

# ARMY HISTORY

THE PROFESSIONAL BULLETIN OF ARMY HISTORY

PB-20-94-5 (No. 32)

Washington, D.C.

Fall 1994

## Engineers in the Battle of the Bulge

William C. Baldwin

*This article originally appeared as an essay in Builders and Fighters: U.S. Army Engineers in World War II. Reprinted with permission of the general editor, Dr. Barry W. Fowle.*

Although D-day gave the western Allies a beachhead in northern France, it took them almost two months of bitter fighting to break out of the Normandy hedgerows. After the breakout, Allied armies raced across France, liberated Paris, and headed toward the German frontier. The rapid pace of the advance placed a severe strain on Allied logistics which, along with bad weather and stiffening German resistance, slowed the offensive. By mid-December, American armies had reached the Roer River inside Germany and the West Wall along the Saar River in eastern France. Between these two fronts lay the Ardennes, a hilly, densely forested area of Belgium. The Germans had attacked France through this supposedly impassable region in 1940.

In early December 1944 five American divisions and a cavalry group held the 85-mile-long Ardennes front. The difficult terrain of the region and the belief that the German Army was near exhaustion had convinced the Allied commanders that the Ardennes sector was relatively safe. Thus three of the divisions were new, full of green soldiers who had only recently arrived on the Continent; the other two were recuperating from heavy losses suffered in the bitter fighting in the Huertgen Forest farther north. In addition, the heavy demand for American troops in some sectors had forced Allied commanders to man lightly other portions of the front.

After months of retreat, Adolph Hitler decided on a bold gamble to regain the initiative in the West. Under the cover of winter weather, Hitler and his generals massed some twenty-five divisions opposite the Ardennes and planned to crash through the thinly held American front, cross the Meuse River, and drive to

Antwerp. If the offensive succeeded, it would split the British and American armies and, Hitler hoped, force the British out of the war. Before daybreak on 16 December 1944, the German Army launched its last desperate offensive, completely surprising the American divisions in the Ardennes.

One of the new divisions there was the 106th Infantry, which had relieved the 2d Infantry Division starting on 10 December. Its organic engineer combat battalion, the 81st, had begun road repair and snow removal in the division's sector. Behind the 81st was the 168th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), a corps unit, which had been operating sawmills and quarries. The massive German assault on 16 December quickly interrupted these routine tasks. Both battalions found themselves fighting as infantry in a brave but ultimately futile attempt to stem the German offensive.

On the morning of 17 December, as German troops were cutting off and surrounding the regiments of the 106th, the division commander ordered Lt. Col. Thomas J. Riggs, Jr., the commander of the 81st, to establish defensive positions east of the important crossroads at St. Vith. Reinforced by some tanks from the 7th Armored Division, elements of the two engineer battalions under Colonel Riggs held their position against determined German attacks until 21 December. During that afternoon, a heavy German assault, led by tanks and accompanied by intense artillery, rocket, and mortar fire, overran the exhausted American defenders. Colonel Riggs ordered his men to break up in small groups and attempt to escape to the rear. The Germans captured most of the survivors, including Colonel Riggs. For its participation in this action, the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion received the Distinguished Unit Citation, which praised its "extraordinary heroism, gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps."

The capture of Colonel Riggs began an odyssey which eventually ended with his return to his battalion several months later. The Germans marched their

prisoners over a hundred miles on foot to a railhead. During that march Colonel Riggs lost forty pounds. From the railhead, Riggs went to a prisoner of war camp northwest of Warsaw. He escaped from the camp and headed for the Russian lines, surviving on snow and sugar beets. Late one night the Polish underground discovered him, and he joined a Russian tank unit when it captured the Polish village where the underground had taken him. After some time with the unit, Colonel Riggs joined a number of former Allied prisoners of war on a train to Odessa. From there he went by ship to Istanbul and Port Said in Egypt, where he reported to American authorities. Riggs was eligible for medical leave in the States, but he insisted on rejoining his old unit, now in western France. On his way back to the unit, Riggs stopped in Paris for a debriefing and made his first contact with his unit when he ran into some engineers from the 81st in a bar. It was their first news of him since St. Vith.

Other divisional and nondivisional engineer units found themselves in situations similar to the 81st during the first few days of the German offensive. As the American front in the Ardennes collapsed, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his subordinates redeployed their forces as quickly as they could to meet the German attack, but while these troops were moving into position, the American commanders had to rely on rear area troops already in the Ardennes. Many of these were corps and army engineer battalions, scattered throughout the area in company, platoon, and even

squad-size groups, and these small groups of engineers played important roles in the Battle of the Bulge. Snaking their way along the twisted Ardennes road network, the German battle groups were bent on reaching the Meuse River with the least possible delay. As they advanced, U.S. Army engineers who had been engaged in road maintenance and sawmilling suddenly found themselves manning roadblocks, mining bridges, and preparing defensive positions in an effort to stop the powerful German armored columns. A few examples will show how these engineers imposed critical delays on an offensive whose only hope for success lay in crossing the Meuse quickly.

Lt. Col. Joachim Peiper, a Nazi SS officer, led one of the armored columns racing toward the Meuse. His route took him near the town of Malmedy and toward the villages of Stavelot, Trois Ponts, and Huy on the Meuse. Trois Ponts was the headquarters of the 111th Engineer Combat Group, and one of its units, the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion, had detachments working throughout the area. When he learned on 17 December of the German breakthrough, the commander of the 111th Group sent Lt. Col. David E. Pergrin, the 27-year-old commander of the 291st, to Malmedy to organize its defense.

Although most of the American troops in the area were fleeing toward the rear, Colonel Pergrin decided to hold his position in spite of the panic and confusion. He ordered his engineers to set up roadblocks and defensive positions around the town. During the after-



## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>Engineers in the Battle of the Bulge</i> by William C. Baldwin.....                                     | 1  |
| New Chief of Military History.....   | 6  |
| Editor's Journal.....  | 6  |
| <i>The Women's Army Corps' Black Band: A Historical Note</i> by Martha S. Putney.....                      | 7  |
| <i>The Army's Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II</i> by Dale E. Wilson.....                        | 14 |
| World War II Chronology.....   | 18 |
| Launching "THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II," part two, by Stetson Conn.....                         | 20 |
| <i>Civil-Military Operations—At Antietam???</i> by John M. Manguso.....                                    | 26 |
| <i>The U.S. Third Army and the Advance to Koblenz, 7 November-17 December 1918</i> by R. Scott Walker..... | 28 |
| <i>The Sergeants Major Course Staff Ride to Schmidt</i> by Steven L. Crawford and William J. Lapham.....   | 34 |
| Book Reviews.....  | 36 |

noon of the 17th, engineers manning a roadblock on the outskirts of Malmedy heard small arms fire coming from a crossroads just southeast of their position. Shortly thereafter, four terrified American soldiers staggered up to the roadblock. They brought the first news of the Malmedy massacre in which Peiper's troops murdered at least 86 captured American soldiers.

Peiper did not attack Malmedy, but headed instead toward Stavelot where Colonel Pergrin had sent another detachment of the 291st. Equipped with some mines and a bazooka, the detachment delayed the column for a few hours. A company of armored infantry eventually reinforced the engineer roadblock, but this small American force was no match for the German *panzers*. Peiper's column pushed through the village, and its lead tanks turned westward toward Trois Ponts.

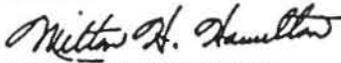
Shortly before the Germans broke through the roadblock at Stavelot, Capt. Sam Scheuber's Company C of the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion had taken up position in Trois Ponts. The 51st, also part of the 111th Combat Group, had received orders to defend the village and prepare its bridges for demolition. While another detachment of the seemingly ubiquitous 291st wired one bridge south of the village, Company C, reinforced by an antitank gun and a squad of armored infantry, prepared its defenses. When Peiper's tanks came into view, the engineers blew up the main bridge leading into the village. Although the river separating Trois Ponts from the German column was shallow enough for infantry to ford, it was an effective barrier to tanks. A detachment of German tanks headed down the river looking for another bridge, while other tanks and infantry remained behind, across the river from the village.

By the evening of 18 December, the small American force at Trois Ponts had come under the command of Maj. Robert B. Yates, executive officer of the 51st Combat Battalion, who had come to the village expecting to attend a daily staff meeting. Fearing that the Germans would discover the weakness of his force, Major Yates tried to deceive the enemy. During the night, the six trucks of the engineer company repeatedly drove into Trois Ponts with their lights on and drove out with the lights off, simulating the arrival of reinforcements. The engineers put chains on their single four-ton truck and drove it back and forth through the village to create the impression that there were tanks in Trois Ponts. An American tank destroyer, which had slipped off the road and into the river a few

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

GORDON R. SULLIVAN  
*General, United States Army*  
*Chief of Staff*

Official:

  
MILTON H. HAMILTON  
*Administrative Assistant to the*  
*Secretary of the Army*

---

*Chief of Military History*  
Brig. Gen. John W. Mountcastle

*Managing Editor*  
Arnold G. Fisch, Jr., Ph.D.

*Army History* (PB-20-94-5) is published by the Center of Military History for the professional development of Army historians. The reproduction of articles for educational purposes is encouraged. Correspondence should be addressed to Managing Editor, *Army History*, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1099 14th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005-3402. Telephone DSN 285-5368 or commercial (202) 504-5368. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors, not the Department of Defense or its constituent elements. *Army History's* contents do not necessarily reflect the official Army position and do not supersede information in other official Army publications or Army Regulations. This bulletin is approved for official dissemination of material designed to keep individuals within the Army knowledgeable of developments within Army history for the purpose of enhancing their professional development. Use of funds for printing this publication was approved by the Department of the Army on 7 September 1983. Postage paid at Washington, D.C.

days earlier, provided the artillery. It caught fire and its 105-mm. shells exploded at irregular intervals throughout the night. The ruses apparently worked, because the Germans never launched a determined attack on the village.

On 20 December, the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82d Airborne Division, which was trying to block the German penetrations, learned of the small force holding Trois Ponts. When the regiment moved into the village during that afternoon, Major Yates greeted its commander with, "Say, I'll bet you fellows are glad we're here!" American troops finally stopped and destroyed Peiper's armored column a few days later; they had received invaluable assistance from the engineers who had delayed the Germans and forced them into costly detours.

Farther south, engineers were also caught up in the massive German attack. On 17 December the VIII Corps commander ordered his 44th Engineer Combat Battalion under Lt. Col. Clarion J. Kjeldseth to drop its road maintenance, sawmilling, and quarrying operations and help defend the town of Wiltz in Luxembourg. The six hundred men of the 44th joined a ragtag force consisting of some crippled tanks, assault guns, artillery, and divisional headquarters troops. Attacked by tanks and infantry on the 18th, the engineers held their fire as the tanks roared by and blasted the German infantry following. Forced to retreat by the weight of the German attack, the defenders moved back into the town and blew up the bridge over the Wiltz River. By the next evening the small American force was surrounded and running low on ammunition. The soldiers attempted to escape, but few made it back safely. Among the heavy American casualties was the equivalent of three engineer companies dead or missing, but the defenders of Wiltz had slowed the German advance and given other American troops time to rush to the defense of the critically important crossroads some ten miles to the west—the town of Bastogne.

With the American defenses collapsing west of Bastogne, the corps commander ordered the last of his reserves, the 35th Engineer Combat Battalion—a corps unit—and the 158th Engineer Combat Battalion—an army unit which happened to be working in the area—to defend Bastogne until reinforcements could arrive. On the morning of the 19th German tanks attacked an engineer roadblock in the darkness. Unsure of his target in the gloom, Pvt. Bernard Michin waited until a German tank was only ten yards away before firing his bazooka. The explosion which knocked out the tank blinded him. As he rolled into a ditch, he heard

machine gun fire close by. He threw a grenade at the sound, which ceased, and struggled back to his platoon. Private Michin, who regained his sight several hours later, received the Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery under fire. During the evening of the 19th and the morning of the 20th, the 101st Airborne Division, which had rushed to the defense of Bastogne, relieved the 158th and the 35th ECBs.

German *Panzers* and troops continued to push west and north of Bastogne, eventually surrounding the American defenders in the town. These German penetrations threatened an American Bailey bridge over the Ourthe River at Ortheuville on the main supply route to Bastogne. Another combat battalion, the 299th, had prepared the bridge for demolition, and one of its platoons, reinforced by some tank destroyers on their way to Bastogne, was defending the bridge when German troops attacked early on 20 December. Alerted the previous evening to help defend the bridge, a platoon of the 158th arrived as German troops seized it. The platoon crossed the river and attacked the German flanks. By noon, the engineers and tank destroyers forced the enemy to withdraw. Reinforced by the rest of the 158th under Lt. Col. Sam Tabet, the engineers held open the road to Bastogne for a few hours and allowed supplies of fuel and ammunition to reach the town. By evening, German tanks closed the road again and attacked the bridge at Ortheuville. In spite of mines the 158th had hastily planted on the road in front of the bridge, the tanks seized it. When the engineers attempted to demolish it, the bridge failed to blow up. Having delayed the enemy advance for a day and allowed some more supplies to reach beleaguered Bastogne, the 158th retired to the west to establish still more barrier lines.

Just a few miles to the southwest, engineers of the 35th Combat Battalion occupied positions blocking another crossing of the Ourthe River and, reinforced by an engineer base depot company, held off German tanks and infantry for most of the day. In the meantime, engineers to the rear blocked roads using mine fields, abatis, blown culverts, and felled trees. When the Germans brought artillery to bear on the positions of the 35th, it retired under the cover of darkness, but only after imposing yet another delay on the German advance.

The German *Panzer* columns that broke through the engineer defenses on the upper reaches of the Ourthe River drove north and west farther into the American rear area. At Hotton they encountered another Ourthe River bridge, a class 70 timber span, defended by

engineers from the 51st Combat Battalion. After Company C had been ordered to Trois Ponts, the rest of the battalion under the command of Lt. Col. Harvey Fraser established barrier lines in the area of Rochefort, Marche, Hotton, and from there a few miles farther north. For the first few days, the engineers' major problems were caused by the flow of American stragglers streaming to the rear and groups of German soldiers disguised as Americans. On the 20th, however, the forward positions of the 51st along the Ourthe toward La Roche came under German attack, and by early morning on the next day enemy armor reached Hotton.

A makeshift force of engineers and others under the commander of Company B, Cpt. Preston Hodges, held the Hotton bridge. In addition to two squads of engineers, Hodges' small force included a 7th Armored Division tank, which the engineers discovered in a nearby ordnance shop. They prevailed upon the crew to join in their defense of the bridge. More reluctant was the crew of a 37-mm. antitank gun, but Pvt. Lee Ishmael of the 51st volunteered to man the weapon.

At 0700 the Germans began shelling Hotton, and German tanks pushed past a small 3d Armored Division force on the far side of the river. As a Tiger tank approached the bridge, Private Ishmael engaged it with his 37-mm. gun and Sgt. Kenneth Kelly attacked it with a bazooka. One 37-mm. round wedged between the turret and the hull, and as the smoke cleared the 51st saw the German crew abandoning the tank. When two more tanks approached the American positions, the 7th Armored tank knocked one of them out and the other slipped behind some buildings near the bridge. An unidentified soldier volunteered to flush out this tank and crossed the bridge with a bazooka and two rounds of ammunition. Minutes later Captain Hodges heard an explosion that sounded like a bazooka round, and the German tank slipped into view between two buildings. The 7th Armored tank fired into the opening, destroying the *Panzer*. The tank-infantry battle raged into the afternoon, but the engineers held the bridge until reinforcements arrived from the 84th Infantry Division, one of the many Allied units now rushing to block the German penetrations. The 51st Engineer Combat Battalion continued to man roadblocks and hold bridges in the area until 3 January.

Throughout the Ardennes divisional, corps, and army engineer units on the front lines and in rear areas participated valiantly in a sometimes desperate attempt to stem the tide of the unexpected German counteroffensive. After the American front in the Ardennes

collapsed under the weight of the massive attack, few American units, except engineers, were prepared to resist. Engineer officers, like Riggs, Pergrin, Fraser, and Yates, insisted on staying in their positions, even when other Americans fled to the rear. Relying on their training in defensive operations, engineer troops established roadblocks with whatever troops and weapons were at hand, blew up bridges, planted minefields, and succeeded, often at the cost of heavy casualties, in delaying the powerful German armored columns. The delays that engineers helped to impose gave the Americans and British time to bring in reinforcements and seal off the German penetrations. The Battle of the Bulge demonstrated that engineer initiative and training in defensive operations could make a major contribution to the outcome of an important campaign.

*Dr. William C. Baldwin is chief of the Histories Division in the Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A historian with the Corps of Engineers since 1980, he has taught military history at the U.S. Army Engineer School. Doctor Baldwin is the author of several articles and The Engineer Studies Center and Army Analysis: A History of the U.S. Army Engineer Studies Center, 1943-1982.*

### Suggestions for Further Reading

The best general account of engineers in the Battle of the Bulge is the chapter on the Ardennes in Alfred M. Beck et al., *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1985). For a more detailed history of the battle, see Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Office of the Chief of Military History, 1965). Janice Holt Giles' lively story of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion's exploits, *The Damned Engineers*, was originally published in 1970 and reprinted by the Historical Division, Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1985. The same office resurrected an account of another battalion's activities, written shortly after the events, from the files of the National Archives, and published it in 1988 as  *Holding the Line: The 51st Engineer Combat Battalion and the Battle of the Bulge, December 1944-January 1945*. The author was Ken Hechler, and Barry W. Fowle added a prologue and epilogue.

