

WORLD WAR II CHRONICLES

A Quarterly Publication of the World War II Veterans Committee

ISSUE XXXI, Autumn, 2005

PRELUDE TO



NUREMBERG

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"WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BIG NAZIS?"

Sixty years ago, this fall, all eyes were fixed on the German city of Nuremberg, where the surviving leaders of the Third Reich were awaiting trial for some of the greatest crimes against humanity in the history of mankind. However, though they were now receiving their due justice, only months before the world was wondering whatever happened to the Nazi leadership. Some speculated that they had fled to South America; others believed that they were regrouping in the Alps, poised to make a return. In fact, they had been rounded up by the Allies, and were being held in a little town in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. In this issue, the last surviving man who was charged with interrogating these Nazis prior to the Nuremberg trials tells his story.



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AVAILABLE SOON FROM THE WORLD WAR II VETERANS COMMITTEE!

WORLD WAR II VETERANS COMMITTEE 2006 COMMEMORATIVE CALENDAR



A sample cover from the 2005 commemorative calendar

Available just in time for fall is the World War II Veterans Committee 2006 Commemorative Calendar. This glossy oversized calendar features colorized reproductions of some of the most famous and legendary moments of World War II, including the flag-raising at Iwo Jima, General Eisenhower addressing the troops prior to D-Day, and General MacArthur returning to the Philippines.

Pre-orders are now being accepted (calendar will mail in November). To place an order, send \$12 (includes the cost of shipping) for each calendar desired to:

World War II Veterans Committee/1030 15th St, NW Suite 856/Washington, DC 20005

Or order by phone with Visa/Mastercard at **202-777-7272 ext. 220**

FROM THE EDITOR

THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WON WORLD WAR II

BY TIM G.W. HOLBERT

For the past six years, on a date marking the anniversary of an important event in World War II, the world has somberly looked back and remembered what had happened 60 years previous. On September 1, 1999, we remembered Hitler's invasion of Poland, which triggered World War II. December 7, 2001 marked the 60th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. On June 6 of 2004, we paused to honor the men who stormed the beaches on D-Day. This year, we celebrate V-E and V-J Day, and remember the men and women who brought about the Allied victory in World War II.

Such anniversaries have taken place each decade since the end of the war. But these 60th anniversaries come at a time when America is losing its World War II veterans at a higher rate than ever before. When the world notes the 70th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Anzio, D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge, and Iwo Jima, very few of those who witnessed the events first-hand will remain, leaving the history of World War II truly consigned to the history books.

But while we still have our veterans with us, it is important to make sure that their stories are entered into the history books in the first place. There have been promising signs in recent years that suggest that Americans have gained a new appreciation for the sacrifices made by those who fought, and died, in World War II. There has been a resurgence in films depicting the heroism of our fighting men of World War II, most notably with the successes of *Saving Private Ryan* and "Band of Brothers." Popular books on World War II line the shelves of bookstores. And of course, the National World War II Memorial has finally been dedicated in the nation's capital.

We can only hope that the momentum of building interest in World War II continues, especially after there are no more anniversaries to mark and most of our veterans have left us. And while Americans' interest in the history of World War II has grown, there is still much work to be done. Most veterans are aware of a very unfortunate

fact: most of today's schools offer little instruction on the importance of World War II, and what they do offer is often skewed to fit a politically correct mold. For future generations to carry on the legacy of the World War II generation, they must be given a proper perspective on why the war was fought and who the men and women were that ultimately won it.

For over a decade, the World War II Veterans Committee has worked to bring the legacy of the Greatest Generation to later generations. Through its various speaker programs, the Committee has given young people an opportunity to meet some of America's greatest heroes, and learn first-hand about what it took to achieve victory. The Committee's oral history program has preserved the stories of veterans, so that they can be heard for decades to come. Recently, the Committee has instituted the National Memorial Day Parade, bringing attention to America's servicemen and women from around the country. And the Committee's upcoming comprehensive World War II Curriculum seeks to give high school teachers a valuable tool in teaching the true history of the Second World War.

The signature event of the World War II Veterans Committee is its annual conference, this year to be held from November 10-12 in Washington, DC. Each year, veterans from around the country gather to meet with high school and college students, fellow veterans, and an interested public in a weekend devoted to learning about the history of World War II. Citizens of all ages are welcome at the event, which will feature many of America's greatest living World War II veterans.

This issue of *World War II Chronicles* is devoted entirely to the Committee's upcoming Eighth Annual Conference, with articles written by veterans who will be appearing to tell their stories. And, as always, it is dedicated to those who fought, and died, to preserve the freedoms which we enjoy today.

WWII

WORLD WAR II CHRONICLES

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THE WORLD WAR II VETERANS COMMITTEE'S EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 10-12, 2005
HYATT REGENCY CAPITOL HILL HOTEL
WASHINGTON, DC



This Veterans Day weekend, join the World War II Veterans Committee as we learn from and honor the Greatest Generation at our Eighth Annual Conference. From November 10-12, veterans of the Second World War, their family, friends, and admirers will gather in Washington, DC, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, and to pass their stories on to future generations. Capped off by the Edward J. Herlihy Awards Banquet, which recognizes the heroics of some of America's greatest living veterans, the World War II Veterans Committee's Eighth Annual Conference will prove to be an event that none who attend will soon forget.

CONFIRMED TOPICS AND SPEAKERS INCLUDE

The Road to Victory: The Pacific

Iwo Jima: Sulfur Island

Donald Mates - Veteran of the 3rd Marine Division

James White - Veteran of the 3rd Marine Division

Frederick Gray - Veteran of the 476th Amphibious Truck Company and President of the Black Iwo Jima Veterans Association

Okinawa: The Last Battle

Donald Dencker - Gunner in the 96th Infantry Division and author of *Love Company: Infantry Combat Against the Japanese in World War II*

The Enola Gay

Brigadier General Paul W. Tibbets - Pilot of the *Enola Gay*

Major Theodore "Dutch" Van Kirk - Navigator of the *Enola Gay*



Then-Colonel Paul Tibbets
prepares for the takeoff of the
Enola Gay

The POW Experience

Colonel Melvin Rosen - Survivor of the Bataan Death March and the Japanese "Hell Ships"

The Road to Victory: Europe

D-Day: June 6, 1944

Donald Burgett - Veteran of the 101st Airborne, author of *Currahee!*, the only book written on World War II personally endorsed by Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Battle of the Bulge - Bastogne

Ed Shames - Platoon leader in E Company, 506th Parachute Infantry, 101st Airborne: "The Band of Brothers"

Capturing the Remagen Bridge

C. Windsor Miller - Veteran of the 14th Tank Battalion, 9th Armored Division. Leader of the first tank platoon across the Remagen Bridge



General Dwight D. Eisenhower rallies his troops prior to the invasion of Normandy

Adolf Hitler: The Führer and the German People

Dr. Jay Baird - Miami University, author of *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon*

Interrogating the Nazi Leadership

Ambassador John E. Dolibois - The last surviving interrogator of the top-ranking Nazi leadership prior to Nuremberg and former U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg

The Holocaust

Henry Greenbaum - Survivor of the infamous Nazi death camp of Auschwitz

The Band of Brothers - E Company, 506th Parachute Infantry, 101st Airborne

Featuring

Forrest Guth

Earl McClung

Darrell "Shifty" Powers

Ed Shames

Paul Rogers

Rod Strohl

Amos "Buck" Taylor



Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill and Lt. Gen. Joseph Stilwell: the leaders on the ground

China-Burma-India: On the Ground

Merrill's Marauders

Phillip Piazza - Veteran of Merrill's Marauders and President of Merrill's Marauders Association

David Quaid - Combat photographer and veteran of Merrill's Marauders

Dr. James E.T. Hopkins - Veteran of Merrill's Marauders and author of *Spearhead: A Complete History of Merrill's Marauders*

Mars Task Force

Captain Richard W. Hale - Veteran of the Mars Task Force, successor unit to Merrill's Marauders

China-Burma-India: In the Air

The Flying Tigers

General David Lee "Tex" Hill - Ace pilot and 2nd Squadron Leader (Panda Bears) in the original American Volunteer Group

Major General John Alison - Ace pilot in the 75th Fighter Squadron/23 F.G. and Commander of the 1st Commando Force in China; former Assistant Military Attaché to the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union

Colonel Don Lopez - Veteran of the 75th Fighter Squadron/23 F.G. and Deputy Director of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum

Winston Churchill and the “Special Relationship”

Hon. Celia Sandys - Noted author and granddaughter of Sir Winston Churchill

Victory in the Skies: The Air War in Europe

Jack Valenti - Decorated bomber pilot in the 12th Air Force and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America

April 12, 1945: The President is Dead

Dr. Hugh Evans - Author of *The Hidden Campaign: FDR's Health and the Election of 1944*



Sir Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt

The WASP Pilots

Lorraine Rodgers - One of the original WASP pilots, the first female pilots in American military history

Baseball Goes to War

Bob Feller - Baseball Hall of Famer and veteran of the *USS Alabama*

PLUS



The National World War II Memorial

A wreath-laying ceremony at the National World War II Memorial

In memory of America's fallen World War II heroes

A Choral Evensong In Honor of World War II Veterans

Celebrating the Anglo-American Alliance

At the historic Church of the Epiphany in downtown Washington, DC

Reception at the Army & Navy Club

In honor of Bob Feller

A wreath-laying ceremony at the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial

Honoring those Marines who made the ultimate sacrifice

A tour of *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War*

Exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Displays of World War II artifacts and gear

AND

The Eighth Annual Edward J. Herlihy Awards Banquet

The conference's signature event, a gala banquet paying tribute to the men and women who fought and won World War II

World War II-era Swing Band Dance

The Eighth Annual Conference is capped off with a swing dance featuring the 21-piece **Difficult Run Jazz Band**

The World War II Veterans Committee is currently accepting registrations for its Eighth Annual Conference, to be held from November 10-12 at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington, DC. To request a full conference agenda and registration form, write to the Committee at World War II Veterans Committee; 1030 15th St., NW, Suite 856; Washington, DC 20005, call 202-777-7272 ext. 220, or e-mail wwii@radioamerica.org

Hotel room reservations should be made directly with the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill Hotel; 400 New Jersey Ave., NW; Washington, DC 20001. Telephone: 202-737-1234 or 800-633-7313. Be sure to tell the reservation clerk that you are attending the World War II Veterans Committee's Conference to obtain the special rate of \$150-per night single/\$175-per night double

THE CLASS OF 1945

BY JOHN E. DOLIBOIS

FORMER UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO LUXEMBOURG

Born in Luxembourg in 1918, John Dolibois immigrated to the United States in 1931, at the age of 13. After graduating from Miami University in 1942, he entered the army, which, due to his fluency in both French and German, assigned him to Military Intelligence (after a long spell in the Armored Force). Trained in strategic intelligence at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, he served as an interrogator in the European theater following the invasion of Normandy. Following V-E Day, Dolibois and a fellow interrogator, Malcolm Hilty, were ordered to Luxembourg City for the “performance of a special mission.” It had been fourteen years since he had left Luxembourg, and he was now returning as an American soldier. Though he had hoped to spend his time in Luxembourg searching for lost family, Dolibois would quickly realize that his assignment was much greater than he could have ever imagined...

As Mal Hilty and I steered our jeep across the French-Luxembourg border on a mild Sunday morning in May 1945, we were traveling the same route taken by General Lunsford E. Oliver and his Fifth Armored Division eight months earlier in their liberation of the Grand Duchy. The first American soldier to die on Luxembourg soil lost his life at an intersection we crossed right after we entered the little town of Pétange.

The people of Pétange later erected a monument to the unidentified American on the spot where he died. On the monument is inscribed “We Will Never Forget.” On every September 9 since then, the people of the town gather at this monument to pay tribute to the American soldier who made the supreme sacrifice for their freedom. As Ambassador, I was privileged to participate in this moving ceremony each year.

We headed into the city on the Route de Longwy. We saw much evidence of earlier fighting—shrapnel marks and bullet holes on the sides of houses and storefronts, piles of rubble and potholes in the streets, occasionally the remnants of a building that had been bombed. The houses still standing were drab, gray, depressing.

I remembered the Luxembourgers’ love of tradition. I told Mal that we were just in time for a concert at the Place d’Armes. Sure enough, we were. For several hundred years, the Place d’Armes had been a parade ground. It’s a handsome square, lined with chestnut and linden trees. Row upon row of sidewalk cafés provide the beer, wine and food at tables under the trees and around a bandstand. When I was a boy, I joined my school friends on the Place d’Armes after church. We’d walk arm in arm, sometimes in step to the band music, around the pavilion. We weren’t there to hear the music, however. We came to watch the girls, who walked arm in arm in a counterclockwise direction. Thus, we’d meet face to face. We boys would strut; the girls would giggle. But that was all behind me now.



The city of Luxembourg as it appeared in 1945. The tower of St. Michael’s Church rises above the city

Mal and I seated ourselves at a table, and I noticed for the first time how many GIs were in the square. At a table next to ours sat two black soldiers. The waiter came to their table. I heard one of them give his order: “Zwé Humpen Béier wann Iech geliff.” I nearly fell off my chair. Here was the first Luxembourgish I heard in fourteen years. It came from a black American soldier. It hadn’t taken long for our GIs to learn how to order “two steins of beer, please.”

Upon hearing Luxembourgish spoken I was able to switch on my own speech processes. Words I thought I had long forgotten came to me as readily as the taste for Luxembourg brew.

Mal and I checked into the Alfa Hotel across from the railroad station. It was set aside for American officers. Immediately I made inquiries about my family, the name Dolibois. No success. There were no telephone directories, no information operators. And I didn’t know until then that French-sounding names were “verboten” under the Nazi regime. I was told that Luxembourgers with foreign names were required to change them to German. Now that the Nazis had gone for good, the original names were returning.

We decided to spend the rest of the day sightseeing. On Monday, at the opening of business, I would begin my search in earnest. So Mal and I drove through the Petrusse Valley, past my old house,

along the cliffs, and under the bridges. We visited my mother's grave in Bonnevoie, and my former school. The church in which I'd been baptized, and in which Papa had served as Schweitzer had been hit during an air raid. My "homecoming" was not the joyful occasion I had expected. Of course, it was reassuring to be able to find my way around town, to locate so many familiar landmarks. But everything looked worn, drab, abysmally poor, despondent. I had little hope of finding my brothers and sisters. That night I went to bed with a heavy heart.

Early Monday morning I started out on my search, alone. First to the fishmarket, to St. Michael's church. I felt certain that Monsignor Erasmy, our former pastor and family friend, would know something about the Dolibois family. I hoped he was still around. I wanted that mean old character to see young "Hansi" in an American officer's uniform. Years ago, just before I left for America, a young friend named Jempy had stolen money from his parents' store, and spent it on us both at the Octave festival at the Cathedral of Notre Dame. When the theft was discovered, he claimed it had been my idea, and that I had coerced him into it. His mother reported the crime to Monsignor Erasmy, who decided to take the law into his own hands. He confronted me, hissing, "You are a thief, you will go to prison. You are a disgrace to your poor dead mother and your saintly father." At the same time, he boxed my ears right and left until I saw stars, and assured me that I would never be welcome in America.

