschwitz and Belsen) were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. Irma remained unrepentant for her despicable acts and continued to act arrogantly until her execution. She was defiant to the end and admitted guilt freely and, in her mind, believed that her acts were justified as defined by the depravity of Nazism, in which she never stopped believing.

The condemned criminals were taken back to their Lüneberg cells and only then did Cranfield see Grese openly crying. She and her co-defendants appealed to Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, but their appeals were rejected on December 8, 1945. Two days later, the 13 sentenced to death were transported to Hameln prison to await their executions.

Albert Pierrepoint, Britain's official hangman, was selected as executioner of the "Beasts of Belsen" and flown to Hameln. Pierrepoint decided to execute the three women individually, then the remaining ten men in pairs, to speed up the execution process.

The night before their executions, the unrepentant Grese, Volkenrath, and Bormann sang Nazi songs long into the night. The next morning, December 13, Volkenrath went to the gallows first at 9:34 AM. Grese was the second to die, at 10:03. Before Pierrepoint sprang the trap, Grese shouted, "Schnell," meaning she wanted to die quickly. The executioner did his duty, thus ending the life of possibly the worst murderer of the 20th century. At only 22 years of age, she was the youngest Nazi war criminal hanged—and also the youngest person ever hanged by the British during the 20th century.

After 20 minutes the corpses were cut down and then buried in the adjacent courtyard of Hameln prison. In 1954 Irma Grese's body was reburied in holy ground at Am Wehl cemetery near the prison.

Undoubtedly there would have been countless more Irma Greses if the Allied victory in Europe had not occurred. Civilization has "The Greatest Generation" to thank for a world in which the Third Reich, Hitler, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and Irma Grese no longer exist. □

Screaming Eagles at BRÉCOURT MANOR

The "Band of Brothers" faced off against German artillerymen in a fight for a crucial battery on D-Day.

BY KEVIN HYMEL

THE MISSION WAS SIMPLE: "There's fire along that hedgerow there. Take care of it."

The order went to First Lieutenant Richard "Dick" Winters, the acting commander of Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. The order came from the battalion's operations officer, Captain Clarence Hester, who, with a sweep of his hand, showed Winters the area he was to attack. The sound of the enemy fire was close and unmistakable. German artillery was raining fire down on Utah Beach, the westernmost invasion beach along the Normandy coast, where at that very moment American soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division were struggling ashore. It was the 8:30 in the morning of D-Day—June 6, 1944.

The mission should have gone to Easy Company's commander, First Lieutenant Thomas Meehan III, but he was nowhere to be found. (It was later learned that Meehan, along with an entire stick of 18 paratroopers, died when their C-47 "Skytrain" transport plane, chalk #66, was hit by antiaircraft fire and crashed near Beuzeville-au-Plain, France.) Winters, Easy's 1st Platoon commander, became the acting commander by default.

Winters, like every paratrooper around him, had jumped into Normandy some seven hours earlier and had had most of his equipment ripped off his body during the violent exit from his C-47. Fortunately, he had picked up a discarded M-1 rifle and a few grenades during his trek to the small town of Le Grand Chemin, where the battalion had set up temporary headquarters.

Winters could count only 11 Easy Company men from a unit that normally numbered nearly 200. With him were Lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton, Staff Sergeant Carwood Lipton, Staff Sergeant Bill Guarnere, Sergeants Don Malarkey and Myron Ranney, Corporals Joseph Liebgott, John Plesha, and Joe Toye, and Privates Walter Hendrix, Robert "Popeye" Wynn, and Cleveland Petty.

Fortunately, Winters was also able to gather a few more volunteers from other 506th

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Today just a quiet, open pasture, this field at Brécourt Manor, between Le Grand Chemin and Ste. Marie-du-Mont, was the site of a four-gun German battery and the scene of fierce fighting between the gunners and a handful of 101st Airborne Division troops on D-Day, June 6, 1944. ABOVE: Once the airborne troops neutralized the batteries within range of Utah Beach, 4th Infantry Division soldiers, shown here, found it easier to move inland.

units who had been misdropped during the chaotic aerial assault; Privates John Hall of Alpha Company, Gerald Lorraine, and Virgil "Red" Kimberling of Headquarters Company agreed to join the attack. Then Private Walter Hicks from Fox Company showed up and offered to help. "Hicks," Winters said, "see if anyone else from F Company wants to go along." Hicks brought back Sergeant Julius "Rusty" Houck. Winters now had 17 men, including himself.

Winters had one wild card in his group. Bill Guarnere had learned before the jump that his brother had been killed in Italy. He was not only angry and wanting to kill every German, but he did not trust Winters. "I respected Winters as an officer," Guarnere later wrote, "but no one proved themselves in combat yet." Earlier that morning, when the men had encountered a horse-drawn supply train, Guarnere had let loose, slaughtering men and animals with his rifle. "I had so much anger I might have turned around and shot him [Winters] if he had tried to stop me."

Winters gathered his team along a road just outside the village of Le Grand Chemin, about five miles inland. "Just weapons and ammo," Winters told the men. "Leave everything else here." Sergeant Lipton instinctively dropped his musette bag, which held some blocks of TNT and percussion caps. He would later regret it.

Winters led his small force across a field toward the guns, crawling ahead of them along a hedgerow, until he could get a view of the enemy battery. He saw four 105mm artillery pieces firing from a trench, dug in behind a hedgerow. Three guns faced east and one faced north, protecting the battery's left flank. The position resembled an L-shape with zigzagging trenches connecting each gun pit.

The field itself was surrounded by hedgerows—thick earthen walls cluttered with trees and overgrowth—as tough and as impenetrable as a stone fortress. Behind the 105s, at the opposite side of the field, a few machine-gun nests protected the battery's rear. At the far end of the field,

Author Photo

LTC Cole Kingseed, USA Retired

ABOVE: Lieutenant Richard Winters, who took over command of Easy Company when its CO, Thomas Meehan III, died when his C-47 crashed. BELOW: The main house at Brécourt Manor has changed little since 1944.

Author Photo

opposite the approach of Winters's force, ran a small country road, on the other side of which stood a barn and a house—Brécourt Manor.

Winters did not know it, but his troops were up against approximately 50 enemy soldiers from the 6th Battery of the 90th German Regimental Artillery. The locals considered the young German gunners to be fanatic Nazis. Earlier that day German Lt. Col. Friedrich von der Heydte, an experienced paratrooper and commander of the 6th Fallschirmjäger Regiment, had climbed the church tower at nearby Sainte Marie du Mont and saw the Allied invasion fleet off Utah Beach. He rushed to the 6th Battery at 8 AM and immediately ordered the weapons manned and firing. By the time Winters had received his orders, the gunners at Brécourt Manor had already repulsed one probing attack from elements of the 506th.

Winters devised a simple but direct strategy following the principle of fire and maneuver: he would attack the first gun by laying down machine-gun fire while his assault force made its way across an open field. Right on their heels would be a secondary force that would spike the guns. Once the first gun was taken, the men would then work their way down the trench to each consecutive gun, knocking it out until the battery was silenced.

The First Gun

Winters placed one .30-caliber machine gun, manned by Petty and Liebgott, in a position that allowed his assault team to get into place. He then divided his men into two teams and led them closer to the big guns. He placed another machine gun, manned by Plesha and Hendrix, along a hedge directly facing the first gun, warning the men not to fire unless they had a direct target—they were too exposed. He then ordered Lipton and Ranney to work their way along the hedgerow to their right and provide flank protection.

As Winters and the men crawled across the field to the battery's trenches, Winters noticed a bobbing German helmet. He fired two shots and the helmet dropped below the parapet of the trench. He then ordered Malarkey to lead the assault.

Malarkey recalled that he "took a deep breath and, carbine in front of me, started snaking my way forward on elbows and knees, rifle poised, staying low in the foot-high Normandy grass."

Suddenly, Winters realized that Malarkey had only grenades and was out of carbine ammunition. He shouted, "Wait, Malark, get back here!" Malarkey returned and Winters told him to get more ammo while he ordered Compton forward. "[Winters] probably saved my life," recalled Malarkey, "which wouldn't be the last time."

Compton, armed with a borrowed Thompson he had never fired before, crawled through the grass while Winters and the others provided covering fire. Compton climbed over a hedgerow and eyed two Germans loading and firing one of the artillery pieces toward the 4th Infantry Division coming ashore at Utah Beach.

Although he was only supposed to observe, Compton jumped from the hedgerow into the trench and charged the Germans. About halfway down the trench he planted himself and raised his Thompson sub-machine gun to his waist, "like Jimmy Cagney in a gangster movie," he later recalled. The Germans spun around and gaped in horror at their uninvited visitor. Compton pulled the trigger but nothing happened, except for a slight "plunk" sound from the weapon—the firing pin had broken.

"I looked at the Germans. They looked at me in surprise. There were two of them and one of me. They were armed to the hilt. I wasn't," Compton said.

As the three men stood staring at each other, Guarnere ran up beside Compton and opened fire with his Thompson. One German crumpled and the other jumped out of the trench and took off across the field. Compton, a former college baseball star with aspi-

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An American soldier, hidden in the Normandy terrain, fires on some Germans. At Brecourt Manor the Airborne troops utilized the German trenches for protection while they captured each artillery gun.

rations of making the major leagues, yanked out a grenade and hurled it at him. It exploded right above the man's head, killing him instantly.

Bill Guarnere recalled, "The Germans ran like hell down the trench in the other direction. Winters and the other guys were right behind us, and all of us started lobbing grenades and shooting everything we had. Tossing grenades and attacking, it was stupid, but we did it so quick, so fast, they thought an entire company was attacking. We caught them with their pants down."

Compton then waved the rest of the team forward. They piled into the trench and continued lobbing grenades at the other Germans. The first 105 was now in American hands.

Meanwhile, Lipton and Ranney had arrived at their flanking position but realized they could not spot the Germans through the heavy undergrowth. Hearing the assault, they quickly climbed two trees. The trees were small and weak, forcing Lipton to carefully balance himself on a branch close to the trunk. From his ringside seat, he could see Germans in both prepared positions and lying prone in the field, firing on Winters's assault force. None of them had yet spotted him or Ranney.

Lipton fired two shots at one of the prone Germans, but the man seemed to simply duck down. Lipton then fired at a dirt mound to check the sighting on his rifle. The dirt exploded exactly where he aimed. Knowing that his first two shots had hit their target, he then opened up on the Germans.

The Second Gun

Back at the first gun, a German grenade exploded in Popeye Wynn's trench, hitting him in the buttocks. "I'm sorry lieutenant," he called to Winters, "I goofed, I goofed! I'm sorry!" The men barely had time to help him out. They had the Germans on the run and did not want to let up, lest the enemy realize how small a force they were fighting.

A German "potato-masher" stick grenade landed in the trench near the Americans and everyone dove forward as it landed between Joe Toye's legs. "Joe!" hollered Winters, "Move for Christ's sake, move!" and Toye flipped over and scrambled to run. The grenade exploded, but the stock of Toye's rifle caught most of the blast; Toye received only some wooden splinters and was able to continue the fight. Guarnere noted, "He was lucky; the rifle took the brunt of it. Otherwise he'd be singing soprano."

The team then resumed firing down the trench at the Germans, three of whom leapt out and fled across the field, offering perfect targets. Winters hollered for Lorraine and Guarnere, who were standing close by. All three opened fire. Winters hit his man in the head and Lorraine caught his man

All: Author Photos

Lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton was an expert grenade thrower; Sergeant Don Malarkey risked his life for a souvenir; Staff Sergeant "Wild Bill" Guarnere unexpectedly missed his target; Staff Sergeant Carwood Lipton was deadly with an M-1.

with a blast from his Thompson. Guarnere, so full of adrenaline and rage, missed his target. "I never missed!" he thought angrily. "Never missed!"

Guarnere's German switched directions and headed toward one of the guns. He had only taken two steps when Winters drilled him in the back. Guarnere calmed down enough to pump the wounded German full of lead. Then a fourth enemy soldier popped up about 100 yards away and began running. Winters assumed a prone position, took a steady bead on the man,

and felled him with one shot. "This entire engagement must have taken about 15 or 20 seconds since we had rushed the initial gun position," Winters later noted.

Malarkey, meanwhile, noticed two Germans down the trench setting up a machine gun but, as he threw a grenade, Winters also opened fire on them, hitting one man in the hip, the other in the shoulder. Malarkey then climbed out of the trench and, spraying the area with his Thompson, headed toward the second 105. The Germans were fleeing as he slid next to a dead German under the gun. He noticed another dead German in the field, with a case on his hip, which he assumed held a Luger pistol. He bolted for the German to grab a souvenir. "Malarkey, you idiot!" Winters shouted. "Get back here!"

But it was too late. Malarkey reached the dead German and grabbed for the case, which turned out to hold only an artillery-sighting device. "Damn!" was his only thought. The Germans, who had held their fire during Malarkey's dash, now began blazing away at him. He charged back to the safety of the 105 as bullets kicked up dirt around his feet, "like a late-spring hailstorm back in Oregon," he later recalled. As he dove into the gun pit, his helmet fell off. He lay on his back, panting while bullets smacked into the gun above him, dropping burning fragments onto his face.

As Malarkey rolled over, he heard Guarnere call to him: "Malark, we'll time the bursts." Guarnere was in the trench about five feet from him. So Malarkey and Guarnere began counting the dead time between the enemy's machine-gun bursts. "Okay," called Guarnere, "next burst ends, get your ass over here." Silence, then Guarnere shouted, "Now!" Malarkey bolted and made it to cover. "Way to go," Guarnere congratulated him, "you stupid mick!"

Meanwhile, Winters prepared the men for the assault on the second gun, ordering Compton and Toye to provide covering fire. Winters then backtracked down the trench where he came across Wynn, lying on the ground and continuing to apologize for being shot. Winters ordered him to

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make his way back to battalion headquarters alone since he could not spare a man to assist him. The loss of Wynne was soon made up for when Lieutenant Bob Brewer, one of Easy Company's assistant platoon commanders, joined the assault force. German fire was increasing.

Compton noted that he and Brewer "spotted an empty gun emplacement, maybe 12 feet in diameter, and jumped in, bullets still streaming over us."

They saw a large ammunition box with a German grenade lying on top of it; somebody bumped the box. The grenade rolled off and the pin fell out. Compton yelled "Look out!" but there was little they could do but brace themselves against the embankments. The grenade exploded. When the smoke cleared, everyone was covered in dirt but no one was hurt.

The explosion was enough to scare one German into surrendering. He ran toward the Americans with his hands raised, crying. One of the Americans—"a desk jockey from headquarters," as Compton put it—belted the new prisoner in the mouth using a pair of brass knuckles built into the handle of his trench knife. The German began bleeding and spitting out teeth. "Probably broke his jaw," Compton said. "It was senseless. The prisoner wasn't offering us any resistance." Compton grabbed the trooper by the arm and spun him around. "I gave our guy hell for doing it. Malarkey says I threatened the guy with a court-martial, but I don't remember that. I was too mad." Compton told him "to get his ass out of there. We didn't need his crap."

While this was going on in the trenches, Lipton and Ranney, in their tree perches, started receiving fire. Lipton had managed to get off between 20 and 30 rounds before the Germans finally realized they were getting hit from above. Some turned left and opened fire on the two exposed troopers. "Bullets were clipping branches and cracking all around me as I scrambled down," recalled Lipton. He made it to the ground without a scratch.

Lipton then hurried over to the other men, coming across Popeye Wynn on his way. He sprinkled some sulfa powder into Wynn's wound, bandaged it, then dragged him to a farm cart. Once Lipton reached the first gun position, Winters told him they had nothing with which to disable the 105—nor any of the other guns for that matter. Remembering the TNT in his musette bag, Lipton crawled back toward Le Grand Chemin and retrieved it.

On his return trip, he came across a group of American officers and men, all headed in his direction. The officer ahead of Lipton turned back and asked him where he could find the headquarters. Lipton looked at the man behind him, Warrant Officer J.G. Andrew Hill, who started to answer, but before he could say a word, a bullet struck Hill in the forehead, killing him instantly.

Back at the first gun, the German who had been hit with the brass knuckles continued to moan and groan. Winters finally went over to him and kicked him in the pants, ordering him to walk in the direction of battalion headquarters. Just as the man got up to leave, Winters noticed three Germans inexplicably walking casually toward his location. He directed two of his men to set the range of their rifles to about 200 yards. When the Germans stopped and seemed to listen to something, Winters called out, "ready … aim...."

Suddenly Lorraine opened up with his Thompson, which Winters thought "isn't worth a damn over fifty-to-seventy yards." One of the Germans went down, wounded, but the German machine guns quickly responded, tearing across the top of Winters's trench. An opportunity had been wasted.

Winters did not intend to waste another on the second gun. Realizing that German machine-gun fire had slackened as they got closer to the first gun position, Winters deduced that by charging the second gun, with good covering fire, his men would not be exposed to as much enemy fire. He ordered three men to remain at the first gun to supply the covering fire, then, like a coiled spring, the rest of the men charged the second gun, throwing grenades and yelling along the way. The men quickly captured the second 105.

The Third Gun

With two guns captured and two to go, Winters sent a runner back to battalion headquarters for more ammunition and men. He also noticed that Petty, who had been manning one of the machine guns between the first and second 105s, had been hit in the neck. Winters ordered Malarkey to take over the weapon.

The Germans, meanwhile, were trying to wrest the high ground from the Americans. A German officer, rifle in hand, approached the manor house and asked the owner if he could use the second story as a sniper's nest. Mr. Charles DeVallavieille, a retired colonel who had fought in World War I, refused. He lied and said the house did not have any windows. The German did not protest and left. For the rest of the battle, the house was never occupied by the Germans, save for two wounded men. Only a few Germans retreated through the yard. Altogether, eight civilians occupied the house, including a two-month-old baby, but none were injured in the battle.

After about a half hour, two machine-gun crews arrived from battalion. Winters put them in place for the assault on the third gun. This attack was a little different. With ammunition running dangerously low, there would be no more random fire. Instead each trooper picked his targets and made sure every shot counted. The men charged the weapon.

Compton later wrote in his memoirs, "A big tall kid [Pfc. John Hall] came down the trench and ran by me. He had served as a waiter in the officers' mess, where I knew him, but he wasn't in my platoon and I didn't know his name. From the trench, I saw him spin around and sprint back toward me. He took a bullet in the back and collapsed in front of me, dead."