## The Center Welcomes a New Chief of Military History

On 17 October 1994, Col. (P) John W. Mountcastle officially assumed his duties as Chief of Military History and Commander, U.S. Army Center of Military History. He became a brigadier general on 29 November 1994.

A native of Richmond, Virginia, he earned a bachelor of arts degree in history from Virginia Military Institute before beginning his active service as an armor officer. General Mountcastle's military education includes the Armor Officer Basic Course, airborne training, the Infantry Officer Advanced Course, the Army Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College. He also holds a master's degree and a doctorate in history from Duke University. He has authored numerous articles for professional journals in the United States and abroad.

General Mountcastle has filled a number of important command and staff positions, most recently that of Director, U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. His earlier assignments included two combat tours in Vietnam, command of a tank company in Germany, and a tour as aide-de-camp to the commanding general, 1st Armored Division. Following assignment as an instructor in the Department of History, United States Military Academy, he returned to Germany. He served as a battalion executive officer, as a staff officer in Heidelberg, Germany, and as battalion commander before attending the Army War College. After graduating from the War College in 1985, General Mountcastle became a division chief in the Training Directorate, U.S. Army Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans. He commanded the 2d Brigade, 1st Armored Division in Erlangen, Germany, from November 1988 to September 1990. Following brigade command, he became chief judge for the Canadian Army Trophy, a NATO tank gunnery competition at Grafenwoehr, Germany. He served as chief of staff, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth from February 1991 until December 1992.

General Mountcastle is married and has two sons.

## Editor's Journal

Certainly the big news at the Center of Military History is the arrival of Brig. Gen. John W. Mountcastle, U.S. Army Chief of Military History. I share the enthusiasm of everyone at the Center in welcoming the new commander. This issue includes a brief biographical sketch of General Mountcastle, above.

Because of competing priorities for printing money, both the Spring (no. 30) and Summer (no. 31) issues were late by the time they were printed and distributed. My apology to those whose notices of meetings, etc., became dated in the interim, but the delay truly was beyond our control. Faithful readers will recall that this is not the first time that funding issues have delayed publication. Now that we are in a new fiscal year, *Army History* should be appearing once again on schedule.

A.G. Fisch, Jr.

# The Women's Army Corps' Black Band: A Historical Note

Martha S. Putney

*This article is derived from a paper Dr. Putney presented to the 1992 Conference of Army Historians in Washington, D.C.*

The black Women's Army Corps (WAC) band, like the legendary Topsy, "just grewed." In 1943 when a few black enlisted women were denied auditions for the band then being organized at the segregated First Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) Training Center, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, black officers on the post made a determined effort to seek out individuals who were interested in playing in a band. One of their own who had taught choral music, piano, and theory—but who had no band experience before entering the military—agreed to serve as band officer if the women were made available during the day for rehearsals. (1)

Among the enlisted women who expressed an interest or who were persuaded to join the unit, only three previously had played an instrument other than a piano. One volunteer had two bachelor's degrees in music, while another had sung with an opera company, some had been members of choral groups or church choirs, and a few could read music, but most had practically no prior experience in music. At first, thirty-five women participated, but over time, after additions and subtractions, the number leveled off at twenty-eight. Three different black officers commanded the unit during its existence. (2)

This historical note is the story of the struggle and triumph of this black band as recalled by Charity Adams Earley, Joan A. Lamb, and five surviving enlisted members of the band.

Maj. Charity Adams Earley, at the time the highest-ranking black officer at Fort Des Moines, recalled that "we were determined to start a Negro band, since none of us were members of the other." She stated that at the beginning, the enlisted women were excused from other duties in their companies to assemble in an unoccupied barracks. She added, "What we were doing was an 'open secret,' unrecognized but not forbidden. We ordered band equipment and supplies as recreational equipment. Eventually, all the members...were assigned to Company 8. Since [it] was a training company, there was a certain legitimacy about it." Earley concluded,

Every day, after work and sometimes during the day, I would go out to see how the band was progressing. I am not at all musical but knew when things sounded better. I shall never forget the first day they tried marching and playing instruments—we had a long way to go from there. Finally, they got it all together—I felt like a proud mother hen the first time they marched on [the] parade ground. (3)

The two individuals most responsible for "getting it all together" were M. Sgt. Joan A. Lamb and S. Sgt. Leonora Hull Brown. Lamb, the director of the nonblack band at Fort Des Moines, had played the trumpet and cello in her high school band and orchestra and was a graduate of Baldwin Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, with a major in instrumental music. After teaching music for a few years in Ohio, she enrolled in the corps and took her basic training at the Second WAAC Training Center, Daytona Beach, Florida. On the completion of basic training, Lamb was assigned to the band on post, where she played the oboe. Several months later she was sent to the Army Music School in Washington, D.C., the specialist school for the training of band officers.

Lamb and one other enlisted woman had expected warrant officer's rank upon completion of the course at the Army Music School, but instead were made master sergeants, since the Army "had trained more band leaders than it had bands." Following a brief stint with the band at the Third WAAC Training Center, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, Lamb was sent to Fort Des Moines where the authorized band "was in a bit of trouble" and in need of some leadership. (4)

With "things going rather well" with the authorized band, Lamb was "ordered to organize a Negro WAC band." This assignment came as a surprise to her. Heretofore she "had never known a Negro," but, she confessed, it was the beginning of "one of the most interesting and rewarding experiences of my career." (5)

In the fall of 1943 she was given the service records of those blacks who wanted to play in the band. After reviewing the files and talking with the women, Lamb discovered that, with the exception of Leonora Hull Brown, even the few who had played instruments had not kept up their skills, and most of the women could

not read music. Relying on what she gleaned from the service records and interviews, Lamb selected those who showed promise.

While waiting for the instruments to arrive, Lamb and Brown (who later became the director of the black band) began to teach the group to read music. Lamb worked with them in the mornings and the nonblack band in the afternoon, and Brown took over the whole operation in the afternoons. Of Brown, Lamb said that she was the only one who had "any real musical background," that she was "a fine pianist and organist," and that she did a fantastic job of teaching the women to sing as a choir and to read music. Throughout this whole learning process, the morale of the women remained high. (6)

Everyone was excited and happy the day the instruments arrived. The women watched intently as Lamb assembled the instruments, and they waited with disciplined eagerness for her to assign them. In most instances, in making the assignments she "relied on tooth and lip formation, physical size, and general intelligence," since most of the women "didn't know enough about band instruments to express a preference." She remembered assigning the French horn to Maude Blackwell because she had the attributes to play what Lamb regarded as "a cranky and difficult instrument," and, Lamb said, Blackwell performed beautifully. Lamb also recalled that T5g. Le Von Dial talked of a dream of playing the saxophone and that a trade was made so that Dial "could realize her dream." (7)

The biggest job, said Lamb, was "teaching twenty-eight people to play in a minimum [amount] of time." Appealing to the women in the authorized band, she got about ten of them to assist her. They came with her several mornings a week and gave private lessons to the black women. Lamb herself worked with them each morning individually and as a unit, teaching the fundamentals of instrumental playing and of marching as a band. In the afternoons, the women continued to practice under the direction of Brown. (10)

"How those girls worked!" exclaimed Lamb. They worked in the morning, in the afternoon, and into the night, frequently disturbing the enlisted women in the nearby barracks. Several times, in response to complaints about the after-hours noise and, more importantly, out of concern for the "physical damage that could have occurred from excessive practice during the developmental stage," Lamb went up to their barracks to put them to bed. She concluded,

All of this hard work paid big dividends. In about three months, we gave our first formal concert. The material

was simple, but effective. We combined both band and choral selections. From this point on, the group really took off! There was no stopping them in achievement after achievement. We were all *so* proud of their remarkable progress. (8)

Lamb spoke of her experience with the black band as one in which she received in personal growth and enrichment "much more than I gave" and as one which "had a great effect on my life." Her only wish was that she was able to convey to the band members "the respect, admiration, and love I felt for them." (9)

Leonora Hull Brown, as noted earlier, played a crucial role in the development of the band and, as its director, exerted a great deal of influence on the women. Brown, whose hometown was Jacksonville, Florida, had earned a bachelor's degree in music from Fisk University and a second music degree from Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio, where she majored in piano and pipe organ. Prior to entering the service, she appeared in several concerts and taught piano, organ, music history, and harmony and directed the choir at Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and at South Carolina State College. During her third year at South Carolina State, a black WAAC officer recruiting team came to the college and "opened my eyes to the advantages of Army life." She related that music had been a part of her life as a young child in church, as a student, and as a teacher and that she was "tired of music." Her mother tried to discourage her from joining the corps, but her father, who had been a commissioned officer during World War I and later commandant of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) unit at South Carolina State College, gave her his blessings. She enrolled in the WAAC in July 1943 with the goal of becoming a commissioned officer. She never dreamed that she "would end up in music." (10)

Brown recalled that in basic training some of the black officers who had been gathering women for the band "were amazed [to find] someone in the ranks with two degrees in music." She thought she had put music behind her, but assented to their entreaties when they told her they needed "proper personnel" for the band. (11)

Brown told of forming a chorus to teach the women to read music, of the memorable day the instruments arrived, of the women's excitement and joy when the instruments were assigned, of the laborious task of learning to play, of the multitudinous rehearsals and drills, of the enormous effort of bringing it all together, of the invaluable work of the nonblack band members, and of the tremendous job done by Lamb, whom

Brown referred to as “the moving force behind our being able to play music.” Their days were full: individual lessons and practice in the mornings and full band practices in the afternoons.

In the beginning, Brown said, “we could not play difficult marches like the other band, but we could stick to a cadence of 120 so that the marchers did not have to run around corners at parades.” Confidence and improvement came with each performance, and each performance was followed by more practicing and learning. Throughout, Brown noted, “we took great pride in our personal appearance.” (12)

Their first off-post appearances were in small towns in Iowa. They played for retreat parades and gave instrumental and vocal concerts at Christmas, Easter, and on other special occasions, both on and off post. One of the early highlights for Brown was a trip to Chicago, where the band participated in a parade for the opening of the 1944 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s annual convention. Brown described the trip as “delightful.” The band members were so proud of the applause they received and of their accommodations at the International House on the campus of the University of Chicago. Brown remarked that, just before the trips, they had been rewarded with their first ratings. It was then that Brown confessed, “I thought I was tired of music, but this was really enjoyable.” (13)

Upon their return to the post, a bombshell shattered their world: “WAC Band No. 2,” the official name of the unit, was to be deactivated. This was “devastating news.” Their instruments and music were taken away, and they lost their ratings. They wanted to do *something* to save the band, yet were fully mindful that—in the Army—an order was an order. At their officers’ urging, they launched a letter-writing campaign, writing to family members, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, begging them to get in touch with “powerful persons” who were asked to protest the band’s deactivation to the Pentagon and the White House. (14)

The command at Fort Des Moines recognized that the deactivation order was a blow to the morale not only of the band members, but also of the significant number of blacks stationed there. Also, the command soon discovered that the order was being protested at the Pentagon. So, instead of sending the women out to field assignments as planned, the command kept them on post. Some remained in the unit and took an advanced basic training course, others had excessive KP (kitchen police) or guard duty, while still others were sent on temporary duty to various schools. Brown

went to Leadership School and was assigned afterwards to teach basic trainee courses in organization of the Army and military sanitation. She found this very boring compared to her duties with the band. (15)

In 1944, Brown recalled, the protest letters bore fruit and the unit was reactivated as the 404th ASF (Army Service Forces) Band, but without the services of 1st Lt. Thelma B. Brown, the band officer who “went to bat for us.” According to Leonora Hull Brown, Lieutenant Brown feared reprisals against her might harm the band, because of her strenuous efforts in advertising the band’s plight. Her loss, Brown said, “broke our hearts, as we truly loved her.” (16)

She was replaced by 1st Lt. Ernestine Woods. Reactivation did not result in the resumption of band activities for some two months, since the members still were without instruments and music.

With the help of “the sympathetic band officer,” the instruments and music eventually were returned, and the hard work began all over again. Brown stated that the women were “so motivated that they worked doubly hard so that nothing would keep them from being ready to perform when the time came.” They wanted to be ready for any eventuality. Brown recalled the day when a group of nonblack officers arrived at the barracks to see if the black band was “capable of providing music” for the ceremonial parade and other activities marking the second anniversary of the founding of the WAAC/WAC. Although Brown and the other women knew that they had been considered only because the nonblack band was on temporary duty on the West Coast at the time, they regarded this as a unique opportunity to convince everyone that they could do the job. This event, Brown recalled, “became a victorious highlight in our history.” (17)

The truly big highlight for Brown and the band was their participation in the Seventh War Bond Drive in Chicago in May 1945. Initially invited to help sell bonds in the Chicago area’s black community, the women so impressed the organizers with their performance that they requested and obtained an extension of the band’s tour of duty to take part in the main War Bond Drive events. In writing about the latter, Brown remembered that “we played on a bandstand set up at State and Madison [Streets] and were absolutely floating on a cloud, sharing the stage with Lauren Beall, Humphrey Bogart, and the servicemen who raised the flag at Iwo Jima.” The next day—I Am an American Day—the band played and its vocal trio sang in Soldier Field, where Pat O’Brien “thrilled us by telling that impressive audience that he had never heard Schubert’s ‘Ave Maria’ done so beautifully.” (18)

Referring to her duties and rating, Brown wrote that she was "acting first sergeant and band director on a private's salary." She did all of the paperwork of a band director and a first sergeant, including the morning report, while paid as a buck private. Her first rating or promotion was that of technician, fifth grade, or T5g. (the equivalent of a corporal), and it was long overdue when it came. As noted earlier, she lost her rating along with the other band members when the unit was deactivated. The highest grade Brown attained was staff sergeant, the highest grade of any enlisted woman in the black band. Brown explained:

I was to be made a warrant officer. The Army did not see fit to send me to the Band School in Washington [D.C.]. Hence, regulations were overlooked and I was given a private course with the director of the [post's] white band as my teacher. This was very frustrating for both of us, since, with music being my field, I really knew more than she did. (19)

Before she finished the "band course," Brown was discharged from the corps because of pregnancy, "since the 1945 Army could not deal with motherhood." On her pregnancy, Brown remarked that one of the clerks in the post's personnel office "wanted to know if I felt that I had let my people down." Like countless blacks before and after her, Brown resented "you people" expressions and did not respond to the put-down. (20) She summarized her feelings:

I left the Army with mixed emotions. This was really a bittersweet time for me. I was thrilled with the prospect of motherhood, but the 404th Band was truly like a family that I hated to leave. I thoroughly enjoyed the WAC experience, and I shall never forget the many friends I made, the fun time, and the bad times. It was truly the experience of a lifetime. (21)

Brown, whose husband was in the military, returned to her hometown of Jacksonville, Florida, to have her baby. Her training and experience led first to a brief return to teaching at Spelman College and Atlanta University. She moved to Chicago in 1951, qualified in early childhood education, and taught in the Chicago public schools until her retirement. Since leaving the WACs, Leonora Hull Brown has kept in touch with the surviving members of the 404th ASF Band and continues to express a great admiration for their dedication and hard work. (22)

Pfc. Audrey Gross, a tenor saxophonist in the band, joined the corps in June 1943 to help the war effort by

releasing a serviceman for combat and "to get away from college and home." She took her basic training at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and was awaiting assignment when the Army closed the fort as a WAAC training center and transferred the women to Fort Des Moines.