It turned out that St. Michael's church was locked. A passerby told me that Monsignor Erasmy was now the pastor of the new church on the Gare. It would have been my parish church if we still lived in the Petrusse Valley.

Back in my old neighborhood on the Gare, the monsignor recognized me at once. "Aus dem Haenschen ist ein Hans Geworden," he exclaimed clapping his hands together in mock wonderment. Yes, the little boy had indeed grown into a man; "and with no help from you," I thought to myself. But let bygones be bygones!

Erasmy had no information about my family, not even a hint. He himself had been gone from the city for several years. He suggested the police might be able to help me. So I went to the Préfecture de Police. There were no records of any kind; not in city hall either. But one policeman was helpful. "Why don't you try the Red Cross," he offered, "they've been quite successful in locating missing and displaced persons."

At the Red Cross a white-haired matron proved to be an angel. She asked the right question, no bureaucratic nonsense. "Do you happen to know where your brother was working when you last heard from him?" she prodded. Yes, I remembered. It was a drogerie—a pharmacy—on the Grand Rue. Well there were four such establishments on the Grand Rue. "Let's go alphabetically," she said, "start with B, Bertogne." Bingo! It was the first one.

"Yes, Karl Dolibois worked for me many years," said Mr. Pierre Bertogne, a sweet old gent with rosy cheeks and a wistful smile. "But he had to use his wife's maiden name, Bausch. It was the law you know." And then he took my arm, patted me on the shoulder. My brother died in December 1942. He had trouble with the Gestapo, resisted military conscription, was under arrest. He died of a ruptured appendix in the prison in the Grund. They had refused him medical care.

Mr. Bertogne directed me to rue des Capucins where Karl's widow and little daughter lived. Number seven, a short block from the monastery church where I had served as altar boy. I climbed four flights of stairs to a top floor apartment. I knocked on the door. It opened and before me stood my sister-in-law, Karl's widow Rose. She gasped, her eyes opened wide, and before I could say anything she glided to the floor in a faint. A very frightened little girl stood in the middle of the room. She burst into tears, and I didn't know to whom I should give attention first. Fortunately, Rose came to at once. I didn't have to tell her who I was. It was my resemblance to my brother that had caused her reaction.

The little girl was Renée; five years old, she was adopted. Of course that bit of news had never reached us back in the States during these years of no communication.

I resolved immediately to provide as much happiness as possible for my new-found niece. On my return visit the next day, I was able to bring her the first orange she had ever seen. Other goodies from the officers' mess at the Alfa Hotel brought great joy to these two members of my family, who were immediately re-named Dolibois.

I came up zero as far as my two brothers, Henrich and Kasi, and my two sisters, Liesel and Agnes, were concerned. Rose had not seen or heard from any of them since Karl's burial in 1942. None of them was in Luxembourg anymore.

As Mal Hilty and I drove back to Revin, I wasn't overly elated about my first Luxembourg visit. Writing to papa and my sister, Marie, back in the states about Karl's death wouldn't be easy, especially since I had absolutely no clue about the rest of the family.

Back in Revin, we settled into our routine again. Most of the time was spent on housekeeping duties, and speculating on when we would be sent to the Pacific and why.

I reported to my CO, Major Giannini, after our return from Luxembourg. I shared with him my observations and the results of my visit. He was very sympathetic, and then broke into a broad grin.

He opened his desk drawer and pulled out a sheaf of papers. "Looks like you'll be leaving us in a day or two, Lieutenant. I have

your new travel orders here,” he said, still grinning. I wondered why he seemed so pleased with himself.

“Have you heard anything about CCPWE number thirty-two? He asked.

“No Sir.”

“Well, it’s the Central Continental Prisoner of War Enclosure, number thirty-two. It’s also known as ‘Ashcan’ for some reason or other.” His grin became broader. “Does Mondorf-les-Bains mean anything to you?”

“Yes, sir, it’s a small resort town in southern Luxembourg, right on the French border.”

“I’ve never heard of it myself,” said the major, “but that’s where you are going. It beats the Philippine Islands.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. Somebody must have screwed up the works, but good. How could they ever have come up with Luxembourg as my next assignment? That just isn’t the way the army does things. But I kept my mouth shut. Leave well enough alone.

The orders contained more good news. My friend Mal Hilty would be in the same place. Our “chief” would be Captain Herbert Sensenig, with whom both of us had worked before. And Sensenig reported to our former CO, Colonel T.C. Van Cleve, who had left Revin for an unknown destination a few weeks earlier. This Central Continental Prisoner of War Enclosure was just being established.

I learned that the 6824 DIC (MIS) was being moved from Revin to Oberursel-im-Taunus, not far from Frankfurt, Germany. SHAEF, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, was being abolished. Our new command would be USFET, United States Forces European Theater. All that was of no consequence to me at the moment. I was too excited about being assigned to Luxembourg, even though I had no idea what the new job was about.

Master Sergeant Amos M. Francischelli and PFC Richard D. Vine were my travel companions from Revin to Luxembourg. We headed directly to Mondorf, a pleasant little spa on the French-Luxembourg border. I remembered it for its beautiful park, a quiet stream on which one could row a boat, lots of old trees, and acres of flowers. There were many hotels and inns, a clinic, and the special facilities that go with a health resort—a watering place. The Romans had developed Mondorf-les-Bains more than

a thousand years ago. The dominant feature of the town was a large four-story structure—the Palace Hotel. I knew of it from my childhood days, but as we approached the building in 1945, I found it drastically altered.

Our jeep came around the bend and halted at an enormous gate, part of a fifteen-foot high barbed wire fence that stretched around the main building, a driveway, and gardens. On each corner of the fence stood a guard tower. Two soldiers and a very visible machine gun ominously occupied each tower. Camouflage nets and large planes of canvas hung on trees and posts all around the place. It was to prevent anyone from seeing what went on inside that fence. There were huge klieg lights overhead. I discovered later that two strands of wire on that fence were electrified. None of the PW enclosures in which I had worked were protected as heavily as this one.



The Palace Hotel in Mondorf, Luxembourg. A heavily guarded prisoner of war enclosure, it contained some of the most infamous characters of the Third Reich

Sergeant-of-the-guard Robert Bock sat in a jeep in front of the gate as I climbed out of mine. He and his driver wore MP armbands. Their shiny helmet liners also sported the white letters “MP.” I returned their salute. “Good afternoon, Sergeant,” I said. “I’m reporting for duty here. What kind of place is this? What’s going on in there?”

His answer was typical of the hard-bitten combat sergeant, the military policeman. “Hell Lieutenant, I don’t know. I’ve been here two weeks and I haven’t been inside yet. To get in here you need a pass signed by God, and then somebody has to verify the signature.”

Well, I had the right papers. I walked about one hundred meters to the entrance of the imposing Palace Hotel and was greeted by two guards stationed at the front door. In the lobby sat a noncom who was expecting me. Captain Sensenig would meet me at the Schleck Hotel around five o’clock. Lieutenant Hilty had arrived two days ago and was on a mission in Germany. I was the only other Military Intelligence officer assigned here, and I should leave my gear in room 30, up one flight of stairs.

That’s all I learned from the staff sergeant, who wore the patch of the 391st Anti-Aircraft Battalion. I climbed up the stairs, located room 30 and let myself in with the key he had given me. It was an ordinary hotel room, with rather noisy wallpaper. A table and two chairs, and a folding army cot made up the furnishings. I started to unpack my duffel bag when I heard a knock on the door. Thinking this might be Captain Sensenig or one of the guard officers, I opened the door and got the surprise of my life. Before me stood a stout man, about five foot ten inches, dressed in a natty pearl-gray uniform, gold braids on the collars, gold insignia of rank on the shoulders. He clicked his heels, bobbed his

head once, and said, "Goering, Reichsmarschall!" I gave a damn poor impression of an intelligence officer. My mouth fell open. Quickly, I gathered my wits and asked the man to step inside. He came to the point at once. On his arm he held a pair of uniform trousers which he handed to me. Then he explained that this was a pair he had "overlooked" when told the day before that he could have only one suit and one extra pair of trousers. "Since I am determined to be a model prisoner," he explained, "I thought I should bring this surplus item to you." I think I detected a note of sarcasm.

Goering then planted his feet apart, put his hands behind his back, and lodged his first complaint. He had been "misled" by the American officers to whom he had surrendered, "voluntarily." At Augsburg he had been told that he was going to a palatial spa and would be treated royally, as deserving the ex-commander in chief of the German Luftwaffe, a marshal of the Reich. He had arrived with all his finery, eleven suitcases. All this had been confiscated. He was extremely nervous and agitated, breathing hard and rapidly. But I was more nervous. For the first time I realized that my new assignment in Mondorf obviously had to do with high-ranking Nazis. It explained the security precautions around the building. I was in for the experience of a lifetime, eager to get my briefing from Captain Sensenig, and to get started on the right foot.

At this point, Goering himself pointed the way. It occurred to me that his knocking on my door was not due to his anxiety about having too many trousers. He could have given that extra pair to a guard just as easily. He had seen me walk into the compound. He was curious about me and the trousers became an excuse to find out for himself who I might be.

"You're such a young man, Herr Lieutenant, what will be your duty in this 'elegant' establishment?"

Then he answered his own question. "Are you by any chance a welfare officer who will see to it that we are treated correctly, according to the Articles of War?"

I decided I could answer that question in part truthfully. So I said, yes, I would be working along those lines. Goering was pleased. I found later that he took it upon himself to inform the other prisoners about my arrival and my responsibilities.

Our conversation was ended. He had satisfied his curiosity. He

made a great show again of heel-clicking, bowing, and taking his 280 pounds out of my room.

I sat down and replayed this surprising incident in my mind, recalling the brief conversation for later guidance. This was going to be a challenging and exciting adventure. I needed to know all about "Ashcan" as soon as possible.

Captain Sensenig was waiting for me at the Hotel Schleck. The comfortable, small hotel, just two short blocks from the detention center, was the officers' mess, the temporary billet, and the



Adolf Hitler and Hermann Goering in more glorious times. By the summer of 1945, Hitler was dead, and Goering, once-successor to the Führer, was a common prisoner and would soon be tried for crimes against humanity

office of the commandant of the prison. He was Col. Burton C. Andrus, cavalry, and I was presented to him at once. His eyes lit up when he saw the crossed sabres on my lapels. He quizzed me about my background. I passed the test. Colonel Andrus was quite a character. I would get to know him well in the months ahead. He prided himself on his own military-cavalry-experience. He was a flashy dresser; his helmet liner lacquered to a high polish in Patton fashion. His trim mustache and clipped speech identified him as a rather vain person. He obviously relished his important position of command. He didn't walk, he marched. And as long

as you let him know that you knew he was in charge, you would have no problem with him. But he managed to cause a few problems for us, by the way he ran his tight ship.

Sensenig and I talked far into the night as he outlined the mission of the Central Continental Prisoner of War Enclosure, number 32—code name "Ashcan"—under the direction of Military Intelligence. Everything was still in the startup stage. A lot of details had to be clarified. This installation had been ordered into being by Allied Command as a processing station and interrogation center. We were representing the interests of Military Intelligence Services, SHAEF G-2. Eventually, a number of high-ranking Nazis would be processed through this detention center. So far, each day had brought its own surprises.

For several months in early 1945, the Palace Hotel had been used as a billet for American troops being readied for the invasion of Germany. The Moselle River and the German border were less than five miles east of Mondorf. In late April, forty-two German prisoners of war, who had been held at Maily-le-Camp in the French Department de l'Aube, were brought to Mondorf. They were specially selected as cooks, bakers, waiters, and handy men. The group included a barber, a dentist, a doctor, and even a hotel manager. It was their job to prepare the Palace Hotel as a prison and to staff it under the supervision of American personnel.

First they moved all the fancy hotel furniture into storage at a nearby cloister. Each “guest room” was then equipped with a folding army cot, two GI blankets, a chair and a table. Eventually, the windows would be replaced with fiberglass and iron bars. These German prisoners of war considered themselves very fortunate. They were well fed, comfortably housed, and enjoyed more freedom and privileges than the field marshals, generals, admirals, Gauleiters, and government bigwigs who had been pushing them around for more than a dozen years. Now they could look down on what they called the “Bonzen”—the big wheels.

Captain Sensenig described the first few days of the Ashcan operation to me. He said the first important prisoner to arrive was Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the man who betrayed Austria and later became the Reichskommissar of Holland. The lord mayor of Stuttgart, Dr. Karl Stroelin, arrived after Seyss-Inquart, along with Wilhelm Frick, a former minister of the Interior, and most recently the Reichsprotektor of Bohemia-Moravia. That same afternoon, General Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel checked in with his aide, Colonel von Freyend, and Corporal Oskar Moench, his batman. This posed problem number one, what to do with

aides and batmen? Sensenig decided to treat the officers as prisoners, and assign enlisted men to the regular PW labor cadre. For a while at least, it was agreed to allow one batman or valet for every six generals and admirals. General Eisenhower issued a declassification order a few days later which changed all that.

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring was delivered to the Palace Hotel with a serious head wound from an auto accident. He was extremely upset about his detention, and made all kinds of demands for his physical comfort. Another problem. If all PW were to be treated alike, how could pillows be provided for some and not for others? If we wanted them to cooperate fully in interrogation, we had to keep up their morale. Colonel Andrus and the guard element of the detention center didn't agree with “special favors” and “sympathetic treatment.” The problem would plague us on and on.

Hans Frank, better known as “the butcher of Poland” for the extermination orders he gave while he was governor general of Poland, made a spectacular entrance in his silk pajamas. Frank had been arrested on April 30 and tried to commit suicide by slashing his neck, left wrist and arm, and his left side with a knife. He was carried into the Palace Hotel and placed under twenty-four-hour guard, one guard in his room, another outside the door. Frank wasn't going anywhere, especially since he had no clothing other than his pajamas.

Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering brought not only eleven suitcases, but also his valet to the CCPWE number 32. Captain Sensenig said it took a whole afternoon to list his valuables and search his luggage. It took an equally long time to pacify him. His hand shook so he could barely sign his name. The shaking was from his addiction to narcotics. On his person and in his luggage were found large quantities of small white pills which were identified as paracodin, the chemical name for which is Dihydrocodeine. Goering was in the habit of taking twenty in the morning and twenty in the evening. The German doctor among the labor PW, Dr. Ludwig Pfluecker, started at once getting Goering to cut down

on his intake. As I got to know Goering better, I found it interesting that he took great pride in cooperating in this endeavor. Later on, our own American doctor, Captain William J. Miller, took charge of the program. The prisoner of war rations and the routine the doctors prescribed resulted in Goering's losing considerable weight and becoming healthier than he had been for some time. It was the one development about which the former Reichsmarschall did not complain. His vanity was being aroused. He fancied looking like the hero of the Luftwaffe again, the highly decorated ace of the famous Richthofen Squadron of World War I.



Generalfieldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel surrenders to the hated Russians. He would join much of the German military elite at “Ashcan”

In the course of my briefing by Captain Sensenig, I told him about Goering's visit to my room earlier in the afternoon. He suggested enthusiastically that I should indeed play the role of a welfare officer for getting information. He and Hilty would handle the more formal interrogations; I would be responsible for “morale,” but in the process keep accurate records of what the prisoners said to me. I would visit prisoners in their rooms, chat with them at chance meetings in the building, and invite them to my own room for informal discussions. I might even give them English lessons if they were interested. Any excuse to make conversation. It turned out to be an effective ploy.