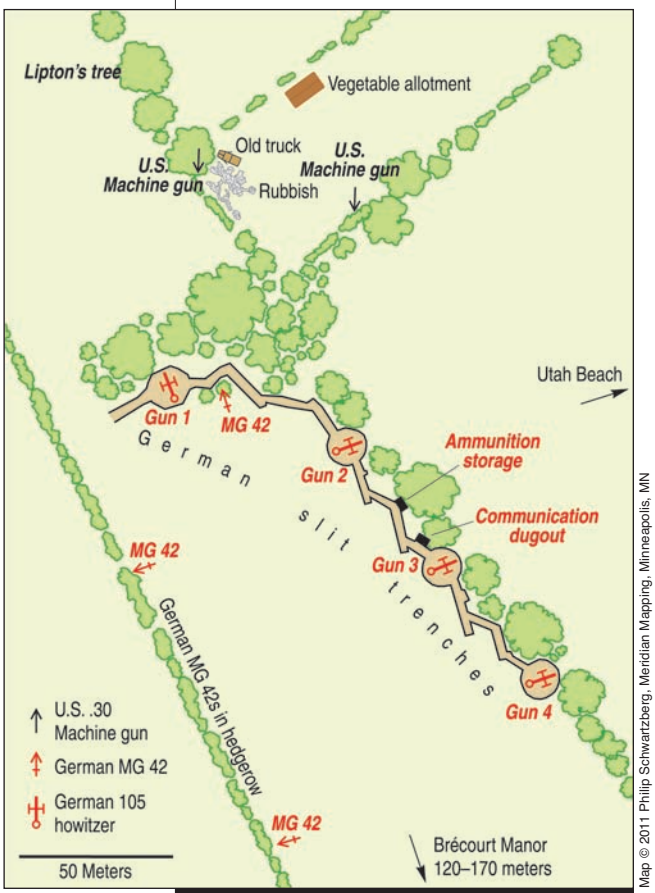
Again, nobody had time to stop for the dead or wounded; mourning would have to wait. The rest of Winters's men bolted forward and quickly captured the third gun.

The Fourth Gun

For a second time, a few Germans ran forward with their hands over their heads, calling out, "No make me dead!" Winters counted six in all and sent them back to headquarters with an escort, along with a request for more ammunition and men.

Concerned about a flank attack, Winters ordered Malarkey to take up a position back where they had first launched the attack and guard the area. "It was a lonely job," Malarkey confessed. He would remain there for the rest of the battle, hurling grenades and firing at any Germans he saw.

Captain Hester showed up in the trenches and gave Winters three blocks of



The battery at Brécourt Manor was located only about 2,000 yards from Utah Beach. This sketch shows the position of the German guns. OPPOSITE: One of the German 105mm guns knocked out by Easy Company's violent assault.

TNT and an incendiary grenade to spike the captured 105s. He also told Winters that Lieutenant Ronald Speirs from Dog Company would soon arrive with a five-man reinforcement team. Winters used the waiting time to destroy the guns and gather any intelligence. He spiked the first gun himself by dropping one block of TNT down its barrel. To detonate it, someone else pulled the fuse on a German potato-masher and slipped it down the barrel. The mix exploded inside the weapon; it would never fire again. For the second and third guns, he gave the rest of the TNT to Hicks and Kimberling, who also dropped some grenades down the barrels, disabling them.

At gun number two, Winters discovered a German map that marked out every battery along the entire coast and their fields of fire. He also noticed something odd: belts of wood-tipped ammunition. "Were the Germans that desperate for lead?" he wondered.

Speirs finally arrived with his reinforcements, including Privates Art "Jumbo" DiMarzio, and Ray Taylor. Once Winters briefed Speirs, the fresh officer charged the last gun, blazing away with his Thompson as he ran.

Seeing Speirs tear off toward the enemy, one of the men said in amazement, "Look at that crazy mother—go!!"Right on Speirs' heels charged Bill Guarnere. "I was so hyped up," recalled Guarnere, "I followed right behind him." Behind Guarnere ran the other Dog Company men and the two Fox Company troopers, Hicks and Houch.

As the men ran down the trench, Houch rose to throw a grenade, but just as he released it, a burst of automatic-weapons fire stitched his back and shoulders, killing him. Hicks was struck in the shin with a bullet that mushroomed when it hit and tore up his calf. "I think I slowed one down," he told the trooper who bandaged his wound. (Hicks claimed that Compton bandaged his leg, but Compton has no recollection of it. Lieutenant Brewer may have been the one to bandage Hicks's leg.)

The fury of Speirs's attack scared the Germans right out of the last gun pit. They jumped out and began to run just as Speirs leapt in, feet first. He opened up on the fleeing Germans until an enemy grenade exploded near him. The last gun was finally in American hands; the landings at Utah Beach would not be bothered by this battery.

As the firing abated, Guarnere picked up a pair of German binoculars and was using them to examine the German machine-gun positions when he suddenly collapsed. Joe Toye spotted him and, thinking his friend was dead, smacked him on the back of the helmet. Guarnere jumped. "He scared the hell out of me and I scared the hell out of him," remembered Guarnere. With his adrenaline spent and the mission completed, Guarnere had simply fallen asleep.

End of the Battle

The mission at last complete, Winters ordered the men to make their way back to headquarters at Le Grand Chemin. He pulled out the machine gunners first, followed by the riflemen. Guarnere spotted Malarkey at his lonely post and called to him, "Malark, pull back to the trench." Malarkey followed, dropping a fragmentation grenade down the tube of the first 105 for good measure as he went.

To cover the withdrawal, Malarkey manned a 60mm mortar while Toye and Guarnere fired .30 caliber machine guns across the field. They blasted the hedgerows along the street near the fourth gun. Malarkey fired so many rounds he buried his mortar in the ground. He had lost his base plate during his jump and was forced to boresight his weapon. His firing shattered every window in the manor house, but did not harm any of the civilians inside.

As Winters withdrew, he noticed a wounded German who was trying to operate his machine gun. Winters raised his rifle and blew a hole in the man's head.

As he made his way back to headquarters, Winters came across the body of Warrant Officer Hill, who lay dead with his right arm sticking straight up in the air, his watch exposed. As machine-gun rounds whizzed overhead, Winters crawled past him, then turned around and reached up Hill's wrist to pull off his watch. "You are nuts," Winters thought to himself. "This watch isn't worth it."

The big guns of Brécourt Manor were silenced but several German machine-gun positions remained, capable of troubling any unlucky American who passed by. Winters wanted

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Four days after the invasion, an American M-4A2 Sherman tank moves past groups of Germans who have surrendered to American infantrymen "somewhere in Normandy." OPPOSITE: The farm lanes and hedgerows of Normandy were littered with the bodies of dead combatants.

to clean out the entire position but he didn't have enough men. After refreshing himself with a swig of hard cider, he found about 30 Easy Company men, led by Lieutenants Harry Welsh and Warren Roush, who had been scattered far and wide during the drop.

In addition, Lieutenant Lewis Nixon, the battalion's intelligence officer, soon arrived, riding the lead on two tanks that had just clanked up from Utah Beach. Winters at last had more men for his final attack. He found Malarkey and Toye asleep in a barn. "Malark, Toye!" he called. "Let's go. Hang tough!" That was all they needed. The two men followed Winters out of the barn.

Winters led his new force back to the field, approaching this time behind the machine-gun nests. The men ran alongside the tanks, firing at anything that moved. There was no opposition. Soon all was quiet, with the exception of a few moans and groans from the remaining wounded Germans. There would be no more trouble from Brécourt Manor. The three-hour battle finally over, Winters was the last man to leave.

Aftermath

For his leading role in the battle, Winters was recommended for the Medal of Honor. It was downgraded, however, to a Distinguished Service Cross. There was an unwritten agreement among the airborne division commanders who fought on D-Day that only one Medal of Honor would be awarded per division during Operation Overlord/Neptune. (Lt. Col. Robert G. Cole, commanding the 3rd Battalion, 101st Airborne, earned the award for leading a bayonet charge against German positions near Carentan on June 11, but was killed in Holland during Operation Market-Garden before he could receive it.) Several groups have since tried unsuccessfully to upgrade Winters's commendation.

The fight for Brécourt Manor proved the leadership of the 2nd Battalion's officers and the fighting quality of its men. Winters had devised a quick, sound strategy and saved the lives of at least two of his men through his attention to detail and quick thinking. Compton led by example and did not tolerate poor behavior, even amid a battle. Speirs charged, hell-for-leather, the last gun. None of the officers hesitated during those trying hours in the trenches. The airborne noncommissioned officers and enlisted men also proved themselves warriors. Fighting for the first time, on little sleep, outnumbered, and in an unfamiliar area, they bested a part of the veteran German war machine.

The battle was a victory for the entire 2nd Battalion of the 506th. Lieutenant Winters led elements of Easy and Fox Companies, as well as paratroopers from battalion headquarters, to capture the first three guns. Dog Company, supported by a few Fox men and a single Easy man, captured the final gun. Teamwork and training proved invaluable to the men who wore the Screaming Eagle on their shoulder.

The battle for Brécourt Manor has become the stuff of legend. Besides being the one of the best documented small-unit actions of D-Day, in 1992, historian

Continued on page 96

DEATH *of the* BATTLESHIP

The Age of the Battleship died when the world's mightiest warships—the *Yamato* and the *Musashi*—succumbed to superior airpower.

BY HERB KUGEL

Special Sea Attack Force (SSAF) was an ordinary-sounding name for the pitifully tiny remnant of what was once the mighty Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN). However, the word "Special" in the Japanese military possessed a unique and dark meaning.

In late 1944, when Japan's defeat became obvious, the desperate Japanese began encouraging *kamikaze,* or suicide aircraft missions, and created "special" units for carrying out these missions. Thus, "special" became a nonthreatening word for "suicidal," and Special Sea Attack Force became the euphemistic name for a Suicide Sea Attack Force.

The SSAF comprised just 10 ships. The first and foremost of these was the mighty battleship *Yamato,* the world's largest dreadnought and pride of the IJN. She was to be escorted to her glorious death by the light cruiser *Yahagi* and eight destroyers: *Asashimo, Fuyutsuki, Hamakaze, Hatsushimo, Isokaze, Kasumi, Suzutsuki,* and *Yukikaze,* which were also scheduled to be sacrificed in a final attempt to cripple the American fleet.

The design and construction of these battleships began in October 1934—well before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, although the Japanese Naval General Staff was even then planning for the inevitable showdown with the United States. Thus they ordered their Navy Technical Department (Kampon) to report on the feasibility of building a new generation of battleships that were superior to anything America had manufactured up to that time. The Japanese realized they could not match American quantity; the Americans could produce far more battleships than Japan ever might, but the Japanese designers felt certain they could build more powerful battleships than the Americans could.

The Japanese government expressed little doubt that these "super battleships" could be designed and built, and so, on December 29, 1934, it gave the required two years' notice that, after December 31, 1936, Japan would no longer be a party to either the 1922 Washington and 1930 London naval treaties. Both agreements contained restrictions on Japanese naval armaments, something Japan now totally rejected. As of January 1, 1937, Japan unilaterally declared it would no longer be bound by these treaties or any restrictions whatsoever to its powerfully expanding military.

After the final construction plans for the three ships were approved in March 1937, they were quickly ordered into production under the Third Fleet Replenishment Program. Following tradition, each ship was named after a prefecture of old Japan. Not merely muscle-flexing or saber-rattling, Japan invaded China on July 7, 1937.

The *Yamato* was the first of what were to have been five Yamato-class battleships, but only three were built. The *Yamato* was commissioned on December 16, 1941, and the second Yamato-class ship, the *Musashi,* was commissioned on August 5, 1942. A third Yamato-class battleship, the *Shinano,* was in the works, but she was hurriedly converted into an aircraft carrier while still under construction, this conversion being made to help make up for the Japanese carrier losses at the Battle of Midway in early June 1942. The carrier *Shinano* was formally commissioned on November 19, 1944, but just 10 days later, on the second day of her maiden cruise, she was torpedoed and sunk by the Amer-

National Archives

A view of the *Yamato* as a bomb explodes near her forward 460mm gun turret during the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea on October 20, 1944. Although considered huge when she was commissioned in December 1941 (she was 266 feet longer and 44,000 tons heavier than the USS *Texas*, which had been commissioned in 1914), by the time she saw action, American battleships of the Iowa class were nearly as big.

ican submarine *Archer-Fish* (SS-311).

The Yamato-class battleship characteristics, according to their final production plan, placed their overall length at 862.83 feet and their fully loaded displacement at 72,800 long tons (73,968 metric tons, 81,536 short tons). They had a top speed of 27 knots. (By comparison, the new American Iowa-class battleships were 887 feet long, but displaced only 45,000 tons and had a top speed of 33 knots.)

Naoyoshi Ishida, an officer who served aboard the *Yamato,* recalled that when he first saw her, his initial thought was, "How huge it is! When you walk inside, there are arrows telling you which direction is the front and which is the back—otherwise you can't tell. For a couple of days I didn't even know how to get back to my own quarters. Everyone was like that.... I knew it was a very capable battleship. The guns were enormous. Back then, I really wanted to engage in battle with an American battleship in the Pacific."

Both the *Yamato* and the *Musashi* were heavily armed and armored, and the Japanese firmly believed these battleships were unmatchable and unsinkable.

What were certainly unmatchable were the nine 18.1-inch (460mm) guns both battleships carried, as opposed to the nine 16-inch (406mm) guns on America's top warships, the Iowa-class battleships. The *Yamato*'s armor-piercing 18.1-inch shells weighed 3,200 pounds each and could be hurled more than 25 miles at 40-second intervals. No Western battleship ever matched this.

But the Japanese encountered difficulties with the *Yamato* and the *Musashi* soon after they were completed. Because of their weight, the two battleships consumed huge quantities of fuel oil, a product Japan did not have in great supply. Another consideration was the fact that the battleships were not only devastating weapons, they were also powerful symbols of national pride, and their loss would be a decimating blow to national as well as to naval morale. Thus, the battleships were to be used in battle cautiously, and not until late in the war, when the Japanese Naval General Staff saw the shadows of defeat darkening around them.

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ABOVE: The *Yamato* is pictured on September 20, 1941, during the late stages of construction at the Kure Naval Base. Her armament included nine 18-inch main guns that could fire 3,200-pound shells a maximum range of 25 miles. BELOW: An illustration of the *Yamato* as she appeared at the time she was sunk.

Various reasons for not using the *Yamato* were put forth, but Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, the main oceangoing component of the IJN, displayed a reluctance to commit the *Yamato,* his flagship, to battle. Even after Yamamoto died when his plane was shot down by U.S. Army Air Force P-38 Lightning fighters on April 18, 1943, his successors did not involve either the *Yamato* or the *Musashi* in any significant combat until the closing months of the war.

The *Yamato* was given the name "Hotel Yamato" by the Japanese Pacific Ocean cruiser and destroyer crews. The battleship spent only a single day away from her Japanese Truk Island naval base in the Caroline Islands during the period between her arrival on August 29, 1942, and her departure on May 8, 1943. Nor did she take part in the

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Battleship *Yamato* running at full power during trials in Sukumo Bay, late 1941.

critical Solomon Islands Campaign, which began on August 7, 1942, and lasted through February 1943.

While on patrol in December 1943, the *Yamato* was damaged by a torpedo launched from the USS *Skate* (SS-305), which struck fear in the hearts of the IJN admirals, who did not want to lose her. She finally saw action during later stages of the war, participating in actions in the Philippine Sea and then as the command ship of Admiral Takeo Kurita, when she devastated a small American fleet off Samar.

By early October 1944, the Americans had "island-hopped" their way across the Pacific and were preparing to invade the Philippine Islands. The Japanese naval defense plan was code-named named Sho-I-Go ("Victory"), and its objective was simple: Sink the American invasion fleet, maintain the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, and, by doing this, protect Japan from invasion.

To accomplish this goal, the Japanese committed virtually everything that was left of the IJN in a desperate effort to destroy the American invasion force. However, they were committing what remained of a navy that had no air support left. Significantly, both the *Yamato* and the *Musashi* were committed to stop America at what became known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

On October 24, 1944, the *Musashi* was sunk during this battle by 17 bomb strikes and 19 torpedo strikes; 1,023 of the *Musashi*'s crew of 2,399 perished, while the Americans lost 18 planes. The *Yamato* suffered relatively little significant damage during the battle and slipped away.

The Japanese were beaten at Leyte Gulf and the Americans pushed closer to the Central Japanese Home Islands by invading Okinawa in Operation Iceberg on April 1, 1945. Okinawa was in the Ryukyu Islands which, despite Chinese objections, had been incorporated into the Japanese empire in 1879. Because of this incorporation, the Japanese considered Okinawa a part of their homeland and would do everything to defend it.

The Japanese grew desperate as the American invasion of Okinawa was under way. The American success forced the Japanese to resort to the full deployment of their powerful last-gasp countermeasure, the "Special Forces"—the suicidal kamikaze, and, for the first time, this included the Navy. Japanese Combined Fleet commander in chief, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, overrode strong objections from members of his Naval General Staff concerning the naval usage of suicidal "special forces." On April 3, 1945, he informed the men of his just-formed Special (Suicidal) Sea Attack Force that "the fate of our Empire depends upon this one action. I order the Special Sea Attack Force to carry out on Okinawa the most tragic and heroic act of the war."

Admiral Toyoda's "most tragic and heroic act of the war" involved ordering all of the SSAF's sailors to embark on a mission to fight "to the last man." On April 5, 1945, the SSAF staff received the following order: "The Surface Special Attack Unit is ordered to proceed via Bungo Suido Channel at dawn on Y-1 Day to reach the prescribed holding position for a high-speed run-in to the area west of Okinawa at dawn on Y-Day. Your mission is to attack the enemy fleet and supply train and destroy them. Y-Day is April 8th."

Shizuo Kunimoto, a lieutenant junior grade on the *Yamato,* reported: "The special order sending the *Yamato* to Okinawa was written with large letters on white paper and posted on the port side of the first deck. After the *Yamato* set sail, all hands not on duty (about 2,000 men) were assembled on the forecastle to hear their specific orders read by the ship's Executive Officer."