While in the staging area there, Gross remembered being questioned about her musical ability and responding that she played "by ear...and loved music." Referring to the initial meeting of the group, she recalled they were told, "You ladies were chosen to play in the first colored Army band. You will have eight weeks to learn music and how to play.... Your first concert will be in eight weeks. The ladies from the other band will come...to assist you with your practice." (23)

With tremendous help from the members of the other band, who became very good friends, and the superior job done by Leonora Hull Brown, who taught them to read music, they were ready in eight weeks for their first concert. The first floor of their barracks, which had been set aside for their practices, was arranged as a concert hall for their debut. Several commissioned officers, both black and nonblack, were in the audience. Once this concert was behind them, they resumed their practice with renewed enthusiasm and dedication. The payoff followed—playing at war bond drives, parades, concerts, and as a swing band at dances at the black service club and performing as vocal units. (24)

Because she loved music, Gross enjoyed being in the band and also enjoyed "the traveling the band did, the publicity" it received, the meeting of many people, and the signing of autographs. She recalled Mary McLeod Bethune's coming to their barracks and speaking to them, and Marion Anderson's visit to Fort Des Moines and her talk with some of the band members. In the course of the band's travels, Gross met—among others—Ida Lupino, Billy Eckstine, and Duke Ellington. Of the three successive black commissioned officers assigned to the band, Gross said that they were "very, very good leaders...helpful and sensitive to our feelings and our situation" and the band's biggest boosters. (25)

Gross, among the first to join the band, held a grade no higher than private, first class, throughout her tour with the band. She felt that she and other members of the band deserved higher grades. While acknowledging that the other band had been operational longer, Gross believed that the black band members should have been given grades comparable to those in the other band. She maintained that the black band offered

a more extensive repertoire and “played long enough and well enough to have deserved better grades.” (26)

T5g. Rachel Stewart Mitchell had completed basic training and was anticipating a field assignment when a black officer approached her and asked if she knew music. Mitchell responded in the affirmative and the officer told her, “Don’t say anything, just wait.” Mitchell waited and discovered in the meantime that two friends (Pfc. Violet Moore and T5g. Lillian Brown), whom she had met in New York as they boarded the train as raw recruits, had also been told to wait. None of the three knew why. Finally, Mitchell and the others were assembled in a barracks and told they would become an Army band, “because the colonel refused to accept [blacks] in the white band.” Mitchell added that the band was allowed to exist “to quiet” talk of discrimination among blacks on the post and because of the demands by black leaders like Bethune and Walter White. Mitchell asserted that, although the colonel “pretty much” stayed out of their way, he gave them an impossible time frame in which to produce a concert. Yet, Mitchell triumphantly stated, “we did the impossible!” (27)

Referring to the members of the other band, Mitchell said that at first they acted like they were “afraid of us,” but they “warmed up” and “taught us well.” She had considerable praise for Lamb, who came to instruct them daily and who organized them as an orchestra and a band. Lamb, she said, realized their potential and became the band’s devoted fan. (28)

The members of the band, Mitchell related, came from all walks of life. Some had been to college and were well educated, some were from black middle class families, some were from poor families, and some were streetwise. But they all had their pride and, through practicing and rehearsing, they each demonstrated their talents. Mitchell repeatedly referred to Leonora Hull Brown as “our teacher.” She recalled her own role in the choral trio with Lillian Brown and Eunice Merriweather, and the beautiful solo voice of T5g. Romaine Saunders, which enhanced the group’s versatility. (29)

Mitchell recalled that their officers, Lieutenants McAlpine, Brown, and Woods, kept them together and encouraged them. She felt that McAlpine “suffered the most for us” since, as their first officer, she had to give them cohesion and overcome the voices of the doubters. McAlpine, Mitchell said, advised them how to act and what to expect. Brown “got to know each one of us,” understood their personal frustrations, and imbued in them a sense of toughness in the face of adversity, to fight when the band’s existence was threatened. Woods,

Mitchell stated, “put our band in the league...[of a] professional Army band.” With Woods, Mitchell declared, “we were on our way.” It was, therefore, a sad day for Mitchell and the others when the 404th ASF Band was deactivated. Although they were still denied membership in the other band, they knew they had done their part. They had served and, with the fighting ended on all fronts, they had made their contribution to the war effort, “no matter how small.” (30)

T5g. Clementine McConico Skinner, who did not play an instrument, but had some knowledge of music, enrolled in the corps in September 1943. After completing basic training at Fort Des Moines, she joined the band at the suggestion of her company commander. She learned to play the trumpet and the French horn and was a soloist in the band chorus. (31)

Skinner discussed Charity Adams Earley’s efforts to get the band approved and the “excellent rapport” that existed between the two bands, but mostly she talked about the learning process and the music. She said the band’s initial concert was 2 December 1943, “given for Col. Frank U. McCoskrie, our post commander.”

Skinner recalled as one of her inspiring experiences playing taps and then observing the “lights go out on the post on a star-studded night.” But a “more exciting and gratifying experience” was the band’s participation in the parade and outdoor mass meeting at the Thirty-fourth Annual Convention of the NAACP in her home town of Chicago, in July 1944. Her “memorable day” was 16 July, when she sang “One Alone” from Victor Herbert’s *The Desert Song* before a large outdoor audience. (32)

Skinner, like the others, was stunned on hearing of the band’s deactivation. She threw herself wholeheartedly into the letter-writing campaign to family, relatives, and acquaintances—some ninety personal letters, including ones to Walter White of the NAACP, Mary McLeod Bethune of the National Council of Negro Women, A. Philip Randolph of the March on Washington Movement, Lester Grandner of the National Urban League, and Adam Clayton Powell. Skinner served as one of the couriers who took the trolley, not the Army shuttle, to mail the letters in town, away from the Army’s scrutiny. Skinner added that Earley worked hard within the system to get the deactivation order reversed. (33)

The reactivation of the band was followed by many engagements, culminating—for Skinner—in the return trip to Chicago for the Seventh War Bond Drive. She recalled staying at the Congress Hotel, seeing radio and movie stars “galore,” being in the midst of

outstanding black musicians, playing in concert at the famed Savoy Ballroom, and enjoying the spotlight at Soldier Field before a huge audience. (34)

The unit was permanently disbanded in December 1945. Reminiscing, Skinner noted that they played before more nonblack than black audiences and that, wherever they went, they were "received graciously," dined, lodged, and treated as if they belonged. She stated, "They made us feel like celebrities. Many of the young girls sought our autographs as if we were famous individuals." (35)

Lt. Ernestine Woods White had been stationed at Fort Des Moines since finishing officer candidate school at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and had assignments in company work and in the records section of the receiving battalion before finding herself unassigned and yearning for a field assignment. When she learned of her assignment to the band, she knew that she would likely remain on post for the duration of the war, so it was with "dismay and displeasure" that she approached her new association with the band. (36)

White surmised that she was selected because she had been a music major in college. She determined to give it her best effort and it did not take long for her to recognize that the other women in the band were doing the same—and doing it remarkably well. White was "proud of these girls" because "They were great. They could play military band music. They had a dance group that played popular music. They had a vocal trio that was terrific. They were so popular because they were so versatile. They really put on a show....a complete show." (37)

When the band traveled, White noted, it went first class, with the top berth for each band member's instrument and the bottom berth for the band member.

She asked rhetorically, "Can you [picture] a piccolo laying up in a top berth?" White declared that it "was quite an experience appearing with them. They really kept busy." She was generous with her praise for the members of the "only 'All Negro Military Women's Band' in the world." They were unique because of the many things they could do, and do well. She recalled, "they were excellent" and paid tribute to the members who had died and to the surviving members, some of whom were ailing. (38)

She concluded, however, "I can truthfully say I did not enjoy my tenure with the band as it was a station complement...thereby causing me to be stuck in Des Moines," and "it was always on the go, and my feet to this day are still suffering from all the marching and parading." (39)

Lamb, Brown, Gross, Mitchell, Skinner, and White all related their experiences, emotions, and feelings—their sadness and joy at the challenges and successes of the U.S. Army's first and only black female band. They have provided some missing pages to the story of blacks in the Women's Army Corps during World War II, women who served with dignity in a segregated Army engaged in a global war against the enemies of democracy. In Mitchell's words, these women in the band "did their part in the war [effort], no matter how small."

*Martha S. Putney retired in 1983 as a senior lecturer at Howard University. She holds an M.A. in history from Howard and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Pennsylvania. The author of two books and some twenty articles in professional journals on black history, Dr. Putney served as a first lieutenant in the WAAC/WAC, 1943-46.*

## Notes

1. Ltr, Charity Earley to the author, 18 Jul 92. On 1 July 1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the act of Congress creating the Women's Army Corps (WAC), and on 1 September 1943 the members of the WAAC were sworn into the WAC.

2. Ltr, Joan A. Lamb to the author, 25 Mar 92; "Summary of Information on Negro Women Who Have Served or Are Serving in the Women's Army Corps, 1942-1963" (Fort McClellan, Ala.: WAC Division of Doctrine and Literature, 1963); Martha S. Putney, *When the Nation Was in Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992), p. 56.

3. Ltr, Earley to the author, 18 Jul 92.

4. Ltr, Lamb to the author, 25 Mar 92.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid. Maude Blackwell, an art teacher before entering the corps, held a one-woman art exhibit at the black service club on post and later gave Lamb one of her paintings—a valued gift.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid. Once she left the corps, Lamb stated that her enthusiastic description of her experience with the black band secured her an instrumental music position in the Los Angeles (California) City School District,

from which she later retired.

10. Ltr, Leonora Hull Brown to the author, 4 Jul 92; Unidentified newspaper clipping (n.d.), in author's papers.

11. Ltr, Brown to the author, 4 Jul 92.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid. Apparently, the band's first off-post performances occurred on 15 April 44 (Davenport), 10 May 44 (Burlington), and 4 Jul 44 (Greenfield). First WAC Training Center, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, Special Orders no. 83, 6 Apr 44, paras. 17-19, 24; Ltr, Earley to the author, 18 Jul 92.

14. Ltrs, Brown to the author, 2 Mar 92, 4 Jul 92.

15. Ltr, Brown to the author, 3 Jun 92, and personal statement, "My Army Experience."

16. Ibid. For a fuller discussion of the deactivation and reactivation of the band, see Putney, *When the Nation Was in Need*, pp. 59-60.

17. Ltr, Brown to the author, 3 Jun 92, and personal statement.

18. Ibid. The trip to Chicago was authorized by First WAC Training Center, Des Moines, Iowa, Special Orders no. 110, 8 May 45, para. 4. For an account of the "very commendable job" the band did at the Seventh War Bond Drive, see ltr, Deputy Manager (Don McKieran), Special Events Division, U.S. Treasury Dept., to CO, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, 13 Jul 45, author's papers.

19. Brown's statement and ltr, Brown to the author, 3 Jun 92.

20. Ltr, Brown to the author, 4 Jul 92.

21. Brown's statement.

22. Ltrs, Brown to the author, 27 Apr 92, 3 Jun 92.

23. Ltr, Audrey Gross to the author, 22 Apr, 92; Undated joint statement of Audrey Gross and Novella Cromer Struthers, "The 404th WAC Band," in author's papers.

24. Gross' and Struthers' statements.

25. Ltrs, Gross to the author, 22 Apr 92, 8 Sep 92.

26. Ltr, Gross to the author, 22 Apr 92. After leaving the corps, Gross raised four children and taught for some twenty years at a Roman Catholic school in Chicago, then returned to her hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, where she served as a teacher's aide in the public schools before retiring.

27. Ltrs, Rachel Stewart Mitchell to the author, 25 Mar 92, 17 Apr 92.

28. Ltr, Mitchell to the author, 25 Mar 92.

29. Ltrs, Mitchell to the author, 25 Mar 92, 17 Apr 92.

30. Ibid.

31. "Afro-American Women's World War II Military Experiences," paper presented by Clementine

McConico Skinner to the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Washington, D.C., 1 Nov 91, in author's papers. Precise dates of events in Skinner's paper raise questions about when the band started. A statement on the concert program dated 3 Jun 45 noted that the band "originally" was organized on 1 September 1943. However, Skinner, Mitchell, Brown, and Moore, all band members, did not enter service until Sep 43 and did not complete their basic training until four to six weeks later. Skinner stated that it was after basic training that an officer asked her to consider the band as an option. Also, Mitchell had completed basic training when she was told "to wait," and Mitchell stated that she was present at the initial meeting of the group. Hence, it appears that the band was organized after Sep 43.

32. "Afro-American Women's World War II Military Experiences."

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid. Estimates are that over one-half million people heard the black band's "fine music" (Ltr, McKieran to CO, Fort Des Moines, 13 Jul 45). The band also participated in the Seventh War Bond Drive on the post at Fort Des Moines. This effort resulted in a better sales record than any of the previous bond drives, which the commander credited to "the interest and enthusiasm" of the women in the band. Ltr, Col Frank U. McCoskrie to CO, 404th ASF Band, HQ First WAC TC, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, 17 Jul 45, in author's papers.

35. "Afro-American Women's World War II Military Experiences." Skinner returned to Chicago, subsequently married, and began a family. While her children were young, she enrolled in college, eventually obtained advanced degrees, and taught in the Chicago public school system, retiring as assistant principal of Southshore High School. She has kept in touch with the surviving members of the band. Ltr, Brown to the author, 3 Jun 92.

36. Ltrs, Ernestine White to the author, 31 May 92, 14 Aug 92. White was assigned to command the band on 1 Sep 44 (Special Orders no. 207, para. 1, 1798 SU, HQ First WAC TC, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, 31 Aug 44).

37. Ltrs, White to the author, 31 May 92, 14 Aug 92.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid. After she left the corps, White completed her degree program at Howard University and returned to her Federal civil service position in Washington, D.C. She later married, raised two children, and began a teaching career. She retired in Georgia (1984) from the public school system.

# The Army's Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II

Dale E. Wilson

*This article is derived from a paper Dr. Dale Wilson presented to the Army's Conference of Army Historians in Washington, D.C., 10 June 1992.*

As war clouds gathered over Europe in 1939, the role of African Americans in the armed forces of the United States became a hotly debated issue. The number of African Americans in uniform had dropped to just 3,640, and only five black officers (three of whom were chaplains) were in the ranks of the Regular Army. (1)

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, members of the African-American media, and sympathetic whites—most notably Eleanor Roosevelt—clamored for an expanded role for blacks, especially in combat units. Their cries did not fall on deaf ears and, by 1941, a formula for including proportionate shares of black troops in all of the combat arms and specialized units, such as the antiaircraft artillery, engineers, Army Air Corps, and the newly created Armored Force, had been devised.

The Armored Force did not fall into line easily, however, arguing against the idea of forming segregated tank units on the grounds that it was not, technically, a separate branch. Instead, Armored Force leaders said their force represented a combination of arms and services that were already taking proportionate shares of African Americans and should thus be exempted. They proposed using black troops in service detachments in Armored Force headquarters at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Soldiers assigned to these units would work as chauffeurs, janitors, firemen, cooks, duty soldiers, and bandmen. (2)

The Armored Force lost the battle, and on 12 May 1941 the 78th Tank Battalion was redesignated as the 758th Tank Battalion (Light) and prepared to receive its first shipment of black enlisted men from Fort Custer, Michigan. The initial cadre of both officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) was white, although the NCO positions gradually were turned over to black soldiers as more experienced troopers transferred in from the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and as the new men earned more stripes.

After completing Armored Force orientation training at Fort Knox, the 758th transferred to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, in August 1941. By the early spring of 1942 sufficient African-American tankers

were entering the force that a second segregated tank battalion was ready to be created. On 1 April the 761st was organized, with a cadre of officers and NCOs provided by the 758th.

Despite some discussion about forming a segregated armored division, that idea was shelved and the 758th and 761st were assigned to the 5th Tank Group (Negro)—one of twenty tank groups organized during the war, each containing three battalions. Army doctrine called for tank groups to be assigned to corps to provide administrative and maintenance support to the battalions, which would be attached to infantry divisions. The 5th reached full strength when the 784th Tank Battalion was activated in April 1943. The group, however, would not see combat. Instead, it was disbanded at Camp Hood, Texas, in December 1944 after the last of its battalions transferred to the European Theater of Operations. (3)

In September 1943, the 761st and 784th Tank Battalions shipped out to Camp Hood, where they dropped their "light" designation and became medium tank outfits. This meant retaining M5A1 Stuart light tanks in their D Companies and adding M4 Sherman mediums for the other three line companies. The 761st and 784th were assigned training duties with the Tank Destroyer School at Hood, where they remained until they deployed to England. The 758th, which had preceded them to Hood, was detached from the 5th Tank Group in November 1943 and sent to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where it became a part of the 92d Infantry Division (Negro). The 758th stayed with the 92d Division for the remainder of the war. (4)

## The 761st Tank Battalion in Action

On 9 June 1944, three days after the Normandy invasion, the 761st became the first segregated tank unit to be alerted for overseas movement. The advance party sailed from New York harbor on 7 August, followed by the rest of the battalion three weeks later. The battalion spent three weeks in England drawing new tanks and preparing men and equipment for transport to France.

Upon arriving on the Continent at the end of October 1944, the 761st moved across France to where the Third Army was stalled in front of Metz. On 2 November, the Third Army commander, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., stood atop a half-track and told

the men of the 761st:

You're the first Negro tankers to ever fight in the American Army. I would never have asked for you if you weren't good. I have nothing but the best in my army. I don't care what color you are, so long as you go up there and kill those Kraut sonsabitches. Everyone has their eyes on you and is expecting great things from you. Most of all, your race is looking forward to you. Don't let them down, and, damn you, don't let me down. (5)

Within a week the black tankers were involved in what was, for them, some of the most vicious fighting of the war. On 8 November, spearheading a major push by the 26th Infantry Division south of Metz, the 761st smashed into the German lines. Between 8-11 November the battalion forced the numerically superior enemy force to withdraw, but lost fifteen tanks and one officer and eighteen soldiers killed in action during the bitter battle. (6)

Ironically, the day before the battalion's first fight, its well-respected commander, Lt. Col. Paul L. Bates, was shot and seriously wounded while directing traffic at a road junction near the front during the early morning hours. Rumors of the circumstances surrounding the battalion commander's shooting ran rampant in the unit, but were laid to rest when doctors extracted a German 9-mm. round from Bates' thigh. (7)

If the loss of their commander before the unit got into battle was not enough, the black tankers had to contend with the unnerving manner in which the first five of their number were killed in action. S. Sgt. Harvey Woodward and his four crewmen were found in their undamaged Sherman, their bodies sitting upright at their crew positions—marred by nothing more than the surprised looks on their faces. The official cause of death was determined to be the concussion caused by the burst of a high-explosive round over the turret. (8)

Despite these setbacks, the 761st persevered, remaining in battle for 183 consecutive days. The black tankers fought both as a separate tank battalion and in company-size task forces in support of various infantry regiments in the 26th, 71st, 79th, 87th, 95th, and 103d Infantry Divisions and the 17th Airborne Division. They participated in major engagements in France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, and Austria.

According to the Presidential Unit Citation presented to the battalion in April 1978, the 761st's

tankers distinguished themselves in a five-day battle with the *15th SS Panzer Division* near Tillet, Belgium, in January 1945, and again in March, when, acting as an armored spearhead, they broke through the Siegfried Line, paving the way for the 14th Armored Division's thrust to the Rhine River. (9)

The citation credits the 761st with inflicting thousands of enemy casualties and with "capturing, destroying, or aiding in the liberation of more than 30 major towns, 4 airfields, 3 ammunition supply dumps, 461 wheeled vehicles, 34 tanks, 113 large guns, 1 radio station, and numerous individual and crew-served weapons."