We also agreed that I should not use my last name since I had relatives in Germany, and one never knows what paths one might cross. I chose to be known to the Nazi leaders and Lieutenant John Gillen. This was a Luxembourg name that occurred to me, and I used it from that time on.

As word got around that Lieutenant Gillen was a sympathetic sort of guy who was willing to listen to complaints and even translate letters or try to locate families, I never lacked for company. The gossiping, the backbiting, and the eagerness to shift blame to another led to revelations that proved very useful. Gradually, a pattern evolved. An interrogator would work with a prisoner. Later I might drop in on the prisoner to inquire about his health or to check if he needed anything. With the interrogation

fresh in his mind, the internee often felt compelled to talk about it, to set the record straight. He might recall something he had wanted to tell his interrogator. Or he would complain that the facts had been distorted by someone else, a colleague or fellow officer. Soon I would get his opinion of that particular “informer.”

In short, my gossip file and collections of off-the-cuff remarks got bigger and better. I came up with some great information and characterizations that proved useful in rounding out an interrogation report. I was grateful to Goering for suggesting the cover I could use in my work at Ashcan. Later, once my role was fixed in the prisoners’ minds, I was able to take on regular interrogations on historic or military matters that were not controversial.

Sensenig, Hilty, and I were joined by two more interrogators, Captain Kurt R. Wilhelm and Lieutenant John G. Ziegler. We had a fine cadre of enlisted men who helped out with the research, preparation of reports, and even taking on interrogations when suitable. Meanwhile, more and more prisoners arrived on the scene. Some stayed with us for next three months. Others were held at the Mondorf center for a few days or weeks, and then were hustled off to agencies in London, Paris, or Wiesbaden. The British had an interrogation center which was coded “Dustbin.” Who said there is no humor in bureaucracy? The person who picked the codenames “Ashcan” and “Dustbin” must have given some thought to how much trash we hauled from one to the other.

Shortly after I joined the Mondorf installation, an efficient system of processing arriving prisoners was established by Captain Herbert Biddle of the Guard Battalion. Biddle, from Columbus, Ohio, demonstrated good Midwestern sense in setting up the procedure. Arriving PW would be brought to the Military Intelligence office first. While they stepped into a bathroom where the doctor would examine them, a guard searched their clothes thoroughly. They then dressed and went to interrogation room for processing. Next came the room assignment.

Meanwhile, their baggage was searched and the items allowed were returned to them. The rest was put in storage. Kurt Daluege, former Generaloberst of the German police, was the first prisoner subjected to this effective system. The search revealed two phials of poison in brass containers, the first of many such discoveries.

Soon we added Robert Ley, the leader of the Reichsarbeitsdienst (the labor service organization of the Third Reich), and the foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to our roster. Then came Jakob Nagel, state secretary for the German Postal Service; the

minister of Labor and Social Policy, Franz Seldte; even the president of German breweries, Franz Schwartz.

We held former ambassadors and officials in the German Foreign Office, such as Franz von Papen, Schwerin von Krosigk, and Admiral Nicolas von Horthy, the regent of Hungary. For some reason these “vons” were housed exclusively in a separate villa just behind the Palace Hotel. We referred to it as the “von Annex.” A baron was added, Baron Gustav Adolf Steengracht, state secretary in the foreign office. Then came a couple of commoners, Hjalmar Schacht, finance minister, and Richard Walther Darré, the Reichsminister of Food and Agriculture.

On one day early in June, a shipment of twenty-four prisoners arrived. The enrollment now stood at fifty-one, and the atmosphere in Ashcan changed considerably. Until then, Captain Sensenig had been fighting a constant battle with Colonel Andrus over the treatment of the prisoners. Military Intelligence wanted the internees treated with fairness and consideration.

This would keep them in a cooperative mood, important to effective interrogation. But Colonel Andrus appeared to have passed judgment already, on one and all. They were war criminals, and he was meting out punishment. Prisoners, regardless of rank, were to snap to attention when the colonel appeared. One general who failed to do so ended up in a basement room on bread and water for a day or two. This helped enforce discipline, but sure as hell didn’t get much cooperation in an interrogation session.

Albert Speer, Hitler’s chief architect and Reichsminister for Armaments stayed with us

for just a few days. Apparently he was much in demand at higher levels. He was moved to Paris, came back for a day or two, and then was shipped off to London. I saw him again in Nuremberg two months later.

But Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, the commander of submarines and then commander in chief of the German navy, arrived with Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, chief of operations of the Armed Forces High Command. These two, along with Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, and several other members of the German General Staff, would be with us from beginning to end. Hitler had designated Doenitz president of the Reich and commander in chief of the armed forces. It was in fact Doenitz who had formally ended the war.

As the number of our “guests” increased, I became more and more intrigued. It seemed that every Nazi ever mentioned in the news during the late thirties and early forties was here under one roof in little Luxembourg. Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi philosopher, Walter Funk, the president of the Reichsbank; a bevy of



Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, the last Führer of the Reich. Prior to his suicide, Hitler appointed Doenitz as his successor, in what was a final insult to his former second in command, Hermann Goering

Gauleiters and military officers of varying ranks, joined those who had come earlier. One of the last arrivals—we called each newcomer a “gain”—was none other than Julius Streicher, the notorious Jew-baiter, editor of the pornographic, anti-Semitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer*. Streicher had also been the Gauleiter of Franken.

His brass-knuckle type of anti-Semitism had become offensive even to some of the most ardent Nazis. Streicher had taken great pleasure in the destruction of synagogues, the smashing of storefronts, the beatings, and finally the pits and gas chambers. He had always wanted the Jews exterminated. He preached what all the party members agreed on: “The Jew was the main cause of the troubles Germany had faced after World War I.” But his vicious, unsavory character had repelled many of them.

When he showed up at Mondorf his former colleagues objected to his presence. They threatened to leave the dining room if he entered it. Colonel Andrus loved this protest. It provided another opportunity for him to let the “Bonzen” know who was running the show. A meeting was called at which Andrus made it clear that they were all in the same situation, and they would all be treated alike.

Nevertheless, we decided that it would be best for Streicher to be lodged on another floor. So, the “Jew-baiter” was given a private room, number 59, a floor below the others. When he entered the dining room, no one spoke to him. For a few days he ate by himself. Then he was joined by Robert Ley, the Labor Front leader. The two became inseparable. We called them the Bobbsey Twins. They had a lot in common.

It became obvious after the first week or two that cliques were forming, actually three distinct social circles. On one hand were the members of the German General Staff; Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the Armed Forces High Command (OKW); Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, his chief of operations; General of Artillery Walter Warlimont, Jodl’s deputy; Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, once chief of Armed Forces Italy and later the Supreme Commander West; and Generals Friedrich von Boetticher, Hermann Reinecke, Johannes Blaskowitz, and others. In the same group were the admirals, Eric Raeder and Doenitz. Here were the guys who had helped Hitler plan and execute World War II. While they favored Germany’s military power, some of them were not necessarily in sympathy with the Nazi way of doing things. Most of them vehemently denied any knowledge of the atrocities, the conspiracy, and even the violent anti-Semitism

of the Nazi regime. Later they were joined on our roster by Field Marshals Gerd von Rundstedt and Werner von Blomberg; Generals Heinz Guderian and Sepp Dietrich; and a few more admirals. The German General Staff group hung together. They wanted as little as possible to do with the other prisoners. And they were quite willing to denounce their fellow inmates in the course of interrogations and discussions.



The notorious Julius Streicher (right)—the “Jew-baiter”—with Joachim von Ribbentrop at a Nazi ceremony

In the second circle or clique were the real Nazi gangsters. They were the “alte Kaempfer”—the old fighters—who had been with Hitler at the beginning of his rise to power. Some had participated in the attempted “Beer Hall Putsch” in Munich in 1923. Some had been in prison with him at Landsberg. After Hitler became chancellor, they were rewarded with the positions that held the powers of life and death. Julius Streicher and Robert Ley stood out in this group of street brawlers. Among others were Hans Frank, Alfred Rosenberg, Seyss-Inquart, Wilhelm Frick, and Walter Buch. Hermann Goering belonged to this group, but was shunned by them, as he was by most of his former colleagues. Rudolf Hess, still interned in England, would not join us until Nuremberg.

These were the Nazi “Bonzen”—the persons largely responsible for the inhuman atrocities associated with the Nazi leadership. The General Staff group avoided them, with disdain. In turn, they blamed the generals for losing their glorious war and the Thousand Year Reich. No love was lost between those two groups.



The front page of a 1934 issue of *Der Stürmer*, Streicher’s virulently anti-Semitic newspaper. The picture depicts the blood of Germany pouring onto the platters of the Jews

The members of the third social circles were united by what they had in common—the bureaucracy of the Third Reich. Otto Meisner, president of the presidial Chancellery, stuck with Hans Heinrich Lammers, Reichminister and chief of the Chancellery. Graf Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk was the former finance minister, designated foreign minister by Hitler in his last will and testament. Certainly Franz von Papen, Schacht, and Nicolas von Horthy fit into this third category. As did Franz Seldte, minister for Labor and Social Policy, Wilhelm Stuckart, secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, and a dozen more. They were the “statesmen”—the career public service officers. Some of them had been in the

government during the Weimar Republic. They changed their political colors to be acceptable to Hitler’s regime. They were opportunists of the highest order.

It’s noteworthy that only two of this group were tried in the first session of the International War Crimes Trials, Schacht and von Papen. Both were acquitted, along with Hans Fritzsche, the assis-

tant to Goebbels in the Propaganda Ministry. Some of these “public servants” were indicted and tried in subsequent trials. In Mondorf they were helpful sources of information in the preparation of the cases against the twenty-two major Nazi war criminals.

Goering didn't fit into any one of these three categories. He was not German General Staff even though he held the highest military rank as commander of the Luftwaffe. As “Reichsmarschall” he ranked higher than a five-star general. His erstwhile Nazi colleagues did not respect him as chief of the Luftwaffe, and as Hitler had turned against him, he was not acceptable to them either. The government officials didn't welcome him, although he was president of the Reichstag, and held other high government positions.

Goering considered himself the number one personage at the detention center, so he attempted to be the chief spokesman, with or without their consent. He fancied himself the captain of the team. He tried to organize a joint defense, to be the aggressive cheerleader. But feelings were bitter. Judgment was passed by one on the other. Thus Goering was, after all, alone, sitting by himself during the mealtimes or reading in his favorite cane chair on the Palace Hotel veranda.

The easiest Nazi to interrogate was Hermann Goering. He's been described as everything from the devil incarnate to a silly fat eunuch.

I concluded early in the game that Goering was nobody's fool. He was an able, shrewd manager, brilliant and brave, ruthless and grasping. At times he turned on his charm and it was almost a pleasure to be with him. At other times he was simply a pain in the ass. But every hour spent with him was interesting. His varied activities in the Nazi regime provided endless discussion on many topics. He was Hitler's designated successor. He was president of the Reichstag; the Reichminister of Aviation; commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, in charge of the defense of the Reich; he was the Forestry and Hunting Master; a member of numerous councils. He was the marshal of the Reich. There was none higher, except Hitler, who had just one title, “Fuehrer.” And Goering loved to talk.

The Luftwaffe commander said he was unable to stop the ruthless bombing of Rotterdam in which tens of thousands were killed. He claimed he was unaware of Holland's surrender until it was too late to call off the bombers.

He took credit for Hitler's decision not to invade Great Britain, yet he justified the vicious air raids on England as “necessary.”

“Bormann, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop influenced Hitler against

me toward the end,” he said time and time again; “they envied me, they didn't trust me.”

“To understand anti-Semitism,” he lectured, “you must distinguish between the Eastern European Jew and the German Jew,” Goering considered the former inferior and their elimination justified. “I befriended and protected many German Jews.”

I asked about one of his immediate subordinates, an ace of his entourage in the Luftwaffe, Field Marshal Erhard Milch. “Isn't he a Jew?”

Goering explained, “No, he was born a *bastard*. His biological father was a Jew, but his legal father was a Christian.” In this case, as in others, the law could be stretched if it was convenient to do so. “In Germany, a Jew is whoever I say is a Jew,” said Goering.



Far from the lifestyle he was accustomed to, a smiling Hermann Goering eats lunch next to Alfred Rosenberg during the later Nuremberg trials

He was critical of Hitler in private; publicly, during the trials, he continually expressed his devotion and loyalty. Occasionally in our conversations he would complain about Hitler's turning against him, as in 1944, when Goering suffered from severe tonsillitis. Hitler didn't even send a get-well message to him at the hospital.

When the subject turned to atrocities, Goering always went on the attack. “How about the Russians' massacre of the Polish officers in the Katyn forest?” he demanded. “The Soviets

have been the executioners of millions of their own people, including officers of their own pre-World War II army.” I'm afraid I never rose to the occasion in such instances. Of course, Goering was right. The Russians were hardly in a position to charge “crimes against humanity.” I changed the subject.

When Goering learned of our dropping the atom bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, he gloated, “Aha, now who are the war criminals?” I liked it better when I asked the questions.

Goering and several other military leaders predicted the “Cold War,” that within a year the Soviets and the United States would be in total disagreement about almost everything. I didn't tell him that this was already the case in the summer of 1945. Their predictions of things to come gave us food for thought.

What really made Goering an interesting subject for interrogation—although an unpredictable one—was his willingness, almost eagerness, to accept responsibility. He was one of the few Nazis who did not deny his part in the conspiracy. He admitted his complicity in the use of slave labor. “They served to help in the economic war. We used this labor for security reasons. So they could not be active in their own country and work against us.” He

admitted using inmates of concentration camps in his underground aircraft factories. He was proud of having been Hitler's active agent and one of the prime leaders of the Nazi movement. In all this it seemed almost as if he would admit to anything so as to not lose his place in the limelight.

We continued to experience growing pains as the CCPWE was getting organized. A verbal order by telephone came from SHAEF G-2 after the Nazi leader of the Sudeten Germans, Konrad Henlein, committed suicide while a prisoner of the Americans. Watch crystals, razors and razor blades, glassware of all kinds, shoelaces, neckties, and belts were to be confiscated. Eyeglasses could be used only under guard. Problems! The removal of window panes without barring the window opening would only expedite suicides. The prisoner could simply throw himself out of the window. It was decided to quietly disobey the order until things were under control.

A few days later we started to get metal bars, a sort of powerful wire mesh. This obstruction was built into the window frames, and then the window glass was knocked out. There was broken glass all over place. The Nazis laughed themselves silly. They called the exercise "Kristallnacht"—crystal night—in reference to the night in 1938 when the windows of Jewish shopkeepers and homes were smashed as part of the Nazis' anti-Semitic pogrom. The ironic aspect of it all was the presence of broken glass everywhere. Any internee who wanted to commit suicide could have picked up a piece of glass and cut himself to shreds.