The *Yamato* sailors bravely continued to honor their traditions after hearing their collective death warrant. Kunimoto commanded his men to bow toward the Imperial Palace and then toward their homes. He then led them in singing patriotic military songs for about 10 minutes, but patriotism and courage didn't change what most of the *Yamato*'s sailors realized would happen to them.

On April 6, 1945 (Y-2 Day for the SSAF), waves of Japanese planes dove in suicidal attacks into Allied Pacific Fleet

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The *Yamato*'s anti-aircraft guns fight off U.S. carrier planes near Samar during the Battle of Leyte Gulf, October 23-26, 1944. *Yamato*'s sister ship, *Musashi*, was lost during this engagement.

ships as part of Operation Kikusui ("Floating Chrysanthemums"), so named after the chrysanthemum crest of Kusunoki Masashige, a 14th-century samurai hero. Kusunoki, in what became remembered as an ultimate act of samurai fidelity, accepted a fatal and foolish command from his emperor and obediently and knowingly led his army and himself to death while fighting to carry out this absurd command. Absolute devotion to their emperor, who was considered a deity before and during World War II, was one of the foundations of kamikaze.

First Japanese pilots and now the sailors of the SSAF, allegedly all volunteers, were ordered to end their lives in the same heroic manner as Kusunoki Masashige. The IJN named their mission Ten Ichi-Go ("Heaven Number One"), and the orders to the SSAF were grimly simple: The SSAF was to sail directly into the American ships and transports supporting the Okinawa landing and inflict as much punishment on them as possible.

After this, the *Yamato* would be beached and use its 18.1-inch main batteries and other weapons as support for Okinawa's land defense forces. "Surplus" *Yamato* crew members (that is, all nongunners) would then leave the beached *Yamato* and die on land while fighting together with soldiers of Okinawa's defense garrison. The sailors on the escort ships would also die fighting. Absolutely no one was to return alive.

Nevertheless, while the Japanese Naval General Staff instructed that each ship be given only enough fuel for a one-way trip to Okinawa, harbor officials risked execution by disobeying this order and refueling the entire SSAF to capacity, giving them more than enough oil to return home if they somehow survived.

There were three admirals in the SSAF, two of whom were aboard the *Yamato*. While Admiral Kosaku Ariga captained the *Yamato,* Vice Admiral Seiichi Ito commanded the entire SSAF. The *Yahagi* and the eight escort destroyers that constituted the Second Destroyer Squadron were commanded by Rear Admiral Keizo Komura, whose headquarters were on the *Yahagi*. Seiichi Ito had furiously opposed the mission, but ultimate control rested with Admiral Soemu Toyoda, who was stationed near Tokyo.

Seiichi Ito's main reason for objecting was the complete lack of air protection, something not the case for the kamikaze pilots as they flew into their April 6 death dives. Ito's other reasons for opposing the mission were his concern about the terrible numerical inferiority of his force—eight destroyers compared to America's 60 destroyers. He also objected to the time of sailing. He wanted the time arranged to allow the SSAF to arrive and attack at night. Ito reportedly gnashed his teeth in rage when his argument that the time of departure should be left to the mission commander was rejected.

Instead of being elated at the prospect of being chosen to die gloriously for the emperor, the *Yamato*'s crew was miserable and despondent on the night of April 5, 1945 (Y-3 Day), the night before the SSAF departed on its final mission. At 5:30 PM, three orders were broadcast over the ship's public address system:

"All cadets prepare to leave the ship."

"Distribute sake to all divisions."

"Open the ship's store."

Sixty-seven naval cadets of Etajima Naval Academy Class No. 74, who had arrived

three days earlier, were ordered to go ashore. But first, the cadets were summoned to the First Wardroom, a room normally reserved for the *Yamato*'s ensigns and junior grade lieutenants. Sake was drunk in ceremonial farewell. The cadets begged to remain but were gently yet firmly ordered to leave by the *Yamato*'s executive officer, Jiro Nomura. "We couldn't bear to take them along on an expedition into certain death," Nomura said. That night many sailors sang unhappy folk songs and drank heavily.

The next morning, April 6, a dozen or so seriously ill sailors were transferred and some 20 sailors were reassigned at the last moment. Their eyes filled with both regret and relief when they heard the news. In addition, there was the matter of the older sailors, those over age 40, who had proven to be ineffective in what little combat the *Yamato* had already seen; their deaths for no reason would be a brutal blow to their families. After consultation, Admiral Ariga permitted some of these men to leave the ship.

The SSAF set sail that day, the ships leaving Tokuyama at 4:00 PM. The *Yahagi* led the SSAF, followed by the eight destroyers, with the *Yamato* bringing up the rear. On the same day, 355 kamikaze planes attacked the Allied Pacific Fleet in the largest kamikaze attack of the war, while the SSAF, as planned, sailed without any air protection whatsoever.

The nine escort vessels were manned by first-rate crews, combat veterans of many battles. However, their little fleet had absolutely no chance to successfully protect the *Yamato* on her final voyage.

The Americans were alerted by the submarine *Threadfin* (SS-410), which was on patrol near Fukashima, a tiny island at the mouth of the Bungo Strait. At 9:00 PM on Y-2, the *Threadfin* radioed the SSAF's location to ComSubPac (Commander, Submarine Forces, Pacific) at Guam. Later, the submarine *Hackleback* (SS-295) sighted the *Yamato* and reported the SSAF's location. The American submarines openly communicated with each other via radio in unencrypted English, with the radio operators frequently mentioning the *Yamato* by name. According to U.S. Navy records that Japanese researchers obtained after the war, the two submarines were ordered to track and report the movements of the Japanese ships but not to attack unless given permission.

What the Americans could not know was that Radio Officer Ensign Shigeo Yamada on the *Yahagi* was a Nisei, the son of Japanese immigrants to the United States. Born and educated in America, Yamada translated and reported to his senior officers what he overheard the Americans saying. Yamada, who was born in Idaho and claimed to have been "raised on potatoes," reported that the American radio operators often referred to the *Yamato* as "King Battleship." He, like fellow Nisei Kunio Nakatani, had been sent to university in Japan by their families and were trapped when the war started. These and other Nisei students could face either the draft, or imprisonment for collaboration, or even possible execution for espionage. Enlisting in the IJN often seemed the best choice for these young American citizens.

(Shigeo Yamada would survive the sinking of the cruiser *Yahagi*. After the war, his American citizenship was revoked, but he was later allowed to return to the United States, where he worked for Japan Air Lines (JAL) and eventually returned to Japan as a JAL vice president.)

Shortly before 7:00 AM on April 7 (Y-1 Day), the *Asashimo* hoisted the signal "engine casualty" and began to fall behind the SSAF armada. Some sailors on the *Yahagi* called this a black omen for the entire unit as the *Asashimo* fell farther and farther behind the rest of the SSAF. Takekuni Ikeda, who was serving as an ensign aboard the *Yahagi,* recalled in his 2007 memoir *The Imperial Navy's Final Sortie,* "But ... [the *Asashimo*] continued to fall behind and gradually disappeared in the mist. I clearly remember that the bridge of the *Yahagi* was in total silence. The day of destiny began under such circumstance."

As the morning progressed, the *Yamato*'s radar detected more and more American planes hovering above them. At 10 minutes past noon, the *Asashimo* radioed that she was engaging enemy planes; then her radio abruptly went silent. The *Asashimo* had been sunk; her entire crew, 326 men, died when she went down.

While the Americans' initial attacks inflicted a heavy toll, their main attacks were yet to come. On the other SSAF

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: A view of the bridge of the *Musashi*. BELOW: Admiral Soemu Toyoda approved the plan that sent the *Yamato* to her final battle at Okinawa.

ships, experienced Japanese lookouts recognized the increasing number of U.S. Navy Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters, Chance-Vought F4U Corsair fighters, Curtiss SB2C Helldiver dive-bombers, and Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers circling above them.

Initially, Fifth Fleet commander Admiral Raymond Spruance ordered six of his battleships that were engaged in shore bombardment at the Okinawa beaches to prepare to attack the *Yamato*. However, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, commander of the powerful Carrier Task Force 58, pushed Spruance to change his orders and replace the six battleships with air strikes from Task Force 58 planes. Mitscher had been determined to attack the *Yamato* and had ignored Spruance's order to avoid the battleship. At about 10:00 AM on Y-1 day, Mitscher had ordered up flights of 280 and 106 planes, respectively, and requested permission from Spruance to attack the *Yamato* and her escorts only after his planes were airborne. Spruance's reply was curt: "You take them."

The SSAF crews had been at general quarters from dawn on Y-1 Day. At 7:00 AM there had been a ceremonial breakfast after which all doors, hatches, and ventilators were closed tightly as the ships readied for battle. At about 8:45, the SSAF was sighted as seven Grumman F6F Hellcat scout planes flew over them. The Hellcats circled the force but kept their distance and made no effort to attack. At 10:14, the Japanese detected two Martin Mariner PBM seaplanes, and the *Yamato* fired a salvo at them from her 18.1-inch guns but missed. The Japanese also spotted the submarine *Hackleback* trailing them. Three minutes later, the *Yamato* received a report from a scout plane that Task Force 58 had been located east of Okinawa, 250 nautical miles (288 statute miles) from the SSAF.

Within Task Force 58, at around 10:00 AM on Y-1 Day, the first full strike of Mitscher's aircraft—280 fighters, dive-bombers, and torpedo planes—readied to attack the SSAF. Tension was high among the American pilots; they knew they had only one primary target: the *Yamato*.

Aboard the *Yamato,* a messenger boy, his face all smiles and showing no awareness of the anguish of the older men, happily informed everyone that the crew would be served bean soup and dumplings for dinner.

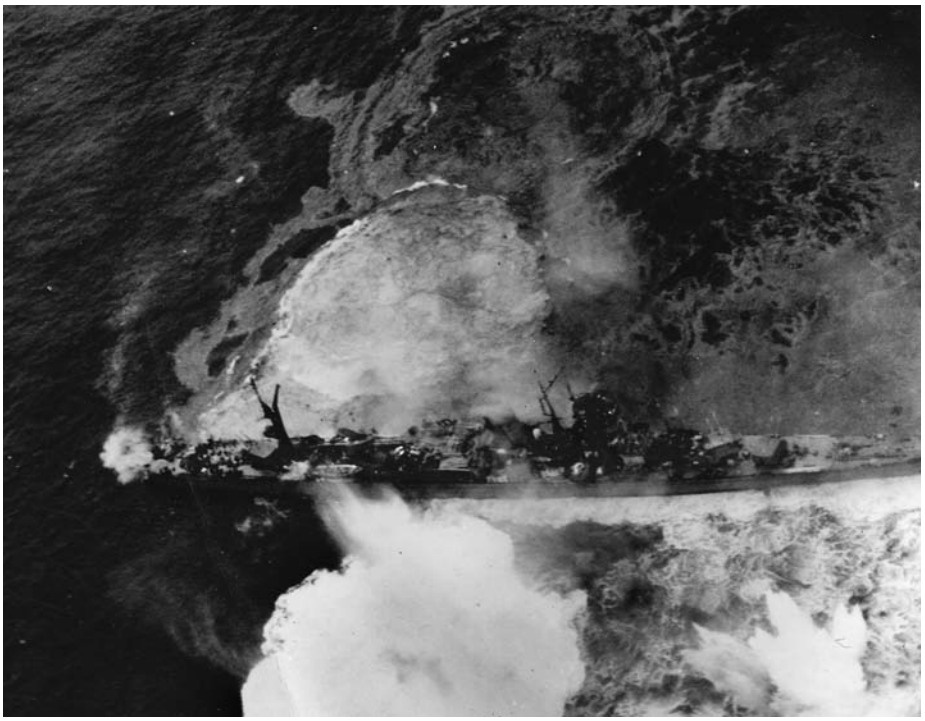
At 10:38, the carrier *Yorktown* (CV-10) launched 43 planes, taking off more than half an hour later than the other groups. At about 12:34, the *Yamato*'s lookouts detected American planes off the battleship's port bow at 40,000 yards (23 miles). The *Yamato* commenced firing, and at 12:41 the SSAF increased its speed to nearly 28 knots (32 mph), matching the *Yamato*'s maximum speed. The nine 18.1-inch guns fired Sanshikidan "beehive" shells—projectiles that functioned like shotgun shells, scattering thousands of pellets or bits of shrapnel into the air when they exploded. Although these shells were especially designed to be fired from ships against attacking aircraft, the American planes flew straight through the shrapnel the shells generated.

The *Yamato*'s main guns were joined in firing by six 6.1-inch guns, 24 5-inch anti-

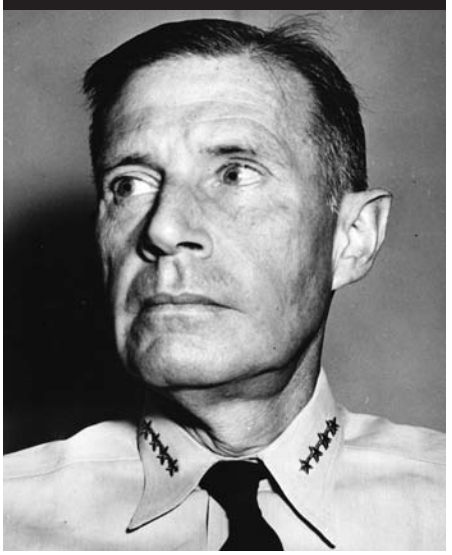
American dive-bombers, probably from the *Yorktown,* bank into the attack on the *Yamato* (left).

National Archives

All: National Archives



ABOVE: Vice Admiral Marc A. "Pete" Mitscher (right), commander of Carrier Task Force 58, studies charts with a staff officer. BELOW: Admiral Raymond Spruance, commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, approved Mitcher's request to attack the *Yamato*. LEFT: All Japanese ships were fair game at Okinawa. Here a light cruiser of the Agano class is pummeled by American warplanes.



aircraft guns, 150 25mm (0.98 inch) antiaircraft guns, and four 13mm (0.51-inch) machine guns, but this firing failed to produce any significant American losses; the gunners quickly learned that their curtain of anti-aircraft fire was far less effective than they had assumed it would be.

The Japanese anti-aircraft gunners, suffering casualties and communications damage, could not maintain coordinated fire against the zigzagging American planes. Fear was a powerful factor. Harvey Ewing, a rear seat gunner in an attacking Avenger, reported: "I could see bursts of anti-aircraft fire all around the plane as I made the run. To say that I was scared would be an understatement. We dropped the fish [torpedoes] and pulled up on one wing over the *Yamato* and seemed to hang there for minutes as the ship was firing every gun, including its 18-inch rifles, at the planes following us in."

At about 12:40, the *Yamato* was hit by two bombs, both landing near the aft secondary gun turret, and three minutes later her port bow was struck by a torpedo. The bombs inflicted casualties; they knocked out the aft secondary battery fire control unit and caused other serious damage. The exploding torpedo killed sailors and also allowed about 2,350 tons of water to pour into the *Yamato*. The damage-control unit contained the damage by counterflooding with about 604 tons of water. (Counterflooding is flooding an "opposing" section of a listing ship in an effort to balance the ship and keep it level.)

At about 12:47, the destroyer *Hamakaze* was sunk. A bomb hit her aft deck, sending up a column of flames, and then a torpedo blast broke her in two. Of her crew of 240 men, 100 were killed and another 45 injured. At about the same time, the *Suzutsuki* received a 500-pound bomb hit to starboard, on top of her No. 2 gun mount, and caught fire. Although hit again, she managed to struggle back to Japan. Of her 263-man crew, 57 were killed and 34 were wounded.

At about 12:50, the first wave of American warplanes had completed its attack and withdrew; at approximately 1:02 PM, the second wave arrived. The second wave attack was a coordinated strike, with dive-bombers flying high overhead to begin their attacks while torpedo bombers came in from all directions, flying at just above the wave tops. This second attack lasted about a half hour, during which the *Yamato* was hit with at least two more bombs and no fewer than four torpedoes. The ship also took in about 3,000 tons of water and listed some seven degrees to port. Damage control corrected this dangerous list by counterflooding the starboard engine and boiler rooms. The list was temporarily corrected, but many men within the ship drowned during the flooding.

At this time, many SSAF sailors were in the water and feared there would be no efforts made to rescue them by their fellow sailors because they were all part of a

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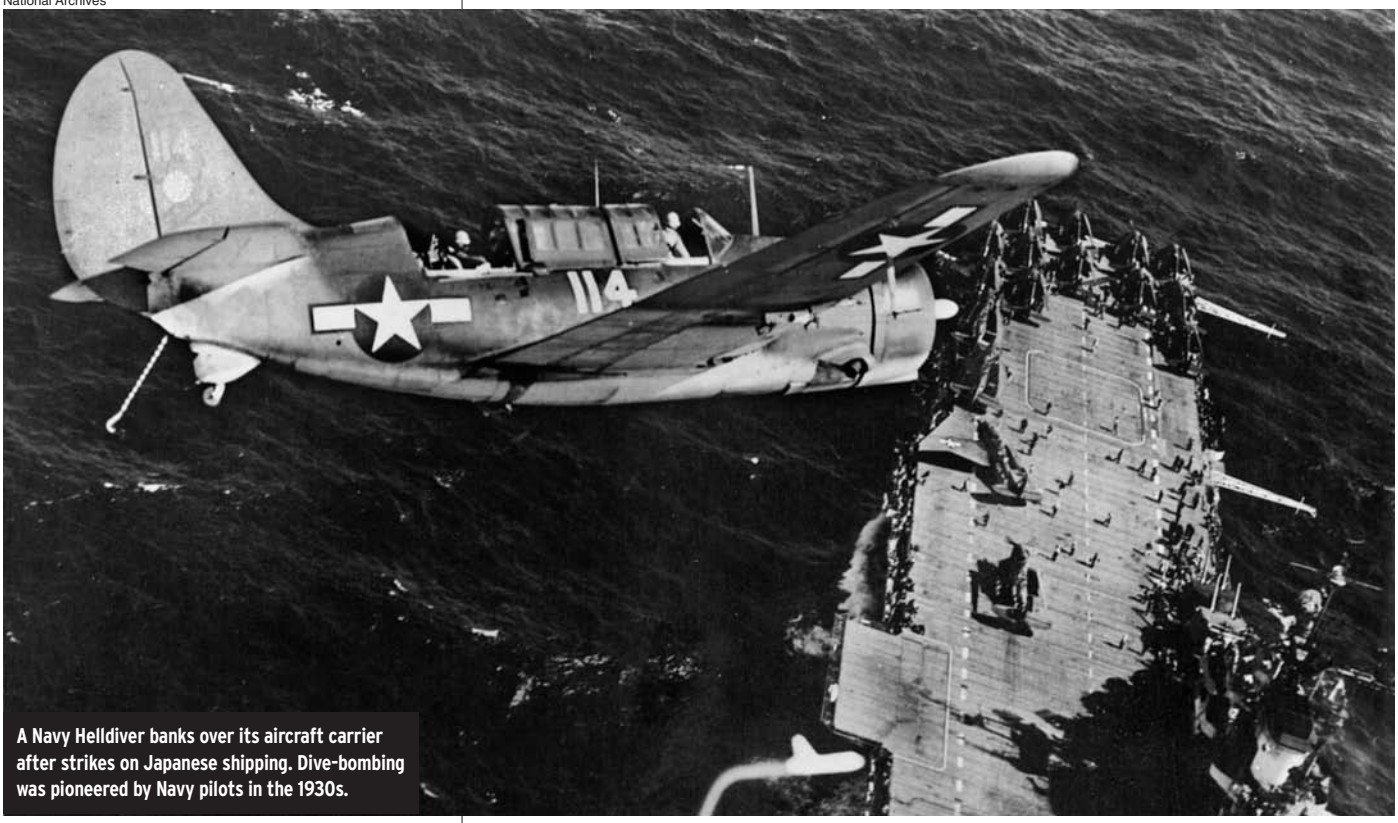


A Navy Helldiver banks over its aircraft carrier after strikes on Japanese shipping. Dive-bombing was pioneered by Navy pilots in the 1930s.

suicide force. However, Admiral Seiichi Ito, realizing his suicide attack force would never reach Okinawa, aborted the mission and ordered the rescue of survivors; Admiral Toyoda accepted Ito's decision.