In accomplishing all that, the unit endured a 50 percent casualty rate—including thirty-four dead—and lost seventy-one tanks. Its men earned 11 Silver Stars, 69 Bronze Stars (almost all for valor), and 296 Purple Hearts. (10)

As the war drew to a close, the 761st was the easternmost American unit in Patton's Third Army, linking up with the Red Army at the Enns River near Steyr, Austria, on 6 May 1945.

#### **The 758th Tank Battalion in Action**

While the 761st's tankers were linking up with the 26th Infantry Division in France, the 758th Tank Battalion moved to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, for transportation to Italy. Upon arrival from Camp Hood they were greeted by angry white paratroopers as they disembarked from their train. According to Sgt. Jefferson Hightower of Company A, the paratroopers

wanted to know where did those niggers get all those stripes. We had pulled our 758 patches off, but all the NCOs still had stripes and just about everybody had some kind of rank. We answered that we received them from their mothers. I was CQ [Charge of Quarters] the night before the trouble, so I did not know that some of our men had been in arguments with the whites at the PX.... [Later] I was in the telephone building right across from our area when the MP came in and called for the guard. I ran back to the area some way and got back in the barracks even as shots were being fired across the road at the paratroopers who had tried to rush our area. (11)

The adjutant's journal records that in the ensuing riot one paratrooper was killed. (12) Curiously, there is no record of an investigation, and the unit departed for Italy to join the 92d Division on schedule with no 758th soldiers ever charged.

Unlike the 761st, the 758th was broken up and cross-attached as separate companies throughout its combat tour and thus never fought as a battalion. The problem of fragmentation was so great for the 758th that the unit's supply officer, Capt. William Bobo, said he neither saw nor heard from the mortar platoon from Thanksgiving 1944 until the end of the war in Italy in mid-1945. (13)

Fighting was sporadic in the 92d Division area of operations, and the 758th's major trial by fire did not come until less than a month before the war ended—during the division's failed effort to breach the Cinquale Canal, 7-9 April 1945. In seventy hours of bitter fighting that resulted in a seesaw battle with well-trenched German forces on the far shore, the 758th lost four tanks, one officer and ten enlisted men killed in action, and ten wounded. (14)

Because of Italy's rugged terrain, the 758th's tanks wound up being used almost exclusively in an indirect fire support role in support of infantry attacks.

#### **The 784th Tank Battalion in Action**

The 784th Tank Battalion was the last of the segregated tank units to see action, entering combat while attached to the 104th Infantry Division near Eschweiler, Germany, in late December 1944. During early 1945, the 784th operated primarily in an indirect fire support role or in division reserve, where the black tankers helped infantrymen learn tank-infantry tactics.

The battalion's after-action reports indicate that it saw its heaviest fighting in March 1945 while attached to the 35th Infantry Division, which was pushing toward the Rhine from the Roer River. While supporting the 137th Infantry, elements of the 784th encountered stiff German resistance, and the battalion lost seventeen tanks and twenty-four men either missing or killed in action.

By war's end the 784th had lost 23 tanks, 1 officer and 30 enlisted men killed, 2 officers and 3 men missing, and 13 officers and 75 men wounded. The battalion's officers and men earned 8 Silver Stars and 51 Bronze Stars. (15)

#### **Conclusions**

The story of the Army's segregated tank battalions is an especially fruitful one for the historian. Proponents of segregation had stridently pointed to the alleged failure of black troops in World War I, using it to justify restricting the role of African Americans in the Army during the interwar period. Furthermore, the paternal nature of the Army's predominantly Southern leadership led to a policy of assigning mostly white

Southern officers to segregated units, especially during the the early stages of the war before Officer Candidate Schools began turning out significant numbers of black graduates. The argument was that Southern whites, because of their "familiarity" with African Americans and a demonstrated "knack" for handling them, were the logical choice to lead and command in segregated units.

Commanders of World War I segregated forces both praised and decried the fighting qualities of their soldiers. Some recommended integration—a policy they knew would never be adopted—or, at least, the assignment of African Americans to smaller segregated organizations, such as companies and battalions, rather than to large ones, such as regiments and divisions. (16)

Ironically, the performance of the three segregated tank battalions in the European Theater of Operations proves the bankruptcy of the former policy and the wisdom of the latter.

By early 1945, the 761st had African Americans in most of its officer positions, with only the field grade slots and a few company grade posts filled by whites. After Capt. David J. Williams was evacuated in January, all of the battalion's company commanders were black. Furthermore, as part of a separate tank battalion in support of various white divisions, the soldiers of the 761st did not have the feeling they were being treated as "second-class citizens"—a major complaint made by those who served in the segregated 92d and 93d Divisions, including the tankers of the 758th Tank Battalion.

About half of the officers in the 758th were black and the other half white. But, as noted above, the unit was part of the larger segregated 92d Division, which operated in a command climate clouded by a lack of respect for the commanding general, who was perceived as being openly racist and distrustful of the fighting ability of African Americans. (17)

Finally, although led only by white officers, the black tankers of the 784th acquitted themselves well, most likely because—as was the case with their counterparts in the 761st—they operated in support of white divisions and thus felt as if they were part of the greater whole.

*Maj. Dale E. Wilson, USA (Ret.), is executive editor of Presido Press. He holds a doctorate in history from Temple University and has served in the Department of History at the United States Military Academy. Dr. Wilson is the author of Treat 'em Rough! The Birth of American Armor, 1917-20.*

## Notes

1. Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975), p. 22.
2. Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1966), p. 133.
3. History, 5th Armored Group, undated, file ARGP-5-0.1, Record Group 407, National Archives, Suitland Records Branch (hereafter NARA).
4. Brief historical data on each of the three battalions can be found in the unit files maintained at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Organizational History Branch.
5. Quoted in Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion, 1942-1945* (Germany: Salzburger Druckerei und Verlag, 1945), p. 21. This is the least profane version of Patton's remarks available. Slightly different, more off-color versions can be found in the oral history interviews contained in Mary Penick Motley, ed., *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, WW II* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975).
6. After-Action Rpt, 2 Dec 44, ARBN-761-0.3 (Nov 44), RG 407, NARA.
7. See interv, Capt. John D. Long, CO, Company B, 761st Tank Bn, in Motley, ed., *Invisible Soldier*; telephone interv, author with Capt. David J. Williams, CO, Company A, 761st Tank Bn, 6 May 92.
8. Anderson, *Come Out Fighting*, p. 20.
9. In the immediate postwar period the 761st was recommended for two Distinguished Unit Citations (DUCs), but both were denied. The members of the battalion association fought for nearly thirty-three years after the war to have their exploits officially recognized. Finally, in 1977, a letter from a member of the 761st Veterans' Association to then-Army Secretary Clifford L. Alexander, Jr., resulted in a seven-month search that uncovered documentation verifying the unit was, indeed, deserving of the award.
10. For the full text of the citation, the bureaucratic record of the battalion's denied DUCs, and the subsequent fight to get the Presidential Unit Citation, see the Center of Military History's 761st Tank Battalion Organization File. Lt. Col. Bates and other former 761st officers and men, responding to the author's survey, claim the unit was slighted for awards because it was a black unit that was bounced from one division to another and, thus, treated as "bastard red-headed stepchildren" by the units it supported. Awards recommendations would be forwarded to higher headquarters by the battalion adjutant, only to be forgotten when the 761st became attached to another division.
11. Ltr, Jefferson Hightower to the author, Aug 90.
12. S1 Journal of Daily Events, 6 Oct 44 entry, ARBN-758-1.2, RG 405, NARA.
13. Interv, William Bobo with the author, Aug 81.
14. Rpt of Action, 30 May 45, ARBN-758-0.3 (2 Apr-5 May 45), RG 407, NARA.
15. After-Action Rpts, Dec 44-May 45, ARBN-784-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
16. Dale E. Wilson, "Recipe for Failure: Major General Edward M. Almond and Preparation of the U.S. 92d Infantry Division for Combat in World War II," *Journal of Military History* 56, no. 3 (Jul 92):473-88.
17. Ibid.

### ***Certain Victory: the U.S. Army in the Gulf War* Now Available Commercially**

*Certain Victory* was researched and written in 1993 by eight officers of the Army's DESERT STORM Study Project, with Brig. Gen. Robert H. Scales, Jr., serving as director. The book was printed in 1994 by the Army's Command and General Staff College Press, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. *Certain Victory* aroused considerable interest, and both Army officers and the general public soon found copies harder to locate. Now *Certain Victory* has been made available commercially in hardcover for \$29.95: 464 pp., 70 photographs, 45 maps, appendix, glossary, and index. Interested parties should write to Brassey's Inc., 1313 Dolley Madison Blvd., Suite 401, McLean, VA 22101. Phone: (703) 442-4535, or FAX (703) 442-9848.

A. G. Fisch

---

---

# World War II

## 1945

### January-March

1 Jan - A German counterattack, code named Operation NORDWIND, is launched against the U.S. Seventh Army in the northern Alsace region of France. This is the first in a series of counterattacks that force the thinly-stretched Seventh Army to fall back.

3 Jan - The First Army begins an attack to push back the northern flank of the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes and to link with the Third Army near Houffalize. The Third Army, meanwhile, continues the offensive that has freed the surrounded units at Bastogne.

9 Jan - The I and XIV Corps of the Sixth Army invade the northernmost Philippine island of Luzon at Lingayen Gulf, 100 miles north of Manila. Japanese resistance is surprisingly light, allowing for the rapid establishment of the beachhead.

16 Jan - The First and Third Armies link at Houffalize, marking the end of the first phase in the reduction of the Germans' Ardennes salient.

20 Jan - President Franklin D. Roosevelt is inaugurated for his fourth term.

23 Jan - The 7th Armored Division retakes St. Vith, from which it had been forced by the Germans' December counterattack.

26 Jan - In XIV Corps' southerly drive from the Sixth Army beachhead on Luzon, elements of the 37th Infantry Division capture one of the runways of Clark Field, the first major objective in the advance toward Manila. By evening on 1 February high ground in the area is in U.S. hands and the extensive airfield facilities are secure.

-The Germans, unable to affect a breakthrough, call off their offensive in the Seventh Army sector.

28 Jan - The First and Third Armies finally eliminate the Ardennes salient, reestablishing the lines held prior to the German offensive.

29 Jan - The XI Corps makes an amphibious landing on the west coast of Luzon north of Bataan.

31 Jan - The 11th Airborne Division makes an amphibious landing on the west coast of Luzon at Nasugbu, sixty miles south of Manila.

3 Feb - Elements of the 1st Cavalry Division, XIV Corps, enter Manila.

4-9 Feb - Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin meet at Yalta in the Ukraine and agree to the invasion of Japan following the collapse of Germany.

9 Feb - The 309th Infantry captures the Schwammenauel Dam on the Roer River.

12 Feb - Elements of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 11th Airborne Division link up in the southern outskirts of Manila, completing the encirclement of the city.

15 Feb - Elements of the 38th Infantry Division, XI Corps, make an amphibious landing at Mariveles on the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula and begin driving north, while other elements of the XI Corps move south from the base of the peninsula.

16 Feb - At 0833 the 503d Parachute Infantry makes an airborne landing on Corregidor, followed two hours later by an amphibious assault by the 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry. The Japanese are caught completely unprepared, and the action rapidly takes the form of a large-scale mopping-up operation.

18 Feb - Elements of the 10th Mountain Division begin an attack against Riva Ridge in Italy by scaling its 1,500-foot cliff face after dark. By the end of the day the ridge is in Allied hands.

19 Feb - U.S. marines invade Iwo Jima.

-The Eighth Army begins a campaign to clear the Visayan Passages through the central Philippines, which will provide a safe channel for Allied shipping and cut 500 nautical miles off the existing available route.

21 Feb - The XI Corps finishes clearing the Bataan

# Chronology

---

---

Peninsula, except for about a thousand Japanese hiding out around Mount Natib, most of whom will starve or die of disease before being hunted down.

-Continuing its program of limited objective attacks to gain favorable positions from which to launch a spring offensive, the 10th Mountain Division completes the capture of Monte Belvedere and the Valpiana Ridge.

23 Feb - The Ninth and First Armies commit elements of six divisions in a successful assault across the Roer River.

26 Feb - Organized resistance ends on Corregidor.

28 Feb - The 186th Infantry, 41st Infantry Division, opens the Eighth Army campaign to take the southern Philippines by making an unopposed landing at Puerto Princesa on Palawan Island.

3 Mar - Organized resistance ends in Manila, and the city is declared secure.

5 Mar - The 3d Armored Division and the 104th Infantry Division enter the ruined city of Cologne, completing its occupation on 7 March.

6 Mar - The Ninth Army finishes clearing the area between the Roer and Rhine Rivers.

7 Mar - Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, reaches the town of Remagen on the west bank of the Rhine, and finds that the Ludendorff railroad bridge over the river is still standing. As the Americans rush the bridge, the Germans attempt to blow it. Only a portion of the demolitions go off, leaving the bridge standing, and troops of the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion dash across, establishing the first Allied bridgehead on the east bank of the Rhine. From this bridgehead the First Army will launch a drive forming the southern arm of a pincer movement to capture the vital German industrial region of the Ruhr.

10 Mar - The 162d and 163d Infantry, 41st Infantry Division, land on the Zamboanga Peninsula of western Mindanao Island against very light resistance.

14 Mar - Elements of the 90th and 5th Infantry Divi-

sions cross the lower Moselle River in the XII Corps zone as the Third Army moves to clear the Germans from the west bank of the Rhine in the Saar-Palatinate area.

16 Mar - The 87th Infantry Division crosses the Moselle near Koblenz.

18 Mar - The 185th Regimental Combat Team lands on Panay Island, most of which is already under the control of Philippine guerrillas.

22 Mar - In the Third Army zone, the 5th Infantry Division makes assault crossings of the Rhine at Nierstein and Oppenheim. These are the first in a series of Rhine crossings by the Third and Seventh Armies which will support the First Army drive from the Remagen bridgehead.

23 Mar - The British 30 Corps begins the 21 Army Group's Rhine assaults with a crossing at Rees. The 21 Army Group's drive will form the northern pincer around the Ruhr region.

24 Mar - the 21 Army Group's Rhine crossings continue as the 30th and 79th Infantry Divisions of the Ninth Army cross near Rheinberg. The U.S. 17th and the British 6th Airborne Divisions make jumps in support of the British 12 Corps crossings.

25 Mar - The First Army breaks out of the Remagen bridgehead and begins its drive east to encircle the Ruhr.

- The Third Army breaks out of the Oppenheim bridgehead and drives toward Kassel.

- The Third Army sends the 87th Infantry Division across the Rhine at Boppard, south of Koblenz.

26 Mar - In the Seventh Army zone, the 3d and 45th Infantry Divisions cross the Rhine near Worms.

- The 89th Infantry Division makes another Rhine crossing in the Third Army zone at St. Goar.

- The 132d and 182d Infantry of the Americal Division land on Cebu Island in the Philippines.

27 Mar - The Seventh Army and the southern Third Army bridgeheads over the Rhine are linked.

28 Mar - Elements of the First Army reach points fifty miles and more beyond their original line of departure in the southern drive around the Ruhr. The complete breakthrough nets tens of thousands of prisoners.

29 Mar - Before midnight, the 2d Armored Division begins a two-day, forty-mile drive east from Haltern to Beckum in the Ninth Army zone north of the Ruhr area. The autobahn to Berlin is cut.

- The First Army redirects its drive from east to north as a task force of the 3d Armored Division makes a spectacular forty-five-mile drive toward Paderborn where it is to link with elements of the Ninth Army to complete the encirclement of the Ruhr. About midnight the 3d Armored Division finally halts fifteen miles from Paderborn.

- In the Third Army zone, Frankfurt falls to the

5th Infantry Division. Mannheim is occupied by the 44th Infantry Division, Seventh Army.

- The 185th RCT lands on the northwestern coast of Negros Island in the Philippines.

30 Mar - The 3d Armored Division task force advancing toward Paderborn runs into elements of several SS Panzer training units which put up a fanatical defense. The task force is stalled six miles from Paderborn. As another task force tries to bypass the defense it is caught in a German ambush. The commander of the 3d Armored Division, Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose, is killed in this action.

*This chronology was prepared by Edward N. Bedessem of the Center's Field Programs and Historical Services Division.*

---

## Launching "THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II"

Stetson Conn

(Part two of three parts)

*The following excerpt from Dr. Conn's book, Historical Work in the United States Army, 1862-1954, is the second of three installments in Army History. The first portion of chapter 5, Launching "THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II," appeared in issue no. 31.*

In 1946 and 1947 the major problems the [Historical] division faced were obtaining assured access to the Army's records, refining the official history plan and establishing its standards and objectives, and substantially enlarging a professional staff at a time of general retrenchment. Until the summer of 1946 the authors of the official history volumes had no formal assurance that they could use the wartime files of the War Department as necessary. Indeed, the only authorized access they had was to after-action reports from overseas sent to the Operations Division during the war, although in practice they managed to see and use a good many other records. Immediately after General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower promised Dr. [Kent Roberts] Greenfield in March 1946 that Army historians would be able to use all the records they needed, the Historical Division drafted a directive giving its authors blanket access to all files in War Department custody. In the normal staffing of this draft, the Intelligence and Operations Divisions insisted on qualifications that were accepted

by the Chief of Staff. The G-2 reservations, which were intended to prevent the disclosure of intelligence sources and methods, did not greatly matter, but those of the Operations Division, if narrowly interpreted, would have made true histories of the war's major plans and operations impractical.