When Captain Sensenig briefed me about the start-up of activities at Ashcan, he didn't hide the fact that we would have problems with the people responsible for guarding the prisoners. Especially Colonel Andrus. He loved strutting around the halls and making the inmates bow and scrape whenever they passed him. Almost daily, he issued new orders dictating their behavior and outlining new rules. Fortunately, he couldn't speak German, so one of us had to interpret his mandates for him. Sometimes it was difficult to keep from joining the high-ranking Nazis in their covert laughter. He kept insisting that we inform the prisoners over and over that he was their commanding officer. They were to come to attention whenever he appeared. Infringement would result in a disciplinary action. The PW were duly informed and accepted this as a matter of course.

But after the word got around they started playing games. They

treated all of us with the same deference Colonel Andrus demanded, knowing it would make us uncomfortable. For instance, if I walked into the building while they were sitting on the veranda, they would all rise in unison, stand at rigid attention, and chant "Guten Morgen Herr Lieutenant!" Having marshals, generals and admirals snap-to whenever I came around was a little more than my ego needed. Eventually, and fortunately, they tired of their game and the atmosphere became more relaxed.



A photo of Reichsmarschall Herman Goering, signed to "John Gillen," the name used by John Dolibois as interrogator

A visit from the American provost marshal, General Record, resulted in a somewhat less rigid situation. The prisoners were given three blankets instead of two, and mattresses and pillows were issued to each internee. The prisoners were allowed a fair amount of clothing. This was especially important to Hans Frank, who was still in his pajamas.

It was also decided the prisoners should have something to do to pass the time. Reading material was provided—books, newspapers, and magazines. A chess set and a checker board were available in the reading room. They could listen to the Armed Forces radio at regular times.

We even arranged for "extra-short" shoestrings, without which some of them couldn't stay in their shoes. It would have been difficult for any one of them, no matter how scrawny, to hang or strangle himself on a four-inch shoestring.

At about the same time, an order from General Eisenhower was issued to all PW installations clarifying the status of the high-ranking Nazis. They were to be treated as declassified prisoners of war, all of equal rank. They were to be addressed only as "Mister," with no military rank or official title or exchange of salutes. Those still wearing uniforms were required to remove all insignia of rank and all decorations. Their daily rations were those prescribed by the Geneva Convention for all prisoners of war, sixteen hundred calories per day.



Hermann Goering, former Reichsmarschall, commander of the Luftwaffe, and hero of the legendary Richthofen Squadron, lies dead in his cell following the Nuremberg trials. He had famously cheated the hangman's noose by having a cyanide pill smuggled to him just hours before his scheduled execution

Apparently, this order was the result of much confusion at different processing centers. It may also have been prompted by the letters General Eisenhower was receiving. Admiral Doenitz, Field Marshal Keitel, Goering, and others, refused to be declassified prisoners. They insisted they were heads of state, commanders in chief. They demanded respectful, dignified treatment. They wrote letters to General Eisenhower, the secretary of war, the secretary of state and even to President Truman. At Mondorf our job was to translate those letters and send them on through channels.

Following the visit of the provost marshal and receipt of General Eisenhower's special order, Colonel Andrus decided to draft a message that would make things clear once and for all. It was read to all assembled prisoners:

Whereas I do not desire to stand in the way of your writing letters concerning alleged theft of property or other violations of human rights, writing letters about the inconveniences or lack of convenience or about your opinions as to any indignity or deference due you is fruitless and apt to only disgust those in authority. Since, as you know, I am subject to frequent inspections by representatives of the highest authority some changes have been made as a result of these inspections. The letters you have written have not yet reached these authorities, but are still on their way through subordinate channels.

The commandant, his superiors, the Allied Governments, and the public of the nations of the world, are not unmindful of the atrocities committed by the German government, its soldiers, and its civil officials. Appeals for added comfort by the perpetrators and parties to these conditions will tend only to accentuate any contempt in which they are already held. Therefore it is my duty to suggest that all refrain from writing letters borne solely of personal vanity.

The message was read in German by Captain Sensenig and punctuated by Colonel Andrus with occasional whacks on the table with his swagger stick.

I'm not sure this message made things clear after all. The less important internees, and even those who felt some guilt, must have wondered why and how they were found guilty without first being tried.

The interrogation officers appealed to Colonel Van Cleve to talk to Colonel Andrus and settle the conflict once and for all. The CCPWE number 32 was a processing/interrogation center, not a penal institution. The guard element was to provide security and to maintain discipline—to prevent escape, suicides, and/or a possible attack on the detention center. Military Intelligence was to gather information. We couldn't work at cross-purposes and succeed. I think Andrus got the message. He gradually recognized and appreciated our objective and became less imperious. In time, the prisoners stopped mocking him as a Chaplinesque figure of authority. For my part, I liked the old boy. We became good friends, and I ended up admiring his attention to duty and his conscientious performance. It wasn't easy being responsible for some sixty or more prisoners whom most of the world despised.

The prisoners were allowed to leave their rooms at certain hours. They could sit on the veranda, in the reading room, or walk around the gardens inside the barbed wire enclosure under the watchful

eyes of the guards. I don't think I ever got used to going up the stairs or walking down a hall of the Palace Hotel and bumping into the Reichsmarschall of the Third Reich or the commander in chief of the German navy. Meeting a Nazi Gauleiter or the successor to Adolf Hitler, so casually, was unreal. I didn't realize the historic significance of what I was doing until much later. I concentrated mostly on getting enough points to go home to my family.

When the Mondorf detention center was first opened in late May, its location was a well-guarded secret. The out-of-the-way health resort was to provide a site where the pretrial interrogation and processing could be handled without disturbance and very little interruption. But it couldn't last. A worldwide press was determined to solve the mystery of "Whatever happened to the big Nazis?" The secret was "leaked."

Reporters and photographers moved into Mondorf, clamoring for interviews and pictures. Colonel Andrus decided only he would grant interviews. Only influential newsmen would be allowed to visit inside the enclosure, and no individual photographs of any kind could be taken. One group picture was permitted. We gathered all of our inmates on the front steps of the Palace Hotel. Time magazine published the full-page portrait and titled it "The Class of 1945."



The author, John E. Dolibois

Indeed, it looked like a class picture. Front row center, stern and regal, was the president of the class, Reichsmarschall Herman Goering. On his right, Ritter von Epp, governor of Bavaria; on his left, Franz Xaver Schwarz, Nazi party treasurer. Robert Ley refused to look at the "birdie," glumly

staring into the distance over his left shoulder. Von Ribbentrop frowned at the photographer on the edge of the group. Streicher had his arms folded against his chest, defiant as ever. Oddly enough, most of the field marshals, generals and admirals—Keitel, Jodl, Kesselring, Doenitz, and Raeder—stood inconspicuously in the back rows. Nobody was smiling.

There was a gap in the very last row. If I had stood up straight, my face would have been in the portrait, too. I had been in charge of lining up the "class of 1945," and ducked down when the photographer was ready. I've regretted my shyness of the moment ever since.



This article was adapted from Ambassador Dolibois' autobiography, Pattern of Circles, which further details Dolibois' interrogations of the Nazi leadership at "Asbcan," and his later experience as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. It is available from Kent State University Press.

WWII

THE MARS TASK FORCE IN BURMA

A PERSONAL MEMOIR

BY CAPTAIN RICHARD W. HALE, USAR (RET)

In June 1994, my local paper published an Associated Press column titled “World War II: Fifty Years Ago.” It stated that the conquest of Myitkyina by Merrill’s Marauders in June 1944 had enabled the opening of the Burma Road, the overland supply route to China. To me, that was typical of the distortion of the history of World War II in what many of us who served there have come to think of as the most forgotten unit in the most forgotten theater of that war. That unit was the Mars Task Force, the brigade that, working with the Chinese, actually enabled the opening of the Burma Road in January 1945, not June of 1944.

The Mars Task Force (MTF) was the successor to the Marauders, and had absorbed many former members of that unit. These two were the only American infantry combat units to serve on the mainland of Asia in World War II. Unfortunately, most histories of the period either ignore the MTF altogether or refer to it along the lines of a “new brigade in the image of the Marauders,” which was not quite correct.

Myitkyina was the main Japanese base and airfield in North Burma. It had to be captured, both to negate the constant harassment of “The Hump” flights by Japanese fighters based there, and because it was the junction point of the new Ledo Road coming out of India with the road network of pre-war Burma. The new route had to pass through there in order to link up with the Old Burma Road near the Chinese border.

The Marauders had been fighting and marching over difficult terrain since February 1944. They moved out of India with about 3,000 men, but by the middle of May, they were down to about 1,300. Combat casualties were outnumbered by exhaustion, malnutrition and disease, mostly typhus, malaria and dysentery.

By the time these remaining Marauders climbed over the 6,000-foot Kumon range to seize the Myitkyina airfield from the surprised Japanese on May 17, they were about done in. When the town of Myitkyina itself actually fell on August 3, all but about 200 had been evacuated. The battle was eventually won by the insertion of two battalions of Combat Engineers from the Ledo Road, plus MPs, truck drivers, clerks, and bakers; any men that could be found were pressed into service from the rear-echelon in India, along with infantry replacements fresh off the ships.

The official designation of the Marauders was “5307th Composite Unit (Provisional).” Its army code name was GALAHAD.

The name “Merrill’s Marauders” was coined by a newsman. The name stuck, despite the fact that Brigadier General Frank Merrill was only in charge of the unit for very short periods (he had a number of heart attacks, and had to be evacuated), and was never in combat with the men. His deputy, Colonel Charles N. Hunter, was the man actually in charge throughout the crucial stages of the Marauder campaign. In any case, during the battle for Myitkyina, the original Marauders came to be called “Old Galahad,” and the replacements “New Galahad.”

After Myitkyina was captured, the Combat Engineers went back to work on the Ledo Road, while everyone else moved north, about ten miles, into a campsite on the west bank of the Irrawaddy River, named Camp Landis in honor of the first Marauder killed in Burma. Most of the Old Galahad men were sent home. The New Galahad survivors were assigned to the newly created 475th Infantry Regiment (Long Range Penetration Regiment, Special), which became part of the also newly formed 5332nd Brigade (Provisional), dubbed the Mars Task Force.



The final input of manpower for the 475th Infantry was the arrival in early October of myself and 599 other cavalry-trained troopers from the Cavalry Replacement Training Center at Fort Riley, Kansas. We were flown in to Myitkyina from the troopship in Bombay, and trucked to Camp Landis in the dark. When we woke up the next morning, we were in the infantry. This was quite a surprise, considering that we were still outfitted with cavalry gear, including two pairs of boots, the spurs we were awarded after graduation from training (a cavalry tradition), riding breeches, and special cavalry raincoats.

Our group was originally intended to be used as fillers for the 124th Cavalry Regiment, which arrived shortly thereafter, but we were instead hijacked to bring the 475th up to strength. The 124th was a Texas National Guard unit. By the time they got to Burma, the Texan contingent was down to about half. One of my high school classmates from small-town Ohio was a medic in the 124th. He was quite shocked when I looked him up to say hello.

Why all the cavalymen, but no horses? The answer of course was mules, mules and more mules. I do not recall ever seeing an exact figure, but we had at least 3,000 mules in the MTF. The Marauders had a terrible time handling their 700 or so mules. Except for a few country boys, most of the men did not have a clue, and both men and mules suffered unnecessarily.

The obvious answer was to use cavalrymen. Cavalrymen in World War II were taught to fight as infantry, the horses were reserved only for fast travel over difficult terrain or hit and run raids. There was no yelling, "Charge!" with sabers flashing, although we did practice firing the .45 pistol at pop-up targets from the back of a galloping horse. It is fair to say that not everyone qualified, but I thought it was wonderful fun.

The key skill was that we had been taught how to take care of our horses, whether for riding or as pack animals. It was fairly easy to transfer those skills to the mules of the MTF. The only riding mules were reserved for the wounded and very ill. The pack mules carried the 81mm and 60mm mortars, the .50 and .30 caliber machine guns, and ammunition, plus feed for the mules.

The Marauders were primarily infantry. The Marsmen were a much more mixed bag. The 475th contained about 3,000 men while the 124th had about 2,000. These troops were to provide the main combat strength. However, in support we also had major elements that were lacking for the Marauders and the Chindits (the British Long Range Penetration Group that was the model for the Marauders), and proved to be a major handicap in their operations. Added to our basic infantry strength were the 612th and 613th Field Artillery Battalions (Pack), three portable surgical hospitals, and a half-dozen quartermaster and veterinary pack troops, bringing the total to well over 6,000 men.



Thousands of mules served the men of the Mars Task Force

A final component not to be overlooked was the hundred or more Kachin guerillas assigned to the MTF. As they had done with the Marauders, these small, sturdy young cutthroats, and the American sergeants and lieutenants from OSS Detachment 101 who directed them, were in many respects our secret weapon. They were our guides, our advance scouts, and they provided flank security in the jungles and mountains far beyond what it would have been possible for us to do. They also killed a lot of Japanese in the process. More on them later.

I was an assistant machine gunner in the Company "I" weapons platoon. This was half the size of a rifle platoon. We had two Browning .30 caliber light machine guns and an 81mm mortar. To support those weapons we had about a dozen mules and, as best as I can recall, about 18 GIs for gunners, ammo carriers and four non-coms. Except for the non-coms, each of us had a mule in our care. The non-coms were all leftovers from New Galahad, and with one exception, rather useless. Unlike the other platoons, we did not have an officer; a staff sergeant was in charge.

I soon regretted volunteering to be a machine gunner. While the rifleman carried everything he owned on his back, he was self-contained. After a day's march, he could wash in a river or stream, eat and sleep, maybe pull some guard duty. The next morning he could wash his face, have a quick canteen cup of coffee with lots

of sugar (and canned milk if we were lucky), maybe a can of "C" rations, and he was ready. Those of us with mules had to unload them in the evening (the pack saddle weighed about 100 pounds, the usual load 200), rub them down, check and clean their hooves, and water and feed them. Then we could look after ourselves. The next morning it all happened in reverse, less the rubdown and the hoof check.

The 475th marched out of Camp Landis in mid-November, was ferried over the mighty Irrawaddy River by an American Engineer unit (they were building a pontoon bridge, which was ready in time for the departure of the 124th). Another friend from my hometown was in that unit. We marched down a fair, pre-war road south toward Bhamo. That city was under siege by the Chinese, so we bypassed it to the East.

I still have a vivid memory of passing along the side of a small mountain, with a clear view of the city to the north. As we did so,

B-25 bombers flew in from the south at our eye level, firing the 75mm cannon in the nose, and then dropping bombs as they passed over the city. I have discussed this with an officer with experience in that model B-25 who disagreed, but I swear that every time the gun fired, you could see the airplane lose airspeed, drop 50 feet or so, and then resume flying.

South of Bhamo, we almost experienced casualties from "friendly fire." Camped on the side of a steep hill, we were permitted to light fires after dark, which was highly

unusual. My section was high up, our mules down below. At one point, we got up and walked down the hill to the next group. A few minutes later our fire blew up, throwing shrapnel, burned wood and hot ash in all directions. It seems that one young man, henceforth called "Dopey," had left his pack uphill from the fire, with grenades attached to the webbing. One grenade came loose and rolled into the fire. Fortunately, the only damage was some holes in our packs and a couple of ruined canteens.