Men responded differently as what they knew to be certain death approached. An officer, his face wreathed in smiles, cheerfully praised the Americans for their skill and bravery. Kunimoto, who was a damage-control officer, realized his ship was doomed as water rushed in around them. Still, he and his shipmates began giving cheers of "Long reign the emperor."

Not all the sailors could accept the idea that their mighty *Yamato* could sink or that they could die. Heiji Tsuboi, who had been a petty officer 2nd class and manned the battleship's No. 5 anti-aircraft battery, recalled: "We were told [by] our Senior Chief that we were not able to return alive from the mission.... I was busy operating my anti-aircraft gun all through the battle until the ship's last minutes. I remember well that I felt a somewhat heavy shock had been transmitted from the bottom of the ship. I thought it must be a torpedo attack but did not think the ship would be sunk."

The *Yamato*'s sheer size made her a tempting target, and she continued to be pummeled unmercifully from above by an unceasing rain of bombs and bullets and from below by torpedoes.

Scenes of sadness and courage played out aboard the task force's doomed ships. As the end approached, 20-year-old Ensign Yoshida Mitsuru, stationed on the *Yamato*'s bridge, watched in disbelief and horror as American dive-bombers sent three more torpedoes into the ship's port side and then raked the anti-aircraft gun crews with lethal machine-gun fire. He wrote later: "That these pilots repeated their attacks with accuracy and coolness was a sheer display of the unfathomable undreamed-of strength of our foes."

Mitsuru survived the sinking of the ship and wrote his account in *Requiem for Battleship Yamato*. One the most poignant incidents he relates involved an assistant communications officer, a Nisei ensign named Kunio Nakatani, who was drafted out of the classroom while attending Keio University; both of his two younger brothers were in the U.S. Army and serving in Europe. Mitsuru described Nakatani as a good-natured young man who went diligently about his work. Although Nakatani alone on the *Yamato* could pick up and translate American transmissions, the younger officers looked at him with contempt and constantly reviled him.

Nakatani showed Yoshida a letter he had just received from his mother in America, sent through Switzerland and received just before the *Yamato* sailed on her final voyage: "We are fine. Please put your best effort into your duties. And let's both pray for peace."

Recalling the capsizing battleship's last moments, Yoshida attributed to the ocean an almost malevolent presence when he wrote: "Dark waves splattered and reached for us as the stricken ship heeled to an incredible list of 80 degrees."

As the SSAF disintegrated, sailors aboard the light cruiser *Yahagi* continued to die when an abrupt break in the low clouds allowed the American pilots to mount a mas-

sive attack against the cruiser.

Takekuni Ikeda recalled what happened: "At 1330, [the *Yahagi*] was hit at the stern… [and] the ship started to make a continuous turn to starboard ... [then] she stopped completely and began to drift in a swell.... Weapons fire from ... American aircraft hit the motionless *Yahagi* again and again. I felt my whole body shaking heavily. Because of the damage to my eardrums, it was as if I were watching a silent movie. Columns of water jumped up around the ship, one after another, taller than the mast. Steam spouted from the cruiser's funnel. The bloody odor of our dead and wounded sailors mixed with the smell of gunpowder."

The *Yahagi* was doomed. Rear Admiral Keizo Komura, who commanded the destroyer squadron, realized that his flagship was sinking and decided to transfer his flag to a destroyer. He sent a signal to the *Isokaze* to approach, but little could be done because of the nonstop American attacks; the *Isokaze* was badly damaged by American bombs during her attempt to reach the *Yahagi* and was later scuttled by gunfire. Of her crew of 239, she suffered 20 dead and 54 injured. The destroyer *Kasumi* was also scuttled due to severe damage from American bombs. Of her crew of 200, she suffered 17 dead and 47 wounded.

The aerial assault continued without interruption. The third American strike force of 43 planes of Air Group 9—the final and most damaging attack—led by the *Yorktown*'s assault leader, Lt. Cmdr. Herbert Houck, arrived at about 1:45. Although accounts vary, it appears that three or more bombs decimated what was left of the *Yamato*'s superstructure and caused heavy casualties among what remained of her 25mm anti-aircraft gun crews. Three torpedoes, close together, slammed into the port side and caused the *Yamato* to resume what proved to be an inexorable roll to port as thousands of gallons of water rushed into her. This continuing roll to port exposed the battleship's now-vulnerable starboard hull to attack as American planes continued their unrelenting strikes.

Counterflooding reduced the list to 10 degrees, but further list reduction required flooding the starboard engine and fire rooms. Many crewmen were trapped belowdecks and drowned by the ever-increasing torrent of water that was pouring in through the ripped hull and by the desperate counterflooding measures undertaken to save the ship. At 2:02, three bombs exploded amidships—about the same time as the much-too-late order to abandon ship was finally given as the *Yamato* was hit by additional torpedoes. The ship's roll to port and sinking created a suction that pulled swimming crewmen back toward the ship and into her propellers. Each three-bladed propeller was nearly 20 feet in diameter.

The *Yorktown*'s planes showed the Japanese ships and sailors no mercy; for many of the pilots, it was payback for Pearl Harbor. At 2:05, the *Yahagi,* hit by 12 bombs and seven torpedoes, sank exactly one minute after the last bomb smashed into her. Out of a crew of 736 men, 446 men were killed and 133 injured.

In desperation, Ariga aboard the *Yamato* again ordered the starboard engineering spaces counterflooded; the counterflooding did no good. Worse, hundreds of men manning the battleship's lower decks were thus sentenced to drown without being given the slightest chance of survival; Tsuboi stayed at his station until the order to abandon ship was given. He, like Kunimoto and Yoshida, would manage to swim clear.

Vice Admiral Ito did not survive. When he saw that he would not fulfill his mission, and that most of the men in his squadron were either dead or wounded, he shook hands and said farewell to the few of his remaining staff officers and started for his flag cabin to await the end. His adjutant, Lt. Cmdr. Ishida, followed behind him. It was Ishida's job to wait on the admiral; now he wished to join the admiral in death, but the chief of staff forcibly stopped him. "You don't have to go. Don't be a fool." Ishida hesitated, averted his face, and then gave in. He did not follow his admiral.

Ishida survived but Ariga did not. Having completed the final dispositions—the code books, the portrait of the emperor, and so on—Ariga, still in the anti-aircraft command post on the very top of the bridge and wearing his helmet and flak

National Archives

***Yamato*'s captain steers violently to avoid bombs and aerial torpedos, but the end is near.**

jacket, tied himself to the binnacle, the nonmagnetic housing for the ship's compass. He did this so that his body would not be washed away when the *Yamato* sank; he wanted to go down with his ship.

He then issued a command for all hands to come on deck, shouted the Japanese cheer and battle cry *banzai!* three times, and then turned to the four surviving lookouts standing by his side. They were devoted to their captain and did not want to leave him, but Ariga would have none of this. He clapped each on the shoulder, encouraged them to be cheerful, and pushed them into the water. The fourth sailor pressed his last four biscuits into the captain's hand, as if to show his deepest feelings. The captain took them with a grin. He was last seen eating the second biscuit when he and the *Yamato* disappeared in a huge explosion. (Captain Ariga was posthumously promoted two ranks to vice admiral in May 1945.)

Kunio Nakatani did not survive the *Yamato*'s sinking. Yoshida Mitsuru said of his American-born friend and shipmate: "Radio officer Ensign Nakatani must have died, too, at his post intercepting enemy communications. Because he was a Nisei, his conduct always attracted attention; I can guess that his death was as splendid as the deaths of his fellows."

Also at 2:05, the *Yamato*'s list, which had increased to 15 degrees to port, was such that torpedoes set to a depth of 20 feet and fired into the *Yamato*'s starboard side smashed below the battleship's armor and exploded directly into her vulnerable hull. (The *Yamato*'s 16.5-inch-thick armor plate formed a ledge along the outer hull; it tapered down to 3.9 inches at 20 feet below the waterline.)

Houck reported what happened: "I saw the runs and figured they got at least five hits. With the 20-degree listing, the torpedoes exploded right in the belly of the ship."

From Houck's statement, it appears that the *Yamato* was hit by at least eight torpedoes during this third raid. It was the death blow for the great ship. She capsized slowly, rolling over her port side. This was followed by a huge explosion at 2:23

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Riding low in the water due to torpedo damage, the *Yamato* burns aft of her superstructure while a bomb explodes off her port side. BELOW: Hit by eight aerial torpedoes, the *Yamato* explodes in a giant plume of smoke and fire. Only 592 of her 3,332-man crew survived.

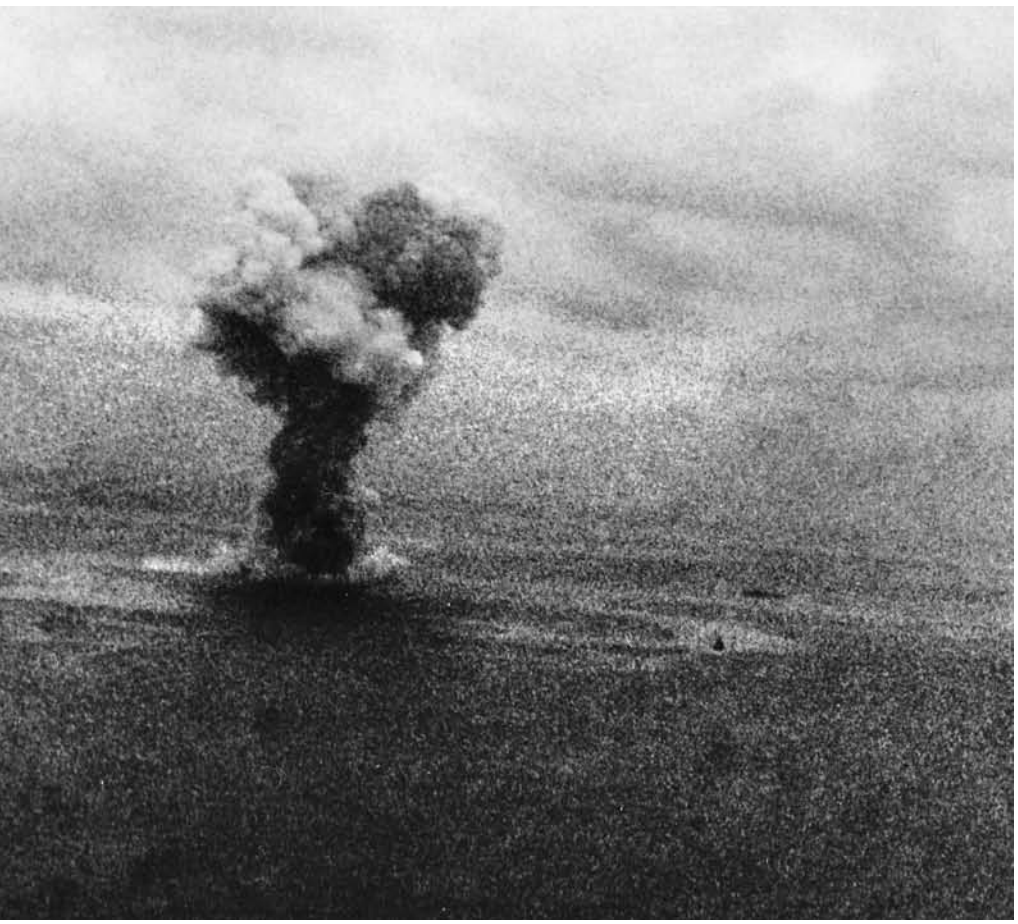
which hurled most of the *Yamato*'s sailors into the sea or killed them outright. Houck took photographs with a wing camera and later recalled what he saw: "It made a mighty big bang. Smoke went up. The fireball was about 1,000 feet high."

Houck was right—the explosion was a "mighty big bang," and the resulting mushroom cloud, more than four miles high, was seen by sentries at Kagoshima, more than 124 miles away. Though nobody can be certain exactly what caused the explosion, it is speculated that one of the Yamato's two bow magazines exploded, shattering the doomed battleship's foresection in a tremendous blast. The *Yamato* sank quickly. Of her crew of about 3,332 men, 2,740 men died and 117 were wounded.

Not only was the great battleship gone, but the *Yahagi* and four of her eight escort destroyers had also plunged beneath the waves. All of the four surviving destroyers—the *Fuyutsuki, Hatsushimo, Suzutsuki,* and *Yukikaze*—suffered casualties, with a total of 72 men killed and 34 wounded. About 981 officers and men in the escort ships died while 342 more were wounded in the ill-fated suicide attack, an attack that never had the slightest chance of fulfilling its kamikaze mission, even by samurai standards.

The Americans lost 10 planes and 14 air crewmen; three others were injured. The world's largest and most powerful battleship was destroyed in less than two hours by an unknown number of bombs and torpedoes.

The story of the SSAF and the *Yamato* does not end on April 7, 1945. Over the years, successful efforts were made to locate the wreckage of the ship, and success was initially reported in 1985. The photographic records made during this successful first search were confirmed by one of the *Yamato*'s designers, Shigeru Makino, as showing identifiable remnants of the *Yamato*. The researchers reported that the wreck lies 180 miles southwest of Kagoshima, off the southern island of Kyushu, in more than 1,100 feet of water. The battleship is broken into two main pieces: a bow-to-midships section roughly 560 feet long and a 264-foot stern section.



In a society that seeks to atone for its warlike past, the *Yamato* remains a powerful influence in Japanese culture. Books and films about the ship and the SSAF have been produced, and museums and memorials to the behemoth, her crew, and the other doomed sailors of the ill-fated SSAF have been built. A television science-fiction series was created in which the wreck of the *Yamato* is used to create a starship bearing the same name. Some of the characters on the *Starship Yamato* bear the same names as their counterparts on the real *Yamato*.

Although an impressive Yamato Museum opened in 2005 in Kure with a huge scale model of the ship, there is a dark footnote to the SSAF story. The IJN held the SSAF survivors virtual prisoners when they returned to Japan. In an interview, *Yamato* survivor Kazuhiro Fukumoto said, "We were held in Kure for a month. So parents who knew about the *Yamato* sinking didn't see their sons for a month and a half. They gave up, thinking that their sons had died."

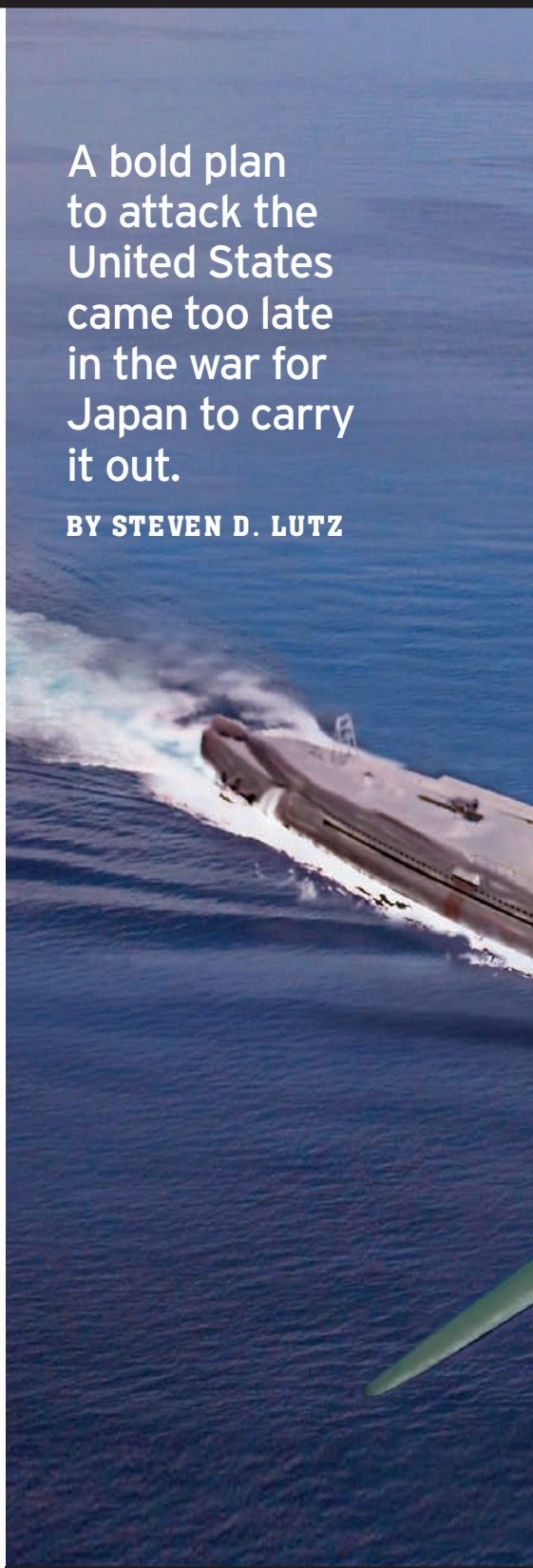
The destruction of the SSAF haunted the psyche of many of the survivors and their immediate families. On April 3, 2006, more than 280 remaining immediate family members and surviving veterans of the SSAF set sail on a commemorative memorial voyage and followed the same route as the SSAF, sailing to the exact locations where relatives and comrades perished on Y-1 Day, April 7, 1945. There had been similar memorial trips in 1987, 1994, and 1995, but in 2006, because the youngest survivor on the memorial trip was more than 80 years old, the families and survivors decided that 2006 would be the final year for the memorial voyage to honor those who died serving with the Special (Suicide) Attack Surface Force. □

SEN TOKU

Japan's Underwater Aircraft Carriers

A bold plan to attack the United States came too late in the war for Japan to carry it out.