Acting as the Army Chief of Staff's command post during the war, the Operations Division (OPD) had overshadowed all other elements in the military hierarchy of the War Department. It had handled all Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff actions for the Army, acquiring in the process a complete set of formal JCS and CCS papers. And the OPD files were filled with individual joint and combined papers interlaced with important material on Army policy. Guardians of the OPD files were reluctant to allow anyone to use them unless they were subject to court-martial. Moreover, OPD persuaded General Eisenhower to require the Historical Division to make its own special arrangements with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on access to joint and combined papers. Thus, the access paper signed by Eisenhower at the end [of] July 1946 left a good deal to be desired.

Initially it appeared that only very limited access to OPD files and no authority to use joint and combined papers would be granted to Army historians. Then in October 1946 Colonel [Allen F.] Clark learned that the

Joint Chiefs were allowing Army schools to use their records, and he persuaded Major General [Harry J.] Malony to reopen the question. A staff study prepared by Colonel Clark supplied General Eisenhower with the ammunition to carry the day at a JCS meeting in early January 1947. A few days later the Plans and Operations Division, OPD's successor, capitulated and henceforth allowed Army historians to use its most privy records under appropriate controls. The last barrier fell when the Joint Chiefs, after a masterly presentation by General Malony at a meeting on 21 June 1948, granted Service historians the authority to cite JCS and CCS papers in their publications.

Both military and civilian leaders recognized in 1946 that good public relations, and especially relations with the historical profession, depended in considerable measure on extending to private individuals as much freedom as possible in research in the Army's World War II records. With rare exceptions, private research had not been allowed in Army records before 1946. The first break came in April when representatives of the Historical Division and the Adjutant General's Office agreed to open unclassified combat analysis files to outside research. Freedom of access to almost all unclassified material soon followed, but the files that scholars were most anxious to use were under security controls that would not be generally removed for decades. Only the sheer bulk of this material prevented the declassification of most of it much earlier. Beginning in 1947 the Army tried to find ways to give responsible outsiders access to the information in its classified files that could be made public.

These efforts to gain access to Army World War II records for both Army historians and outside researchers received strong backing from Chief of Staff Eisenhower. In a directive of 20 November 1947, he took the positions that the records of the Army's activities in World War II were public property, that its official history then in preparation must tell the whole story without reservation "whether or not the evidence of history places the Army in a favorable light," that preparation of this history should not be a barrier to private research in Army records, and that no information in them should be withheld from public release except when such release would "in fact endanger the security of the Nation." In practice this directive helped official more than it did private research in records. Although it did lead to the adoption of procedures that permitted controlled research by outsiders in classified records relating to the war, procedures which the Historical Division helped to publicize, only a limited amount of private research in such

records ensued. While the controls imposed on outsiders were similar to those under which the Army's own historians worked, it was much easier in practice for the latter, working as full-time government employees, to learn how to extract the maximum of information that could be released without endangering the national security. Indeed, perhaps the basic justification for undertaking the Army's World War II history as a public enterprise was that it could not have been compiled and made public in any other way.

The plan for the World War II history approved in February 1946 was refined considerably in the following months. In the spring of 1946 the Historical Division was contemplating an eventual total of eighty or more volumes dealing with the activities of the War Department and the major commands and services operating within or under it, many more than actually would be undertaken. The list then included seven volumes dealing with the Army Air Forces and ten each for the Army Service and Army Ground Forces. In the reorganization of the War Department in June 1946 the Army Service Forces disappeared, and the Historical Division was never able to fully cover its manifold activities. The projected number of Ground Forces volumes shrank during 1946 from ten to three. And the Air Forces, while keeping its seven, tended more and more to go its separate way in historical work as in other matters. In September the Army's technical services assumed responsibility for accounts of the overseas activities relating to their respective branches. As a result, the number of volumes they were scheduled to produce increased to twenty-eight. The major coverage of overseas operations was to be, nevertheless, in the theater volumes. By August the chiefs of the European and Pacific writing sections had worked out reasonably firm volume plans for their areas. The first World War II volume, rushed to the press in September 1946, contained an estimate that the Army's official history of the war would eventually total ninety-nine volumes, a considerable drop from earlier projections. The new figure, no more than an educated guess, still contemplated devoting more than two-thirds of the series' coverage to the nonoperational aspects of the war.

One consequence of the big series planning was a decision by October 1946 to curtail the American Forces in Action (AFA) series and to convert some of the manuscripts being prepared for it into volumes for *The United States Army in World War II*. The three AFA pamphlets appearing after 1946 were works begun earlier that could not be fitted into the official history. Two others in progress in the summer of 1946,

dealing with the Okinawa and Guadalcanal operations, became the first combat volumes to be published in the World War II series. At the end of December, the Chief Historian hoped *Okinawa* could be published not too long after the Navy's first operational volume, then scheduled to appear within two months. In the event, the Army volume was not ready for distribution until December 1948. *Guadalcanal*, on which Dr. John Miller, jr., had begun work in November 1945, became the first volume in the series written entirely within the Historical Division, although Miller benefited from extensive work done overseas. Completed in draft form in two years, its editing and publication took almost as long as its composition.

Work on many other theater volumes was just beginning in the summer of 1946. An exception was the work of Dr. Forrest C. Pogue on the history of General Eisenhower's European headquarters, *The Supreme Command*, which he had begun overseas during the preceding winter. Another project well under way was a history of the Women's Army Corps, being written by Maj. Mattie E. Treadwell, who had joined the division the preceding autumn. After Captain [Ulysses] Lee joined in February 1946, the division found the scheme for feeding material on the participation of Negro troops into other authors' volumes too difficult. In mid-summer 1946 he was assigned to write a separate volume on the employment of Negro troops during the war, a volume that would not appear in print until two decades later. Works planned on the Army's part in the higher direction of the war effort included the history of the Operations Division and two or more volumes on the activities and contributions of Chief of Staff George C. Marshall. Work began on the Operations Division history in October 1945, and in September 1946 Mr. Mark S. Watson, a distinguished war reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, undertook the work on the Chief of Staff's office. The histories of secretariat activities had been started in 1944 by Drs. [Rudolph A.] Winnacker and [Troyer S.] Anderson. Dr. Anderson had hoped to complete his work on the Under Secretary of War's activities before he returned to teaching in September 1946, but he actually produced only an introductory portion before his untimely death in April 1948. After nine months' duty as Chief Editor, in January 1947 Dr. Winnacker resumed his work on Secretary Stimson; but two tours of duty with the new National War College and other outside engagements inhibited much further progress before his appointment in 1949 as Historian for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

As noted above, the historical studies of the Army

Ground Forces, prepared by and under the direction of Dr. Greenfield before he became Chief Historian, were considered in early 1946 the works most nearly ready for publication in the official history. In mid-February, Dr. [Walter L.] Wright and Colonel [John M.] Kemper in a conference with Greenfield approved the immediate publication of the latter's own short work (220 typed pages) on General Headquarters, AGF's predecessor, as a separate volume in the World War II series. Two months later his executive [secretary] sent the Historical Division three more studies, totaling 285 pages, for a second AGF volume. These studies had already been revised in accordance with comments and criticisms made by the division in an earlier review. In July 1946 General Malony and his helpers decided these works were too short to be printed as separate volumes in the rather large book size that had been adopted for the World War II series. Even before then Dr. Winnacker and his assistants had begun to question whether the AGF studies were really ready for publication. Yet it was essential for the division to publish a volume in the new series as soon as possible. Combining the GHQ history with five other studies made a book of suitable length. Two months of intensive work made it ready by 17 September for delivery to the Adjutant General's Office, the channel through which all Army publications had to be transmitted to the Government Printing Office. In November Dr. Greenfield was hoping to get this volume "out of the trenches before Christmas," but, in fact, this first book in *The United States Army in World War II* was not published until the fall of 1947.

The second AGF volume proved even more a testing ground for the series than the first. As the time scheduled for its delivery to the printer approached, Dr. Winnacker took the position that the studies to be included needed a broader perspective and other improvements before publication. Dr. Greenfield took exception to some of his criticisms, but accepted others, and personally devoted two or three months to revising these studies and added others to flesh out the volume. It finally went into the publication channel in April 1947, but another fourteen months passed before it appeared in print.

That complex historical volumes would take far longer to print through the Government Printing Office than anyone had anticipated was but one of the lessons learned from experience in the preparation and publication of the AGF and other early volumes. Work on these volumes also led to development of more explicit standards and objectives for the series than those set forth in the approved plan. A necessary degree of

uniformity in style was obtained by preparation of a style manual for series volumes. Distributed in October 1946, the manual allowed some leeway for variations, but not within the same book. All authors of series volumes, both within and outside the Historical Division, were expected to adhere to accepted standards of historical scholarship and methodology. Their works were to be fully documented, not only to indicate the sources on which they relied but also to provide the reader with a guide to the documents. While bearing in mind that the series had been conceived as a work for training and reference, authors were expected to write their books in clear and common English. Full responsibility for authorship was to be recognized by placing the author's name on title-page and spine, and by inclusion of a signed author's preface. That signature meant that nothing had been included in his book, nor any changes made in its language, without his consent. Also, the Army faithfully adhered to a policy of never publishing a censored or "sanitized" version. Recognizing that documentary evidence was frequently inadequate, from the beginning authors were encouraged to interview participants. The Army was thus a pioneer in oral history. Moreover, draft manuscripts were circulated widely to obtain as much helpful criticism as possible from both participants and other historians. Both authors and Army history were protected by a basic rule against changing any statement of fact unless new and convincing documentary evidence was produced.

As for objectives, authors had necessarily to keep in mind that the series was intended primarily for Army use: for the instructor in Army schools, for the "student-officer educating himself for a position of responsibility in another war" as the Chief Historian once put it, and for a broader professional scholarly public and a "general but limited public of thoughtful citizens." As reference works, its volumes were not expected to be popular histories or, to quote Dr. Greenfield, "bed-time reading for anybody." Content was to be confined to topics of Army-wide interest and to subject matter of sufficient import for it to be useful for the Army to know about for a half-century or more.

A periodic seminar launched by the Chief Historian 1 November 1946 became a major vehicle for developing common standards and objectives. Dr. Greenfield modeled it on a seminar he had developed as chairman of Johns Hopkins' history department. Looking back in 1948, Colonel Clark characterized the seminar system as "invaluable in indoctrinating our authors with the level of scholarship demanded in the division." For each seminar, an author submitted what

he considered a finished and properly documented piece of thirty or so pages written for a major division publication. Reproduced and distributed a week in advance, this paper was read critically by about a dozen individuals, including the Chief Historian or his representative, one of the division's senior military critics, a member of the editorial staff, one or more knowledgeable critics from outside the office, and a half dozen or more of the author's peers, including some working on dissimilar topics. The author was present at the meeting of the members of the seminar, and normally received a barrage of criticism, most of it helpful. The realization by all the writers that they would be subjected to the seminar system provided a most effective spur to better scholarship. Participation of top Army and Navy officers was not only helpful to authors, but also it made these officers aware of the trustworthy manner in which the Army's history was being written. Attendance of the ex-commander of the China Theater, Albert S. Wedemeyer, and key members of his staff at a seminar in January 1947 won for the authors of the China-Burma-India theater volumes both the promise and practice of whole-hearted support. Later in 1947, Chief of Staff Eisenhower twice took the time to participate in seminars on topics related to his European command. While seminars were held less frequently as work on the series progressed, for a decade or more they continued to be a useful device. In later years they were used particularly for technical service historians preparing volumes for the series who lacked the advantages that historians within the division had of working closely together.

As work on the World War II history gathered momentum in the second half of 1946, the problems of manning the Historical Division increased. However logical the argument that the war's history could not be written until the fighting ended and records became available, and therefore that the Army's central historical office needed substantially greater peacetime strength than had been allotted to it during the war, from the spring of 1946 the division had to fight off attempts to include historical activity in the general curtailment of War Department operations and its accompanying sharp reductions in authorized military and civilian strengths. Under the policy of relying on civilians to write the history and to undertake most of the other tasks related to its preparation and publication, the division needed fewer officers, but many more civilian professionals and the necessary clerical support for their work. By the summer of 1946 its goal was a strength of twenty officer and eighty-three Civil Service positions, exclusive of those required by the

World War I section attached the preceding May. In fact, during the second half of 1946 the division could not find enough qualified people to reach the authorized civilian strength of seventy-four. At the end of the year a further reduction in the authorization for the succeeding quarter brought it in line with actual strength, but the new ceiling precluded any more recruiting for World War II history work. Furthermore, sharp reductions in other Army agencies posed more than a threat of large-scale "bumping" of division employees by considerably less qualified people from the outside.

As Colonel Clark lay awake on the night of 16 January 1947 worrying about personnel and money, an idea came to him that would prove to be the salvation of the Army's big official history project. He knew that the Army had accumulated a large surplus of funds from operations post exchanges during the war, and that it had begun turning this money over to the Treasury. Why not ask the Secretary of War to allocate enough of this nonappropriated money to the Historical Division to pay civilians working on the World War II project? Exploring his idea informally with the executive to Assistant Secretary of War Howard C. Peterson, Mr. [John J.] McCloy's successor, he received an encouraging response. Before the end of January he learned that Mr. Peterson, whose duties included supervising nonappropriated funds, had recommended to his superior that some of this money be allocated to the preparation and publication of *The United States Army in World War II*.

Thus encouraged, Colonel Clark and the division's chief planning officer worked up a detailed statement of how much it would cost to complete the World War II series, as then planned, within five years. As Clark later acknowledged, the total they came up with, \$3,974,000, was related more to the maximum of \$4,000,000 they dared ask for than to their actual calculation. General Malony's formal request on 7 March for nonappropriated funds in this amount set off a struggle with the War Department's budget officer that remained unresolved until after Assistant Secretary of War Peterson returned in June from a trip around the world. During this interlude, the Historical Division was threatened with a 50 percent cut in its civilian professional ranks, from which it fortunately escaped. Then in early June the division learned that its civilian strength was to be cut by 25 percent in the coming fiscal year. The Chief of Military History and his Chief Historian, working in close cooperation, tried every approach they could think of in attempts to mend the situation, including an alert to the Historical Advisory Committee that its members might be called upon

to help lobby for a special appropriation from Congress. On 10 June, with the budget officer still adamant, General Malony in a third formal appeal asked the Chief of Staff and Secretary of War to overrule him and grant the total originally requested, or as much as they were willing to make available, in order to save the World War II history program. At a meeting of the War Council on 16 June, with [Robert P.] Patterson and Eisenhower present, Mr. Peterson brought up the proposal and the council agreed to make not more than \$4,000,000 in nonappropriated funds available to support the World War II project. Until this news reached the Historical Division, which it did on or about 20 June, the outlook there was a gloomy one indeed, even the Chief Historian seeing no hope for more than a very incomplete windup of the program during the next two years. Now the Army's World War II history, in contrast to almost all of the Federal historical projects inaugurated during the war, could be carried through to a fruitful conclusion.

In hurried action during the week preceding the new fiscal year, the Historical Division established a War Department Historical Fund to administer the money, with the Army Central Welfare Fund serving as its formal custodian. An increment of a million dollars was made available immediately, and effective 1 July 1947 nearly half the division's civilian workers were transferred from Civil Service to nonappropriated fund status as employees of the War Department Historical Fund. They continued to receive the same salaries and all the usual Civil Service perquisites except retirement benefits. With satisfactory performance they had job security for at least the next five years. As an interim arrangement the division put Fund employees into new World War II and Editorial Groups, which would be consolidated as the World War II Group in a formal reorganization on 1 January 1948. With the Fund at hand the Historical Division was willing to accept a reduction in its authorized Civil Service strength from eighty to sixty-four. It now had the financial means to hire as many employees as it needed to work on the history of the World War II, and to defray the costs of publication.

The immediate transfer of civilian employees from Civil Service to the Fund on 1 July included historians of the OPD, Signal Corps, and Transportation Corps historical offices. The latter two had been abolished in the widespread reduction of Civil Service strengths among Army agencies, and all historical and clerical personnel of the former would, in due course, be taken over by the Historical Division. The absorption of the OPD section, under Dr. Ray S. Cline after Colonel

[Harvey A.] DeWeerd's return to teaching in 1946, was accompanied by a recasting of its work to include not only an administrative history of the Operations Division by Dr. Cline, but also two volumes on the high-level strategic planning in which that division had been so intimately involved and concerning which its records were the primary American source. These two volumes were written principally by Cline's successor as section chief, Dr. Maurice Matloff.

The Fund also made it possible for the Historical Division to add new professional and clerical employees both for existing and new projects. For example, in September 1947 Dr. F. Stansbury Hayden was engaged to complete the voluminous unfinished history of Army training left by Dr. [Boyd C.] Shafer on his departure a year earlier. Several months later the Chief Historian, attracted by the excellence of a recently published narrative by Mr. Charles B. MacDonald of his wartime combat experiences, persuaded him to join the division and undertake a volume on small unit combat actions. To bolster one of the weakest of the surviving technical service historical offices, the division employed Dr. Constance M. Green, a well-known economic historian, to take charge of the Ordnance Department's historical work. To support the historians of the European, Mediterranean, and Pacific theater sections, the division also employed from late 1947 onward several research assistants with the language capacity to work in the large volume of German and Japanese material that was becoming available in Washington. Presently there would emerge out of this activity a separate foreign studies section. Actions such as these led to a threefold increase in the division's civilian Fund employees in the two years after it was established, to a total of about 100. The division's whole strength increased from 130 on 1 July 1947 to 210 on 1 April 1949.