We saw our first action early one morning in mid-December near a village called Tonkwa, when the 2nd and 3rd Battalions replaced the Chinese 22nd Division, which was going back to China. We were dug in on the edge of a large, overgrown paddy field when the Japanese, having crawled up close, launched a Banzai charge at first light. They made a mistake by preceding that attack with a ten-minute artillery barrage, so we were more than ready for them. These were troops of the elite 18th Division: the conquerors of Singapore. They were unaware that they were now facing American troops, not the Chinese, though they would soon find out.

The charging Japanese ran into a firestorm of .30 caliber bullets from our two machine guns, a dozen or so BARs (Browning Automatic Rifles), and 30 or 40 aimed M-1 rifles. The Chinese always used a lot of ammo, but most of it was wild firing. I do

not know how many of the 220 Japanese dead credited at Tonkwa we killed that night, but they broke off that action and never tried it again against our portion of the perimeter.

Our small platoon had one casualty. “Dopey” caught a Japanese bullet in the leg and had to be evacuated, which was rather ironic. While we were digging in, our sergeant inquired as to where Dopey was. As it turned out, he had decided, on his own initiative, to protect our rear, though it was already covered by a rifle platoon. Bringing him back where he belonged caused him to be wounded.

The Japanese 18th Division bumped into us on their way to relieve their comrades at Bhamo. After that city fell on December 15, they gradually broke off their confrontation. The only other action I recall that I participated in at Tonkwa was when Alan Phail, my gunner, and I were attached to the platoon of Lt. “Jungle Jim” Applegate for an attack on a Japanese strong point. At one point, the three of us realized we had gotten out ahead of the platoon, and found ourselves trying to dig in with our noses while under enemy machine gun fire. Fortunately, it was an area of heavy jungle, and the Japanese could not see us any better than we could see them. We did drive them out and overrun their position.

Alan and I had made special preparations for this attack. Carrying the 35-pound or so “light” machine gun took both hands, and he had to carry his carbine across his back. I had a similar problem with the 15-pound tripod in one hand and a 20-pound box of ammo in the other. We were afraid that if an enemy soldier popped up out of nowhere we would be unable to defend ourselves.

We chopped about fifty rounds off a belt and loaded the gun, then wrapped a rag around the barrel so he would not burn his hand. Not ideal, but better than before. In my case, I hung the tripod from a rope around my shoulder and kept the ammo box in my left hand, leaving my right hand free for the carbine. It was awkward, but it worked. We never needed that arrangement, but we felt safer.

After a rest break at Christmas, the 475th moved out to the east across a chain of mountains and the wide, fast and deep Shewli River. It was an exhausting journey that took more than two weeks. The mountains were about 6,000 feet high, and one morning we woke up to find that water left in a steel helmet had a skim of ice on top. At least it was warm crossing the river on a rickety bamboo bridge. Some mules were lost, along with their gear, although all of ours made it over.

Our objective was the line of hills on the east side of the Hosi Valley, which overlooked the old Burma Road. The original plan was to establish a block on the road itself, putting us behind a mixed bag of regiments from the Japanese 49th, 55th, and 56th Divisions. Since they had heavy artillery, tankettes armed with 40mm guns, and many times our manpower, the plan was changed to that of a “fireblock” from the hills. The commanding heights were more defensible, and our 75mm artillery, 81mm mortars, and .50 caliber machine guns could reach the road. These weap-

ons were supplemented by air-dropped 4.2” mortars, which could throw an HE (high explosive) shell equal to a 105mm round up to three miles.

Approaching the Hosi Valley down a smaller valley from the west, “T” Company was in the lead. My best friend in the company was Jack Gullette, a scout. Nearing the main valley, Jack moved out into an open area, and was cut down by a Japanese machine gun firing from across the small valley. We immediately went to ground behind the partial cover of some terraced rice paddy walls, and raked the other side of the valley with machine gun and mortar fire, even though we could not pinpoint the enemy’s location.

After an hour or so we moved out, and walked by Jack’s huddled body with no more interference. I have never understood why the Japanese fired on Jack alone, when they could have caught many more men in the open if they had waited. After the Burma Road battle was over, I visited the site. The Japanese had dug a ten by ten-foot, six-foot deep hole with a firing step under the tree line at the base of the hill. It was totally camouflaged by native vegetation, and could not be seen from 50 feet away. I have no idea if our random saturation of the area killed the enemy in the hole or not.

Our small weapons platoon was assigned the task of guarding the back trail on the west side of the Hosi Valley. The 1st Battalion was assigned the southern end of the Hosi Valley, the 3rd Battalion the northernmost of the two major hills overlooking the Burma Road, and the 2nd Battalion the southernmost of the hills. The 1st had no problems, and the 3rd occupied its hill without opposition. The 2nd Battalion had a different situation, noted below.

After dark on the 17th, my sergeant came to me and said that several men were going back to collect Jack’s body, and asked if I wanted to come. To this day, I cannot recall why I said no. Had it been a stranger, I would have certainly gone; but I just could not face seeing Jack’s body again. I think my sergeant understood.

Early the next morning the Japanese launched a ferocious Banzai attack on the 3rd. We could hear the screaming and constant gunfire, but could do nothing to help. It was a bad move on the part of the Japanese, they were attacking up a rather steep hill, which slowed them down and made them even better targets. The enemy tried again the next morning, with the same result.

Back to the 2nd Battalion: They turned out to have the toughest job of all the 475th. The “hill” could more properly be described as a “ridge.” It was higher than the other hills, about 400 feet above the valley, and had sides so steep that flanking movements were impossible. Called Loi Kang Hill after the name of the village on top, it was occupied by at least a company of well-dug-in Japanese troops. It was also a threat to the rest of the force. From their high elevation, the Japanese could see everything going on in the valley, and used their radios to call in artillery strikes after the airdrops, when the evacuation planes were using the rice paddy airstrip, or any other activity in the wide-open valley.

Despite pounding by our artillery and mortars, and air strikes by P-47 fighters, it took more than ten days of heavy fighting to clear the ridge; and even then the 1st Battalion had to assist by attacking the ridgeline from the south. After the ridge was captured, things quieted down a bit for the 475th, if it possible to call constant bombardment by the Japanese heavy artillery “quiet.”

The main action shifted to the 124th Cavalry, which arrived at the valley three days after the 475th. They were assigned the task of clearing the hills north of those held by the 475th, and heavy fighting ensued, as the Japanese tried to hold on to every last piece of real estate. For the moment, let us go back to the 475th.

From our rear guard position, our only source of water was a spring in the middle of a north-facing open glade, about a quarter-mile down a path through heavy trees. There were open paddy fields to the next hill, about 500 yards. We were certain that there were Japanese on the other side (at least until the 124th arrived), but it was too far for rifle or machine gun fire, so we got careless.

On the second afternoon, I took my carbine and a load of canteens and went off alone to the spring. I had nearly finished when I heard a 105mm cannon fire off to the north, and a couple of minutes later the shell landed about fifty feet up the glade from me. I was only slightly concerned, as I thought it was a short round aimed at the 612th Field Artillery, which I knew was located on the far side of the hill. When a second shell landed about fifty feet downhill from me, I realized I was in the center of an artillery “bracket”. It seemed absurd that the Japanese would waste 105mm shells on a lone GI, but there it was.

I could hear more shells on the way, and it was too far and too late to make a run for it, so I curled up into a ball in a slight hollow next to the spring. The next shell landed about 20-30 feet up the hill from me, and I could hear the shrapnel whistle over my head. Now I was really scared, since the fourth shell was likely to either land on me or slightly downhill, meaning the shrapnel spray would hit me. The next shell did land about 20 feet below me, and I was hit, not with shrapnel, but with mud! I think the shell came down in the runoff from the spring, and buried itself just deep enough before exploding that it saved me.

I could not hear another shell on the way, so I got up and ran like hell! I have always wondered if the Japanese artillery spotter had a perverse sense of humor when he did not fire that fifth shell to the center of the bracket, or simply gave up in disgust. On my way back to the platoon, I met my sergeant coming down the trail, alone. All he said was, “We thought you were dead!” I think I replied, “So did I.”

Back on the line with Company “I,” another good friend, Mose Hart, told me of his experience during that first horrific Banzai attack. Mose was a Tommy-gunner, and was standing up in his foxhole firing, when he wondered why the kid who was sharing the hole was not up shooting his rifle. It turned out he was in the bottom of the hole, curled up and crying for his mother! Mose complained to his platoon leader the next day, and the kid was banished to what passed for our rear area.

My second artillery incident happened near the end of January. “L” Company had been ambushed while on a combat patrol. The company commander, a platoon leader, radio operator and six others were killed. Several friends of mine from Fort Riley were in that platoon, and the next day I walked around the perimeter to check on them. They were alright, though still in shock. On my way back, I was about 50 yards from my own foxhole when I heard one of the big guns fire, and the express train rumble told me, and everyone else, that a 155mm shell was coming our way.



Artillerymen of the MTF receive parachuted supplies of ammunition, packing it onto mules. The Mars Task Force was virtually indistinguishable from Merrill's Marauders, except the MTF contained artillery

The other members of my platoon were watching, and yelled for me to run, then ducked down under cover. Again, it was too late to run, and I spotted a slit trench about ten feet away and made it in one long dive, just before the shell landed approximately where I had been walking. When my friends looked up I was gone, and they thought I had been vaporized until I climbed out of the empty slit trench.

We were always under threat from the Japanese big guns, but other than that, my last big close call came in the middle of a very dark night. I was on watch, and wanted a cigarette to help keep me awake. We usually lit up under a blanket, and kept the butt shielded. However, someone had sent me one of the new “flameless” lighters, consisting of a flint, a wheel and a length of punk of the kind we used to light fireworks back home. The punk was supposed to glow hot enough to light the cigarette, without any flame.

Without taking cover, I flicked the wheel. Nothing. Flicked it again. Nothing. On the third flick, a bullet whacked into the tree log about a foot over my head (at this point we had roofed nearly all of our foxholes with logs and dirt for some protection, however dubious, against the Japanese artillery). I belatedly realized that just the spark of the wheel against the flint lit up the bunker for a split second. The first flick drew the attention of a Japanese sniper, the second flick gave him my location, and he fired on the third flick. Again, I think a hill saved my life. The sniper's line was perfect, but the fact that he was firing up a steep hill threw his aim off a bit.

I have written about the Japanese 105mm and 155mm guns (some accounts call them 150mm). I have not mentioned the enemy

weapon that caused us even more heartburn: the Japanese 77mm mountain gun. We called it the “Whizz-Bang,” because it fired such a high velocity shell that all you heard was a bang, a whiz, and another bang, so fast that you did not have time to seek cover. The good news was that being a direct-fire weapon they had to bring the guns in close enough that our 75mm artillery and 4.2” mortars could reach out and neutralize them.

Through all of this, the Japanese kept trying to bring up ammunition and reinforcements over the Burma Road, and we kept blasting them with artillery, mortars and machine guns. Some of our patrols would slip down and place mines, but this was less effective than the HE rounds. Some Japanese trucks and tankettes did manage to get through at high speed, but not many.

We had regular support from the Air Force, in the form of regular bombing and strafing runs against suspected locations of the enemy artillery, mostly by P-47s. The enemy never fired when the planes were around, but every now and then the planes would hit an ammo dump, and the resulting explosions drew cheers from those of us watching the show. The only problems we had with the Japanese air force were occasional nighttime visits from a “Washing Machine Charley,” which would drop a few small bombs and then fly away. They never did any damage.

We got close-up with one P-47 pilot. He came climbing up our hill from the north at dawn one morning. His plane had been hit by Japanese anti-aircraft fire, and he had bailed out south of our position. He had somehow avoided capture. Wearing high-top tennis shoes, he walked up the Burma Road in the dark until he heard Japanese voices, then turned off the road and climbed into our lines.

We gave him breakfast, and then several of us walked with him down to the little airfield. He climbed into a Piper Cub and waved goodbye, just as we heard a 105mm shell coming our way. We ducked into the nearest slit trench as the pilot of the Cub slammed his throttle to the wall. He was airborne when the shell landed under his left wing, and flipped the Cub over on its side off the runway, joining several others that had been damaged in one way or another. Fortunately, nobody was hurt.

I do not mean to ignore the 124th. As I mentioned, they experienced heavy fighting clearing the hills to our north. The most memorable of those battles took place on February 2, just a few days before it was all over. Lt. Jack Knight led his “F” Troop to clear an enemy strongpoint, and became the only ground combat soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor in the CBI. The award was made in May 1945, and read as follows:

On 2 February 1945, near Loi-Kang, Burma, First Lieutenant Jack L. Knight, 124th Cavalry Regiment, Mars Task Force, led his cavalry troop against heavy concentrations of enemy mortar, artillery and small arms fire. After taking the troop's objective and while making preparations for a defense, he discovered a nest of Japanese pillboxes and foxholes to the right front. Preceding his men by at least 10 feet, he immediately led an attack. Single-handedly he knocked out two enemy pillboxes and killed the occupants of several foxholes. While attempting to knock out a third pillbox, he was struck and blinded by an enemy grenade. Although unable to see, he rallied his troop and continued forward in the assault on the remaining pillboxes. Before the task was completed, he fell mortally wounded. First Lieutenant Knight's gallantry and intrepidity were responsible for the successful elimination of most of the Jap positions and served as an inspiration to the officers and men of his troop.



Cheering veterans of the CBI return home aboard the *USAT General A.W. Greely*. Among them were men from Merrill's Marauders, Flying Tigers, and Mars Task Force

While the 124th was clearing their hills, several Chinese regiments were sitting on other hills to the north of us. One regiment, more aggressive than the others, established an actual roadblock, but was badly mauled by the Japanese and had to pull back off the road. However, help was on the way.

Back in the spring of 1944, the Chinese had crossed the Salween River Gorge, the de facto China-Burma border, and tried to move south. Moving slowly, failing to coordinate their attacks or consolidate their gains, they were ignominiously pushed back across the border by probably not more than a regiment of Japanese. This time the Chinese had several advantages. The American-trained Chinese troops

from Bhamo joined up with the Chinese Yunan Armies, called the “Y Force,” in mid-January at the junction of the Ledo Road with the old Burma Road near the Chinese border. That meant the new road was open all the way, and the supply trucks began to roll.

Another important advantage, other than numbers, that this force enjoyed was provided by another long-unheralded American unit, the First Provisional Chinese-American Tank Group. This was the only Chinese unit in the CBI commanded by an American, Colonel (later Brigadier) Rothwell Brown. He was also the only experienced tankerman. At its height, the Americans in the group numbered 29 officers and 222 enlisted men.

The tank group had M-3 Stuart Light Tanks with the 37mm gun. Exact numbers of the Stuarts have proven elusive, but they probably started out with 60, then were divided into two battalions, all crewed by Chinese. They were eventually reinforced by 17 Sherman M-4 Medium Tanks with the 75mm gun, which were formed into an all-American platoon. Only a few of the Americans were tank crewmen. They manned assault gun companies, drove armored bulldozers to clear the way for the tanks, or maintained

the equipment under very difficult conditions. They were after all working with Chinese peasant soldiers, most of whom had probably never ridden in a motor vehicle until they were drafted.