BY STEVEN D. LUTZ



Jack Fellows, ASAA

In Jack Fellows's painting, an Aichi M6A1 Seiran "Mountain Haze" floatplane rises above the I-400 aircraft-carrying submarine while another Seiran is launched from the bow. The 400-series were the largest submarines of the war.

As soon as Colonel James Doolittle's B-25 raid struck Japan in April 1942, Japan sought to wreak revenge on the United States, but by 1944 devastating aerial bombings on Japan by the Americans had become all too regular.

It was not until early 1945 that the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) was ready to strike America even further than it already had on December 7, 1941. After considering, then ruling out San Francisco, San Diego, New York City, and Washington, D.C. as targets, the IJN chiefs settled on America's vital Panama Canal. The plan to disable the canal—through which the United States was funneling military resources from the Atlantic to the Pacific without the long voyage around the southern tip of South America—had been the brainchild of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the architect of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

The plans called for an aerial bombing by specially designed attack planes launched from surfaced submarines. Those submarines, the Sensuika, or I-400 Series, would be the largest submarines the world would see for decades to come. Loosely translated as "Secret Attack Submarine," *Sensuikan* was shortened to *Sen Toku*.

In mid-1942, Yamamoto foresaw two things: how susceptible Japan would become to American aerial bombing and how Japan could reciprocate against American soil. From that he envisioned 18 huge submarines—basically underwater aircraft carriers—that could ferry attack bombers to their targets. Although Yamamoto's plan envisioned two planes per submarine to attack America's shoreline cities, in actuality each I-400 was designed to ferry three Aichi M6A Seiran "Mountain Haze" planes.

Construction on the Sen Toku behemoths began on April 25, 1943, one week after Yamamoto was shot down and killed by American P-38s over Bougainville in the Solomons. But with Yamamoto's death and the fortunes of war turning against Japan, there was nobody to champion Yamamoto's dream.

Delays plagued the project from the beginning. The I-400 prototype, built at


1400
©FELLOWS-ASAA

Hiroshima Bay's Kure Navy Yard, was not commissioned until December 30, 1944, while both the I-401 and I-402 were laid down shortly thereafter at the Sasebo Navy Yard Docks at Nagasaki. Further, the naval construction facilities at Kure and Sasebo were often targeted by American planes but the damage was insignificant; the American bomber pilots had no knowledge of the giant submarines being built beneath them.

On January 8, 1945, the I-401 was commissioned and, six months later, on July 24, 1945, came the I-402. Once completed and out to sea, these vessels would become Submarine Division One.

Of the planned 18 submarines, however, only three would be completed: the I-400, I-401, and I-402; numbers I-404 and I-405 were still under construction when the war ended in August 1945. The remaining proposed fleet of the I-Series—403 and 406-417—was scrapped before construction could begin. In their place came two new submarines—the I-13 and I-14—that were smaller but still held the same design aspirations.

The Sen Toku were beyond comprehension of any navy but that of Japan; they were 60 percent larger than any submarine America would put forth until the nuclear submarine age. The most important part of the I-400s were the planes they sequestered within their watertight forward hangars. Japan had long mastered the art of flying piggy-backed scouting planes off of their surfaced subs.

The sea beast I-400 series measured 400 feet long with a beam of 39 feet and a draft of 23 feet. It was a double-hull configuration that the Soviets would replicate 30 years later. It operated on four diesel engines of 7,700 horsepower with two electric motors as back up. The sub's surface tonnage was 5,223 tons; when submerged, it weighed 6,560 tons.

Prior to their deployment, the I-400s had retractable snorkels fitted. When they were submerged for extensive periods, fresh air could be taken in while poisonous diesel exhaust fumes would be expelled. The searoaming range was a staggering 37,500 miles without refueling. Their fastest surface speed just topped 18 knots; submerged, the speed was reduced to 6.5 knots. The deepest they could safely dive was 330 feet.

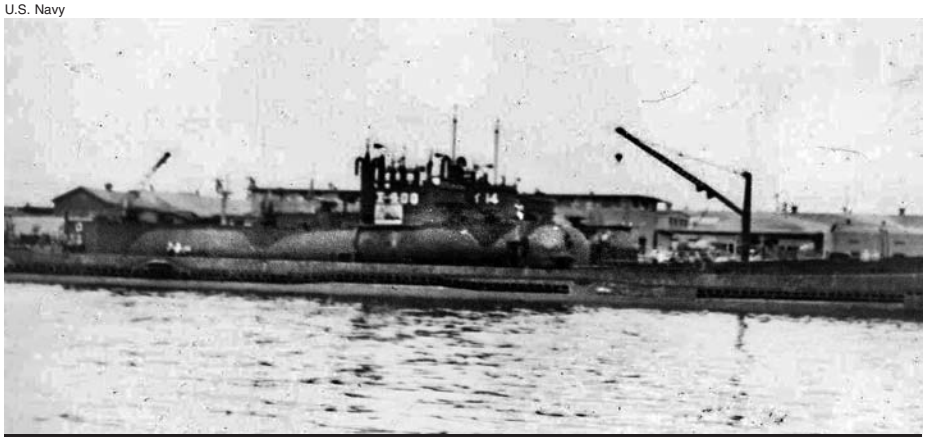
The crew, which numbered from 140 to 220 sailors per sub, had the extravagant luxury of a walk-in freezer for storing their on-board rations. Still, potable water was limited to mealtime servings only, and latrine service was less accommodating, with just one "head" per boat available.

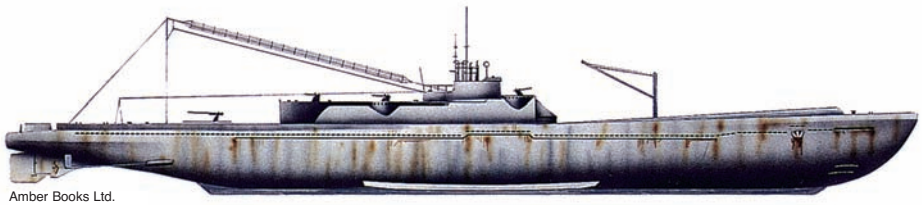
The I-400s were well armed. From their eight forward torpedoes tubes, 20 Type-95 torpedoes could be fired. On deck, three triple-barrel 25mm guns and one 25mm single-barrel gun were mounted. An even heavier gun—a 140mm/5.5-incher—was also part of the armament.

Another unique application was a slide. Once ordered to clear the deck for a dive, sailors rushed the hatch of the conning tower. Jumping inside, they slid down a funnel onto a cushioned landing spot, thus cutting the time it took to clear the deck by more than half that of regular subs.

In appearance there was an oddity in the I-400s' structure. From the bow's view, the conning tower jutted off-center to the right. This was done to facilitate the 115-foot-

U.S. Navy





Amber Books Ltd.

ABOVE: After the Japanese formally surrendered in September 1945, the Americans discovered the I-400 (foreground) and I-14 moored in Tokyo Bay. BELOW: An illustration of a 400-series submarine. They were 400 feet long–88 feet longer than a Balao-class American submarine. An onboard crane was used to retrieve the floatplanes.

long, 12-foot-wide, watertight aircraft hangar that housed the three attack floatplanes specially built by Aichi Aircraft Company of Nagoya just for the I-400 Series subs. Adjoining the hangar was an 80-foot-long pneumatic catapult.

In 1942 the Aichi company was put to work designing these floatplanes that became known as the M6A1 Seiran "Mountain Haze." Each plane required a crew of two—a pilot and a gunner. The gunner faced rearward in the back seat and manned a 12.7mm Type-2 machine gun.

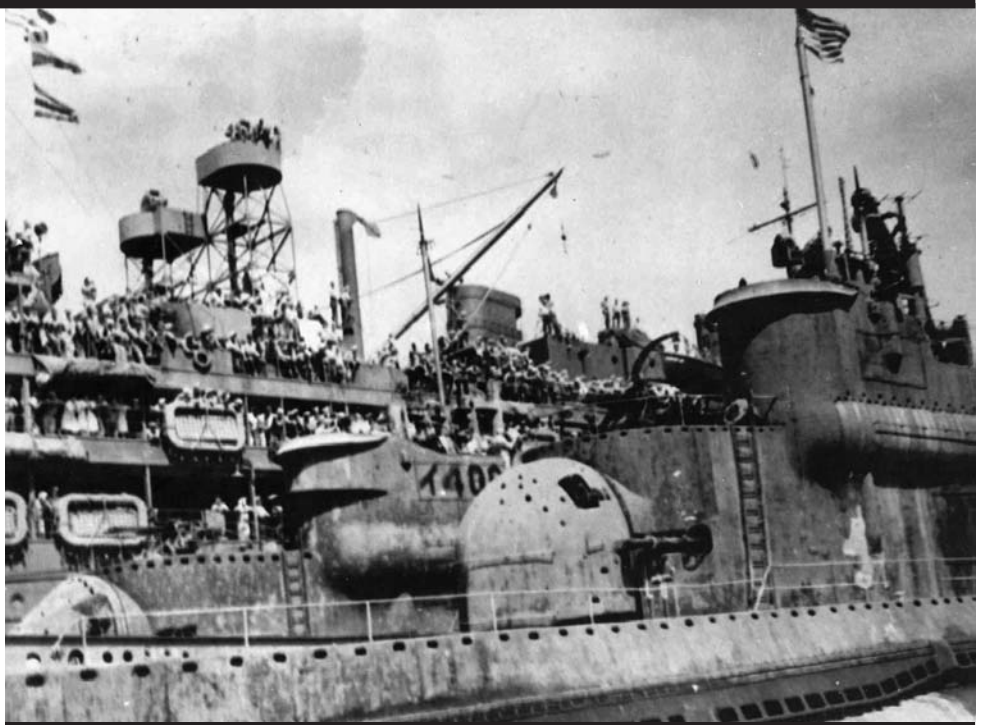
To save room in the subs' hangars, the plane's wings and tail had to be engineered to fold in along the fuselage. Instead of wheels, the Seirans came with two detachable floats. The bomb load came in varied combinations—two 551-pound bombs, one 1,764-pound bomb, or one 1,874-pound bomb. Once in flight, the Seiran could extend over

642 nautical miles/739 standard miles.

To expedite launch preparation, portions of the planes' exteriors were coated with fluorescent paint, thus allowing the four-man teams readying the planes for flight to work in a minimum amount of light. Once the subs surfaced, a four-man deck crew could launch all three planes within 45 minutes. (After numerous delays, by July 1945, only 28 Seirans had come off the production line—16 short of the intended goal.)

The sole reason for the planes' existence: to attack mainland America. All that was needed now was a target. Various targets were considered: West Coast cities and even Washington, D.C., were discussed. The idea of attacking the Panama Canal was also considered.

U.S. Navy



Sailors aboard the submarine tender USS *Proteus* (background) line the rails to view the I-400 and I-401 in Tokyo Bay, September 1945. The large rounded structure in the center of the photo is I-401's outer access door to the hangar.

Before attacks on any of those targets became operational, however, Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa set forth the I-400's first mission. For its short existence, it was known as Operation PX, based on the achievements of Special Unit 731.

Special Unit 731 was a large, permanent-structure complex established in Harbin, Manchuria, that was opened as soon as Japan gained control on the Asian mainland. The facility was disguised as a water-treatment plant, but its real purpose was to research the causes and effects of germ/biological warfare. Their test subjects were thousands of civilian and military prisoners of war. (See the sidebar.)

By the early months of 1945, Japan was hell-bent on bringing some form of warfare upon America's citizenry. Ozawa's plan was to have the four subs of Sub Division One—I-400, I-401, I-13, and I-14—sail for America's West Coast. Once in position they would launch their combined total of 10 Seirans with ceramic canister bombs filled with flea-bearing rodents infected with cholera, typhus, plague, and other pathogens designed to cause widespread illness in the United States. Previous attempts to launch such biological-warfare attacks on China had already been tried and found to be successful. The proposed target was San Diego, California.

Planning for the Panama Canal attack went forward. The birth of that plan came from two individuals with completely contradicting existences. One was a senior Japanese citizen who had once worked on the canal; he freely furnished to Japanese authorities hundreds of pages of personal notes, drafts, blueprints, and so on, that were in his possession.

The second source was less willing. He was an American soldier detained at the infamous Ofuna prisoner-of-war camp near Yokohama—a site that became well known for its excessively brutal, torturous treatment of inmates. This inmate had been stationed at the Panama Canal at the war's outbreak. With that known to his captors, he was tortured and grilled for all he knew of the canal's defensive positions. He informed his interrogators that as the war progressed and Japan lost more and more ground, the attentiveness of those guarding the canal had dwindled by the time he left there.

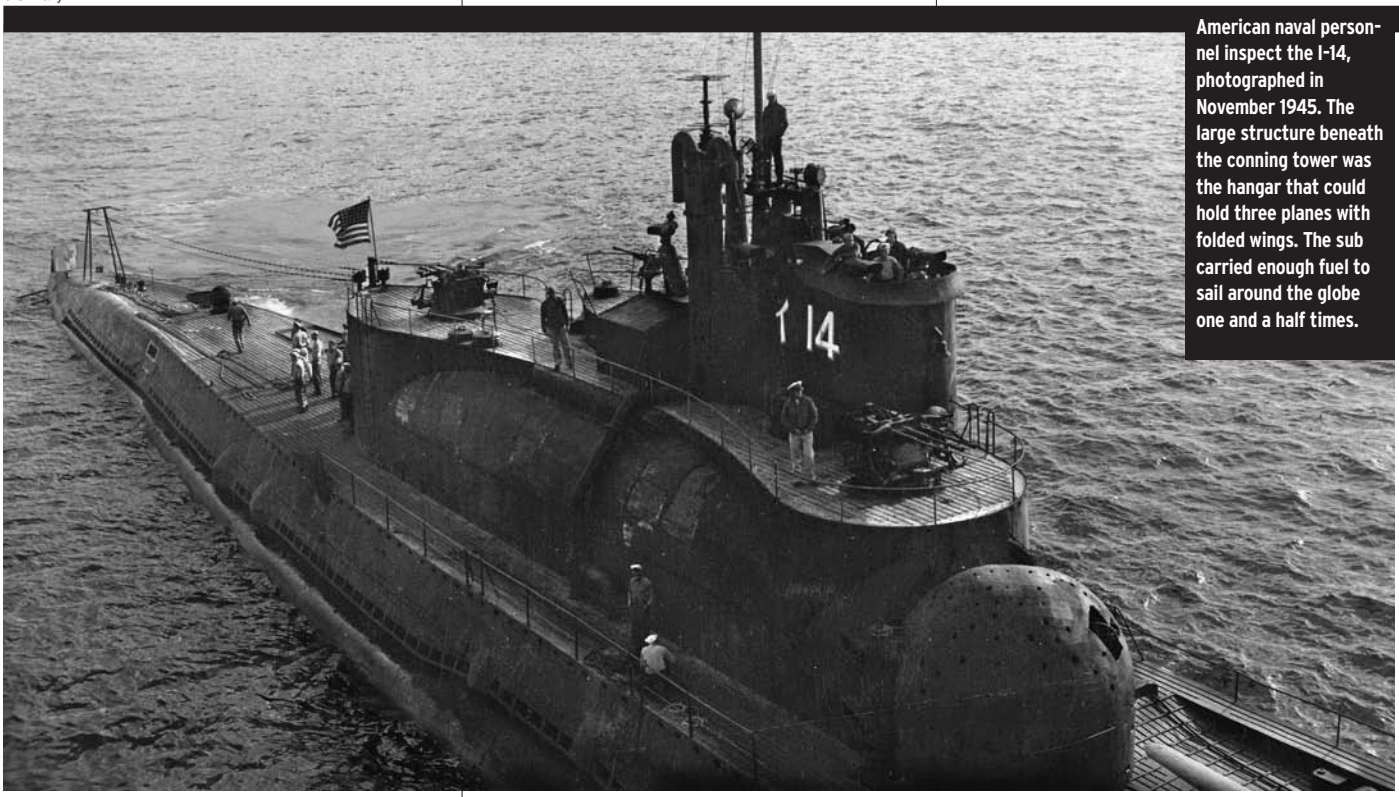
It was easy, then, for the planners to move forward at that point. The ultimate Panama Canal target was its Gatun Locks.

Preparations began on December 15, 1944. A new Japanese Navy Air Wing was created and dubbed the 631st Kokutai; their training program began 15 days later. The 631st consisted of 30 experienced combat pilots who shared one philosophical point of view: Suicidal flights were senseless and less productive than committing an attack, surviving it, and returning to attack again.

The 631st's first training site was the Sea of Japan's Toyama Bay, located on the northwest side of the main home island of Honshu. There a full-size mock-up of the Gatun Locks was set up, but training proceeded with mishap after mishap. The planes were slow to be delivered. At one point two Seirans, along with four crew members, were lost in separate accidents. Attacks by American sea and air forces on the area persisted unhindered. On January 23, 1945, the 631st relocated to the naval yard at Kure. Within two months the unit reestablished itself at Yashiro Jima, Iwakuni.