Even though money was now available, the Historical Division in only three instances entered into contracts for outside preparation of volumes for the World War II series, a procedure that the original plan had proposed for much wider use. Only two of these contracts produced books. In the spring of 1948, the division let a Fund contract with Professor Irving B. Holley of Duke University to do a work on the procurement of air materiel. This subject might seem of more concern to the Air Forces than to the Army, but the Air Forces did not plan the detailed coverage of it that the division considered desirable. The other contract was for the "biography" of Army Service Forces' headquarters mentioned below. Beginning in 1942, the Army Air Forces (Department of the Air Force from 1947) had developed a large historical organization both at home and overseas; and its historical work, like its other functions, became increasingly independent of Army control. This autonomy accelerated after the reorganization of June 1946; for all practical purposes after the fall of that year the Air Forces historical program was no longer under Army supervision. The original World War II series plan had included seven Air Forces volumes; but instead of central editing in the Historical Division and publication through the Government Printing Office the Air Forces arranged to have its volumes edited and published by the University of Chicago Press. While the Historical Division formally reviewed the first two Air Force volumes, published in 1948 and 1949, its criticisms were offered as friendly suggestions rather than as mandates for change. In July 1947, the Air Force applied for and was allocated a fair share (over \$300,000) of the War Department Historical Fund to pay for the preparation and publication of the seven Air Force volumes, all of which would eventually appear.—*To be continued.*

\* \* \*

### ***Canadian Military History* Issue Features Normandy**

*Canadian Military History* is published twice a year, in the spring and fall, by the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic, and Disarmament Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University. The spring 1994 issue (vol. 3, no. 1) features the Canadian experiences of D-Day and the campaign in Normandy. The editors devote almost ninety pages, many with fascinating photographs and examples of Canadian artwork, to the Normandy struggle. The issue is a welcome contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the Allied effort in World War II.

For additional information regarding this particular issue, or for subscription information, interested readers can write to Prof. Terry Copp, Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic, and Disarmament Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5, or phone (519) 884-1970 Ext. 2328.

A.G. Fisch

## Civil-Military Operations—At Antietam???

John M. Manguso

During the U.S. Army Museum Conference in 1992, the assembled curators and their uniformed supervisors participated in an abbreviated staff ride at the Antietam battlefield. As a museum curator and graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College with twenty-six years' active and reserve service, I was in my glory as we trekked from position to position, checking avenues of approach, fields of fire, and all that sort of thing. By the time we reached the Dunker church, however, it occurred to me that we were missing something. Putting on my Civil Affairs officer kepi, well-worn after years in a reserve civil affairs group and brigade, I realized that we were not taking sufficient account of the fact that the battle had taken place in an inhabited area. How did the presence of civilians affect the Union and Confederate armies and their conduct of the battle? How did the battle affect the people in and around Sharpsburg? These questions were not dealt with in sufficient detail to enable an assessment of civil-military operations.

Should civil-military operations (CMO) be included on a staff ride in a Civil War battlefield context, e.g., at Antietam? Clearly, they should be if one is to cover all aspects of a military operation. CMO are, after all, an element of the Combat Service Support Battlefield Operating System. Warfare takes place in populated areas today just as it did in the nineteenth century. But can sufficient information be gleaned from existing source materials to assess the impact of civil-military operations on a battle? I propose to review the doctrine for CMO and then to examine evidence of its application during the Antietam campaign.

Basically, CMO are undertaken to assist the commander in accomplishing the mission. Typically, this goal is met by the performance of the following tasks:

- \* Minimizing civilian interference on operations
- \* Assisting the commander in meeting his moral and legal obligations toward the civil populace
- \* Acquiring supplies and services from the local economy
- \* Supplementing the intelligence cycle

The Army's "doctrine" for CMO during the Civil War was not well defined. The organization of the staff in 1862 did not include a CMO staff officer, although

several members of the staff typically would be in contact with the civil population, e.g., the quartermaster, commissary, and provost marshal. There were no civil affairs units per se. The *Army Regulations* promulgated in 1861 provided some guidance to commanders and soldiers on relations with civilians and, since Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan was operating within the borders of the United States, this guidance was applicable (Confederate regulations were based on those of the U.S. Army, so the Confederate doctrine was similar). Soldiers were directed to "behave themselves orderly" on the march and not to waste or spoil houses, fields, or meadows or maliciously destroy any property of inhabitants of the United States (unless by order of the Commander in Chief!). Plundering and marauding of the persons and property of those the army had the duty to protect were considered disgraceful and punishable by court-martial. Marauding and plundering the enemy's population and property, however, were not likewise proscribed. Giving aid and comfort to the enemy was punishable by court-martial. The commander of an army was authorized to levy contributions in money or in kind on the enemy's country when "the wants of the army absolutely require it, and in other cases." Protection was granted to hospitals, public establishments, churches, museums and depositories of the arts, mills, post offices, and other "institutions of public benefit" in the form of a safeguard, usually a certificate by the commander designating a site as protected.

With 1862 CMO doctrine and CMO tasks in mind, one can review the battle of Antietam in terms of each of the above CMO tasks to see what can be divined about CMO's impact on the battle. To assess the extent of available information, I will turn to the *U.S. Army War College Guide to the Battle of Antietam* and to the "Antietam Staff Ride Briefing Book," issued by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

### Minimize Civilian Interference

There were no uncontrolled movements of civilians on the battlefield at Antietam such as occurred in 1861 at Manassas (Bull Run). Any civilian congestion on the road from Shepherdstown to Sharpsburg would have spelled disaster for Robert E. Lee, who depended

upon the timely arrival of reinforcements to hold his position east of Sharpsburg. Was the lack of population movements the result of good traffic control, enforcement of curfews, or a dearth of civilians fleeing the battlefield, or just a dearth of civilians in the vicinity?

### **Fulfill Moral and Legal Obligations to the Civilian Populace**

We know that Lee hoped to impress Marylanders favorably with his army's good behavior so as to achieve the Confederate campaign's political objective. McClellan, in turn, issued orders against pillage. Although damage resulting from the battle was extensive, claims for damages are seldom mentioned in our two sources (an exception being the \$60 paid to Daniel Wise for the dumping of Confederate corpses into his well near Fox's Gap). Sites which should have been afforded protection under the existing rules of warfare—the Dunker church and the Lutheran church in Sharpsburg—were subjected to heavy damage. The Dunker church probably owed its injuries to its unchurchlike architecture. Had it been of a more conventional style or clearly marked as a church, would it have escaped damage? The Federals fired upon the Lutheran church when the Confederates used it as a signal station, a violation of the rules, at least from the Union point of view (Monte Cassino comes to mind). This church, as well as the Dunker church, was used as a hospital at the end of the battle. The farms between the two armies were devastated. The Confederates deliberately burned the Mumma Farm house and buildings to deny them to Union sharpshooters, a case of perceived military necessity. Clearly, there is evidence of the interplay of the commanders' moral and legal obligations and the exigencies of battle.

### **Acquire Supplies and Services**

The Federal Army was supplied chiefly from its supply depots but relied extensively on the use of railroads and boats to move its supplies. Frequent mention is made of the use of houses and barns (particularly as hospitals) by headquarters and units, though no information about compensation, if any, for such use is offered. The Confederate Army lived off the land but generally paid for its needs to avoid alienating the Marylanders. Lee did direct the "securing of the transportation of the country" in Virginia to move his sick and wounded. What percentage of each army's logistical tail was moved by civilian means? How many of their supplies were requisitioned from civilians?

### **Supplement the Intelligence Cycle**

Examples of this task are evident for both armies. It was a Maryland civilian who first reported the Confederate crossing of the Potomac to the Union forces. Likewise, it was a civilian who overheard McClellan's plan and disclosed it to Lee. There is no indication that either army assigned to any unit or agency the task of gathering intelligence from civilians. Yet, given the inadequacy of maps, both armies had to rely on civilians for information on the terrain. To what extent did the cavalry of either side extract useful data from civilians? To what extent did the screening forces deny their opponents access to information from civilians?

Even from this cursory look at our two sources on Antietam, it is evident that enough information about civil-military operations exists to pose questions for staff ride participants about their impact. Although we are left with several unanswered questions about the application of CMO tasks, the questions themselves can stimulate thought and discussion for staff ride participants. They can also serve as a guide for further research for a more detailed assessment of CMO. The *War of the Rebellion*—the official records of the Civil War—newspaper accounts, and the sources cited in Ted Ballard's article, "Antietam Staff Ride Guide," in *Army History*, no. 20 (Fall 1991), should provide the answers.

I can already hear the groans from staff ride coordinators who would have to do more research and cram even more information into their presentations. There is no need to worry: remember how Tom Sawyer got the fence painted. What an ideal research paper CMO would make for a student at the Command and General Staff College or the War College! There is, in addition, the 352d Civil Affairs Command (USAR), in Riverdale, Maryland, which has the CMO expertise to do the research and prepare instructional materials as a professional development project. Data could be accumulated over a period of time and incorporated into staff ride guides. Clearly, it is feasible to integrate CMO into the Antietam staff ride. This can be done without a research effort of epic proportions, and if it can be done for Antietam, why not for the others? The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School might be recruited to oversee the integration of CMO—and possibly special operations as well—into the staff ride process.

Staff rides offer an excellent method for conveying the lessons of the past to today's leadership, yet as currently practiced by the Army, the staff ride over-

looks an important aspect of warfare—civil-military operations. Real warfare takes place on battlefields occupied by civilians. In the post-Cold War era, the presence of civilians and their impact on operations cannot be ignored. Integrating CMO into the staff ride will improve the training value of this experience, not just for those in Career Management Fields 38 and 39,

but for all leaders. The answer to the question posed in the title is “Yes, indeed.”

*John M. Manguso is director of the Fort Sam Houston Museum at Headquarters, Fifth U.S. Army and Fort Sam Houston, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.*

---

## **The U.S. Third Army and the Advance to Koblenz, 7 November-17 December 1918**

**R. Scott Walker**

On 11 November 1918, delegates representing both Germany and the Allied and Associated Powers signed an armistice agreement which ended hostilities between the warring nations of the Great War. Four days earlier, General Headquarters, the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), established the Third Army. Following the signing of the cease-fire agreement, the AEF commander-in-chief, General John J. Pershing, designated the Third Army as the American Army of Occupation in Germany. Under the command of Maj. Gen. Joseph T. Dickman, the Third Army began its advance toward the Rhine River on 17 November 1918. Passing through parts of France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Lorraine, and the German Rhineland, the American forces established a bridgehead on the Rhine at the city of Koblenz on 17 December.

The Third Army's advance to Koblenz is a topic that deserves much more attention than it has received. The 1918 armistice is generally recognized as the end of the “war to end all wars”; however, peace between Germany and the Allies was not achieved officially until the signing of the peace treaty at Versailles in June 1919. The United States did not sign the treaty, and it was not until July 1921 that the U.S. Senate declared the war against Germany officially concluded. The cease-fire agreement of November 1918 did not end the war; rather, it marked the transition between a war of combat and one of occupation. The establishment of the U.S. Third Army and the advance to Koblenz, therefore, form a significant chapter in the history of World War I.

The citizens of the United States were not particularly interested in or enthusiastic about the notion of occupation. Although Americans generally favored the idea of delivering a “knockout blow” against Germany, they did not demand an occupation, and many

were eager to get out of Europe as soon as possible. After four years of hard fighting, depleted finances, and heavy casualties, Great Britain certainly had good reason to harbor hostile feelings toward Germany and to demand an occupation that would end forever the threat of war from Germany, but the British were tired of war and ready to call it quits. (1)

Unlike the Americans and British, the French involved in the 1918 armistice negotiations refused to accept a cease-fire agreement that did not contain conditions for an Allied military occupation of the Rhineland. They had maintained a sour disposition toward Germany ever since France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. In addition, the French sought revenge for the German invasion of their homeland and for the destruction and waste the Germans had left in the wake of war. Furthermore, the French hoped to ensure that Germany would be unable to recover following the armistice or to renew the war. (2) The United States and Britain agreed that the terms for occupation be included in the armistice, principally because the cease-fire agreement did not guarantee permanent peace, and neither nation relished the thought of Germany's successfully retaliating against the Allies in the event hostilities erupted again.

Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the commander-in-chief of the Allied armies, was the prime mover behind the drafting of the armistice agreement, with its foundation for an occupation. Foch incorporated the Allied occupation of the Rhineland into the earliest negotiations and drafts of the cease-fire agreement.

The Rhine River cities of Cologne, Koblenz, and Mainz were the designated bridgeheads for the Allied forces. The British Second Army established the bridgehead at Cologne, north of the Americans at Koblenz, while the French Tenth Army established its

occupation in the southern part of Koblenz and at Mainz. (3) Originally, the Third Army was to occupy the entire bridgehead at Koblenz, but the French High Command altered the southern limit of the American forces during the course of the march.

The Third Army initially was composed of two corps, the III and IV. The III Corps consisted of the 2d, 32d, and 42d Infantry Divisions, while the 1st, 3d, and 4th Divisions comprised the IV Corps. The VII Corps, with the 5th, 89th, and 90th Divisions, was added to Third Army on 22 November 1918. The 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th Divisions were Regular Army; the 32d and 42d Divisions were National Guard; and the 89th and 90th were National Army units. Some changes in the organization of the Army of Occupation occurred during the advance. On 12 December the 42d Division was assigned to the IV Corps, while the 1st Division passed to the III Corps. At the same time, the 33d Division replaced the 5th Division in the VII Corps. (4)

Chaplain Francis Duffy of the 165th Infantry, 42d "Rainbow" Division, commented that "the Third Army has been organized on a shoestring." (5) His characterization of the American force's situation was not far from the truth. The Third Army was formed at the last minute, only ten days prior to the march, and it was not designated the American Army of Occupation until after the signing of the armistice. General Dickman assumed command of the army on 13 November, and his staff officers began arriving just two days before the advance started.

General Dickman wrote that "the difficulties of the march of so large a force through devastated or partly exhausted territory, the scarcity of food and forage, and the bad condition of the roads, called for staff work of the highest order." (6) Five days prior to the advance, American engineers busily rebuilt roadways across areas formerly known as No-Man's-Land. While the roads behind enemy lines were reported in good shape, engineers joined the frontline units in the American advance to repair any damaged roads and bridges and to clear the way of mines. The Signal Corps also moved near the front to have telephones installed at the designated command posts before the army and corps headquarters arrived. Local water sources were off limits to American troops until they could be tested for contamination. Reconnaissance balloons monitored the withdrawal of German troops. (7)

All units designated for service in the Third Army received refits for the journey ahead. The general headquarters (GHQ) anticipated food shortages in the American-occupied zone; therefore, the soldiers re-

ceived adequate supplies so as not to be dependent on the local country as they passed through.

Although the possibility that Germany might renew hostilities against the Allies was remote, General Dickman made sure that every unit in the Third Army stayed at full combat readiness. Also, to enable the troops to enforce the armistice terms regarding Germany's surrender of large quantities of military equipment and the steady and punctual withdrawal of German troops from the West, the Third Army prepared itself to resume hostilities as quickly as possible.

General Dickman had a difficult job. He had to march six—and later nine—divisions to the Rhine while maintaining a constant state of combat readiness. Upon reaching Koblenz and establishing the bridgehead, he had to transform the Third Army into a defensive force for holding the bridgehead, while at the same time governing the surrounding area until a peace treaty was signed between the Allies and the Germans.

Both Marshal Foch and General Pershing drafted proclamations to notify the civilian inhabitants and the civil authorities of Luxembourg and Germany of the advancing Americans' intentions. GHQ also devised plans for the American military government at Koblenz. Prior to the formulation of official American policy, however, Pershing retained all decision-making authority regarding the governing of the American-occupied territory. (8)

At 0530 on 17 November, the Third Army began its advance toward Germany, crossing into territory that had been under German control for over four years. General Dickman described the weather as "clear and cool...very comfortable" for the long march ahead. (9)

The advance to the Luxembourg-German frontier took seven days; advance elements of the Third Army reached the boundary on 23 November. The Army of Occupation maintained the general front at the German border until 1 December, thus giving time for the American forces to reposition, reorganize, and train and for the Allies to plan the next phase of their advance to the Rhine.

The march of the Third Army through parts of France, Belgium, Lorraine, and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg went without incident. American soldiers faced virtually no hostility or resistance from German troops; in fact, the German withdrawal from their occupied territories progressed according to the terms of the armistice. Because of the lack of adequate supplies and gasoline and the limited number of roads and bridges crossing the Moselle River, many elements of the German armies were forced to slow their

retreat. As a result, the Allies often delayed their marches to allow the enemy more time to complete a withdrawal, so long as the other conditions of the armistice were fulfilled.

The weather remained cold, but good for marching. The health of the American troops was excellent. The Americans' reception by civilians formerly under German occupation was at once anxious and cheerful. On 1 December 1918, at 0530, advance elements of the Third Army crossed the eastern boundary of Luxembourg into Germany. The movement of American forces from the Luxembourg-German frontier to the Rhine River took eleven consecutive days of marching. The advance elements of the army reached the Rhine on 9 December. Two days later, the general army front ran along the river.