The tank group had seen its share of action in North Burma, working with both the Marauders and the Chinese, and on more than one occasion they tipped the balance in favor of the Allies, who were up against the ubiquitous Japanese 18th Division. Unfortunately, they had to be withdrawn to Assam at the start of the monsoon season in spring 1945, as the roads and trails became too slippery for them to operate. This was doubly unfortunate for the siege at Myitkyina, as there seems little doubt that their presence there could have shortened that battle by many weeks.

In any case, by December the tank group was ready for more action. They had moved south from Myitkyina to support the Chinese attack on Bhamo, but arrived too late. Instead, they moved on east to join the Y Force. The Chinese came pushing down the road at a rapid clip, mostly riding in trucks, with the tanks acting as their spearhead, which I suspect is the main reason they moved so fast. They passed through our area during the night of either the 3rd or the 4th of February without even slowing down.

We learned after the war that the Japanese commander knew his position was hopeless, and had asked for permission to withdraw. It was granted, on the condition that he bring his artillery and motor transport with him. Since that was impossible, the Japanese simply abandoned everything and slipped away on foot on the trails beyond the eastern hills of the Burma Road.

While we suspected from the decreased Japanese activity that something of the sort might be happening, it did not deter the MTF from enjoying the show the Chinese put on. Along with artillery, tank guns, flares and the sound of motor vehicles, the Chinese advance was preceded by a quarter-mile wide curtain of tracers. As I have mentioned, the Chinese were always prodigious users of ammunition, but this was truly remarkable, when you consider that only one in five bullets in a machine gun belt was a tracer.

The tankers fought on with the Chinese down the old Burma Road to Lashio, and were then disbanded. I read somewhere that an American captain and his crew eventually delivered the tanks some 1,700 miles to Canton, in South China, after the war was over. For this, the Chinese gave him a medal.

As for the Mars Task Force, we could now relax a bit for the first time in many weeks. We were declared to be in administrative bivouac on February 8, one day after my 19th birthday. A few days later, we moved down the Burma Road a few miles and set up a camp under multi-colored parachutes from the supply drops. It took us away from the stench of the poor dead mules that did not have the cover of foxholes against the Japanese artillery, the

shell holes, and the now polluted small river that was our only source of water for everything.

We had one final visit from the Japanese air force. Some accounts say it was a false alarm, that an Allied fighter plane buzzed the encampment. Not unless the Allies were now flying Zeros with large orange circles on the side and wings! Our machine gun sections had a better view than most, as we had been out on a nearby ridge zeroing in new barrels. The Zero came in from the south for a low pass, turned and came back over the camp, then flew off. For some reason he did not open fire. The camp was pretty sprawling, but he could still have caused quite a few casualties.

We had two sets of visitors from the outside world. I was standing naked up to my knees in a stream, a skinny kid who had lost 35 pounds, washing my fatigues, when Lt. General Dan Sultan, the commander of the India-Burma Theater, rode up on a saddle mule. We had an amiable chat, but for the life of me, I cannot recall the conversation. I was distracted by the glare of the next man behind the General. I had never seen him before, but somehow knew it was the putative commander of the Mars Task Force, Brigadier John Willey.

None of us had ever seen him before, since he directed the campaign by radio from Myitkyina. I assumed he was glaring at me for appearing naked in front of this distinguished group. How the hell was I to know? In any case, General Sultan did not appear to be concerned. John Randolph, author of *Marsmen in Burma*, wrote that Willey was a former Marauder, but I find no record that he was, only a staff officer for Gen. Stilwell.

The next visit was from Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the commander of SEAC (Southeast Asia Command). He said nice things about us, and hinted at what many of us expected, that we would soon be fighting on south on the left flank of the British 14th Army attack on Mandalay and Rangoon.

Mars Task Force casualties up to that point were 122 KIA, with 573 wounded, about equally divided between the two regiments. The 475th had 929 men evacuated for wounds and illness.

The situation in China changed our future. The Japanese had a million troops in mainland China, and launched what proved to be their final offensive against the portion they did not occupy. While their main objective was to overrun the forward B-29 bases that were the largest threat to Japan, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was afraid they might go all the way.

Now that the Burma Road was open, Chiang lost interest in Burma, and demanded the return of all his troops. For good measure, he also demanded the Mars Task Force. General William Slim, the commander of the British 14th Army, was furious and appealed to Mountbatten to prevent the loss of the MTF. Washington, how-



The author, Richard W. Hale

ever, had grown so tired of dealing with Chiang that they gave in. The Chinese troops were flown out first. Starting in early March, the MTF left its mules behind and was flown to Myitkyina, then over "The Hump" to Kunming, China. By the time we assembled, the Japanese had already overrun the B-29 bases, and their offensive petered out.

Air transport being in short supply, it was decided that the MTF would not be returned to Burma. The left flank task was turned over to OSS Detachment 101. They had already started to disband, as their Kachin guerillas were far out of their home turf. With the new task, many Kachins volunteered to stay, and the OSS picked up new fighters from the pro-British Karen and Chin tribes as they moved south. The guerilla force eventually numbered more than 10,000, and they inflicted horrific damage on the Japanese fleeing towards Thailand ahead of the British 14th Army. Again, that is another story.

By late April, both the 475th and the 124th were in China, and we were broken up into small groups and assigned to train Chinese troops all over Western China. I spent the rest of the war teaching troops of the First Heavy Mortar regiment how to handle the 4.2" heavy mortar, given to the Chinese as mobile artillery. Mobile? As best I recall the base plate weighed 150 pounds, the tube was 100 pounds, and the bipod 50 pounds. The whole rig was carried on a steel cart with two heavy-duty bicycle wheels. We were stationed up in the boondocks near a town called Lushien, and did our training on the banks of the Yangtze River.

At the end of the war, we reassembled in Kunming, and it was decreed that "high-point" men, which meant all combat veterans, would be sent home. "Low-point" men were to be sent to Shanghai, "for further duty." Then it got frustrating. We spent two months in Kunming waiting to be flown back to India, then four months in various camps on the outskirts of Calcutta waiting for our troopship. It was a converted Victory ship named the *Marine Angel*. We called it the *Lost Angel*.

A real kick in the teeth happened in mid-December. I got a postcard from a kid who had joined us as a replacement after we arrived in China. The card was mailed from Iowa. He wrote that they were not needed in Shanghai, so they were put on one of the many empty ships and sent home!

We boarded the ship in Calcutta in mid-February, and arrived in Seattle in mid-March, then onward by the Great Northern Railroad to Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

I had joined the Army Reserve on March 21, 1943, in order to participate in the ASTRP (Army Specialized Training Reserve Program) set up for qualified 17 year olds. After high school graduation, I was sent to the University of Kentucky until the Army decided that it would not need all those engineers and canceled the program. Then on to Fort Riley. By a strange coincidence, I was discharged at Camp Atterbury on March 21, 1946!

WWII

THE MARS TASK FORCE BIBLIOGRAPHY THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE MISERABLE

The good, worth reading:

MARSMEN IN BURMA, by John Randolph. First published in 1946, again in 1977 by his widow, and finally in 1990 by the Extension Division of the University of Missouri. John was a PFC (not a Lt. Col., as one book asserts!) assigned to the 124th Cavalry Regiment by the public relations branch of the Army.

CBI - CONFUSION BEYOND IMAGINATION, BOOK 1, by William Boyd Sinclair. Published by Joe F. Whitley, 1986. Sinclair was a correspondent for the *CBI Roundup*, the theater newspaper. He wrote a series of ten books about the CBI, but Vol. I covers both the Marauders and the MTF.

VINEGAR JOE'S WAR - STILWELL'S CAMPAIGNS FOR BURMA, by Nathan N. Prefer. Published in 2000 by Presidio Press. I have a few problems with this book, but I have to give him credit for the details he records about both the Marauders and the MTF. Also one of the best sources for information about the First Chinese American Tank Group.

I will skip the bad, there are so many it would take up too much space, and go straight to the miserable:

AMERICAN HERITAGE - NEW HISTORY OF WORLD WAR II. Original text by C.L. Sulzberger in 1966, allegedly updated by the late Stephen Ambrose in 1997. I have always admired Ambrose's work, but he really screwed up this time. I have not read the rest of it, but the section on Burma is a disaster.

Just a few examples: That General Merrill recruited the Kachin guerillas to work with the Marauders. History says OSS Detachment 101 did that, and handed them to Merrill on a platter. A statement reads, "By the time the Burma Road was reopened (January 1945), the war was nearly over." That must come as a surprise to the British, since they did not reach Rangoon until May, and the last Japanese holdouts (10,000) northwest of the city were not destroyed until early August.

A major error has the British Chindits "Parachuting into the Japanese rear." During the first Chindit incursion in 1943, a single brigade walked in. During the second incursion in 1944, one brigade walked in, and two brigades were carried behind the lines by C-47s and Waco gliders provided by the American Air Commandos. Also, in August 1945, the MTF was supposedly "Safeguarding the Burma Road," when we had already been in China for four months. I am only listing a few of the mistakes.

Must not forget one more: *EMPIRES ON THE PACIFIC*, by Professor Robert Smith Thompson of the University of South Carolina-Columbia. The most outrageous statement was that "Stilwell parachuted the Marauders into the Japanese lines at Myitkyina"!!

He was probably using the *New American Heritage* book reviewed above when he wrote that the war was nearly over after the opening of the Burma Road in January 1945. He may have also gotten the idea about the Marauders and the parachutes from a comment in the above book to the effect that the Marauders "landed" in Myitkyina. I feel the same way about this book as I do about the other book, but hopefully its pernicious influence will not be widespread.

For the record, the only time parachutists were used in Burma was when a battalion of Gurkha paratroopers jumped outside Rangoon on May 1, 1945. By that time the city was in the hands of the British armored units. -Richard Hale

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

BOOKS AUTHORED BY WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Books written about World War II are becoming more and more popular, as the public seeks to learn more of the heroics displayed by our men and women who served. While the works of authors and historians are valuable and entertaining, a great untapped source of history resides in the stories of the veterans themselves. A large number of veterans have written books on their own experiences, with many being published. *World War II Chronicles* is proud to showcase excerpts of books written by veterans of World War II. To submit a book to be highlighted in “In Their Own Words,” please mail to:

World War II Chronicles
Attn: Editor
1030 15th St., NW Suite 856
Washington, DC 20005

C. Windsor Miller was a platoon leader in Company A of the 14th Tank Battalion, 9th Armored Division during World War II. Deployed to the European Theater, he saw heavy combat during the Battle of the Bulge. On March 7, 1945, as his platoon approached the city of Remagen along the Rhine River in Germany, he saw through the haze a bridge, still standing despite the fact that the retreating German army had already destroyed almost every other crossing over the river. With tank support, the American infantry quickly moved in and seized the bridge. Soon after, Miller would lead his platoon across, the first tanks to reach the other side of the Rhine. For his action, Miller would receive the Distinguished Service Cross.

A TANKER’S VIEW OF WORLD WAR II

By C. Windsor Miller

From Chapter 13: Capture and Crossing of the
Bridge at Remagen

We viewed this bridge with mixed emotions. While knowing what a prize it would be, we would also be deprived of our break. The Ludendorff Bridge, named after a World War I German General, was built shortly after that war and was a two way railroad bridge with a tunnel that ran through a high rocky cliff on the east side of the river. Also on the east side was the little town of Erpel that would figure prominently later on as events started to unfold. It might be worthy of note that the Rhine River had not been crossed by an invading army since Napoleon’s conquest of that part of the European continent.

As expected, after a very short period, the order came for the lead elements to proceed into the town. The lead elements consisted of Company “A” of the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion and the First Platoon of Company “A” of the 14th Tank Battalion and in close support would be the remainder of the tank company. The tanks were told not to fire at the bridge with our big

guns so as not to damage it, obviously hoping to capture the bridge intact, which was an extremely unlikely consequence of our action.

The column moved rather cautiously into Remagen and started to receive some artillery and machine gun fire as it slowly made its way in the direction of the bridge. All of a sudden there was a huge explosion ahead of us and our immediate reaction was “there she blows and now we get our break,” but that vision was short lived. The bridge was not blown up. Instead, a large crater was blown in the approach to the span but none of the other charges on the structure were detonated. The front of our column had now reached the bridge and my dozer tank was called up to help fill in that deep crater. I lined up my platoon of tanks along the bank of the river to give me a clear shot at any action I saw on the other side. All that I observed at the moment was a motorcycle driving through Erpel. We fired a burst from our .50 caliber machine gun as he disappeared behind some houses.



We had arrived at Remagen at just about 1500, which was the time some of the prisoners had said the bridge was scheduled to be destroyed, but we knew that this one explosion wasn’t intended to blow up the bridge and that the worst was yet to come. The crater was finally filled in and we were wondering what was next when we received word that the infantry would attempt a crossing under covering fire from our tanks. This was a very risky mission because it was felt that the main charges on the bridge would be set off momentarily, dropping the troops on the bridge into the river, and leaving those that might make it across stranded on the other side.

Just as the infantry was preparing to make their dash, another even greater explosion went off right on the bridge. Certainly this would be the end of the structure as huge billows of smoke, dust and debris totally obliterated it from our view and we were sure that now we would get our break. Not so fast, because when the

smoke and dust cleared, much to our surprise, there stood that old railroad bridge that simply refused to die. The task force commander soon repeated his order for the infantry to take the bridge and move to the other side under cover of the tanks' firepower. So in spite of the tremendous odds against a safe crossing, the men of Company "A," 27 AIB started their dash along the 1200-foot heavily charged span to a fate only time could tell. Along with the infantry went a unit of engineers tearing out wiring and tossing explosives into the river as they made their way toward the opposite end of the bridge.

I was always aware of the danger that I was in during the times I led the attack on the drive for the Rhine, but I at least had the protection of 32 tons of steel wrapped around me. These men, as they zigzagged against enemy fire, were protected only by their GI shirt, which did little to stop a German bullet. Bravery is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to face danger in spite of that fear. These guys were brave and got the job done as they reached their objective without a single casualty. Soon we saw a stream of German prisoners walking back across the bridge from the tunnel where they had taken cover when they saw the Americans arriving at Remagen.

Now we have the bridge, which has been secured by the removal of the hundreds of explosives that had been wired to it and the next step is to make it usable for vehicular traffic, especially the tanks. Again, the engineers were pressed into service to lay planking along the railroad tracks and cross ties to give some semblance of a road so we could travel over it. You can imagine the Herculean task it was to bring up enough material to cover about 1200 feet of railroad track and get it in passable condition.

In the meantime, I was instructing my platoon to zero in on certain targets across the river and record their gunsight readings so we could fire on the targets after dark in the event of an expected counter attack. It was getting late and all this activity continued long after dark when at around 2100 hours I was summoned to an officers' call in the basement of another bombed-out house.