Two weeks later the I-400 that was docked at Kure suffered minor damage during an aerial attack, but the I-401 and

U.S. Navy



American naval personnel inspect the I-14, photographed in November 1945. The large structure beneath the conning tower was the hangar that could hold three planes with folded wings. The sub carried enough fuel to sail around the globe one and a half times.

I-13 escaped damage by putting to sea; the I-14 was already out to sea and avoided being struck.

Twelve days later American B-29s littered the Inland Sea with sea mines, and the pathway to be used by Sub Division One became an ongoing hazard. Crews of Sub Division One and of the 631st were running short on patience with seemingly nonstop American harassment.

Ozawa's intended date of attack after the final choice of the canal as target was September 22, 1945, but on March 26, 1945, Japan's Army Chief, General Yoshijiro Umez, nixed Ozawa's scheme. As America held such an overwhelming military advantage, he reasoned, far too much could be lost if Japan applied germ-warfare tactics.

By this time, however, a realization slammed home: Germany was on the verge of losing the war in Europe, and Japan, too, was in great danger. If the Allies won in Europe, it would be only a matter of time before the military might of the Western powers would be rushed from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and concentrated against Japan. To forestall this from happening, the war would have to be dragged out until more advantageous events favored Japan. Since the quickest path from one ocean to the other was through the Panama Canal, the canal would have to be taken out. With dwindling options, Japan's war chieftains were overwhelmingly agreeable to the Panama Canal plan. Instead of vulnerable surface aircraft carriers delivering the strike planes, this vital waterway would be destroyed via conventional aerial bombing, and accomplishing this mission became the sole reason for the existence of the I-400 series subs and Sub Division One.

Before the plan could be carried out, however, on April 1, 1945, the crucial battle for Okinawa began. Geographically, Okinawa is part of the far-reaching islands constituting the island nation of Japan. With that battle engaged, it was as if Japan itself was finally attacked.

By that time, Sub Division One was at Fukuyama, near Hiroshima, but then another impediment arose: a serious shortage of diesel fuel for IJN use. For Sub Division One to accomplish anything they would have to fetch their own fuel oil, so the I-400 went off to do just that. On April 14, the I-400 returned from Dairen, Manchuria, with 1,700 tons of fuel oil for its own use, and the I-13 and I-14 sailed for Chinkai, Korea, to acquire their share of fuel oil. (Originally the I-401 was designated to make the oil run. Having reached open sea, it brushed a sea mine and incurred damage. Damage was not severe but significant enough to force its return to harbor.)

Sub Division One was turned over to Captain Tatsunoke Ariizumi, formerly commander of the submarine I-8, where he had acquired a notorious record. Adhering to pressure from his top commanders, Ariizumi took to slaughtering survivors from ships the I-8 sunk. The survivors of one such sinking—the Dutch freighter SS *Tjisalak,* on March 26, 1944—were picked up in the water by an American vessel and Ariizumi's criminal actions were made known.

Ariizumi's plan for proceeding onward to the Panama Canal mirrored Yamamoto's Pearl Harbor approach of December 7, 1941. The four subs would set out with four months' worth of stored rations on board. They would cross the northern east-west corridor of the Pacific and, once past Hawaii, the four subs would steer south, avoiding Pearl Harbor altogether.

The four would then surface within 100 miles of the coast of Ecuador (at the time all of South America was neutral concerning the Pacific War). Ten Seirans would be launched, fly east, and cross over northern Colombia and out into the Caribbean Sea. They would then swing west and come back upon the canal and drop their ordnance. The planes would continue heading northwest in the direction of their waiting subs. The pilots would then ditch as close as possible to their subs, the flight crews would be plucked out of the water, and all would head for home. The mission, they hoped, would extend the war in the Pacific for months, if not years, and buy preciously needed time for Japan.

That was the plan for September 22, 1945, but even that plan got nipped in the bud. Okinawa was the nip. Geographically, the island is at the tail end of the long string of islands making up the multi-island nation of Japan. To the Japanese, the strike on Okinawa could mean only one thing: The next battlefields would be on the four main islands of Japan. The military leaders hastened to intervene in such a stratagem. On June 21, 1945, the 82-day battle of Okinawa ended in an American victory. For both sides, the focus now shifted to the Ulithi Atoll.

U.S. Navy

The I-14, I-401, and I-400 photographed in Tokyo Bay at war's end. They were later sunk in Hawaiian waters during torpedo tests by the U.S. Navy.

The Ulithi Atoll is part of the Caroline Islands. In sand and dirt the atoll holds just less than two square miles of dry soil. Within the atoll is sequestered a 210-square-mile deep-sea port. With the Japanese occupants giving minimum resistance, America's Navy had taken over the site on September 20, 1944. It was immediately transformed into a U.S. deep-sea service port and storage site. A Navy airstrip was laid out; a general, all-purpose hospital went up; and a desalinization plant made seawater potable.

Ulithi became important for one purpose: It was the collection point for the final assault on Japan. Within the 210 square miles of water surrounded by the atoll were hundreds of U.S. Navy ships of all sizes, sorts, shapes, and purposes; more than 20 were aircraft carriers. If the Japanese wanted to delay any attack on the home islands, the American fleet and facilities at Ulithi had to be severely damaged.

For the second time, Sub Division One's grand scheme to hit the Panama Canal was put aside. Starting June 12, 1945, at Nanao Bay, all training efforts would concentrate upon striking Ulithi. What was not known by the Japanese was how little time they had left.

Once back in home port, the I-13 and I-14 traded their Seiran torpedo bombers for more modest Nakajima C6N1 Saiun "Myrt" long-range reconnaissance planes; the Myrts would be delivered to Truk Island. What Ulithi and Pearl Harbor were to the Americans, Truk was to the IJN. Truk had been occupied by Japan in 1919 and, ever since, they had been building a deep-water port for future use.

The four Myrts would gather attack intelligence while six Seirans would do the attacking. In an effort to fool the Americans, the Seirans were painted with U.S. Air Force markings and color schemes; their silhouettes, at a distance, could easily be mistaken for American P-51 Mustangs.

On July 11, the I-13 left Ominato for Truk with two Nakajima C6N2 Ayagumo "Colored Cloud" long-range scout planes on board. Five days later it was caught out in the open by a Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bomber off the USS *Anzio* (CE-57) aircraft carrier. At that point the destroyer escort USS *Lawrence C. Taylo*r (DE-415) joyfully jumped in; the I-13 was discovered and sunk.

Meanwhile, with no communications between them, the I-400, I-401, and I-14 continued toward their rendezvous point for a joint attack on the U.S. base at Ulithi, but a two-day typhoon on July 28-29 interfered with their progress. Once the storm had subsided, the I-401 crossed paths with an unescorted U.S. tanker vessel; it was allowed to slip away so as not to reveal the I-401's presence. On August 4, the I-14 reached Truk, where the "Colored Cloud" planes were unloaded.

American surface ships and planes kept trailing and harassing Sub Division One, forcing Captain Ariizumi to keep issuing revised course plots to his remaining three subs. He then picked August 25 as the new date of attack against Ulithi, but first came August 6 and 8—the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Undeterred by this turn of events (and possibly not even knowing about them), at sunset on August 14, the I-401 showed up at the right spot near Ulithi, but the

other two subs were not there. The I-400 was still wandering about, unable to keep up with Ariizumi's constant changes.

On August 14, 1945, Japan's Emperor Hirohito issued a royal proclamation. It was actually a surrender notice: all Japanese land, sea, and aerial military units were to cease hostilities immediately and comply with all Allied authorities in terms of surrender. For Sub Division One that meant running on the surface displaying a black naval flag designating a ship being surrendered. On August 18, the three remaining Sen Toku subs received word to immediately set the quickest courses for their home ports. They were not to evade Allied or U.S. Navy ships if encountered, and to acquiesce to their directives.

The commanders and crews of Sub Division One had one major problem with those orders: believing them. It took a couple of days before the reality of the orders finally sank in, but the men became resigned to their humiliating fate: Japan had lost the war.

The remaining officers of Sub Division One stretched their orders a bit. They proceeded for home waters at 12 knots. On August 26, all three subs catapulted their planes, unmanned, out to sea, where they crashed and sank. The bombs were dropped overboard and all Type-95 torpedoes were fired into open water,

Bill Swisher Collection

A surviving Aichi M6A1 Seiran float plane photographed in 1956 at an unnamed Naval Air Station air. This aircraft is now restored and located at the NASM-Udvar-Hazy museum near Washington, D.C.

where they also sank. Then came the elimination of logs, journals, orders, notes, charts, and so on, to prevent the Americans from ever knowing how close they came to being attacked, let alone by what they would have attacked. Then the race for home was on.

The next day, Navy pilot Lieutenant Robert Mahoney of VT-1 Squadron, flying an Avenger off the carrier USS *Bennington* (CV-20), was the first American to see a Sen Toku sub. Mahoney looked down and there was the I-401; within minutes, the I-14 also came into view. Both subs notched up their speed but showed no sign of offering resistance. Mahoney had to convey to the I-401 to reverse course and follow him.

Aboard the I-401, its skipper, Commander Toshio Kusaka, played dumb to Mahoney's first pass and showed no signs of altering his sub's speed or path. The Avenger came alongside in a second pass, that time within 100 feet of the evading vessel. Mahoney extended an upright thumb with his remaining fingers clenched. Perhaps the Japanese were unfamiliar with America's "hitchhike" gesture. Kusaka pressed on. Feeling shunned by the I-401's apparent inattentiveness, Mahoney came back around even closer. In that pass his message came across loud and clear. It was a shaken clenched fist—a gesture

SPECIAL UNIT 731: JAPAN'S TORTURE SPECIALISTS

Special Unit 731 was one of numerous "Special Units" spread across Japanese occupied territory whose role in conducting ghoulish medical experiments and other cruelties on living human subjects mirrored that of the Nazis. The units were identified by arbitrarily issued facility numbers, such as 543, 773, 100, 1644, and 1858.

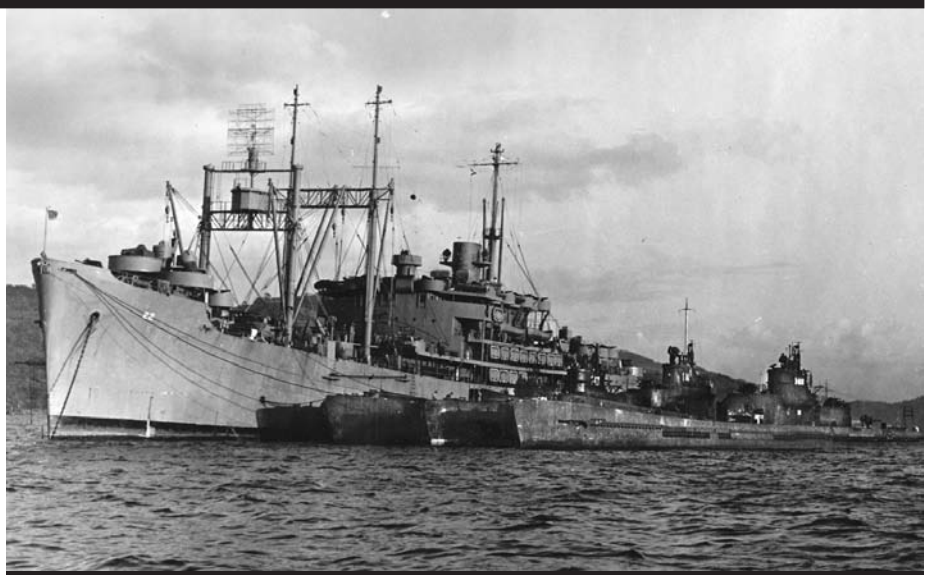
Special Unit 731 went into operation in 1932 at Harbin, Manchuria, and became a 150-building, permanent-structure facility. A minimum of 9,000 known victims died from research done there—brutal, inhumane, tortured deaths. Projects focused on draining subjects of blood, then providing transfusions from various animals. The goal was to see if such transfusions would sustain life.

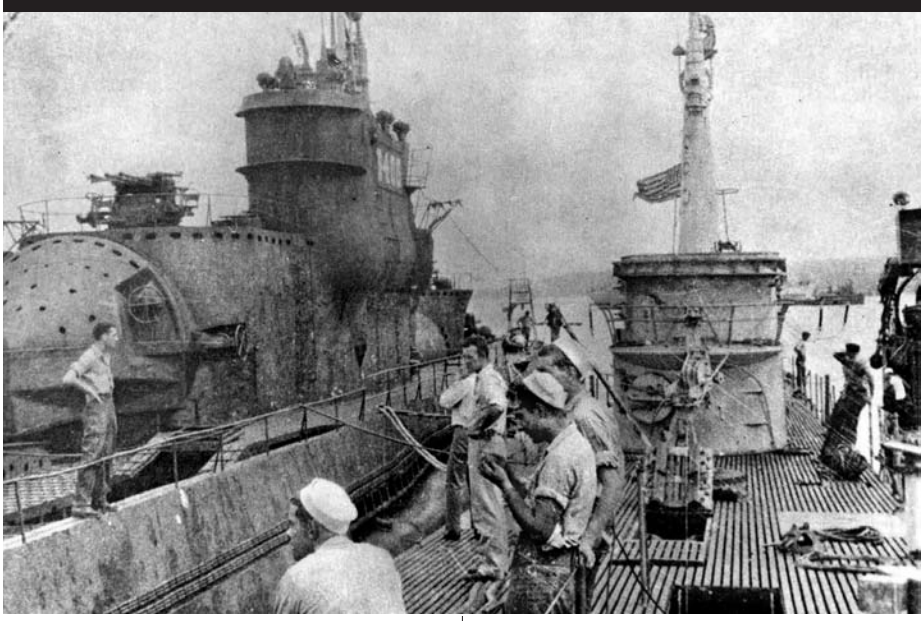
For the benefit of Japanese pilots, Chinese victims were subjected to high-altitude simulators to see how high a human body could possibly fly before the eyes exploded. Others were exposed to variations of extreme weather conditions to evaluate medicine's best approach for saving recovered downed Japanese pilots. Other experiments involved loading subjects down with 44-pound backpacks and putting them on forced marches until they dropped dead, the curiosity being how long a human body could be worked on the least calorie intake.

Producing and spreading food poison also became a topic worth pursuing. In 1942, under supervision of Special Unit 731 Medical Director Shiro Ishi, the Japanese Army used germ warfare weapons against Chinese soldiers and civilians.

At the end of World War II, America's top military commanders in the Pacific granted immunity to operators of such camps as Special Unit 731 and spared them war-crime indictments. Shortly after the war, General Douglas MacArthur released the following statement: "The value to the U.S. of Japanese biological warfare data is of such importance to national security as to far outweigh the value accruing from war crimes' prosecution."□

Both: U.S. Navy





ABOVE: Japan's three surviving 400-series aircraft-carrying subs are tied up alongside the submarine tender USS *Euryale* at Sasebo in November 1945 prior to being transferred to Hawaii for secret tests. BELOW: A object of great curiosity, the I-400 attracted considerable attention from American submariners from the much smaller USS *Blower* in Tokyo Bay.

unavoidably clear in its internationally well-known sign language.

The I-401 reduced speed and, on August 29, the American submarine SS *Segundo* (SS-398) closed in and boarded it. Meanwhile, the I-14 was tailed by the U.S. destroyers *Murray* (DD-576) and *Dashell* (DD-659). Although within 300 miles of his home-port destination, Tsuruzo Shimizu gave up his flight and allowed his sub to be escorted to port.

By 5:30 PM, the destroyers *Blue* (DD-744) and *Mansfield* (DD-728) spotted the I-400. Whereas the surfaced I-400, with some of its crew on deck, took in the unfolding events with curiosity, those aboard the destroyers saw it in a different light. A sizable gathering of I-400 crewmen clustered around the 5.5-inch deck gun created suspicions among the Americans about Japanese intentions. The giant sub was ordered to come to a complete halt or be fired upon. Those upon the I-400, with no malicious intent, were just awe-struck and gawking at the warships hovering around them, but the sub's skipper wisely complied with the order.

Captain Ariizumi knew full well that, upon return to port, he would be arrested and tried as a war criminal for his actions surrounding the Tjisalak incident and an American Liberty Ship massacre. To spare his family the pain and embarrassment of such an end, he retired to his cabin and, on August 30, shot himself. His body was wrapped in a Japanese flag by his crew and buried at sea.

One by one the Japanese subs were boarded by American sailors. Communication between opposing officers was not a complication; Japanese naval officers were by-products of their country's Naval Academy, required to master a foreign language, and English always topped the list.

It was an odd meeting aboard the subs. The Americans wore fresh, clean uniforms. They were shaved and immaculate in dress and appearance. Their counterparts were in dirty, rumpled uniforms and far along from applying a shaving razor to their beards after weeks at sea.

All three subs returned to an American-occupied Japan. The Americans quickly familiarized themselves with each sub and marveled at them. So the Americans could analyze them further, the three subs sailed away from Japan in the greatest secrecy and headed for Hawaii. There the American Navy went to great lengths studying the engineering of the I-400 series. According to postwar agreements, all the victorious Allied powers were to share what was garnished from their defeated enemies, but the I-400 series subs were not something the U.S. Navy was going to share with the Communist Soviet Union.

After all the information was gleaned, to keep the Sen Toku's secrets secret, the I-401 was purposely torpedoed off the northwest coast of Hawaii during testing of America's Mark 10-3 torpedo; the other three met the same fate. (In March 2005, the remains of the I-401 were discovered at a depth of 2,665 feet by the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory.)

Had not Hiroshima and Nagasaki intervened, there is no telling how the saga of the I-400 series submarines might have ended. □

As a POW in Oflag XIII-B with Patton's son-in-law, Lieutenant Herndon Inge, Jr., had a front-row seat to Operation Baum, the disastrous attempt to liberate the camp.

IN DECEMBER 1944 the vaunted Third Reich was in its death throes, crushed by Allied forces on all sides. While Stalin's Red Army thrust its way through Eastern Europe, Anglo-American forces had liberated France and were on Germany's western borders. Adolf Hitler had enough resources to stage a final offensive, a last throw of the dice to stave off an inevitable and ignominious defeat.