Unfavorable weather conditions, combined with the poor state of the major roadways leading to the Rhine, made the second part of the advance quite unpleasant and, at times, treacherous. In contrast to the clear and sunny weather during the advance to the Luxembourg-German frontier, rain and fog predominated throughout the march to the Rhine. Intelligence summaries routinely reported poor visibility and "muddy and slippery" roads. (10) Sgt. Elmer Frank Straub of the 42d Division, wrote, "The weather remains cloudy, damp and foggy, and when we start in the morning we are always buried far down in our overcoats." (11)

According to General Dickman, the advance of the American soldiers over the hilly country of the Rhineland was difficult enough due to the "inferior construction" of the roads and "severe service" to which these roads were subjected during the German retreat, but it was the "cold, drizzling rains of winter" that made the situation ever worse. He wrote, "the movement of the army transportation became a tremendous task." The direction in which the American army traveled forced it to cross valleys and climb hills, rather than follow the waterways and other natural avenues of the countryside. "Horses were unable to drag the heavy guns up the entire length of the slopes and had to be helped by men." (12) In his operations report to GHQ, Third Army Chief of Staff Malin Craig wrote, "the recent rainy weather and heavy traffic have reduced the roads to such a condition that our troops are experiencing some difficulty in completing their days' marches." (13)

Accounts of the reaction of the German civilian population to the presence of the American soldiers were mixed; however, the German people were more

hospitable than expected and there were no incidents of hatred or aggression. The worst that could be said of the general attitude of the German civilians toward the American army was one of indifference.

The inhabitants of the American-occupied territory appeared extremely relieved that they had not been assigned to part of the French zone of occupation. When the *Burgermeister* of Trier met with General Dickman, he voiced his pleasure over the discipline and demeanor of the American soldiers. The mayor stated that the Americans were the only hope of his people to receive fair treatment. The Third Army impressed the Germans so much that "the authorities of Koblenz requested that the advance part of the forces be expedited...to afford police protection to the city." (14) As a result, on 8 December, the 39th Infantry Battalion went by train to Koblenz in advance of the Third Army.

In his memoirs, General Dickman noted two cases of French hatred toward the Germans. In the first incident, a French captain serving as an interpreter at the Third Army headquarters assaulted a German civilian delivering mail, "by seizing his ears, shaking his head and striking him in the face." Since the captain was on duty with the American forces, Dickman judged his actions as a breach of American policy, which he was subject to obey. The French officer was immediately detached from Third Army headquarters. (15)

As a second example, Dickman quoted the chief liaison officer at Third Army headquarters, Maj. Reginald Kahn, who reported that the French on duty with the Americans found their assignment "intolerable," because "there were no restrictions on the German people, who received better treatment from the Americans than from their own Prussian officers." Dickman replied that the United States military was quite experienced in governing occupied territories and referred to past American military involvement in Cuba, the Philippines, and China. Dickman also sent a letter to General Pershing strongly urging him to make no changes in policy toward the German inhabitants in the American zone of occupation. (16)

During the course of the American advance across the Rhineland, the French High Command reduced the American front along the Rhine by approximately 40 percent. As a result, the French Tenth Army occupied the southern part of the Koblenz bridgehead. Dickman pointed out that although the AEF formed roughly one-third of the total Allied-American forces, only one-twelfth of the Allied front from Holland to Switzerland was allotted to the Americans. (17)

American troops generally observed the Rhineland to be in much better shape than the Allies originally expected. Surprisingly, there appeared to be no food shortages among the civilian population. More than once, intelligence summaries reported no evidence of an inadequate food supply; indeed, one summary noted that the "inhabitants appear anything but starved." (18)

With the exception of the weather, the American journey to the Rhine passed without any significant problems or hostile incidents. The German armies continued their retreat across western Germany. By 7 December only the rear elements of the German forces remained west of the Rhine.

The establishment of the Koblenz bridgehead by the Third Army took five days to complete. Elements of the III Corps began crossing the Rhine River on the morning of 13 December; the same day, advance elements of the French Tenth Army entered Mainz to set up its bridgehead, and the British Second Army began establishing its bridgehead at Cologne. The American III Corps traversed the river without incident. On 15 December, Headquarters, Third Army, moved from Mayen to Koblenz, and the occupation and establishment of the bridgehead in a thirty-kilometer radius around the city were achieved by 17 December 1918.

American military policy toward the German inhabitants in the American zone of occupation continued as it had during the march. American Lt. Harry Franck wrote, "The Americans came to Koblenz without any of those bombastic formalities with which the imagination imbues an occupation." He commented that at the sight of the Americans, who seemed more concerned with washing and relaxing than with enforcing occupation policies, the Germans "probably smiled to themselves and whispered that these *Amerikaner* were strangely ignorant of military privileges." (19) The German population, however, soon discovered that the American military took occupation duty very seriously.

General Dickman wrote that the American forces treated the civilian population with "firmness and justice." He noted, "the American army came as victors, but without arrogance, brutality, or harshness." (20) The safety of the American troops as well as the unhindered operation of American military activities was always enforced and ensured. As the establishment of the American bridgehead neared completion, Edwin James reported that the German residents at Koblenz expressed their gratitude toward the American soldiers. They felt fortunate that they

were under American, rather than British or— especially—French, occupation. (21)

General Dickman continued to experience problems with French officers on duty with the Third Army. Some of them persisted in their disapproval of American handling of the German civil population. Two more French officers were released from service with the American forces for committing brutal acts against the German residents. Conflicts broke out between American military police and French troops at Trier, and, according to Dickman, the French practically incited riots there. He wrote approvingly that a few weeks after the establishment of the bridgeheads, the British and French armies began adopting more generous policies toward the Germans, much like those of the Americans. (22)

At noon on 17 December 1918, the Luxembourg-German frontier was designated as the rear limit of the American zone of occupation. The American-occupied zone encompassed approximately 2,500 square miles of territory, compared to the roughly 12,000 square miles of German soil occupied by all of the Allied and American forces. (23)

General Dickman was very pleased with the performance of his men. He boasted that the advance of the Third Army to Koblenz was the longest march ever made by American forces in Europe to that time. According to him, the III and IV Corps marched between 225 and 250 miles, sometimes traveling more than 30 miles a day. "The ability to carry heavy packs over hilly and muddy roads, for such distances, indicates, very clearly, the superb physical condition the men had attained." (24)

While at Koblenz, the Third Army slowly increased in size, and the American occupation forces trained and prepared for a possible renewal of war with Germany. During the winter and spring of 1919, American forces in Germany performed routine occupation duties and training. One historian noted, "The new enemies of the American troops were stiffening Army regulations, the continued training and maneuvering (with live ammunition), boredom, restlessness, and the growing desire to go home." (25)

In June 1919 German delegates signed the Versailles Peace Treaty, thus ending the threat of further war between the Allies and Germany. On 2 July 1919, the United States Third Army was inactivated, and its headquarters, personnel, and units that remained were designated American Forces in Germany.

The advance of American forces from eastern

France to the Rhine River to establish a bridgehead at Koblenz was a major undertaking. The Third Army accomplished the task impressively, and the Germans residing in the American-occupied zone expressed their gratitude over the excellent conduct of the American soldiers during the march and subsequent occupation.

The fact that the Third Army was able successfully to accomplish such a difficult and significant task with so little time and preparation was the result of excellent work on the part of staff officers at both the GHQ and the Third Army headquarters. Chiefs of Staff James McAndrew (GHQ) and Malin Craig (HQ, Third Army), as well as all the individuals working under their supervision, deserve considerable credit for moving and supplying the Third Army on the long march. Also, World War I was the first occasion in which the U.S. Army had to coordinate large-scale efforts with armies of Great Britain and France, and with other European forces, such as those of Belgium. American staff officers succeeded in this coordination.

While the movement of American troops over such a large area in such short time was new to the U.S. Army, the concept of occupation was familiar. As General Dickman pointed out to the French officers dissatisfied with the American handling of the occupation, the U.S. forces had their share of previous occupation experiences upon which to draw. Some of the soldiers serving in the American occupation forces in 1918 had served earlier in the Philippines. The American Provost Marshal in Koblenz, who proved to be quite efficient at spotting American soldiers in the city without proper passes, had also served in the Philippine Islands. (26)

The Third Army's advance to Koblenz and the establishment of the army's bridgehead displayed the capability, competence, and determination of the U.S. Army. The effort was executed totally by the Ameri-

can military without other governmental participation. President Woodrow Wilson was deeply involved in the armistice and the peace settlement between Germany and the Allied and Associated Powers; however, he showed little concern or interest in the occupation of Germany, beyond the basic guidelines defined in the armistice. The establishment and formation of the Third Army, its advance to the Rhine, the establishment of the bridgehead at Koblenz, and all American policies concerning the governing of the inhabitants in the occupied zone were devised and executed by the Allied and American military forces. Marshal Foch oversaw the execution of the advance and occupation as a whole, but General Pershing dealt with all other details concerning American procedures. Consequently, Pershing was solely responsible for the success—or failure—of the American participation in the occupation of Germany.

The armistice gave supreme governing power to the occupying armies. This responsibility placed a heavy burden on the American High Command, which immediately drew up regulations for the security of the army and for the military tribunals that would enforce those regulations.

Ultimately, the advance of the American Third Army to the Rhine and the establishment of the bridgehead at Koblenz were accomplished with a high degree of expertise and professionalism by all who participated. Although the armistice of 11 November 1918 is often recognized as the end of World War I, the role of the Third Army in the final days was as challenging and significant as any undertaken by the United States Army in the Great War.

*R. Scott Walker holds an M.A. degree in history from the University of Louisville (Kentucky). This article is derived from his master's thesis.*

## Notes

1. Keith L. Nelson, *Victors Divided: America and the Allies in Germany, 1918-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 3, 7-8.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
3. Third Army, AEF, FO 10, 12 Dec 18, in *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919*, vol. 11, *American Occupation of Germany* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of the Army, Historical Division, 1948), pp. 75-76. Hereafter *U.S. Army in the World War*.
4. U.S. Army War College, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War, Ameri-*

- can Expeditionary Forces, Divisions* (Washington, D.C.: War Dept., 1931), passim; and *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 11, pp. 2, 4, 6.
5. Francis P. Duffy, *Father Duffy's Story: A Tale of Humor and Heroism, of Life and Death with the Fighting Sixty-Ninth* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1919), p. 307.
6. Joseph T. Dickman, *The Great Crusade: A Narrative of the World War* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927), p. 199. Includes a foreword by John J. Pershing.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 200; Edwin L. James, "With the American

Army in France," *New York Times*, 17 Nov 18.

8. U.S. Army, *The American Occupation in Germany, 1918-1923*, vol. 1, *Third Army and American Forces in Germany* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1985, text-fiche), p. 23.

9. Dickman, *The Great Crusade*, p. 200.

10. Intelligence Summaries, 4 Dec 18, 6 Dec 18, in *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 11, pp. 58, 62.

11. Elmer Frank Straub, *A Sergeant's Diary in the World War: The Diary of an Enlisted Member of the 150th Field Artillery (Forty-Second [Rainbow] Division), October 27, 1917 to August 7, 1919*, Indiana World War Records, vol. 3 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1923), p. 236.

12. Dickman, *The Great Crusade*, pp. 213, 215.

13. G-3, GHQ Third Army, OR 22, 8 Dec 18, in *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 11, pp. 65-66.

14. Dickman, *The Great Crusade*, pp. 215-16.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-22; G-3, GHQ Third Army, OR 26, 12 Dec 18, and Intelligence Summary, 12 Dec 18, in *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 11, pp. 73-74.

Dickman places the southern limit of the American front at Rhens, while the Intelligence Summary of 12 December places it at Brey.

18. Intelligence Summary, 3 Dec 18, in *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 11, p. 56.

19. Harry Alverson Franck, *Vagabonding Through Changing Germany* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1920), p. 26.

20. Dickman, *The Great Crusade*, p. 228.

21. Edwin L. James, "American Troops on Coblenz Arc," *New York Times*, 18 Dec 18.

22. Dickman, *The Great Crusade*, p. 229.

23. G-3, GHQ Third Army, OR 30, 16 Dec 18, in *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 11, p. 84; Nelson, *Victors Divided*, pp. 26-30.

24. Dickman, *The Great Crusade*, p. 223.

25. Frank Burt Freidel, *Over There: The Story of America's First Great Overseas Crusade*, rev. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), p. 226.

26. Henry J. Reilly, *Americans All, the Rainbow at War: Official History of the 42d Rainbow Division in the World War*, 2d ed. (Columbus, Ohio: F. J. Heer Printing Co., 1936), pp. 860-61.

---

## 1995 U.S. Field Artillery Association History Writing Contest Announced

The U.S. Field Artillery Association is sponsoring its tenth annual History Writing Contest. To compete, interested parties should submit an unpublished, original manuscript on any historical perspective of Field Artillery or fire support by the contest deadline of 6 February 1995.

The Field Artillery Association will award \$300 for the first place article; second, \$150; and third, \$50. The winners' articles will be published in the August 1995 edition of *Field Artillery*. Selected honorable-mention entries also may be published in *Field Artillery* or the association's newsletter, "Forward Observer."

The writing contest is open to any U.S. armed services member, ally, or civilian; entrants need not be a member of the Field Artillery Association.

Submissions should consist of the following:

- A typed, double-spaced unpublished manuscript of no more than 3,000 words. The manuscript should include footnotes and a bibliography.

- A comprehensive biography of the author.

- If possible, graphics, maps, photographs, slides, charts, etc., to illustrate the article.

The entry should include specific lessons or concepts that apply to Redlegs today—not merely record historical events or document the details of an operation. Articles may be about any historical period.

A panel of three expert historians will judge the manuscripts, which will not carry the authors' names during judging. The panel will determine the winners based on historical accuracy (30 percent), writing clarity (30 percent), applicability to today's Redlegs (30 percent), and originality (10 percent).

Submit entries by 6 February 1995 to the U.S. Field Artillery Association, ATTN: History Writing Contest, PO Box 33027, Fort Sill, Oklahoma 73503.

For additional information, contact *Field Artillery*, DSN 639-5121 or 6806, or commercial (405) 442-5121 or 6806.

## The Sergeants Major Course Staff Ride to Schmidt

Steven L. Crawford and William J. Lapham

The sergeants major course at the Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas, trains the Army's senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs). The course provides future Army sergeants major, a small number of foreign students, and NCOs from sister services the tools needed to be effective leaders and to interact efficiently with senior officers. It provides a curriculum which, in numerous ways, mirrors the education provided senior officers at such institutions as the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. One example of this parallel instruction is the staff ride. Each student in these courses studies staff ride methodology and participates in a staff ride.

During recent years the commandant of the Sergeants Major Academy has sponsored an additional staff ride for students who win a writing competition. Each competing student writes an essay on whatever battle is chosen for the upcoming staff ride. When they return from the ride, the students create a multimedia presentation for the entire class on their experience. This presentation serves as a reinforcement to the staff ride training already completed. In April 1993 we were among five students from Class 41 at the Academy who participated in the commandant's staff ride to Schmidt, Germany.

The battle for this little highway crossroads town lasted from October 1944 through February 1945 and was heartbreaking for Americans. Day by day, hour by hour, a succession of American divisions and their supporting elements were chewed up in the surrounding Huertgen Forest. Outnumbered, they faced adverse terrain, poor weather conditions, and a determined enemy. First, German units mauled the 9th Infantry Division in October. Then, when the 28th Infantry Division replaced the 9th Division during November, it, too, was so badly crushed that it had to leave the line. The 4th Infantry Division followed but fared only slightly better before it was withdrawn. This series of division-size battles was anything but the highlight of the American experience in the European theater.

No one planned to have a succession of American divisions chewed up in battle. On the contrary, the historical unit attached to the 28th Division anticipated

a victory and was preparing to document it using S.L.A. Marshall's newly developed battlefield interview techniques. As it turned out, the historical unit managed to document thoroughly a battle which might best be termed a defeat.

Today, the battle site around Schmidt is an excellent location for a staff ride because it is hardly disturbed. Land use is much the same as in 1944, with no shopping malls in the center of the battlefield. It is even possible to examine abandoned equipment such as tank treads imbedded in the Kall Trail.

Staff ride participants can also study the battle in amazing detail through documentation left by the 28th Division's historical unit. The 800-plus pages of oral interviews and documents collected by the historians are available on microfiche at the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Combined with transcripts of interviews with senior German military officers (also available from the Military History Institute), these documents provide a rich source of primary material. From these sources have come part of an Army "green book" by Charles McDonald and such non-Army studies as Cecil B. Curry's *Follow Me and Die*. The richness of the primary material relevant to the role of enlisted personnel makes this battle especially useful for NCOs because such material has been lost for most other battles.

The generosity of the German Army made our staff ride to Schmidt possible. The Germans provided transportation from Fort Bliss on the weekly *Luftwaffe* flight to Cologne, ground transportation to the battle site, and accommodations at a *Kaserne* in Duren. The coordinating and translating efforts of Sgt. Maj. Josef Nawrat, the Academy's German Army exchange instructor, greatly facilitated our effort. Lt. Col. Ekkehard Tautz of the German Army led the staff ride with the help of several individuals from the area, including the mayor of Vossenack, a native who served as a tanker in the *116th (Greyhound) Panzer Division* during the battle.

In all, the school commandant, Col. Fredrick Van Horn, the school historian, Sergeant Major Nawrat, and we five students made the trip from the Academy. The Pennsylvania National Guard's command sergeant major, James M. McDonald, came along to represent the 28th Division, which still hails from the



*U.S. and German Battle of Schmidt staff ride participants, 5 April 1993.*

Keystone State.