The Colonel was still in charge of this operation and called us together to give us our orders for the next action. I invite you to read carefully this perfect example of how in combat the best laid plans can go terribly wrong. The Colonel told us that it was absolutely imperative that tanks get across the bridge to reinforce the infantry in the event of a counterattack by the enemy. Along

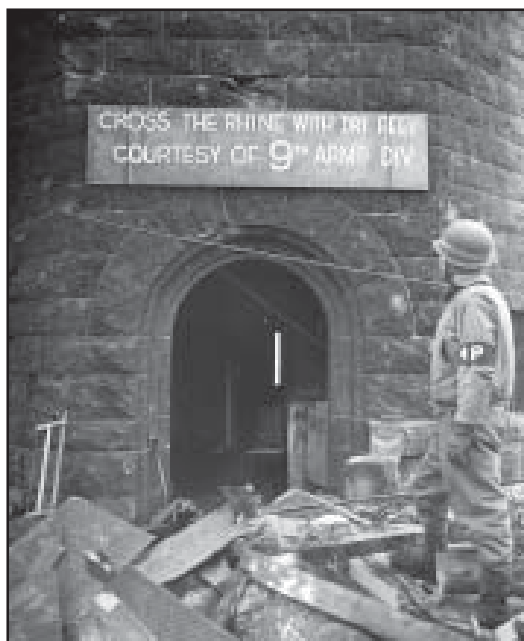
the river on the other side ran a railroad track that had to be blown up to prevent the Germans from bringing in troops by rail. At exactly midnight, the engineers would set off a charge blowing up the railroad track and that would be the signal for the tanks to start across the bridge. Also they will have strung engineers' tape to guide us and keep us from falling into the river because the planking only covered the one track and there were these gaping holes all along the other track. If we should stray beyond those tapes and fall through one of those holes we would find ourselves at the bottom of the Rhine River. After the tanks reached the other side they were to make a clover-leaf under the bridge and head north to the edge of this little town of Erpel. There they were to rendezvous with the infantry at a roadblock

set up to provide security for the tanks during the rest of the night. This plan also included a platoon of tank destroyers, which would cross soon after the tanks and infantry were settled in.

It was now time to decide who was to do what and the colonel turned to the Captain and said, "Soumas, I want "A" Company to go across the bridge." Well my first reaction to that would have been to remind the Colonel that there were two other tank companies in our battalion and "A" Company was pretty beat up. But I guess he already knew that and it would not have been very wise for me to say anything, which of course, I had no intention of doing anyway.

As he closed the meeting the Colonel said, "Be sure you keep your men awake and alert because we don't know what is over there and you could run into trouble," and with that cheerful remark,

he dismissed us. Captain Soumas was sitting near the door so there was no way I could sneak past. "Miller, I want your platoon to be in the lead crossing the bridge." Now why didn't that surprise me? But he did say this: "And I think you should put one of your tanks in front of you." As I have mentioned before, he and I had discussed this but he never really gave me an order so I was about to go out the door when the Colonel said in a loud voice, "Miller, come back here." He was still sitting and it seems he overheard what Soumas had said to me. Shaking his finger at me, he again raised his voice and said, "You will have a tank in front of you tonight and from now on, and that is an order." Like I tell the folks in my talks, you do not want to be guilty of insubordination in the face of the enemy. It could result in an immediate Court Martial and execution, and that was something I didn't want to happen. Insubordination is disobeying a direct order from a superior officer, which under any circumstances is a serious matter but in the face of the enemy it is totally unacceptable.



This sign makes it clear who was responsible for capturing the bridge at Remagen intact

With the Colonel's stern admonition burning deeply in my mind, I walked out to tell the tank commander of my number two tank, "Speedy" Goodson, that he and I were going to have to change places that night and he would be in the lead. His only response was "How come I get this honor?" which I totally ignored, and was glad it wasn't any worse than that. I told all my tank commanders what the plan was and they were to be very careful because of the extreme darkness and not to get separated from the rest. I explained to my guys, as I had done before, that the Third Platoon had to lead because the Pershings of the First Platoon were too heavy to put on the bridge that had been severely weakened by the efforts to blow it up and because the Second Platoon was reduced to just two tanks by the shelling it received, so we were all that was left.

As the witching hour of midnight approached, I placed my tanks in position to go when we received the signal to move across the bridge. While I was waiting, I decided to have a look at what was to guide us along the way, so I dismounted and walked over to check it out. I had to get almost on top of that tape before I could see it because of the total darkness of this moonless, starless night, and I wondered how I would be able to see it from my position nearly 12 feet up in the turret of my tank. The answer, of course, was I couldn't, so for me the use of that tape to guide me was SNAFU number one. While the tank driver is seated much lower and would be closer to the tape he would be "buttoned up," meaning his hatch is closed, and would have to look through his periscope sight which provided a very limited visual range, making it virtually impossible to see that tape. I also noticed that the tapes were placed on either side of the planking, which was just the width of the tank leaving absolutely no margin for error. When I returned to my tank, I wanted to again warn my people about how dangerous and narrow the roadbed was, but we were observing radio silence until we got underway.

Here it was now midnight and I was straining my ears to hear the explosion that would be our signal to move out, but there was none. SNAFU number two. Then the Colonel came on the air and gave the order for the tanks to proceed in accordance with his instructions. Now I could talk to my platoon, and I told them

to take it slow and easy and be very careful to stay within that small invisible tape to avoid a sudden shower in the river. I am sure my guys failed to see any humor in my warnings but I hope you do.

We were moving at a pace set between two and four miles an hour and I couldn't see Speedy because I couldn't even see the end of my arm. I radioed him to take it easy and not to get too far ahead of me. He called back to ask if I had just felt a bump, which I had and he replied, "Well that was your tank bumping mine so I am not very far ahead of you." All I could say was "Roger and out." Although the bridge was roughly 1200 feet long, somebody must have stretched it to about five miles that night because it was a long way across. We finally made it without any serious problems. Some may ask why I put my five tanks at one time on a bridge whose strength was unknown, but I gave it a lot of thought and because I knew from the machine gun fire that there were some Germans over there and, always fearful,



The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen. Captured by the Allies, it was the only bridge not destroyed before the Allies advanced over the Rhine and further into Germany

especially at night, of their use of the Panzerfaust, I did not want tanks to cross one at a time and be picked off like sitting ducks. If we were in close formation and the lead tank got hit, the tank



C. Windsor Miller receives the Distinguished Service Cross from Maj. Gen. John Leonard for his action at the Remagen Bridge

following could spray the area with its machine guns, either killing or chasing the enemy off so there would be no damage to the remaining tanks. Upon reaching the other side we made the "clover leaf" under the bridge and headed toward the northern end of Erpel where we would rendezvous with our infantry at the roadblock they were to have set up. As I mentioned, this is where we would spend the rest of the night with the infantry providing security for the tanks and themselves.

It seemed that I was going a little farther than I expected when all of a sudden I was being fired on. That certainly wasn't my infantry, there was no roadblock, and I found myself in a firefight. SNAFU number three. When the Germans attacked at night, they would often yell and scream and call "Comrade!" which is supposed to confuse and maybe stop your firing to take prisoners. As always I was aware of the possibility of getting hit with a Panzerfaust so I dropped a grenade out of my turret and heard at least one other go off so some of my guys were doing the same thing. I wasn't about to get out of my tank in the dark so I radioed back to battalion. I reported to

the Colonel that there was no infantry or roadblock and I was engaged with the enemy and to send me some infantry to take prisoners. His response was: "You will hold your position until the last tank is shot out from under you." Now that wasn't exactly what I wanted to hear. I didn't ask him if I could go somewhere, although I would rather have been watching a movie or having a soda at the corner drug store. I just asked for the infantry that I had been told would be there and wasn't.

After another sleepless night interspersed with distant machine gun fire and the occasional "swoosh" of an artillery shell coming and going, we began to see the light of day which again was gray, damp and dreary. Through the early morning haze I saw a boat like the ones used to push and pull the barges up and down the Rhine. My tanks were pretty close to the water's edge and the boat was very near me moving up river toward the bridge. I yelled as loud as I could. "Stop that boat! Stop that boat!" then "Halt" but it kept coming ever so slowly. My loader hearing me yelling came up through his turret hatch to man the .50 caliber machine gun and I told him to put a couple of bursts at the boat's water line. He did just that and the boat immediately dropped anchor. I decided to report what I had done and found I was still on battalion frequency so I talked to one of the staff officers and said I had my guns trained on the boat, ready to sink it



The author, C. Windsor Miller

He said to hold my fire unless somebody started shooting at me and he would send a boarding party to take people off of the boat. In less than half an hour a small craft arrived with just three men on it and approached the German vessel. One of the Americans called out, "Kommen sie aus! Kommen sie aus! Mit hands uber kopf." I yelled over to them "I gotcha covered!" just as some German soldiers came up from the cabin with their hands over their heads, the first man waving a white cloth. One of the Americans climbed aboard and went inside, and soon returned with a civilian, apparently the boat's pilot. They all boarded the American craft and I noticed one GI sat at the front and the other aft with their rifles trained on their prisoners.

A little later, an ambulance drove past my tank and disappeared around the corner behind some houses. I heard some machine gun fire and in a few seconds the ambulance came tearing back around the corner and I could see a number of bullet holes in it. I radioed this incident to Captain Soumas who informed me that all units were to remain in place, as reinforcements were already crossing the bridge. I now found out that SNAFU number four occurred when the first tank destroyer to start across the bridge last night fell into one of those holes along side of the planking but did not go all the way through and just hung there.

They tried to back it off but couldn't because one track was suspended and they couldn't get traction so they tried to push it into the river because it was holding up traffic but it would not budge. It was not until 0530 that they managed to dislodge it and traffic could move across the bridge. So there I was, from midnight until 0530, no infantry, no tracks blown up, no roadblock, no tank destroyers and I am in a firefight all by myself. What did I tell you about those well-laid plans? SNAFU!

It is now around 0800 and I am up in my turret eating a box of cereal from our 10 in 1 rations when a jeep came past me headed toward that corner where the ambulance had gone a little earlier, and I let out a yell that echoed through the Rhine Valley to "get the jeep back here." The driver slammed on his brakes, turned around and stopped at my tank. "What's the problem, Lieutenant?" inquired the lieutenant colonel riding in the passenger's seat. I told him about the ambulance and that this area was under fire. He ordered his driver to go back and did not say anything about the disrespectful way I yelled at him. I didn't know it was a colonel and it wasn't anyone I knew, but I would have acted the same regardless of who it was.

I was very glad to hear the news from Soumas that reinforcements were on the way because we only had one night's sleep in over a week and the bridge crossing and the other action during the night left my platoon really wrung out and badly in need of some relief. It was

late in the morning when Soumas called me and said I was to attend an officers meeting at a house just beyond my last tank.

I wondered who could be there because we only had one platoon leader across the bridge, so I walked up to the house and saw Soumas and a bunch of other officers I did not know. Soumas told me that my platoon was being attached to a company of the 78th Infantry Division because their tanks hadn't arrived yet. I felt like killing him, but all I could do was shake my head and wonder what he thought my men were made of. We walked over to where the others were gathered and Soumas introduced me to the captain who was the commander of the infantry company. Soumas said he was sending me one of the two remaining tanks from the Second Platoon and I should let it lead the platoon for a while. I was really worried that we were being pushed beyond the limits of human endurance and that we might be approaching the breaking point. I dreaded having to tell those very weary guys that we were going to continue the fight. It was enough that we didn't get the break we thought we would when we reached the Rhine and now to have to keep going seemed like a little too much to me.

WWII

THE WAY TO HIROSHIMA

BY MAJOR THEODORE “DUTCH” VAN KIRK

NAVIGATOR OF THE *ENOLA GAY*

I joined the Air Force at 19. After the first summer of college, I saw the ads to be an aviation cadet, to fly and all that and thought, “Gee, I’m going to be in the war anyhow.” The war had not yet been declared, but you did not have to be too smart to see that we were going to be in it. I decided that rather than being in the mud and on the ground I would join the Air Force. I signed up in 1940, but they did not take me until the late summer of 1941.

Out of navigation school, I was sent to the 340th Bomb Squadron and the 97th Bombardment Group. The commanding officer was Colonel Paul W. Tibbets. We got on the same crew together and flew the first mission out of England in 1942 on B-17s. Tibbets at the time was our commanding officer and pilot, and Major Tom Ferebee was our bombardier. The three of us pretty much flew together. I ended up with 58 missions. Tom, I think, ended up with 64. We trained 15 bombing crews with special B-29s to drop atom bombs.

We had absolutely no idea how many times we were going to have to drop the bomb—but that’s the Air Force for you. You are training people not only for only this particular war, but also the post-military. The military jumped on the atomic bomb as the weapon of the future.

I arrived on Tinian on June 25, 1945. There were about 1,700 people in the full 509th Group. We had 15 airplanes and 15 crews, and we were self-sufficient, with our own mechanics, our own medical staff and our own MPs. In essence, we were a small air force. Every one of those 1,700 people there were very major contributors, from the MPs who guarded the airplane to the people who flew it.

From July 16, when they had the explosion in New Mexico, they knew that they had a weapon that would work, or that they thought would work, and things got very interesting. We had a number of briefings, a lot of sessions to tell us what to expect. We were told how big the explosion might be, how it might rock the airplane. Some of them told us how it would destroy the airplane.

They said that it would probably destroy everything within a couple hundred yards from the center of the blast, and cause lesser damage further out. You fight a war to win. There were over 100 numbered military targets within the city of Hiroshima. It was not a matter of going up there and dropping it on the city and killing people. It was destroying military targets in the city of

Hiroshima—the most important of which was the army headquarters charged with the defense of Japan in the event of invasion. That had to be destroyed.

All this went on from July 16. Eventually, President Truman gave the order to use the bombs and we really started getting going in earnest.

When Colonel Paul Tibbets was picked to be the commanding officer (in 1944), he named me group navigator. He told me,

“We’re going to do something that I can’t tell you about right now, but if it works, it will end or significantly shorten the war.” And I thought, “Oh yeah buddy. I’ve heard that before.” We picked a day the weather was good. At the briefing that day, they told you who was assigned to what airplanes. We were going to drop the bomb, Captain Charles Sweeney was going to fly the instruments, George Marquart was going to fly the picture airplane, Captain Frederick Bock was flying one of the weather airplanes. They called us about 10 or 11 in the evening. I do not know how they expect to tell you that you are going out to drop the atom bomb and not know if it is going to work or if it is going

to blow up the airplane, and then tell you to go get some sleep. I was not able to sleep.

Our takeoff time was 2:45 A.M. We get down to the airplane, and the Manhattan Project had it lit up with a whole bunch of lights. I said it looked like a Hollywood premiere. (Private) Dick Nelson said it looked like a supermarket opening. But there were questions, picture taking, tape interviewing and everything. We got in the plane and took off. I did not talk about anything. The navigator was to keep the plane on course, getting the plane from Tinian to Hiroshima on time. It was 12 hr. and 15 min. total.

The *Enola Gay* was stripped down—a big metal tube with a lot of instruments and people in it. All the turrets, all the guns—except the tail guns—and anything we did not absolutely need, we discarded. It was about 6,000 lbs lighter.

It was just like any other mission: some people are reading books, some are taking naps. When the bomb left the airplane, the plane jumped because you released 10,000 pounds. Immediately Paul took the airplane to a 180-degree turn. We lost 2,000 feet on the turn and ran away as fast as we could. Then it exploded. All we saw in the airplane was a bright flash. Shortly after that, the first shock wave hit us, and the plane snapped all over. We looked to



The author, Theodore “Dutch”
Van Kirk

see what happened to the target, and we could make absolutely no visual observation because the entire city of Hiroshima was covered in black smoke and dust, debris that had been kicked up by the bomb and the blast, and the large white cloud that you have seen pictures of. I would guess it was up to 42,000 feet already.