The result was the Ardennes offensive of December 1944 to January 1945, usually called the "Battle of the Bulge," in reference to the how the Allied line gave way to the German onslaught. The goal of Hitler's plan, which even his generals thought was quixotic, was to seize the port of Antwerp, at the same time dividing Allied forces in two.

But thanks to the heroic resistance of such units as the 101st Airborne, and the return of good weather, which meant Allied planes could once more take to the air, Hitler's offensive ran out of steam. Allied forces advanced, reducing the "bulge" and pushing the Germans back to their original starting point.

In January 1945, Lieutenant Herndon Inge, Jr., was serving with the 94th Infantry Division, part of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's famous Third Army. The 94th was in the process of punching through Germany's fortified Siegfried Line (West Wall), but progress was slow, and the weather bitterly cold. Lieutenant Inge was cut off near Orscholz and captured by the Germans.

BELOW: Smashing the gate at Oflag XIII-B POW camp, an American tank is greeted with cheers from American prisoners.

Eventually Inge found himself in Oflag (Offizierlager) XIII-B, an officers' POW camp that held some 1,200 American and 3,000 Serbian officers at the German town of Hammelburg, near Schweinfurt. Lt. Col. John Knight Waters, Patton's son-in-law [married to Patton's oldest daughter, Bee], who had been captured in North Africa, was also in the camp, setting the stage for one of the most controversial episodes of the war. Patton ordered XII Corps commander Manton S. Eddy to have William M. Hoge's 4th Armored Division form a task force (Task Force Baum) and send it on a mission 50 miles behind enemy lines to liberate Oflag XIII-B. Patton later denied all knowledge of his son-in-law's whereabouts at the camp, but there is evidence to the contrary.

Task Force Baum—named after its commander, Captain Abraham Baum—set out on March 26, 1945. There were 10 M4A3 Sherman medium tanks, six M5A1 Stuart light tanks, three self-propelled 105mm guns, 27 half-tracks, and eight jeeps. Total command strength was a little over 300 men.

TF Baum reached its objective, but its triumph was fleeting. Baum's command was quickly cut off by the Germans and annihilated; 26 were killed in action, and the majority were forced to surrender. Only a handful made it back to Allied lines. The rest joined the other POWs and waited for liberation, which finally came a few weeks later.

What follows is an interview with Herndon Inge, Jr., by the author.

Niderost: First, some background. Where were you born, and where did you grow up? What occupation did your father have?

Inge: I am the third of seven children, and was born in Chickasaw, Alabama, a suburb of Mobile, on March 4, 1920. My father was employed at the shipyard there during World War I and we later moved to Mobile in 1925. He later worked for the *Mobile Register* and the Equitable Life Insurance Company.

How was your family impacted by the

Great Depression?

When the Depression came, my brother, Zeb, and I quit Murphy High School and went to work in a filling station. While working there I finished high school and went to Spring Hill College for one year, and then three years to the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, where I had a job at the treasurer's office.

How did you end up in the United States Army?

I graduated from the University of Alabama Commerce School with a BS degree in May 1943 and, having finished the ROTC advanced course, went to the Infantry Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, graduating as a second lieutenant on September 7, 1944. I was ordered to Company D, 301st Regiment of the 94th Infantry Division at Camp McCain, Mississippi.

When were you shipped to Europe?

After pre-overseas training and maneuvers at Camp McCain, the entire division sailed from New York on August 6, 1944, on the RMS *Queen Elizabeth,* which had been converted to a troopship. We arrived at Grennock, Scotland, six days later and went by train to Wiltshire in southern England.

What were your combat experiences prior to the Battle of the Bulge?

The 94th Infantry Division landed on Utah Beach on D-Day-plus-90, September 6, 1944. My D Company was in combat in Normandy until January 1, 1945, containing the Germans in the ports of Lorient and St. Nazaire. [Note: These hold-out garrisons, long cut off, contributed little to the German war effort.] When the Germans attacked the Americans in the Ardennes Forest [Battle of the Bulge], the 94th was sent into Germany [Rhineland] and entered combat January 1, 1945, at the base of the Saar-Moselle triangle in the Siegfried Line near Trier, Germany. The 94th was in Patton's Third Army, and in my opinion Patton was the outstanding American general of the European campaign in World War II.

Where exactly did the 94th Infantry Division attack?

Lieutenant Herndon Inge, Jr., photographed during the war.

The 94th Division was deployed against a fortified section of the Siegfried Line. The Germans put up a stiff resistance to the attacking Americans. The line consisted of trenches, pillboxes, "dragon's teeth" barriers, antitank ditches, and extensive mine fields. There were also trenches, barbed wire, and prepared concentrations of mortars, and 88mm artillery on the Western Front.

There were elements of the 11th Panzer, 123rd Infantry, and 273 Reserve Panzer Divisions there. They had been badly mauled on the Eastern Front prior to their transfer west, but they were still formidable fighters. In fact, the 11th Panzer was called the "Ghost Division" because, after their decimation, they were mere "specters" of what they had been. Describe the events leading up to your capture.

Well, I was the forward observer for the six mortars of Company D, the heavy weapons company of the 1st Battalion of the 301st Regiment. My duties as the forward observer required me to be with the point of the column and radio back to the mortars with firing instructions.

I was attached to Company B, the rifle company commanded by Captain Herman C. Staub. They were chosen to lead the attack on Orscholz. We had stopped at the woods' edge and looked over several hundred yards of snow-covered fields. On the far side we could see "dragon's teeth" [concrete barriers]. Two scouts were sent out over the fields, and we were not far behind them. We made sure we stepped in their deep footprints, since we were certain the area was covered with Schu mines laid out by the Germans and hidden in the snow.

Did the Germans eventually discover you?

I remember the popping of the machine-gun bullets in the cold, gray dawn as the Germans discovered us and sprayed the area. Behind me, Schu mines exploded as the men stepped on them. As they fell, they cried for medics over the sounds of gunfire. Then the German 88s opened up on us.… I remember the shells and their deafening explosion on impact.

You were eventually cut off?

Yes, but first we had to take cover in shell holes, trenches, and woods while the German artillery and mortar fire continued unabated. We stayed the night of January 20, 1945, in a cold, narrow trench. We continually fired our rifles and carbines into the darkness and threw all of our hand grenades. We were soon out of ammunition.

What happened the next morning?

Captain Straub called the officers together to say we would try and make our way back down the road and across the open field to where the rest of the battalion had dug in. As we headed out, an 88 shell shrieked in and exploded near a tree trunk over my head. My runner, Pfc.

Harley Terrell, and I crowded down to the bottom of the trench, our helmets touching. After the blast, I said, "Let's get out of here, Terrell." He did not move, and I saw a jagged hole in the top of his steel helmet. I lifted it up, and saw his face was bloody, and there was a big hole in his forehead. I was too shocked to cry or speak, and my stomach cramped with nausea.

When did you actually get captured?

I called to the remaining men in the trench and said, "Follow me!" Bullets were popping everywhere, and the 88s were exploding in the snow. We ran up a hill and into a concrete bunker; I found it was crowded with dead and wounded GIs. The Germans surrounded the bunker and called out in English for us to come out with our hands up. After we laid down our rifles and carbines, we were told to follow some armed Germans.

Describe the first few days of your captivity.

We were marched to the rear in the snow. An English-speaking German officer told us that we were prisoners of the German Army, and that anyone trying to escape would cause the other remaining prisoners to be shot. After that, we joined a large group of Americans who had been taken earlier.

After being loaded in open trucks, we were taken several miles to the rear and crossed the Saar River on a barge at night. American mortar rounds and artillery continued to fall on the area and roads. We traveled all night in open trucks in the snow and sleet. No food or water was provided for several days.

We then marched along the open, snow-covered roads, often taking cover in the ditches and woods as American P-51 and P-47 planes strafed the roads and countryside.

You eventually made it to Oflag XIII-B, near Hammelburg in Bavaria. What was the camp like?

We now found ourselves to be *Kriegsgefangen* [war prisoners], or "kriegies" for short. The camp consisted of tar-paper-covered buildings heated by oil-burning heaters and surrounded by barbed-wire fences with watch towers and heavily armed German soldiers. There was a large

General Patton's son-in-law, Lt. Col. John Waters, photographed in Tunisia in 1943. This photo is from Patton's personal collection.

number of American prisoners at Hammelburg. [Note: Besides Battle of the Bulge American POWs, there were also Americans coming in from POW camps in Poland, primarily Oflag 64 at Szubin. They were moved to prevent their liberation by the Russians advancing from the east. One of these was Patton's son-in-law, Colonel Waters. There were some 1,500 American officer POWs by March of 1945. In a separate but nearby camp were 4,000 Serbian POWs.]

I understand the conditions of the camp were bad. Dysentery was rife, and even in the barracks temperatures were near freezing.

Very little heat and food were provided by the Germans. As I said, the buildings were tar-paper-covered and heated by pot-bellied stoves. There was not enough firewood to keep the buildings warm, and we all huddled together for warmth.

What was the daily routine in camp, besides trying to stay warm and alive? Were there any escape attempts?

A daily news bulletin reached us some days and was read out at roll call by English-speaking German guards. There was a chess set, and games went on constantly. One person would end a game, and another person would take his seat and begin a new game. There wasn't any attempt to escape. We were cold, weak, and hungry. Besides, we knew we would be liberated soon. We could often hear the rumble of American guns in the distance. The prisoners stayed inside mostly, though during the day there was some warmth in the sun beside the buildings.

What about the German guards? How were you treated?

The American prisoners were not mistreated. It was mainly a lack of heat, food, and comforts that we lacked. We saw very little of the German officers, but the German soldiers were in the watchtowers and well armed. Noncommissioned German officers were in charge. The German guards were not particularly friendly, but "correct." Perhaps it was also because they knew the war would soon be over.

When was your first indication that Task Force Baum had arrived at the camp?

The first sign that the Americans were coming was seeing German trucks and tanks speeding by the compound. Later we saw American tanks [of Baum's command] arrive, and they broke through the barbed-wire fences in several places. The Shermans fired their guns overhead and to each side. At about 2:30 in the afternoon, two big Shermans broke through the double barbed-wire fence, trailing the uprooted fence posts and wire. Shells continued to explode around the perimeter of the camp, but a joyous feeling of liberation prevailed.

Eventually you were told that, perhaps, all was not well—that Task Force Baum would have to try to make it back to the American lines, still some 50 miles away.

It was almost dark when I walked through the gaping hole in the fence and walked up the hill. The POWs were gathered around the tanks in small groups. I recall an American officer [Baum himself] getting up on a tank and stating they expected reinforcements to come up soon, but that the tanks would try and get back to the American lines.

It was discouraging, and many of the newly liberated POWs, most of them weak and hungry, trudged back to the camp. About 200, including yourself, decided to take their chances with the tanks and attempt to get back to the American lines.

It appeared that there was not enough room on the tanks for all the liberated prisoners to be evacuated. It was thought that later reinforcements and trucks would arrive [for the rest].

You and five or six other POWs clung to the topside of a Sherman tank. It proved a wild ride, when Germans starting lobbing *panzerfaust* [antitank] rounds at the column.

One of the rockets swooshed by my head like a Roman candle as it went past and exploded in the woods. I felt the heat, and crouched down and hung on. If the round had been a few inches closer and had hit the tank, all of us hanging on the tank would have been killed.

When the column slowed down, I climbed down and ran back 10 or 12 tanks and other vehicles and climbed up on the back of a half-track. I felt relieved I was no longer at the head of the column.

I hung on to the back of that half-track for hours. As it began to get light, Colonel Paul Goode climbed up on a tank and announced that those of us who wanted to stay with the task force and fight could do so. He, however, was opting to return to the Oflag. Most of the POWs, including myself, followed him. We walked down a narrow dirt road in the German countryside.

You had some close calls, but you narrowly missed the final annihilation of Task Force Baum.

After we had only gone about a mile, we heard the noise of a terrific battle taking place. We could also see columns of black smoke rising up over the trees. The Germans had surrounded the task force and were firing with everything that they had.

The march back to Oflag XIII-B must have been exhausting as well as bitterly disappointing.

We trudged the 11 or 12 miles back to the Oflag, and had not eaten or had a drink of water for over 24 hours. We also hadn't slept. The German soldiers had returned to the camp, but now they were equipped for combat.

They marched us a couple of miles down the steep road to the rail yards at Hammelburg, where we were ordered to get into boxcars and were locked in. We were the targets of our own P-47 and P-51 air attacks and were given no food or water.

Herndon Inge, Jr., in a recent photgraph.

The next afternoon we arrived at Nürnberg at the heavily damaged rail yards and marched to a prison camp there [Nürnberg-Langwasser].

Many able-bodied POWS were taken to Nürnberg, but others—particularly the sick and wounded—remained behind at Hammelburg. Oflag XIII-B was liberated a second time on April 6, 1945, by the U.S. 14th Armored Division. How was your own liberation?

They broke through the barbed-wire fence and met little resistance, since all the German guards had left. We were marched to an open field and flown by C-47 planes to Nancy, France.

After a few days at the hospital at Nancy, we went through Paris to Camp Lucky Strike [near Le Havre] in Normandy. We were kept there for several days receiving physical exams, uniforms, then it was on to the *Jonathan Trumble,* a troopship, where we arrived in New York on June 6, 1945.

During the arrival of TF Baum, Lt. Col. Waters saw the American tanks firing at gray-clad troops they assumed to be Germans; they were actually Serbian POWs. While going out with a white flag to inform the tankers of their error, Waters was shot by a German guard and taken back to the camp hospital, where a Serbian doctor did his best to save him.

Meanwhile, while trying to battle his way out of the encircling German units, Captain Baum, too, was wounded; he and Waters recuperated together in the infirmary until the camp was liberated. For his heroic but failed actions, Baum later received the Distinguished Service Cross; Waters also recovered and eventually became a four-star general.

Of the 314 officers and men in TF Baum, 26 were killed. A handful made it back to American lines while the rest were taken prisoner. All 54 of TF Baum's tanks and other vehicles were either destroyed or captured by the Germans.

Although Patton forever maintained that he did not order the raid to rescue his son-in-law, others, including Baum, believed he did exactly that. Patton had sent an aide, Major Alexander Stiller, along with the task force, purportedly to identify Waters and make sure that he was taken to safety. Patton wrote in a letter to his wife, Beatrice: "I sent a column to a place 40 miles east of where John [Waters] and some 900 prisoners are said to be. I have been nervous as a cat… as everyone but me thought it too great a risk…. If I lose that column, it will possibly be a new incident. But I won't lose it."

On April 5, Patton, not yet knowing if Waters was dead or alive, again wrote to Beatrice: "I feel terribly. I tried hard to save him and may be the cause of his death."

General Eisenhower was furious with Patton for the failed rescue attempt and the loss of so many men and vehicles. For his part, Patton was unrepentant, admitting only to the mistake of sending too small a force to perform the mission: "I can say this, that throughout the campaign in Europe I know of no error I made except that of failing to send a combat command [a full armored regiment] to take Hammelburg."

But, as Patton's biographer Carlo D'Este noted, "Hammelburg was the least defensible decision [Patton] ever made, and nearly as self-destructive as the slappings [of American soldiers in Sicily].... Hammelburg has become an enduring stain on Patton's reputation." □

Great Depression?

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When the column slowed down, I climbed down and ran back 10 or 12 tanks and other vehicles and climbed up on the back of a half-track. I felt relieved I was no longer at the head of the column.

I hung on to the back of that half-track for hours. As it began to get light, Colonel Paul Goode climbed up on a tank and announced that those of us who wanted to stay with the task force and fight could do so. He, however, was opting to return to the Oflag. Most of the POWs, including myself, followed him. We walked down a narrow dirt road in the German countryside.

You had some close calls, but you narrowly missed the final annihilation of Task Force Baum.

After we had only gone about a mile, we heard the noise of a terrific battle taking place. We could also see columns of black smoke rising up over the trees. The Germans had surrounded the task force and were firing with everything that they had.

The march back to Oflag XIII-B must have been exhausting as well as bitterly disappointing.

We trudged the 11 or 12 miles back to the Oflag, and had not eaten or had a drink of water for over 24 hours. We also hadn't slept. The German soldiers had returned to the camp, but now they were equipped for combat.

They marched us a couple of miles down the steep road to the rail yards at Hammelburg, where we were ordered to get into boxcars and were locked in. We were the targets of our own P-47 and P-51 air attacks and were given no food or water.

Herndon Inge, Jr., in a recent photgraph.

The next afternoon we arrived at Nürnberg at the heavily damaged rail yards and marched to a prison camp there [Nürnberg-Langwasser].

Many able-bodied POWS were taken to Nürnberg, but others—particularly the sick and wounded—remained behind at Hammelburg. Oflag XIII-B was liberated a second time on April 6, 1945, by the U.S. 14th Armored Division. How was your own liberation?

They broke through the barbed-wire fence and met little resistance, since all the German guards had left. We were marched to an open field and flown by C-47 planes to Nancy, France.

After a few days at the hospital at Nancy, we went through Paris to Camp Lucky Strike [near Le Havre] in Normandy. We were kept there for several days receiving physical exams, uniforms, then it was on to the *Jonathan Trumble,* a troopship, where we arrived in New York on June 6, 1945.

During the arrival of TF Baum, Lt. Col. Waters saw the American tanks firing at gray-clad troops they assumed to be Germans; they were actually Serbian POWs. While going out with a white flag to inform the tankers of their error, Waters was shot by a German guard and taken back to the camp hospital, where a Serbian doctor did his best to save him.

Meanwhile, while trying to battle his way out of the encircling German units, Captain Baum, too, was wounded; he and Waters recuperated together in the infirmary until the camp was liberated. For his heroic but failed actions, Baum later received the Distinguished Service Cross; Waters also recovered and eventually became a four-star general.

Of the 314 officers and men in TF Baum, 26 were killed. A handful made it back to American lines while the rest were taken prisoner. All 54 of TF Baum's tanks and other vehicles were either destroyed or captured by the Germans.

Although Patton forever maintained that he did not order the raid to rescue his son-in-law, others, including Baum, believed he did exactly that. Patton had sent an aide, Major Alexander Stiller, along with the task force, purportedly to identify Waters and make sure that he was taken to safety. Patton wrote in a letter to his wife, Beatrice: "I sent a column to a place 40 miles east of where John [Waters] and some 900 prisoners are said to be. I have been nervous as a cat… as everyone but me thought it too great a risk…. If I lose that column, it will possibly be a new incident. But I won't lose it."