The American army began the battle for Schmidt as it sought to penetrate the West Wall or Siegfried Line between Aachen and the Ardennes Forest. The Americans hoped to capture the crossroads town of Schmidt, which could provide access for armor to the Roer River, slightly to the east. Open land along the Roer and east to the Rhine appeared to be good tank country, but until the American tanks could get there, the fight would belong to the infantry.

The 28th Infantry Division's goal was to capture this crossroads in the midst of heavily forested and broken country. The division planned to cross the precipitously steep Kall River Valley from the town of Vossenack to the village of Kommerscheidt and on to Schmidt. Division elements would depend on the Kall Trail from Vossenack to Kommerscheidt as the main supply route.

The forces available for the offensive proved inadequate, and the trail simply could not support the logistics effort. Furthermore, the German forces found that they could interdict the trail almost at will. Even though lead elements of the 28th Division initially took the town of Schmidt, they eventually broke and retreated before German armored counterattacks—first to the western head of the Kall Trail outside

Kommerscheidt and finally across the valley to the takeoff point at Vossenack.

Within days after the start of the battle, lead elements of the 28th Division had more casualties than they had healthy soldiers to carry them. We estimate that considerably more than a thousand soldiers had to be medically evacuated over the trail and through the shelter alongside as the Americans suffered almost 6,000 casualties in the first two weeks. Few could be evacuated by transport. Virtually all had to come out on foot or on litters. The medical station on the eastern slope of the Kall Trail became a symbol of the 28th Division's plight.

Not everyone made it out. Months later Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin found a myriad of abandoned bodies along the trail as he reconnoitered the area before bringing his 82d Airborne Division through the battlefield. The 28th's "Bloody Bucket" keystone patches on the corpses contrasted sharply with the snow. Clearly, there had been a breakdown in leadership within the division. Discipline and morale had melted away. How did this happen? What can we learn from it?

One objective of our staff ride was to explore the impact of the physical and mental demands created by battle. We hoped to study their influence on morale and the decision-making process, because the human ele-

ment so often is decisive in battle.

During our staff ride Colonel Van Horn used an exercise to illuminate the point. Toward the end of the longest, coldest, and wettest day of our staff ride, we prepared to climb the Kall Trail. Our commandant chose four of the five students to carry the fifth up to the site of the original aid station, and then on to the summit outside Vossenack. The weather was nearly as miserable as that the 28th Division endured during those first weeks in November. The Kall Trail before us was a narrow cart and cattle path that drops sharply from Vossenack on about a 30 percent grade. The hillside dropping away from the trail might be more aptly called a cliff. It was going to be an arduous climb.

At several points during our ascent, we halted and Colonel Van Horn asked us how we were faring. We became increasingly tired and were grateful for the pauses in the climb, while he, in turn, related our growing fatigue to the much more demanding conditions experienced by NCOs of the 28th Division along the trail in November 1944. He asked what effects this would have had on the battle-weary men of the division. We were exhausted while enjoying the relative luxury of four soldiers carrying one! It became easier to see that leadership failures, resulting from exhaustion, had led to a loss of morale and discipline. In 1944 they resulted in the abandonment of dead and dying soldiers. We also began to understand that the modern NCO has a responsibility to shield his or her officers from the exhaustion that can lead to the breakdown of leadership.

The Kall Trail is the site of another leadership failure. At one end, just at the wood line outside Kommerscheidt, we saw hundreds of foxholes, one upon the other. They looked like they had been dug yesterday, but soldiers of the 112th Regiment dug them in November 1944. Paralyzed by fear, the soldiers had attempted to huddle together, although this was the

most dangerous thing they could have done. Again, a breakdown in military discipline and the absence of strong leadership allowed this situation to develop.

We returned from Germany with numerous impressions we could relate to our education at the Sergeants Major Academy. Our first thoughts concerned the applicability of staff rides for NCOs. Usually, such rides are organized for—and conducted by—commissioned officers. Staff rides, as a rule, do not include NCOs. Yet, when questioned about conclusions they draw from their staff ride experience, most officers mention the human element in combat—not tactics and strategy—and no one deals more closely with the human element on the battlefield than the NCO. The more violent and demanding the fight, the more NCOs become involved in the critical decisions affecting the human element.

Officers are largely committed to making tactical decisions and to managing the flow of battle. Who, then, is going to look for the indicators of fatigue, fear, lack of discipline, and reduced morale? Who will react to correct these problems? Clearly, we believe the NCO must take care of troops and correct the problems. We have a much broader responsibility than did our predecessors in 1944.

We believe our staff ride demonstrated the role of the NCO with thought-provoking clarity. If NCOs are given the opportunity to participate in staff rides which focus on small unit tactics and the human elements of battle, the benefits to the Army can be great. There are lessons to be learned through study of a carefully selected battlefield. They are waiting for NCOs at Schmidt.

*Master Sergeant Steven L. Crawford and Senior Chief Petty Officer William J. Lapham attended the Sergeants Major Course at Fort Bliss, Texas, and participated in the April 1993 staff ride to Schmidt.*

---

## Book Reviews

---

### Book Review

by Andrew J. Birtle

*Low-Intensity Conflict in American History*

by Claude C. Sturgill

Praeger Publishers. 160 pp., \$49.95

"Low-intensity conflict," writes the author, "is almost any military action that is just short of war." In this book, Claude Sturgill, a professor of military

history at the University of Florida, attempts to guide the layman through a vast and complex subject, encompassing such diverse events as the Indian Wars and the bombing of the World Trade Center. It is an ambitious, though unfortunately not entirely successful, undertaking.

Writing in a style that is conversational and easy to read, Dr. Sturgill begins by offering an eighteen-point checklist that the person on the street can use to help determine whether a past or present event should be

classified as a low-intensity conflict (LIC). The events on the checklist are arranged roughly in ascending order of intensity and degree of American involvement. Included on the list are such bench marks as "Minor anti-American propaganda begins. Look for 'Yankee Go Home!' signs," (point number 2), and, "Key words such as rebellion, revolution, guerrilla, and counter guerrilla operations appear on a daily basis in the press. The news begins reporting American military casualties." (point number 11). The checklist serves as the foundation for the rest of the book, as the author frequently employs it as a pedagogical tool, asking his readers where they would rate particular events on his LIC Richter scale.

Despite the title, the book offers only a brief synopsis of American experience in low-intensity conflicts prior to World War II. Dr. Sturgill correctly points out that the U.S. military was heavily involved in LIC-style activities before 1940 and that these experiences on the Western frontier, in the Philippines, the Caribbean, and elsewhere shaped the military's basic doctrinal approach to low-intensity conflict up to the present day. His coverage of these pre-1940 experiences is cursory, however, and consists largely of extended quotations from secondary works.

Coverage of events after 1940 is better, but selective rather than comprehensive. Most of the book is arranged topically rather than chronologically, as the author discusses in turn each of the major categories of LIC operations, including military interventions, peacekeeping, and counterinsurgency, counterdrug, and counterterrorism missions. Having recently served as a visiting scholar at both the Army and Air War Colleges, Dr. Sturgill should be well acquainted with the latest military doctrine concerning each of these activities. Unfortunately, his somewhat careless use of terms tends to muddy rather than clarify the doctrinal waters. For example, the military intervention chapter includes not only true interventions, such as President Lyndon Johnson's venture into the Dominican Republic, but operations like the Son Tay Prison raid, the Mayaguez incident, and the Iranian hostage rescue attempt—actions that fall outside the traditional definition of a military intervention. Similarly, although he defines peacekeeping missions as operations that are "conducted in accord with agreements among the parties to the conflict," he gives as examples DESERT SHIELD and the invasions of Grenada and Panama—none of which were undertaken with the consent of their primary targets. The reader is likewise hard pressed to understand why the author classifies a Central Intelligence Agency operation that cut an undersea

communications cable between China and North Korea during the Korean War (an action that forced the Chinese to use less secure means of transmitting military communications) as a psychological warfare operation. Such questionable organization and analysis undercut the author's intention of making the complex world of LIC clear and comprehensible to the average reader.

For the most part the book is factually accurate in the events it describes, although it errs in asserting that Filipino opposition to Spanish and American rule sprang from conditions of poverty and social injustice. For the most part, Filipino opposition to foreign rule was led by the middle and upper classes, who had no interest in radically altering the traditional socioeconomic structure of the Philippines.

The book does a better job of illustrating the many issues—political, economic, legal, diplomatic, military, and social—inherent in low-intensity conflicts. The author points out the political and cultural handicaps under which Western democracies labor in trying to defeat guerrillas and terrorists, saying that to survive, the West may have to adopt the twin attitudes of "the only good insurrectionist is a dead insurrectionist" and "do unto them before they do unto us." He devotes one chapter to the issue of media coverage and censorship during low-intensity conflicts, and another to the institutional development of military formations that are particularly useful in the conduct of low-intensity operations, such as Ranger, Special Forces, Delta force, and psychological warfare units. The latter discussion concludes with an account of the creation of a Special Operations Command and the post of assistant secretary of defense for special operations in the mid-1980s, two actions that Dr. Sturgill feels were long overdue. Throughout, the author criticizes the military's apparent disinclination to accord LIC equal status with conventional operations. In this he is unabashedly partisan, giving short shrift to those with different views.

*Low-Intensity Conflict in American History* provides a snapshot look at what is admittedly a difficult subject. Its focus is more contemporary than historical, its coverage more anecdotal than comprehensive. It offers little for the academic or the knowledgeable practitioner. Although the book does illustrate the many political and operational pitfalls typical of this class of military operations, its usefulness as a primer on low-intensity conflict is marred by a careless use of terms and a tendency to alternate between chronological and topical approaches in a way that sometimes results in repetition and a lack of clarity.

*Dr. Andrew J. Birtle is a historian in the Center's Histories Division. His recently completed manuscript, "The Development of Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine, 1860-1941," will be the first of a two-volume study on LIC. His second volume will study low-intensity conflicts from 1941 through 1975.*

#### **Book Review**

**by Paul R.M. Brooks, Jr.**

***Front and Center: Heroes, War Stories & Army Life***  
**L. James Binder, ed.**  
**Brassey's (US), Inc. 250 pp., \$32.00 hardcover,**  
**\$15.95 softcover**

*Front and Center* is an anthology of articles, stories, and memoirs published in *Army* magazine. In his preface, L. James Binder states that to be included, an "article had to be something anybody, soldier or not, would pick up to read for enjoyment at the end of the day. It could absorb, inspire, instruct, amuse, sadden, or any of a hundred other things the printed word holds for the reader." These selections represent the culmination of numerous months of diligent work by many members of AUSA (Association of the United States Army) and the *Army* magazine staffs. It represents a labor of love for soldiers and their families.

The book contains selections which run the spectrum from hilarious to tragic. The stories relate everyday life among soldiers from many ages; some recount the mundane life a peacetime army ("Bearwatch"), while others relate the sublime efforts of soldiers in combat ("Cortes in the Valley of Anahuac"). All offer a view of a very special breed of human being.

For avid *Army* readers, such articles as "Mustaches" by Scott R. McMichael will remind them of the pettiness and pretentiousness of a martinet style of army leadership, where "real leaders" do or do not do such-and-such. The humorous anecdotes are countered with memoirs like "Omak," which relates the story of Amie Klein, a New York City guttersnipe turned combat leader of the first order. Each selection stimulates the reader to consider the life of sacrifice that is typical of a military career.

Since the business of soldiers, ultimately, is war, most of the entries deal with either the preparation for or the execution of combat. Two stories discuss

George C. Patton's abilities as both trainer and leader; two others deal with John J. Pershing. Some of the most compelling, however, discuss the seemingly mundane aspects of leadership. Mitchel L. Kotula's powerful entry, "Daryl's Last Christmas," relates the strength of character and leadership of a black mother at Christmas time, when she realizes that her eldest son has been killed in Vietnam.

Possibly the best characteristic of this book is that each of the chapters is easily read in a single sitting. An average selection will consume only about ten minutes. Often that is about as much time as one can set aside for nonspecific tasks which, nonetheless, help in developing a sense of professionalism.

*Front and Center* does not pretend to be a "how to" book for the leadership, planning, and execution of military life; rather, it is a compilation of personal accounts and historical vignettes about military experiences throughout the ages. That most entries discuss the American military should not diminish the universality of the subject. *Front and Center* is a volume which should be kept in a quiet place for those who desire to read a short story and then to contemplate the insights and lessons of heroes, war stories, and army life.

*Capt. Paul R. M. Brooks, Jr., is an Armor officer. A graduate of New Mexico State University and a Vietnam veteran, Captain Brooks spent four years with the Department of History, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York. He currently serves as psychological operations officer at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.*

#### **Book Review**

**by John Austen**

***Fortress America: The Corps of Engineers, Hampton Roads, and United States Coastal Defense***  
**David A. Clary**  
**University Press of Virginia. 222 pp., \$35.00**

This aptly named book is a high-level administrative overview of the subjects set forth in the title. The book illustrates the fortress mentality—literal and figurative—of the Corps of Engineers throughout the nineteenth century. It shows the firm hold on American defense policy the Corps held from its formal establishment in the early nineteenth century until technological developments in the latter part of that

century reduced the Corps' influence. The author then brings the story up to date with a review of harbor defense developments in the twentieth century.

The Defense Department professional will feel right at home here as he reencounters that old verity: the more things change, the more they remain the same. As an example, consider this brief quote from the book, referring to construction in the mid-nineteenth century: "Once the shortfall in estimates was apparent, the government was committed to the program and must continue it, even as costs rose further in response to refinements of design or addition of new forts."

*Fortress America* is an analysis of the evolution of American defense policy from the perspective of the Corps of Engineers, but is not particularly sympathetic to the Corps. Inter-branch and inter-service rivalry crop up repeatedly in the narrative, and often are accompanied by statements such as the following:

The engineers, ordnance, and the artillery—three separate domains—declined to cooperate as well as they should have. The engineers had a long tradition of knowing what was best for the army—and especially an assumed monopoly on fortifications—so they caused most of the trouble.

The author's research has left him with an engineering bias, if, indeed, he did not begin with one. This perspective is demonstrated in two ways. He makes free use of engineering technical terms when discussing fortifications (such as terreplein and scrap), yet includes no glossary. This is not a problem or inconvenience if the readers are assumed to be military engineers or professional historians. But such an audience should not be expected to forgive the other shortcoming, i.e., numerous minor technical inaccuracies when referring to artillery. The author refers to the defeat of Fort Pulaski by rifled *field* guns, when, in fact, it was reduced by rifled siege and seacoast guns. In referring to an extensive program to rearm fortifications at the of the Civil War, he makes this statement: "Where before they had built gun platforms for 42-pounders or smaller, now they must prepare for 100-pounder rifles and 10- to 15-inch smoothbore guns." Almost every word of that except is only half true. Any forts having 42-pounder guns also had 8-inch and 10-inch seacoast howitzers and/or Columbiads. These were larger weapons firing larger projectiles. Seacoast forts receiving 100-pounder rifles often also received 200- and 300-pounder rifles. The new pattern

Columbiads (or Rodman guns) was produced in great numbers in 8-10- and 15-inch calibers but not (except for one or two Confederate pieces and one or two planned or experimental pieces) between 10- and 15-inch. A very limited number of 20-inch Rodmans also were produced.

But enough with the nitpicking. This is, overall, a very well written and tightly edited book. There are very few typographical errors ("for" instead of "fort"; "or" instead of "of"). Other than the lack of a glossary, or inadequate attention to artillery technicalities, the only shortcoming of the book is the lack of maps. Considering the constant references to sites around Hampton Roads, a map (perhaps on the endpapers) would have been a great convenience. This reviewer worked at Fort Monroe and in the Hampton Roads area for some years, yet still would have appreciated a map.

Mr. Clary made judicious use of the very few secondary works available on the subject, especially *Seacoast Fortifications* (Lewis) and *Defender of the Chesapeake* (Weinert). But *Fortress America*, for the most part, is the product of exhaustive research in a host of primary sources, neatly summarized in an eight-page bibliography. The notes (along with their abbreviation key) are grouped in 27 pages following the main text. The 12 pages of index, compared to the 177 pages of main text, represent a ratio of approximately 1:15, adequate although not exhaustive. Of the book's total of 222 pages, 27 are illustrations: photographs and plans of forts. The plans are too small to be useful; while the photographs are second-rate reproductions of scenes available in other secondary works, e.g., Lewis and Weinert.

*Fortress America* is a worthy addition to the scholarship of all three areas mentioned in its subtitle. The book presents an insightful and unabashed analysis of the nation's budgetary process and the formulation of American defense policy. Its few shortcomings are trivial. This interesting and entertaining book is recommended to the historian and the Defense Department professional alike.

*John Austen is a systems analyst at the Defense Logistics Agency. After graduating from Virginia Tech as a history major, Mr. Austen began his Federal service in ADP (automated data processing) at Fort Monroe, Virginia. A life-long history buff, Mr. Austen has reviewed a number of books and is a member of several historical societies, including the Council on America's Military Past.*

**Forthcoming in *Army History*...**

Louis E. Keefer describes, in words and photographs, the emergence and the demise of the Army's World War II-era Specialized Training Program.

John W. Whitman looks at the mobilization of artillery in the Philippines campaign.

Edward P. Shannahan, Chief, Historical Services, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Atlanta, Georgia, shares his thoughts on a staff ride to the Chickamauga battlefield.

Book review by Dr. Rodney J. Ross of Donald J. Young's *The Battle of Bataan*.

And much more...

**Department of the Army**

The Chief of Military History and  
The Center of Military History  
1099 14th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005-3402

---

First Class  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 4401  
Suburban, MD