When you are looking at it, you know that a tremendous amount of energy has been released. There was one thought that was uppermost on everyone's mind. Somebody said, and I thought too, "This war is over." You did not see how anybody—even the most radical, militaristic, uncaring for their people—how anybody like that could stand up to something like this. **WWII**

NO REGRETS

A STATEMENT FROM THE SURVIVING CREW OF THE ENOLA GAY BY PAUL W. TIBBETS, THEODORE "DUTCH" VAN KIRK, & MORRIS R. JEPSON

On this occasion, the surviving members of the *Enola Gay* crew would like the opportunity to issue a joint statement.

This year, 2005, marks the sixtieth year since the end of World War II. The summer of 1945 was indeed an anxious one as Allied and American forces gathered for the inevitable invasion of the Japanese homeland. President Truman made one last demand, one final appeal. Together with Great Britain's Churchill, and Russia's Stalin, the President of the United States urged the Japanese to "... proclaim the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces...The alternative," they said, "for Japan is prompt and utter destruction." Ignoring the obvious military situation, the Japanese Prime Minister Baron Kantaro Suzuki issued the Japanese refusal to surrender which included these words: "... there is no other recourse but to ignore it (the surrender demand) entirely and resolutely fight for the successful conclusion of the war."



The crew of the *Enola Gay* prior to takeoff for Hiroshima

While it is certainly unfortunate this course of action was necessary, for the Allies, at that moment in time, there was no other choice. Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote, "The decision to use the atomic bomb...was our least abhorrent choice."

President Harry S. Truman approved the order to use the atomic bomb. It was his decision and his hope to avoid an invasion of the Japanese homeland. An invasion that would have cost tens of thousands of Japanese and Allied lives.

Winston Churchill concurred with the decision saying, "To avert a vast, indefinite butchery (the invasion), to bring the war to an end, give peace to world, to lay healing hands upon its tortured peoples...at the cost of a few explosions, seemed after all our toils and perils, a miracle of deliverance."

On August 6, 1945, the B-29 Superfortress *Enola Gay* dropped the world's first atomic bomb on the island of Hiroshima hoping to expedite the end of World War II. The second atomic weapon was delivered over Nagasaki by the B-29 Superfortress *Bock's Car*

three days later. The availability of those weapons in the American arsenal left President Truman no choice but to use them. To spare the world a horrific invasion and to save American, Allied and Japanese lives was literally the only course of prudent action.

The surviving members of the *Enola Gay* crew, Paul W. Tibbets (pilot), Theodore J. "Dutch" Van Kirk (navigator) and Morris R. Jeppson (weapon test officer), have repeatedly and humbly proclaimed that, "The use of the atomic weapon was a necessary moment in history. We have no regrets." They have steadfastly taken that stance for the past six decades.

Comments Brigadier General Paul W. Tibbets: "In the past sixty years since Hiroshima I have received many letters from people all over the world. The vast majority have expressed gratitude that the 509th Composite group consisting of 1,700 men, 15 B-29s and six C-54s were able to deliver the bombs that ended the war. Over the years, thousands of former soldiers and military family members have expressed a particularly touching and personal gratitude suggesting that they might not be alive today had it been necessary to resort to an invasion of the Japanese home islands to end the fighting. In addition to American veterans, I have been thanked as well by Japanese veterans and civilians who would have been expected to carry out a suicidal defense of their homelands. Combined with the efforts of all Americans and our allies we were able to stop the killing."

It is a sentiment upon which the surviving crewmen are unanimous.

In this year, 2005, we will observe the anniversary of the epic flight of the *Enola Gay* close to our homes and friends. To our fellow veterans and the American nation, we all echo one sentiment, "I pray that reason will prevail among leaders before we ever again need to call upon our nuclear might. There are no regrets. We were proud to have served like so many men and women stationed around the world today. To them, to you, we salute you and say goodbye."

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THE WORLD WAR II BOOK CLUB

FEATURING BOOKS ABOUT WORLD WAR II

- SPECIAL EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE EDITION -

In this issue, we feature books written by those veterans and authors who will be appearing at the World War II Veterans Committee's Eighth Annual Conference. All books are available at bookstores and online outlets such as www.amazon.com.

TO DIE FOR GERMANY

HEROES IN THE NAZI PANTHEON

by Jay W. Baird

Indiana University Press; 329 pages \$15.95 (Paperback)



In this pioneering work in the area of Nazi mythology, Jay W. Baird illuminates the political culture of the Third Reich by focusing on the regime's fascination with motifs of death. He demonstrates that National Socialism was grounded in a dualism which set the love of Aryan heroes against the hatred of the world's Jews. Baird's work carefully traces the development of Nazi propaganda from the fields of Flanders in 1914 to the cult of death created by Hitler, Goebbels, and others during World War II. Using

extensive archival research and personal interviews with Nazi figures still living, Baird examines in detail the lives of individual heroes such as notorious Berlin Brown Shirt leader Horst Wessel, as well as the rituals, songs, films, and poems used by the Third Reich to sustain the deadly Nazi mythology and inspire its followers.

CHASING CHURCHILL

THE TRAVELS OF WINSTON CHURCHILL

by Celia Sandys

Avalon Publishing Group.; 293 pages \$25.00 (Hardcover)



Sir Winston Churchill was a well-traveled man. By the time he was twenty-five, his thirst for adventure had taken him to Cuba, India's North-West frontier, the Sudan, and South Africa, as well as to battle, prison, and worldwide fame. During World War II, when as prime minister he held Britain's destiny in his hands, he hazarded arduous journeys not only to confer face-to-face with his allies Roosevelt and Stalin, but also to witness firsthand the action at the front. In later years, his enduring passion for painting prompted travels to locales like

Marrakech (He took President Roosevelt there in 1943, simply to view a splendid sunset). Celia Sandys actually accompanied her famous grandfather on some of his later travels, most memorably on a cruise aboard Aristotle Onassis's yacht *Christina*, but for this always-engaging book she herself has retraced his many journeys and sought the people who knew, entertained, or simply crossed paths with him. And in their long-untold stories she finds her grandfather's character illuminated in new and often surprising ways.

CURRAHEE!

A SCREAMING EAGLE AT NORMANDY

by Donald Burgett

Foreword by Stephen E. Ambrose

Dell Publishing; 224 pages \$7.50 (Mass Market Paperback)



"A fascinating tale of personal combat...portrays the courage, endurance, initiative, and fighting qualities of an American soldier on a European battlefield of World War II."—Dwight D. Eisenhower

In June 1944, the Allies launched a massive amphibious invasion against Nazi-held France. But under the cover of darkness, a new breed of fighting man leapt from the airplanes through a bullet-stitched, tracer-lit sky to go behind German lines. These were the Screaming Eagles of the newly formed 101st Airborne Division. Their job was to strike terror into the Nazi defenders, delay reinforcements, and kill any enemy soldiers they met. In the next seven days, the men of the 101st fought some of the most ferocious close-quarter combat in all of WWII.

Now, Donald Burgett looks back at the nonstop, nightmarish fighting across body-strewn fields, over enemy-held hedgerows, through blown out towns and devastated forests. This harrowing you-are-there chronicle captures the baptism of fire of a young Private Burgett, his comrades, and a new air-mobile fighting force that would become a legend of war.

Stephen Ambrose wrote of the book, "I have read a lot of books on the experience of combat from both World Wars, and this is by a longshot the best. Without qualification." Since its original publication almost four decades ago, *Currahee!* has become a true classic and a must-read for any student of World War II.

Also by Donald Burgett: Road to Arnhem, Seven Roads to Hell, and Beyond the Rhine

RETURN OF THE ENOLA GAY

by Paul W. Tibbets

Enola Gay Remembered.; 339 pages \$25.00 (Hardcover)



Perhaps no name is more synonymous with a single military action during World War II than Paul W. Tibbets is with the bombing of Hiroshima. In the 60 years since the deployment of the first atomic weapons in the history of warfare, the event has been debated time and time again. In this riveting biography, Tibbets tells his side of the story behind the attack, and the reasons why, unfortunately, it was necessary. This is the story of a man determined to do his duty, and who, after everything, has "no regrets."

INTO THE TEETH OF THE TIGER

by Donald S. Lopez

Smithsonian Books; 230 pages \$17.95 (Paperback)



Though later in life he would become the Director of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, some sixty years ago Donald Lopez was a 23-year old fighter pilot with the 75th Fighter Squadron (successor to the American Volunteer Group) in China—the famed Flying Tigers. Flying P-40s and P-51s, Lopez and the 75th fought the air war in a theater of the war that has been too-often overlooked, but was of vital importance. An excellent pilot and leader, Lopez is also a wonderful writer, vividly recounting combat over the skies in the China-Burma-India Theater. Today, Lopez's Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, *Lopez's Hope*, can be seen at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum, nearby the legendary *Enola Gay*.

SPEARHEAD

A COMPLETE HISTORY OF MERRILL'S MARAUDER RANGERS

by Dr. James E.T. Hopkins

Merrill's Marauders Society; 862 pages \$19.95 (Paperback)



Walawbum, Shaduzup, Inkangahtawng, Nhpum Ga, Ritpong, Myitkyina. Although the names of these battles are not as familiar to the public as Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima, the name of the legendary American volunteer regiment that fought in them echoes throughout modern military history. Thrown into combat in the Burmese jungle in February 1944 at the request of the British government, Merrill's Marauders was the first American infantry regiment to fight on

the Asian continent since the Boxer Rebellion. Assembled in 1943 as the 5037th Composite Unit (Provisional), the three thousand infantrymen who answered FDR's call for volunteers for a secret, dangerous, and hazardous mission found themselves in India training for jungle combat. Created to spearhead under-trained (and American-led) Chinese troops in Burma and reopen the land route to China, the 5037th was expected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to take 85 percent casualties and be disbanded within three months. As it turned out, the Marauders existed for eleven months, operating successfully in hostile territory, pioneering long-range military activities in jungle and mountainous regions, and completing one of the most productive—and perilous—military campaigns in American history.

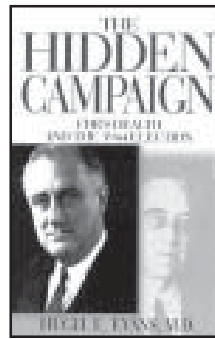
Despite its considerable achievements under the most difficult conditions, there has never been a complete history of the regiment until now. In *Spearhead*, James E. T. Hopkins—a field surgeon with the Marauders' Third Battalion—in collaboration with John M. Jones, provides a detailed history of the highly decorated unit, from the circumstances under which the 5037th was formed and its arduous training to the many battles in which the Marauders distinguished themselves to the unit's deactivation in July 1945. Drawing on unpublished logs, personal diaries, and histories kept by members of the regiment, Hopkins provides a personal story of combat in an environment that was nearly as deadly as the enemy. With *Spearhead*, Hopkins reveals the real story behind a chapter in the history of the Second World War too often officially forgotten or clouded by myth. *Spearhead* offers a heartfelt tribute to the men who served as Merrill's Marauders — and a comprehensive account of their deeds in the treacherous jungles of Burma fifty years ago.

THE HIDDEN CAMPAIGN

FDR'S HEALTH AND THE 1944 ELECTION

by Dr. Hugh E. Evans

M.E. Sharpe; 208 pages \$34.95 (Hardcover)



In a media environment where we get more details about politicians' health than we sometimes prefer, it is hard to imagine how President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death in 1945—with the outcome of World War II still undecided—came as a shock to the nation. Although only sixty-two in 1944, FDR was, in fact, mortally ill—information that was carefully shielded from the American public prior to that year's presidential election. Drawing on the clinical notes of the physician who treated Roosevelt at the time, Dr. Hugh E. Evans looks at the issue

of FDR's health from a medical ethics perspective. He also brings to the inquiry a keen eye for the political and media considerations that led to the decision to run and not disclose the extent of the president's illness.

"TEX" HILL: FLYING TIGER

by David Lee "Tex" Hill and Reagan Schaupp

Universal Bookbindery; 322 pages \$29.95 (Hardcover)



Born the son of missionary parents in Korea, David "Tex" Hill has become one of America's most famous and beloved fighter aces. *"Tex" Hill: Flying Tiger* recounts his intriguing early life, standout career, and non-stop adventures of all kinds. Tex's story is inescapably intertwined with those of Claire Chennault, the famed "Flying Tigers," and the nation of China, and this book weaves all three fascinating storylines into a masterful tapestry, certain to entertain and educate.

Tex and his grandson relate Hill's exploits through his naval aviation days and on to the Far East, where a motley collection of maverick airmen and ground crew—the American Volunteer Group—changed the face of war in China and Burma through unparalleled valor.

The story then moves to Tex's command of America's first jet-fighter squadron and the creation of the Texas Air National Guard. The authors include a hard-biting assessment of the failures and missed opportunities that changed China's stance toward America and the West just a few short years after their wartime alliance.

Finally, Tex's forays into the realms of Hollywood filmmaking, African big-game hunting, mineral mining in Mexico, and operating oil interests in south Texas round out the tale, providing an insightful look into the life of one of World War II's premier flying legends.

Each of these books will be available to be purchased and autographed at the World War II Veterans Committee's Eighth Annual Conference, November 10-12, 2005 in Washington, DC. To request a registration form, please call the Committee at 202-777-7272 ext. 218.

UNITED STATES SENATE PAGE SCHOOL SYMPOSIUM SERIES



Since its inception, the World War II Veterans Committee has worked to preserve the legacy of the World War II generation for future generations. In recent times, the Committee has partnered with the United States Senate Page School to sponsor a series of symposiums at which prominent veterans meet with and speak to the students. The ongoing symposium series at the Page School continued this past May, with a special V-E Day anniversary presentation by Ambassador John E. Dolibois, the last surviving interrogator of the top Nazis prior to Nuremberg and former United States Ambassador to Luxembourg.

For over 100 years, messengers known as pages have served the United States Congress. Pages not only work for the Senate during the day, they also take a full load of classes as high school students.

These pages are appointed and sponsored by a member of Congress, and are some of our brightest young Americans.

Speaking not only on his experiences as an interrogator of Nazi leaders as Goering, Doenitz, and Keitel, Dolibois (pictured left) also recalled the journey from his native Luxembourg to America as a boy, arriving in his new country on July 4, 1931 at the age of 13. After World War II, he returned to his collegiate alma mater, Miami University, becoming Vice President for University Relations, where he was instrumental in the growth of the university's alumni program and foreign exchange program. Eventually, Miami would open a campus in Luxembourg, named in honor of Dolibois.

Dolibois' unique American story, combined with the drama of his World War II experience, impressed the newly-inaugurated President Reagan in 1981. Fifty years to the day after he left Luxembourg for his new home in America, President Reagan appointed Dolibois to the position of U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. Dolibois' story can be read in full in his autobiography, *Pattern of Circles*, which he has described as "an essay in gratitude" to America.

WWII

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