On April 5, Patton, not yet knowing if Waters was dead or alive, again wrote to Beatrice: "I feel terribly. I tried hard to save him and may be the cause of his death."

General Eisenhower was furious with Patton for the failed rescue attempt and the loss of so many men and vehicles. For his part, Patton was unrepentant, admitting only to the mistake of sending too small a force to perform the mission: "I can say this, that throughout the campaign in Europe I know of no error I made except that of failing to send a combat command [a full armored regiment] to take Hammelburg."

But, as Patton's biographer Carlo D'Este noted, "Hammelburg was the least defensible decision [Patton] ever made, and nearly as self-destructive as the slappings [of American soldiers in Sicily].... Hammelburg has become an enduring stain on Patton's reputation." □

The Hawaiian island of Oahu is home to numerous museums, exhibits, and memorials of World War II.

THERE ARE FEW places on earth that have as many World War II museums, memorials, and monuments located in such a small area as the island of Oahu. Here are a few of the most significant:

Pearl Harbor

Over 90 percent of the tourists who come to Oahu visit Pearl Harbor. To begin your tour, start at the U.S. Navy Base at Pearl Harbor and proceed to the Visitor Center, where you will board a Navy launch that takes you out to the USS *Arizona* Memorial. Here you will find the names of all the American servicemen who lost their lives aboard the battleship that fateful day. You can also view the remains of the sunken ship (which is still leaking oil) in the clear, shallow waters of Pearl Harbor. A visit to the *Arizona* Memorial is a solemn and moving experience, even for those who had not yet been born when the attack occurred.

The launch will also take you around Ford Island, where you can see the upturned hull of the World War I battleship USS *Utah* (BB-31), which was being used as a state-of-the-art bombing and submarine target and anti-aircraft gunnery training ship at the time of the attack. (The USS *Utah* memorial can be visited while on a tour of Ford Island.)

The USS *Arizona* Memorial, at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii, marks the resting place of 1,102 of the 1,177 sailors killed on the *Arizona* during the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

As one of Hawaii's most popular tourist attractions, the wait for the tour to begin can be an hour or more. (For hours, location, directions, fees, etc., see the website: www.pacifichistoricparks.org/pearl-harbor-hawaii)

The *Bowfin* is located within walking distance of the visitor center for the USS *Arizona* Memorial and the USS *Missouri* Museum.

USS *Bowfin* Submarine Museum, Pearl Harbor

Also located at Pearl Harbor is the USS *Bowfin* Submarine Museum. Nicknamed the "Pearl Harbor Avenger," the *Bowfin* is one of only 15 U.S. subs that did not end up as scrap, used for target practice, or sold to other nations after the war. (For hours, location, directions, admission fees, etc., see the website: www.bowfin.org)

USS *Missouri*, Pearl Harbor

Another major attraction at Pearl Harbor is the USS *Missouri* (BB-63)—the battleship on which the articles of surrender were signed by representatives of the Empire of Japan on September 2, 1945. The *Missouri*—nicknamed the "Mighty Mo"—is itself a floating museum and memorial. The Mighty Mo and her three Iowa-class sisters were the largest, most powerful warships ever built.

During the final month of the war, the *Missouri* served as Admiral William "Bull" Halsey's flagship while he was in command of the U.S. Pacific Third Fleet. Her 16-inch guns fired shells that were as

The USS *Missouri* was decommissioned on March, 31 1992 at Long Beach, California, and opened as a museum in 1999.

heavy as Volkswagens and could travel up to 23 miles in less than a minute.

So potent a warship was she that the *Missouri* also fought during the Korean War and the Gulf War of 1991. She was then retired, mothballed, then refurbished to serve as the floating museum she is today. (For hours, location, directions, admission fees, etc., see the website: www.ussmissouri.com)

F4F-3 Wildcat on display representing Cactus Air during the Battle of Guadalcanal.

Pacific Aviation Museum, Ford Island, Pearl Harbor

While at Pearl Harbor, don't miss the Pacific Aviation Museum, located in Hangar 37 on Ford Island. The war in the Pacific could not have been won without air power, so this fine collection of now-rare vintage aircraft and many other exhibits paying tribute to the brave aviators is on display. (For hours, location, directions, admission fees, etc., see the websites: www.pacificaviation museum-com and www.pacifichistoricparks.org/pearl-harbor-hawaii

National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific

It takes only one visit to a national military cemetery to truly understand the idea that "freedom isn't free," and few military cemeteries convey that idea more movingly than the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, just north of downtown Honolulu. Here in the crater of a long-dormant volcano, more than 49,000 men and women who died while fighting in the Pacific Theater are buried. (For hours,

The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific occupies much of Punchbowl Crater.

location, directions, etc., see the website: www2.va. gov/directory/guide)

Hickam Field, Wheeler Army Airfield, Fort Shafter, and Schofield Barracks

If they are open for civilian visitors, drop in at Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Fort Shafter, and Schofield Barracks on Oahu and see bullet marks in some of the buildings' walls made by the strafing Japanese planes. Fort Shafter is the oldest U.S. military base on Oahu, completed in 1907, and looks identical to the way it did on December 7, 1941. Japanese attack aircraft strafed Schofield Barracks, the largest Army base outside the continental United States and home to the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions, while on their way to bomb Wheeler Field and Pearl Harbor. At the museum dedicated to the 25th Infantry Division, you will find World War II photos, tanks, and weapons. (For hours, locations, directions, etc., see the websites: www.nps.gov/nr/travel/aviation/hic www.nps.gov/nr/travel/aviation/whe www.cobases.com/hawaii/fort-shafter www.cobases.com/hawaii/schofield-barracks)

Brécourt Manor

Continued from page 69

Stephen Ambrose published *Band of Brothers*, a history of Easy Company's exploits in World War II; the battle is well depicted in its pages. In 2002, HBO premiered a television miniseries of the same title, recreating the battle for a national audience.

In addition, Dick Winters, who corresponded with the veterans of Brécourt for Ambrose's book, donated his entire collection to the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Aspiring leaders can now examine the battle, and other Easy Company experiences, for themselves.

Altogether, 21 paratroopers attacked approximately 50 Germans and successfully disabled four artillery pieces. Winters noted in his autobiography, "In all, we had suffered four dead, six wounded, and we had inflicted 15 dead and 12 captured on the enemy." It was a lopsided victory for the outnumbered paratroopers.

Winters said, "Even though Easy Company was still widely scattered, the small portion that fought at Brécourt had demonstrated the remarkable ability of the airborne trooper to fight, albeit outnumbered, and to win."

Buck Compton had his own view of the battle's outcome. "History has shown that troops landing at Utah Beach had an easier time landing due in part to what was accomplished at Brécourt. I'm happy about that. If our actions saved any of our boys' lives, that's part of what we were there to do."

He added, "There's a sense of guilt that will always be part of the war for me. It's the guilt I feel from making mistakes. It's the guilt I feel because I survived. Surviving a war is such a tricky thing. Why does one man live through a chaotic situation when another man doesn't? Out of all the horror of war, the guilt of survival is one of the things that haunts me most to this day. I will never know why I survived when so many others did not. When it comes to understanding any of this, I have long since given up trying." □

North Africa

Continued from page 47

tion, spares, and food was also disrupted, demoralizing the Italians. But German reinforcements began to arrive, formations that had been earmarked for the aborted attack on Malta—Ramcke's Parachute Brigade and the 164th Light. However, these had no transport and proved more of a burden than a help in the desert.

The Allied air force was concentrating on disrupting Rommel's fragile and elongated supply routes while British mobile forces were causing havoc in the Axis rear areas. Rommel could hardly afford these losses. He would later blame the failure to break through to the Nile on how the sources of supply to his army had dried up. He complained bitterly about the failure of important Italian convoys to deliver desperately needed tanks and supplies—always blaming the Italian Supreme Command.

There was a question of whether the reverses inflicted on Rommel during the summer and autumn of 1942 were due to the nonarrival of fuel from Italy or to the fortuitous sinking of a disproportinately large number of vitally important tankers.

No fuel reached Libya in the first week of October. The cargo ship *Francesco Barbaro*, en route to Benghazi via Greece, was torpedoed. The *Unione*, carrying fuel in the same convoy, was also torpedoed. Four days later, the fuel-carrying *Nino Bixio* was sunk by a torpedo-bomber.

In the Second Battle of El Alamein, October 23-November 4, 1942, the British Eighth Army broke the back of Rommel's Panzerarmee and began a long advance that would eventually take them all the way to Tunisia.

The Axis political situation necessitated supporting what was considered a less than useful force—the Italians. In terms of the larger picture, it seemed that, for all Rommel's tactical brilliance, the problem of supplying an Axis ground force for an advance to the Middle East was virtually insoluble.

Rommel's supply difficulties were in part due to the limited capacity of the Libyan ports, which not only determined the largest possible number of troops that could be maintained and the force mix, but also restricted the size of convoys, making escorting them expensive in terms of fuel and the warships employed. Once ashore the logisticians were faced with distances that were out of proportion to those the Wehrmacht encountered in Europe, including Russia, along with an insufficient number of trucks. While coastal shipping was employed, given the RAF's domination of the skies, its effect was limited. Given this, only a railway might have helped to solve the overland problem. The Italians, however, never mobilized resources for this purpose. Finally, the Axis decision in the summer of 1942 not to occupy Malta had far less to do with the outcome of the struggle in North Africa than the fact that the port of Tobruk was too small and exposed to attacks by the RAF.

Under such circumstances, Hitler's original decision to send a force to defend a limited area in North Africa seemed correct. Rommel's repeated defiance of his orders and attempts to advance beyond a reasonable distance from his base, however, were mistakes and should never have been allowed to happen.

Rommel was not unaware of the logistics situation he faced. The Rommel Papers state, "The first essential condition for an army to be able to stand the stress of battle is an adequate stock of weapons, petrol and ammunition. In fact, the battle is fought and decided by the quartermasters before the shooting begins." But he was forced to rely on either the Italian Commando Supremo or Kesselring to transport his supplies across the Mediterranean.

There seemed little that the Axis could do to rectify the problem. The few options available included expansion of the port facilities at Tripoli and Benghazi, the capture of Malta, or the building of a railway from Tripoli east 600 to 900 miles.

The situation in the Libyan desert was best summed up by German General Johann von Ravenstein, commander of the 21st Panzer Division, who described it as a tactician's paradise but a quartermaster's hell. □

From the Publishers of WWII History Magazine

D-DAY

Through A Soldier's Eyes…

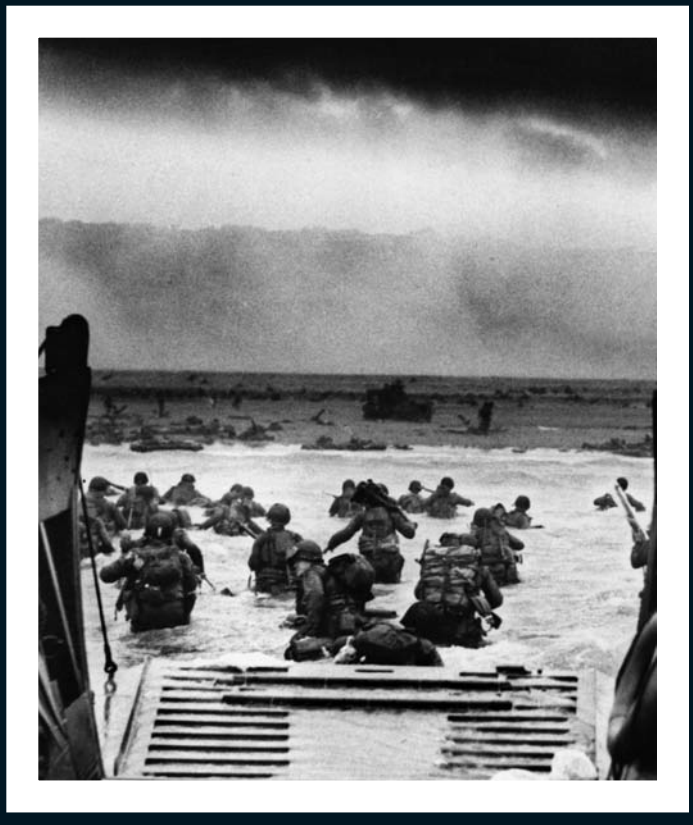
Limited Edition Print

The storm was violent, the waves were huge and the noise was deafening for the soldiers in the landing craft on D-Day, June 6, 1944. As they neared the beach, the door dropped open… and this photo lets you see exactly what they saw, and feel what they felt: treacherous breakers, withering machine gun fire, a long beach, huge cliffs, and near-certain death.

None hesitated. These brave unselfish men jumped into the cold Atlantic waters. Two thirds of them died soon after, so that we could live in freedom.

This historic photograph shows American soldiers from Company E, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division exiting their LCVP landing craft under heavy German machine gun fire on Omaha Beach. The photo was taken by Coast Guard Chief Photographer's Mate Robert F. Sergeant.

Company E landed on Easy Red Beach at 0645 in the face of murderous fire. Those few who survived kept wading right into everything the enemy had and took their objective, which provided the only exit from the beach that the entire Fifth Corps had for two days. Company "E," perhaps by strength of will and courage alone, helped keep the entire landing force from being thrown back into the sea. For a month afterwards, those who survived remained almost in a daze.



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Monte right up until the final Japanese effort against the field. Supplies were delivered to Corregidor by submarine—until the Navy decided the submarines were needed elsewhere. Three converted B-24 Liberator transports arrived in Australia in early February and immediately went to work transporting supplies to Del Monte and elsewhere in the southwest Pacific. They were assigned to the 21st Transport Squadron, commanded by Captain P.I. Gunn, who was starting to become famous throughout the region as "Pappy." Pappy Gunn also made several flights to Del Monte and on to Bataan before Maj. Gen. Edward P. King, commanding general of Philippine-American forces on Bataan, surrendered his men in early April.

Gunn's family was interned at the Santo Thomas University internment camp, and he was desperate to get them out. On one occasion he landed his Twin Beech on Quezon Boulevard after making arrangements with a Filipino on Bataan who promised to get them out—for $5,000. He waited for 15 minutes, then took off when they didn't appear.

Other air transport was performed by what the troops came to call the "Bamboo Fleet"—a menagerie of transport and obsolete combat aircraft that included a Grumman Duck, a Bellanca, two Beechcraft, a Waco, and two P-35s. Commanded by Major William R. Bradford after Gunn had been ordered to Australia, the small fleet of transports operated between Bataan and Mindanao carrying badly needed supplies and evacuating personnel. Eventually all of the transports were lost to either enemy action or accident, with Bradford making the last flight in the Bellanca carrying a load of quinine into Corregidor. He crashed on takeoff, thus ending the short history of the Bamboo Fleet.

As the Japanese Army closed in and the situation on Bataan became more desperate, steps were taken to get as many of the Air Force personnel out as possible, particularly pilots and maintenance personnel since they were badly needed to organize new units in Australia. Other Air Force personnel were evacuated by submarine or Navy PBY, but the support troops and some of the aircrew ended up as prisoners of the Japanese. At least three P-40s made it to Del Monte, where they joined three others that had flown up from Australia and continued to fight the Japanese until the airfield was about to be captured.

It was Pappy Gunn who in many ways was responsible for the final American effort in the Philippines and the first offensive Air Force mission of the war. Although he was a highly trained and experienced combat pilot, Gunn was initially assigned to the transport role. But he became close friends with Big Jim Davies, the former commander of the 27th Bombardment Group, and when he spotted a dozen brand-new North American B-25 Mitchells that had been consigned to the Netherlands East Indies Air Force, he rushed to let Davies know they were there.

The two concocted a plan to persuade Eugene Eubank, who was now a brigadier general, to write an order of dubious authority transferring the Mitchells to the 3rd Attack Group, of which Davies was now in command. On March 28, 1942, Gunn was officially transferred to the 3rd Attack Group and within two weeks was on his way back to Del Monte as the pilot of one of 10 B-25s that were part of a mission commanded by Brig. Gen. Ralph Royce to attack Japanese shipping around Cebu. Three B-17s from the recently arrived 7th Bombardment Group plastered enemy-held Nichols Field.

While the Royce mission was operating out of Del Monte, word reached the field that the advancing Japanese were a day away. The crews loaded their bombers with as many men as each could carry and left Del Monte for Darwin. Pappy Gunn was the last to arrive; apparently he had been sent on a secret mission to pick up a Japanese-American intelligence operative who had been pulled out of his position as an infiltrator at the Japanese headquarters in Manila.

The last American airplane out of the Philippines was a B-24 Liberator transport that came in and took off after dark. All of the Philippines were now in Japanese hands.

The question has to be asked: What if the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines had been reinforced? Considering the damage done by the small force that hit the Japanese landing party at Vigan, it is possible that, had there been more air power in the islands, the Japanese could have been defeated on the beaches. Even after they got ashore, Air Corps fighters, in particular, often extracted a heavy toll in Japanese blood.

The Allies' lines of communication from Luzon to Australia did, in fact, remain open for several weeks, although the powerful Japanese naval forces around the island prevented surface reinforcement. Mindanao, however, was free from Japanese attack for several weeks, and American bombers and the small force of transports that were available were able to bring in supplies, even after the Japanese won control of the East Indies.

In spite of the possibilities, the U.S. government decided to abandon the Philippines and forgo any attempt to reinforce the "Battling Bastards of Bataan," as the Americans in the dwindling Philippine perimeter began calling themselves. Even if Roosevelt had decided to try to reinforce the Philippines as the modified war plans called for, the demoralized military forces in Australia were not up to the task.

And even though there were men such as Pappy Gunn, Grant Mahony, and Buzz Wagner who were willing to go far beyond the call of duty, there were many more who put out much less. In fact, morale among the Air Corps survivors in Australia was so low after the defeat in Java that many of the B-17 crews went on a two-week drunk in Melbourne and refused to even show up for meetings. While their buddies in the Philippines were starting the march into the oblivion of the Japanese POW camps, many American airmen were fighting the Battle of Melbourne.

The time would come, however, when America would reassert her military might and begin the long, slow, and costly reconquest of the Pacific. □

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